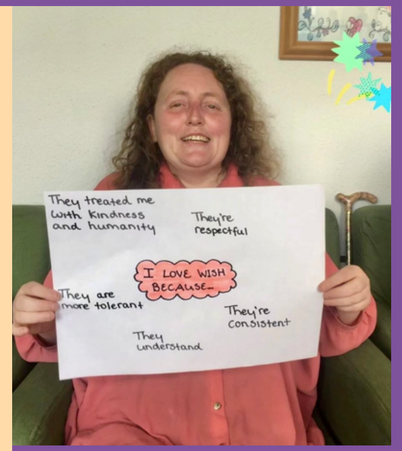
WISH
standing together

ONE YEAR AT WISH

April 2023- March 2024







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Dear friends and supporters,

The past year at WISH has been one of resilience, and growth. Despite significant challenges, we've strengthened our organisation and deepened our commitment to supporting the women we serve. We are immensely proud of what we've achieved together.

Our advocacy services ensured that women and young people in mental health hospitals across England had their voices heard. By fostering confidence and self-advocacy, service users engaged more effectively with care teams, reclaiming agency in their recovery. Our trauma-informed counselling provided a safe, supportive space for women to address mental health challenges, with many reporting reduced anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, our Community Link project tackled practical and emotional barriers, offering comprehensive support to help women achieve stability and empowerment.

We also advanced key organisational priorities, including establishing the WISH Diversity Working Group to foster equality, initiating a membership review to better serve our community, and preparing for a trustee recruitment drive to increase board diversity.

While we made great strides, the year was not without its challenges. In December 2023, an unexpected financial crisis arose when a major funder withdrew a previously confirmed donation due to an internal error on their part. This setback placed WISH in a precarious position. In response, we launched the No Woman Left Behind campaign, and thanks to your generosity, we overcame the hurdle and continued our work without interruption. We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of support, which reaffirmed the collective commitment to our mission.

We continued to be relentless in our pursuit of sustainable funding throughout the year. This effort culminated in 2024/25 with securing significant three-year funding commitments that have not only stabilised WISH financially but also positioned us for continued growth and impact in the years ahead.

None of this progress would have been possible without you — our supporters, donors, staff, and volunteers. Your belief in our mission and your unwavering dedication sustain our work. Thank you for being part of this journey.

With gratitude,
Joyce Kallevik, Director, WISH

IN A NUTSHELL

ADVOCACY	**139** Women and young people supported	**11** Wards and units working with WISH	**3** Hospitals commissioned WISH
COUNSELLING	**1056** Hours of counselling delivered	**44** Women benefited from counselling	**24** Average no of free sessions per person;
COMMUNITY LINK	**783+** Support sessions with women	**45** Women supported in the community	**430+** Direct contact support hours
COMMUNITY	**150** Members	**854** People subscribed to our newsletter	**4867** People follow us online
WISH TEAM	**7** Part time staff	**11** Volunteers and interns	**7** Trustees

ADVOCACY

Throughout the year we have been working with 139 service users across our three sites, including both women and young people:

- Cygnet Bury, where our service users included:
  - Women detained on two dedicated wards: Upper West, a medium secure ward, and Lower West, a low secure service, recently renamed Dunes.
  - Young people either detained under the Mental Health Act (Section 2 or Section 3) or admitted as informal patients. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) unit includes four wards: Mulberry (low secure), Buttercup and Primrose (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit - PICU), and Wizard (acute ward).
- Cygnet Sheffield, where we provided support for:
  - Women on Spencer ward, a low secure unit.
  - Young people detained or admitted informally across three adolescent wards: Unicorn (PICU), Pegasus (general adolescent acute), and Griffin (low secure).
- Cheswold Park Hospital, Doncaster, where our support focused on:
  - Women detained in Bronte, a medium secure ward.

139

Women and young people have benefited from WISH advocacy services

11

wards and units we have been working with

3

hospitals commissioned WISH

“I know that when I message my advocate, even if it is weekend, she will get back to me as soon as she is available.
Even just getting a text to let me know she has picked up my message has made all the difference”

L, SERVICES USER

ADVOCACY

"It has been a pleasure working with WISH for another year. WISH's Advocacy Manager goes above and beyond and continues to be dedicated, loyal and supportive of both the service users and staff at the Dunes."

