

Registered Company Number: 03171880 (England and Wales)
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**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023 FOR
WOMENS AID FEDERATION OF ENGLAND**

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Women's Aid Annual report 2022-23

Introduction

This has been another strong year in ambition to end violence against women and girls for Women's Aid Federation of England. The trustees of Women's Aid Federation of England, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Reference and administrative information set out on pages one and two form part of this report. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard 102. The board members including the chair and treasurer are appointed by the board. Each appointment is in accordance with the Women's Aid Memorandum and Articles of Association. Women's Aid is required to have a minimum of three board members and a maximum of 12.

Board members are required to act in the best interests of Women's Aid Federation of England and for the benefit of the members as a whole. The board is ultimately responsible for all that Women's Aid does. In order for Women's Aid to perform effectively, day-to-day operational management of the charity is delegated to the Chief Executive.

The board has added a system of subcommittees, to its structures for strategic input. The subcommittees' membership includes board members and relevant staff, as well as appointed external committee members from member organisations and other external experts. These subcommittee members act in an advisory capacity only, but support and strengthen the ability of the board.

The board retains the following duties to:

- ensure that Women's Aid fulfils its charitable objectives;
- determine Women's Aid's overall strategic direction within resource limits;
- monitor the performance of the Chief Executive and her team, holding them to account for the exercise of their delegated powers and delivery against plans and budgets;
- promote and protect Women's Aid's values, integrity, and reputation;
- ensure high standards of governance that command the confidence of all of Women's Aid's staff and stakeholders;

- act with independence and in the interest of WAFE at all times, exercise independent judgement, reasonable care, skill and diligence; and
- promote the success of Women's Aid for the benefit of members by considering the:
 - impact of Women's Aid's actions on the interests of employees;
 - need to foster business relationships with customers/suppliers;
 - impact of Women's Aid's actions on the community and environment.

In fulfilling these duties, the board pays particular attention to:

- maximising the impact and effectiveness of Women's Aid;
- consulting, listening and responding to members;
- identifying and managing risks and harnessing opportunities;
- ensuring prudent use of funds restricted and unrestricted; and
- ensuring that Women's Aid acts fairly, responsibly, transparently, proportionately and ethically.

Board appointments, induction and training

The board appoints new trustees through a transparent and inclusive recruitment and selection process where board members must be aged over 16 years, meet the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of Women's Aid and commit to upholding the organisation's mission and values. The board has undertaken a governance review this year, see governance.

On appointment, new board members receive an induction to their role with Women's Aid. Information supplied includes a copy of Women's Aid's Memorandum and Articles of Association, a copy of Women's Aid's latest reports and statement of accounts and an induction pack. The board recognises a new trustee needs ongoing support to be effective and will follow the six key principles of good governance, as set out in the Women's Aid's Governance Framework. In order to ensure all trustees receive ongoing support the board will, where realistic: - have a mentoring programme; - undertake training; - take part in trustee or specialist networks; - have appraisals; - review their performance; and - undertake benchmarking.

Trustees can expect to learn, develop, and be able to take on different responsibilities within the board. The board will be continuing its governance effectiveness review over the next year to ensure it is following good governance practice appropriate to the size, scale and nature of the charity's operations.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Women's Aid will invite all full members and board members to the AGM. Copies of the annual report and accounts will be sent to the board members and made available to all other members at the meeting venue. The notice calling an AGM will be sent to all members 21 days before the meeting date.

The notice will set out:

- the date and time of the meeting;
- the venue;
- the details of the business to be considered (which will probably be mandatory items at this stage as members' resolutions may not have been received); and
- an invitation to propose resolutions.

Introductions from our Chief executive, chair and patron

Farah Nazeer, Chief executive, Women's Aid

As I reflect on the past year, I feel proud of everything we've accomplished while acknowledging everything we have yet to do. From working with our members and lobbying government to raising life-saving funds and campaigning for change, we have never lost sight of women affected by male violence and the vital services that support them. We thank every single person and organisation that has come together to make this progress possible.

Our forces joined, we have remained unwavering in our commitment to building a world where women and children are free from harm. It is this relentlessness that has resulted in the Emergency Fund for survivors of domestic abuse – a change that we, along with many other organisations, tirelessly campaigned for. Over the year, we also relaunched our Survivor's Handbook, enabling women to access practical support, and we have helped more survivors find safety through what has been an undoubtedly challenging year. The effects of the cost of living crisis is still being felt by survivors and services all over the country – underscoring the importance of supporting women as they recover and creating a world where they never have to suffer from domestic abuse in the first place.

Our members are the beating heart of our Federation, day in and day out these determined powerful frontline services provide lifesaving and life changing support and care for women and children across the country. Without them - the implications for survivors of domestic abuse do not bear thinking about. However, these precious services are still severely underfunded, and their immense value still not recognised as it should be in many local settings. Some commissioners favour the poorer cheaper though ultimately less efficient less effective non-specialist providers. This is significantly more acute for those services working to serve black and minoritised survivors - most of whom do not receive any commissioned funding. All at Women's Aid pledge to fight and reverse this trend.

