



# Stepping Stones North Wales

## Annual Report

### 2020 – 2021

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## **Trustees:**

Mr N Beesley

Ms P Davies (until 05.10.2020)

Mr D Edwards (until 22.10.2020)

Mr P Gordon

Ms J Henderson

Mrs H Thomas (until 25.03.2021)

Ms N Winney

Ms S Worland

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## Message from the Chair of Trustees

I am pleased to provide the Annual Report for the year 2020-2021, in what has been a year like no other that the charity has faced, with the pandemic impacting our lives in so many different ways.

I am delighted to say that we have been able to continue to meet the needs of our service users throughout, adapting our practices to continue to provide the vital support. This could not have been done without the hard work, flexibility, and support of the fantastic team of management, staff, counsellors, and volunteers within Stepping Stones North Wales. A huge thank you to you all.

As well as delivering our service throughout the pandemic, we have also had a significant change in Management with Berni Durham-Jones joining us as Director of Services, which allowed Sue Roberts to finally make a long-planned step back to the role of Business Support Manager. We are very lucky to have Sue remain in the team, and I wish to thank her specifically for her dedication to Stepping Stones whilst she was Director of Operations. Berni has quickly settled in, and we have seen great work in not only increasing our core capacity, but also enhancing our service offering. Welcome Berni and I hope this is the start of a long and successful chapter for our Charity.

As we emerge out of lockdowns and the removal of restrictions, we are seeing an expected increase in referrals for our services. I am pleased to say that we are very well placed to meet this increase and look forward to continuing to provide an invaluable service for many years to come.

My thanks again to everyone who has contributed to the successful year for Stepping Stones North Wales.

*Paul Gordon*



## Message from the Director of Services

It is a privilege and an honour to be the new Director of Services for Stepping Stones North Wales. Joining the charity in June 2020, during the most difficult global crisis for the world was not easy; especially starting a new role working from home.

Group activities and in-person counselling had to stop; however, this did not prevent Stepping Stones from providing a service, and we continued to assist our clients by sending out wellbeing packs and providing support via texts and online counselling. In addition, we launched our 'Step into Wellbeing' programme which allowed clients to attend psychoeducational courses, activities, and resources.

I have been overwhelmed by the dedication from the whole workforce during the pandemic, the commitment from the staff and counsellors to provide a service to clients was truly humbling.

All the volunteers, staff, trustees, and counsellors demonstrated flexibility, commitment, and true professionalism through an extremely difficult situation. This enabled Stepping Stones to continue to provide a service to clients quickly via remote methods including telephone and virtual counselling as well as online educational courses. The pandemic has enabled Stepping Stones to now provide a virtual service throughout North Wales which we will continue to offer.

Although a difficult year, Stepping Stones has proved it is able to support clients throughout unprecedented times and expand its services. I could not be more proud of the charity and am very grateful to everyone who is involved with Stepping Stones. I am also looking forward to seeing how the charity develops over the next twelve months.

*Berni Durham-Jones*

## Objectives and Activities

The Charities key objectives and aims are:

1. To promote and preserve the good health, both the mental and physical wellbeing of adults who are survivors of child sexual abuse.
2. To advance the education of persons working with those who are survivors of child sexual abuse.

## Significant activities

Our core activities are:

- Provision of one-to-one counselling and support to survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) and their family members, carers, and friends throughout the six counties of North Wales.
- A range of group activities, including educational and psychoeducational courses, as well as resources throughout the six counties of North Wales.
- Ensuring high quality services by running regular Practise Days and sourcing appropriate training and development opportunities for our team.
- Delivering appropriate education and outreach sessions to professionals and other individuals / groups to raise awareness of the effects of CSA and how survivors have been affected.
- Working within policies, procedures, ethical practice guidelines and legislation to ensure our practice is safeguarded and our clients feel safe.
- Continually consulting with individuals engaging with our service to develop new pathways of support in a collaborative way.



