

St Giles

Turning a past into a future

Annual Review

2021-2022



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Our vision

Inclusive communities where people facing the greatest adversity have a voice and opportunity to realise a positive future.

Foreword from Duncan Gibson

Chair, St Giles

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The growth of St Giles, coupled with the effects of both Covid and the cost-of-living crisis, have had a seismic impact on the way we work with our clients. As a result, we have had to adapt our approach and ensure our teams are equipped with the necessary skills and support.

Firstly, the needs of the people we help have become increasingly complex.

Our clients are often unable to access opportunities within the job market due to heavy competition and the added barriers they face. Child criminal exploitation is a big concern especially given the current economic climate where many young people could be groomed into criminal activity as a way of making ends meet. Our role is to untangle their problems and guide them towards hope and positive, achievable goals.

This means we have focused our experience and efforts on providing intensive, one-to-one support for the people who need us the most rather than reaching larger numbers of people with relatively brief interventions. Long-term, sustainable solutions to complex problems require a great deal of patience and persistence. We work with our clients on their terms and our teams will be there for them as long as they are needed.

Secondly, the policy and funding landscape is shifting. Charities like St Giles were already facing challenges in delivering more for less and we are now facing potentially devastating cuts to public services. We are stepping in to pick up the pieces and will need to be increasingly nimble and innovative in how we resource our services against a backdrop of increasing demands on them.

Given these factors, we have focused a lot of effort on internal resilience at St Giles over the past year and ensured that we have the processes and quality checks in place to support these changes and challenges. Our Skills Centre is ensuring our staff have the very best training to continue providing our high quality services.

We recognise the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), to our clients, to our staff and the communities within which we work. EDI improves wellbeing, outcomes, and access to opportunity, ensuring everyone feels equally valued. To achieve our vision, we will proactively

support EDI and lived experience, live it through our values and demonstrate leadership through our partnerships and networks. We will be innovative and courageous in challenging the status quo.

Our internal structure is changing to further encourage collaboration across all of our teams and sharing of learning and good practice. We will continue and further develop our ethos of consulting with our frontline teams, Peer Advisors and clients to ensure we involve them in developing our services and structures.

There has been a great deal to celebrate over the past year, including St Giles's 60th anniversary. Since 1962, St Giles has been a place where people could turn to if they were struggling to get help from elsewhere. We continue to be that safety net that ensures people do not fall through the gaps. Utilising lived experience, the backbone of our work, has continued to flourish since it was first deployed in HMP Wandsworth in early 2002 through training serving prisoners to become advice and guidance workers known as Peer Advisors.

Today, these Peer Advisors speak at national conferences, advise statutory services such as police and probation and continue to provide hope and inspiration for those going through the experiences they once had. They are changemakers who remind us that we should never give up on people. Some of the bravest, inspirational individuals are often those who were once unfairly side-lined and shunned.



I would like to pay tribute and say a huge thanks to Rob for being at the helm of St Giles over the past 15 years. Rob saw the potential in St Giles and knew it had the ability to make such a huge impact on individuals, communities and wider society. His vision and determination has driven St Giles to develop from being a mainly London-based charity to becoming a national one working in local communities across the UK, transforming thousands of lives each year. He will be very much missed.

Lastly, I would like to thank the kindness and generosity of all our supporters, funders and partners. I know this is said each year in this foreword but it needs to be repeated. Without your support St Giles would not be able to provide the services which have such a transformative impact on individuals and those around them. We are extremely grateful for your support and our commitment to you is to continue providing the very best for our clients at a challenging time when they really need care and compassion.

Duncan Gibson
Chair, St Giles

Foreword from Rob Owen

Outgoing Chief Executive, St Giles

This year felt like a new beginning in many ways. Emerging from the pandemic and associated restrictions was a relief for all of us but especially our caseworkers and clients who had been facing considerable challenges. The increase in face to face contact has been a blessing and helped our teams develop their services and increase accessibility to those who need them most.

