



Stepping Stones North Wales

Annual Report

2021 – 2022

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Message from the Vice Chair

As Vice Chair of Trustees, I am pleased to provide the Annual Report for the year 2021-2022. You will see this has been another busy year for Stepping Stones North Wales, as we move forward from the effects of the pandemic. Despite the obvious difficulties, Covid-19 had some unexpected benefits. It has enabled us to further develop new ways of working remotely, in order to support our clients. For some service users, either individually or in groups settings, where this has proved to be beneficial and convenient, we have retained this flexibility of service provision. Allowing staff, counsellors, and volunteers to attend training sessions and meetings remotely. Post pandemic grants have boosted our funds, enabling us to help meet the demands of increasing number of referrals and to reduce waiting lists.

I am delighted that Berni Durham-Jones our CEO (formerly Director of Services) has settled in well and continues to be a very busy and forward-looking leader. Ready to embrace new innovations to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our organisation. She has been joined by Shona and Kate, who are our joint Clinical Co-ordinators. Their services have been much welcomed by Berni and our counsellors. The clinical Co-ordinators have piloted a project working within HMP Berwyn.

In this last year we are delighted that we have been able to extend our services, by the addition of an ISVA (independent sexual violence adviser). This includes a Young People's ISVA and a Young People's Counsellor. From the number of referrals received we can see that this is a much-valued addition to the service.

A huge thank you to Shirley and our volunteers, as our Next Steps programme continues to thrive. As we provide Step into Wellbeing courses that include, Understanding the impact of child sexual abuse, Stress Management, Resilience and Emotions, and Own my Life (Domestic Abuse). I cannot fail to mention Louise, Sue and Liz who have all worked extremely hard, ensuring the smooth running of the organisation, both administratively and financially. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the counsellors for their amazing work and my fellow Trustees who have been so committed to Stepping Stones North Wales over the years.

Finally, I acknowledge our service users who, despite their past experiences of childhood sexual abuse, continue to inspire us with their fortitude.

I look forward to seeing Stepping Stones North Wales continue flourish.

Diolch yn Fawr I bawb - Many Thanks Everyone.

Jennie Henderson



Chief Executive Officer Message

What a busy year! At the start the pandemic was still impacting on our services however at times we were able to offer in-person counselling but then it had to stop. We achieved this with great composure and did not waver from ensuring our clients were supported and nearer the end of the year, in-person counselling was firmly back on the agenda.

Stepping Stones has been going through a period of growth and this, in part, has been achieved through funding from the Office for the Police Crime Commissioner which has allowed us to be able to offer two new services. We now have an Independent Sexual Violence Service (ISVA) for current clients. This service allows them to access emotional and practical support, as well as assistance with criminal justice. In addition, we now support 16+ primarily in education and have a dedicated Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (YPIOVA) and a young person's counsellor.

We have been working in collaboration with North Wales Police, Coleg Cambria, Glyndwr University, National Trust (Erddig), Keep Wales Tidy, Race Equality First, Live Fear Free and HMP Berwyn on various exciting projects.

We were able to offer some fundraising activities in-person and we have lots of plans for growing that support throughout North Wales.

Our Next Steps group took part in a range of activities including sewing, crafts and, cookery etc. The group won the Hywel Francis Award for Community Impact with Inspire Adult Learning Awards for Wales.

Our aim for the next twelve months is to embed our Independent Sexual Violence Sexual service and to continue to provide support to individuals across North Wales who have experienced sexual violence. All in all, it's been a very productive year and I would like to express my appreciation for all the dedicated work from my team.

Berni Durham-Jones (Mrs)

Chief Executive Officer

About

Stepping Stones North Wales is a specialist charity that provides support, psychoeducational courses and resources, group activities and counselling free of charge to individuals who live in the six counties of North Wales. Our next steps group complements counselling and is open to all clients in service, referral is via our counsellors and is currently held monthly in Wrexham and Rhyl and clients undertake various activities including pottery, family days out, online safety etc. As part of this we offer Maths, English and IT classes in conjunction with Coleg Cambria and these are held weekly during term time.

We offer a range of courses as part of our Step into Wellbeing programme including stress, resilience, and emotions, understanding sexual abuse sessions and being a male survivor. Art therapy is offered to clients at different stages of counselling and allows individuals to explore their thoughts and feelings through a mixture of talking and creative methods, whilst also assisting clients who may find talking therapy not appropriate, this is offered individually or in small groups. An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) supports clients with a range of issues including practical and emotional support as well as assistance through the criminal justice system. Furthermore, a Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (YPISVA) is available to 16+ primarily in education who have experienced any form of sexual violence, we also offer between six-eight counselling sessions for young people via our young person's counsellor.