## The Year in Numbers

**473**  
Individuals  
Supported

**379**  
Female

**88**  
Male

**6**  
Trans Gender/Non-  
Binary/Intersex

**5907**  
Counselling sessions  
delivered

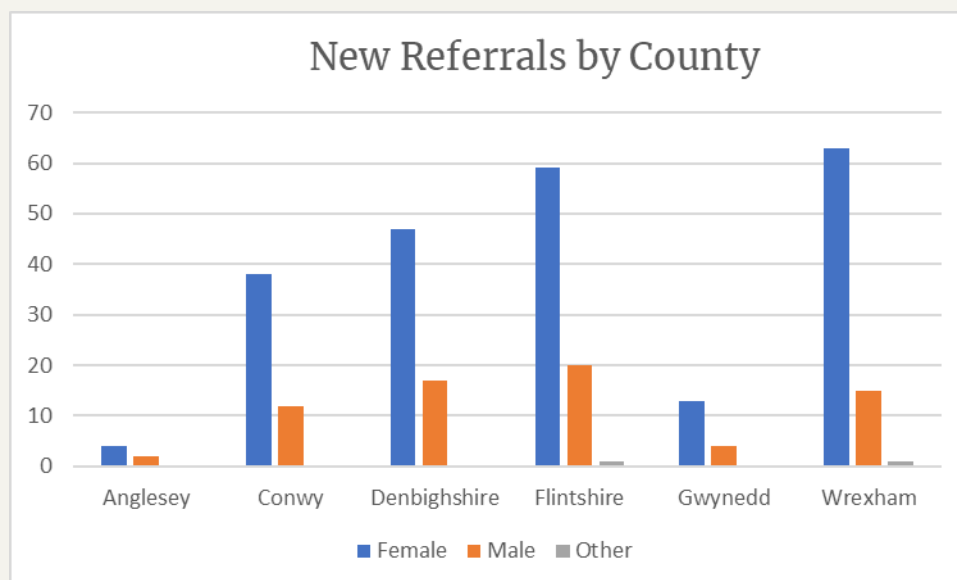
**8690**  
Support Contacts made  
with Individuals

**398**  
Referrals  
within the  
year

### First Steps

**126**

People accepted the offer in partnership with the Live Fear Free Helpline



## Health and Wellbeing

During the year we have seen a further increase in both the number of people engaged with our support services and the level of specialist therapeutic counselling provided. We have also seen an increase in participation in our Next Steps groups and our Essential Skills training.

We continue to see a steady number of referrals year on year and have made good progress in reducing our waiting list by increasing the availability of virtual counselling sessions and increasing counselling capacity as funding has allowed.

We receive feedback from individuals who have benefitted from our services on a regular basis, telling us how it has changed their lives, improved their wellbeing, and helped them to move on, live well and enjoy more rewarding and productive lives.

"I was very unhappy, lonely, self-loathing and ashamed. With your help I have become more positive, feel happier, the things that happened to me were not my fault and I know that now."



We continue to improve and develop our service provision with the help of service users and are working towards further quality marks and accreditations in 2021-22.

## First Steps

Stepping Stones support our clients throughout their counselling journey with us. Following initial assessment, those who want to continue their journey with us are supported by our First Steps initiative, receiving a support call weekly until their first counselling sessions starts. During and post counselling they are also able to access the support of Next Steps.

## Next Steps

Despite the pandemic, we continued to facilitate our Next Steps support groups, providing a friendly, welcoming, safe environment, supporting, and empowering all clients past and present to overcome the impacts of their abuse. Supporting them to gain confidence, new skills, build friendships and achieve their hopes and goals in life through education and a variety of activities such as art, creative writing, and crafts.

During 2020-21, our Essential Skills Education Classes ran virtually with ten people attending each week. Maths and English classes were held weekly throughout the pandemic, with support from Coleg Cambria.





During Covid, our Next Steps groups were unable to meet in-person, so we quickly adapted new ways of support. We set up a dedicated Facebook page, with news, quizzes, music, information, and an opportunity to stay connected with other members. Wellbeing texts, newsletters and packs of art, crafts and plants were also sent out monthly.

We also provided:

- Sunflower lanyards for 15 individuals who were unable to wear a face mask due to suffering with anxiety or health issues.
- £1,500 of electric top-ups to 12 families.
- Food parcels to 36 families, 100 packs to those experiencing financial difficulties.
- Christmas toys to 26 children.
- Wellbeing packs to 36 individuals every month.
- Support with housing issues, medical appointments, and prescription pick-ups.