With that being said, it feels like progress is being made. Our Federation is undaunted and strong. Together with our members we are challenging and changing the perception of domestic abuse. It has been powerful to see more people discussing violence against women in the media and within institutions. Through our World Cup campaign, which highlights how existing domestic abuse can increase during big sporting moments, our flagship mental health campaign, which has reached its final year, and our progressive work with children and young people, we are stopping abuse before it starts and challenging the misogyny that underpins it.

Next year, Women's Aid will commemorate 50 years of supporting survivors. As well as reflecting on how far we have come, we are more ambitious than ever in how far we have yet to go. To that end,

we will continue to campaign and challenge violence against women, making it a national priority and keeping survivors at the heart of everything we do.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the whole team at Women's Aid, our members, our board who volunteer so much of themselves and their time, to our Treasurer Lindsey Wishart for wisdom, expertise and support, and to our Chair Sarah Hill, for her kindness, guidance and leadership.

In truth, my hope is to one day be in a place where we needn't share nor need the ambitions of Women's Aid. This would symbolise that we have progressed to a world where domestic abuse is no longer tolerated and no longer prescient. Until then, let's keep listening, let's keep learning and let's keep prioritising the safety of women and girls.

Sarah Hill, Chair

As Chair of the Board of Trustees of Women's Aid, I would like to thank the team for their hard work and our CEO Farah for her leadership over the past year, where so much has been achieved against a backdrop of so many challenges. The current cost of living crisis means that the federation has to support a membership of local domestic abuse services that have faced countless increases to costs, at a time where donors have less money themselves to support with. I am proud that we have been able to secure and launch the Emergency Fund, which enables many women to leave abusive partners, when financially this may not have been an option before.

As a national network of specialist domestic abuse charities, we are able to share knowledge and expertise, to help each other, and can campaign together for the resources we need to meet survivors' needs. Our federation is supportive, powerful and effective. We give our huge thanks to those who have aided us over the past year, and made our lifesaving work possible – from Live Chat and No Woman Turned Away project, to our campaigns and training, and preventative work with children and young people. Together, we can create a world where survivors can get the support they need today, and where domestic abuse becomes completely intolerable across society.

Julie Walters, Patron

As a Patron of Women's Aid, I would like to thank everyone who has made our lifesaving work possible this year. Without supporters, funders and fundraisers, we quite simply could not do the work that we do. So many people do not understand domestic abuse, because it is something that is still too often hidden away behind closed doors, in homes and in relationships where those affected feel unable to tell anybody what is happening. Survivors of domestic abuse can feel shame, fear and be worried about being judged if they confide that they are being abused by a

partner. They may be frightened that their partner will kill them if they try to leave. With three women being killed every fortnight by a current or former partner, that is a very real fear, and safety planning is an important part of our work for this specific reason.

Survivors of domestic abuse are everywhere across our society, and it could not be more important to not only let them know how to access support, but that they are understood and believed. I am very proud to be a Patron of this important charity and thank everyone across the country for working so hard to help end domestic abuse.

Impact and priorities

Putting survivors at the heart of policy

Women's Aid brings together survivors and policymakers to ensure that survivors' experiences are understood, and their needs are central to funding and policy decisions. During the year 2022-23 our work had some notable policy successes as a result of our campaigning including a specific focus on services supporting survivors of domestic abuse in the £100 million committed by government to charities in the 2023 budget.

We successfully campaigned for an Emergency Fund for survivors of domestic abuse. Following nine months of campaigning, Women's Aid was awarded a £300,000 pilot fund from the Home Office to help survivors flee abuse. Survivors referred to the fund received £250–£500 one-off payments.

Our campaign included working in partnership with other charities including Surviving Economic Abuse, as well as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, to highlight the severe impacts of the crisis on our sector. It also included an event in Parliament convening 39 MPs and direct engagement with Home Office ministers.

In June-July 2022, during the height of the cost-of-living crisis, we conducted a survey with women who were experiencing domestic abuse or who had experienced domestic abuse in the past 12 months. This research found that 73% of women living with and having financial links with their abuser struggled to leave the abuser due to the cost-of-living crisis, saying it either prevented them from leaving or made it harder to leave.

Our research¹ also demonstrated the devastating impact that the rising costs of living are having on specialist domestic abuse services – our survey with members found that one in five (20%) services had staff who were using foodbanks, and 67% said that if this crisis continues without intervention, they would have to turn survivors away from existing support, reduce the support available or close all together. This rose to 85% of services run by and for Black and minoritised women.

Experts by experience

We have continued to bring our 'Experts by Experience' network of survivors together this year. The network provides support, skills and opportunity to ensure women's lived experience informs local practice and national decision-making.

The diverse community of survivors has shared their views, learnt new skills and connected with other women to promote empowerment and recovery from domestic abuse. Their voices and expertise have influenced national decision makers, including during parliamentary meetings, the development of legislation and at our Public Policy Conference.

¹ See "Cost of Living and the impact on survivors of domestic abuse" and "Cost of Living and the impact on domestic abuse support services" on <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/evidence-hub/>

The network has provided their expertise from lived experience to Cafcass' Domestic Abuse Learning and Improvement Board, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Perpetrator Strategic Reference Group and Ministry of Justice focus groups' on the Victims and Prisoners Bill.