As the misery of the pandemic receded, the cost-of-living crisis threatens to replace it unless we act fast to protect our clients. Over the past year, we have already put the groundwork in place for this through further developing our Pantry network and other services helping with emergency support. For many of our clients, their local Pantry has proved to be a lifeline as it not only provides access to healthy food, it also provides support with underlying issues which could be trapping people in poverty.

The value of our long-standing prisons work last year came into sharp focus as the work temporarily halted due to Government changes in the way criminal



justice work is provided. People in the criminal justice system are often those who face some of the heaviest disadvantages in our society and we are committed to continue providing our support to them. I am extremely pleased that through St Giles Wise we are still able to do so through our peer-led model which delivers value and results.

Sadly, child criminal exploitation and exposure to serious violence remain prevalent amongst the lives of the young people we support. This has been compounded by the wider impacts of missed education and mental health issues experienced by many young people in the post-Covid period. Our teams have worked round the clock and across the UK to ensure these very vulnerable young

people are safeguarded and get the care and support they need. Furthermore, our vital schools-based prevention work helping raise awareness and resilience to child criminal exploitation has continued to flourish.

Issues around cost-of-living and wellbeing are universal and our staff have not been immune to them. We have increased our support for staff as their employer and have ensured that they are able to access clinical supervision and counselling services should they need them. They carry out difficult work in often challenging circumstances and it is only right that we look after them. I am delighted to report that we once again made the Best Companies Top 100 list in the Not For Profit category, ranking as the 4th best charity to work for in the UK.

I have now been Chief Executive of this incredible charity for 15 years. Thanks to our teams, my colleagues on the Senior Management Team, our Board and loyal funders it has grown to become a UK-wide charity tackling social exclusion. Our work has transformed the lives of thousands

and we are leading players in the fields of harnessing lived experience and utilising its benefits, and our work tackling child criminal exploitation is regarded as a model of good practice.

We are about to embark on a new chapter at St Giles and that will be led by someone else as I will be stepping aside in March 2023. I am in just as much awe of our teams as I was when I first walked into the reception at our HQ in 2007 when I saw the work upfront. Even after I have left St Giles, I will continue to be inspired and uplifted by its work.

As ever, I would like to thank to loyal, hardworking teams who continue to fight for their clients' corners each day. I am also extremely grateful to our partners, funders and supporters. You continue to share our vision of a better society for people who are struggling within it at this uniquely challenging time. If we continue to be there for them, they will become empowered to thrive.

Rob Owen OBE

Outgoing Chief Executive, St Giles



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We help people create a better future for themselves and those around them through providing support, advice and training.

Who we are

We are St Giles, a national charity that helps people overcome big challenges in their lives and build a positive future.

We support people who are held back by poverty, unemployment, experience of the criminal justice system, homelessness, substance misuse, exploitation, ill-health and abuse.

Our projects are run by people who have overcome these challenges, because the ones who have 'been there' are best at helping others.

We help people create a better future for themselves and those around them through providing support, advice and training.

Our services address the root causes of the barriers holding people back.

They help:

- People achieve a route out of poverty
- Children and young people involved in or at risk of child criminal exploitation make a safe and sustained exit
- Women and families to overcome disadvantage and progress towards independence
- Adults and young people facing barriers access opportunities around skills and employment
- Serving prisoners and prison leavers to resettle and make positive progress

We raise awareness of the situations facing the people we support amongst policy makers and the wider public. We want to see long-term changes put in place to create a fairer society where everybody – no matter what their background – has the chance of a positive future.

Our impact

Our clients are facing extreme hardship from the cost-of-living crisis and pressures on public services.

At St Giles we have shifted our work to meet their needs and help them tackle the increasingly complex challenges they face.

To meet these emerging issues, we have intensified our support for our clients and focussed on providing one-to-one support for people who are really struggling to get the help they need.



5,569
clients offered
1-2-1 support



1,084
provided with training
and employment



223
rescued from
county lines



836
helped with debts
and finance



105,629

reached via SOS+
schools prevention
sessions



5

Pantry hubs tackled
food poverty



Overview of the year

March '21

The Wonder Project, which supports women in the criminal justice system in Norfolk, had its funding extended by Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner. Originally established as a one-year pilot project in 2017, it has since helped hundreds of women overcome multiple and complex disadvantages.