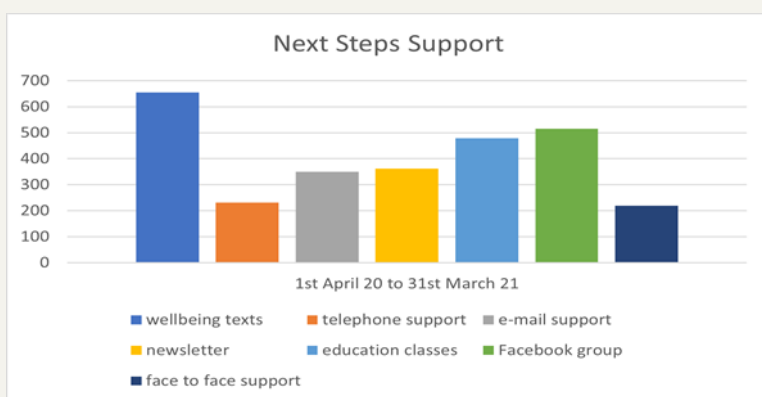
#### Next Steps Client Evaluations:

98% of attendees said their mental health had improved

97% felt their confidence and self-esteem was better

92% learned new skills

99% made long-lasting friendships through their activities



## Step into Wellbeing

During the year, we were able to secure VAWDASV Needs Regional Plan funding. This enabled us to launch the Stepping Stones' 'Step into Wellbeing' project in March 2021.

The intended outcomes for clients include improved health and wellbeing, the ability to cope better with everyday lives, increased feelings of safety, being valued, improved relationships, and reduced social isolation.

Step into Wellbeing is comprised of the following courses:

## **Understanding the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse**

The above course is specifically designed to provide support to those on our waiting list and is offered after initial assessment.

This 90-minute session aims to help clients' understanding of some of the effects and impacts that child sexual abuse can have on their lives.

Due to the success of the course, it is envisaged that it will be offered next year.

## **Own my Life**

The above course is an innovative, creative, and educational 12-week course for women. It is delivered online and supports women to regain ownership of their lives when they have been subjected to trauma and abuse. It is run by some of our female counsellors.

The first course started on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 and was well received by all participants.

## **Stress Management, Emotions & Resilience Course**

This course is designed to enable clients to have a better understanding of how to manage stress levels and emotions and equips them with techniques to make them become more resilient.

It is a seven-week course run virtually.

## **Male Survivor Course**

The above course aims to address social myths that male survivors of child sexual abuse face, encourage reflections and bring empowerment.

The 90-minute group session encourages participants to share their thoughts, ask questions and connect with others virtually.

"I wanted to thank you, and if I could, pass my thanks onto the group. I know I haven't always spoken, but I have learnt so much about myself, and as I said in the last session, I'm feeling that sense of happiness and I guess pride in myself again.

I wanted you to know this was the first step for me and I appreciate the safe environment to be able to talk, listen and learn."

## Working in Partnership

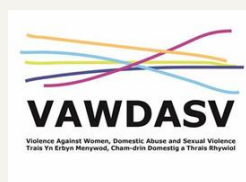
It has been a challenging year, but one in which we feel proud to have been able to offer support to survivors and to our team, to enable counselling and support services to continue throughout the pandemic.

Stepping Stones value partner organisations and engage to work together to generate new ideas, sharing skills and knowledge to ensure that we deliver the best support to our clients.

We are committed to working within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

We are members of the Survivors Trust, Welsh Women's Aid, Male Survivors Partnership (MSP), Fundraising Regulator Board and all six County Voluntary Councils. We are also a Disability Confident Employer.

Without the support of our funders, commissioners, and supporters we just could not do the work we do and would like to extend our thanks to all those who have been involved.



## Fundraising/Donations

### Co-op Support



The Co-op is a leading supporter of local causes within the communities in which its stores are located. Stepping Stones was their chosen charity in 2020, Co-op members voted for us and supported our cause each time they shopped. Their kind support raised £2,422.08, which was used to support vital counselling sessions, specialist family support and our Next Steps Survivors Group activities, making a real difference to people's lives. A huge thank you to the Co-op Team and all their wonderful Co-op members!