Engaging decision makers

We responded to 13 consultations and inquiries from government, parliament and statutory agencies. As a result we secured changes such as improvements to the statutory guidance on coercive and controlling behaviour, stronger government regulation of 'rogue' housing providers targeting survivors, and our key calls referenced in the Justice Committee's pre-legislative report on the Victims and Prisoners Bill. We contributed to partnership working within the violence against women and girls, housing and homeless and health sectors by collaborating with sector partners.

We represented Women's Aid on 16 different government and agency advisory groups, ensuring survivors and specialist services' views are heard in policy making and development.

We had a strong presence at both the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences, with three over-subscribed fringe events covering the Victims and Prisoners Bill, the 'Come Together' campaign and the need for a strategic health response to domestic abuse. Speakers included now-Treasury Minister James Cartlidge MP, the former Government VAWG Advisor Nimco Ali OBE, then-Home Office Minister Mims Davies MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities Anneliese Dodds, VAWG policing lead DCC Maggie Blyth and online influencer Malin Andersson.

Our event at the Conservative Party Conference with Melanie Brown MBE resulted in front page coverage in the Sun newspaper, on the same day that Liz Truss's Government U-turned on its economic policy.

Improving mental health responses to domestic abuse

Our flagship 'Deserve to be Heard' campaign continues to focus on improving the mental health response to survivors of domestic abuse and will conclude in September 2023. The campaign has featured spotlights on the experiences of Deaf survivors, older survivors and LGBT+ survivors and produced our survivor-led film, 'The Road We've Had to Walk' which launched in Parliament to showcase what survivors want to see from mental health services.

The campaign successfully influenced the content of key government strategies including the Women's Health Strategy and the Home Office's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, which provides millions of pounds of support to improve service provision for survivors and address abusers' behaviours. The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan committed to:

- £7.5 million over 3 years to enable healthcare professionals to better identify, refer and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- £15.7 million of the proposed funding each year to be spent on community-based services supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence

The Women's Health Strategy, published in 2022, listed mental health and violence against women and girls as two out of six priorities and led to the appointment of the first Women's Health Ambassador.

The campaign also focused on securing positive impact for survivors of domestic abuse through the Health and Care Act 2022. While we did not manage to achieve our aim of ensuring a VAWG

specialist was included on every new Integrated Care Board (ICB) across the country, the legislation does require that these new Boards include a mental health expert, which is a critical step to ensuring effective health commissioning for survivors in England. Following our subsequent engagement with NHS England, we also managed to ensure that the new guidance for ICBs explicitly references domestic abuse - essentially holding local health bodies responsible for meeting the needs of survivors.

Our open letter to the Women's Health Ambassador was signed by 478 #DeserveToBeHeard campaigners, leading to her speaking at our Parliamentary film launch and prompting Parliamentary Champion sign-up, ensuring survivors voices are heard within government.

'Deserve to be Heard' has continued to raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on the mental health of survivors throughout the media. Coverage included an interview with our Ambassador Alice Liveing in Grazia magazine, commentary from survivors on politics.co.uk and our Chief Executive, Farah Nazeer in Marie Claire calling out the misogyny that underpins the abuse women experience.

- 2,018 people are now #DeserveToBeHeard campaigners
- 1,059 campaigners signed our cost of living pledge with 518 writing to their MPs to commit to supporting survivors through the cost-of-living crisis.
- 36 MPs have pledged to 'hear' the voices of survivors, including one Government Minister.
- The campaign is supported by seven Parliamentary Champions, across three UK political parties (Conservative, Labour and Green), many of whom who have gone on to attend and speak at Women's Aid events and frequently raise questions in Parliament about domestic abuse and mental health.

Women's Aid evidence base

We led the way in evidence and data on domestic abuse. Over 21,000 people have downloaded our reports and publications, sharing the latest research on survivor experience and our approach to ending domestic abuse. During the year we published four reports to strengthen our evidence base which are highlighted throughout this report. Women's Aid research is published on our website at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/evidence-hub/>

Creating lifelines for survivors

Women's Aid provides support and advice to women and their children through our lifesaving package of online support services:

- **Live Chat:** our team of support workers was contacted over 16,200 times on Women's Aid Live Chat. Of these contacts, more than 87% were with survivors, while others included concerned friends and family, or professionals working with survivors.
- **Email support:** we responded to more than 10,300 helpline emails. Over 78% were from survivors. 1,800 professionals, friends and family members concerned about survivors they know were also supported.
- **Professionals service:** our dedicated service for professionals supporting survivors was contacted by 480 professionals and the opening hours of this service have been extended to cover Monday to Friday 10am-4pm.

- **Survivors' Forum:** our Survivors' Forum supports over 13,500 members and had more than 1.85 million page views across the forum last year. In our annual evaluation survey, 98% of respondents said the forum has helped them to have a better understanding of domestic abuse and 96% feel more supported after joining.
- **The Survivor's Handbook:** our vital resource, 'The Survivor's Handbook', provides practical support and information for women experiencing domestic abuse. Since its relaunch, it has been viewed 61,000 times and our additional language audio versions have been listened to 12,000 times. We also launched our signposting and support page, the accessibility toolbar and a new search function enabling more survivors to access our lifesaving services.

Rail to Refuge

Our Rail to Refuge scheme is being expanded to other forms of transport to allow more survivors to flee abuse. 70% of survivors using the scheme stated that they wouldn't have travelled unless the ticket was paid for.

