

A continuous white line that winds across the page, connecting various line-art illustrations of people. It starts at the top left, loops around a woman and child, then a man sitting, then loops down to a woman and child, then a man standing, and finally loops back up to a woman and child.

Safety Net

Impact Report 2022–23

1. Foreword

It is a pleasure to introduce Safety Net's 2022-2023 Impact Report, and to reflect on the outstanding work of the team over the past year. Every year, the overall outcome scores of our service users improves and increases. This is despite ever increasing referral numbers and a cost of living crisis that is deeply affecting local people in Cumbria.

I've been involved with Safety Net since 2016, when I first came to the service as a service user. Back then, I was a walking shell after leaving my abusive partner. For the first year after leaving, I was on constant guard the whole time and hyper vigilant. I wasn't sleeping and I wasn't eating – I was just existing. I spent the whole time dwelling on the past.

I had some tier 2 Trauma Informed Practitioner sessions with Helena, followed by tier 3 therapy with Kathryn, and from that moment onwards, my life got better. Kathryn taught me the skills I needed to focus on managing and moving past the trauma of the abuse. This was followed by an emotional resilience course in 2017, with a number of other service users who now remain lifelong friends.

Safety Net was quite literally my lifeline at that time. I was so thankful for the support I received that I became a volunteer, running a coffee and crafts group with other women who'd been through the same journey that I had. Over time I began to recover from my

experience and to heal. This allowed me to focus my attention on my life and making it the best it could be. In 2021, I was delighted to be invited to become a trustee, one of two with lived experience of abuse. More recently I've made use of my bookkeeping skills and taken on a finance role in the team (to prevent a conflict of interest, I resigned from my trustee position).

Now that I'm one of the team, I'm prouder than ever of Safety Net and what it's achieved over the last few years. I'm living proof that the Safety Net model – involving initial information and advice, stabilisation work through trauma informed practitioners, deeper therapeutic work and reintegration back into the community – really does work. My daughter is also a member of the Trauma Informed Practitioner team, and the charity has had a transformative effect on both of our lives.

I hope you enjoy reading this year's report. We welcome all comments and feedback, so if you'd like to get in touch, please do send us an email to office@safetynetuk.org.

**Giovanna Maietta,
Finance Officer,
Former Service User,
Safety Net**

Chair's Foreword

It In 2022 I concluded my introduction to our Annual Report by quoting the words of Nelson Mandela:

"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in our hands to make a difference".

At Safetynet we are committed to making that difference for all those we help.

Our Impact Report for 2022-2023 provides the hard evidence of the difference our work is making to our local community.

The case studies in this report, and in particular the story of our Finance Officer Giovanna Marietta's journey with Safetynet – from Service User to Trustee, and now a valued member of our team – shows how the work we do is transforming lives and making a real difference.

**Linda Vance,
Chair,
Safety Net**



2. Introduction

Safety Net is a charity supporting the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse across Cumbria.

We offer advice, support, counselling and therapy to adults, children and young people, who have been affected by abuse and trauma.

Our approach is holistic, inclusive, LGBTQ+ friendly and trauma informed. We work in partnership with other professionals and community groups, with the aim of improving wellbeing and quality of life.

In this report you can find out about the impact of our work in 2022 – 2023, and the difference we are making to lives in the local area.

*To protect the identities of our service users, names have been changed in all testimonials and case studies included in this report.

3. The scale of the problem

Rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse are common in our society. Sadly, recent figures show that there has been an increase in abuse across Cumbria. Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that in the year to March 2022, Cumbria experienced:

- 9990 domestic abuse incidents and crimes – up 9% from the year before, and the highest amount since records began.
- 1708 sexual offences – up 38% from the year before, and the highest amount since records began.

As a service, we've also seen an increase in young people experiencing abuse. This has included an increase in young girls seeking services in response to sexual assault and rape. We've also seen an increase in sexual activity amongst children under 16, including sexting and sending nudes.

Our service users are also experiencing increasingly complex needs related to the trauma they have experienced. In 2022 – 2023, over 70% presented with moderate to high trauma symptoms.

The effects of trauma

Abuse inflicts deep trauma – the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated.

Trauma affects a person's physical health, emotions, impulse control and self-image. It also affects their ability to think, learn, concentrate and form relationships. Many people who have been abused have mental health problems and suffer from depression, anxiety and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Common side effects include nightmares, panic attacks, self-harm and thoughts and attempts of suicide.

In response to the abusive experience, people can develop a range of complex feelings, including anger, shame and guilt. Many find it difficult to trust others and to form relationships. Poor self-care and low levels of confidence and self-esteem can occur, as well as poor physical and mental health. Adults and young people often turn to drugs and alcohol as coping strategies. Many self-harm and have eating disorders.

As a result of Safety Net's support, our service users are able to process and recover from the trauma they have experienced. This results in improved mental and physical health, as our outcomes show on page 30. Many find employment or go back to education. Some get involved in their local community, expanding their circle of social support. All of this enables our service users to heal and move past their abusive experiences, with the aim of improving their lives.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM IN CUMBRIA:

9990

DOMESTIC ABUSE INCIDENTS & CRIMES IN 2022 – UP 9% FROM THE YEAR BEFORE, AND THE HIGHEST AMOUNT SINCE RECORDS BEGAN.

1708

SEXUAL OFFENCES IN 2022 – UP 38% FROM THE YEAR BEFORE, AND THE HIGHEST AMOUNT SINCE RECORDS BEGAN.

998

PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY SAFETY NET IN 2022 – THE HIGHEST AMOUNT SINCE OUR CHARITY WAS FOUNDED.



Poppy – adult tier 2 trauma-informed support

In July 2022, Poppy reached out to Safety Net, seeking help after enduring years of domestic abuse from her ex-partner, who was also the father of her child. Despite reporting the abuse to the police, no action was taken, and she found herself entangled in family court battles as her ex-partner sought access to their son. A non-molestation order was put in place, but it was a distressing and anxiety-inducing situation for Poppy, who constantly feared running into her ex and his partner while out with her son.

Laura, Safety Net's Trauma Informed Practitioner supported Poppy with eight sessions of tier 2 support. At the outset, Poppy described feeling constantly on edge, so the sessions focused on empowering her with coping strategies, anxiety management techniques, and psychoeducational insights into the impact of domestic abuse trauma. Together, they practiced breathing and grounding exercises, granting Poppy a sense of control over her emotions and their physical impact.

