ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating 65 years of service

Family Welfare



Supporting families in the Wigan borough since 1958

WE LISTEN,
WE CARE,
WE SUPPORT.

Contents

Overview

Our Mission 3
Timeline Feature 4
CEO Statement 10
Operations Manager Statement 12
Counselling Services Manager Introduction 14
Advocacy Services Manager report 18

Statistics

Counselling Statistics 20
Advocacy Statistics 22

Counselling Service Reports

Adult Anger Management 25
Adult Bereavement 26
Child Anger & Child Bereavement and Loss 27
CAMHS 28
Schools & College Counselling 29
Perinatal Counselling 30

Advocacy Service Reports

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) 35
Community Fun Day montage 37
Relevant Person's Representative 38
Litigation Friend Role & Legal Challenges 40
Rule 1.2 Representative 41
Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) 42
Children & Young Persons Advocacy 44

Our Mission



Rivington Pike in early autumn

Family Welfare provides independent counselling, advocacy and community support services to vulnerable people of all faiths and none. We respect each individual and family we encounter it in all its variety and imperfection.

We hope you enjoy reading about the great work we achieved in 2023. It was only possible thanks to the efforts of many incredible people, including our professionals, volunteers, supporters, and project partners. We have achieved so much over the past year, and made a real difference to the lives of people living in the borough.

Trustees

Chairman
Canon Conor Stainton-Polland

Treasurer
Alan Johnson

Trustees
Revd Will Gibbons
Cameron Latham
Jessica Murdoch
Sara Cole
Jillian Hyde

Advisors

Legal Advisor
Mr Gary Shepherd, Alker Ball, Healds Solicitors

HR
Stephensons Solictors

IT Consultants
Sentis Managed Solutions

Brand Management & Marketing
ZeroGap Creative Marketing Ltd

Broadband
Elantelecom Ltd

Timeline Feature

In recognition of the last 65 years, we created a timeline wall feature showing how things have changed over the last 65 years.



65 YEARS GONE BY...

1958

IN THE BEGINNING

On the 10th of October 1958, the Wigan and District Moral Welfare Association was formed and Iona Beard was appointed secretary. The first interdenominational organisation in Wigan was set up, one of the first of its kind in the North West.

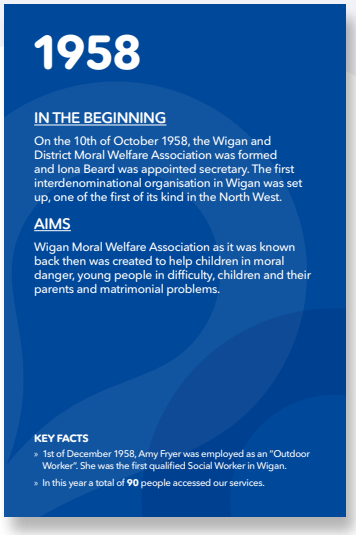
AIMS

Wigan Moral Welfare Association as it was known back then was created to help children in moral danger, young people in difficulty, children and their parents and matrimonial problems.

Key Facts

» 1st of December 1958, Amy Fryer was employed as an "Outdoor Worker". She was the first qualified Social Worker in Wigan.

» In this year a total of **90** people accessed our services.



1958

1960's

MISSION HOUSE

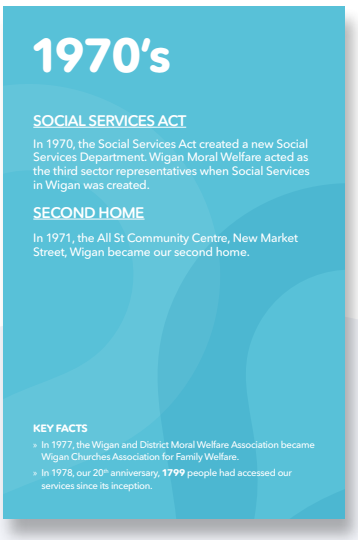
In the 1960's, the first accommodation, 'All Saints Mission House', New Market Street, Wigan, opened its doors. The Mission House was originally built in 1893 to house the sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin, who began to work in the parish in 1887. They were withdrawn in 1954.

After renovation, the building was re-opened in 1957 as a parish hall and meeting place.



1960's

> *Whilst Catholics and Protestants were fighting in the streets of Liverpool, they were sat round a table in Wigan.* Bishop of Liverpool



1970's

1970's

SOCIAL SERVICES ACT

In 1970, the Social Services Act created a new Social Services Department. Wigan Moral Welfare acted as the third sector representatives when Social Services in Wigan was created.

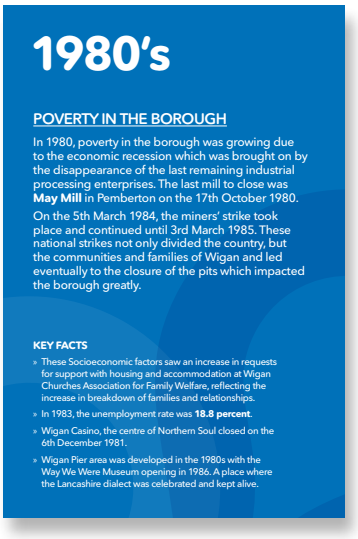
SECOND HOME

In 1971, the All St Community Centre, New Market Street, Wigan became our second home.

Key Facts

» In 1977, the Wigan and District Moral Welfare Association became Wigan Churches Association for Family Welfare.

» In 1978, our 20th anniversary, **1799** people had accessed our services since its inception.



1980's

1980's

POVERTY IN THE BOROUGH

In 1980, poverty in the borough was growing due to the economic recession which was brought on by the disappearance of the last remaining industrial processing enterprises. The last mill to close was **May Mill** in Pemberton on the 17th October 1980.

On the 5th March 1984, the miners' strike took place and continued until 3rd March 1985. These national strikes not only divided the country, but the communities and families of Wigan and led eventually to the closure of the pits which impacted the borough greatly.

Key Facts

» These Socioeconomic factors saw an increase in requests for support with housing and accommodation at Wigan Churches Association for Family Welfare, reflecting the increase in breakdown of families and relationships.

» In 1983, the unemployment rate was **18.8 percent**.

» Wigan Casino, the centre of Northern Soul closed on the 6 December 1981.

» Wigan Pier area was developed in the 1980s with the Way We Were Museum opening in 1986. A place where the Lancashire dialect was celebrated and kept alive.

"In the 1980's, despite high areas of deprivation, the Wigan Borough had many social hot spots such as Wigan Casino, Hindley Monaco, and Rubens in Leigh. Many travelled from all over the Northwest to socialise in the Borough. Local Resident

1990's

FUNDED SALARIES

In 1991, the Liverpool Anglican Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility began funding all employees of Wigan Family Welfare.

In 1994, we moved to 537 Warrington Road, Spring View, Wigan, our third Home.

In 1999, all funding given by Liverpool Anglican Diocese ended.

LOTTERY FUNDING

In 1999 we received our first Lottery funding. The team increased by **400%** to 4 workers. The team now consisted of, 1 counsellor, 1 advocate, 2 part time administration staff and a social worker post.

Key Facts

» In 1990, Wigan Churches Association for Family Welfare began Youth & Community Work.

» In 1998, our 40th Anniversary, **3876** people had accessed our services since its inception.



1990's

2000's

A CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION

By 2006, our aims and purposes had changed and we reinforced our Christian core values to be, 'an established Christian organisation whose membership is drawn from across the Churches and Communities of the Wigan Borough'.

By working in partnership, we sought to serve the whole community, of **all faiths and none**.

Key Facts

» In 2000, advocacy expands and begins counselling in GP surgeries

» In 2001, counselling begins in Sure Start family centres.

» In 2002, children's advocacy begins using volunteers and St Nathaniel's Vicarage in Platt Bridge became our fourth Home.

» In 2003, the school counselling project begins.

» In 2007, the first Independent Mental Health Capacity tender was won.

» In 2007, Iona Beard, one of the founding members of the organisation died after 49 years of service, she died as a member of the board.

» In 2009, St Catharine's House, Scholes, Wigan, became our fifth Home. In approximately 1860, the name "Catherine" was incorrectly spelt to "Catharine" and this spelling has continued to be used until today.



2000's



2010's

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS

In 2018, we celebrated 60 years as an organisation. In the 1st 20 years **1,799** people were supported, in the 2nd 20 years **2,077** people supported, in the 3rd 20 years **41,859** people supported.

ADVOCACY EXPANDS

During this decade, advocacy expands again, children's advocacy and Independent Mental Health Advocacy **(IMHA) were commissioned**.

Key Facts

» By 2010, **2,725** people had accessed our service, this was more than our first 20 years altogether. We now had **24 staff members**.

» In 2010, the Quality Performance Mark was awarded for advocacy. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy accredited the counselling service.

» In 2016, the organisation was awarded the **Josephine Butler award** by the Anglican Diocese of Liverpool for its service to the community.

2010's



2020's

BIGGER & BETTER

In 2020 we moved to our current and 6th home, based at Wigan & Leigh College, Walmsley Road, Leigh. Moving forwards Wigan Family Welfare is now known as '**Family Welfare**' (Wigan and Leigh Churches Association for Family Welfare).

THE NEXT 65 YEARS

Family Welfare aspires to become more embedded in the community as we grow from a very small charity to a medium sized organisation, working more closely with statutory services than ever before.

Key Facts

» In 2022, **3,235** clients accessed our services whether it was counselling or advocacy. This is nearly as many people as we supported in the first 40 years in total.

» In the Greater Manchester Local Transformation plan for young people 22/23, Family Welfare was recognised as a key VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) systems partner in delivering services to young people with mental health issues.