No Woman Turned Away project

The No Woman Turned Away (NWTa) project provides dedicated support and telephone advocacy to women experiencing domestic abuse who face barriers in accessing a refuge space or safe accommodation. In 2022, the No Woman Turned Away project received 394 referrals and 254 women completed the programme. We opened two new referral pathways and hosted workshops and webinars for members to find out more about the support the team offer.

Research report: "Nowhere to Turn 2022"

Our annual evaluation report for the No Woman Turned Away Project was published in June 2022. Findings showed that at the end of support from the NWTa team, 25% of women were accommodated in a suitable refuge space and 19% were accommodated in emergency accommodation. When asked about their sense of safety, 55% of the survivors who gave us their views on this said there'd been a significant (45%) or some (10%) improvement in their safety after working with the project:

- 254 women engaged with the project and finished support between 1st January 2022 and the 31st December 2022
- 64 women (25.2%) were accommodated in a refuge
- 49 women (19.3%) were found emergency accommodation

Delivering recovery programmes for survivors

- 3,000 survivors attended our Power to Change recovery programme, receiving support on understanding their experiences of abuse and for the start of their journey to recovery.
- 1,134 children and young people were supported to understand the abuse that they had witnessed/experienced via our Helping Hands programme.

Changing attitudes

During the year Women's Aid campaigns, training offer and media work aimed at shifting attitudes towards domestic abuse.

Come Together to End Domestic Abuse

Our 'Come Together to End Domestic Abuse' campaign launched in summer 2022 at our annual National Conference, with a video featuring our ambassadors and supporters. #EndAbuseTogether www.womensaid.org.uk/endabusetogether

We shared 'Come Together' at political party conferences, with our Patron, Melanie Brown MBE, in partnership with the Sun, and at our own Public Policy Conference. The Sun launched 'Speak Out Against Domestic Abuse' in support of the campaign reaching over 86 million people.

Our Patron, Melanie Brown MBE, spoke out on key issues affecting survivors on our Speak Out Against Domestic Abuse panel at our Public Policy Conference with the Leader of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer (pictured above, with Victoria Derbyshire and Women's Aid Chief Executive, Farah Nazeer). 140 people attended, including survivors, member services, corporates, and senior representatives from across government, parliament and statutory services. The panel made headlines across national papers, reaching 1.7 million people.

Research report: "Come Together To End Domestic Abuse: A survey of UK attitudes to domestic abuse 2022"

As part of Women's Aid's Come Together campaign, we worked with M&C Saatchi as their charity partner to develop a unique survey into UK adults' attitudes to domestic abuse. The aim was to design a piece of formative research to gather insight on attitudes towards domestic abuse in order to identify a target audience and inform our campaign. Including key points:

- What makes domestic abuse tolerable?
- Why this is the case (underpinning attitudes/priorities)?
- How important is domestic abuse in relation to other issues politically (e.g. Health/economy)?

We see in this research a correlation between tolerance of abusive behaviors and traditional ideas of relationship roles and the belief that society does not bear responsibility for domestic abuse. The findings show a continued prevalence of harmful myths around domestic abuse, including victim blaming and the myth of the perfect victim. We also found that significant portions of the adult population are still able to excuse abuse behavior if, for example, there is an apology or mental health issue or if they perceive the victim to bear responsibility.

He's Coming Home

'He's Coming Home', our advertising campaign made in collaboration with House337, has had 23 million views on TikTok, a reach of 560,000 on Instagram and 1.1 million impressions on Twitter.

The advert won one Silver and two Bronze British Arrows advertising campaign awards. The advert highlights that domestic abuse can become more frequent or severe during big football tournaments, including the Men's FIFA World Cup. The campaign had an enormous impact, reaching over 12 billion people with the average number of page views on the Women's Aid support page rising 26.1% during the period of the Men's World Cup compared to the annual average.

On matchdays, the average number of users on the Survivors' Forum was 11.7% higher compared to the annual average, and usage continued rising into the day after matchdays to 13.9% above average, showing that the signposting was continuing to have an effect.

Football United Against Domestic Abuse

Our 'Football United Against Domestic Abuse' campaign has led to commentary in the press about violence against women and the footballing community, resulting in front page stories in both The Sun and The Mirror and increasing understanding of domestic abuse and the role everyone must play to end domestic abuse.

- 12 billion reach
- +26.1% page views on the Women's Aid support page during the period of the World Cup
- +11.7% number of users on the Survivors' Forum

New TikTok channel launched

Building on our huge social media influence and reach, Women's Aid launched its TikTok channel in November 2022, to coincide with '16 Days of Activism'. We have had 24.7 million views so far, sharing information on coercive control and early warning signs with millions of people. The purpose of the channel is to reach the younger audiences who engage with TikTok, but who are absent from our other social media strongholds.

Within two weeks of the launch, we gained more than 11,000 followers, demonstrating the appetite for education around domestic abuse with this age group. When we relaunch our microsites for young women and children and young people, TikTok will be a key tool to promote the sites and their content.

Raising journalistic standards when reporting domestic abuse

Women's Aid has worked with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to develop guidance for journalists as well as contributing to the IPSO podcast on best practice when reporting domestic abuse.