We work in partnership with the Live Fear Free Helpline who offer a first steps service to clients whilst on the waiting list, as well as having direct access to the helpline service via our website 24 hours a day, as well as North Wales Police and Coleg Cambria regarding sexual violence.

There are currently around 22 self-employed counsellors who work with individuals either in-person or remotely (telephone/virtual). We provide a tailored approach for clients and offer a choice of gender of counsellor, venue, and time. We offer up to eight-weeks counselling to family and friends of survivors.

We provide community awareness sessions to anyone in a communal setting and provide appropriate information about the service with marketing materials. Our professional awareness enables us to provide bespoke education and knowledge regarding trauma and is directed at professionals.

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

591
Individuals
Supported

418
Female

107
Male

4
Trans Gender/Non-
Binary/Intersex

5075
Counselling sessions
delivered

6778
Support Contacts made
with Individuals

Total 498
Male 125
Female 368
Non- Binary 5

First Steps
316 Offered, 135 accepted service and 118 declined
People accepted the offer in partnership with the
Live Fear Free Helpline

Referrals
within the year

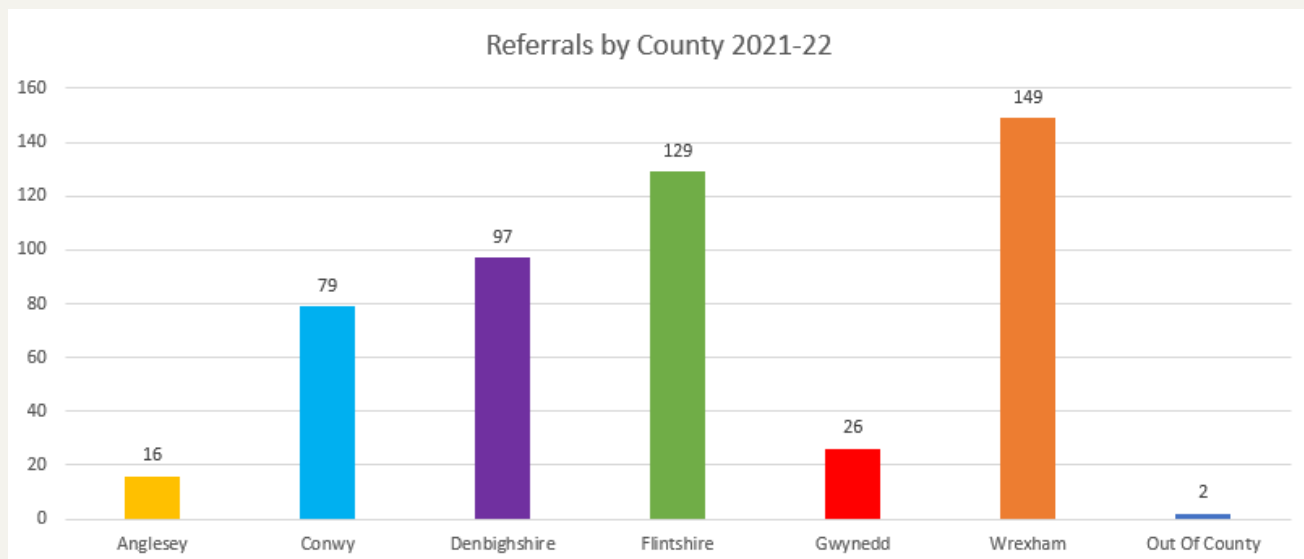


Figure 1 Referrals by County

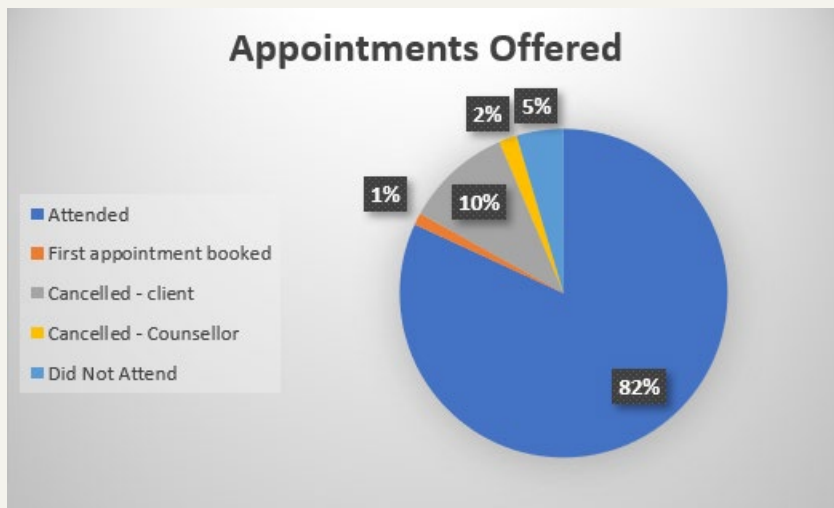


Figure 2 Appointments Offered 2021/22

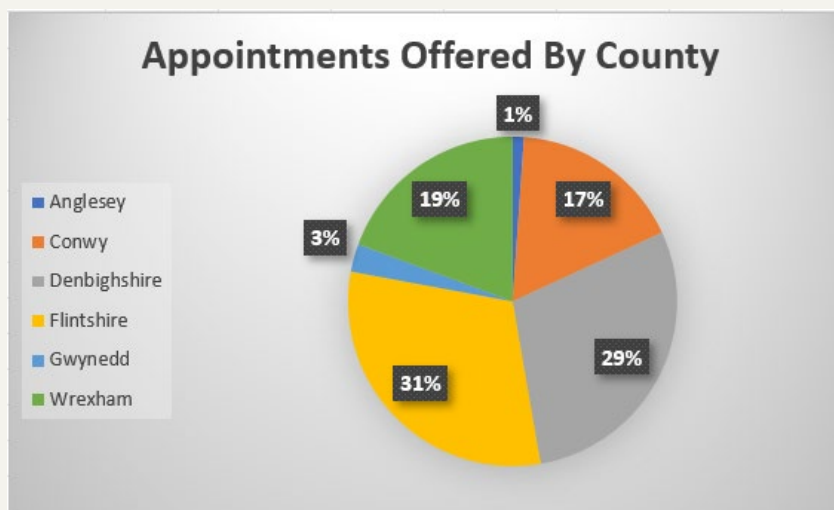


Figure 3 Appointments offered by county 2021/22

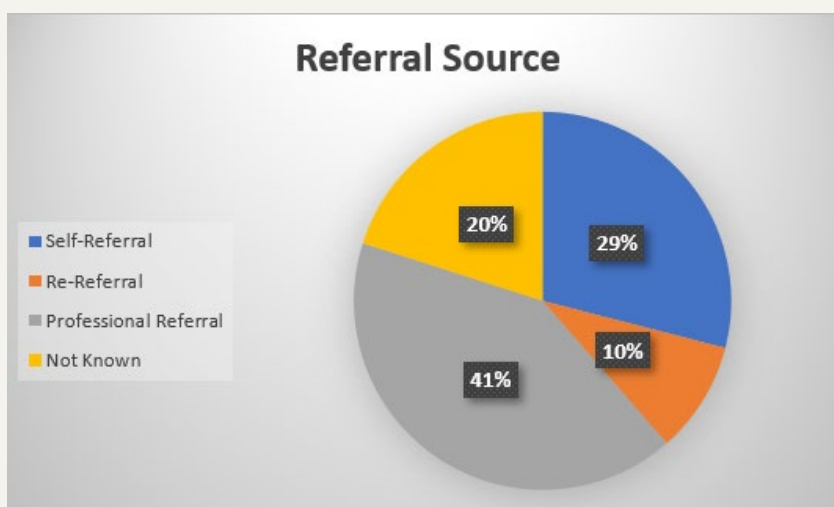


Figure 4 Referral Source 2021/22

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."

Cerrig Camu
Stepping Stones

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 2022-23.

First Steps

Stepping Stones support clients throughout their counselling with us. Following initial assessment, those who want to continue their journey 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

During the covid restrictions we have used a variety of ways to ensure we kept connected and in touch with all the individuals in our Next Steps groups. From wellbeing craft packs, wellbeing texts/calls and monthly newsletters and dedicated Facebook page, with the aim of making sure everyone felt supported. We supported individuals in all 6 counties of North Wales.

At the end of April 21, the Welsh Government relaxed the Covid restrictions and small groups were once again allowed to meet up in person.

There are 62 next steps group members at Wexham, and Rhyl and members were keen to meet up, so we started with a flower arranging session.

We found however that some of the men and women in the groups have suffered with their mental health during Covid-19. The isolation has brought on anxiety and fear of going out again, some had also seen their jobs reduced or lost. With this in mind, we continue to offer a holistic approach with support from weekly wellbeing calls and texts, the provision of food, toiletry packs, fuel vouchers and craft packs, also 1-1 volunteer mentor supported meetings for some to help re-build their confidence and we have found this to be working well.

