



ANNUAL REVIEW 2015 – 2016

Registered charity 1058295

Registered company limited by guarantee 2266883

Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge Ltd
PO Box 40
Colchester
CO1 2XJ

www.colchester-refuge.org.uk/

Patron: Amanda Root

Trustees at October 2016: Catherine Clarke, June Freeman, Nancy McNichols, Julie Powell, Jane Wilson

Company Secretary: Catherine Clarke

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Our core values

We totally reject all forms of domestic abuse and any attempts to justify it.

Domestic abuse is not a marginal social issue. We believe in the importance of campaigning against it as part of asserting the dignity of women and men and helping them to act autonomously and independently.

We believe that everyone has the right to make free and informed decisions about her or his future and her or his right to choose the structure of their family.

We believe that children affected by domestic abuse deserve our support.

We believe in equality of opportunity.

We believe in the independence and autonomy of the voluntary sector.

This last year has been changing and challenging for the Refuge. Our Executive Director, Caroline Robinson, left in August 2015 to start a new life in Italy. I took over as Chair from Mo Oliver in February 2016. Our Interim Executive Director, Sanna Westwood, has worked hard to ensure that we have continued to maintain our high level of services to people experiencing domestic abuse.

Funding, as always, remains a complex and formidable process. We are working with Safer Places, who were successful in obtaining the Essex County Council contract for delivery of domestic abuse services in Essex in July 2015. This has necessitated some changes in our structure, particularly around our outreach and community services. This has enhanced our work in a wider remit and with local partnerships, providing greater support, for example, within the NHS. We have increased our presence in rural areas in NE Essex.

In March 2016, we were awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for a three-year project called "You can't beat a woman". This project will document the history of women's refuge work in the East of England and its impact on the women survivors who have used the services.

We thank all our staff for dealing so positively with the restructure this year, their dedication and hard work which ensure that we meet our core values to provide the best support for those who experience domestic abuse.

Julie Powell, Chair of Trustees

This past year has presented us with many challenges as we work to maintain our services whilst responding to funding and contract requirements and delivering our objectives. Whilst our services predominantly continue to support women, we are now established as providing gender-inclusive services.

As ever, funding for both our core and frontline services is an ongoing issue as demand increases, so does the need for secure funding to both sustain and develop services and this, coupled with new commissioning models, has resulted in varied and complex contracting arrangements.

We have restructured our Adult Services team in response to new commissioning arrangements and, although unsettling for staff, they have responded positively to the changes and are enjoying increasing our reach into the communities of Colchester and Tendring whilst developing new partnerships with other organisations. Occupancy in our two refuges has been maintained over the year, but the new commissioning framework is looking to reduce refuge spaces across Essex and will no longer fund services for more than 5% of women who come from outside the Essex County Council area.

Together with Changing Pathways (previously known as Basildon Women's Aid) we are delivering an exciting two-year NHS Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) project, working in partnership with Colchester General Hospital and Anglian Community Enterprise. The funding for this project has been provided via Essex Community Foundation and Comic Relief. We look forward to the publication of an evaluation next year which will provide us with evidence to support ongoing service delivery.

I would like to pay tribute to our extraordinary staff team, who have continued to work tirelessly to provide services day in, day out but not forgetting our volunteers and our specialist volunteer counsellors who consistently provide an excellent service and have seen a total of **765** clients during 2015 – 2016.

As we look to 2016 – 2017 we want to build on our passion and strong track record to develop our services, further ensuring that everyone who needs to can benefit from our specialist support.

Sanna Westwood, Interim Executive Director

Our support services for adults

Services are provided to all victims of domestic abuse on the basis of risk, need and choice.

High risk victims are those where there is an imminent risk of serious harm or death. They are supported through the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) service which is commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner and covers the whole of Essex.

Medium risk victims are those who are not at imminent risk of serious harm if their circumstances do not change. This service is commissioned by Essex County Council for all areas of Essex except Southend and Thurrock. Referrals into this service should be made by phone on 03301 025811, although we are able to support and signpost as appropriate.

There is no commissioned service for **standard risk** victims. However, we can assess and refer on for support to other services that we provide which are funded through other income streams such as the Big Lottery Fund, Children in Need, Comic Relief.