» To date in the year 2023, we have a total of **39** members of staff.

2020's





Head office building







Timeline wall feature


Our fantastic staff room


Janet and Liz holding the fort



Forward Statement

from the CEO of Family Welfare

As we entered our 65th year, no one could have predicted the growth our organisation would experience, not only this year but over the past six and a half decades. Starting in 1958 with the first qualified social worker in Wigan, Family Welfare has grown to a team of 37 staff members in 2023. This expansion is a testament to the dedication and passion of all who have been part of our journey. **Over the years, we have supported an estimated 55,000 people within our Borough.**

I encourage you to explore the timeline we created in 2023 to celebrate this remarkable milestone. It is both an honour and a privilege to be part of Family Welfare.

As detailed in this annual report, we have not spent the year merely reflecting on our past. Instead, our 65th anniversary has inspired us to achieve even more. Recognizing the need for a robust infrastructure to support our expanding organisation, we embarked on a focused restructuring and remodelling effort throughout the year.

We now have a new management structure tailored to the needs of Family Welfare. With new staff and new projects, enhancing our management support was essential. This process, spanning a couple of years, was completed at the beginning of 2024. Our management team is strong and aligned with the ethos of Family Welfare, working collaboratively to provide solid support for all staff and volunteers.

This year also marked the beginning of our journey with a new case management system, which has been both challenging and exhilarating. Achieving what was unimaginable a decade ago, in partnership with others, has been truly inspiring.

As in previous years, we saw staff changes, bringing fresh ideas and growth to Family Welfare. We are always enriched by the new perspectives and contributions of our team members. However, we also bid farewell to some valued colleagues. Helena Burke, our counselling services manager, retired in July 2023. Her dedication and leadership have left a lasting legacy, particularly through the expansion of our schools' counselling provision to over 50 schools.

The transition to our new counselling services manager was smooth and supportive, ensuring uninterrupted services and reinforcing our strong counselling team.

In September, Family Welfare celebrated its 65th year of service to the people of the Borough of Wigan with a Fun Day, welcoming 611 attendees. We provided 455 free lunches, 560 ice creams, and 180 food parcels from Heinz, creating a joyful day for the community we serve.

This year has also brought personal sorrow for many of us. The outpouring of support and love within our organisation has been profound. My heartfelt condolences and thanks go out to all who have experienced loss and to those who offered their support during these difficult times.

Despite the ups and downs, this has been another very busy year. Our projects have reached even more people, maintaining our high standards while transitioning into a stronger, more resilient organisation. People may come and go, but our commitment to excellence remains unwavering.

As we look to the future, the next 65 years hold great promise with the systems we have in place. Here's to a bright and positive future for Family Welfare.



Stuart Parsons



Stuart Parsons (CEO)

"Our projects have reached even more people, maintaining our high standards while transitioning into a stronger, more resilient organisation. People may come and go, but our commitment to excellence remains unwavering."

A few words

from the Operations Manager

2023-2024 has marked a significant transformation and growth for Family Welfare. This year, we say a heartfelt farewell to Cath Lester, whose nearly 25 years of dedicated service have been instrumental in shaping our organisation. Her leadership and commitment have left an indelible mark on Family Welfare, guiding us through numerous challenges and milestones. Cath's contributions will be deeply missed, and we express our sincerest gratitude for her unwavering commitment and passion for our cause. Her legacy will undoubtedly continue to inspire us as we move forward.

This year, we have taken critical steps to modernise our operations and better align with our stakeholders by transitioning to a financial year running from April to March. This change is more than a procedural update; it represents a strategic alignment with the financial cycles of our key partners and commissioners. By doing so, we enhance our financial review processes, making them more transparent and in sync with our commissioners' timelines. This alignment will facilitate more effective project management and expansion opportunities, ensuring that we can plan and execute our initiatives with greater precision and accountability.

Recognising the need for improved infrastructure to support our growth, we have overhauled our IT systems. This overhaul is a comprehensive effort to bring our technological capabilities in line with our expanding needs as a medium-sized charity. We have partnered with a new provider, Sentis, to ensure we have the robust technological infrastructure required to support our operations. This collaboration will enhance our operational security and compliance, particularly with GDPR, and support our ongoing efforts to streamline work processes and reduce duplication. With Sentis, we are not just upgrading our hardware and software; we are investing in a partnership that will help us navigate the rapidly changing technological landscape, ensuring that our systems are both current and future-proof.

A major milestone this year has been the development of a new case management system designed to elevate our service delivery. This system is a significant leap forward in our ability to manage client interactions and data securely and efficiently. The new system promises to improve efficiency across our operations, enhance client outcomes through better tracking and management of services, foster better communication among our staff and with our clients, and ensure robust data security and compliance. With features like electronic health records, appointment scheduling, secure messaging, and real-time data analytics, the system will significantly benefit both our staff and clients. It allows for a more integrated approach to care, enabling us to provide more personalised and effective support to those we serve.

Family Welfare is committed to leveraging these advancements to fulfil our mission of providing compassionate, effective mental health care. As we implement these changes, we will continuously evaluate and refine our services to meet the evolving needs of our clients and the community. This iterative process of evaluation and improvement is central to our ethos, ensuring that we remain responsive to the needs of our clients and the broader community. The changes made this year have set a solid foundation for future success, providing us with the tools and frameworks necessary to expand our impact.

In summary, the transformations we have undertaken this year will drive our future success and growth. By embracing new technologies, enhancing our financial processes, and continually focusing on the needs of our clients, Family Welfare is well-positioned to achieve its mission and positively impact the community for years to come. The modernisation of our IT infrastructure, the strategic realignment of our financial year, and the implementation of a state-of-the-art case management system are all pivotal developments that underscore our commitment to excellence and innovation. As we move forward, we are confident that these advancements will enable us to serve our clients more effectively, support our staff more robustly, and engage with our community more meaningfully. The future holds great promise for Family Welfare, and we look forward to continuing our journey of growth and transformation, always guided by our core mission of compassionate care.



Daniel Perks



Daniel Perks (Operations Manager)

"The transformations we have undertaken this year will drive our future success and growth. By embracing new technologies, enhancing our financial processes, and continually focusing on the needs of our clients, Family Welfare is well-positioned to achieve its mission and positively impact the community for years to come."

An introduction

from the Counselling Services Manager

2023/24 has been my first year in this role, and what a year it has been!

In April 2023, two months into my position as Counselling Services Manager, I was settling in well, shadowing Helena Burke, my predecessor, and Stuart Parsons, our CEO. This allowed me to gain a good understanding of the projects and get to know the counselling teams. This induction by Stuart and Helena was imperative, as my role, unlike Helena's, covers all the counselling projects and management.

Initially, I spent a lot of time visiting our commissioning schools, introducing myself while Helena bid her farewells. Many of these schools were familiar with her as she had worked closely with them. By July 2023, I was delighted to have passed my probationary period a month early, which was timely as we then said goodbye to Helena. Family Welfare held a celebration of Helena's 20 years at the Leigh office on the 21st of July. The Board and all Helena's colleagues attended a very inclusive, informative, and engaging Mass led by Canon Conor, followed by a buffet lunch. The celebration, well attended, also marked the retirement of two other Family Welfare counsellors, Andy Gordon and Carlos Sampson. Carlos had been with Family Welfare for 20 years and was well-loved by the schools he serviced. Andy, who joined us as a newly qualified therapist three years ago, is retiring to pursue his hobbies of reading, playing the drums and guitar, and spending time with his grandchildren. We wished them all well as they embarked on new chapters.

The celebration of these much-loved staff members also marked the end of the transition for the counsellors, from Helena as manager to myself, immersing me fully into the role of Counselling Services Manager.

By the time Helena left the organisation, I was already five months in post and felt embedded in the role, well-supported by both my line managers. I had the full support of all the counsellors, who were embracing the changes I had implemented. One of the first changes was the implementation of assessments for clients attending therapy in the Adult Anger, Adult Bereavement, and Perinatal projects. All clients now have an assessment as their first session, conducted by phone. This allows the therapist to determine any historic or ongoing mental health issues or diagnoses, ensuring that the therapy we offer would be beneficial and refer them to another service if more appropriate. Making the first session an initial assessment reduces the number of counselling session DNAs (Did Not Attend) and the waiting time for clients.

In March, we held an open day, inviting all commissioners and schools in the Wigan Borough. This event highlighted the work we do with children and our various projects, including Child Advocacy. It provided the schools an opportunity to see the organisation from a broader perspective, and we plan to repeat this next year. Following the open day, all schools, except one, renewed their contracts for 2023/24, and two new schools took up the service. This was remarkable given the current economic climate. This meant we had 49 schools commissioning this service, and we later gained two more schools once the new school year began, bringing the total to 51. We had a few staff changes on this project following Carlos's retirement, Simon leaving in November to pursue his private practice, and Annie transitioning from the Schools Service to the Adult Anger Management project. As a result, we welcomed Sarah Parry, Samantha Worrall, and Rebecca Green onto this project and into the organisation.

When I came into post, the Adult Bereavement Counselling Service was being delivered by one volunteer, Julie McManus. By April, I had taken on two more volunteers as the organisation was keen to develop this service further. I established a solid induction process for the new volunteers, which I wrote and delivered on a training day in April. All the volunteers have since completed their training. Julie completed her training in June 2023 and has since left, but Jayne and Janet are both keen to stay on, help with completing assessments, and gain more experience, client hours, and support with their accreditations once their training is complete. As the board has confirmed we can use funds to fund a counselling coordinator post next year, we are focusing on expanding this service into a generic Adult Counselling Service. The new post holder will support more volunteer trainee counsellors. This new adult counselling service will be the main placement provider for Wigan and Leigh College's Level 4 Counselling Course.