Throughout the year we have gone on to hold monthly next steps meetings at Rhyl and Wrexham and classes ranged from flower arranging, block printing, sewing, to name a few.

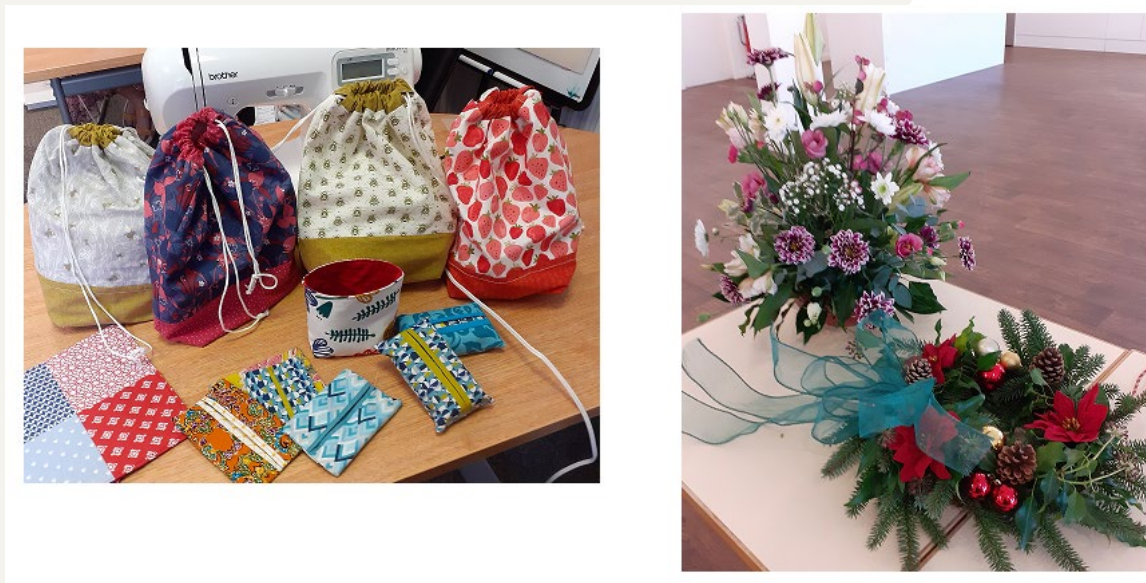


Figure 5 Next Steps Sewing and Flower arranging classes

In September, a Look Good Feel-Good session was hosted by Doll Beauty, co-owned by Samantha Allen and Danielle Gregory, at their salon at Doll HQ Hoole, Chester their range of consumer products is stocked by retailers such as Boots, Beauty Bay, and Pretty Little Thing.



Figure 6 Next Steps Look Good Feel-Good Session

In addition to these classes, we have run two special projects. The first our Grow with Confidence Garden situated at Felin Puleston, Erddig. Part of the National Trust Erddig Eco Garden. This project was supported by Keep Wales Tidy who provided over £9,000 worth of gardening equipment, plants, greenhouses, and expert support to set up the garden. This is now being used by next steps members, their families, Stepping Stones staff and volunteers. To grow their own fruit and vegetables, learn new skills and a place to find peace and relaxation.



Figure 7 Grow with Confidence Garden Felin Puleston

The second has been our Mood and Food, sit and chill project, kindly supported by The Community Foundation Wales. We saw 91 individuals join in the project which included our next steps members and their children, with ages ranged from seven to seventy years it included partners and friends.

We held cookery, menu planning and budgeting sessions, cooking chilli, curries, fresh bread cakes and so much more with the support from chefs at Coleg Cambria, The Welsh Cookery School Bodnant Gardens and The National Trust chef at Erddig.



Figure 8 Mood and Food at Bodnant and Coleg Cambria

Gym membership gave access to swimming and gym sessions and one client learnt to swim. We teamed up with local grocers and Gousto to provide weekly vegetable and fruit packs to enable everyone to cook using fresh ingredients. Following a recipe to make a family meal, this was a favourite with the young people in the group, coming home from school and helping make tea.

We took part in Healthy Eating Week and were able to provide raised beds, plants, trees, and a greenhouse and many of the group are now growing their own fresh fruit and vegetables. Many say that it has really helped improve their mental health and wellbeing.