Our media guidance now features on IPSO's website and is highlighted on the Editors' Codebook. It ensures that journalists understand the intricacies of domestic abuse, that survivors are treated with dignity, and understand that only perpetrators are responsible for their actions.

YSL Beauty partnership

Our partnership with YSL Beauty has led to a number of media and communications wins, resulting in significant awareness raising. Over the past year, the partnership has featured in Marie Claire, with a reach of 2 million people, interviewing ambassadors Michelle Griffith-Robinson and Alice Liveing, and supporter Phoenix Brown about their lived experience of domestic abuse. YSL Beauty also created a video with these women to support Women's Aid's launch onto TikTok in November 2022.

Media work

Women's Aid has a huge impact on awareness of domestic abuse through our work in the media, and our work within communities through schools, employers and public engagement. This year, Women's Aid's profile has soared. We have achieved over 12,253 media mentions, with a total

reach of 165 billion. Our news stories and media commentary regularly extend beyond the UK into the international news cycle. Highlights have included an interview with our Patron Melanie Brown MBE on Newsnight and front page coverage in The Sun during the week of the Conservative Party Conference. We have over 358,700 followers on social media, giving us a platform where we can change attitudes and increase understanding of domestic abuse with new audiences.

‘Ask Me’ training continues to create safe spaces in communities for women to open up about abuse

‘Ask Me’, the communities strand of our Change That Lasts programme, delivered in partnership with Welsh Women’s Aid, continues to be popular. Through training sessions, community members are equipped with an understanding of domestic abuse, how to challenge myths and victim blaming and how to provide a supportive response to survivors to play an active role in ending domestic abuse.

This year, ‘Ask Me’ has:

- Supported four Women’s Aid member services to deliver Ask Me in their local communities.
- Delivered six ‘Ask Me’ online courses, for people who can’t access Ask Me in their local area, to a total of 63 people.
- Delivered sessions to corporate clients, including Apple, Bloom and the media.

Attendees are given the skills to raise awareness about domestic abuse, challenge victim blaming and sexism, and support survivors to access specialist support. Many people speak about how they feel empowered after the training and inspired to take action in their communities following on from the training. Survivors who attend ‘Ask Me’ training have shared that they feel more equipped to raise awareness and support others and that the training has helped them personally as part of their healing journey.

Strengthening local services

Women’s Aid is a federation of local domestic abuse support services across England. We have been offering support and representation to our members for almost 50 years. As well as the Emergency Fund which enabled survivors to access funding via local member services to leave abuse, our offer to members has included a wide range of support.

Routes to Support

Over the last year there were over 180,000 logins to Routes to Support, the UK violence against women and girls directory of services and refuge vacancies, run in partnership by the four UK Women’s Aid federations.

We hold a national dataset through the database which allows us to report on trends in the nature and scope of domestic abuse service provision across England in order to inform practice and policy.

Training offer for members

We held 33 member coaching sessions and support 23 member services to achieve National Quality Standards Stage One, full awards or to complete quality reviews ensuring quality provision and services for survivors

Through our National Training Centre, we trained 300 new domestic abuse advocates, working within the sector, to support survivors and their children. Each advocate supported on average 50 women, totalling a reach of 15,000 survivors per year. We trained 100 advocates to support survivors with immigration issues, with each advocate supporting an average 20 women.

Research report: “Investing to Save: the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support”

In February, we released a cost-benefit analysis of fully-funded specialist domestic abuse service provision, conducted by the think tank ResPublica, which showed that for every £1 invested, there would be a saving to the public purse of at least £9. Women’s Aid’s report ‘Investing to save: the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support’² was launched by Women’s Aid at our Public Policy Conference. Its findings played an important part in making the case for additional Government funding and the Emergency Fund for survivors of domestic abuse, which was announced by the Government on 31st March 2023.

The report was also influential amongst the conference delegates, which included survivors, member services, corporates, and representatives from across government, parliament and statutory services. 88% of attendees either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the conference would be likely to influence their thinking or decision-making.

Direct commissioning and funding support

Commissioning and funding pose a major threat to domestic abuse services providing specialist support to survivors. Women’s Aid has expanded our direct support to members facing these issues, helping to resolve them by changing local commissioning practices and supporting members to navigate challenging funding and commissioning problems.

Over the past year we have:

- Provided tailored 1-1 support to 13 members across England – our work has helped lifesaving services to navigate challenging funding and commissioning issues, supported them to build relationships and influence, and in some cases led to commissioners re-evaluating their funding decisions.
- Published a new range of briefings, guidance and tools to support our members to influence funding and commissioning locally – we launched a suite of resources at the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s Festival of Practice for commissioners and specialist women’s services.
- Identified new funding opportunities and promoted these, such as the London Cost of Living fund, Integrated Care Board health funding and more.
- Led workshops and webinars for members, local councillors and commissioners – such as ahead of the local elections to provide members with support for how to engage with new councillors.

² Investing to save: the economic case for funding specialist domestic abuse support
www.womensaid.org.uk/investing-to-save-report

Research report: “The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit”

Our ‘Annual Audit’ provides an overview of the provision, usage and experiences of domestic abuse services in England. This year, a webinar about our findings was attended by 105 people, including representatives from government, academia and local services.

