



**TO FREEDOM FROM
DOMESTIC ABUSE**

23rd Annual Report 2018/19

The First Step
St Johns Road
Huyton
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Board of Directors

Chair	Mary Weston
Vice Chair	Lisa Pearson
Honorary Treasurer	Jeremy Fagan
Trustee	Nicola Harris
Trustee	Kevin Rigby

Date of incorporation: 14th March 1996 (name change incorporated 25th November 2014)

Registered Charity Number: 1054533

Company registration number: 3172572

Registered Office: The First Step, Old Schoolhouse, St Johns Road, Huyton, Liverpool L39 0UX

Telephone number: 0151 548 3333

Chief Executive Officer/Company Secretary: Angela Cholet

Bankers: Nat West
Aintree
Liverpool L9 0EG

Solicitors: MSB Solicitors, MSB House
20-22 Tapton Way
Wavertree Business Village
Liverpool L13 1DA

Auditors: DSG
Castle Chambers
43 Castle Street
Liverpool
L2 9TL



CHAIR'S REPORT

It is a privilege to introduce this year's Annual Report, taking over from Jeremy Fagan as chair of The First Step, at a time when awareness of domestic abuse is beginning to take something like its due place in the national conversation. The Domestic Violence Bill may have been — let's hope temporarily! — a casualty of recent parliamentary upheavals, but Rosie Duffield's courageous testimony brought the country face to face with the emotional reality of a survivor's experiences in an unprecedented way.

Joining the Board of Trustees in the summer of 2018, I have been awestruck by the dedication and expertise embodied in this relatively small organisation, and I hope that reading this report will give you a similar sense of the excellent work being done. Both the statistics and the stories attest to lives transformed, to the number of women who can at least begin to imagine being able to say, with Rosie Duffield:

'You realise you are allowed to be happy. You dare to relax and you dare to start to feel free. You realise it is not your fault.'

I come to The First Step with a background of working in small voluntary organisations, the SWAN Centre for Women and more recently The Reader Organisation: my interests have been in therapeutic and arts-based interventions in mental health.

I have had a lot to learn, and am very grateful to Angela Cholet, CEO, for showing me the ropes, and to Jeremy Fagan and my fellow board members Nicola Harris, Lisa Pearson, and Kevin Rigby. And thanks indeed are due to all the staff for the competence and commitment they give, day in and day out, and to the survivors for their courage in rebuilding their lives and for the support they give to each other.

Mary Weston
Chair

CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

Putting victim/survivors at the heart of what we do we have supported 1,034 people. Across the agency there have been 2,130 face to face meetings including at people's own homes, at mutually safe venues, within the centre and the refuge and in partner agencies premises. We have supported over 330 victim/survivors through the criminal justice process and over 110 through the civil/family court processes. Our referrals came from 116 organisations based within 29 different local authorities. Group work is facilitated both in our community based services and our refuge, they continue to be well attended and feedback tells us people enjoy the camaraderie of the group, reducing isolation and building new friendships.

We are proud we have been accredited by Investors In People (IIP), this is a credit to the commitment and support of the staff team, volunteers and Trustees. All staff completed the online staff survey and apparently it is quite unusual to get 100% staff participation. Part of our IIP journey included a review of the agency key values which the staff team developed, discussed and agreed to. During the coming year we will be working towards fully embedding the values which are:

- ✓ **Non-Judgemental** – We are accepting of all differences and choices
- ✓ **Empowerment** – we support survivors to make informed choices
- ✓ **Trust** – We build honest and open relationships in a safe space
- ✓ **High Quality Service** – We are always improving and embracing positive change

The environment in which we work has become more difficult. The funding available has to stretch further against an increase in demand for our services together with increased expectations from fellow professionals who refer into the agency. Supporting victim/survivors with an array of complex needs is a challenge staff face every day, however their passion to counter the effects of domestic abuse and their commitment in enabling and empowering all the people who use our services shines through.



Reading through the annual report provides a snapshot of the tremendous work undertaken by the agency but it is best illustrated by a comment from a user of our services: ***'They actually sit with you and say "Well, where would you want to go with your life, if you could do anything, what would you want to do?" And they try their hardest to make that possible for you'***¹.

Angela Cholet CEO

¹ Focus group participant

ROSS HOUSE CHILDREN'S SERVICE

During this year the Children's Service welcomed 65 children and young people into refuge, aged from 0 to 16 years old. The majority age range of 30 children were from 0 to 4 years, with 21 children aged 5 to 9 years and the remainder between 10 and 15 years.

Funded by Children In Need the Children's service is available 52 weeks a year and is accessible on varying levels 5 days per week. The weekly timetable includes creche and after school club sessions. Activities and groups are also provided on alternate Saturdays to cover the different age groups. One to one sessions are facilitated around the timetabled group sessions with the frequency and length of each session based on age range and individual level of need.



Many families arrive at Ross House having been restricted in ways that have impacted on their physical and emotional health. The Children's Service focuses on improving emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of the children. Our trips are often aimed at family time promoting positive relationships between the children and their mothers, and also with siblings and peers. Trips such as bowling, swimming and rock climbing allow the children to exercise in a fun, accessible way, promoting self-esteem, team building and risk management.