A significant breakthrough for Poppy was being able to openly discuss the sexual abuse she had endured within her relationship. This not only provided relief but also offered validation and belief in her experiences. As the sessions progressed, efforts were made to bolster Poppy's confidence by highlighting her strengths and encouraging self-compassion, a recurring theme in their discussions.

Gradually, Poppy's feelings of vigilance and anxiety diminished substantially. The most momentous change came in regards to her sense of safety. She achieved a major milestone during Christmas when she experienced no contact or issues with her ex-partner or his family. This peaceful period allowed Poppy and her son to enjoy a happy time together without the looming fear of her ex-partner trying to see their child during the holidays.

Additionally, Poppy's engagement in leisure activities improved significantly. She regained her passion for attending dog shows and started enjoying nights out with friends once more.

After completing the eight support sessions, Poppy felt equipped to manage and rationalise her thoughts and feelings better, marking a positive turning point in her journey towards healing and recovery.

4. Our key achievements in 2022 – 2023

Every year the number of people we support increases. 2022 – 2023 was no exception – our referrals increased by a third. Despite these increased pressures, the outcomes of our service users have improved across almost all areas (see page 30 for information). This shows the real difference we are making to the lives of local people.

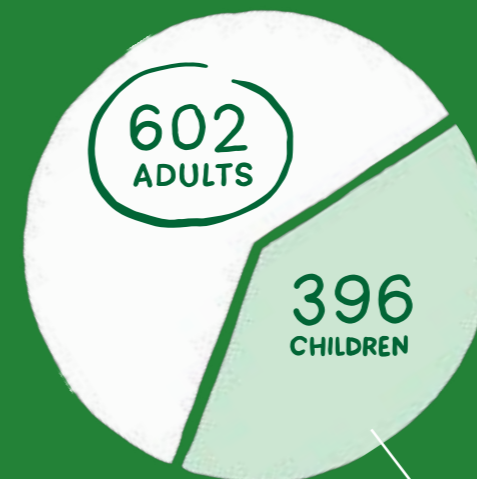
There are many reasons why the number of people we are helping is increasing every year:

- We've expanded our schools service to 10 schools across Cumbria, so referrals for young people have increased by 98%.
- Public services are overwhelmed due to funding cuts, and some have closed. This has resulted in more referrals.
- Safety Net's profile has improved due to our communications and partnership working.
- National campaigns are raising the awareness of domestic and sexual abuse, so more people understand about the impact of abuse.

"I could sit and write a book on the whole experience, it has been life changing... I am so excited for my future now. My therapist was absolutely amazing and the whole experience will stay with me for the rest of my life."

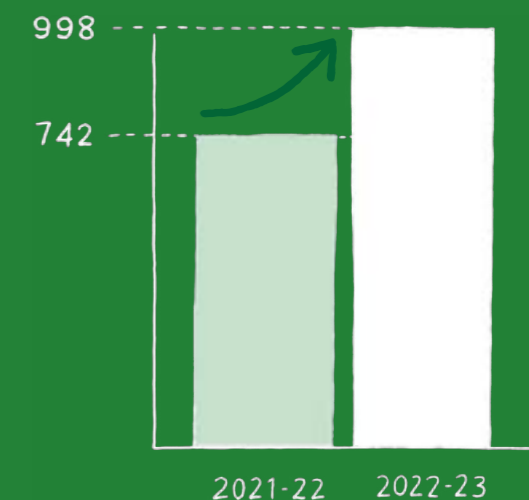
– A*, adult service user

IN 2022-2023 WE SUPPORTED **998** PEOPLE -



- OF WHICH **292** WERE IN SCHOOLS

... AN INCREASE OF **33%** FROM THE YEAR BEFORE:



13553

INTERACTIONS ACROSS ALL SERVICES

260

PROFESSIONALS ATTENDED WORKSHOPS / TRAINING

710

ENQUIRIES FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE

1412

YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDED PEER GROUP SESSIONS



“My time spent with Safety Net has been very rewarding, I always felt safe, supported and heard by my wonderful therapist.”
– C*, adult service user