BETH CLAMP, REGISTERED MANAGER, DUNES, CYGNET HOSPITAL BURY

Our team is responsive and consistently goes above and beyond to support engagement. For example, we prioritise Care Programme Approach (CPA) meetings, often meeting with women and young people multiple times in advance to help them prepare self-reports. Many have experienced past challenges with services, so we understand that trust can take time to build.

WISH also continued liaising with the Children's Commissioner to support young people in care. In one case, WISH advocated for a young person whose home team had delayed their transfer to a local area, despite efforts by commissioners and Cygnet. Direct involvement from the Children's Commissioner ultimately facilitated the young person's repatriation.

Additionally, we engaged with the Head of Advocacy at the Children's Commissioner's office, as well as PALS and complaints departments, to address cases where home teams provided insufficient support. This collaborative approach resolved outstanding issues, ensuring all young people received the necessary care and services.

ADVOCACY

“Before you were my advocate I would just shout and kick off, mostly I’d end up in seclusion. In my family everyone shouted so you had to shout to be heard but I have learnt that the more you shout the less likely anyone will hear you. You helped me find the words and now people listen to me.”

M, SERVICE USER

Our advocacy work spans a wide age range, from children as young as 12 in CAMHS units to women up to 60 years old in adult services, reflecting diverse backgrounds, languages, and needs. For example, for young people with limited English proficiency, hospitals provide interpreters, which is invaluable to communication. Additionally, we work with many service users diagnosed with autism, and we provide easy-read, pictorial information to ensure accessibility.

While each journey is unique, we often see that service users are initially hesitant to raise issues with advocacy. Establishing a trusting relationship remains essential to fostering open communication and effective advocacy.

Service user engagement remained strong overall. Building and maintaining trust is central to our advocacy approach. We invest time in creating consistent, reliable relationships with service users, ensuring they feel heard and empowered to advocate for their needs. We work with service users from admission through to discharge, meaning our time with each individual varies depending on their length of stay. It's rewarding to witness these journeys, with many service users ultimately returning to their communities.

In 2025, we plan to implement an automated reporting system to streamline data collection, enhance our advocacy insights, and further improve the efficiency of our support services.

COUNSELLING

WISH's counselling services continue to be a safe space for women to address life experiences without fear of judgment.

Between April 23 and March 24, 44 women received Trauma-Informed Counselling through WISH, marking a significant increase from the previous year with 29 more women accessing these essential services. At year-end, 27 women were actively engaged in counselling sessions.

Our trauma-informed counselling approach has yielded positive results, with the majority of women showing decreases in anxiety and depression scores measured by the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scales. Additionally, an impressive commitment to counselling was evident, with very few missed sessions and strong overall attendance.

Our counselling and support are not limited to addressing mental health. We understand that social issues, like housing and financial stress, contribute to distress. That's why we integrate practical support through our Community Link project, helping women address these issues so they can fully engage in therapy when they are ready.

1056

No of hours of counselling delivered

44

Women benefited from WISH counselling

24

Average number of free counselling sessions delivered per person;

COUNSELLING

Our client base is diverse, with 48% of women from racialised communities, including Bangladeshi, Chinese, Afro-Caribbean, Black African, Asian, and Pakistani backgrounds.

The WISH counselling team comprises two paid counsellors and five volunteer counsellors from Bangladeshi, White British, Spanish, and Romanian backgrounds. This diversity provides a strong foundation of cultural awareness and understanding, reflecting the communities we serve.

Cultural competence at WISH goes beyond language or ethnicity; it encompasses flexible, client-centred care that honours each woman's lived experience. Our team takes a trauma-informed, gender-specific approach, recognising the complexities of racialised trauma and cultural identity. For example, our Bangladeshi counsellor provides critical insight into the stigma surrounding mental health in South Asian communities, fostering trust and reducing barriers to care. Additionally, counselling in Bengali ensures that language is never a barrier for Bangladeshi women seeking support.

Recognising that some clients prefer a counsellor from a different ethnic background to avoid cultural bias or stigma, we provide flexibility to meet their needs. By integrating culturally relevant therapy modalities, we ensure clients' ethnic, cultural, and religious values are respected, fostering meaningful progress on their therapeutic journey.

"Attending counselling sessions with you has enabled me to converse about things that have happened in my life without fear of judging or being gaslit by how I feel as I have dealt with many manipulative people in my life."

