WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT CIO

TRUSTEES` REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31ST MARCH 2026

CHARITY NUMBER 1187765

ROBINSON UDALE
Chartered Accountants & Tax Advisors
The Old Bank
41 King Street
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 7AY

WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

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WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Charity Number	1187765
The board of trustees	S Fawcett H Bell (Vice Chair) L Bowen (Chair) M Burns E Teasdale S Cox – Appointed April 2025
Registered office	First Floor Offices Unit 1 Dobies Cumbria Ltd Dobies Business Park Lillyhall West Workington CA14 4HX
Independent Examiners	Robinson Udale Limited Chartered Accountants & Tax Advisors The Old Bank 41 King Street Penrith Cumbria CA117AY

WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2026. The Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of this report are listed on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management

West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered as a charity on 5th February 2020 and the charity number is 1187765. The charity is regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales and is subject to charity law.

The charities trustees also form the management committee of the organisation, and they are elected at the Annual General Meeting.

The Board of Trustees currently has a membership of 5 people. Some are representatives of partner organisations such Cumbria County Council and Health services. They have fast knowledge and experience in the issues surrounding domestic abuse and working with victims of abuse and their children. Our chair is the head of Performance and Talent with our biggest local employer, Sellafield Ltd, our vice chair is a Programme Assurance Lead at Kellogg Brown & Root (U.K.) Ltd and our treasurer is a chartered accountant and director of her own company.

The Board meets monthly and more frequently if required. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the organisation and for robust governance and rigorous financial management.

The CEO holds the day-to-day responsibility for the operational management of the organisation. and for the day-to-day provision of services.

The service is delivered via a combination of 11 professional counsellors (10 adult and 1 Child and young person's counsellor), 3 trained volunteers and 8 members of salaried staff comprising of the CEO, Operations Manager, Service Manager, 2 Administration Assistant, 3 Support Workers for victims/survivors and 1 McKenzie Friend for all disadvantaged women.

Objectives and Activities

The Freedom Project is unique in West Cumbria in providing a free holistic family approach, working with victims, perpetrators and children suffering from the trauma and effects of domestic and sexual abuse.

Our mission is to help break the cycle of abuse in Cumbria through the following objectives:

- Supporting clients by improving their safety and security for themselves and their children.
- Supporting survivors to move on, equipped with the resilience and skills to avoid future abusive relationships.
- Help children/young people who are caught up in domestic abuse, as a victim, or witness, and those starting to display challenging and abusive behaviours, to cope with difficult situations and manage their emotional and physical responses in a healthy and positive way.
- Help perpetrators to change their behaviour so that they cease to abuse.
- Work with partner agencies to promote better integrated services to victims and perpetrators and raise awareness on domestic abuse
- Act as an advocate so that domestic abuse is kept high on the policy and decision-making agendas.

Our main services are delivered through the Freedom Project, which consists of:

- A Confidential Helpline offering practical and emotional support. This is the route to which many of our referrals are received.
- one-to-one assessment of need where client and support worker decide which counselling support service pathway (group sessions, one-to-one sessions, or both) is most appropriate for themselves, and their family
- one-to-one and individual counselling for victims, perpetrators, and children/ young people
- Volunteer befriending and support service (including pre counselling sessions- provided to clients on the waiting list that feel they need immediate support, attending courts, helping with transport)
- a rolling programme of group sessions with adult victims/survivors.
- a rolling programme of group sessions for children (primary age and under)
- a rolling programme of group sessions for older children/young people (secondary age up to 18)
- Providing McKenzie Friend support to all disadvantaged who need help, advice, and support through the family courts process.

Our values and mission are central to our approach, which includes placing the needs of our clients first and "walking the extra mile" to help bring change to those whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse.

Public Benefit

The trustees have complied with their responsibility to have due regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit in exercising their powers and duties. Trustees are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and in planning their activities for the year have kept in mind the Charity Commission's guidance at Trustee meetings.

West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support brings benefit to the public in line with its objects through its range of services (detailed above) that are freely accessible to the public affected by domestic abuse including victims, their children and families and perpetrators.

Financial review

The net funds for the year amounted to £69,603. As of 31 March 2026, the charity had restricted funds of £305,726 (2025; £182,386) and unrestricted funds of £20,993 (2025; £74,730).

We are deeply grateful to all our supporters, whose kindness and generosity have enabled us to continue supporting people when they need it most. Francis C Scott, Garfield Weston, The Henry Smith Foundation, Cumbria Community Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Cumbria Police Fire Commissioner Fund, The Hadfield Trust, National Lottery Community Fund, Cumberland Council, The NDA, as well as several smaller grants from local businesspeople.

However, we cannot be complacent and are continuing to review the project's finances on a regular basis to identify any possible shortfalls and submit further applications necessary to ensure that this vital service continues to help the communities of West Cumbria.

We are committed to keeping our service free so that it remains accessible to everyone irrespective of their income. There are enough barriers in place already which deter victims and perpetrators of abuse from seeking help - we will not add ability to pay to that list.

Therefore, the service will always need to be paid for from sources other than fees charged to clients. In the past costs have been entirely met through grants from charities and funding agencies.

We believe this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. However, we will gear our organisation up to bid for contracts which may be tendered by the Police, Health, Children's and Adult Social Services, the Home Office etc. We will respond to such opportunities on a full cost recovery basis.

In the meantime, we will support our Trustees and volunteers and continue to be more pro-active in terms of fund-raising, including encouraging donations and business sponsorships.

Reserve's policy

WCDVS's reserves policy aims to have income equivalent to at least 3 months running costs and service costs enabling the organisation to meet both short term cash flow pressures and legal commitments in the event of the organisation being unable to continue to operate. The Board of Trustees keeps this policy under review as part of its ongoing monitoring of the financial needs of the organisation and management of risk.

Risk Management

The Trustees have a risk management strategy which composes: ~ review of the risks the charity may face, ~ the establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the plan; and the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

Plans for the Future

We have spent time as a team reviewing our strategic themes and the progress we have made against each one and we are delighted to report that we have made significant progress against each one;

- Raising awareness
- Growing our impact
- Breaking the cycle of abuse and
- A continual focus on our structure and governance.

We plan to retain these themes as we move into delivery year 2026/27 with an increased focus on some specific areas, all with the intent of breaking the cycle of domestic abuse.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that year. In preparing these financial statements the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

L Bowen

On behalf of the board
L Bowen – Chairman

Date 9th June 2026

West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support

Independent examiner's report to the trustees on the unaudited financial statements of West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support Group.

I report on the accounts of West Cumbria Domestic Violence Support for the year ended 31 March 2026 as set out on pages 7 – 17.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and independent examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011, (the 2011 Act) does not apply and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act, to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act, and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(i) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements: - to keep proper accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

(ii) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

D. Roper

.....

Mr D Roper

Robinson Udale Ltd
Chartered Accountants and Tax Advisors
The Old Bank
41 King Street
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 7AY

Date 16 June 2026

WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2026	Total Funds 2025
			£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES:					
Donations and Legacies	2	54,550	555,202	609,752	518,781
Income from investments	3	519	-	519	602
Income from Other Trading Activities	4	-	-	-	-
Other Income	5	-	-	-	-
Total Incoming Resources		55,069	555,202	610,271	519,383
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Expenditure on :-					
Charitable activities	6	107,632	422,362	529,994	581,064
Fundraising activities	7	1,174	9,500	10,674	1,798
Total Resources Expended	8	108,806	431,862	540,668	582,862
Net income/(expenditure)		(53,737)	123,340	69,603	(63,479)
Transfer between funds		(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Net movement in funds		(53,737)	123,340	69,603	(63,479)
Reconciliation of funds					
Funds Introduced		-	-	-	-
Funds brought forward		74,730	182,386	257,116	320,595
Funds carried forward		20,993	305,726	326,719	257,116

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.

All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 10 to 17 form part of these accounts

WEST CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

BALANCE SHEET

	Note	2026 £	2026 £	2025
FIXED ASSETS	12		13,763	13,539
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	13	24,786		7,145
Cash at bank and in hand		312,062		254,966
		336,848		262,111
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	14	23,892		18,534
NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)			312,956	243,577
			326,719	257,116
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due after more Than one year	15		(-)	(-)
NET ASSETS			£326,719	£257,116
FUNDS				
Restricted Income Funds	17		305,726	182,386
Unrestricted Income Funds			20,993	74,730
TOTAL FUNDS			£326,719	£257,116

These financial statements were approved by the trustees on .... and are signed on their behalf by:

H Bell
Trustee- Programme assurance lead

M Burns
Trustee- Treasurer

The notes on pages 10 to 17 form part of these accounts

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026

	2026 £	2025 £
Cash Used in Operating Activities		
Net movement in Funds	69,603	(63,479)
Add Back Depreciation Charge	4,438	4,073
Decrease/(Increase) in Debtors	(17,641)	(4,332)
(Decrease)/Increase in Creditors	5,358	8,927
Net Cash used in operating activities	61,758	(54,811)
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Fixed Assets Introduced	(-)	(-)
Purchase of Tangible Fixed Assets	(4,662)	(2,649)
Cash Provided By (Used In) Investing Activities	(4,662)	(2,649)
Increase/(Decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the Year	57,096	(57,460)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the Year	254,966	312,426
	312,062	254,966

The notes on pages 10 to 17 form part of these accounts

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies are summarised below. The accounting policies have been applied consistently throughout the year and the preceding year.

Basis of accounting
The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities' preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Effective 1 January 2015)-(Charities SORP(FRS 102)) and the Companies Act 2006.

The company constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS102. The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the company's ability to continue as a going concern.

Income
All income is included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

Voluntary income is received by way of grants, donations and gifts and is included in full in the statement of financial activities when receivable. Grants where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Donated services and facilities are included at the value to the charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included.

Gifts donated for resale are included as incoming resources within activities for generating funds when they are sold.
Grants, including grants for the purchase of fixed assets, are recognised in full in the statement of financial activities in the year in which they are receivable.

Income from investments is included in the year in which it is receivable.

Expenditure
Expenditure is recognised on an accrual basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered and is reported as part of the expenditure to which it relates.

Costs of generating funds comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income and the costs of trading for fundraising purposes including.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity and include project management.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation
Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Leasehold properties -	Straight line over the life of the lease
Plant and machinery -	25% reducing balance
Fixtures, fittings and equipment -	25% reducing balance

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2026 £	Total Funds 2025 £
Donations	-	24,550	24,550	29,153
Cumbria Community Foundation	-	-	-	49,910
Cockermouth Rotary	-	-	-	2,000
BBC Children In Need	47,865	-	47,865	20,183
Hadfield Trust	5,000	-	5,000	-
Copeland Community Fund	14,875	-	14,875	69,784
Police & Crime Commissioner Cumbria	36,993	-	36,993	40,358
Henry Smith	-	-	-	89,750
Morgan Sindall	-	-	-	3,000
PFCC	6,000	-	6,000	-
Barry Earl	-	-	-	2,000
KYC Lester	-	-	-	2,650
Prosperity Law	-	-	-	2,000
Snowball Fund	3,000	-	3,000	2,477
Francis C Scott	-	-	-	15,000
Garfield Weston Fund	-	30,000	30,000	-
Souter Charitable Trust	-	-	-	5,000
Jeronime Palmer	-	-	-	2,921
Chalk Cliff Trust	-	-	-	5,000
Cumberland Council	10,080	-	10,080	-
Awards For All	20,000	-	20,000	-
Brian and Ann Clarke	10,000	-	10,000	-
McKenzie Friend	41,509	-	41,509	42,857
National Lottery Community Fund	84,000	-	84,000	84,000
Safety Net	16,000	-	16,000	16,000
Eleanor Peel Trust	-	-	-	10,000
Together We Can	17,380	-	17,380	1,738
David and Ruth Lewis	-	-	-	15,000
Ambergate	-	-	-	5,000
Mosonic	20,000	-	20,000	2,000
Conference Sponsorship	5,500	-	5,500	1,000
Workington Town Council	2,000	-	2,000	-
NDA Funding	215,000	-	215,000	-
	555,202	54,550	609,752	518,781

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

3. INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2026	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£	£
Bank Interest Receivable	519	-	519	602
	519	-	519	602

4. INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2026	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£	£
Fundraising Events	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-

5. OTHER INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2026	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£	£
Other Income	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-

6. COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2026	Total 2025
	£	£	£	£
Domestic Violence Support	108,806	431,862	540,668	581,064
	108,806	431,862	540,668	581,064

7. COSTS OF FUNDRAISING

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2026	Total 2025
	£	£	£	£
Fundraising Expenditure	1,174	9,500	10,674	1,798
	1,174	9,500	10,674	1,798

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

8. COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY

	Activities Undertaken Directly	Support Costs	Total 2026	Total 2025
	£	£	£	£
Domestic Violence Support	540,668	-	540,668	582,862
	540,668	-	540,668	582,862

9. SUPPORT COSTS

	Total 2026	Total 2025
	£	£
Wages	-	-
Legal and Professional fees	-	-
Office running costs	-	-
Premises Costs	-	-
Finance charges – Finance Lease	-	-
Depreciation	-	-
	-	-

The Board of Trustees is of the opinion that every cost incurred, no matter what the expense, goes directly towards supporting the victims. The support costs provide the infrastructure which enables the direct counselling service to be delivered to our service users.