We aim to provide an elite placement that focuses on offering trainees a quality, supportive environment where they can develop their skills, gain more experience with different client cohorts, and prepare for working in the industry with an understanding of meeting KPIs as part of organisational service delivery.



Debbie Topping (Counselling Services Manager)

Debbie Topping
Counselling
Services Manager

I would like to thank Canon Conor, the Board, and of course, Stuart and Dan for all their support and for allowing me to play a small part in Family Welfare's ongoing continuity and development.

Another change this year has been the development of the organisational staffing structure. In January 2024, Fay Waldram became the first Family Welfare Team Leader for the peripatetic service. This model was replicated in the Advocacy Team, meaning staff are line-managed by their team leader and have a clear organisational structure and career progression model. Next year, we plan to introduce a team leader role for the Schools Counselling Service.

The Perinatal Service, delivered by our senior therapist, continued to be provided two days a week, supporting parents expecting a baby or who have had a baby in the past three years. This year, Natalie mentored Jayne, one of our volunteer counsellors, as she worked with a couple of perinatal clients to build on her experience and work with a different client cohort. This has been a great opportunity for Jayne to gain support and expert knowledge from Natalie, while Jayne has also been a great support for Natalie. This is something we wish to expand in the future.

In April 2023, GM Health and Social Care confirmed funding for a CAMHS Counselling Project, and I was involved in preparations for rolling out this service. This included a prolonged recruitment drive as we struggled to find the right calibre of staff. I was also part of a large-scale scoping exercise based on the Thrive model to understand a child or young person's experience when accessing mental health services and what their journey could look like. Being new to the Wigan area and unfamiliar with the available services proved tricky, highlighting the difficulties parents face when trying to get support for their child. This was followed by a referral pathway meeting with commissioners and key stakeholders supporting CYP mental health, where it was agreed that the Multi Agency Resource Hub (MARH) be reinstated with partner agencies, including core CAMHS, MHST, and School Link, which we attend twice weekly. The MARH proved to be a great success, and strong working relationships were forged. In November, Stuart and I received Star Awards for re-establishing and attending the MARH.

In September 2023, the Child Anger and Child Bereavement and Loss projects were amalgamated into the CAMHS Counselling Service Project. The four new counsellors (and two existing ones) on this project now deliver Child Anger, Child Bereavement and Loss, and CAMHS Counselling. Each team member was given a smaller area to cover, meaning less time spent travelling and more time focused on supporting the CYP. The work completed by Family Welfare on this project this year has significantly supported the eradication of CAMHS waiting lists. This turnaround, which occurred only three months after the referral pathways for this project opened, is a credit to the entire staff team working on this project.

In September, Sabina decided to move to the CAMHS project. CAMHS is delivered termly, allowing Sabina to balance her work and family life. As a charity that supports families, it is wonderful when we can support our staff too. As a result of Sabina's transition, we welcomed Annie onto the Anger Management project. Annie had been with us since February 2023, working on our Schools Counselling Project. She has proved to be an invaluable asset, experienced with both child and adult work. Annie was looking for a 52-week post and was delighted with the opportunity to increase her hours and gain more experience working with anger clients.

In October 2023, we received confirmation that we had passed the BACP Counselling Service Accreditation following my submission in July. This is a significant achievement involving extensive evidence gathering. The process, now completed annually instead of every five years, focuses on different aspects of the service each year. For 2023/24, the focus was on staff recruitment, staff safety, home visits, staff supervision, continual professional development, staff meetings, and staff induction. Completing the accreditation as a rolling program allows us to reflect on our working practices, review processes, and make necessary changes. The BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) reviews the evidence, agrees, or makes recommendations. This is a prestigious award, as we are one of only six in the Greater Manchester and Wigan areas and the only service in Wigan with BACP accreditation.

As we move into 2024/25, the focus will be on rolling out and training staff on the new case management system, the new adult counselling service, the annual counselling accreditation, the growth and development of the professional supervision service, and staff well-being.

While this first year at Family Welfare has been extremely busy, I have found it exciting to be part of this wonderful organisation, which has been going strong for 65 years! It was lovely to be part of the planning and execution of the fun day celebrating this amazing anniversary in September.

As I look forward to another amazing year, I want to thank Janet, Liz, Annie, Fay, Natalie and all the counselling staff for their hard work and loyalty to me, the clients, and the organisation. It is much appreciated!

D. Topping

Debbie Topping



"As we move into 2024/25, the focus will be on rolling out and training staff on the new case management system, the new adult counselling service, the annual counselling accreditation, the growth and development of the professional supervision service, and staff well-being."

A few words

from the Advocacy Services Manager

As we reflect on the recent developments and restructuring within our organisation, I am pleased to present our annual report, highlighting the milestones, challenges, and achievements of our advocacy team at Family Welfare.

Acknowledging Milestones

Let us begin by acknowledging the remarkable contributions of our team members.

We bid farewell to Cath Lester after 24.5 years of dedicated service, as she embarks on a well-deserved retirement. Her commitment has left an indelible mark on our organisation.

Additionally, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Matthew Ainsworth for his invaluable service as an advanced practitioner. His impact will continue to resonate within our organisation.

Embracing Change and Growth

Transitions have presented opportunities for growth and renewal.

The departure of Matt created an opportunity for us to restructure our advocacy provision, ensuring that we can continue to meet the increasing demand for our services without compromising on quality.

I, Smitha Shashidhara, have been honoured to step into the role of acting Manager for the Advocacy Service, bringing experience and a sincere dedication to upholding our organisation's values with me.

Chloe Aspinall has been appointed as acting Advanced Practitioner, showcasing our dedication to nurturing talent from within our ranks.

Investing in our Team

Investing in our team members and providing them with opportunities to grow and excel has always been a priority.

We have welcomed New Staff members RPR's: Chris Turner-Baish and Leanne Shaw and provided them with comprehensive training under the supervision of our (CEO) Stuart Parsons, very experienced Advocate: Susan Martindale, AP: Chloe Aspinall and I ensuring they are equipped to provide the highest level of advocacy support to our clients.

With our Advocacy team expanding, along with our experienced CYP advocates Marjorie Banks and Anne Nelson, we are confident that we can continue to deliver exceptional service to those who need it most.

Navigating Complex Cases and Increasing Referrals

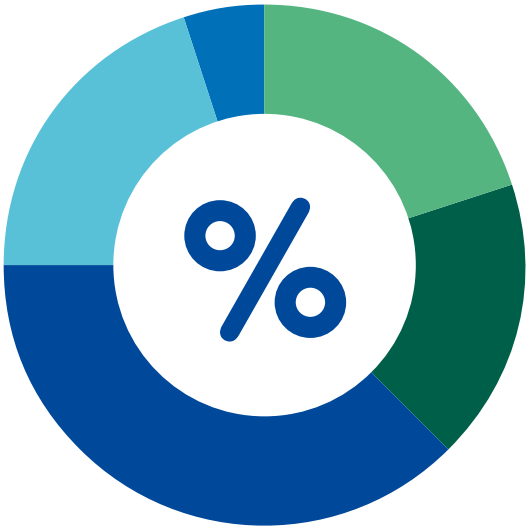
Despite the challenges posed by increasing referrals and complex cases, our team remains steadfast in our commitment to amplifying the voices of our clients and upholding their rights.

We have seen a surge in Court of Protection work and have doubled our efforts to meet this growing demand.

Additionally, our collaboration with Flexsolve who are supporting us in formulating a New Case Management system which will allow us to enhance our efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring that we can provide prompt, reliable, and proactive service to all individuals in need of advocacy support.

TOTAL REFERRALS FOR ALL ADVOCACY SERVICES

160 IMHA
140 IMCA
300 RPR
160 CYPA
40 COP





Smitha Shashidhara
Advocacy
Services Manager

Fostering Collaboration and Strengthening Partnerships

Our commitment to collaboration and partnership remains unwavering, from multi-organisational meetings with Embrace, IDVA and Health Watch to our positive rapport with Atherleigh Park, we continue to foster relationships that enhance the quality of care and support we provide to our clients.

Our engagement with the Local Authority's recruitment in Best Interest Assessors has been instrumental in addressing gaps between referrals and ensuring advocacy support for those in need.

In conclusion, as we reflect on the past year, we are filled with a sense of pride and gratitude for the dedication and resilience of our team. Despite the challenges we've faced, we have remained persistent in our pledge to our mission and values.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and confident in our ability to continue making a meaningful impact in the lives of individuals and communities.

Together, we will navigate the road ahead with determination, compassion, and a shared commitment to excellence.

S. Shashidhara

Smitha Shashidhara

Counselling Statistics

In **2023** our ambitious counselling strategy was reflected by our results.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED IN 2023



Adult Anger

In 2023/24

2,054 sessions offered



CAMHS

In 2023/24

1,440 sessions offered



Adult Bereavement

In 2023/24

114 sessions offered



Child Bereavement & Loss

In 2023/24

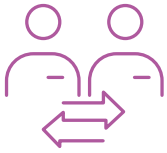
1,466 sessions offered



Child Anger

In 2023/24

3,530 sessions offered



Perinatal

477 sessions to 208 clients in 2023/24

477 sessions

Schools & Colleges

In 2023/24

6,094 sessions offered

TOTAL SESSIONS **15,175**



Testimonial
Schools & College Counselling

"I enjoyed learning about myself. You made me laugh sometimes. I loved everything about coming to counselling, especially talking about ourselves and playing with the squishies. I'm glad I can still come and chat with you."