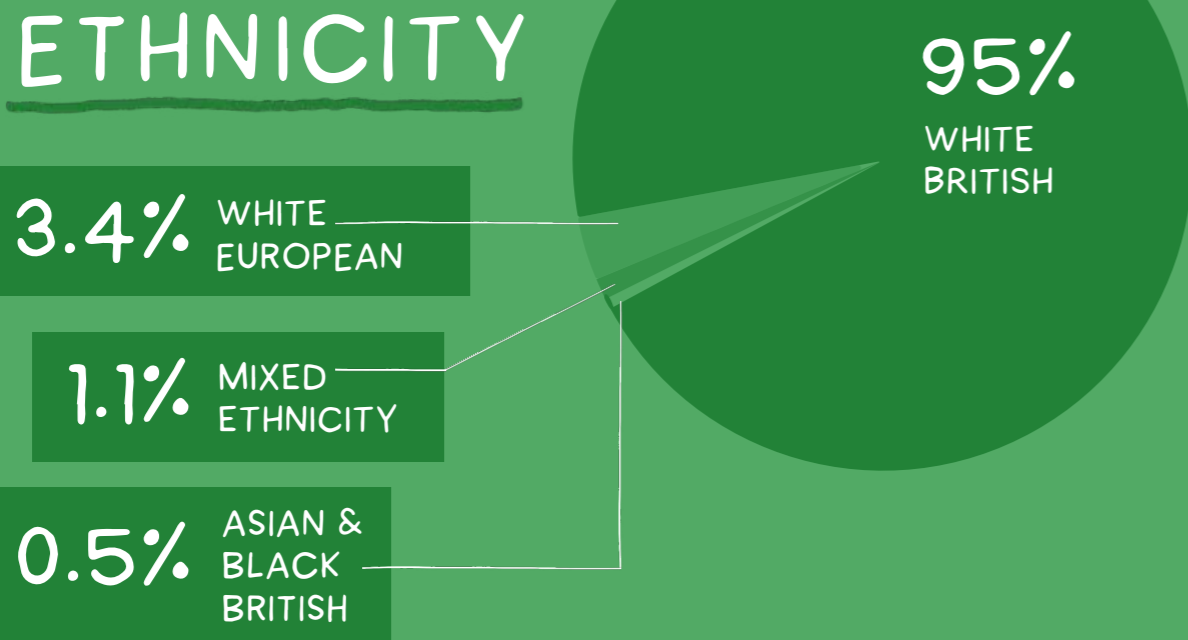
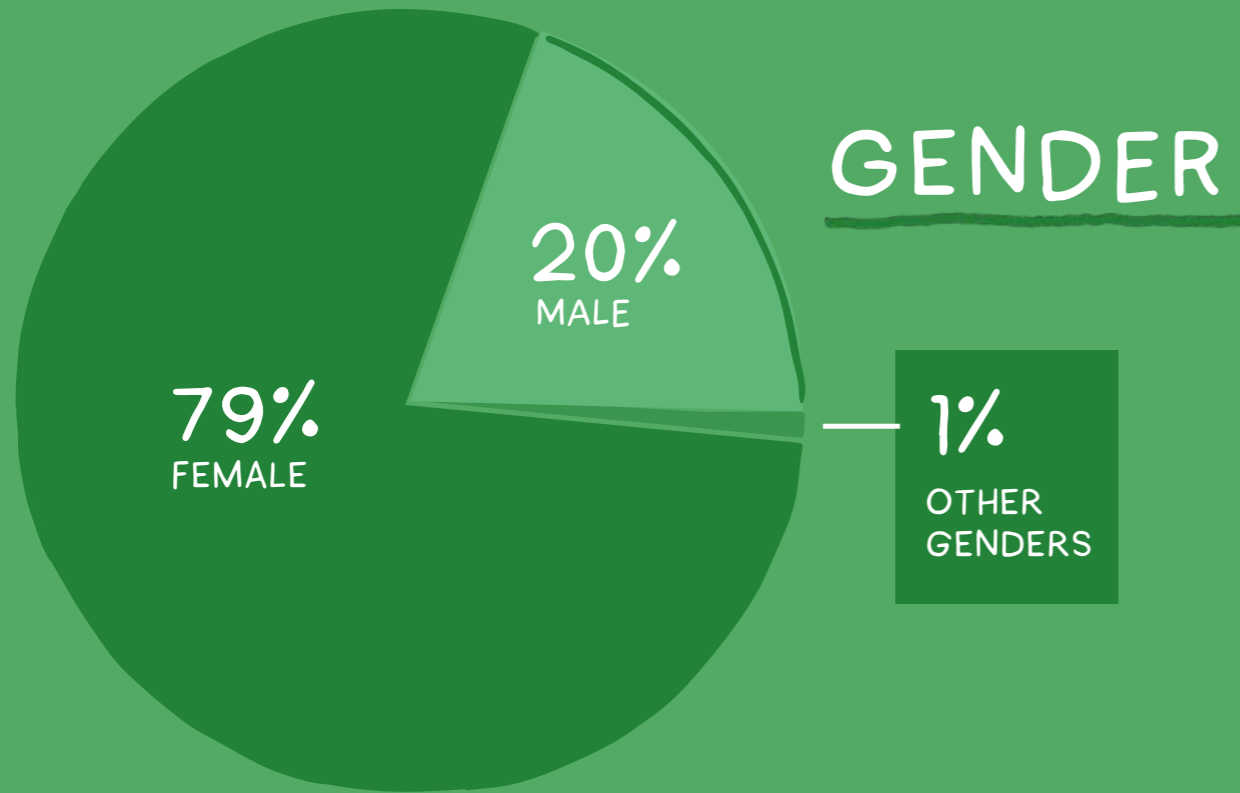
“It was really good to talk to someone about my worries. It allowed me to learn how certain reactions are due to the event and it’s a normal reaction.”
– B*, adult service user

“Safety Net literally saved my life. I am now on the waiting list for counselling. I would like to volunteer with Safety Net in the future.”
– D*, adult service user

5. Who we are



6. Who we support



MAIN PRESENTING INCIDENT



OVER **70%** OF SERVICE USERS PRESENTED WITH MODERATE TO HIGH TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

"I like the sessions because it gives me help on how to control my emotions and I feel comfortable."

- T*, young service user

7. Our vision, mission & values

Our vision:

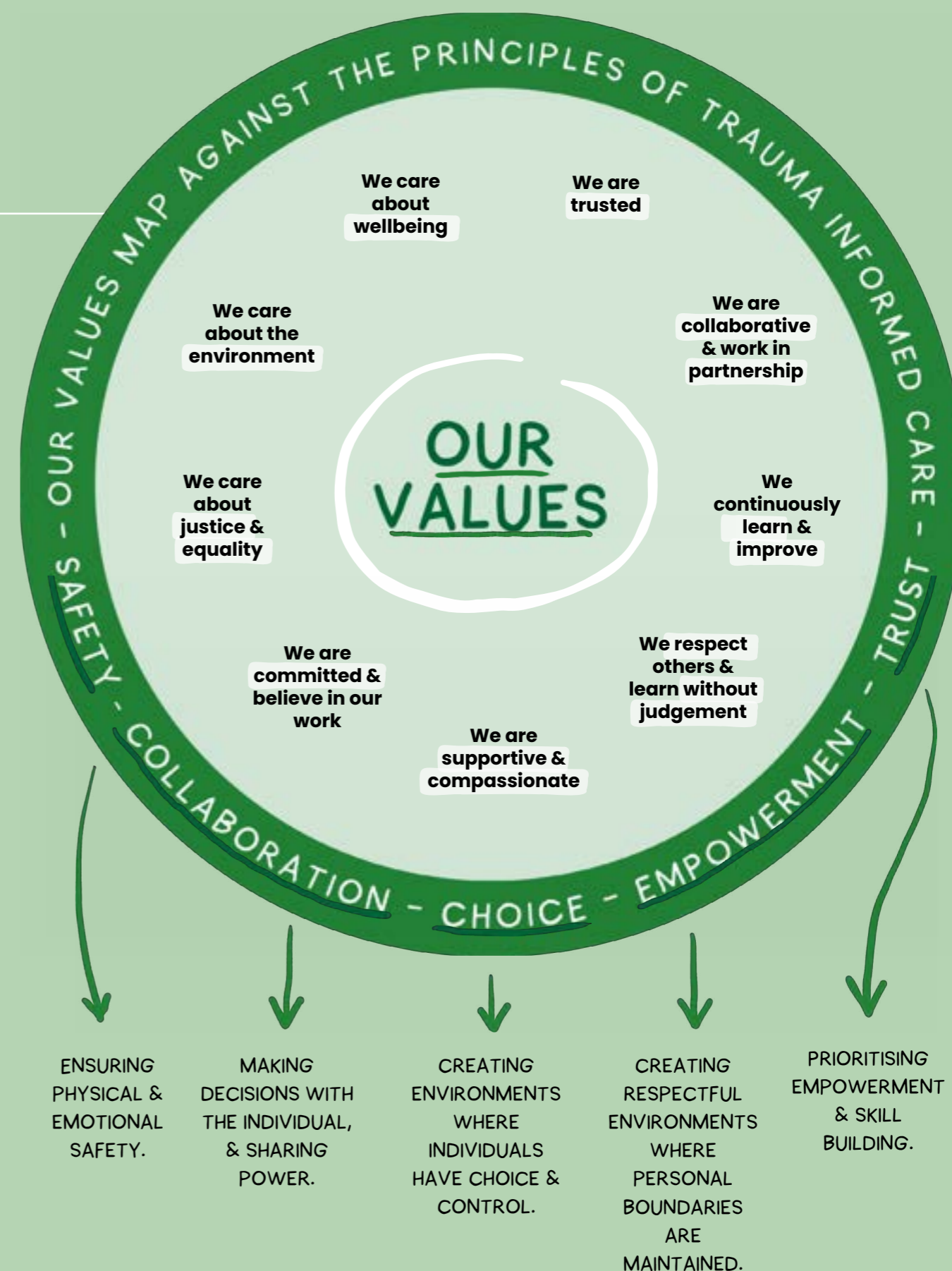
Communities free from abuse.