10. STAFF COSTS

	Total 2026	Total 2025
	£	£
Wages and Salaries	214,058	232,119
Employers National Insurance and Pension Contributions	21,058	21,132
	235,116	253,251

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 (2025: £Nil)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on a full-time equivalent basis was as follows:

	2026 Number	2025 Number
Management staff	3	3
Administrative staff	2	2
Support Workers	3	4
Total	8	9

11. TRUSTEE'S EMOLUMENTS

The trustees neither received nor waived any emoluments during the year (2025: £Nil)

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Short Leasehold Property £	IT Equipment £	Fixtures, Fittings & Equipment £	Total £
COST				
At 1st April 2025	-	19,346	6,205	25,551
Additions	-	951	3,711	4,662
Donation Received	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
At 31st March 2026	-	20,297	9,916	30,213
DEPRECIATION				
At 1st April 2025	-	8,426	3,586	12,012
Charge for the year	-	3,195	1,243	4,438
At 31st March 2026	-	11,621	4,829	16,450
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31st March 2026	£Nil	£8,676	£5,087	£13,763
At 31st March 2025	£Nil	£10,920	£2,619	£13,539

Included in tangible fixed assets are assets held under finance leases or hire purchase contracts as follows:

	2026		2025	
Asset description	**Net Book Value**	**Depreciation Charge**	**Net Book Value**	**Depreciation Charge**
Fixtures, fittings, and equipment	£-	£-	£-	£-

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

13. DEBTORS

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade Debtors	21,875	4,474
Prepayments	2,911	2,671
	24,786	7,145

14. CREDITORS : (Amounts falling due within one year)

	2026	2025
	£	£
Net Obligations under finance leases	-	-
Trade Creditors	20,275	14,707
Other Taxes and Social security Costs	1,717	2,017
Accruals and deferred income	1,900	1,800
	23,892	18,534
Deferred Income		
At 1st April 2025	-	-
Resources deferred in the year	-	-
Amounts released from previous year	-	-
Deferred Income at 31st March 2026	-	-

The deferred income at 31st March 2026 relates to donations received in advance

15. CREDITORS (Amounts falling due after more than one year)

	2026	2025
	£	£
Net Obligations under finance leases	-	-
	-	-
Net Obligations under finance leases		
Repayable within one year	-	-
Repayable within two and five years	-	-
	-	-

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

16. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2026	Total Funds 2025
	£	£	£	£
Tangible Fixed Assets	8,743	5,020	13,763	13,539
Current Assets	36,142	300,706	336,848	262,111
Current Liabilities	(23,892)		(23,892)	(18,534)
Long Term Liabilities	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Net Assets at 31st March 2025	20,993	305,726	326,719	257,116

17. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	At 1st April 2025	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	At 31st March 2026
	£	£	£	£
Copeland Borough Council	9,543	14,875	(20,862)	3,556
BBC Children In Need Kids Provision	1,155	47,865	(35,253)	13,767
Cumberland Council	14,902	-	(14,902)	-
Cumberland Council CYP Provision	-	10,080	(10,080)	-
Cumbria Community Foundation	16,910	-	(13,292)	3,618
Henry Smith	51,280	-	(51,280)	-
National Lottery Community Fund	32,769	84,000	(116,769)	-
Police & Crime Commissioner Cumbria	10,089	36,993	(47,082)	-
Safety Net	16,000	16,000	(23,000)	9,000
Eleonor Peel Trust	5,000	-	(5,000)	-
Together We Can	1,738	17,380	(5,000)	14,118
David and Ruth Lewis	15,000	-	(15,000)	-
Ambergate	5,000	-	(5,000)	-
Mosonic Charitable Trust CYP	2,000	20,000	(2,000)	20,000
Conference Sponsorship	1,000	5,500	(6,500)	-
McKenzie Friend	-	41,509	(41,509)	-
Workington Town Council	-	2,000	(-)	2,000
Brian and Ann Clarke	-	10,000	(-)	10,000
Awards For All	-	20,000	(13,333)	6,667
Hadfield Trust	-	5,000	(-)	5,000
NDA Funding	-	215,000	(-)	215,000
PFCC Marketing	-	6,000	(3,000)	3,000
Snowball	-	3,000	(3,000)	-
	182,386	555,202	431,862	305,726

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Purposes of restricted funds

The purpose of the BBC Children in Need fund is to contribute towards the costs of our children's provision.

The purpose of Cumbria County Council grant is to fund an increase in service costs to meet increasing demand on our service.

The purpose of Copeland Community Fund is to be used against staff and support worker salaries and counselling costs for Copeland residents.

The purpose of the Cumbria Community Foundation grants received was to part fund staff salaries and direct client support through the Family Support Fund.

The purpose of the Henry Smith fund is to be used against staff salaries.

The purpose of Masonic Charitable Trust fund is to be used against our children's provision.

The purpose of Police & Crime Commissioners Cumbria fund is to be used against counselling costs.

The purpose of National Lottery Community fund is to be used against counselling costs.

The purpose Cumbria Community Foundations- McKenzie Friend fund is to be used against staff salaries and the McKenzie Friend service provision.

The NDA is to be used against counselling costs, staff salaries and overheads in 26-27.

Eleonor Peel Trust fund is to be used against staff salaries.

The charity's general unrestricted funds are usually smaller grants/donations and are used as directed by the provider.

THE FREEDOM PROJECT CUMBRIA



Annual Report

Breaking cycles, building futures, supporting Cumbria since 1997



31st March 2026

Registered Charity No: 1187765

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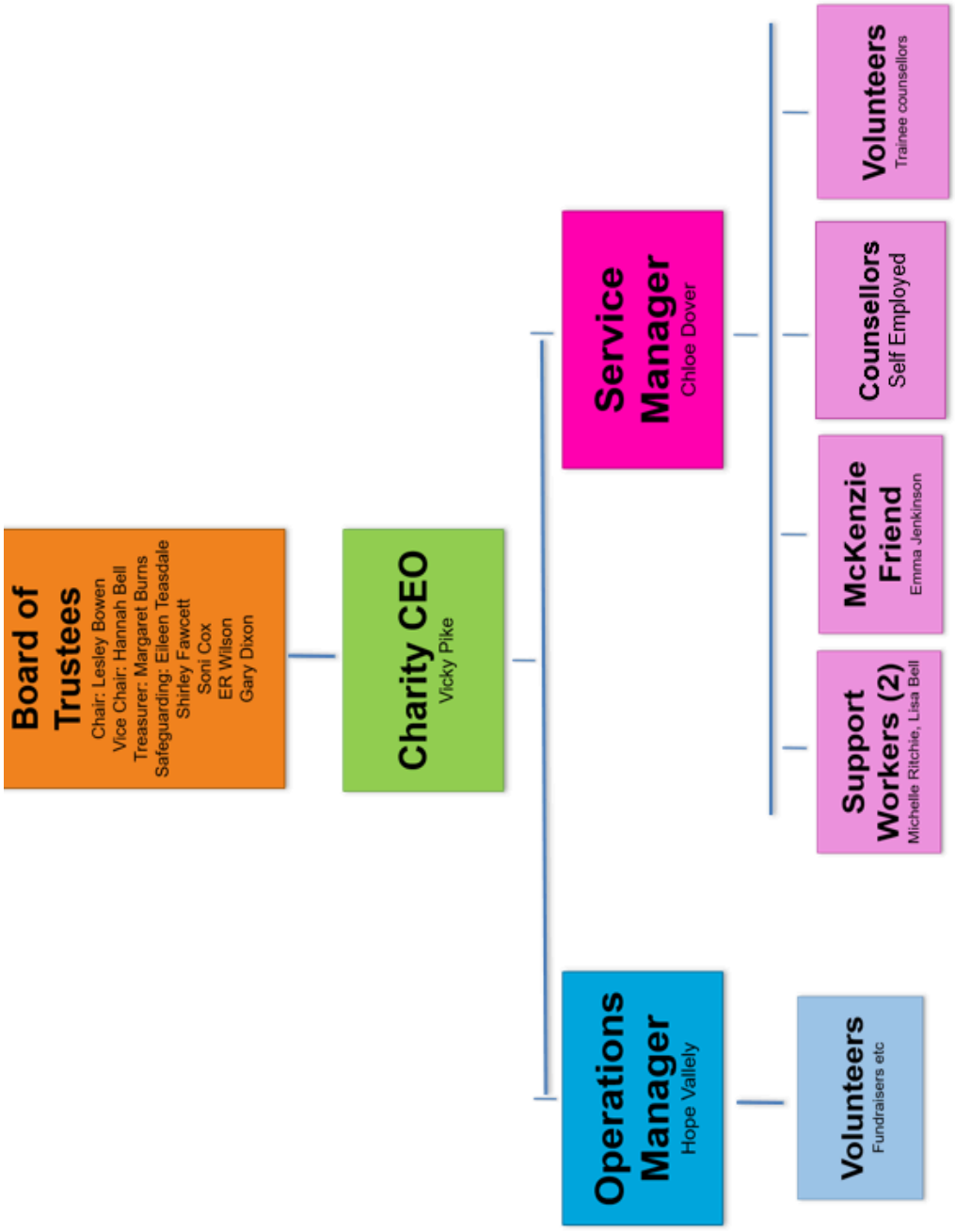
CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

Another highly successful but challenging year for the Freedom Project.
I have to start with an enormous thank you to all of our funders, our many and varied supporters, our volunteers, our team of trustees and of course our core delivery team. Together we have made a significant contribution to breaking the cycle of domestic abuse across Cumbria and beyond.
We have again stayed true to our strategic intent, focusing on raising awareness of the topic of Domestic Abuse and the impact it can have in the home, community and workplace and creating a service model which enables a greater reach to those impacted.
The demand for our services continues to grow year on year and this year we have directly supported around 700 people with one-to-one and group counselling. Regrettably, due to increasing demand and challenges over funding, we had to take the unprecedented step just after Christmas to temporarily close our waiting list. The team and trustees worked extremely hard to minimise the impact of this and, as a consequence, we have again revised our counselling model and attracted additional funders. We are pleased to say that our referral pathways have now reopened, and we are already seeing a rapid intake of new referrals, demonstrating the continuing and urgent need for our specialist support across the community.
Funding has been a constant challenge to us this year and we have had to work hard to maintain and seek new grant funding in order for us to continue to deliver our work. A key focus for us next year will be to seek a more stable funding platform, developing new opportunities for funding and income generation recognising the service we provide in the end to end support system for those impacted by Domestic Abuse.
We have continued to build on our strong governance arrangements with regular, structured trustee meetings enhanced by Sunday working sessions to focus on specific issues with a forward look ahead. We have recruited additional trustees with skills that complement the current team in order to provide succession planning capability.
We have become a member of EIDA who are an organisation which supports employers to develop a proactive, best practice environment for employees who are impacted by Domestic Abuse. With their support, in June 2025 we took the bold step of delivering a conference which was specifically aimed at local employers with the aim of raising awareness of domestic abuse, the impact it can have in the workplace and highlighting what a good employer response should look like. We had over 135 delegates at the conference representing 31 employers. It was a great success with tremendous feedback and the impact has been significant with a number of employers registering with EIDA and reaching out to us for support.
The topic of Domestic Abuse is no longer a behind closed door topic, the topic is subject to significant national attention and I'm proud to say that the Freedom Project stays ahead of this, well informed and responsive and ready for the year ahead.
Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report and supporting this vital agenda.

Lesley Bowen, Chair of the Trustees

Meet the dedicated team behind our mission, passionate individuals working together to create meaningful, lasting change.

OUR TEAM



MESSAGE FROM OUR TRUSTEES

WCDVS Trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year in March. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period.

Our Vision
To deliver effective, co-ordinated, responsive and accessible services for victims, perpetrators and children who are living with, or have lived with, domestic and sexual abuse. Breaking the cycle of abuse now and for future generations.

Our Mission
To help break the cycle of domestic abuse.

Our values

- We care
- We are inclusive
- We do not judge
- We take our responsibilities seriously
- We are client focussed
- We provide a safe space

THE FREEDOM PROJECT CUMBRIA

Our mission and values are at the heart of everything we do, guiding us to put our clients' needs first and go the extra mile to support lasting change in the lives of those affected by abuse.

OUR HISTORY

1997

This year marks 29 years since our charity was founded, born from a conversation around a kitchen table, where Carole Launder, Susan James, and Shirley Fawcett united around a shared commitment to create change and support victims of domestic abuse in a community with little to no provision.

Since those early beginnings, public understanding of domestic abuse has evolved significantly. What was once seen as a private issue, often ignored or dismissed as 'just a domestic', is now more widely recognised as a serious, complex societal problem.

Survivors have bravely shared their stories, legislation has progressed, and powerful portrayals in programmes such as EastEnders, Emmerdale, and The Archers have helped bring the issue into public consciousness.

The silence has been broken, and vital conversations are now taking place in homes, schools, workplaces, and across communities.

2026

Today, we deliver a free, holistic, family-focused service that supports adults, children and young people impacted by domestic abuse. This includes those who have experienced abuse, as well as those seeking support to address harmful behaviours.

Our service offers emotional and practical support, one-to-one interventions, counselling, and therapeutic group programmes. By working with the whole family, we aim to increase safety, support recovery, and enable lasting positive change.

Need across Cumbria remains significant, and referrals continue to rise. This underlines the ongoing importance of specialist, accessible support within local communities.

In response, we have continued to develop and strengthen our service so that more families can access the help they need, when they need it. We are proud to provide free, long-term, community-based support that responds to the realities families face today.

Alongside our direct work with families, we remain an active partner in the multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Meaningful progress depends on strong collaboration, sustained commitment, and continued investment in specialist services. With the support of our partners and funders, we will continue working to improve safety, support recovery, and help break the cycle of abuse.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2023-2026

Progress in a challenging year

Year 3 of our strategy brought unprecedented demand, safeguarding pressures and funding uncertainty. While we were not able to deliver everything exactly as originally planned, we continued to make meaningful progress, protect service quality and build strong foundations for the future.

01 Raising Awareness

We continued to raise awareness of domestic abuse across Cumbria through awareness sessions, community events, employer engagement and partnership work.

Highlight
Our Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference was the first of its kind in Cumbria and helped strengthen our role as a local driver of awareness, learning and change.

02 Growing our Impact

We strengthened our counselling model, moving to a more structured, recovery-focused approach that gives clients a clearer journey and helps them recognise progress.

Highlight
We continued developing our Theory of Change and improving how we evidence outcomes, learning and service impact.