Advocacy Statistics

Our advocacy strategy was also reflected by our amazing results.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED IN 2023



IMCA (Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy)
2023/24
141 referrals



RPR (Relevant Person's Representative)
2023/24
305 referrals



IMHA (Independent Mental Health Advocacy)
2023/24
160 referrals

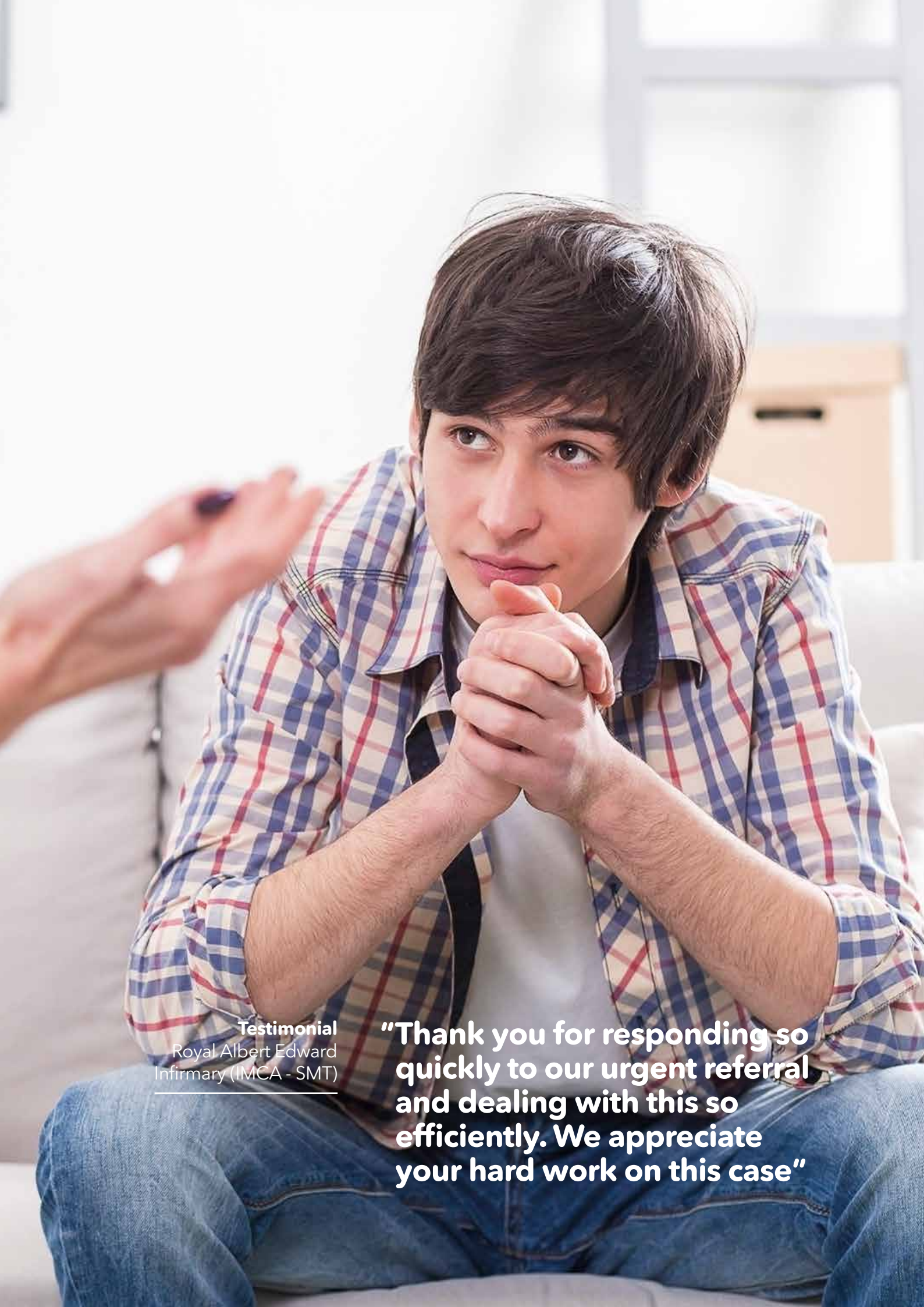


CYPA (Children and Young Person's Advocacy)
2023/24
165 referrals



COP
2023/24
40 referrals

TOTAL REFERRALS **811**



Testimonial
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary (IMCA - SMT)

"Thank you for responding so quickly to our urgent referral and dealing with this so efficiently. We appreciate your hard work on this case"

Counselling Service Reports

Our counselling strategy was reflected by our amazing results.

ADULT ANGER COUNSELLING

CHILD ANGER & CHILD BEREAVEMENT & LOSS COUNSELLING

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES COUNSELLING

ADULT ANGER BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

CAMHS COUNSELLING

PERINATAL COUNSELLING

ADULT ANGER MANAGEMENT COUNSELLING

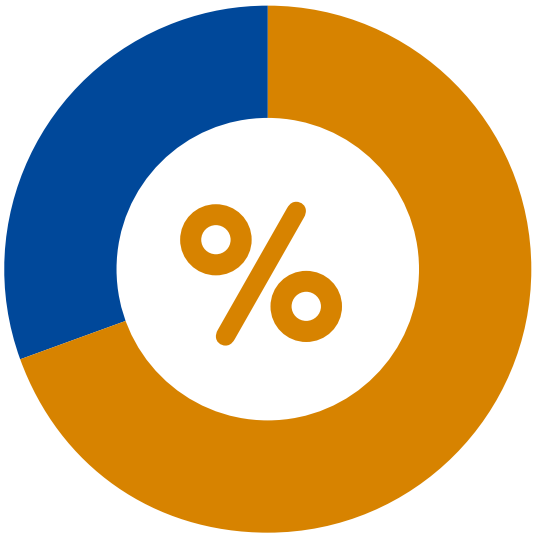
Annie Andrews-Gittins
Anger Management Counsellor

The Adult Anger Management project offered 800 sessions to 208 clients in 2023/24. The project continued to provide counselling for people who found themselves having specific issues with anger.

Implementing telephone pre-assessments has significantly enhanced our understanding of clients' needs and facilitated effective session arrangements. The assessment process gives clients the opportunity to decide if this service is the right one for them and so are less likely to drop out of therapy, DNA or cancel appointments once their therapeutic journey begins. Telephone assessments also identify specific client requirements, such as online or telephone sessions. In cases where our service wasn't suitable for the client's needs, we were then able to signpost to other services.

The assessment process has had a notable impact on attendance rates, increasing from 76% in 2022/23 to 87% in 2023/24.

800 SESSIONS OFFERED TO 208 CLIENTS



Case study

Jane initially sought counselling to address why she was becoming frustrated at work because of anxiety building up. She scored 54 which is Medium on the anger measure score.

She said that in the past she has been able to 'deal with it' but no longer feels she can cope. She described having 'angry outbursts'.

As the sessions unfolded it became clearer that her workplace anger was linked to unresolved grief after the loss of her partner. During the sessions the client recounted details surrounding her partner's passing with the counsellor guiding her through the experience. She expressed anger at the hospital, her partner's family and herself. We looked at anger and found that Jane was looking for control in a time where she was feeling out of control. **She stated that it was 'weird but nice' and that recounting things in a safe space brought an unexpected comfort.**

Carl Rogers' research into the psychotherapeutic revealed that when a client felt accepted and understood, healing occurs. His daughter Natalie Rogers explained that it is a rare experience to feel accepted and understood when you are feeling fear, rage, grief or jealousy yet it is this very acceptance and understanding that heals.

Jane began acknowledging and allowing herself to experience the pain of her partner's passing and developed an acceptance of her emotions, including anger. Further to this she then used the sessions to explore building boundaries in her life. We spoke about her anger trying to tell her something and she added that being able to express her feelings has been so useful in understanding her needs.

Creating a safe and open space in counselling empowered the client to implement healthier boundaries outside of the therapeutic setting. We are happy to report that at the end of Jane's sessions she scored a 1 on the anger measure score.

*Client name and identifying details have been changed for anonymity.

ADULT BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

Debbie Topping
Anger Bereavement Counsellor

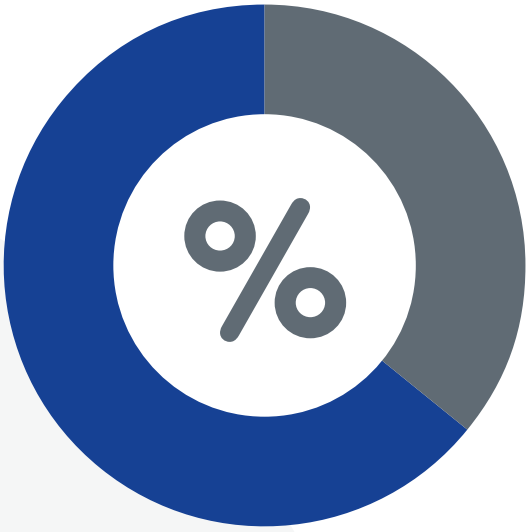
In 2023/24, the Adult Bereavement Service received 114 referrals. Of these, 41 clients identified as male, while 73 identified as female.

This disparity suggests that men are less likely to seek support for their mental health issues, such as bereavement. Interestingly, referrals for Family Welfare's Anger Management Counselling Service are predominantly for males, indicating that there is still some stigma around men accessing support for emotional health, whereas support for anger seems less stigmatised.

Like the Adult Anger project, telephone pre-assessments were introduced and are conducted by qualified staff counsellors. This ensures that trainee counsellors are not working beyond their competency and that any risk or safeguarding issues are addressed before allocation to a counsellor. In some cases, referrals are directed to other services that are more appropriate for the client's needs. The assessment process also provides clients with an opportunity to understand what counselling entails and to opt out at the assessment stage, thus reducing cancellations and DNAs (Did Not Attend).