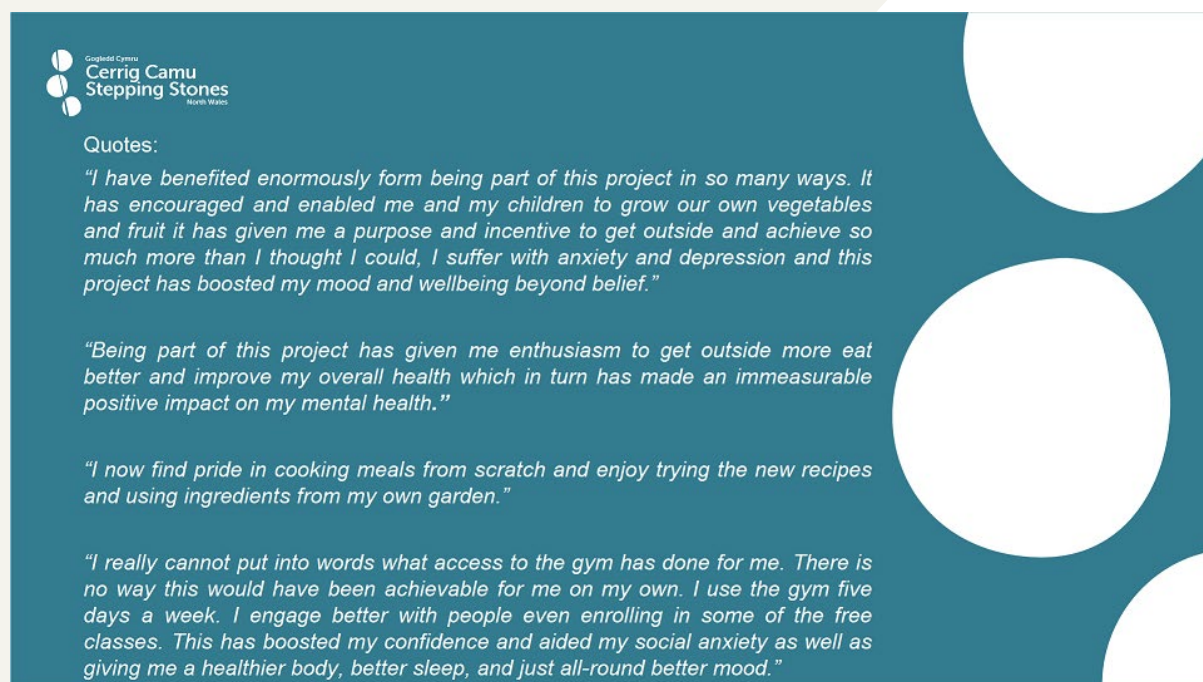


Figure 9 Next Steps Quotes

Our weekly education classes continue with the support of tutor from Coleg Cambria. This year the class has seen the women pass levels 1 and 2 in essential skills (in English and Maths) and has seen the whole group winning the Inspire Hywel Francis Community Impact Award.

Further information shown at:

English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRNHtx50LoI>

Cymraeg: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvC1NyPyp4s>

We were proud to hear this year that one of our original essential skills class members has just graduated from university and is now looking at a career in teaching.

Other Areas of Support

Christmas presents provided to 27 children.

Approximately 100 food packs to families and £1,200 of fuel vouchers.

We have also helped with housing and debt issues and enabled one lady with health issues to move to a ground floor flat.