03 Breaking the Cycle of Abuse

694 people supported
523 adults supported
171 children and young people supported
4,197 adult counselling sessions
678 CYP one-to-one sessions
72 CYP group sessions

Our whole-family approach remains central to breaking the cycle of abuse now and for future generations.

04 Governance and Sustainability

Governance and leadership were central to our resilience. Difficult decisions were made to protect safety, quality and consistency of support.

Highlight
Trustee recruitment strengthened skills, oversight and challenge.

Looking Ahead, Building on Strategy

As we move beyond the current strategy period, our focus will be on building from the foundations created in Year 3. We will continue exploring opportunities to expand access into Millom and Carlisle, strengthen our Theory of Change and outcome measurement, grow our education and awareness work, and review our counselling model and wider service offer so people can access the right support at the right time.

A Strategy Under Pressure - Still Moving Forward

This year has tested us. Demand has increased, funding has remained uncertain, and difficult decisions have had to be made.
But we have continued.
The progress may not have been as fast or as visible as we hoped, but it has been real.
The Freedom Project Cumbria will continue working to break the cycle of abuse, support recovery and create safer futures for individuals, families and communities across Cumbria.

Our strategy remains relevant. The need remains urgent. Our commitment remains unchanged.

A snapshot of our year supporting adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse across Cumbria.

A YEAR OF IMPACT

171
Children & Young People

523
Adults

694
People directly supported

4,197 adult 1-1 counselling sessions

82.2%
Attendance rate

678 CYP 1-1 counselling sessions



100% of victims, CYP and Perpetrators reported....

I feel better I have someone to talk to



100% of victims and CYP reported....

I know what to do if I ever feel unsafe in the future

"My support has been amazing, to say the least. I have been helped and supported through my process and the support and help is still continuing. Brilliant service!"

Every figure reflects a life touched, a voice heard, and a journey supported.



OUR HIGHLIGHTS

01 A Counselling Model We Are Proud Of

This year, we are incredibly proud to have strengthened our counselling service by moving from an open-ended model to a more structured, recovery-focused approach. Counselling remains long-term, trauma-informed and centred around each client's needs. Clients are usually offered up to 24 sessions, with flexibility to extend where circumstances, level of trauma, risk or safety mean that further support is needed.

This change has given clients a clearer counselling journey, helping them to understand their support, set meaningful goals and recognise the progress they are making. Rather than limiting support, the new model has created greater focus, purpose and momentum, while still allowing space for compassion, flexibility and safety.

The impact has been outstanding. Clients have embraced the structure, reporting increased confidence, improved emotional wellbeing and a stronger sense of control over their recovery. We are seeing amazing outcomes and are proud that this change is helping survivors feel empowered, supported and able to move forward at their own pace.

This change reflects the heart of our work: listening, learning and continually improving so that victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive support that is safe, purposeful and genuinely life-changing. It also means we can help more people, plan ahead more effectively, and respond to changing levels of demand, including pressures on waiting lists.

02 Strengthened Governance, Leadership and Partnership Support

This year, we received visible and meaningful support from key partners and supporters, including BECBC, David Allen and Josh MacAlister, helping to raise the profile of our work and strengthen confidence in the charity.

We also strengthened our governance by directly advertising and recruiting to address identified skills gaps on our Board of Trustees, ensuring stronger oversight, experience and challenge.

The year further demonstrated the excellence of our charity leadership. Safeguarding concerns were raised and managed correctly, and following a challenging period, the organisation recovered from the need to temporarily close referrals, moving forward with greater stability, learning and resilience.



OUR HIGHLIGHTS

03

Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference

Our conference was the first of its kind in Cumbria, bringing people together to share learning, raise awareness and strengthen partnerships. The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) spoke at the event, and we were proud to become EIDA members, further strengthening our commitment to supporting workplaces and communities to respond effectively to domestic abuse. It was a powerful and inspiring day, creating space for important conversations and a shared commitment to positive change.

04

Proud winners of Diversity Event of the year at the Diverse Cumbria Awards

We were proud to win the Diversity Event of the Year Award in recognition of our conference. This achievement celebrates the importance of bringing people together to share learning, raise awareness and champion inclusion, equality and diversity across our community.

05

CEO attends King's Garden Party

Our CEO was honoured to attend the King's Garden Party in recognition of their contribution to Freedom Project Cumbria. This prestigious occasion was a proud moment for the organisation, reflecting the dedication, commitment and impact of our work in supporting people across our community.

06

Christmas Campaign

Through our Christmas campaign, we were able to support 49 families with gifts, bringing some festive joy to 99 children and young people. For the first time, we were also able to personally deliver gifts to 39 of our families, making this year's campaign especially meaningful.

CONFERENCE

In June 2025, in collaboration with the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA), the Freedom Project hosted Cumbria's first Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference focused on education, awareness and employer engagement.

The event was closely aligned with the UK Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, reinforcing the important role that employers, community organisations and local leaders play in identifying, responding to and preventing domestic abuse.

The conference brought together over 135 attendees from businesses and organisations operating across Cumbria, creating valuable opportunities for networking, partnership working and knowledge sharing. By engaging employers from a range of sectors, the event had the potential to indirectly reach and positively influence a significantly wider workforce through increased awareness, policy development and practical advice to implement workplace support.

A key strength of the conference was the collaboration with EIDA, enabling the event to incorporate national best practice and expertise into local delivery, ensuring that delegates were able to access latest guidance, practical resources and nationwide examples of effective employer-led approaches to tackling domestic abuse within the workplace.

The conference generated meaningful momentum beyond the event itself. Following attendance, a number of businesses signed up to engage further with EIDA, demonstrating a clear commitment to strengthening workplace responses to domestic abuse and embedding safer, more supportive working environments for employees.

Feedback from delegates highlighted increased confidence in recognising the signs of domestic abuse, understanding the responsibilities of employers and knowing how to signpost individuals to appropriate support. The event also strengthened relationships between organisations across the region, helping to build a more connected and informed network of support.

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COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Community fundraising has continued to go from strength to strength, with members of our local community raising money for us through events and challenges such as the Great North Run and the New Year's Eve Dip. Alongside this, staff and trustees have delivered talks and attended events to raise awareness of our work.





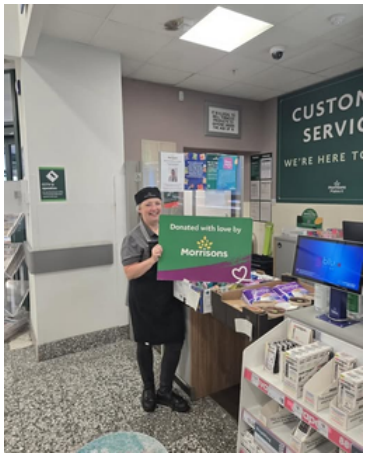








COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING



















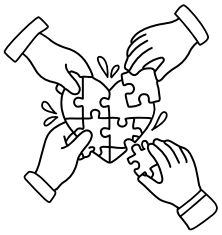






Services Delivered in 25-26

Engagement remained strong across all of our services this year, demonstrating both the dedication of our team and the confidence that individuals and families place in our support. Below are some of the key highlights from the year.

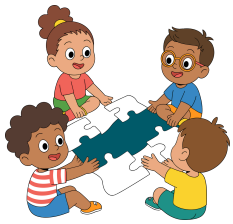


1:1 Counselling Sessions

Our one-to-one sessions remain a vital lifeline, with an 82.2% attendance rate demonstrating the continued commitment of those engaging in support.

82.2% attendance rate

Children & Young Persons Group



72 sessions delivered

Our weekly group provided a safe and supportive space where children and young people could share their experiences, build confidence, and connect with others.

Awareness Raising Sessions

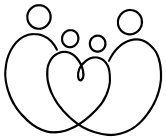


We delivered awareness raising workshops to build understanding, reduce stigma, and help communities, professionals, and individuals feel better equipped to respond to domestic abuse.



McKenzie Friend Service

Our McKenzie Friend Service has continued to go from strength to strength, providing support to 29 families facing complex legal challenges and indirectly benefiting 55 children.



55 children and young people benefited from healthier, happier home lives.

94% *of individuals referred to us actively engaged in support, demonstrating the value of accessible, responsive services that meet real need.*

Every number reflects a person, a story, and a step forward.

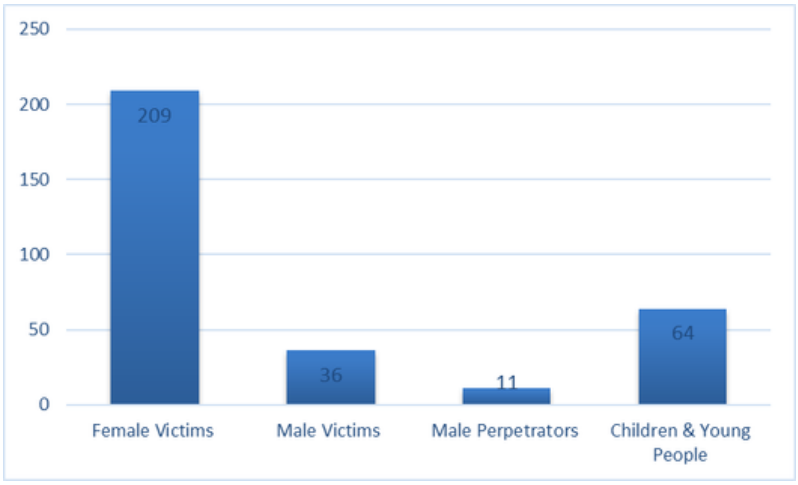
Now lets look at the numbers...

Due to unprecedented demand, we took the difficult decision to close our adult referral pathway from 26th January 2026. This was the first time in our 29-year history that we had taken such a step, and it was not a decision made lightly. In making this decision, our priority was to ensure that we could continue to deliver effective, trauma-informed and consistent support to those already accessing our service.

We were pleased to reopen referrals in April 2026.

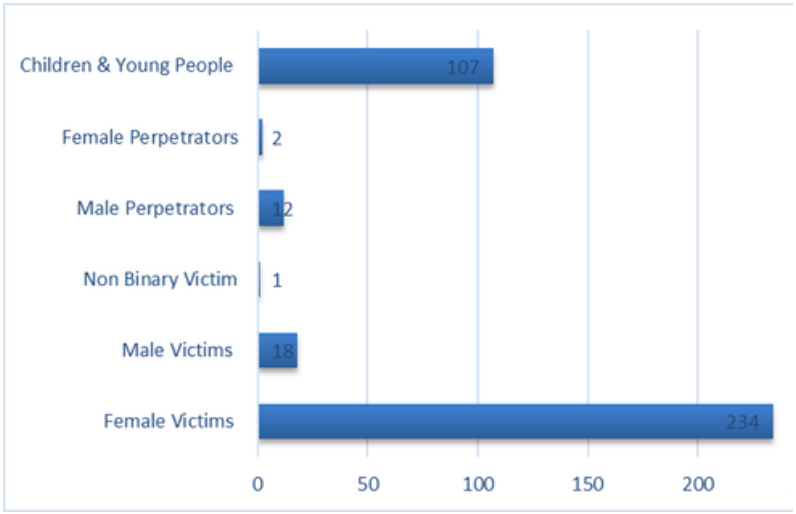
Clients Actively Engaging at 1st Apr 25

320 clients were actively engaging in service.



New referrals to Service 1st Apr 25th-31st Mar 26

374 people were referred who had never accessed our service before.

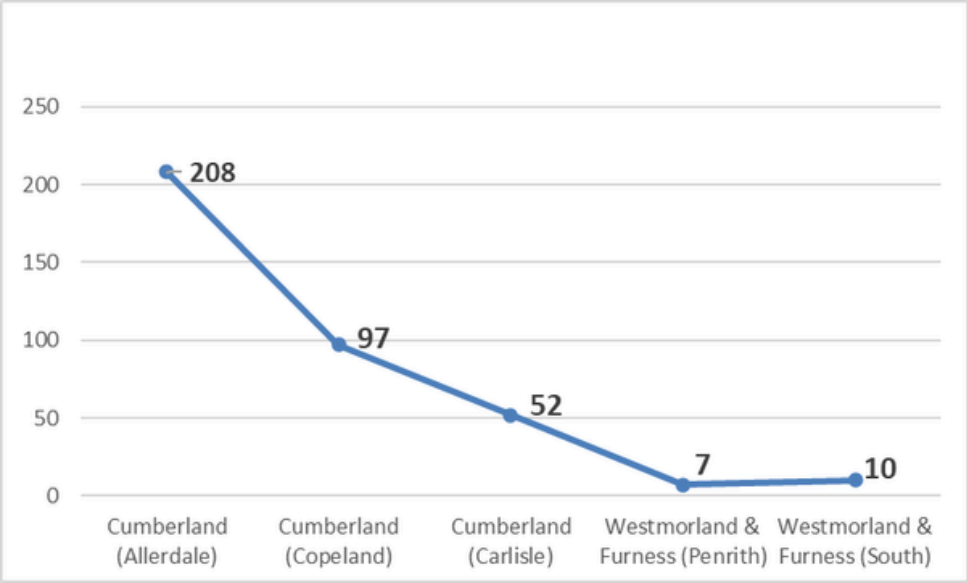


694 *people directly supported over the last 12 - month period*

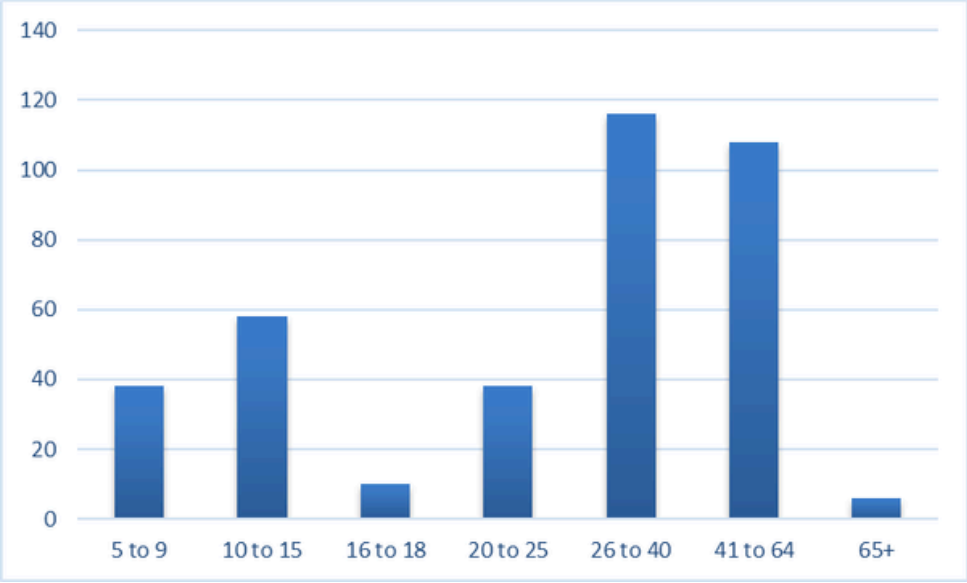
A closer look at new referrals

- We carried out a detailed review of referrals to build a clearer picture of referral patterns and identify opportunities to widen our reach.