On Track: supporting local services and providing national insight

On Track, Women’s Aid’s On Track Case Management and Outcomes Monitoring System, continues to grow with 97 member services now using it. The national dataset we hold as a result now includes the experiences of 68,316 survivors supported by local domestic abuse services across England, as well our own Live Chat, email and No Woman Turned Away project. On Track reports to a core outcomes framework for survivors, developed in partnership with Imkaan.

We have been able to use survivors’ experiences to feed into our evidence base and influence policy and practice, notably through our ‘Annual Audit’ report, strengthening domestic abuse services and improving outcomes for survivors. We have developed a standardised national dataset using data from all organisations using On Track. This dataset will allow us to improve identification of national trends from our national data.

We have shared our learning through the On Track workshop programme, delivering 36 workshops for members using On Track, and talking about and measuring their impact. After attending, 92% had more confidence articulating outcomes to funders.

Women’s Aid National Conference was held ‘in person’ for the first time since the pandemic

‘Come Together to End Domestic Abuse’ launched at our National Conference with our members, highlighting why we all have a role to play in ending domestic abuse. This event was the first opportunity since the pandemic to bring together our federation of member organisations with leading experts from within and beyond the domestic abuse sector. Speakers included ambassador and Olympian, Michelle Griffith-Robinson and Anneliese Dodds MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities.

Donations

Donations worth over £370,000 were shared with members services including toiletries, clothes and electrical goods helping to meet survivor essential needs.

Structure, governance and management

How the Board of Trustees has been evaluated this year

The board undertook a substantial governance review this year, focusing on board effectiveness. Campbell Tickell were appointed to undertake the review following a competitive procurement process. The review began in November 2022 with the final report presented to the board in June 2023.

The process included:

- Benchmarking governance documents against the Charity Governance Code.
- An online survey of trustees, subcommittee members and senior staff.
- Interviews with trustees, some subcommittee members, and the CEO.

- A focus group with the Executive Leadership Team.
- An observation of a board meeting.
- Meeting with a working group of trustees and senior staff.
- A meeting with the Race Equality Strategy Group staff chairs.

Campbell Tickell assessed the board's practice and performance against each of the areas of practice set out in the Charity Governance Code.

Following the review, an action plan has been agreed, for implementation during 2023/24. This covers opportunities for development across the following areas, building on much existing good practice:

- Administration and processes
- Board composition
- Board structure
- Expectation setting
- Planning and performance monitoring
- Culture and EDI

We look forward to reporting on progress against these areas in next year's report.

Governing framework

The Women's Aid Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the management of the charity and delegates this responsibility on a day-to-day basis to the Chief Executive. At present, there is a headcount of 123 full and part-time staff.

Financial and operational policies, agreed by the board, are also in place, which govern the management of the charity. The charity's annual business plan is produced as part of an annual planning, consultation and budgeting cycle. Annual work plans enable the delivery of the core and development objectives, which are approved by the board, and monitoring against these plans forms the basis of quarterly reports to the trustee meetings.

Risk management

The Board of Trustees holds responsibility for strategic risk management within the charity. Responsibility for compiling and updating the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) is delegated to the CEO. Responsibility for detailed review of the BAF is delegated to the FRRG committee, which undertakes this review at each meeting and reports on this process to each full board meeting.

The BAF is comprised of the highest rated risks identified in functional risk registers at an operational level and takes account of risks identified with significant partnership initiatives, reflected in dedicated risk registers for those projects. These risks are reviewed and validated by the Executive Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Team before submission to FRRG.

Organisational risks are assessed according to both likelihood and impact. Each risk is assigned a senior responsible lead. The BAF sets out a narrative on the nature of each risk and its likely impact, the mitigating actions already underway, and next steps.

Key strategic risks identified for monitoring this year have included:

- Financial sustainability and income generation.
- Impact of the cost-of-living crisis on beneficiaries and member services.
- Reputational risk associated with legacy issues.
- Governance in association with board development.
- Safeguarding and compliance.
- People risk associated with recruitment and change management.
- Technological risk including cyber security.

Website

Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

People, Inclusion and Equity

Work has been focused on building a robust infrastructure, recruiting dedicated personnel and procuring identified training. We have worked as a team bringing together the internal Race Equality Strategy Group, the Leadership Team, Anti-Racism Taskforce and the Board of Trustees to focus on our anti-racism agenda and Equity Diversity and Inclusion ambitions. We continue to work on ensuring a positive working environment with the aim of having a diversified, happy workforce. The organisation is undertaking a pay and benefits review to include implementation of a new Job Evaluation scheme and we remain committed to ensuring we move towards being a best practice employer. Women's Aid is proud to be a Disability Confident Employer demonstrating our continuing Disability Confident journey to ensure that disabled people within the workforce and those who use our services are able to fulfil their potential. Women's Aid also continues to meet the standards set as a Living Wage Employer.

Pay policy for staff

The board considers that the Executive Leadership Team at Women's Aid Federation of England comprises the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. All trustees give up their time freely and no trustee received remuneration in the year. However, we pay a nominal honorarium to member organisations represented by a trustee. Details of trustees' expenses and related transactions are disclosed in the accounts.

The organisation is currently undertaking a review of pay and benefits with outcomes to be implemented during 2023/24.