Shirley McCann, Stepping Stones Volunteer & Events Manager received a cheque from Vicky Davies, Pioneer Member Co-op and some of the Co-op Borrás Park Team:



### Tesco Community Grant



Stepping Stones kindly received a donation of £1,000.00 to support adult survivors of child sexual abuse, providing vital counselling sessions, family support and access to education and wellbeing support. During the Covid pandemic it enabled our charity to reduce isolation, provide access and additional support quickly to individuals.

### Local Giving Magic Little Grant:

Kindly donated £500 enabling individuals supported by our charity to have access to support with physical fitness.



## Support from the Community



The pandemic has seen many kind acts of support within the community. Early in the Covid crisis, we received offers of PPE (personal protective equipment) from Brother Industries (UK) based in Ruabon. Tony Lock OEM and Production Manager at Brother adapted their machines and with his colleagues produced thousands of face visors and splash shields to support the local and wider community, donating to Hospitals, Care Homes, schools, and charities.

### Flint High School

We were also supported by the students at Flint High School, led by their teacher Mr Russell Davies, Leader of Design, Technology and Engineering. They produced over 1,000 visors for use within the community, using a simple design developed by Mr Davies.

The donated visors enabled our counsellors to meet clients in-person, providing vital support to people suffering the trauma of abuse.



### Gwynt y Môr (GYM) Community Fund



Stepping Stones was kindly supported by the Gwynt y Môr (GYM) Community Fund in 2020.

The funding of **£4,920** enabled 20 security devices to be purchased for counsellors, staff, and clients, ensuring they feel safe and connected, with quick accessibility to support at any time.

During the Covid pandemic, these safety devices proved to be essential, enabling people to access our services when at home or in remote locations, reducing isolation and keeping people safe.

### Local Voluntary Support during 2020

We received funding from Local Voluntary Councils and organisations in North Wales with donations from their Covid Emergency Funds:

- AVOW, Association of Voluntary organisations in Wrexham
- DLVC, Denbighshire Local Voluntary Council.
- FLVC, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council.



## Freezing Fingers Challenge!



Having accomplished the Three Peaks Challenge in 2018, and a year later the Crazy Seven in Scotland, including the Cairngorms, Karl Jackson completed the Freezing Fingers challenge in winter 2020/21.

Karl, who is site lead and Assistant Director for the Institute of Technology at Coleg Cambria's Bersham Road site in

Wrexham, travelled 100 miles over four days in bleak conditions over the Rhinogydd mountain range in Snowdonia, which is some of the toughest terrain in the UK.

As well as the ice and snow, he navigated rugged rocks, steep hills, and marshland with a rucksack on his back and only Paul Standring, a lecturer in the Higher Education and Technical Construction Faculty, for company.

Together they raised **£1,359** for Stepping Stones!

"Thank you so much to everyone that donated, we were overwhelmed by the response.

Stepping Stones is an incredible charity, so we are pleased to be able to contribute towards the amazing work they do in our community."

Karl Jackson



## Other Support received:

- Wrexham County Borough Council Community Inclusion Grant of **£1,000**, supporting individuals and their families to have access to education, activities, and counselling support.
- Celtic Arms, Northop raised **£114** with a raffle to support the work of our charity.
- Paul Gordon Birthday Fundraiser raised **£250** to support our services to survivors.
- The National Trust has provided Well-being Passes for our clients and their families to use.
- Regular monthly supporters

## Volunteering

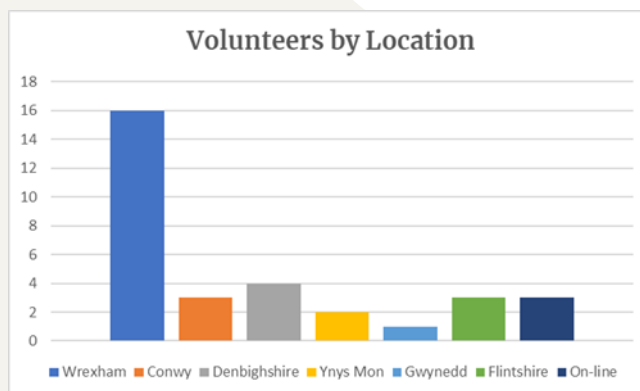


**32** Volunteers kindly gave **503** hours of their time, skills, and support to Stepping Stones over the last twelve months; including nine Trustees who provide governance, guidance, and leadership.