Area of new referrals

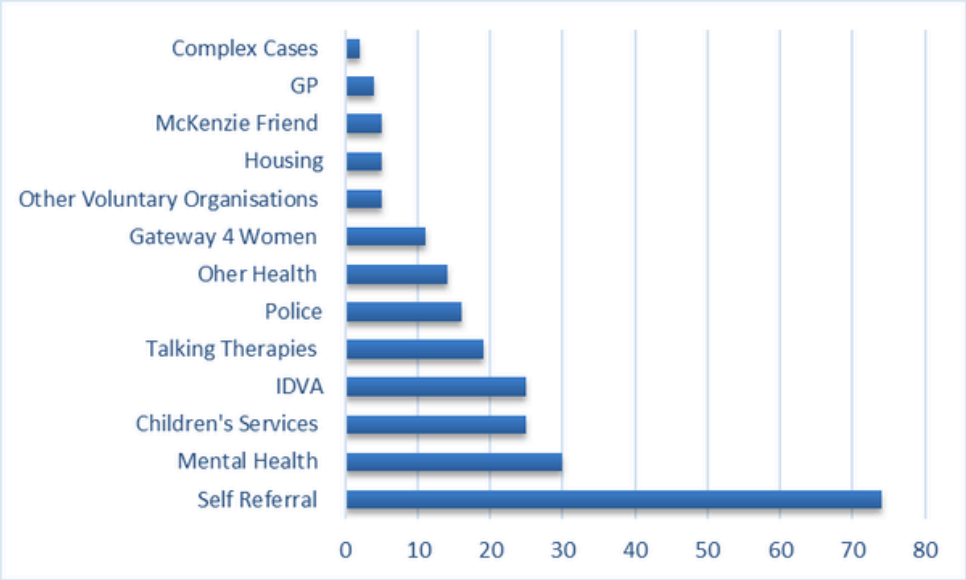


Age range of new referrals



Source of new referrals

Adult female victims inc 1 non binary victim (235)



14%
of female victims were aged 20-25

43%
of female victims were aged 26-40

40%
of female victims were aged 41-64

3%
of female victims were aged 65+

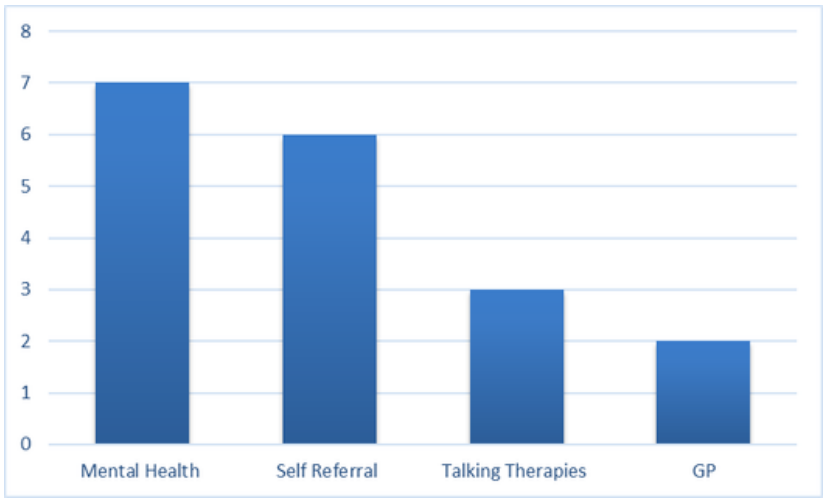
32% *of total referrals for female victims were from statutory services. 31% were self referrals.*

Adult Male Victims (18)

28%
of male victims were aged 26-40

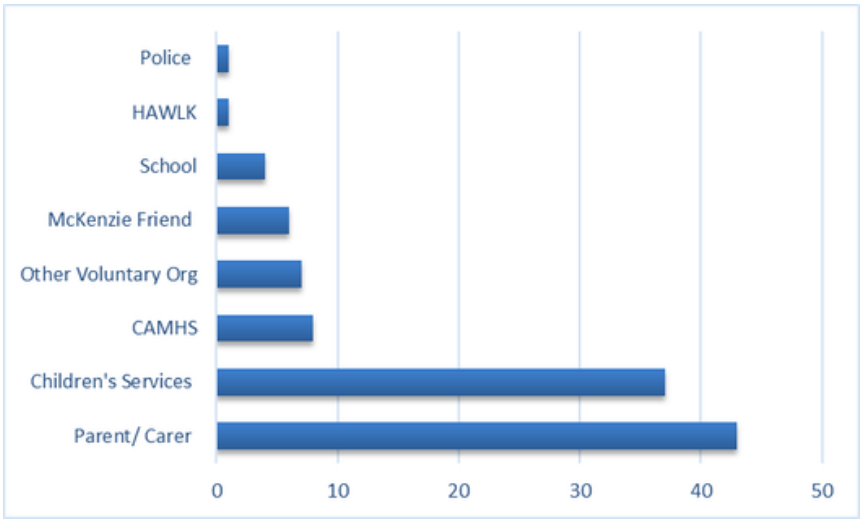
72%
of male victims were aged 41-64

50% *of total referrals for male victims were from Statutory Health Services*



CYP new referral breakdown

Children and Young People impacted (107)



Referrals for our Children and Young Person's provision increased by 35% on the previous 12 months

40% *of total referrals for CYP were from parents and guardians*

42%

of CYP were male

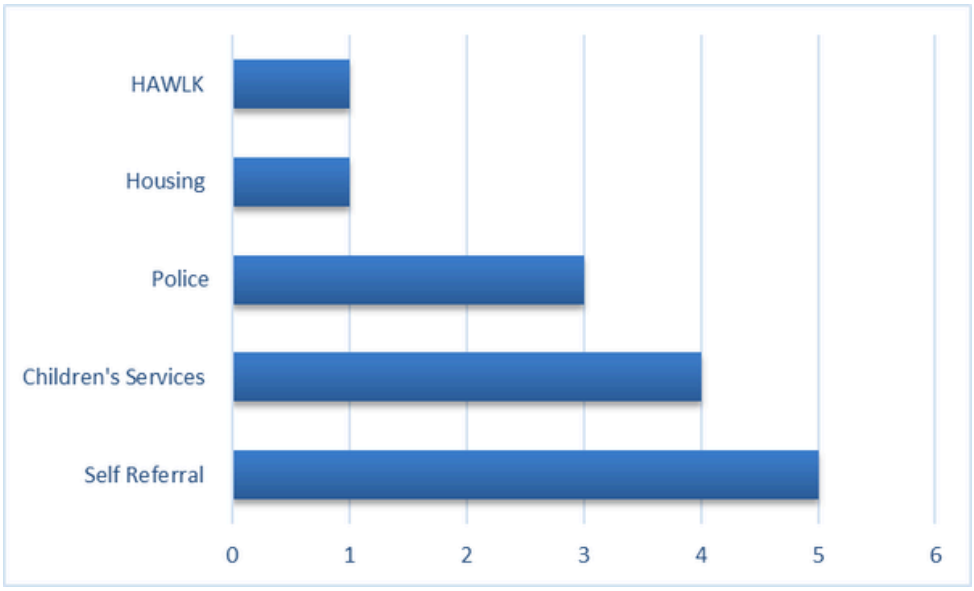
58%

of CYP were female

Referrals from Children's Services increased by 208% on the previous year

New referrals

Perpetrators (14)



22%

of perpetrators were aged 20-25

57%

of perpetrators were aged 26-40

23%

of perpetrators were aged 41-64

12

perpetrators were male

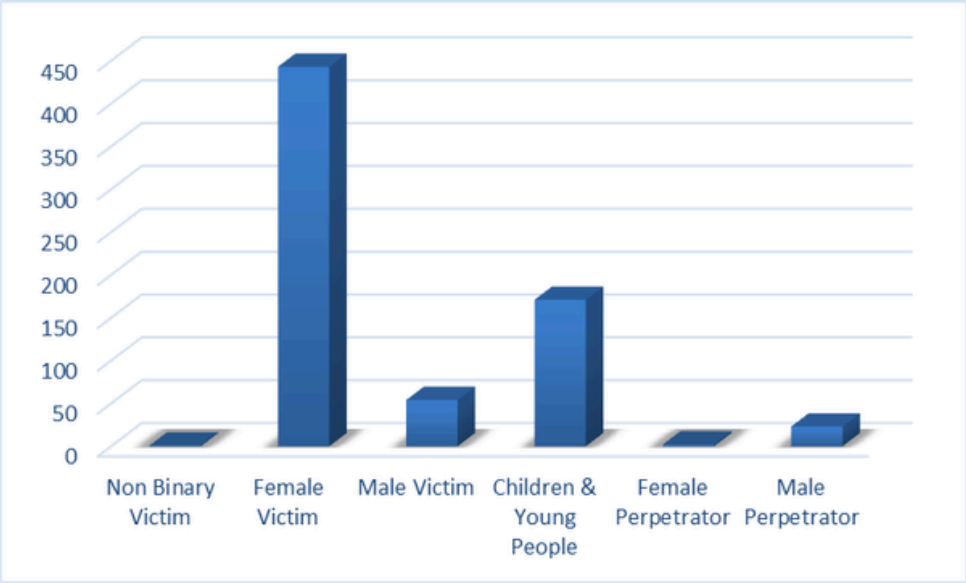
2

perpetrators were female

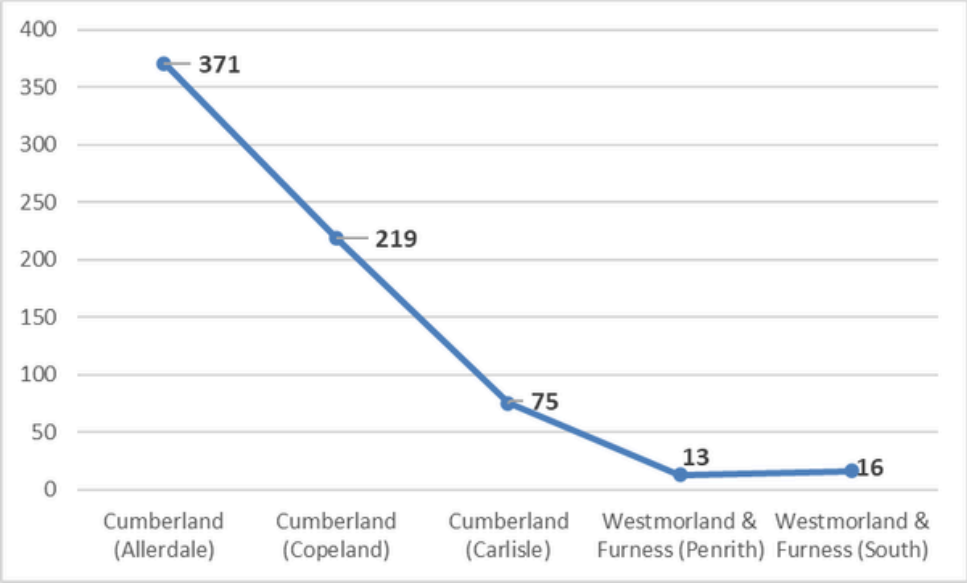
Summary of total clients supported

During the period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, we directly supported 694 people across Cumbria, including both existing clients actively engaging with our services and new referrals received during the year.

Gender & role



Area



A journey of change

How our support creates lasting impact



Access Support

Safe, confidental help when it's needed the most

"I began working with The Freedom Project during one of the most difficult periods of my life"



Build Trust

A compassionate, non-judgemental space to talk

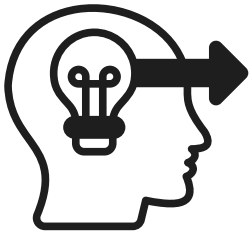
"I never felt judged and felt confortable throughout my time with you"



Recover & Grow

Improved confidence, mental health and well being

"I never used to leave the house now I go to shops, dog walks and get my nails done"



Move Forward

Safer futures and stronger, healthier relationships

"I am planning to get back into fitness and am looking forward to my future plans"

What changed this year

Our key outcomes at a glance



97% of victims,
74% of perpetrators
76% of CYP
reported.....

My mental health has improved



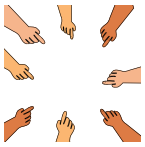
91% of victims,
83% of perpetrators,
68% of CYP
reported.....

My self confidence has improved



67% of victims,
85% of CYP
reported.....

I feel safe at home



100% of CYP
reported.....

I understand that the things that happen at home are not my fault



95% of victims,
100% of perpetrators,
91% of CYP
reported ....

I could fully open up to my counsellor



88% of victims,
80% of perpetrators,
86% of CYP
reported.....

Things are happier at home



84% of victims
reported....

I understand the signs for avoiding future abusive relationships



97% of victims,
100% of perpetrators
reported....

I understand the impact abuse had on myself and my family



100% of perpetrators
reported.....