Connections to wider network

Women's Aid is a federation of approximately 160 organisations providing around 300 lifesaving local services to women and children across England. Our network also includes a further 72 organisations run by non-members who are engaged with us through the Routes to Support database of services. The year-on-year reduction in members is primarily caused by services closing due to loss of funding or merging in order to meet the requirements of statutory funders. The charity works in partnership with a range of statutory, voluntary, corporate and other bodies to deliver its mission and achieve its objectives. Membership is based on signing an agreement to support the charity's mission, aims and objectives. There are two membership categories: 1. Full

Members: organisations that deliver direct services 2. Associate Members: other supporting organisations Women's Aid local member services provide a range of refuge and community-based services to address domestic abuse including sexual abuse in intimate partner relationships. Members work to national standards for service delivery, including the Women's Aid National Quality Standards which cover all aspects of service delivery, as well as using model policies and procedures developed by Women's Aid.

Reference and administrative details

Registered Company number
03171880 (England and Wales)

Registered Charity number
1054154

Registered office
PO Box 3245 Bristol England BS2 2EH

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial position

The charity's total income amounted to £5,612,885 (2022: £6,240,065). This includes a valuation for generously donated services and facilities of £181,144 (2022: £125,080 - see note 2 of the accounts for more information). Underlying income excluding donated services and facilities was £5,431,741 (2022: £6,114,985).

Total expenditure for the year amounted to £6,786,963 (2022: £5,600,394). Underlying expenditure excluding the value of donated services was £6,605,819 (2022: £5,475,314).

The charity's assets are available and adequate to fulfil its obligations on a fund by fund basis.

The charity's performance during the year resulted in an actual net deficit of £1,174,078 (2022: surplus of £639,671) made up of restricted funds deficit of £283,811 (2022: deficit of £595,929) and unrestricted funds deficit of £890,267 (2022: surplus of £1,235,600). The reason for the deficit on the unrestricted funds was due to the planned spending of designated reserves.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Principal funding sources

Women's Aid continued to benefit from a wide range of funding sources during 2022-23 and we want to thank all our funders for their continued support.

Fundraising performance

- Raised: £1,830,382

We are enormously grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have supported our work over the course of the year, and remain committed to working with our existing funders to deliver effective solutions to domestic abuse.

We would like to thank the large numbers of individuals who have continued to loyally support our work through making regular donations, responding to appeals, taking part in sponsored challenges, organising events, and speaking out on their own social media and within their networks about the importance of challenging domestic abuse.

We would also like to thank the loyal and committed full and associate members of our federation whose subscriptions enable us to develop our member support activities.

Community

This year our amazing community fundraisers raised over £239,000. They raised funds for Women's Aid in all sorts of inspirational ways - by running, cycling across the country, jumping out of planes, or hiking... even to Everest Base Camp. By holding art exhibitions, raffles, or book club parties and many more ways! We have also seen fantastic displays of advocacy from university students, and we have created strong and impactful Charity of the Year partnerships with schools across England who have taken part in fundraising events for us.

Corporate

We are very grateful to Women's Aid's corporate supporters, who are an integral part of our movement to end domestic abuse. This year we have been generously supported by our Corporate Partners:

- AVON Cosmetics Ltd
- Bloom UK
- Dinny Hall
- Incisive Media
- L'Occitane
- OKA
- YSL Beauté

We have also received generous donations this year from the below companies, whose generosity has enabled us to continue our vital work:

- Platform Housing Group
- Paperchase
- Yawn
- Smurfit Kappa

This year we were very fortunate in being selected by a number of companies to be their 'charity of the year' (including M&C Saatchi World Services, Galliard Healthcare Solutions, Oakmere Wealth Management Ltd, Richard Designs and East Midlands Railway). We supported their fundraising efforts which were undertaken throughout the year, and very much enjoyed seeing the creative ways in which they used their platforms and work forces; and through events such as comedy nights, cycle challenges and quizzes. We also saw corporates engage in training, as well as sharing their skills and expertise with our staff, in particular the work done by Absolute Interpreting to improve accessibility on our website and our direct services, which has been indispensable. Further partnerships came through supporting Women's Aid during the month of March, marking 'International Women's Day', providing further income, from companies such as Roythorne's Solicitors, as well as continued awareness raising. We are tremendously grateful for the positive difference that all our corporates have made.

We would also like to recognise those corporate supporters who wish their contributions to remain anonymous, and those we have not been able to name here. We are grateful for all your support.

This year, we have also been delighted to work with more smaller businesses, using the Work for Good platform. 16 businesses raised funds for Women's Aid through their sales and in total raised £39,678.66. Notably, £14,000 of this coming from Chelsea Peers (Renfold Ltd). Women's Aid was also recognised twice during the year by Work for Good as their 'featured charity' helping to boost fundraising and was featured in an International Women's Day blog post featuring our CEO, to raise further awareness of our work.