Our mission:

Safety Net supports those affected by rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse across Cumbria.

We offer advice, support, therapy and a safe space to help people recover from the trauma of abuse.

“Safety Net has been a big part of life and I’m extremely grateful for the help and support I have received. If it wasn’t for Safety Net I wouldn’t have made it through the bad time I was going through.”
– T*, adult service user



8. How we work

We offer a tiered service to adults and children from across Cumbria.

Tier 1:

Information and advice:

Advice and support to individuals, professionals and family members. Includes signposting to other agencies and services, pre-trial and court procedures advice.

Tier 2:

Emotional and practical support through our Trauma Informed Practitioners:

Help with safety, stabilisation and wellbeing. Includes mindfulness, relaxation, sleep and self-care techniques, plus education on the impact of trauma (up to 12 sessions).

Tier 3:

Trauma-focused counselling or therapy:

Helps service users process and cope with the impacts of trauma. Includes pre-trial therapy.

Tier 4:

Reintegration into the community:

Art therapy groups, a men's group, peer mentoring, befriending and volunteering.

We also deliver prevention and education work.

We offer a whole school approach, which includes 1:1 support work with children and young people, through our new programme Your Space. The aim is for young people to develop resilience, self-esteem and confidence to tackle situations that are impacting on their wellbeing. These include:

- Relationships with friends
- Relationships with romantic partners
- Family breakdown
- Sexuality and sexual health issues
- Gender identity issues
- Online safety
- Self-harming
- Anxiety and low mood

Sessions are led by our Trauma Informed Practitioners and supported by the therapy team.

Within each session, we provide advice, explore healthy relationship skills and coping strategies. We use a range of techniques including mindfulness and creative therapy.

We also deliver peer group sessions that support the Relationships and Sex Education agenda. Topics include:

- Consent
- Online safety
- Sending nude photos
- Pornography
- Healthy relationships

We also provide training and information to other professionals. This supports safeguarding, Early Help Assessments, and multi-agency meetings.

“Excellent, I’m so grateful to have been able to access such a brilliant service - thank you so much for helping me when I really needed it, it’s not something I will never forget. You made one of the worst times in my life bearable.”
– H*, Adult service user



Marina – schools case study

Charlie is in year 11 of a school in Cumbria. In 2022, they confided to teachers about their need to identify as a girl. Some of their friends already called them Marina, and they were keen to change their name on the school register, but this required the permission of Marina's Dad. As time went on, Marina started experiencing suicidal thoughts and anxiety that took a toll on her happiness and led to self-harming signs.

The school's pastoral team reached out to Safety Net's Trauma Informed Practitioners, who were embedded in the school. Their 1:1 support sessions gave Marina a safe space to discuss her transition journey, with a particular focus on managing anxiety and suicidal thoughts. Each session enabled Marina to explore her self-image and gender identity through expressive collage work.

Angela, the Trauma Informed Practitioner based in the school, facilitated a meeting with Marina's Dad to navigate the process of changing her name. Recognising the importance of social connections, Angela put Marina in touch with support groups like Stonewall and Pride in North Cumbria. These provided Marina with a sense of belonging and understanding during her waiting period for the medical appointment with the GP, which was a significant step in her journey.

As the support continued, Marina's once overwhelming thoughts of suicide began to subside. She developed strategies to cope with thoughts of self-harm, taking control of her emotions and wellbeing. She also cultivated new friendship groups and started planning to attend next year's pride, shopping for outfits with her new found friends.

Not only did Marina's self-confidence and happiness grow, but a positive ripple effect spread throughout the school. Safety Net's workshops and staff training helped create a more inclusive and supportive environment, promoting understanding and acceptance of gender diversity among everyone in the school.

9. Our theory of change

Our theory of change describes how Safety Net is going to create change in the world.