Next year, Family Welfare plans to recruit a counselling coordinator for this project to extend the service, support more counsellors in training, and accept generic counselling referrals. This expansion aims to increase the provision of counselling to adults 18+ in the Wigan community. Given the high demand for this much-needed service, we anticipate a significant increase in referrals.

114 SESSIONS OFFERED
73 FEMALE / 41 MALE



" My placement at Family Welfare helped me develop valuable experience counselling and supporting people in need. The opportunity allowed me to grow both personally and professionally, and I am grateful for the warm, friendly and supportive work environment, that has helped make my time there so rewarding."

Jayne Murphy / Volunteer

" I think being listened to was amazing, helping with strategies and being helped to reflect on situations then helped me to deal with them better. I will absolutely miss the support I was receiving"

Client

CHILD ANGER & CHILD BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS COUNSELLING

Debbie Topping
Child Anger & Child Bereavement and Loss Counsellor

This project supports children and young people aged 5-18 who are experiencing difficulties in managing their anger, which may negatively impact their well-being, education, and home life, as well as those around them. The project also takes referrals for young people dealing with bereavement, often involving a close family member, or other losses such as family breakdown, change of school, or other significant life experiences.

Commissioned to work with 78 young people annually, the project has been able to support an additional 440 young people by amalgamating with the CAMHs Counselling Service. This expansion has significantly increased access to therapeutic support for those in need.

" Client felt sessions have "really helped me, things are really good now in school and home and life is easier."

Child Anger Feedback

" Especially when I didn't see my Mum, and my Dad wouldn't listen to me so we wrote him a letter. You helped me to understand more things than I did"

Child Bereavement & Loss Feedback

Child Anger referrals have increased 391% this year when compared to last year 2022/23 whilst Child Bereavement and Loss had a 56% increase in referrals when also compare to last year 2022/23.

Sessions offered in 2023/24

A total of 2,054 young people have accessed this service in 2023/24, the increase in referrals has been accommodated by the amalgamation for this project with the CAMHs project. 3,520 sessions have been offered for Child Bereavement & Loss and Child Anger.

Sessions generally take place face to face in the young person's school or a venue situated in their local community. Telephone sessions are also an option and 15 telephone sessions took place this year on this project.

Impact

Recovery rates are high with 97% of young people who have completed this year reporting an improvement in their Mental Health and 79% reporting a significant improvement.

3,520 SESSIONS OFFERED IN 2023/24

1,039 SESSIONS OFFERED IN 2022/23



CAMHS COUNSELLING

Debbie Topping
CAMHS
Counsellor

This project was commissioned in April 2023 to assist CAMHS in eradicating their long waiting lists. Initially, Family Welfare experienced a delayed start due to recruitment issues.

However, they utilised this deferment as an opportunity to develop referral pathways, reinstate the Multi-Agency Referral Hub (MARH), and eliminate the waiting lists for the Child Anger and Child Bereavement and Loss projects, which had seen a significant increase in referrals following the closure of the CAMHS 4-week wait project.

With permission from commissioners to amalgamate the Child Anger and Bereavement & Loss counselling service with the CAMHS Generic project, Family Welfare can report that they have received 760 referrals from April 2023 to March 2024 and have worked with 620 young people during the same period of time.

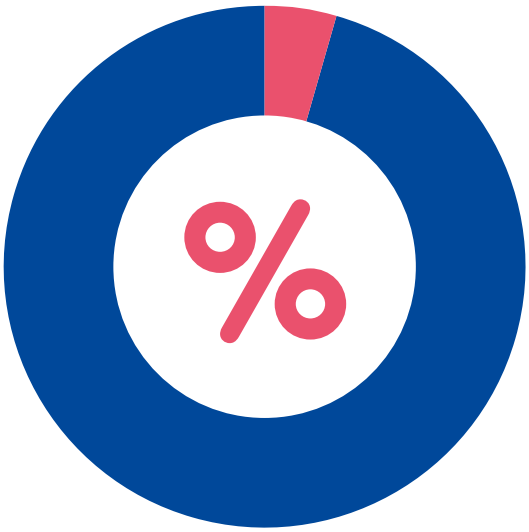
Project Challenges

This project has faced several challenges since its inception. The delayed start due to difficulties in recruiting the right calibre of staff and the lack of a clear referral pathway were the initial issues. These were followed by a lack of referrals once the project was up and running. After the staff were in place, referral pathways were established through regular meetings at the twice-weekly Multi-Agency Referral Hub. Therapists were utilised to see young people from the Child Anger and Child Bereavement & Loss projects, as these had seen a significant increase in referrals in 2023/24 and are commissioned by the same entity. The Child Anger and Child Bereavement & Loss projects and the CAMHS counselling project have now been merged together.

Project Successes

So far, 620 young people have accessed the project– an incredible achievement, considering that Family Welfare is funded to see 527 annually through this initiative. Additionally, 3,520 face-to-face sessions have been offered for Child Anger and Bereavement & Loss. Combined with 242 CAMHS referrals, the total number of sessions offered so far is 4,960.

1,440 CAMHS SESSIONS
4,960 COMBINED SESSIONS



Partnership working

Much of the success of this project is attributed to the excellent solid working relationships which have been developed between Family Welfare, CAMHS, School Link and MHST partners at the twice weekly Multi Agency Referral Hub (MARH), though which the referral pathways have been developed.

The running of the project is constantly reviewed though regular team meetings and the excellent staff working on this project are well supported by the new team leader and a solid senior management team.

Future plans

Such is the success of this project, the demand is proving to be far greater than the resources available. Therefore Family Welfare are now adhering to more robust referral criteria for this project. This will prevent huge waiting lists developing and allow a smooth client journey from the point of referral through to completion of therapy.

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES COUNSELLING

Debbie Topping
Schools & Colleges
Counsellor

Family Welfare has been delivering a high-quality counselling service to primary and secondary schools in Wigan and Leigh since 2003.

Reflecting our charitable status, we have expanded our services to include schools beyond the Wigan borough, a move that has proved highly successful. Additionally, we now provide support across all campuses of Wigan & Leigh College. Over the course of the 2023/24 academic year, our counselling services expanded from 49 to 51 educational institutions.

Counselling sessions are conducted in private rooms within schools and colleges, ensuring a secure and familiar environment for children and young people, thereby ensuring equal access for all. The service operates efficiently with minimal DNA (Did Not Attend) and cancellation rates. In the 2023/24 period, our DNA rate was 2.3% and the cancellation rate was 0.63%. Unused sessions are promptly offered to other young people, ensuring no resources go to waste.

Each client, regardless of age, enters into a counselling contract that outlines the nature of counselling and the boundaries within which we operate. Confidentiality is guaranteed, with provisions for the child or young person to disclose safeguarding concerns to appropriate school or college staff.

Our counsellors actively build strong relationships with school and college staff to facilitate smooth referrals and ensure the effective operation of Family Welfare's services.

" I enjoyed learning about myself. You made me laugh sometimes. I loved everything about coming to counselling, especially talking about ourselves and playing with the squishies. I'm glad I can still come and chat with you."

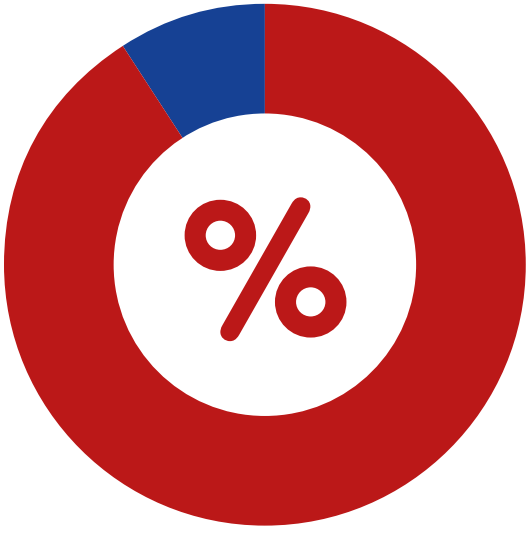
Young Person Feedback

At the start of each academic year, we evaluate and present our service to schools and colleges, consistently achieving high ratings. We at Family Welfare are proud and privileged to support the children and young people in our borough. Our work helps them navigate challenges, cope during difficult times, and manage their emotions. The relationship between our counsellors and young clients is built on trust, enabling them to express themselves openly and honestly without fear of judgment or upsetting loved ones. Providing young people with a space to be heard and acknowledged helps them release negative emotions such as anger or sadness. Counselling often fosters the growth of confidence and resilience as young people begin to recognize their positive attributes, skills, and strengths.

Statistics

During this academic period, our team provided a total of 6,094 individual counselling sessions. Our comprehensive service statistics indicate that 91% of the young people we worked with showed improvement, while 9% remained stable, and none experienced deterioration.

6,094 SESSIONS OFFERED
91% IMPROVEMENT
9% REMAINED STABLE



PERINATAL COUNSELLING

Natalie Collier
Perinatal
Counsellor

The Perinatal Counselling Project offers therapy to individuals during both the ante- and post-natal periods, as well as to partners who may experience emotional difficulties during pregnancy and following their child's birth. We are one of the longest-running, re-commissioned projects within the organisation, now in our 15th year - a milestone we are proud to celebrate.

Over the years, we have seen many changes across the Borough of Wigan and in the people we support. Currently, the demand for telephone sessions is consistently high. We also offer sessions in our offices within the borough, at local Start Well Centres, and through home visits. While in-person sessions used to be the most popular option, since COVID-19, this has changed. However, we continue to provide these options to ensure there are no barriers to accessing the service when needed.