Trust and Statutory

Women's Aid are very grateful to receive the support of Trusts, Foundations and Statutory organisations. We are proud to work in partnership with the following funders to achieve our mission:

- The Home Office awarded Women's Aid grant funding through the Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls and Supporting Children (PVSC): 'What Works' Funding (WWF) to deliver our Children and Young People's Programme.
- Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) have awarded us a contract to expand our On Track service and to enhance Routes to Support.
- London Councils have awarded a 4-year grant for our London Refuges Data Collection Project, which includes collecting and analysing data from Routes to Support to provide an evidence base on the demand and use of refuges in London.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) continues its commitment to Routes to Support and the No Woman Turned Away project, supporting women to access local services and refuge provision.
- We received funding towards our Direct Services from Bally's Foundation (previously Gamesys Foundation), Marsh Charitable Trust, Sydney Black Charitable Trust, Wonderful Giving Foundation, Pledgeling International Fund, The Grace Trust, The Big Give, David and Ruth Lewis Family Charitable Trust, Van Neste Foundation, Michael and Anna Wix Charitable Trust, AllFunds and the Bedford Road Charitable Fund (NPT Atlantic Donor Advised Fund).
- CVC Foundation have provided vital funds towards our membership work.
- We have received funding from the Bally's Foundation (previously Gamesys Foundation) towards our Mental Health Campaign.
- The Kering Foundation continued their support of increasing capacity in our Research team and towards our Power to Change project.
- We received funding from Sir Derek Greenaway Foundation and Hudson Charitable Trust towards our Central Accessibility.
- The Sisters Trust awarded us multi-year funding towards the salary of our chief executive.
- Women's Aid supported the Caring Family Foundation to distribute 16 grants to 'By and For' Black and Minoritised member services.
- The Association of British Insurers are supporting Women's Aid and our sister organisation through the Resilience project. The project aims to strengthen the UK network of domestic abuse services emerging from the Covid-19 crisis.

We are grateful to The Cobalt Trust, The Keeble Charitable Trust, Ian Mactaggart Trust, Ardwick Trust, The Two-Way Trust, Edward S Smyth Trust, The David Family Foundation, Pears Family Charitable Foundation, The Minto Charitable Trust, The Ian Askew Charitable Trust, Allen and

Overy Foundation, The Hon M L Astor's Discretionary Trust 1969, The Arnold Clark Community Fund, The Mrs Wingfield Charitable Trust, The Squire Patton Boggs Charitable Trust, Masonic Charitable Trust, Rest Harrow Trust, Clark Charitable Settlement, The Cara Delevingne Foundation, Betty Messenger Foundation, John Laing Charitable Trust, William Grant Foundation, Violet Black Charitable Trust, Roy Proctor Foundation, Wallace and Edna Davis Charitable Foundation, Chillag Family Charitable Trust, GVMKR Trust, The Orr Mackintosh Foundation, Multithon Trust, Schroder Foundation, Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust and Basing Lodge 5500 for their support of our core costs, enabling us to direct funds where they are most needed to support women and children affected by domestic abuse.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Individual Giving and Appeals

Our Winter Appeal was centred around the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on survivors of domestic abuse. We are grateful that, despite the economic climate, our supporters responded positively to the appeal and were motivated to support survivors, donating over £34,000.

However, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, as well as less media coverage and public awareness of domestic abuse compared to during the pandemic, has led to a decline in one-off online donations, though we continue to see strong support from regular donations, which raised over £490,000 this year.

Legacies

We are fortunate to have been the recipient of some incredibly generous Legacy gifts over this past financial year, which have brought in over £200,000 in unrestricted funds. These kind gifts have helped us to achieve many of the successes detailed in this report, the impacts of which will be felt for years to come.

This year we have also seen an increase in the number of 'in memory' gifts we have received. We are humbled that our supporters choose to commemorate their own lives or the lives of their loved ones with a gift to Women's Aid and thank them for their thoughtfulness at such a difficult time.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Investment performance

Under the terms of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the charity may invest monies of Women's Aid not immediately required for its own purposes in or upon such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit. The level of the charity's reserves is such that investment is limited to short-term markets rather than any long-term strategy, although other options continue to be explored. Over the past year we have continued to take a prudent view in terms of the security of the charity's reserves rather than pursuing the highest return. The investment policy is being kept under review to take account of investment opportunities whilst maintaining a low-risk strategy.

Reserves policy

The reserves policy has been reviewed and updated during this financial year.

The board recognises that the charity serves many beneficiaries with an ongoing need and, as such, the organisation's reserves policy has been set with the long-term financial viability of the charity as a critical factor and within the context of the short-term nature of funding contracts.

Trustees have determined that free reserves should be set at an amount sufficient to support core operating and wind down costs for a minimum period of three months and a maximum of six months.

The total balance of funds at 31st March 2023 amounts to £5,501,436 (2022: £6,675,514). This includes restricted funds of £1,015,794 (2022: £1,299,605). The balance of unrestricted funds at 31st March 2023 was £4,485,642 (2022 £5,375,909). Of these unrestricted funds, free reserves (calculated as total unrestricted funds, less designated funds and tangible fixed assets) amounted to £2,101,773 (2022: £3,025,908).

Designated reserves totalling £3,505,598 was set aside at the beginning of the year to further our work around four priority areas:

- Membership development & sustainability
- Sector wide initiatives
- Transformation (Internal investments for future sustainability)
- Culture change

The remaining balance on these designated funds is £2,383,369. This will continue to be spent across these three areas in line with the business plan that was agreed when these funds were first designated.