<p>The context:</p>	<p>Rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse have a huge impact on people’s lives. Over 70% of our service users have symptoms of trauma, causing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health issues • Physical health issues • Risk-taking behaviours • School or work absences • Low resilience and inability to cope <p>Safety Net supports people to manage these impacts, through trauma informed advice, support and therapy.</p>
<p>Our qualities:</p>	<p>Our team are qualified trauma experts. Our service is specialist, safe, trusted, non-judgemental and confidential. We work alongside crisis services providing therapy to help people process trauma. We are members of The Survivors Trust and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).</p>
<p>Our activities:</p>	<p>We offer a tiered service to adults, children and young people based on their needs and risks. The service is flexible, so people can enter the service at different points depending on their needs. We also provide training, education and outreach support in local schools.</p>
<p>Enablers:</p>	<p>We have a highly specialist team. Two trustees have lived experience of abuse. We have the right tools at our disposal, and we measure our impact. We are linked in with partners and that helps us to remain effective.</p>

<p>Inputs:</p>	<p>In recent years we have added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development and training • Staff wellbeing sessions • Staff clinical supervision • A staff charter • Working within BACP’s ethical framework • Increased our reach through partnership working • Increased our reach through effective communications
<p>Outputs:</p>	<p>We measure our outcomes all the time. We have four main delivery outcomes that enable us to measure progress. We also have smaller outcome measures, listed below.</p>
<p>Intermediate outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced risk • Reduced symptoms of trauma • Improvement in mental health • Improvement in self-care, ability to cope • Engagement in social activities • Developing safe and supportive relationships • Engagement in work / school • Improved access to services and support
<p>Aims:</p>	<p>To support the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse across Cumbria, supporting them to live safe and fulfilling lives.</p>

10. How we achieved our goals in 2022 – 2023

Goal 1:

Effective governance and long-term sustainability:

Safety Net is a member organisation of The Survivors Trust and accredited against membership standards. Our organisation is a pilot for The Survivors Trust’s UCAS accredited inspection process. We are also organisational members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, and work within their ethical framework.

In 2022, we finalised funding for the next financial year, and created a new, four-year business strategy. This explains our plans for changing the way that Safety Net is funded over time. Our aim is to create more of our own income through selling training and events and community fundraising. This will give us a greater amount of financial stability over time.

We made progress in these areas by developing training and a community fundraising plan. We also recruited a Volunteer Coordinator and a team of volunteers who can support us with fundraising.

Goal 2:

To challenge inequality and injustice, and campaign to influence strategy and policy:

In 2022 – 2023, we gave evidence to the following government consultations. This ensured we have a voice in national strategy and guidance. We also made sure the final guidance was reflected through our services:

- Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.
- Supporting Male Victims positioning statement.
- Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan.
- Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioning Toolkit.
- Relationships and Sex and Health Education Statutory Guidance.

We are linked in with many local decision-making groups. The groups influence local policy decisions around domestic abuse and sexual violence. This helps Safety Net to represent the voice of our service users, and to ensure domestic and sexual abuse remains high on the political agenda.

OUR PARTNER NETWORK

- ACTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH FORUM
- BRIDGEWAY MANAGERS GROUP
- CUMBERLAND SOCIAL PRESCRIBING
- CUMBERLAND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PRACTITIONERS GROUP
- WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING
- CUMBRIA SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN’S PARTNERSHIP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
- CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE ENGAGEMENT FORUM
- THE SURVIVORS TRUST CHIEF OFFICERS FORUM
- CUMBRIA CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REFERENCE GROUP
- CUMBRIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE CHAMPIONS NETWORK
- CUMBERLAND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- CUMBERLAND SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- WEST CUMBRIA MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
- WEST CUMBRIA FAMILY WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP
- NORTH CUMBRIA MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
- MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES
- POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONING CONTRACT MONITORING GROUP
- RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES SCRUTINY GROUP
- CUMBRIA COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE - VOLUNTEER MANAGERS MEETING
- BEFRIENDING NETWORK MANAGERS MEETING

Over the last year, we got involved in national and local social media campaigns, demonstrating our commitment to inequality and justice. These included:

16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence:

This campaign takes place in late November and early December every year, and it's led by the United Nations. We created social media content explaining the facts on gender-based violence.



Two campaigns for North West Sexual Violence Week:

These took place in early November. We created social media content explaining the impact of sexual violence on male victims:



We also created a campaign on the negative effects of victim blaming. The aim was to show how language can be used to blame victims, rather than making perpetrators accountable:

We generated 7912 views on social media as a result of these two campaigns.

Throughout the year, we also worked hard to challenge misconceptions around domestic and sexual abuse and to promote Safety Net's services through effective communications:

- www.safetynetuk.org: 9100 visitors - 30% increase from the year before, when it was 7000.
- Facebook: 1127 followers - 12.7% increase from year before when it was 1000.

- Instagram: 264 followers - 50% increase from year before when it was 175.
- Twitter: reduction in followers from 1110 to 967 (13%). Twitter has removed inactive accounts resulting in a drop in followers.

"From my first telephone conversation after seeing my GP, to my last session, it's all been very helpful and each time I felt so much better."

- S*, Adult service user

Goal 3:

To work collaboratively to deliver trauma-informed, needs-led and accessible services:

Last year we adapted our services to ensure they remain as accessible as possible. We did this by providing a mix of online and face to face work. This is in line with feedback from service users and supports those living in remote areas. We also promoted self-care advice through social media and online resources.

We also worked closely with referring partners partner (see diagram, right).

The number of people we served increased dramatically last year. This demonstrates the accessibility of our services – as well as the level of need in our local area.

Tier 1: Information and advice

- We received 708 contacts via our information and advice service. This is an increase of 84% on last year, when we were contacted 384 times.
- 287 people received short term support (less than three sessions). This is an increase of 45% on last year, when we helped 197.
- We provided wrap around support including help with benefits, housing, food bank referrals and cost of living grants – a total of 13,553 phone calls and interactions across all services. This is a 38% increase on last year

when we had 9827 interactions across all services.