We do have a waiting list, but thanks to the preference for telephone sessions, it is much smaller now. This allows us to see more clients daily, making the service more cost-effective. Additionally, this year, we were fortunate to enlist the help of a skilled volunteer, which has further reduced our wait times. We contact clients within 24 hours of receiving their details to show them that their referral is important to us.

In the spring of 2023, we held an Open Day where two former clients, along with their children, attended to highlight the support they received from the counselling service and the positive impact it had on their lives as new mothers. They shared their counselling journeys with the professionals present, emphasizing the necessity of the service for women's mental health during such a vulnerable time in their lives. We are immensely grateful to them for sharing their time and experiences with everyone.

Statistics

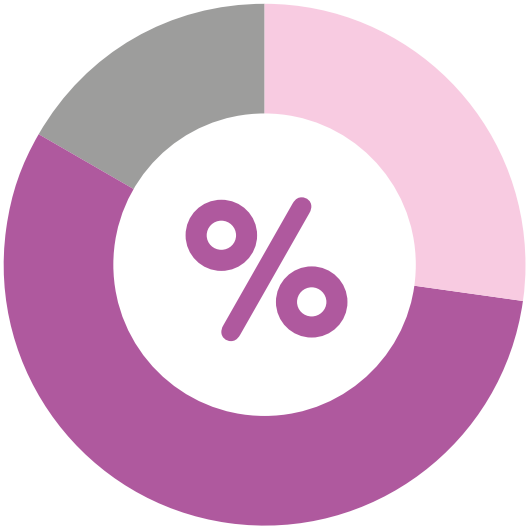
From April 2023 to March 2024, we conducted a total of 427 sessions, with an impressive attendance rate of 87.36%.

We received a total of 73 referrals: 20 from Health Visitors (HV), 41 self-referrals, and the remaining 12 from Think Wellbeing, Leigh Infirmary, Tyldesley Clinic, GP surgeries, Making Space, a primary school, and Lindamere Unit, Leigh.

Partnership Working

We maintain partnerships with PIMHT, BABS, Think Wellbeing, Well Women in Leigh, Ward 2 Leigh Infirmary (Early Pregnancy Unit), and the midwifery and health visiting teams from all localities. Additionally, we contribute to the Maternity Voices Partnership, where ex-service users have expressed positive feedback about the service they received.

73 REFERRALS
20 FROM HEALTH VISITORS
41 SELF-REFERRALS
12 FROM OUR PARTNERS



Case Study

The client is a 32-year-old woman with a long-term partner and a 9-month-old baby boy living in the Wigan Borough. She was referred by her Health Visitor due to overwhelming feelings as a new mother, compounded by a lack of family support, as her maternal grandmother was primarily focused on her sons' children. Despite feeling unsupported, she hesitated to voice her feelings to her mother, fearing ingratitude. The client scored 23/30 on the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale, indicating high levels of distress and urgently requested therapy.

Counselling sessions revealed disparities in her relationship with her partner. The client felt deeply affected by seemingly casual remarks from him, which negatively influenced her self-perception as a mother and as an individual. Her low self-esteem and inadequate self-care were identified and addressed during therapy. Over time, discussions extended to her relationships with her mother and partner. She communicated her need for support without appearing incapable, expressing that she was struggling and required more understanding and practical assistance.

As therapy progressed, the client's concerns shifted to returning to work and the loss of her self-confidence. Through exploration and collaborative work, she confronted the challenges she faced. Initially hesitant about returning to work, she gradually felt more prepared and anticipated regaining her former self.

Throughout therapy, the client was periodically monitored, resulting in decreased anxiety and depression levels, alongside improved physical health. A significant issue for the client was her lack of sleep, significantly impacting her mood and mental well-being. She disclosed feeling occasional resentment towards her son due to the unexpected changes his arrival brought to her life. Additional support was sought, and she engaged a private sleep therapist. Following a short period, her son's sleep patterns improved, alleviating her sleep deprivation.

During a review session, the client expressed concerns about not living up to societal expectations of motherhood, feeling deprived and misled regarding the happiness having a baby should bring. This realisation prompted her to acknowledge her need for fulfilment beyond motherhood. She bravely admitted her feelings, emphasising that it didn't make her a bad mother but rather a woman seeking a more holistic identity. She reflected on the choice to become a mother and the importance of honouring her personal needs without self-judgment. This self-awareness facilitated positive changes in her life, including a return to work and a new found enjoyment of quality time with her son.

In her final session, the client described counselling as a lifeline during isolated and lonely moments. Initially hesitant about expressing herself verbally, she eventually embraced the therapy process, leading to significant personal growth and satisfaction. At the conclusion of therapy, her score on the Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale was notably high at 42, with reduced anxiety and depression scores. Her EPDS score improved to 7, well below the threshold indicative of postnatal depression.

"I believe every single Mum who has a baby should have these sessions. They have been so helpful for me. It was great that they were so flexible, and I could have telephone sessions when I couldn't get into the office. Thank you."

Client Feedback

Thank you for letting me talk without judging me, as this is something I have had to deal with all my life. If there are any opportunities to volunteer for your organisation, I would love to pay it forward. Thank you for all your help."

Client Feedback

" One of the most important aspects of the service is that you are offered a therapist who is impartial and can support without judgment, unlike family. I was feeling very overwhelmed and worried that I had left it too late, and it wouldn't be helpful. But now I feel so much better and had no idea what to expect. I had both face-to-face and telephone sessions and found them both invaluable. Over the telephone, I still was able to share my feelings and was supported. I was seen very quickly, which really benefitted me. This was a great help, and I felt very supported. I would recommend it to others."

Client Feedback














FF
TOILETS
FAMILY
WELFARE
& CAFE
GF
TOILETS
LEIGH ADULT
LEARNING
CENTRE
RECEPTION


Family
Welfare



Advocacy Service Reports

Our advocacy strategy was also reflected by our amazing results.

INDEPENDENT
MENTAL CAPACITY ADVOCACY

RELEVANT
PERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE

LITIGATION
FRIEND ROLE

INDEPENDENT
MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

CHILDREN &
YOUNG PERSONS ADVOCACY

RULE 1.2
REPRESENTATIVE

INDEPENDENT MENTAL CAPACITY ADVOCACY

Smitha Shashidhara
IMCA
Advocate

As we reflect on April 2023 to March 2024, it's imperative to acknowledge the significant strides and challenges encountered in our Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) service, particularly concerning Serious Medical Treatment (SMT) and Accommodation referrals.

This report provides an overview of our activities, achievements, and areas for improvement during this period.

Serious Medical Treatment (SMT) Referrals

Over the past 12 months, we received a total of 54 IMCA referrals for Serious Medical Treatment.

Collaboration with stakeholders, including social workers, care home managers, and hospital teams, have been instrumental in vetting referrals and ensuring a streamlined process.

However, challenges persist, notably the lack of detailed information from decision-makers, delays in completing Mental Capacity Assessments (MCAs), and unclear decision objectives.

Efforts to address these challenges include advocating for thorough MCAs and providing guidance to decision-makers through training and awareness sessions.

Accommodation Referrals

Our IMCA service at Family Welfare remains dedicated to supporting individuals lacking capacity in accommodation decisions.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, we received 87 referrals.

Challenges have included scarcity of suitable placements, particularly for individuals with challenging behaviours, and inappropriate referrals stemming from family disagreements.

Despite these challenges, our team's commitment to person-centred solutions and proactive initiatives, such as drop-in sessions and training, has garnered positive feedback and reinforced our dedication to supporting vulnerable individuals.

Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships

Throughout the reporting period, we pursued strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery and stakeholder engagement.

Notably, collaborations with Wigan Locality and Hospital teams facilitated the vetting of inappropriate referrals for SMT.

Additionally, efforts to establish an IMCA presence at Royal Albert Edward Infirmary (RAEI) aim to improve the quality and appropriateness of referrals directly to professionals.

Challenges and Opportunities

While progress has been made, obstacles persist, particularly regarding the completion of capacity assessments and delays in decision-making processes.

However, these also present opportunities for innovation and improvement. With ongoing efforts to expand resources, enhance training, and strengthen communication with decision-makers, we remain optimistic about overcoming obstacles and achieving our objectives.

In conclusion, the past year has been marked by significant achievements and ongoing challenges in our IMCA service.

Despite obstacles, our team's dedication, proactive initiatives, and strategic collaborations have enabled us to provide essential support to vulnerable individuals and improve outcomes in Serious Medical Treatment and Accommodation decisions.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement to meet the evolving needs of our service users and stakeholders.

"Thank you for responding so quickly to our urgent referral and dealing with this so efficiently. We appreciate your hard work on this case"

Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, IMCA (SMT).

Case Study

One of our more complex Cases involved a young lady with a learning disability referred to here as P. The referral was for an accommodation decision, but it transpired there were many other issues to be addressed before this could be determined.

P was pregnant and it was unclear whether decisions around the pregnancy and birth would need to be made in her best interests. There were queries around her mental health and safeguarding concerns around her understanding of sexual relations along with safeguarding issues of coercion & control from her boyfriend who she had lived with until being temporarily placed with a Shared Lives Worker.

The IMCA worked alongside a range of health professionals, Care Act Advocate (for the safeguarding), P's social worker and the social worker for the unborn baby. All the identified issues impacted on the accommodation decision although the IMCA needed to be mindful of when their involvement was relevant.

Once P had given birth without any complication there remained issues around contact with the father of the baby, contraception & sexual relations, and access to mobile phone content. These are on-going issues and the IMCA is now acting as Litigation Friend and working alongside an Accredited legal Representative to present the case in Court.

The accommodation decision was made, and it is highly likely that we will receive a referral to act as Rule 1;2 when the application for a Court deprivation is submitted.