Age appropriate group sessions are held to discuss mindfulness, confidence and healthy relationships. The service aims to build resilience by helping children to understand they are not to blame for what has happened and support them in looking forward to their future in Ross House and beyond.



Children are encouraged to join in cultural celebrations and understand each other's similarities as well as differences which make us all unique. Sessions also include nurturing healthy attitudes towards food, supporting children to get involved in preparing their own food and tasting food from around the world such as when celebrating Chinese New Year or Diwali.



Some of the trips and activities are held to enable quality time to be spent together, something that is often restricted by the perpetrator. The service provides education sessions for mums about developmentally appropriate activities with their children and facilitates inhouse family time including baking, arts & crafts and family film nights.

Laura Foster
Snr. Children's Worker



ROSS HOUSE

This year we saw an 86% increase in people seeking refuge space. Some of this increase will be due to staff more effectively monitoring/recording referrals, however a jump of this size could not be justified solely in this way and shows a significant increase in level of need. Of the 269 enquiries we were able to accept 64 which is a 21% increase on acceptances into refuge compared to last year. At 36% the main reason for not accepting referrals was due to the refuge being full while 17% were refused due to chaotic alcohol/drug use.

Enquiries for refuge space come from a wide variety of sources with the main ones in the table below:

Referral Sources into Ross House			
Housing Options and Homeless Teams	28.6%	Refuges/Domestic Abuse Services	19%
IDVA Services	12.4%	Self-referrals	10%
Remainder came from a range of services including children's social care, police, probation, hospital/NHS, drug/alcohol services.			30%

Each referral is assessed individually, and we accept as many referrals as we can. Apart from the refuge being full unsuccessful referrals are not accepted for a variety of reasons which includes the area not

being safe, having support needs the service could not meet and inappropriate referrals with domestic abuse not being the presenting issue. Of all referrals this year 25% came from outside of the Merseyside area.

With referrals coming from a variety of sources, and from all parts of the UK, it is vital refuges continue to be 'services without boundaries' to ensure we can truly offer a safe refuge for women and children fleeing perpetrators of domestic abuse.



Women, children and young people living at refuge are encouraged to comment/feedback during their time at Ross House. This allows the service to evolve and ensure we are meeting the needs rather than a perception of them. One area that women expressed more of a need was for 1 to 1 sessions for the children. This was included in the Children In Need funding bid and across the last 12 months we have been able to fulfil this request.

Average length of stay this year has been 57 days however this average increased to 98 days for families moving into private rented accommodation and 113 days for families moving into social housing. This year we did not have any formal evictions but 3 women abandoned their place after an average of 8 days.

Move On From Refuge: Total Leaving 57			
Returned safely to previous property	12	Started New Tenancy	24
Stayed with family/friends	12	Alternative Supported Accommodation	6
Evicted	0	Abandoned	3

Lesley Green Refuge Manager

THE FIRST STEP PROJECT SURVIVORS TO THRIVERS

During the year 192 people self-referred into the service, 22 only required initial telephone support due to their queries being answered on first contact. The remaining 170 victim/survivors received further support including 1-1 appointments.

Face to face support is offered to victim/survivors either through outreach, which is at a mutually safe, accessible venue or at our centre. Support includes practical assistance including ensuring their homes have appropriate security, support with housing moves, finding refuge space, accompanying to court and working together to agree a safety plan tailored to their particular needs. We also provide emotional support enabling the victim/survivor to talk through their situation, ask all their 'what if' questions and enable them to make informed choices about their next steps.

Group work is important in enabling people to move forward while also gaining support from peers, sharing experiences and forming new friendships. This approach contributes to reducing their isolation. This year we delivered 3 Freedom programmes and 2 Recovery Toolkits. The Recovery Toolkit is a 12 week programme based on a psycho educational model which aims to provide women who have experienced domestic abuse with the resources to maximise their own potential. Women who attend this programme have to have left the relationship. As the programme is accredited successful completion means every participant gains a Level 1 certificate in 'Developing Personal Confidence and Self Awareness'.



In addition to the 1-1 support and structured group programmes we also facilitate moving on groups which are in response to service user requests and have included: vision board workshops, meditation, reiki, careers corner as well as activity days for the family including a visit to Chester Zoo.

Below is a wonderful positive comment from a user of the service: ***"I'm getting on a train on the 29th December and I'm going to London for a week on my own. On my own!! The First Step gives you that confidence"***.

Funded by the Big Lottery Fund the Survivors to Thrivers service is being evaluated by Liverpool Hope University led by Dr Emma Katz. An interim report was produced in November 2018 which concluded: *Survivors to Thrivers meets the needs that survivors face after an initial crisis intervention. It does tailored work to increase the wellbeing of survivors for the long term. The evaluation data highlighted that the service is meeting its goals, namely: increasing service users self-esteem, increasing their safety, reducing their isolation and giving them more control over their futures.*

Melanie Grice Snr. Domestic Abuse Worker

INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVOCATE (IDSVA)

The IDSVA service works with people who have been assessed as high risk (GOLD), which is victim/survivors most at risk of serious injury of murder. Referrals to the service have been through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), which is a co-ordinated approach with partner agencies to review the risks posed to the victim, children and other household members. The safety plan is reviewed at MARAC and actions are given to agencies when needed to support this. Upon receipt of the referral the service will make a minimum of 3 attempts at contact.