We are very lucky to have such wonderful volunteers across North Wales and they help us in a variety of ways, including, receptionist, mentors, fundraisers, trustees and many more.



Value of volunteer hours provided:  
**£10,187**



## Volunteer Week – June 2020

Volunteer Awards for outstanding achievement and commitment went to:

- Stepping Stones Board of Trustees
- Jennie Henderson
- Pat Davies
- Maureen Earnshaw
- Linda Jones
- Stacey McCann
- Carolyn McKenzie

Volunteers say they support Stepping Stones because:

“They want to give something back to their community and use their skills and knowledge to give back to others.”



## Social Value

Our service in general generates a significant amount of social value. During 2018/19 we completed a SROI project which resulted in a figure of £4.98 returned for every £1 spent, detailed in our SROI Report published Autumn 2019.

During the pandemic, the dynamics for measuring SROI changed significantly, and we are now working on re-evaluating. With new initiatives which support the mental health and wellbeing of survivors pre, during and post counselling, we are expecting our SROI to increase considerably.

It is clear that our beneficiaries achieve well defined outcomes as a result of their engagement with our service, including reduced isolation, better relationships, and improved confidence, resulting in improved health and well-being.

“The things that my counselling taught me were like pieces of gold, which came down on me through all the fog and dullness which was my life.”



“I feel free now to live my life. I am no longer carrying a secret which weighed me down. I can be honest with my wife, without carrying a secret shame and guilt.”





## Financial Summary

### Income

During the financial year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, our total income was **£543,800**, an increase of £274,126 compared to the previous financial year. This is due to additional funding we received to assist with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to our principal funding sources which include Local Authorities, the Local Health Board (BCUHB), The Ministry of Justice, Welsh Government and the VAWDASV Regional Team and North Wales OPCC, we were able to apply for funds from a variety of other organisations.

Some funds were facilitated by partners, such as Comic Relief funding awarded and administered by Welsh Women's Aid, Community Foundation Wales funding in partnership with the Lloyds Foundation and funding from Gwynt y Môr in partnership with DLVC.

We were also fortunate to be awarded significant Voluntary Services Emergency Funding (VSEF) managed by the WCVA. Additional funds were also awarded from the Ministry of Justice, the VAWDASV Regional Team managed by the OPCC, the Local Health Board (BCUHB) and from the County Voluntary Councils across North Wales.

In addition, we continued to receive funds from the Lloyds Bank Foundation as well as regular fundraising and private donations.