To be effective in reaching victims and to do so as early as possible IDVAs and Domestic Abuse Practitioners (DAPs) are **community-based** and work wherever and whenever it is most appropriate to do so.

We offer a range of counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy recovery programmes based on individual need as well as facilitating peer support groups. We also provide specialist housing advice, hold drop-in surgeries and can support clients to access legal advice. We have 21 units of accommodation for women and their children, as well as single and older women. In 2015-16, we accommodated **67** women and their children: **25%** of whom referred themselves to us, **16%** were referred from another voluntary agency, **10%** from another refuge and the remainder from the police, health and social services or housing departments. From boroughs within Essex, we received **41** referrals.

In our community work, we worked with an average of **32** clients per month in the Borough of Colchester and **20** per month in the Tendring District Council area.

Group programmes were Time for Me, Freedom, Liberty, Roads 2 Recovery, Power 2 Change and Coffee Pots, with more than **260** participants in total.

Our support services for children

We have an Ofsted-registered pre-school on site, which in 2015-2016 provided services to **53** young children up to the age of five years. We offer the Early Years Foundation stage curriculum. We also welcomed **45** other young people: **35** aged from five to eleven years and **10** from twelve to eighteen years.

9 of the children were on children in need or child protection plans, **6** had special educational needs or a disability. **39** children were affected by issues of mental health or emotional well-being.

Our weekly “Mum and Baby” group is popular and we also support mothers with parenting of children of all ages.

Holiday activities for children and families in the refuge and in the community include days out, picnics, trips to Discovery Cove, Jump Street and to the Mercury Theatre. Mums and children get involved in preparing impromptu barbecues, to encourage healthy eating.

Balancing on the edge: a survivor's story

After years of physical and emotional abuse, I was finally at the edge of death's door. This fairy tale had turned into a nightmare and my partner was no longer Prince Charming but a violent perpetrator, and when I look back I see the warnings were there. Gone was the fun-loving independent woman, now a shadow of her former self and I forgot what it was like to feel happy or safe. I finally managed to get away and I contacted Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge. The woman on the phone was kind and supportive and made me feel brave enough to make the journey to them. She would play a prominent role in changing my life and I am forever grateful to her. I was met and settled into my room, not rushed into talking about what I had been through and for the first time I could just breathe. It took me a while to adjust but I was supported by specialist workers and by friendships with other residents. We shared experiences and helped each other and I also attended Refuge specialist programmes, helping me to understand perpetrator behaviour and develop tools to make better future decisions. The abuse was not my fault, it was his, I know that now and I am so glad I finally left him. I now have a home of my own where I'm safe, and I have a future. Every day is a blessing and I'm so thankful to the Refuge for supporting me all the way. I once was a victim but now I'm a survivor.

Our volunteers

We have an amazing team of **29** volunteers (excluding Trustees) who together contributed more than 2,000 hours in 2015-2016. Other volunteers are involved in fundraising projects and activities.

We truly could not provide our services without these volunteers. A huge “thank you” to everyone who has contributed their time and skills.

Being a volunteer

Before I retired, I planned how I would fill my time once the happy days had arrived. My first contact, by phone, with the refuge encouraged me to meet the Chair and offer to help. Volunteering means far more when it's a two-way process. I have learned so much from the staff, Trustees and clients and feel proud to be part of this essential and very effective team who really value volunteers and make sharing my time and skills a real pleasure.

Anne Kiely, Trustee

Could you join us as a volunteer? Find out more on our website <http://www.colchester-refuge.org.uk/be-a-volunteer/> or phone 01206 500585.