This complex case demonstrated good partnership working and the need to address all issues before decisions can be made. It was a difficult piece of work but provided a wealth of learning for the IMCA which has been shared with the Team for their continuing professional development.

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141 SESSIONS OFFERED

54 SERIOUS MEDICAL TREATMENT REFERRALS

87 ACCOMMODATION REFERRALS



"Very happy to know that our residents have advocates like you to advocate. Many thanks for contacting the doctor and getting this sorted."

Care home manager

"Thank you for all the work you've done with AD - he has really enjoyed having you involved"

Care Team Leader Supported Living, IMCA (A)

"Thank you for the offer of providing IMCA training. This will be particularly helpful to our newly qualified social workers, as well as an opportunity to discuss some ongoing cases. Thank you"

Advanced Practitioner, Leigh Locality Adult Social Care.

2023 Fun DAY

We celebrated **65 years** of service with the local community by hosting a family fun day event. All food, activities and promotional items were free for everyone, a great day had by all who attended.















RELEVANT PERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE

Susan Martindale
RPR
Advocate

During the period from April 2023 to March 2024, Family Welfare received a total of 305 referrals for Relevant Person's Representative (RPR) services. Presently, we are managing 229 open cases.

The RPRs engage in various forms of communication with clients, including face-to-face visits, phone calls, and video calls, to gather their views on their placement and explore their right to appeal decisions regarding their residence.

Additionally, RPRs review care files to ensure appropriate completion of capacity assessments and best interest decisions.

Challenges and Solutions

One of the challenges faced by RPRs is incomplete information upon client relocation, leading to delays in obtaining necessary details.

To address this, we are implementing a streamlined process to handle inquiries efficiently.

Moreover, there is a need for ongoing training for care home staff and other health professionals to ensure they understand the referral criteria, process, and role of the IMCA.

Collaboration and Feedback

We maintain a positive working relationship with the DOLS teams, prioritising referrals for individuals objecting to their placement.

Regular contact with care home staff, best interest assessors, and solicitors has facilitated effective advocacy.

Additionally, we receive regular feedback from various stakeholders, indicating satisfaction with our services.

Increasing Demand and Strategic Response

The number of referrals for RPRs continues to rise, reflecting the growing demand for advocacy services.

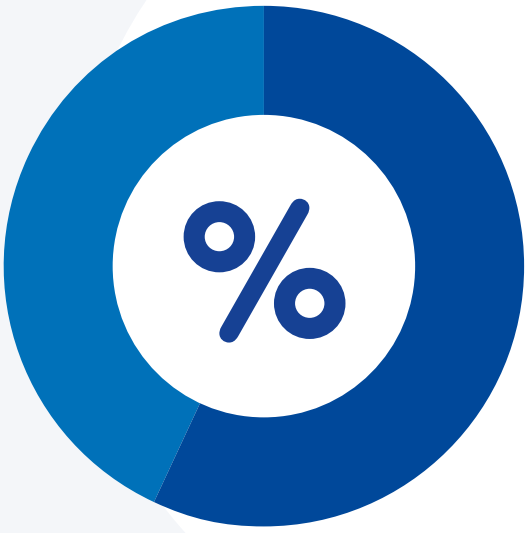
In response, we have welcomed two new RPRs to the team and restructured our operations to efficiently manage the workload.

We are also exploring the possibility of appointing a specialist RPR to handle cases where individuals are not objecting to their placement.

" Thank you for helping us understand the conditions that are set out in the authorisation, and for your explanation in how we can evidence this moving forward. This will help us in this case, but many others as well"

Care home manager.

305 REFERRALS
229 OPEN CASES



Case Study

P is an 85-year-old gentleman residing in a care home in Leigh. P is subject to restrictions resulting in the requirement of a DOLS. P's family were deemed as inappropriate to consult, due to their strong views that P should remain in a care home to be adequately supported, which may result in family being unable to complete the RPR role and uphold their relatives' rights under Article 5 of the Human Rights Act. Therefore, a Paid RPR from Family Welfare was allocated.

When the Paid RPR visited P, to ensure his rights were upheld and that all conditions to the DOLS in place were followed correctly by the managing authority, it was found that P had been objecting to placement and had absconded from the care home on one occasion. The RPR noticed that objections arise after family visits and discussions with professionals about where P would like to live, and that the majority of the time, P was settled and happy within the care home.

P had previously received PRN medications throughout the 'settling period' to support with incidents of agitation and sundowning, a direct effect of his dementia diagnosis. The Local Authority were also concerned about P and contacted the RPR to discuss these concerns. The RPR did not feel there was enough evidence to instruct a solicitor for a 21A challenge at this time, as other ways of supporting the client should be explored before this action is taken. Therefore, the RPR requested a review of medications, to ensure the correct medications were prescribed to support P with his diagnosis of dementia.

After P was re-prescribed with PRN medication, to manage agitation, it was noted in his daily notes and care plans that agitation has decreased, and incidents of requesting to leave the care home are minimal. There were no further safeguarding issues in place regarding absconding, and the RPR felt comfortable in monitoring this situation further by completing visits regularly to remain up to date with any objections.

"I feel your report is helpful and extremely informative so thank you"

Best Interest Assessor

"You are so nice. You listen to me. Thank you for helping. Social worker saw me."

Client.

"Thank you for your work on this case. You always go above and beyond any other RPR we work with"

Solicitor.



LITIGATION FRIEND ROLE & LEGAL CHALLENGES

Chloe Aspinall
Litigation Friend
Advocate

As RPRs, we often find ourselves acting as Litigation Friends for s21a appeals, managing ongoing court proceedings, and liaising with legal representatives.

However, sourcing appropriate legal representation has become increasingly challenging, as a result of high caseloads among legal firms.

Nonetheless, we are committed to providing comprehensive support to our clients, including navigating complex legal processes.

In conclusion, despite facing various challenges, our team remains dedicated to advocating for the rights of vulnerable individuals. We continue to strengthen our partnerships with stakeholders, streamline our processes, and adapt to the evolving landscape of advocacy work.

Moving forward, we will strive to provide high-quality and effective advocacy services to those in need.

Case study:

The IMCA is working with P, who is consistently objecting to his placement. P has had numerous placements over a significant period of time, none of which have lasted. Due to P's consistent objection to the current placement, the IMCA/RPR instructed a solicitor, who in turn made a s.21a application. The RPR was subsequently appointed Litigation Friend by the court.

Since then the RPR/LF has visited P on numerous occasions, both with legal representatives and on their own. It is the objective of the RPR/LF to ascertain what P would like from any future placement, and whilst this has not been an easy task, the RPR/LF is now getting to a position where a picture is being put together of what P wishes for the next placement.

In addition, through instigating s.21a proceedings, P is now expecting a judicial visit from the appointed Court of Protection judge, which will allow P the opportunity to see the judge in person and to provide his thoughts, views, wishes and feelings in person.

"The advocate did amazing; didn't appear nervous in the slightest and the Judge was very complimentary of their input and the way they had considered their position on behalf of the client. Please do ensure your management are aware of how well they have done."

Solicitor.

"And thank you again for how well you have handled this case."

Solicitor.

"You are a person of candour and have been very open minded and I thank you for that."

Judge, Manchester Civil Justice Centre

"Thank you for your input and perseverance in this case. It has helped us get the outcome that we have been wanting to get for P for such a long time."

Social Worker

RULE 1.2 REPRESENTATIVE

Chloe Aspinall
Rule 1.2
Advocate

As we assess the period from April 2023 to March 2024, it's evident that our Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) service has encountered both notable successes and persistent challenges.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of our activities, achievements, and areas requiring further attention during this timeframe.

Referrals for 1.2 Representatives

Referrals for 1.2 representatives have continued to flow into our service, driven primarily by the local authority's focus on individuals lacking capacity in care and residence decisions, reaching the threshold of deprivation of liberty (Court of Protection Deprivation of Liberty – CoPDoL).

Our role in this process involves visiting these individuals, assessing their views and preferences, and liaising with care teams and social workers to provide comprehensive reports to the Court of Protection.

Challenges arise from the increasing caseload, whereby clients are subject to CoPDoLs.

We are actively engaging with commissioners to address these challenges and ensure appropriate funding and resources are allocated.

Streamlined Processes and Challenges

We have observed an increase in requests to act as Rule 1.2 representatives for deprivations authorised in the community through streamlined processes.

However, challenges persist, particularly regarding the review of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) authorisations in the community, often resulting in delays and duplicated efforts.

Efforts to streamline processes and enhance communication with social workers aim to mitigate these challenges and improve efficiency.

In conclusion, the past year has been characterised by significant progress and ongoing challenges in our IMCA service.

Despite obstacles, such as increasing caseloads and ethical dilemmas, our commitment to advocating for vulnerable individuals remains unwavering.

Moving forward, we will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, streamline processes, and advocate for adequate resources to meet the evolving needs of our service users and uphold their rights.

"Thank you for your input and perseverance in this case. It has helped us get the outcome that we have been wanting to get for P for such a long time."

Manager

"Thank you very much for your email, this is very helpful and will assist us greatly moving forward. I shall disseminate the information accordingly."

Consultant

Case study:

The IMCA is currently working as 1.2 Representative with P, who lives within his own flat as part of a wider scheme, with support on hand throughout the day and night.

The care provider explained to the 1.2 Representative, that they were having difficulty in contacting the moving and handling team in order to address the declining mobility of P. This was having a detrimental impact on P's overall mental health, as he was unable to access the community as he had previously enjoyed. In particular, P was missing going out to watch Leigh Leopards rugby league team, who were enjoying one of their best seasons in their history.