Tier 2 and Tier 3: Support and therapy

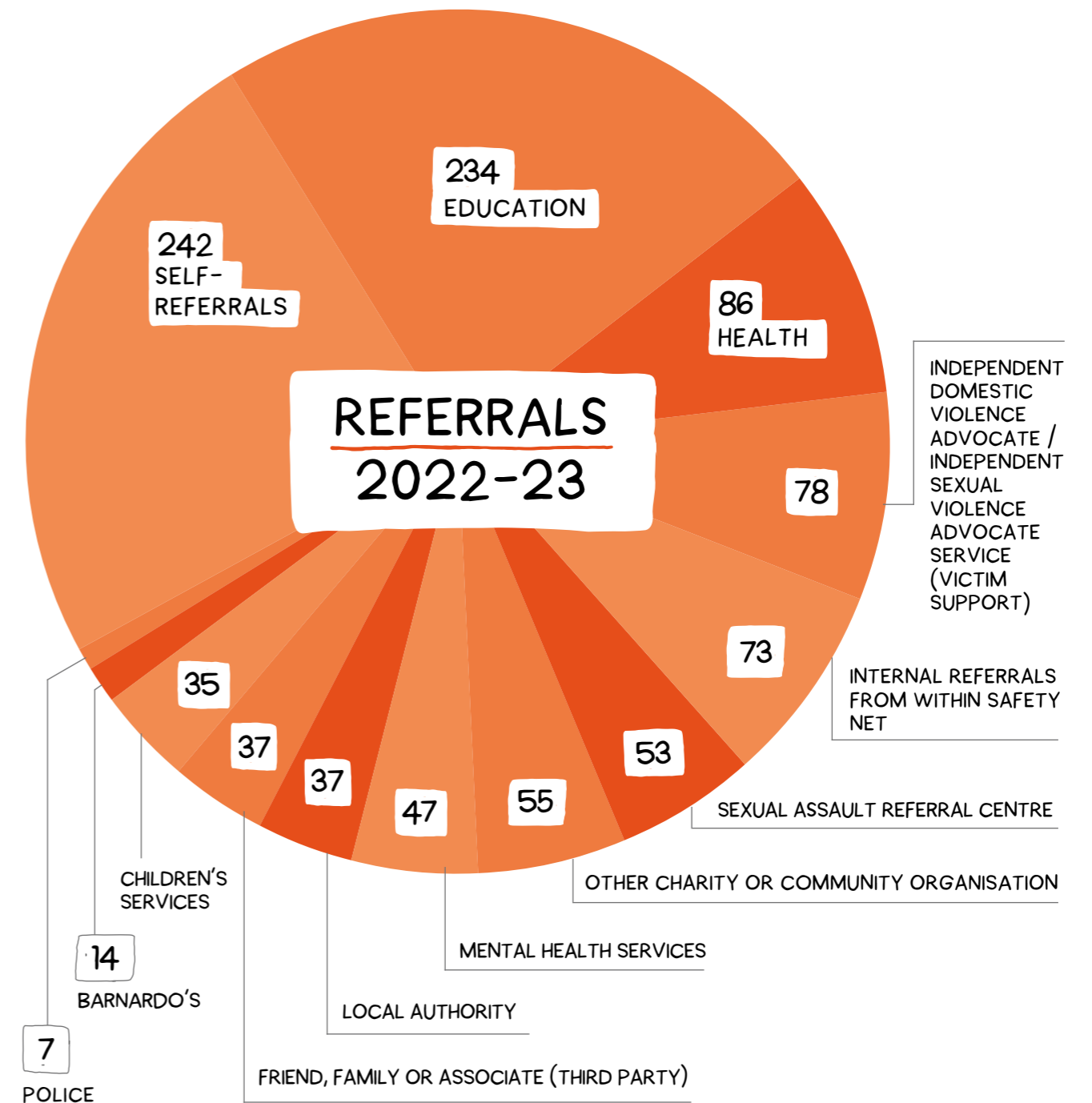
- 438 people received either tier 2 or tier 3 support. This is an increase of 25% on last year, when we helped 350.
- 135 people were supported through pre-trial therapy. This is an increase of 14% on last year, when we helped 118.

Tier 4: Reintegration back into the community

Our Tier 4 services support service users to reintegrate back into communities, supported by a team of volunteer befrienders and a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator. This creates social networks for ongoing support. All volunteers receive induction, monthly supervision, and clinical and wellbeing support. Many are ex-service users.

There were 14 volunteers during 2022 – 2023, providing 583 hours of support:

- 8 have moved on to either education or training.
- 2 have taken full time positions at Safety Net.
- 1 is now a trustee for Safety Net.



Our volunteers supported:

- 22 peer-led coffee and craft groups, aimed at women. 15 women benefitted from these groups last year.
- A monthly men's group, attended by an average of eight men each time.
- 72 befriending sessions across the year, equating to 150 hours of

befriending support. A total of 12 people benefitted from this vital service across the year.

- Set up of Walk and Talk groups, run by a volunteer and staff member.
- Admin support (part time). The volunteer completed 75 hours of office support, and there is the potential of this becoming an employed role in the future.

ADULT SERVICES OUTCOMES

IMPROVED WELLBEING / SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

77%

HAD IMPROVED HEALTH & WELLBEING.
(71% IN 2021-22)

79%

HAD REDUCED SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA.
(78% IN 2021-22)

REDUCED RISK & RISK TAKING BEHAVIOURS

79%

FELT THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY HAD IMPROVED
(75% IN 2021-22)

80%

HAD GREATER AWARENESS AROUND ONLINE SAFETY
(66% IN 2021-22).

IMPROVED EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

81%

FELT THEY HAD BETTER COPING AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES
(79% IN 2021-22).

78%

FELT MORE ABLE TO MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS
(72% IN 2021-22).

78%

HAD IMPROVED ABILITY TO INTERACT SOCIALLY WITH OTHER PEOPLE
(71% IN 2021-22).

79%

HAD BETTER ENGAGEMENT IN PRIVATE LEISURE ACTIVITIES / HOBBIES
(75% IN 2021-22).

INCREASED ABILITY TO COPE WITH PRACTICAL TASKS:

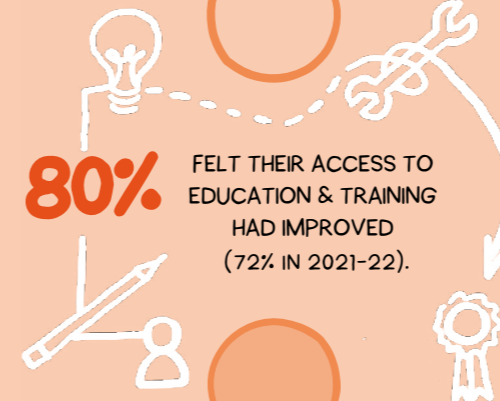


87%

FELT MORE ABLE TO SEEK & MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT
(64% IN 2021-22).

70%

FELT MORE ABLE TO MANAGE POLICE, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, & COURT PROCEEDINGS
(66% IN 2021-22)



80% FELT THEIR ACCESS TO EDUCATION & TRAINING HAD IMPROVED
(72% IN 2021-22).