On International Women's Day over 150 guests logged on to a virtual celebration event marking the achievements of women across St Giles.



May '21

We officially launched **St Giles Wise** which is a partnership between St Giles and The Wise Group to support prison leavers through Ministry of Justice commissioned Dynamic Framework contracts. Through this work we are utilising a lived experience approach to support prison leavers around personal wellbeing factors such as lifestyle, positive relationships and social inclusion.

St Giles ranked 4th in the Best Companies to Work for under the not for profit category and at number 43 in the wider survey of all companies who entered.



June '21

Our teams were experiencing rapidly increasing levels of need around areas addressing poverty, welfare and nutrition as welfare support implemented during Covid started to be scaled back.

Our Pantry network became increasingly crucial as a means of ensuring people had rapid access to healthy, affordable food and added support to address underlying issues trapping people in poverty.



July '21

According to a YouGov survey specially commissioned for St Giles around **half of the parents surveyed were unaware of the risks their children could potentially face from child criminal exploitation**. We launched a campaign Keep Children Safe This Summer which highlighted the risks, potential warning signs and where to go for help.

September '21

The new academic year presents a risky time for children transitioning to secondary school as they may be vulnerable to child criminal exploitation. We highlighted the risks to them and to the **100,000 'invisible' children identified by the Children's Commissioner** Anne Longfield who did not return to school after Covid closures.

October '21

The SOS Project celebrated its 15th anniversary having first been established in 2006 as a south London pilot project working with young men leaving prison. It has since grown to become a leading national service helping young people directly involved in gangs and child criminal exploitation and preventing many thousands of children from becoming so through schools-based interventions and prevention.



Overview of the year

November '21

Our work with women received a welcome boost through the news that we had been one of 14 organisations who had successfully secured Tampon Tax Funding. The funding meant we could enable women who had experienced disadvantage to make positive changes for themselves and others through creating Community Champions.

December '21

Rising levels of poverty and costs of essentials led us to highlight the plight of our clients at Christmas who were facing a particularly desperate time as cuts to Universal Credit represented a 20-25% drop in their average weekly income. **Through the network of St Giles Pantries, our teams worked exceptionally hard to ensure clients stayed fed and nourished during the winter months.** St Giles's long-standing patron actress Jenny Agutter OBE helped us raise awareness and garner support for this work.

January '22

2022 represented St Giles's 60th anniversary. **Since our start in 1962, we estimated we had helped over 300,000 people and trained 2,000 through our award-winning Peer Advisor Programme,** training and empowering people who had overcome complex disadvantages to transform their own lives and those of others going through the same experiences they once were.



February '22

The WREN (Women Rising Enabling Others) grant programme was launched thanks to the Tampon Tax Funding secured last year. The programme provides grassroots organisations supporting women in Norfolk and Margate with grants to enable them to train women as Community Champions.