Next Steps Stats

Table 1 Next steps Feedback

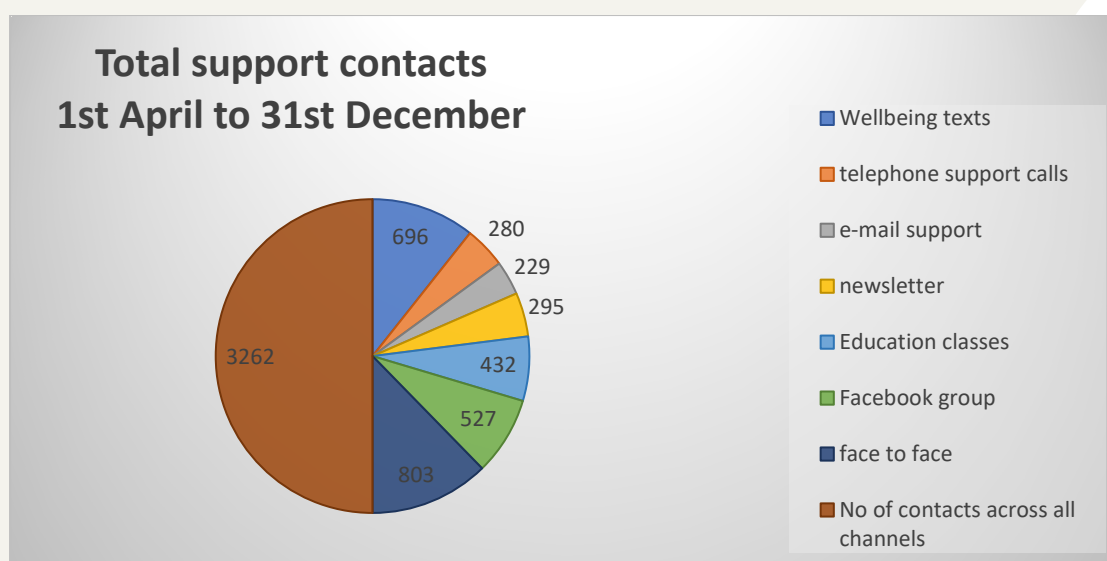


Figure 10 Next Steps Total Support Contacts 1st April to 31st December 2021

Step into Wellbeing

During the year, we were again able to secure 'VAWDASV Needs Regional Plan' funding. This enabled us to continue with our successful Step into Wellbeing project throughout the year.

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 comprises the following courses:

Understanding the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

This is specifically designed to provide support to those on our waiting list and is offered after initial assessment, the 90-minute session aims to help clients' understanding of some of the effects and impacts that child sexual abuse can have on their lives.

During the year 2021-22, we ran three sessions, with 18 waiting list clients attending (15 female and 3 male).

Client Feedback:

"Thank you for today. I found it very emotional, but in a way that I found very beneficial. I feel a little lighter."

Own My Life

This 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.

During the year 2021-22, we ran two 12-week Own my Life courses, attended by 21 female clients.

Client Feedback:

What three words can you think of that most accurately describe the group?

"Open. Honest. Supportive"

"The information your get is enlightening, and you will realise that you are not on your own!"

Stress Management, Emotions & Resilience Course

This seven-week virtual 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.

During the year 2021-22 we ran three Stress Management, Emotions and Resilience Courses, attended by 29 clients (27 female, two male).

Client Feedback:

"The teaching was of a high standard and the counsellor made everyone feel very at ease. I enjoyed the ice breakers at the beginning of each session as I felt it got everyone ready to talk and share if they wanted to during the session.

The course felt very kind. At no point was it too much, and there was always respect that we were there because stress was an issue for us, and we clearly didn't want to feel more stressed by the course.

Each week we did a different breathing exercise which I really enjoyed. We were taught and shared between us different coping strategies and ways of thinking all of which were very valuable."

Healthy Relationships Course

The new Healthy Relationships course rolled out in February 2022, and focuses on understanding relationships, how to build a healthy relationship, explores potential barriers to healthy relationships and covers topics including boundaries, trust, communication, and relationships in general.

During the year 2021-22, we ran one Healthy Relationships Course, attended by four female clients.

Client Feedback:

"I found the course to be very beneficial, we received plenty of handouts, everything was gone through and explained well. There was plenty of group participation which I liked, and the tutors were very encouraging and made you feel at ease."

Art Therapy

Our Art Therapist began working for in January 2022.

Art Therapy has a lot in common with talk therapy or counselling, except it uses creative expression as its main way of working, the aim is to provide a safe, accepting, and confidential space where clients can explore their experiences using different creative methods.

The Art Therapist has been delivering weekly one-to-one sessions with clients

Client Feedback:

"I believe the sessions are extremely valuable and helpful. This does not feel like a chore or something I resent; it feels enlightening and enjoyable. I have found myself wanting to create again."

Overall, during 2021-22, we had 239 individual course attendances - 228 females and 11 males.

Working in Partnership



We support partnership working, which allows all our team to learn from one another, increasing our knowledge, skills, and practice. Ideas and information can then be shared, and a positive, mutually supportive environment can develop.

The partnership working has enabled positive outcomes for the individuals involved.

Without the support of our funders, commissioners, and supporters. We just could not provide the services and level of support we do.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved and provided their kind support.