Being a Trustee

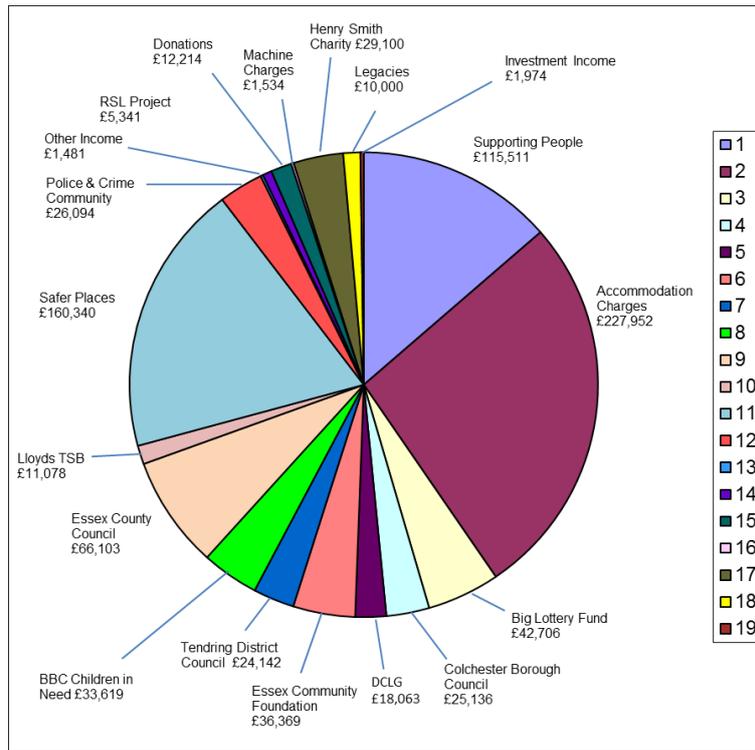
We meet monthly to discuss the running of the charity, with a detailed agenda. Management team members attend the meetings and update us on the work of their departments, highlighting operational challenges and successes. This keeps us up to date and allows us to make informed decisions and convert day-to-day detail into our planning and strategic decisions. Trustees are volunteers who spend at least ten hours per month on their role. We work to our strengths, calling upon life skills or further training to meet the needs of the organisation, ensuring that we are a good employer and are able to deliver on our contractual and charitable obligations.

Nancy McNichols, Trustee

Financial report for the year ending 31 March 2016

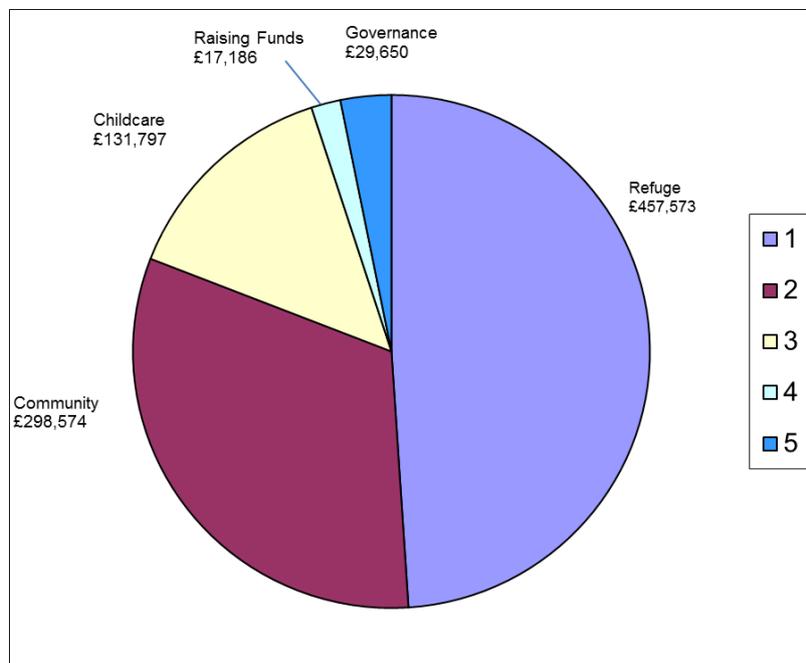
Incoming resources

Our total income for 2015 – 2016 was £848,757 (compared to £837,353 for the previous year).



Resources expended

We spent £934,780 in 2015 – 2016 (compared to £848,497 in the previous year). 99% of this was direct charitable expenditure.



Thank you

We would like to thank all those who have been so generous with their support this year with cash donations, household goods, bedding, women's and children's clothes, toiletries, food, quilts, toys for the children and the giving tree at Christmas.

It is not possible to name here all of the people, groups, churches, Quaker meetings, supermarkets and many more who have supported us throughout the year, but, with all your help, we have been able to make a bigger difference to the families who access our refuges and community services.

Outside our statutory funding, we received contributions from:

BBC Children in Need

Big Lottery Fund

Chiron Fund

Essex Community Foundation

Lloyds Bank Foundation

The Henry Smith Charity