77%

REPORTED A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING, FINANCES, & BENEFITS
(74% IN 2021-22).

73%

FELT BETTER ABLE TO PARENT & LOOK AFTER CHILDREN
(79% IN 2021-22).



77%

FELT BETTER ABLE TO MANAGE HOUSEHOLD TASKS
(70% IN 2021-22)





Richard* – tier 2 adult case study

After disclosing that he had experienced childhood sexual abuse, 76 year old Richard was referred to Safety Net by local partners The Bridgeway in 2022. The abuse happened when Richard was 10 years old, and it had had a huge impact on his life. He had a negative opinion of himself, low self-esteem, poor sleep and self-directed irritability. This impacted on Richard's relationships with others.

During the first few sessions, Richard worked with Kate, a Trauma Informed Practitioner at Safety Net. These sessions helped him to better understand the psychological impact of this traumatic experience. Kate also supported Richard to improve his sleep through sleep hygiene habits. Richard discussed his suicidal thoughts with Kate, and she was able to help him understand his distress and the impact his death could have on his family.

Over time, Kate worked with Richard around his self-esteem, confidence, shame and guilt, as well as understanding possible reasons for gaps in his memory due to the abuse. Richard always engaged well in conversations and activities and was open to reviewing progress.

Over time, Richard reported the lessening of his own self-directed negativity. He expressed that he knew the memory of the event would always be there in some form, but he was no longer panicked or worried by it. He felt he was kinder to his wife and felt much better for it.

The change he was most relieved about was the reduction and eventual eradication of his suicidal thoughts. The sense of relief expressed by Richard was palpable and he regularly gave thanks to Kate for this. Through his work with Safety Net, he had gained a good understanding of himself and the effect his early trauma had had on his life, and this enabled him to be more at peace with himself.

Goal 4:

To develop and embed our prevention and early intervention work with young people:

We wanted to do more to prevent domestic and sexual violence occurring in future. With this in mind, last year we increased the amount of prevention and support work we did with schools. We're now supporting 10 schools across the county.

In 2022-2023, 292 children and young people were referred for direct support via our schools project, Your Space:

Ages:

- 30 aged 11 to 12
- 244 aged 13 to 17
- 16 aged 18 to 19
- 2 age unknown

1412 other children and young people attended peer group education sessions in school.

In addition, 60 teachers received training on relationship and sex education issues related to our work.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OUTCOMES

Like our adult service users, the children and young people that we supported last year had improved symptoms of trauma across almost all outcome measures.

IMPROVED WELLBEING / SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

79%

HAD IMPROVED HEALTH & WELLBEING
(78% IN 2021-22).

80%

HAD REDUCED SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA
(65% IN 2021-22).

REDUCED RISK & RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOURS

74%

FELT THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY HAD IMPROVED
(73% IN 2021-22).

81%

HAD GREATER AWARENESS AROUND ONLINE SAFETY
(62% IN 2021-22).

IMPROVED EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

75%

FELT THEY HAD BETTER COPING AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES
(55% IN 2021-22).

76%

FELT MORE ABLE TO MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS (76% IN 2021-22).

79%

HAD IMPROVED ABILITY TO SOCIALISE WITH THEIR FRIENDS (74% IN 2021-22).

83%

INDICATED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SCHOOL LIFE, 10% REPORTED NO CHANGE. (78% IN 2021-22).



Nieve – children and young people’s therapy tier 3

Nieve was referred to Safety Net for children and young people’s therapy by her mum. Several years of sexual abuse by a family friend (followed by a police investigation and criminal trial) had had a big impact on her daughter. Her mum felt that she kept a lot to herself and was struggling to process all that had happened.

Our children and young people’s therapist Lorna began working with Nieve in March 2022, using an Integrative Holistic Play Therapy approach. This involved working non-directively with Nieve, giving her the opportunity to explore the themes that were most important to her. Nieve most often chose to communicate through talking, but she sometimes also used art materials and therapy toys. Themes were revisited throughout the process including safety and boundaries, authenticity and masking, control and autonomy, anger, relationships, pressure and expectations.

At times Lorna took on a more directive approach, supporting creative activities that allowed for the expression of anger and relaxation, as well as educational work around trauma. She also facilitated a joint session between Nieve and her mum, which Nieve had requested, to support her to express the impact of the abuse she had experienced.

Over the course of sessions, Lorna observed an increase in Nieve’s ability to share more of her feelings and her life. This was hugely significant, due to the years of silence and isolation she had to endure as a result of the abuse. Therapy also enabled Nieve to place her trust in another person.

Nieve found therapy really helpful and expressed anxiety around ending as she felt she had only just begun her journey. Lorna offered Nieve an additional block of four therapy sessions to support her over the festive period, and the option for her to re-refer into the service after three months once her sessions had ended. She also referred Nieve to Barnardos Link Service as a source of on-going emotional support.

Goal 5:

To embed a culture of continuous improvement and service development informed by service user experiences:

Our staff team is very important to us – without them, Safety Net could not do its important work. So, to prevent stress and burnout, last year we invested in staff wellbeing and other support for staff and volunteers. This included:

- Hybrid working patterns and flexible working
- Clinical supervision
- A new employee assistance package
- A new staff charter

Recruiting experienced staff in a remote area remains a challenge. We aim to 'grow our own experts' by supporting colleagues to develop their knowledge and experiences over time. There are currently three trainee therapists embedded in our organisation. It's an effective approach, as this case study from Malcolm, our Clinical Supervisor shows. (See right)

Goal 6:

To be recognised as a centre of excellence for trauma-informed work in Cumbria:



We made progress on this goal by developing Trauma Informed Cumbria, in partnership with The Birchall Trust, a local charity providing similar services to Safety Net. Trauma Informed Cumbria improves organisational responses to trauma through sharing best practice, training and networking. The first conference took place in November 2022, attended by over 200 professionals and volunteers. Over time, this venture will involve other voluntary and public sector partners, including health, as well as our local councils.

“The support I received allowed me... to think deeper about my emotions which allowed me to progress..”
– R*, young service user

From Trauma Informed Practitioner to Clinical Supervisor at Safety Net – Malcolm's journey

I'm a freelance Clinical Supervisor at Safety Net. My role provides a space for Safety Net therapists to explore their feelings about client work. This supports the team and ensures that, as an organisation, we're providing an ethical and safe practice to our service users.