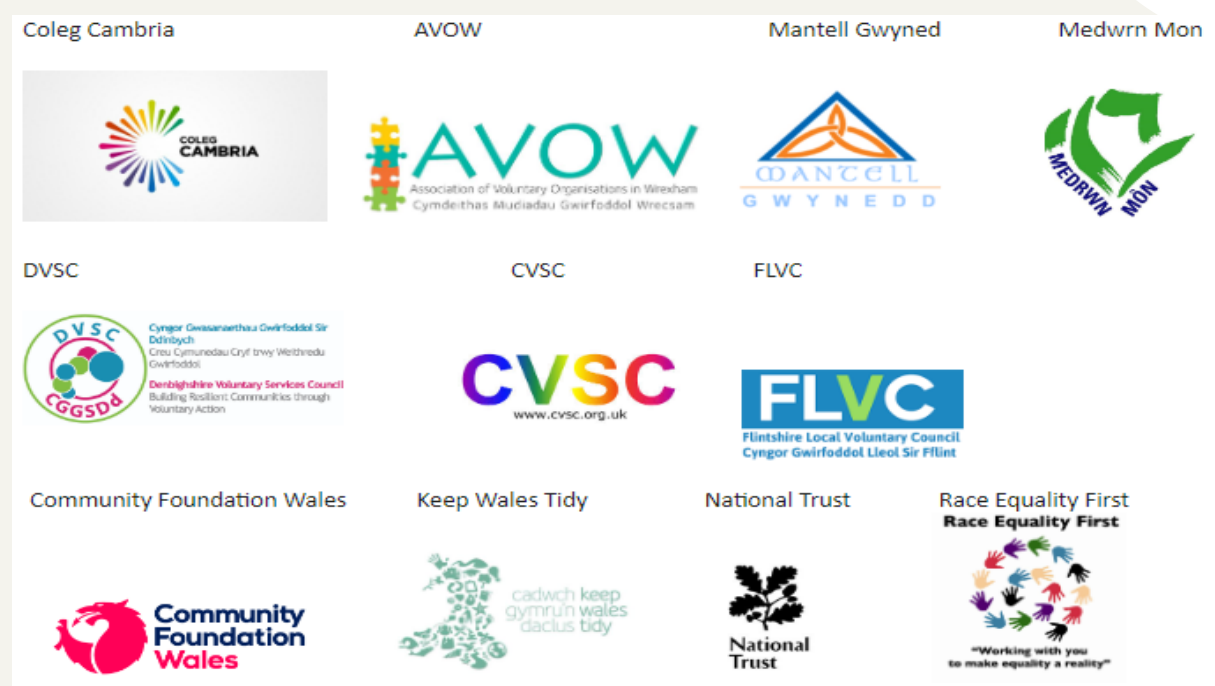


Figure 11 Working Partnership

Our partnerships include Lloyds Bank Foundation, Live Fear Free helpline, BCUHB, Ministry of Justice, WCVA, Welsh Women's Aid, VAWDASV, Welsh Government, Anglesey County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Gwynedd Council and Wrexham County Borough Council.

Fundraising / Donations

Sadly, adult victims/survivors of sexual abuse in childhood, still need our support, we rely on donations to continue to provide that support and fundraising really can make a difference.

It is a brave decision to reach out and ask for help, our helpline operates 24 hrs a day 365 days a year, with out of hours and weekend calls kindly supported through our partnership working with the Live Fear Free Helpline.



We are registered with the Fundraising regulator

Fundraising Events



Figure 12 Poppy's Manchester Half Marathon

Poppy's Manchester Half Marathon in October 2021 raised £270.00 Poppy and her mum ran the half marathon dressed as Freddie Mercury and Brian May from the band Queen! Fantastic unique support thank you!



Figure 13 Samantha Allen and Danielle Gregory Co-owners of Doll Beauty

Doll Beauty organised a Dolloween Night at the Opera Bar and Grill Chester which raised £1,000.00. Huge thanks to Samantha Allen and Danielle Gregory and all the Doll Beauty team for their wonderful support.

Coleg Cambria raised £1,143.75 with the sale of their Christmas crafts, we would like to thank Karl Jackson and all the staff and students at the Bersham Road college site for their wonderful skills and support.



Figure 14 A reindeer one of the craft items made by the students



Figure 15 Karl Jackson, cheque presentation at Coleg Cambria

Other Support Received



Figure 16 Arron Ramsey Wales football Shirt

Kerry McCann kindly donated a signed Arron Ramsey Wales football shirt.

We had a wonderful handmade nativity scene by Mr Ian Mitchell who carefully crafted each piece. His stunning creation raised £220.00.



Figure 17 Handmade nativity made by Mr Ian Mitchell

A signed picture of Sir Edmund Hilary was kindly donated and raised £100.00

We provide a range of options for donating to the charity including an Easy Giving page on our website, amazon charity support, texting, card payments and Loto Lwcus.

Volunteering

We value each and every one of our volunteers and are committed to working with them, in a way which adds value to our services, whilst enabling volunteers to use their skills and experience positively which is respected by all. We just couldn't provide all the services at our charity without their wonderful support. They are a vital part of the team, and their work really does help change the lives of the individuals we support. During the pandemic, our volunteers quickly adapted their roles and really stepped up to the challenge.

In February we held a Volunteer Meet and Greet Day and were able to say a huge Thank You!