Through a combination of phone calls from the 1.2 representative and the care provider, as well as liaison between the three parties, P had a review from the moving and handling team and was provided with a new hoist and specialist wheelchair. As a result, P enjoyed going to watch Leigh Leopards, going shopping with staff and meeting with his daughter in the community.

INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY

Jessica Mcdonald
IMHA
Advocate

In this comprehensive annual report, we reflect on the progress and challenges faced by our Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA) team at Family Welfare over the past year.

With a focus on empowering individuals on psychiatric wards, our advocacy services have seen notable growth amidst ongoing challenges.

Meeting the Growing Demand

Between April 2023 and March 2024, our team received 160 referrals for IMHA and 11 for MHA.

These referrals were collected from professionals across Wigan borough, supplemented by drop-in sessions on in-patient wards.

Despite the challenges, our IMHA team has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring continued support for individuals accessing psychiatric services.

Navigating Communication Challenges

Communication with ward staff remains a significant challenge, particularly on certain wards where referrals are lacking, and information sharing is limited.

Our IMHA team is actively working to address these issues, engaging with clinical leads to improve advocacy referrals and enhance communication channels.

Challenges also arise during strikes and staff shortages, impacting the ability to access important information and discuss client care and treatment.

Building Stronger Partnerships

Despite these challenges, our IMHA team has forged strong partnerships with professionals on certain wards, facilitating improved communication and access to meetings.

Collaborative efforts with Embrace Wigan & Leigh have further strengthened our advocacy services, ensuring individuals receive comprehensive support across organisations.

Addressing Systemic Concerns

The IMHA team remains proactive in addressing systemic issues, including unsafe discharges and patient safety upon discharge.

Advocacy efforts extend to individuals under sections of the Mental Health Act, emphasising a person-centred approach to advocacy support.

Continued Growth and Adaptation

Our IMHA team continues to navigate complex cases and provide support tailored to individual needs.

Despite challenges in referrals and communication, our commitment to empowering individuals on psychiatric wards remains unwavering.

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

Looking ahead, we recognise the need for ongoing advocacy efforts amidst the evolving landscape of mental health services.

Challenges such as communication barriers and staff shortages persist, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration and advocacy.

In conclusion, our IMHA team at Family Welfare has made significant strides in empowering individuals accessing psychiatric services.

Despite the challenges faced, our commitment to advocating for the rights and well-being of individuals on psychiatric wards remains steadfast.

With resilience, dedication, and collaborative efforts, we look forward to continuing our advocacy mission in the year ahead.

"You have made this admission much easier on me. I feel supported, thank you."

Client.

Case Study

Mr M was detained under section 3 of the Mental Health Act. He was referred to advocacy services by mental health professionals on the ward.

Mr M contacted our advocate directly and explained that he had currently gone AWOL from the hospital, our advocate chatted with Mr M and ensured he felt he was safe and in a safe environment before continuing, Mr M said he felt fine and was safe. He explained that he would like the advocate to speak to the hospital to arrange a review for him, he said he would return if this was possible, as he did not feel he was appropriate to be on a PICU and would like to be stepped down to an acute ward.

The advocate discussed this with the hospital and this was arranged and the advocate attending the ward round with Mr M. The advocate and Mr M discussed the concerns with the consultant, it was explained to him that he was on a PICU due to the amount of times he has gone AWOL, but the consultant agreed to liaise with the acute ward about stepping down.

Mr M was granted two days escorted leave with a view of this becoming unescorted if it went well. Mr M was then given unescorted leave which also went well, the advocate attending weekly reviews with Mr M who was then stepped down to an acute ward. Mr M was later discharged into the community with support from CMHT.

Mr M was very grateful to the advocate for attending reviews, even when they were arranged last minute. He said "they treat me differently when you are there, I feel like they take me seriously. Thank you for supporting me throughout my admission and at review meetings".

"My review today was quite intense. I felt much more comfortable with you by my side, this is my life, and I needed my doctor and social worker to listen to my views about the decisions that they are making about my future. Thank you for helping me"- "

Client

"I asked for an advocate without knowing what you can do. I'm really glad you can come to my ward round meetings with me. I always feel so overwhelmed and don't cover everything I need to. I'll feel better knowing you're there"

Client.



CHILDREN & YOUNG PERSONS ADVOCACY

Anne Nelson / Marjorie Banks
CYPA
Advocates

Since the early 2000s, Family Welfare has been dedicated to providing advocacy for children and young people in the Borough of Wigan.

The commissioned service was realigned in 2019 to focus on cases involving Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), Children Looked After (CLA), and Care Leavers.

By April 2022, we expanded our advocacy to 6 days a week, thanks to increased staffing and realignment, initially funded through charitable resources, later supported by commissioners.

In the period of 2023 – 2024, we received 165 referrals, indicating a slight increase from previous years, highlighting the growing demand for our services.

However, referrals are becoming more complex, requiring increased time and resources to resolve.

Despite these challenges, our Child and Young Person's Advocates (CYPA) continue to deliver successful outcomes, as evidenced by positive feedback from both young people and professionals.

Successes

We have observed an increase in CYPA referrals and repeat referrals from children and young people, demonstrating their trust in our service.

Social workers increasingly refer complex cases to us, recognising our ability to provide effective support.

Our partnership with Wigan LA has facilitated a more relaxed and friendly environment for family meetings.

Utilising technology, we ensure that CLA placed out of Borough can access advocacy services and have their voices heard, regardless of their location.

We have seen an increase in meetings attended with, or on behalf of, young people, further amplifying their voices in decision-making processes.

Challenges

Contact with social workers remains a challenge, sometimes leading to delays in case progress.

Lack of communication about social worker transitions can further impede case progression.

CYPA work is not always reflected in social workers' case notes, hindering continuity of care.

We continue to support young people and families navigating mental health services, which can be complex and challenging.

Proposals

We propose addressing the current resource shortfall to ensure that all young people can access advocacy services, not just those currently within specific demographics. This would allow us to better serve the diverse needs of our community.

Despite challenges, it has been another successful year for Family Welfare. Our reputation for delivering effective advocacy services continues to grow, underscoring the vital role we play in supporting children and young people in our community.

We remain committed to working in partnership with Wigan LA and other stakeholders to address the evolving needs of our service users and ensure that their voices are heard, and their rights upheld.

"Following further CYP Advocacy work (requested by SW), the 2x YP of this family said that they had felt listened to and were happy for their wishes and feelings to be shared at the upcoming IRO Review Meeting. They also wanted their parents to understand how they were feeling. One of the YP attended the IRO Review Meeting following discussions with the CYP Advocate."

Client.

Case Study

KL was referred for advocacy by the social worker, she was a looked after child and had moved placements. The referral was originally for placement concerns having been moved unexpectedly from her long-term placement. Her sister NL was also referred, she was still with her original foster carer.

The advocate met with KL at her new foster carers home. She was very distraught as she said she was moved and was not made aware that she was being moved until her Social Worker (SW) had picked her up from school to take her to another foster home. KL said she had been moved away from her sister and was not given any information as to why she was moved and was unable to say good bye to her sister. KL had reflected over her previous care and was not happy about how she felt she was treated differently from her sister, and felt she was excluded from things that her sister was allowed to do. Her wish was to have contact with her sister, she was worried about her.

The younger sister NL met with the advocate at Family Welfare offices and was brought there by her foster carer. At first, she was reluctant to see the advocate without her foster carer being present but, following some reassurances she was happy to meet the advocate alone. Although she was reluctant to share her wishes and feelings and refused to talk about it. The advocate met with both siblings individually, KL was more vocal and had reflected on the care she received from her previous foster carer, and wanted to make a formal complaint. The younger sibling, NL, was still reluctant to discuss her wishes and feelings, and her activities would often be focused on colouring and drawing pictures which she insisted on giving to the foster carer, who she said she called mummy. Within two months, following a strategy meeting, the younger sibling was moved to be with her sister. Both girls were reported to be very happy about being together, again. KL was very happy about her sister being placed with her but was still determined to make her complaint. The younger sister was still very close to her previous foster carers, was very loyal to them, and missed them.

The advocate supported KL in making her complaint. This was completed and sent to the CYP's feedback team. There was also a complaint in progress from the foster carer about the children's social worker. The authority thoroughly investigated KL's complaint and asked for an extension to respond as the issues were complex, which created a delay in responding to the young person. The advocate met with KL to read the response together with her. Some of her complaints were upheld, but some issues were not due to lack of evidence. KL requested to meet the manager who had written the response face to face, to give more clarity on his findings. This meeting took place in school and the advocate was present to give support. KL also asked for support from her Pastoral team as they have been very supportive to her in school and have a close relationship with her. During the meeting, KL became upset as the process had triggered some emotions and memories. The manager stepped out of the meeting, and the Pastoral staff came in, to support KL. It was agreed to give KL time to make a decision about what she wanted to do next, and it was explained that she may wish the case to go to stage 2, at which an independent investigation would take place.

KL's decision was not to take it to a stage 2. The Manager agreed the upheld issues would be dealt with by the local authority, and her SW would meet with KL to give further feedback. The advocate completed her last visit with both sisters, independently. Both children were reported to be much more settled. Their foster carer had agreed to have the girls permanently until they reached adulthood. KL and NL were very happy with this decision. The case was closed.

Feedback from KL was she was happy to have had advocacy support. The SW sent an email: she thanked the Advocate for all the support she had given to the children and all the work that had been done.

"We now have the child's voice, which we have not had before, and this will have an effect on plans for the next stages for this YP."

IRO



165 REFERRALS 2023
150 REFERRALS 2022

NOTES

NOTES

ANNUAL REPORT

& ACCOUNTS 2023/24

The Wigan Churches' Association for Family Welfare is a registered charity in England and Wales (1076830). Company number 3773810.

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