I have a plan in place to manage my anger

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

You have truly made the world of difference to my life...thank you.

The way you do things is excellent and just what people need.

The support has been life changing, it is safe and genuine, the counselling is totally different from everything I have experienced before unless your trained in DA you cant get it. I will be forever grateful.

Thank you! My sons behavour has improved so much, he can process his behavours much better and I can see him stopping and thinking about his actions. You have not only helped my son but have been a great help for me too.

The service I received has been invalueable. Great communication from start to finish. I never felt judged and felt confortable throughout my time with you. I would highly reccomend peole to reach out to you.

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

The whole service helped me feel/think differently, it gave me the focus to get through the week. The way you do things is excellent and just what people need. I wouldn't be here without the service, I am planning to get back into fitness and am looking forward to my future plans. Thank you all.

I like everything about the Freedom Project, and nothing can make it better. You're pretty to whoever is reading this." – Child 11

I shout about the FP to everyone who will listen! Such a great experience and Lorna was amazing! I didn't realise I had childhood trauma but I did and I delt with it. I never used to leave the house now I go to shops, dog walks and get my nails done.

I began working with FP during one of the most difficult periods of my life. I am a survivor of domestic abuse. You stepped in when I felt overwhelmed and unheard. Through you support, guidance, and belief in me, I was able to begin rebuilding my life and had hope again. For the first time in a long while, I feel optimistic about the future. I have been able to heal, understand my situation more clearly, and move forward positively. The support I received has been life-changing, helping me rebuild my wellbeing, strengthen my resilience, and prepare for the future.

Because of you, the violence stopped.
Because of you, I found the courage to keep going.
Because of you, my kids and I are safer.

I want you to know that your presence changed the course of our lives. Not in theory. Not emotionally only. In real, tangible ways that matter.

Thank you for standing when it was hard.
Thank you for choosing me when it would have been easier not to.

Thank you for being human in a world that often isn't.

I will carry this gratitude with me always.

MCKENZIE FRIEND FEEDBACK

I don't think words will ever fully carry what I feel, but I need to try.

If it were not for you, the violence would never have stopped. That is the truth. Clear, simple, and heavy with meaning.

You stood with me when I was afraid, exhausted, and unsure if I had the strength to keep going. Step by step, you stayed. Every meeting. Every decision. Every moment where giving up felt easier than continuing.

You didn't just support me from a distance you walked beside me.

When the system felt overwhelming, when my head was full and my heart was breaking, you remained steady. Calm. Present. Unmoving. You carried strength when I had none left.

Emma, good morning. I Just wanted to tell you how amazing you are and without you I will still be stuck with my old life. From the bottom of my heart Thank You for everything you have done for us. We all appreciate it.

I appreciate your help, I will be ready for today because you helped me.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Case Study: “The Freedom Project Helped Me Find My Voice Again”

Without The Freedom Project, I do not believe I would be the woman I am today. Their support has, quite sincerely, kept me afloat and helped me begin to enjoy life again.

Nearly two years ago, the abuse I had experienced reached a crisis point and my world imploded. Although my ex-partner was no longer physically present in my life, I continued to live in fear. He had been granted bail with conditions, but when you have lived with the fear that your life could be taken, bail conditions can feel worthless. I had to learn to live with that fear every day, and that is where The Freedom Project came to my rescue.

When I first met my ex-partner, he swept me off my feet. I was a confident, independent woman with a career I loved, friends, hobbies and a love of travel. I could never have imagined that over the next nine years I would slowly begin changing how I behaved, what I said, what I wore, who I spoke to, and what I believed was acceptable in a relationship.

Over time, I became isolated from close friends and family. I gave up hobbies, lost confidence, and lived with criticism, gaslighting, guilt, threats and fear. I never knew when an outburst would come. I began compromising my work in an attempt to appease him, avoiding colleagues and situations that might lead to accusations or conflict. I was gradually losing my free will.

By the time I escaped, there were only glimpses left of the woman I had once been. I felt ashamed, frightened and trapped. The day I left, everything felt insurmountable. I simply wanted to go to sleep and never wake up.

The Freedom Project took me by the hand and helped me see that things were not impossible. With the right tools and support, they helped me take one step at a time. Their support helped me keep working, keep a roof over my head, and hold on to my dignity. Being able to provide for myself became an essential part of my recovery.

Recovery from trauma and abuse is like a rollercoaster. Even when the abuser is no longer there, the impact continues. Court hearings and the justice process can be traumatic and overwhelming. Just when you feel you are making progress, something outside your control can knock you sideways. The Freedom Project’s support changed my world for the better.

For months, I lived with fear in my own home. I checked wardrobes when I came in, feared leaving windows or doors open, and could not sleep upstairs in case I failed to hear him entering the house. I slept on a camp bed in the lounge until I found the courage to sleep in my bedroom again. It took months to piece me back together to the point where I could function independently, and The Freedom Project was instrumental in that process.
My ex-partner replaced friendship with isolation, light-heartedness with fear, and liberty with control. The emotional scars run deep and may take many years to heal, but he did not silence me.

With the support of The Freedom Project, I found the strength to stand in the witness box at Crown Court and speak the truth. I also read my own Victim Personal Statement at sentencing, something I so nearly lost the courage to do. Justice was eventually achieved, with a three-year custodial sentence passed.

Words will never be enough to thank The Freedom Project for helping to piece me back together. You helped shape the woman who found her strength, stood up, and allowed her voice to be heard.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Case Study: Rebuilding Hope, Stability and Purpose

I began working with The Freedom Project during one of the most difficult periods of my life. I am a survivor of domestic abuse, and I was going through a long, painful and deeply traumatic divorce. For many years, I was denied contact with my three young sons, which had a devastating impact on my mental health, stability and sense of purpose.

When I first came to The Freedom Project, I felt overwhelmed, isolated and unheard. I had lost confidence in myself and struggled to see a way forward. The effects of domestic abuse, separation from my children and the stress of the legal process had left me feeling powerless.

The Freedom Project stepped in at a time when I needed support the most. Through their kindness, guidance and belief in me, I began to rebuild my life emotionally and practically. I worked closely with a therapist, who helped me process the trauma I had experienced, and a McKenzie Friend, who supported me with practical guidance and reassurance throughout the legal process.

Having both emotional and practical support made a huge difference. I felt listened to, believed and treated with dignity. Over time, this helped me regain clarity, confidence and a sense of control over my life. Instead of feeling alone, I knew I had people in my corner who understood what I was going through and wanted to help me move forward.

The most significant change has been regaining my sense of self, hope and purpose. Before working with The Freedom Project, I felt as though I was simply surviving. Now, I feel more emotionally stable, resilient and able to cope with challenges that once felt impossible. I have started to believe in myself again and to look towards the future with optimism.

This change has been life-changing because it has allowed me to function again as a person and as a father. It has helped me make positive decisions, rebuild my wellbeing and prepare emotionally and practically for the possibility of reconnecting with my sons. Because of the continued support I have received, I am hopeful that I will be reunited with my children later this year.

The Freedom Project has not only helped change my circumstances; it has helped restore my belief that healing and justice are possible. Their support has given me strength, direction and the tools I need to continue rebuilding my life long-term. Most importantly, they have helped me believe that I can become the stable, present father my children deserve. The difference The Freedom Project has made is not temporary. It has laid the foundation for a healthier, stronger and more hopeful future.

LOOKING AHEAD 2026–27

As we move into 2026–27, our focus remains clear: to provide safe, effective, and accessible support for adults, children, and young people affected by domestic abuse across Cumbria. The rising demand seen this year has reinforced both the importance of our work and the need to grow sustainably.

Service priorities

We will continue to deliver high-quality, trauma-informed support that puts the needs of individuals and families first. Building on the progress made this year, we will keep strengthening our support pathways to improve safety, recovery, and long-term outcomes for those who access our services.

Growth plans

We want to grow our impact in a considered and sustainable way. This includes reviewing capacity, improving access to support, and using data, learning, and research to shape service development so that more people can receive the right help at the right time.

Partnership goals

Partnership working will remain central to our approach. We will continue to work closely with agencies across health, education, policing, social care, and the voluntary sector to strengthen referral pathways, improve collaboration, and provide more joined-up support for families across Cumbria.

Fundraising ambitions

Securing and maintaining a sustainable base of funding remains a key priority for the year ahead.

We will continue to build strong relationships with funders, partners, and local communities; while developing new opportunities for fundraising and income generation.

This is crucial to ensure we can provide continuous support to clients; whilst also growing our service provision to meet the increasing support needs of the families in Cumbria.

Governance and people

We will continue to invest in our staff, volunteers, and trustees, ensuring the organisation remains well-led, resilient, and fit for the future. By strengthening governance, supporting our team, and reviewing organisational capacity, we will build on this year's progress with confidence and purpose.

Together, with the support of our team, trustees, partners, funders, and community, we will continue working to improve safety, support recovery, and help break the cycle of abuse for individuals and families across Cumbria.

In 2026–27, we will continue to strengthen our services, act with compassion,
and create safer futures for communities across Cumbria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our fantastic staff, volunteers, and therapists for your dedication, compassion, and hard work this past year. Everything you have done, individually and together, has made a real difference, and we sincerely appreciate it.

To all our supporters and funders, thank you for standing beside us as we work to break the cycle of abuse in Cumbria. Your support makes a real difference.

THE FREEDOM PROJECT CUMBRIA



Annual Report

Breaking cycles, building futures, supporting Cumbria since 1997



31st March 2026

Registered Charity No: 1187765

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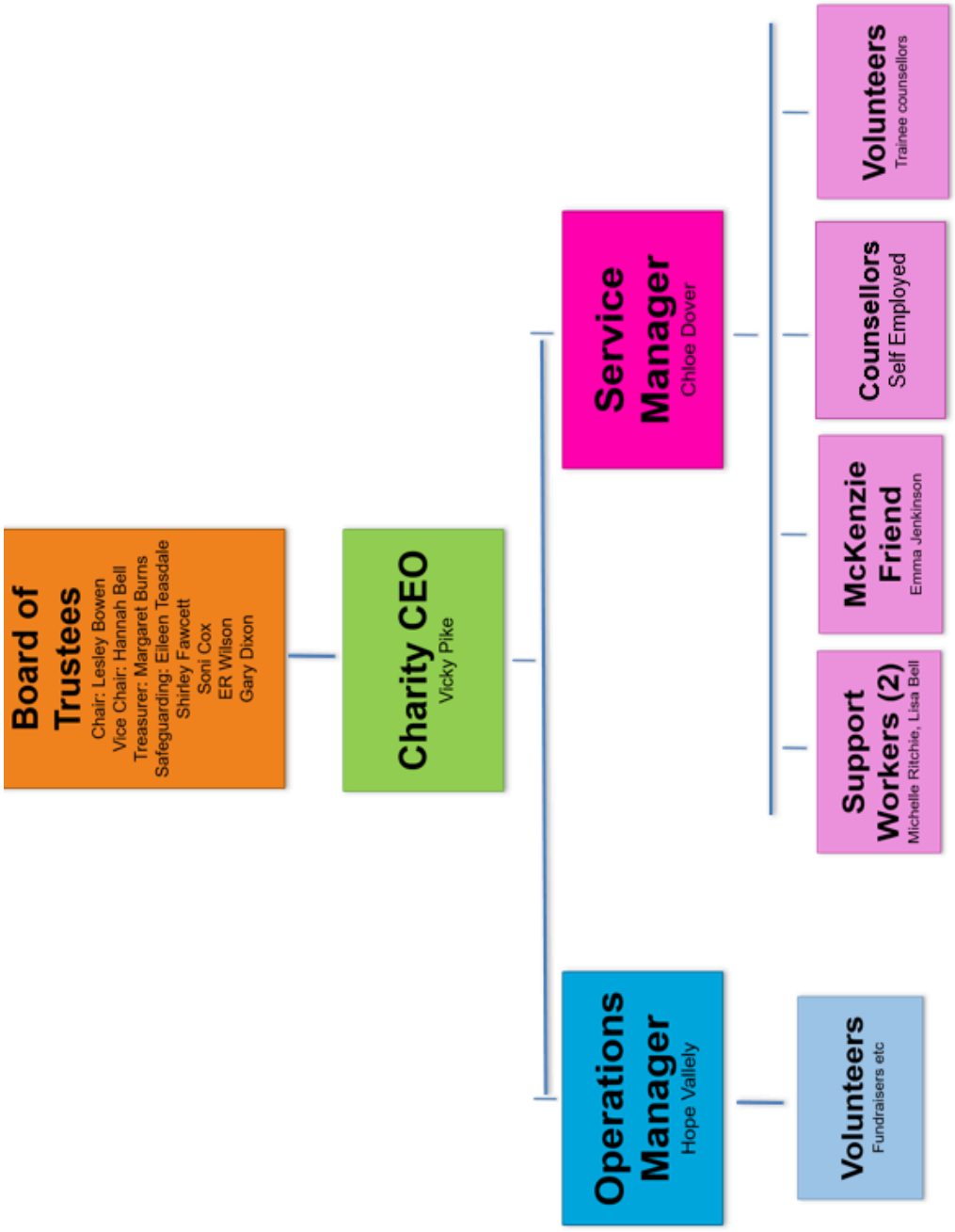
CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

Another highly successful but challenging year for the Freedom Project.
I have to start with an enormous thank you to all of our funders, our many and varied supporters, our volunteers, our team of trustees and of course our core delivery team. Together we have made a significant contribution to breaking the cycle of domestic abuse across Cumbria and beyond.
We have again stayed true to our strategic intent, focusing on raising awareness of the topic of Domestic Abuse and the impact it can have in the home, community and workplace and creating a service model which enables a greater reach to those impacted.
The demand for our services continues to grow year on year and this year we have directly supported around 700 people with one-to-one and group counselling. Regrettably, due to increasing demand and challenges over funding, we had to take the unprecedented step just after Christmas to temporarily close our waiting list. The team and trustees worked extremely hard to minimise the impact of this and, as a consequence, we have again revised our counselling model and attracted additional funders. We are pleased to say that our referral pathways have now reopened, and we are already seeing a rapid intake of new referrals, demonstrating the continuing and urgent need for our specialist support across the community.
Funding has been a constant challenge to us this year and we have had to work hard to maintain and seek new grant funding in order for us to continue to deliver our work. A key focus for us next year will be to seek a more stable funding platform, developing new opportunities for funding and income generation recognising the service we provide in the end to end support system for those impacted by Domestic Abuse.
We have continued to build on our strong governance arrangements with regular, structured trustee meetings enhanced by Sunday working sessions to focus on specific issues with a forward look ahead. We have recruited additional trustees with skills that complement the current team in order to provide succession planning capability.
We have become a member of EIDA who are an organisation which supports employers to develop a proactive, best practice environment for employees who are impacted by Domestic Abuse. With their support, in June 2025 we took the bold step of delivering a conference which was specifically aimed at local employers with the aim of raising awareness of domestic abuse, the impact it can have in the workplace and highlighting what a good employer response should look like. We had over 135 delegates at the conference representing 31 employers. It was a great success with tremendous feedback and the impact has been significant with a number of employers registering with EIDA and reaching out to us for support.
The topic of Domestic Abuse is no longer a behind closed door topic, the topic is subject to significant national attention and I'm proud to say that the Freedom Project stays ahead of this, well informed and responsive and ready for the year ahead.
Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report and supporting this vital agenda.