Figure 18 Volunteer Meet and Greet Day - Feb 2022

30 Volunteers
23 Women and 7 Men

Age Range 26-72 years

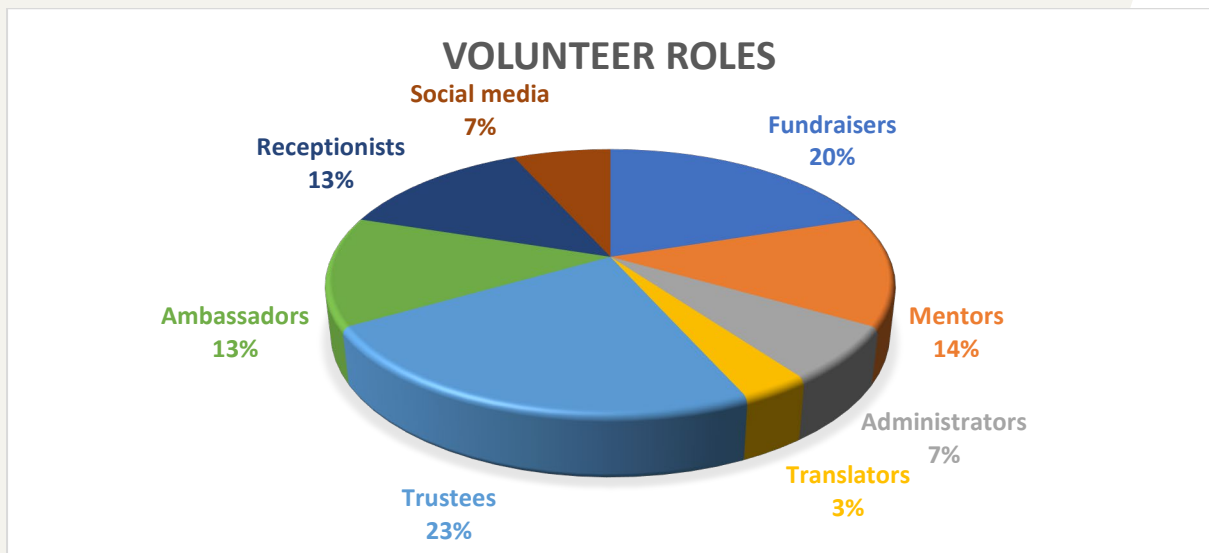


Figure 19 Volunteer Roles 2021/22



Figure 20 Volunteer Quote

Financial Summary

Income

During the financial year 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, our total income was **£532,262.48**, a decrease of £11,537.52 compared to the previous financial year. The increase on the previous year was due to additional funding we received to assist with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to our principal funding sources which include The Ministry of Justice, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, North Wales Commissioners, Welsh Government Revenue & Capital, Wrexham Borough Council, and AVOW. We were able to apply for funds from a variety of other organisations.

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 **£482,900.17**. Whilst this has increased by £90,229.17 81.3% compared to the previous fiscal year. Even with a decrease in income it still resulted in a surplus of £49,362.31. Part of the increased expenditure relates to a significant increase in training costs and supervision fees, Covid-19 cover & expenses, 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.

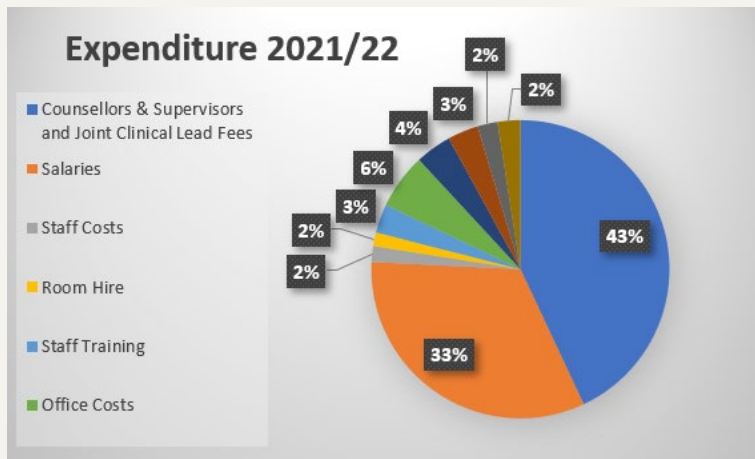


Figure 21 Expenditure graph 2021/22

Future Plans

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.

Outreach and Awareness – we will develop our methods of raising sexual violence awareness, including the development of a Webinar, information sessions given by our YPISVA 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
- Art Therapy



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



donr



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

***Electronic document version**