F, Service User

COUNSELLING

"I feel I benefitted immensely from your sessions and have learnt about areas in my life I need to work in like believing in myself and self-worth not only for me to show up as my best self but limit access to toxic people who will take advantage of my weaknesses."

D, Service User

The majority of referrals (57%) came from GP and social prescribing practices in Tower Hamlets, including our longest-standing partner, The Mission Practice, as well as nine other GP and social prescribing partners.

Another 30% of referrals came from Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies, an NHS service which provides limited short-term counselling for women but does not provide longer-term counselling for women with complex needs.

Notably, 13% of referrals were self-referrals from women encouraged by their GPs to seek longer-term, specialised support.

The increase in women in counselling, our current waiting list of 40 women, and the increase in the number of referring partners shows the incredible need for our service and the necessity for statutory funding. During the year WISH also became a member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and we are now commission ready. There's no other counselling service that we know of in Tower Hamlets which provides:

- Free, trauma-Informed Therapy for women with complex mental health needs
- Extended number of sessions .

COMMUNITY LINK

This year, our Community Link services have been a lifeline for many women facing barriers to essential support. Self-referrals increased significantly, with women reaching out directly or being signposted by organisations like MIND. Many women who sought our help were excluded from mainstream services, including GPs, A&E, and mental health support.

While these situations are often complex, our team provided a compassionate listening ear, helping women reframe their approach and regain access to necessary care. Our team's dedication, bolstered by contributions from a Youth Work student and an intern from Syracuse University, extended beyond one-on-one support.

Addressing complex needs often required several hours long, in-depth conversations to fully understand circumstances before offering assistance or signposting to appropriate organisations such as Women's Aid,Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC) , Find Others – a central hub for victims of injustices, Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), MPs or local councillors.

"My neighbour, a qualified psychotherapist, volunteers for WISH and I discovered their work through her. When I visited their office I was impressed by the commitment of the staff and their imaginative understanding of the complex needs of the women they are helping. With the NHS in such disarray the demand for their services has grown dramatically."

GILLIE, WISH SUPPORTER

783+

Support sessions with women

430+

Number of Community Link direct contact support hours.

45

Women benefited from support in the community

COMMUNITY LINK

The service also fielded numerous calls from prisons, including HMP Bronzefield and HMP Downview, and letters from HMP Send and HMP Styal. We provided financial advice, emotional support, and assistance with release planning, alongside liaising with prison staff, families, and probation services to facilitate smooth transitions.

The dominant themes for the year included managing finances, fostering meaningful activities, and improving physical health. Our support ranged from assisting with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims and securing food vouchers to empowering women to advocate for better healthcare and embrace self-care practices like balanced nutrition and improved sleep.

Despite these challenges, we continued to support women through targeted interventions and advocacy. We provided aid via calls, social media, in-person meetings, and administrative assistance, such as drafting letters to reduce debts or applying for grants for essential items. We also supported women during outings, like a trip to the Tate Britain to see feminist art, and hosted events such as a Christmas gathering for women spending the holidays alone.

We have also recognised and celebrated small but impactful victories, such as helping a woman finally receive critical medical investigations after years of neglect by the NHS. She acknowledges that she has the power to speak and be heard now.

CAMPAIGNING

Advocating for the Care Supporters Bill

WISH joined Care Rights UK's campaign for the Care Supporters Bill, which aims to establish a legal right to a care supporter in health and social care settings.

Opposing the Illegal Migration Bill

We joined efforts with over 250 charities and organisations to oppose the Illegal Migration Bill, which undermines migrants' rights and international human rights commitments, helping to emphasise the Bill's conflict with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and its potential to erode protections for all.

Supporting the National Women's Fund Campaign

We backed the Women's Resource Centre's (WRC) campaign for a National Women's Fund, to address the disproportionate impact of the cost-of-living crisis on women and children. Chronically underfunded women-led organisations like us play a pivotal role in providing support, including domestic abuse services, mental health care, and childcare solutions. The petition called on the Government to allocate targeted financial resources, ensuring we can continue delivering essential services during an era of heightened economic instability.

Defending Democracy

WISH supported Liberty' campaign to challenge the Government's adoption of a new definition of "extremism," which risks silencing legitimate debate and undermining democracy. We also supported their legal challenge against protest law changes, which expanded police powers to shut down demonstrations.