Lesley Bowen, Chair of the Trustees

Meet the dedicated team behind our mission, passionate individuals working together to create meaningful, lasting change.

OUR TEAM



MESSAGE FROM OUR TRUSTEES

WCDVS Trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year in March. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period.

Our Vision
To deliver effective, co-ordinated, responsive and accessible services for victims, perpetrators and children who are living with, or have lived with, domestic and sexual abuse. Breaking the cycle of abuse now and for future generations.

Our Mission
To help break the cycle of domestic abuse.

Our values

- We care
- We are inclusive
- We do not judge
- We take our responsibilities seriously
- We are client focussed
- We provide a safe space

THE FREEDOM PROJECT CUMBRIA

Our mission and values are at the heart of everything we do, guiding us to put our clients' needs first and go the extra mile to support lasting change in the lives of those affected by abuse.

OUR HISTORY

1997

This year marks 29 years since our charity was founded, born from a conversation around a kitchen table, where Carole Launder, Susan James, and Shirley Fawcett united around a shared commitment to create change and support victims of domestic abuse in a community with little to no provision.

Since those early beginnings, public understanding of domestic abuse has evolved significantly. What was once seen as a private issue, often ignored or dismissed as 'just a domestic', is now more widely recognised as a serious, complex societal problem.

Survivors have bravely shared their stories, legislation has progressed, and powerful portrayals in programmes such as EastEnders, Emmerdale, and The Archers have helped bring the issue into public consciousness.

The silence has been broken, and vital conversations are now taking place in homes, schools, workplaces, and across communities.

2026

Today, we deliver a free, holistic, family-focused service that supports adults, children and young people impacted by domestic abuse. This includes those who have experienced abuse, as well as those seeking support to address harmful behaviours.

Our service offers emotional and practical support, one-to-one interventions, counselling, and therapeutic group programmes. By working with the whole family, we aim to increase safety, support recovery, and enable lasting positive change.

Need across Cumbria remains significant, and referrals continue to rise. This underlines the ongoing importance of specialist, accessible support within local communities.

In response, we have continued to develop and strengthen our service so that more families can access the help they need, when they need it. We are proud to provide free, long-term, community-based support that responds to the realities families face today.

Alongside our direct work with families, we remain an active partner in the multi-agency response to domestic abuse. Meaningful progress depends on strong collaboration, sustained commitment, and continued investment in specialist services. With the support of our partners and funders, we will continue working to improve safety, support recovery, and help break the cycle of abuse.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2023-2026

Progress in a challenging year

Year 3 of our strategy brought unprecedented demand, safeguarding pressures and funding uncertainty. While we were not able to deliver everything exactly as originally planned, we continued to make meaningful progress, protect service quality and build strong foundations for the future.

01 Raising Awareness

We continued to raise awareness of domestic abuse across Cumbria through awareness sessions, community events, employer engagement and partnership work.

Highlight
Our Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference was the first of its kind in Cumbria and helped strengthen our role as a local driver of awareness, learning and change.

02 Growing our Impact

We strengthened our counselling model, moving to a more structured, recovery-focused approach that gives clients a clearer journey and helps them recognise progress.

Highlight
We continued developing our Theory of Change and improving how we evidence outcomes, learning and service impact.

03 Breaking the Cycle of Abuse

694 people supported
523 adults supported
171 children and young people supported
4,197 adult counselling sessions
678 CYP one-to-one sessions
72 CYP group sessions

Our whole-family approach remains central to breaking the cycle of abuse now and for future generations.

04 Governance and Sustainability

Governance and leadership were central to our resilience. Difficult decisions were made to protect safety, quality and consistency of support.

Highlight
Trustee recruitment strengthened skills, oversight and challenge.

Looking Ahead, Building on Strategy

As we move beyond the current strategy period, our focus will be on building from the foundations created in Year 3. We will continue exploring opportunities to expand access into Millom and Carlisle, strengthen our Theory of Change and outcome measurement, grow our education and awareness work, and review our counselling model and wider service offer so people can access the right support at the right time.

A Strategy Under Pressure - Still Moving Forward

This year has tested us. Demand has increased, funding has remained uncertain, and difficult decisions have had to be made.
But we have continued.
The progress may not have been as fast or as visible as we hoped, but it has been real.
The Freedom Project Cumbria will continue working to break the cycle of abuse, support recovery and create safer futures for individuals, families and communities across Cumbria.

Our strategy remains relevant. The need remains urgent. Our commitment remains unchanged.

A snapshot of our year supporting adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse across Cumbria.

A YEAR OF IMPACT

171
Children & Young People

523
Adults

694
People directly supported

4,197 adult 1-1 counselling sessions

82.2%
Attendance rate

678 CYP 1-1 counselling sessions



100% of victims, CYP and Perpetrators reported....

I feel better I have someone to talk to



100% of victims and CYP reported....

I know what to do if I ever feel unsafe in the future

"My support has been amazing, to say the least. I have been helped and supported through my process and the support and help is still continuing. Brilliant service!"

Every figure reflects a life touched, a voice heard, and a journey supported.



OUR HIGHLIGHTS

01 A Counselling Model We Are Proud Of

This year, we are incredibly proud to have strengthened our counselling service by moving from an open-ended model to a more structured, recovery-focused approach. Counselling remains long-term, trauma-informed and centred around each client's needs. Clients are usually offered up to 24 sessions, with flexibility to extend where circumstances, level of trauma, risk or safety mean that further support is needed.

This change has given clients a clearer counselling journey, helping them to understand their support, set meaningful goals and recognise the progress they are making. Rather than limiting support, the new model has created greater focus, purpose and momentum, while still allowing space for compassion, flexibility and safety.

The impact has been outstanding. Clients have embraced the structure, reporting increased confidence, improved emotional wellbeing and a stronger sense of control over their recovery. We are seeing amazing outcomes and are proud that this change is helping survivors feel empowered, supported and able to move forward at their own pace.

This change reflects the heart of our work: listening, learning and continually improving so that victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive support that is safe, purposeful and genuinely life-changing. It also means we can help more people, plan ahead more effectively, and respond to changing levels of demand, including pressures on waiting lists.

02 Strengthened Governance, Leadership and Partnership Support

This year, we received visible and meaningful support from key partners and supporters, including BECBC, David Allen and Josh MacAlister, helping to raise the profile of our work and strengthen confidence in the charity.

We also strengthened our governance by directly advertising and recruiting to address identified skills gaps on our Board of Trustees, ensuring stronger oversight, experience and challenge.

The year further demonstrated the excellence of our charity leadership. Safeguarding concerns were raised and managed correctly, and following a challenging period, the organisation recovered from the need to temporarily close referrals, moving forward with greater stability, learning and resilience.



OUR HIGHLIGHTS

03

Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference

Our conference was the first of its kind in Cumbria, bringing people together to share learning, raise awareness and strengthen partnerships. The Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) spoke at the event, and we were proud to become EIDA members, further strengthening our commitment to supporting workplaces and communities to respond effectively to domestic abuse. It was a powerful and inspiring day, creating space for important conversations and a shared commitment to positive change.

04

Proud winners of Diversity Event of the year at the Diverse Cumbria Awards

We were proud to win the Diversity Event of the Year Award in recognition of our conference. This achievement celebrates the importance of bringing people together to share learning, raise awareness and champion inclusion, equality and diversity across our community.

05

CEO attends King's Garden Party

Our CEO was honoured to attend the King's Garden Party in recognition of their contribution to Freedom Project Cumbria. This prestigious occasion was a proud moment for the organisation, reflecting the dedication, commitment and impact of our work in supporting people across our community.

06

Christmas Campaign

Through our Christmas campaign, we were able to support 49 families with gifts, bringing some festive joy to 99 children and young people. For the first time, we were also able to personally deliver gifts to 39 of our families, making this year's campaign especially meaningful.

CONFERENCE

In June 2025, in collaboration with the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA), the Freedom Project hosted Cumbria's first Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Conference focused on education, awareness and employer engagement.

The event was closely aligned with the UK Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, reinforcing the important role that employers, community organisations and local leaders play in identifying, responding to and preventing domestic abuse.

The conference brought together over 135 attendees from businesses and organisations operating across Cumbria, creating valuable opportunities for networking, partnership working and knowledge sharing. By engaging employers from a range of sectors, the event had the potential to indirectly reach and positively influence a significantly wider workforce through increased awareness, policy development and practical advice to implement workplace support.

A key strength of the conference was the collaboration with EIDA, enabling the event to incorporate national best practice and expertise into local delivery, ensuring that delegates were able to access latest guidance, practical resources and nationwide examples of effective employer-led approaches to tackling domestic abuse within the workplace.

The conference generated meaningful momentum beyond the event itself. Following attendance, a number of businesses signed up to engage further with EIDA, demonstrating a clear commitment to strengthening workplace responses to domestic abuse and embedding safer, more supportive working environments for employees.

Feedback from delegates highlighted increased confidence in recognising the signs of domestic abuse, understanding the responsibilities of employers and knowing how to signpost individuals to appropriate support. The event also strengthened relationships between organisations across the region, helping to build a more connected and informed network of support.

.



COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Community fundraising has continued to go from strength to strength, with members of our local community raising money for us through events and challenges such as the Great North Run and the New Year's Eve Dip. Alongside this, staff and trustees have delivered talks and attended events to raise awareness of our work.





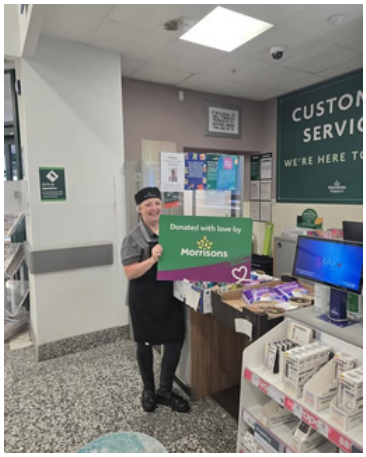








COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING



















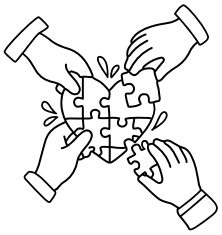






Services Delivered in 25-26

Engagement remained strong across all of our services this year, demonstrating both the dedication of our team and the confidence that individuals and families place in our support. Below are some of the key highlights from the year.

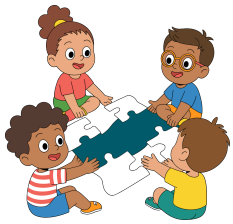


1:1 Counselling Sessions

Our one-to-one sessions remain a vital lifeline, with an 82.2% attendance rate demonstrating the continued commitment of those engaging in support.

82.2% attendance rate

Children & Young Persons Group



72 sessions delivered

Our weekly group provided a safe and supportive space where children and young people could share their experiences, build confidence, and connect with others.

Awareness Raising Sessions

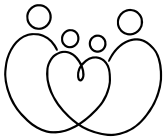


We delivered awareness raising workshops to build understanding, reduce stigma, and help communities, professionals, and individuals feel better equipped to respond to domestic abuse.



McKenzie Friend Service

Our McKenzie Friend Service has continued to go from strength to strength, providing support to 29 families facing complex legal challenges and indirectly benefiting 55 children.



55 children and young people benefited from healthier, happier home lives.

94% *of individuals referred to us actively engaged in support, demonstrating the value of accessible, responsive services that meet real need.*

Every number reflects a person, a story, and a step forward.

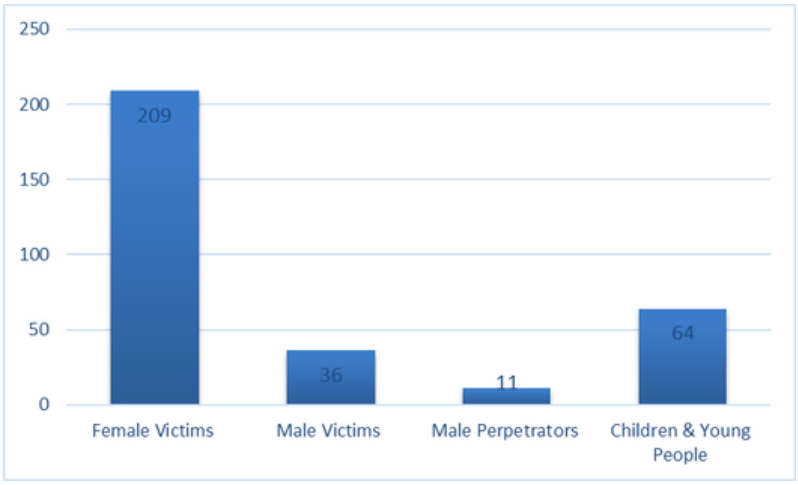
Now lets look at the numbers...