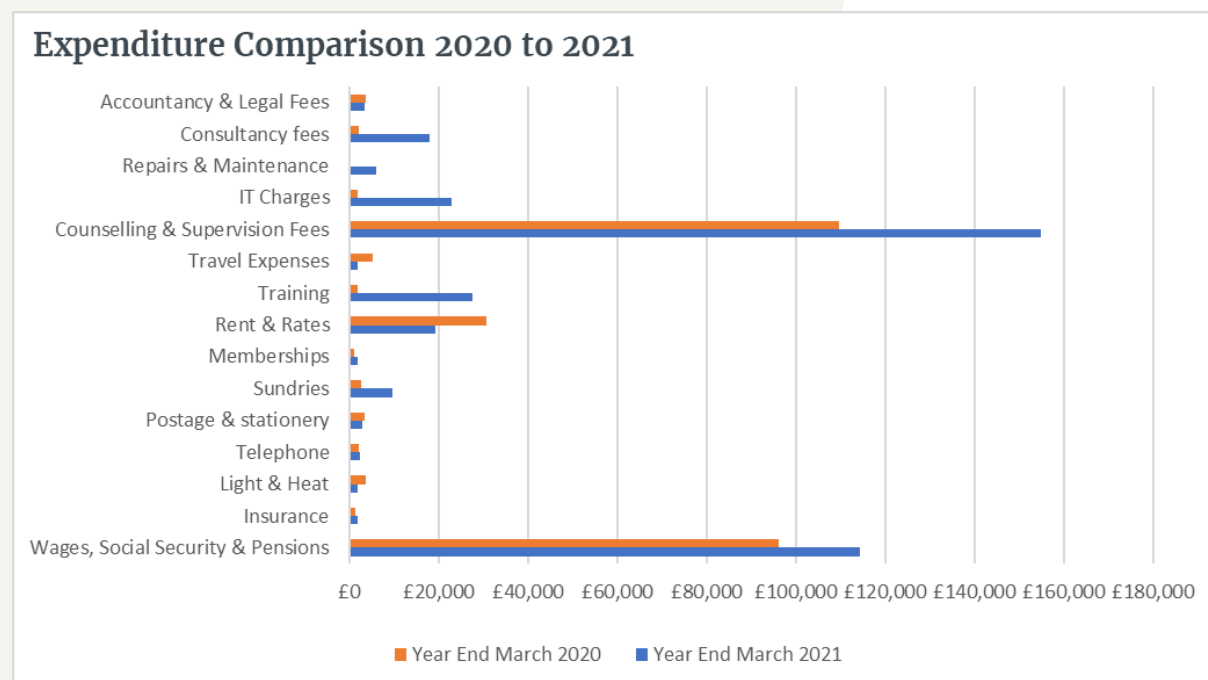
We continually look for alternative funding options to diversify our income streams and to meet the growing demand for our services.



## Expenditure

Our total expenditure during the year was **£392,671**. Whilst this has increased by 47.70% compared to the previous fiscal year, the increase in income resulted in a surplus of £151,129, of which £43,942 is ring fenced to be expended during the remainder of 2021. Part of the increased expenditure relates to a significant increase in training costs and supervision fees, a key investment in staff, ensuring we can offer the best support possible to our clients and ensure the good health and wellbeing of our team.

Additionally, we have revised our website, installed a new database, improved our IT systems and phone systems. This ensures that we can provide services across a variety of platforms as demand dictates.



## Future Plans

As Covid regulations relax we will be able to return to more in-person counselling and support services during 2021/22.

The demand for our service is steadily increasing. We are well placed to meet this continuing demand during the coming year, providing a mixture of virtual and in-person support to suit our clients' needs.

We plan to provide clients with greater flexibility and choice by providing additional counsellor availability and support, more opportunities for clients and their families to attend well-being sessions and increased regional access to counselling and Next Steps activities.

We will focus on reducing our waiting list and will continue to provide regular contact and support by continuing to provide our Step into Wellbeing programme which offers a range of psychoeducational courses and resources.

Workforce - We continuously invest in our staff by providing training and supervision; during 2021/22, we plan to appoint two Clinical Co-ordinators, an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA), a Young Persons' ISVA and a Young Persons' Counsellor to enhance our service provision.

Outreach and Awareness – we will develop our methods of raising sexual violence awareness, including the development of a Webinar, information sessions given by our Young Persons' ISVA at local education venues, including Coleg Cambria, and outreach sessions held at various other venues across North Wales.

We will continue to develop our service offering across the year:

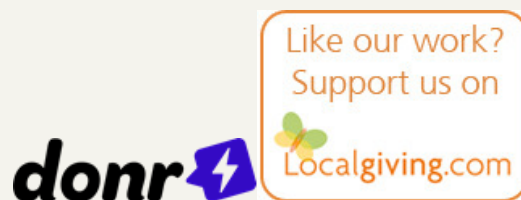
- Step into Wellbeing courses
- Essential Skills Education classes
- Families and Friends counselling
- Next Steps activities and projects
- Well-being projects for clients and staff
- Volunteer opportunities

In October 2020, Stepping Stones North Wales Counselling Service achieved the Independent Accreditation Programme Quality Mark for services supporting male victims and survivors of sexual violence. Building on this achievement, we will continue to develop our male specific courses and projects across the year.





**Donations to Stepping Stones can be  
made via the following:**



**\*This Annual Report is also available  
in Welsh and large print.**

**\*Electronic document version**