This has been a challenging year for the IDSVA service with a 51% increase in referrals from 345 last year to 521 this year. Despite this high number of referrals, the service maintained extremely high levels of contact at 80% with 78% engaging. 191 of the 531 referrals were repeat cases which equates to 36%. Safelives recommend that an established MARAC repeat rate would be in the region of 28% to 40%, therefore the Knowsley MARAC falls within the recommended range.

Annual Breakdown of Engagement	
Referrals to IDSVA	521
Referrals contacted	415
% contacted	80%
Referrals engaging	322
% engaging	78%

Alongside the increase in referrals was a large increase in clients supported through the CJS (Criminal Justice System) with a 216% increase from 107 last year to 338 this year. There was also a notable increase for clients supported through the Civil/Family Court process of 71% from 55 last year to 94 this year.

During this year the IDSVA service was also asked to provide a service to 16-19 years olds assessed as bronze or silver as a condition of the grant funding for 2018/19, utilising the same 2.6 (FTE) IDSVA staff team. Although the IDSVA service already supports 16 -19 year olds at gold level, young people assessed at bronze or silver are harder to engage as they fall outside of the structured multi agency MARAC process. It was very challenging to manage this additional piece of work within the same resources due to the 51% increase in GOLD referrals. Going forward, due to limited funding, the IDSVA service will not be providing an offer of support to 16-19 year olds assessed as bronze or silver.

Client comment: ***"I am really grateful for my support regarding housing. I was living between homes as to risky to return home and would not have secured a new property had it not been for IDSVA intervention"***.

Partnership working is an integral aspect of the IDSVA service, we are appreciative of our colleagues and partner agencies who work alongside us and we look forward to continuing the partnership during the coming year.

Emma Kay Snr. IDSVA

Our Fundraising Promise

We know that when you make a donation, whichever charity you support, you will want to know that the organisation is committed to best practice, that we are responsible in the way we fundraise and are dedicated to honesty and accountability. That is why The First Step has signed up to fundraising regulation through the Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB). Membership is a commitment to the highest standards of fundraising. Should there be any concerns about the way we fundraise, we have a robust complaints process in place, notifying the FRSB of any issues raised. It is about being accountable for our actions and ensuring that we put you, our supporters, first.

You will see the **give with confidence** tick logo on our website and appeals, reminding you of our commitment to best practice in fundraising. We hope that our membership will give you added confidence in our fundraising and, ultimately, encourage more people to provide vital support for us to continue to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns about the way we fundraise, please get in touch by calling 0151 548 3333. You can also download a copy of our complaints procedure at: www.thefirststep.org.uk

Our fundraising promise to you

We are committed to high standards
We are honest and open
We are clear
We are respectful
We are fair and reasonable
We are accountable

You can help us by:

Just Giving:
 Make a donation on line by visiting
www.justgiving.com/thefirststep

Just Text Giving:
 Just text TFSS01 plus the amount you want to donate to 70070
 Texts are free to send from all networks

Thankyou

THE FIRST STEP LTD

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

		Unrestricted funds 2019 £	Restricted funds 2019 £	Total 2019 £	Unrestricted funds 2018 £	Restricted funds 2018 £	Total 2018 £
	Notes						
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	3,261	-	3,261	5,622	-	5,622
Charitable activities	4	329,265	291,655	620,920	331,923	301,136	633,059
Investments	5	-	-	-	4	-	4
Total income		332,526	291,655	624,181	337,549	301,136	638,685
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	6	324,310	291,655	615,965	316,335	301,136	617,471
Net income for the year/ Net movement in funds		8,216	-	8,216	21,214	-	21,214
Fund balances at 1 April 2018		181,534	-	181,534	160,320	-	160,320
Fund balances at 31 March 2019		189,750	-	189,750	181,534	-	181,534

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

THE FIRST STEP LTD

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2019

	Notes	2019		2018	
		£	£	£	£
Current assets					
Debtors	12	725		24,150	
Cash at bank and in hand		241,295		230,317	
		<u>242,020</u>		<u>254,467</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(52,270)</u>		<u>(72,933)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>189,750</u>		<u>181,534</u>
Income funds					
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>					
Designated funds	15	5,121		5,121	
General unrestricted funds		<u>184,629</u>		<u>176,413</u>	
			<u>189,750</u>		<u>181,534</u>
			<u>189,750</u>		<u>181,534</u>

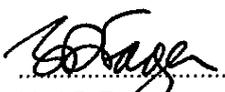
The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 March 2019.

The trustees acknowledges her responsibilities for ensuring that the charity keeps accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act and for preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 10th December 2019



 Mr J D Fagan
 Trustee

Company Registration No. 03172572

2018/19 the First Step received funding and support from:



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Huyton
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