Due to unprecedented demand, we took the difficult decision to close our adult referral pathway from 26th January 2026. This was the first time in our 29-year history that we had taken such a step, and it was not a decision made lightly. In making this decision, our priority was to ensure that we could continue to deliver effective, trauma-informed and consistent support to those already accessing our service.

We were pleased to reopen referrals in April 2026.

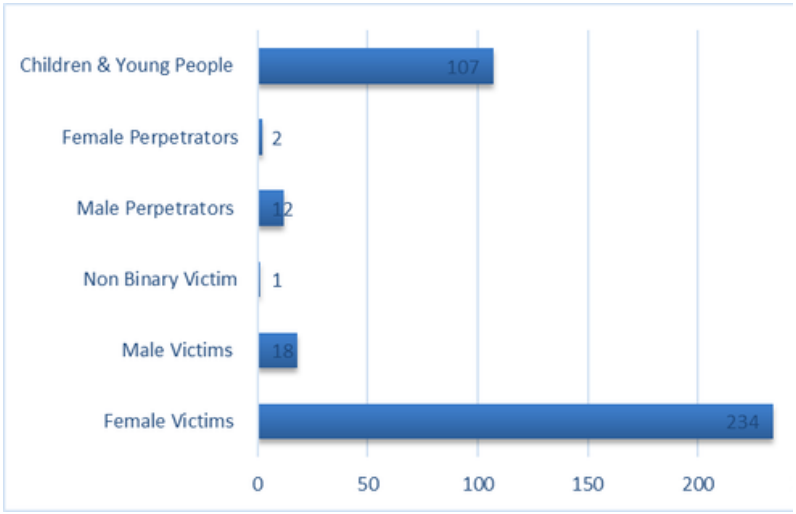
Clients Actively Engaging at 1st Apr 25

320 clients were actively engaging in service.



New referrals to Service 1st Apr 25th-31st Mar 26

374 people were referred who had never accessed our service before.

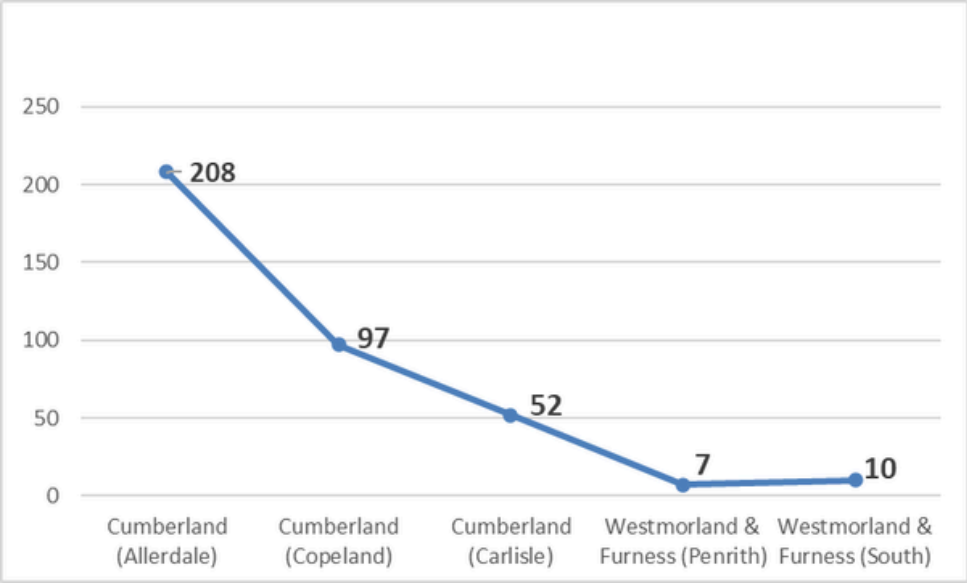


694 *people directly supported over the last 12 - month period*

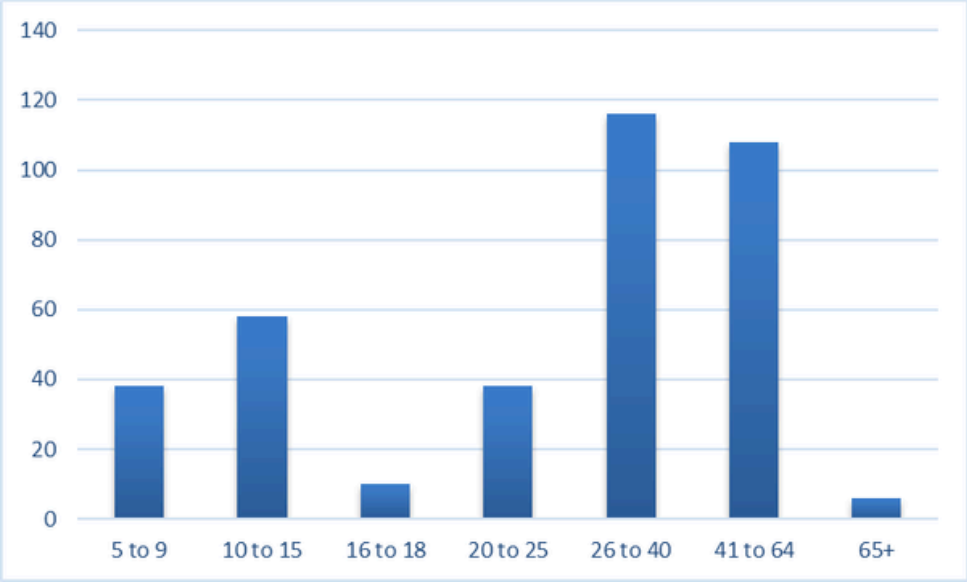
A closer look at new referrals

- We carried out a detailed review of referrals to build a clearer picture of referral patterns and identify opportunities to widen our reach.

Area of new referrals

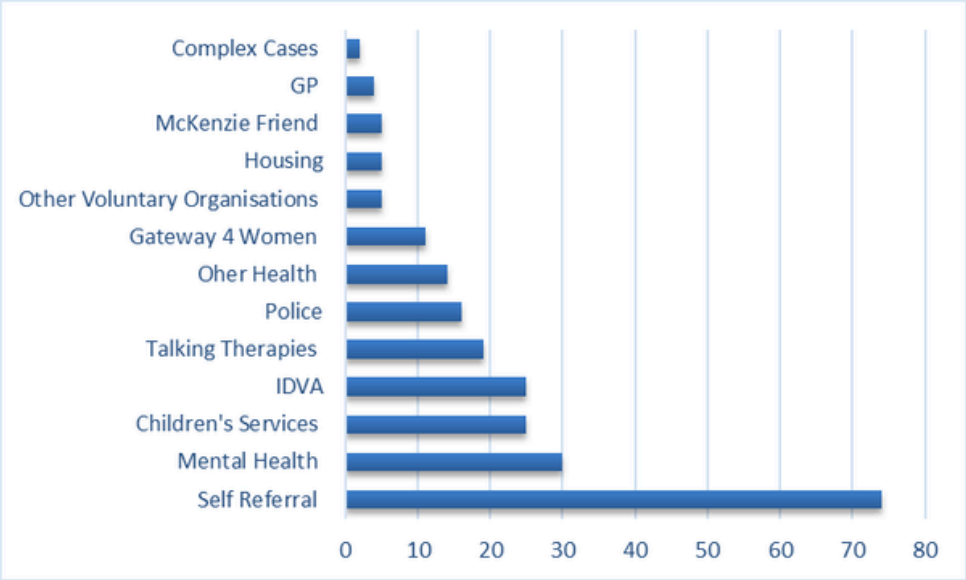


Age range of new referrals



Source of new referrals

Adult female victims inc 1 non binary victim (235)



14%
of female victims were aged 20-25

43%
of female victims were aged 26-40

40%
of female victims were aged 41-64

3%
of female victims were aged 65+

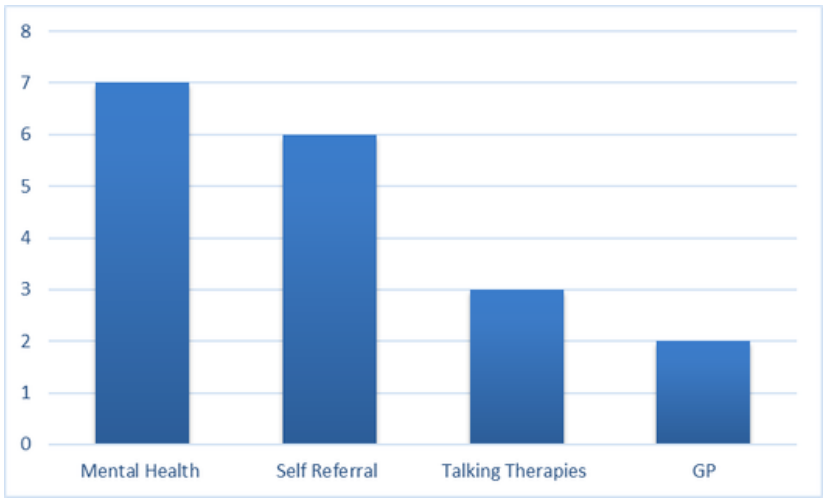
32% *of total referrals for female victims were from statutory services. 31% were self referrals.*

Adult Male Victims (18)

28%
of male victims were aged 26-40

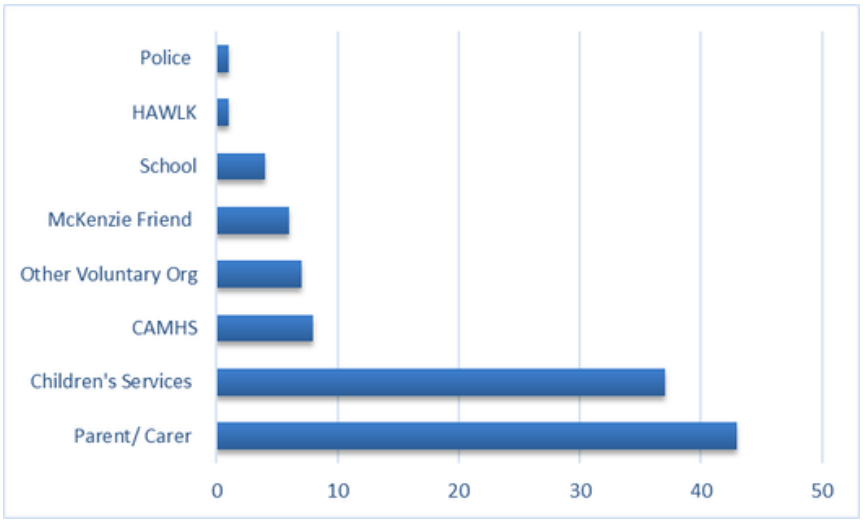
72%
of male victims were aged 41-64

50% *of total referrals for male victims were from Statutory Health Services*



CYP new referral breakdown

Children and Young People impacted (107)



Referrals for our Children and Young Person's provision increased by 35% on the previous 12 months

40% *of total referrals for CYP were from parents and guardians*

42%

of CYP were male

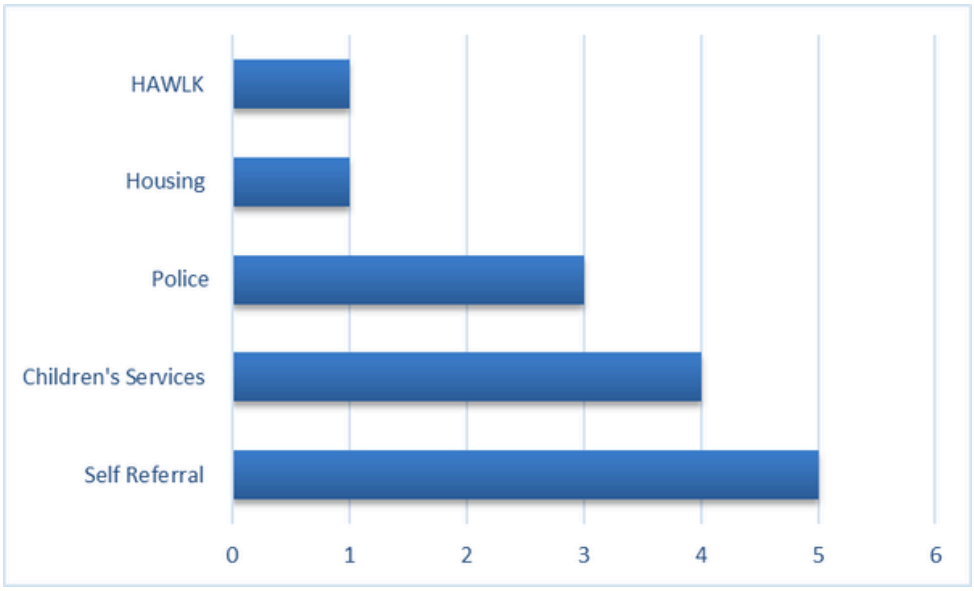
58%

of CYP were female

Referrals from Children's Services increased by 208% on the previous year

New referrals

Perpetrators (14)