Advocating for Mental Health Reform

Through the Mental Health Alliance, WISH co-signed an open letter to the Prime Minister, calling for urgent reform of the outdated Mental Health Act 1983. The letter highlighted the need for improved treatment, reduced racial disparities in detention, and greater investment in mental health care to prevent crises and inappropriate detentions.

Promoting Human Rights

We joined over 75 organisations in endorsing the British Institute of Human Rights' (BIHR) Human Rights Day letter. Marking the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we urged political leaders to protect fundamental rights and uphold the ECHR as a cornerstone of UK law.

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT

As for any small charity ongoing fundraising is essential to service development and core functions, and we are grateful to charitable trusts and donors for supporting WISH in its core mission. Our income is gained through a number of streams:

– **Charitable Trust Funding:** Despite the competitive environment for small charities, particularly women's organisations (which receive just 1.8% of trust funding), we secured critical grants, including:

- Trust for London's Disability Justice Fund: £117,500 over three years to support membership development, communications, campaigning, and co-produced Diversity and Inclusion policies.
- Hilden Charitable Trust: £6,000 to develop work in three prisons: HMP Downview, HMP Send, and HMP East Sutton Park.
- Awards for All Lottery Funding: £9,400 for community work and trauma-informed counselling.
- Partners for Health (Saturday Hospital Fund and London Catalyst): £4,000 for healthcare-focused initiatives.
- Wakefield Trust: £3,700 to support trauma-informed counselling through GP referrals and social prescribing in Tower Hamlets.
- Small Grants: Vanderville £3,000, Queen Adelaide £1,600.

FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT

– **Contracts**: WISH provided trauma-informed advocacy in three hospitals, with the contract directly supporting the delivery of our services (£92,898 across the financial year)

– **Donor Fundraising:** Donations remain vital as they provide unrestricted funds to ensure WISH's survival and growth. In December 2023, an unexpected financial crisis arose when a major funder withdrew a previously confirmed donation due to an internal error on their part. In response, the "No Woman Left Behind" campaign was launched, supported by a Fundraising Working Group established in January 2024. The campaign, which continued in the next financial year, successfully reached its goal and raised funds to avert closure, thanks to the generosity of our community.
Between February and March 2024, we raised £11,418.

– **Consultancy:** WISH carried out research on behalf of Inclusion London's Free Our People Campaign to develop guidelines for self-advocacy groups, and other user-led groups, to run safe and inclusive meetings for neurodivergent people who are at risk of being detained, or who have been detained in secure hospitals and ATU's. This project contributed £6,200 to our income.

– **Small businesses:** Partnerships with small businesses contributed significantly. For instance, Samsara Parlour and My Urban Trail collectively donated over £1,500 during the year.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial summary for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Our income comes from 3 major sources:

£52, 363
Grants and Donations, Unrestricted

£67, 448
Grants, Restricted

£95, 874
Contracts, Unrestricted

	2024	2023
Incoming Resources	£215, 885	£241, 691
Resources Expended	£220, 321	£236, 669
Net Surplus/ (Deficit) For The Year	(£4, 436)	£5, 022
Total Funds at 31 March 2023/4	£14, 736	£19, 172

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

This year's achievements were made possible by the dedication and hard work of our incredible team of staff and volunteers. Their efforts go far beyond their roles, demonstrating a deep empathy and commitment to those we serve.

Staff:
Joyce Kallevik, Director
Justine Howard, Advocacy manager & IMHA
Lucy Birch, Mental Health Advocate
Penny Bennett, Community Link Manager
Kelly Royer, Community Link Worker & Counselling Manager
Diana Serban, Head of Brand, Communications and Campaigns
With thanks to Kate Morgan who left in 2023.

Volunteer Counsellors: Rebecca Sutton, Rebecca Porteous, Meera Khanna, Mercedes Belinchon, Ruxandra Zaharia.

Interns & Community Link or Administration Volunteers: Emma Draper -Coates, Ruochen Liao, Mariana Adams, Emma Hardwell, Ashley Issak, Clarissa Cowie.

Board of Trustees: Alex Phillips (Chair), Ruth Lambley, Dr Rachel Seoighe, Dr Carly Guest, Christine Spooner, Sarah Wilson and Helen Harcombe-Edwards.

7
Members of staff

11
Volunteers and interns

7
Trustees

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