I've developed my career with Safety Net over many years. I started working in 2015 as a Trauma Informed Practitioner, offering support to people receiving our Tier 1 and 2 services. I quickly became interested in the work and received funding from Safety Net to undertake Independent Sexual Violence Advisor training in 2016. This gave me the skills to support individuals who needed pre-trial therapy. The more I got involved, the more interested I became in trauma recovery. So, in 2017 I started my Postgraduate Diploma in Person-Centered Counselling and Psychotherapy. This was also funded by Safety Net.

Safety Net gave me one day per week of therapy work to enable me to get the client-facing hours that I needed to complete my qualification. I did this alongside my regular day job as a Trauma Informed Practitioner. This opportunity – to train and at the same time undertake therapeutic practice – has been one of the benefits of my career. Not many newly-qualified therapists work with traumatised individuals straight away. Practitioners usually have to provide support with other mental health issues and develop experience in trauma work over a period of time. Working with Safety Net enabled me to hit the ground running and to specialise quickly. I qualified in 2019 and moved into a full-time therapy role, working with adult and older young people experiencing complex PTSD.

My partner and I have recently started a family. To work more flexibly, I elected to go freelance and to become a part time clinical supervisor. I also run a professional development group within team. I feel really grateful for the support I've had at Safety Net, and would recommend that therapists who are interested in this area look out for roles within the team, with a view to upskilling over time.

11. Our Goals for the Future

Goal 1:

Effective governance and long-term sustainability:

- Recruit new trustees to replace those who are leaving, and diversify our Trustee Board.
- Increase voluntary funding and traded income to 5 – 10% of total income over the next three years, and 20 – 25% income over the longer term.
- Move our office to a greener and more sustainable building, with more outdoor space.
- Recruit management posts to support the senior leadership team – including business manager and office manager.

Goal 2:

To challenge inequality and justice, and campaign to influence strategy and policy – both locally and nationally:

- Keep up-to-date with national best practice, and contribute to national and local policy and strategy.
- Embed relationships with the two new Local Authorities across Cumbria and the Integrated Care Board (health).

Goal 3:

To work collaboratively to deliver trauma-informed, needs-led and accessible services:

- Raise the profile of our services among minoritised communities, with a particular focus on older women.
- Develop two new housing projects: one supporting women and children in a refugee hostel, and one supporting people living in short-term accommodation.
- Develop and expand our tier 1 work. This includes sessions for service users to support with practical issues, and skills-based courses to encourage coping skills and improve health and wellbeing. We will also provide surgery slots for professionals who need advice and support.
- Create more volunteer and peer-led group work and befriending. This includes building a larger pool of trained befrienders with lived experience of abuse.
- Develop our online tools and resources, sharing more information to more people through our website and social media.

Goal 4:

To develop and expand our prevention and early intervention work with young people:

- Develop our schools service and roll it out across more schools in Cumbria.

Goal 5:

To embed a culture of continuous improvement and service development informed by service user experiences:

- Ensure that we do more to include the voices of service users in shaping our services.
- Ensure at least 25% of the board is made up of trustees with lived experience.
- Develop and expand our pool of volunteers with lived experience, to shape service delivery.
- Develop and recruit young ambassadors to support the development of services for younger women aged 16–25.
- Work collaboratively with staff, volunteers and ambassadors to provide internal and external training around trauma and recovery work.
- Embed a culture of development and continue to prioritise staff wellbeing, to retain staff and support internal talent acquisition.

Goal 6:

To be recognised as a centre of excellence for trauma informed work in Cumbria:

- Work in partnership with The Birchall Trust to deliver and expand Trauma Informed Cumbria, including the 2023 Trauma Informed Cumbria conference.
- Achieve One Small Thing’s silver trauma-informed quality assurance mark over the next year, and achieve the gold quality assurance mark the year after.

“Safety Net has walked with me through the hardest journey I couldn’t walk on my own, I recommend to anyone that is struggling to give Safety Net a chance.”
– R*, Adult service user

12. Get Involved

Get involved in our work and help support victims of abuse in Cumbria:

Fundraise for us :

Each year, we are humbled and amazed by the creativity of our supporters, and the activities they undertake to raise funds for us. We can help with any fundraising challenge you have in mind, from running the Great North Run to a wing walk on a plane. [Access our Fundraising Pack](#) from our website to find out more.

Become a donor

Do you work for a funding body or are you a philanthropist with an interest in supporting social causes? We are always pleased to work in partnership with major donors, with the aim of making a real and lasting difference to people's lives. There are many areas of our service that we are hoping to grow in the future, including increased support for young people – with your help we could do this.

Volunteer for us

Taking action against domestic and sexual violence is a growing concern. By lending your energy to volunteering with Safety Net, you're challenging a culture where harassment and violence is the norm.

We have a number of opportunities in this area, including befrienders to support service users, and ambassadors to spread the word about our work.

Become a corporate partner

Do you work for a business that is looking to support a local charity? We have lots of things you can support us with, from volunteering to fundraising in your workplace, with bake sales and dress down days.

Spread the word for Safety Net

Only 1 in 5 people in Cumbria know about Safety Net. Help us spread the word far and wide by becoming an ambassador, giving talks at community groups about our work, following our social media and sharing our content.

Get in touch today and help us support more people in Cumbria:

E: office@safetynet.uk

T: 01228 515859

 **@safetynetnorth**

 **@safetynetnorth**

 **@safetynet_uk**

13. Thanks and acknowledgements

Thank you to our staff, partners and volunteers for the support we have received in 2022 – 2023. We could not have run Safety Net without you.

Thank you to our funders:

North Cumbria Place Community Mental Health Transformation (for refugee support), plus our funders below:



We would also like to say a very big thank you to our service users. To recover from the trauma of abuse takes huge bravery. Thank you for trusting us and for working so hard to transform your lives.

Safety Net
1 Fisher St
Carlisle
CA3 8RR

E: office@safetynet.uk
T: 01228 515859
W: www.safetynetuk.org

 **@safetynetnorth**

 **@safetynetnorth**

 **@safetynet_uk**

© Safety Net (UK) 2023.
Registered charity number: 1164998.