22%

of perpetrators were aged 20-25

57%

of perpetrators were aged 26-40

23%

of perpetrators were aged 41-64

12

perpetrators were male

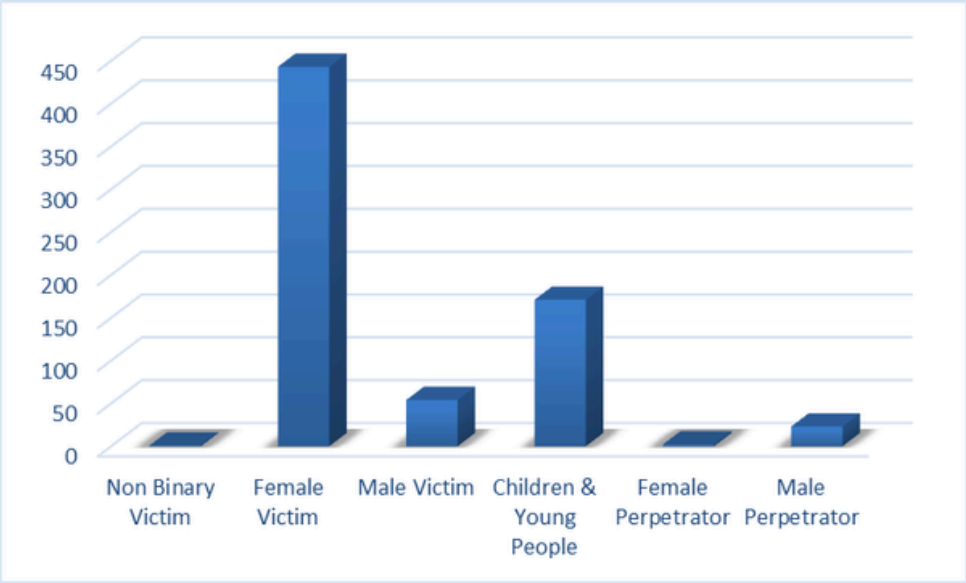
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perpetrators were female

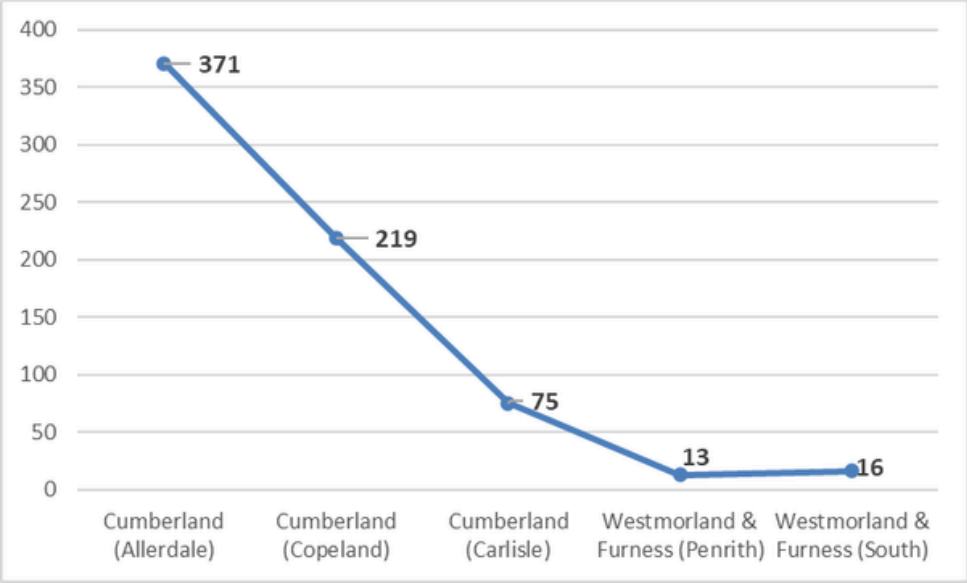
Summary of total clients supported

During the period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, we directly supported 694 people across Cumbria, including both existing clients actively engaging with our services and new referrals received during the year.

Gender & role



Area



A journey of change

How our support creates lasting impact



Access Support

Safe, confidental help when it's needed the most

"I began working with The Freedom Project during one of the most difficult periods of my life"



Build Trust

A compassionate, non-judgemental space to talk

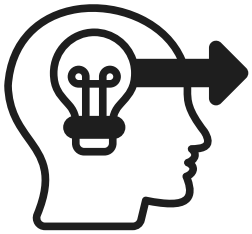
"I never felt judged and felt confortable throughout my time with you"



Recover & Grow

Improved confidence, mental health and well being

"I never used to leave the house now I go to shops, dog walks and get my nails done"



Move Forward

Safer futures and stronger, healthier relationships

"I am planning to get back into fitness and am looking forward to my future plans"

What changed this year

Our key outcomes at a glance



97% of victims,
74% of perpetrators
76% of CYP
reported.....

My mental health has improved



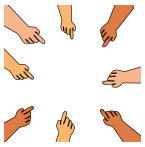
91% of victims,
83% of perpetrators,
68% of CYP
reported.....

My self confidence has improved



67% of victims,
85% of CYP
reported.....

I feel safe at home



100% of CYP
reported.....

I understand that the things that happen at home are not my fault



95% of victims,
100% of perpetrators,
91% of CYP
reported ....

I could fully open up to my counsellor



88% of victims,
80% of perpetrators,
86% of CYP
reported.....

Things are happier at home



84% of victims
reported....

I understand the signs for avoiding future abusive relationships



97% of victims,
100% of perpetrators
reported....

I understand the impact abuse had on myself and my family



100% of perpetrators
reported.....

I have a plan in place to manage my anger

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

You have truly made the world of difference to my life...thank you.

The way you do things is excellent and just what people need.

The support has been life changing, it is safe and genuine, the counselling is totally different from everything I have experienced before unless your trained in DA you cant get it. I will be forever grateful.

Thank you! My sons behavour has improved so much, he can process his behavours much better and I can see him stopping and thinking about his actions. You have not only helped my son but have been a great help for me too.

The service I received has been invalueable. Great communication from start to finish. I never felt judged and felt confortable throughout my time with you. I would highly reccomend peole to reach out to you.

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

The whole service helped me feel/think differently, it gave me the focus to get through the week. The way you do things is excellent and just what people need. I wouldn't be here without the service, I am planning to get back into fitness and am looking forward to my future plans. Thank you all.

I like everything about the Freedom Project, and nothing can make it better. You're pretty to whoever is reading this." – Child 11

I shout about the FP to everyone who will listen! Such a great experience and Lorna was amazing! I didn't realise I had childhood trauma but I did and I delt with it. I never used to leave the house now I go to shops, dog walks and get my nails done.

I began working with FP during one of the most difficult periods of my life. I am a survivor of domestic abuse. You stepped in when I felt overwhelmed and unheard. Through you support, guidance, and belief in me, I was able to begin rebuilding my life and had hope again. For the first time in a long while, I feel optimistic about the future. I have been able to heal, understand my situation more clearly, and move forward positively. The support I received has been life-changing, helping me rebuild my wellbeing, strengthen my resilience, and prepare for the future.

Because of you, the violence stopped.
Because of you, I found the courage to keep going.
Because of you, my kids and I are safer.

I want you to know that your presence changed the course of our lives. Not in theory. Not emotionally only. In real, tangible ways that matter.

Thank you for standing when it was hard.
Thank you for choosing me when it would have been easier not to.

Thank you for being human in a world that often isn't.

I will carry this gratitude with me always.

MCKENZIE FRIEND FEEDBACK

I don't think words will ever fully carry what I feel, but I need to try.

If it were not for you, the violence would never have stopped. That is the truth. Clear, simple, and heavy with meaning.

You stood with me when I was afraid, exhausted, and unsure if I had the strength to keep going. Step by step, you stayed. Every meeting. Every decision. Every moment where giving up felt easier than continuing.

You didn't just support me from a distance you walked beside me.

When the system felt overwhelming, when my head was full and my heart was breaking, you remained steady. Calm. Present. Unmoving. You carried strength when I had none left.

Emma, good morning. I Just wanted to tell you how amazing you are and without you I will still be stuck with my old life. From the bottom of my heart Thank You for everything you have done for us. We all appreciate it.

I appreciate your help, I will be ready for today because you helped me.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Case Study: “The Freedom Project Helped Me Find My Voice Again”

Without The Freedom Project, I do not believe I would be the woman I am today. Their support has, quite sincerely, kept me afloat and helped me begin to enjoy life again.

Nearly two years ago, the abuse I had experienced reached a crisis point and my world imploded. Although my ex-partner was no longer physically present in my life, I continued to live in fear. He had been granted bail with conditions, but when you have lived with the fear that your life could be taken, bail conditions can feel worthless. I had to learn to live with that fear every day, and that is where The Freedom Project came to my rescue.

When I first met my ex-partner, he swept me off my feet. I was a confident, independent woman with a career I loved, friends, hobbies and a love of travel. I could never have imagined that over the next nine years I would slowly begin changing how I behaved, what I said, what I wore, who I spoke to, and what I believed was acceptable in a relationship.

Over time, I became isolated from close friends and family. I gave up hobbies, lost confidence, and lived with criticism, gaslighting, guilt, threats and fear. I never knew when an outburst would come. I began compromising my work in an attempt to appease him, avoiding colleagues and situations that might lead to accusations or conflict. I was gradually losing my free will.

By the time I escaped, there were only glimpses left of the woman I had once been. I felt ashamed, frightened and trapped. The day I left, everything felt insurmountable. I simply wanted to go to sleep and never wake up.

The Freedom Project took me by the hand and helped me see that things were not impossible. With the right tools and support, they helped me take one step at a time. Their support helped me keep working, keep a roof over my head, and hold on to my dignity. Being able to provide for myself became an essential part of my recovery.

Recovery from trauma and abuse is like a rollercoaster. Even when the abuser is no longer there, the impact continues. Court hearings and the justice process can be traumatic and overwhelming. Just when you feel you are making progress, something outside your control can knock you sideways. The Freedom Project’s support changed my world for the better.

For months, I lived with fear in my own home. I checked wardrobes when I came in, feared leaving windows or doors open, and could not sleep upstairs in case I failed to hear him entering the house. I slept on a camp bed in the lounge until I found the courage to sleep in my bedroom again. It took months to piece me back together to the point where I could function independently, and The Freedom Project was instrumental in that process.
My ex-partner replaced friendship with isolation, light-heartedness with fear, and liberty with control. The emotional scars run deep and may take many years to heal, but he did not silence me.

With the support of The Freedom Project, I found the strength to stand in the witness box at Crown Court and speak the truth. I also read my own Victim Personal Statement at sentencing, something I so nearly lost the courage to do. Justice was eventually achieved, with a three-year custodial sentence passed.

Words will never be enough to thank The Freedom Project for helping to piece me back together. You helped shape the woman who found her strength, stood up, and allowed her voice to be heard.

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Case Study: Rebuilding Hope, Stability and Purpose

I began working with The Freedom Project during one of the most difficult periods of my life. I am a survivor of domestic abuse, and I was going through a long, painful and deeply traumatic divorce. For many years, I was denied contact with my three young sons, which had a devastating impact on my mental health, stability and sense of purpose.

When I first came to The Freedom Project, I felt overwhelmed, isolated and unheard. I had lost confidence in myself and struggled to see a way forward. The effects of domestic abuse, separation from my children and the stress of the legal process had left me feeling powerless.

The Freedom Project stepped in at a time when I needed support the most. Through their kindness, guidance and belief in me, I began to rebuild my life emotionally and practically. I worked closely with a therapist, who helped me process the trauma I had experienced, and a McKenzie Friend, who supported me with practical guidance and reassurance throughout the legal process.

Having both emotional and practical support made a huge difference. I felt listened to, believed and treated with dignity. Over time, this helped me regain clarity, confidence and a sense of control over my life. Instead of feeling alone, I knew I had people in my corner who understood what I was going through and wanted to help me move forward.

The most significant change has been regaining my sense of self, hope and purpose. Before working with The Freedom Project, I felt as though I was simply surviving. Now, I feel more emotionally stable, resilient and able to cope with challenges that once felt impossible. I have started to believe in myself again and to look towards the future with optimism.

This change has been life-changing because it has allowed me to function again as a person and as a father. It has helped me make positive decisions, rebuild my wellbeing and prepare emotionally and practically for the possibility of reconnecting with my sons. Because of the continued support I have received, I am hopeful that I will be reunited with my children later this year.

The Freedom Project has not only helped change my circumstances; it has helped restore my belief that healing and justice are possible. Their support has given me strength, direction and the tools I need to continue rebuilding my life long-term. Most importantly, they have helped me believe that I can become the stable, present father my children deserve. The difference The Freedom Project has made is not temporary. It has laid the foundation for a healthier, stronger and more hopeful future.

LOOKING AHEAD 2026–27

As we move into 2026–27, our focus remains clear: to provide safe, effective, and accessible support for adults, children, and young people affected by domestic abuse across Cumbria. The rising demand seen this year has reinforced both the importance of our work and the need to grow sustainably.

Service priorities

We will continue to deliver high-quality, trauma-informed support that puts the needs of individuals and families first. Building on the progress made this year, we will keep strengthening our support pathways to improve safety, recovery, and long-term outcomes for those who access our services.

Growth plans

We want to grow our impact in a considered and sustainable way. This includes reviewing capacity, improving access to support, and using data, learning, and research to shape service development so that more people can receive the right help at the right time.

Partnership goals

Partnership working will remain central to our approach. We will continue to work closely with agencies across health, education, policing, social care, and the voluntary sector to strengthen referral pathways, improve collaboration, and provide more joined-up support for families across Cumbria.

Fundraising ambitions

Securing and maintaining a sustainable base of funding remains a key priority for the year ahead.

We will continue to build strong relationships with funders, partners, and local communities; while developing new opportunities for fundraising and income generation.

This is crucial to ensure we can provide continuous support to clients; whilst also growing our service provision to meet the increasing support needs of the families in Cumbria.

Governance and people

We will continue to invest in our staff, volunteers, and trustees, ensuring the organisation remains well-led, resilient, and fit for the future. By strengthening governance, supporting our team, and reviewing organisational capacity, we will build on this year's progress with confidence and purpose.

Together, with the support of our team, trustees, partners, funders, and community, we will continue working to improve safety, support recovery, and help break the cycle of abuse for individuals and families across Cumbria.

In 2026–27, we will continue to strengthen our services, act with compassion,
and create safer futures for communities across Cumbria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our fantastic staff, volunteers, and therapists for your dedication, compassion, and hard work this past year. Everything you have done, individually and together, has made a real difference, and we sincerely appreciate it.

To all our supporters and funders, thank you for standing beside us as we work to break the cycle of abuse in Cumbria. Your support makes a real difference.