March '22

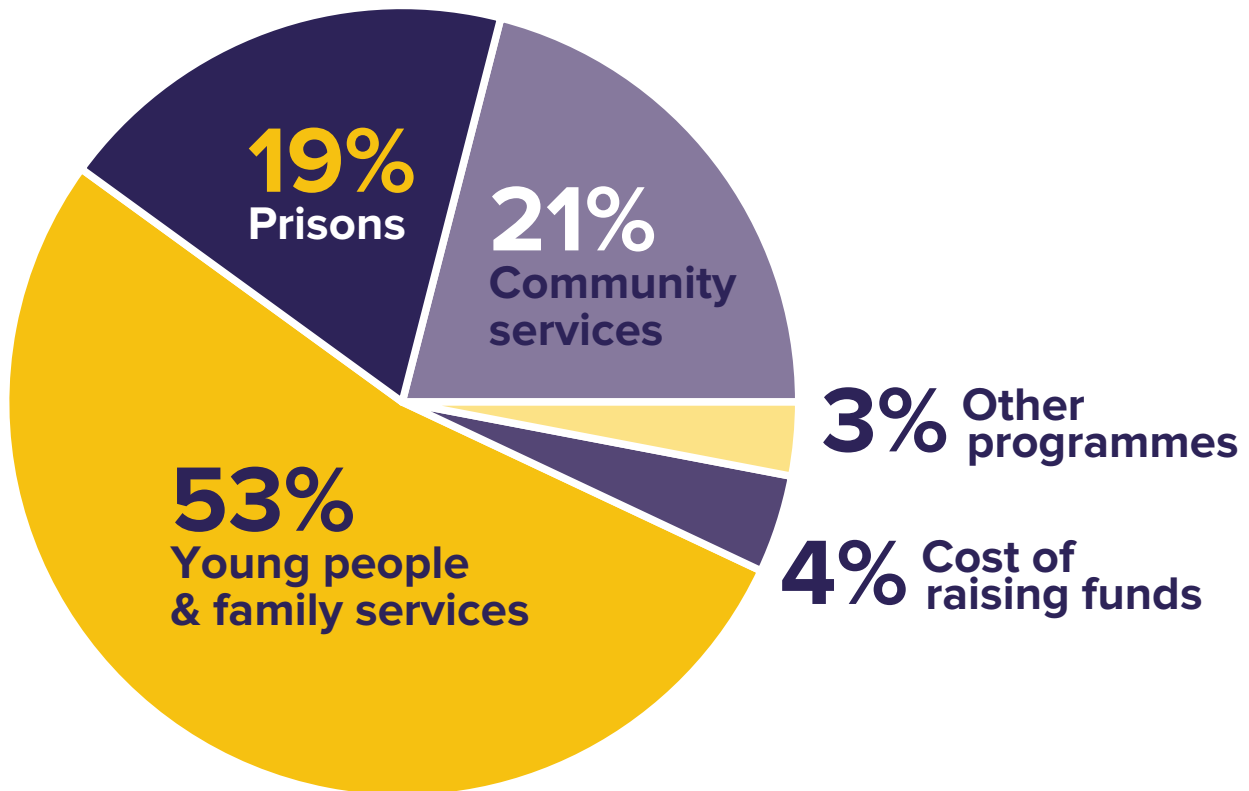
An evaluation of the Peer Advisor Network by Revolving Doors found that **94% of partner organisations who had hosted St Giles trained Peer Advisors on work placements would be willing to host further placements**, and that over half of the partners were more open to employing people with lived experience. This was the first independent review of the network and demonstrated that it was beginning to have an impact in enabling sector change.



stgilestrust.org.uk

How we allocated our funds

For the full set of annual accounts
please visit www.stgilestrust.org.uk





Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

As a charity proudly working with diverse communities across the UK, and with staff teams to reflect these communities, we are committed to doing our utmost to support equity, diversity, inclusion and positive community relations.

At St Giles, where over 80% of our frontline teams come from the same backgrounds as the people we support, we know from our experience that harmony, mutual respect and diversity bring out the most positive qualities in people and deliver the best results.

We believe in listening, addressing inequalities and remaining open to questioning and scrutiny.

Our commitment to learning and improving

We still have work to do in this area and have taken a series of steps to discover where we are now and how we can get to where we want to be:

- We have established an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group at a senior level within St Giles who are taking forward change and providing staff with a safe space to feedback. They are also monitoring our policies and practices.
- We have a mandatory staff training package to ensure our teams have the knowledge, skills and tools to help us realise our commitment in this area.

- We have established a clear process for the set up and support of Employee Resource Groups. We currently have two up and running – the Black Lives Awareness Group who provide advice, support and development opportunities to black staff members, support organisational training and awareness raising; and a Neurodiversity Group to raise awareness and also create a more neuro-inclusive environment for staff and better support for clients.
- There are other Employee Resource Groups in the pipeline including a Women's Group, a Muslim Group and a Mental Health Group.
- Our Expert Panel comprises staff and volunteers with lived experience who have a direct say in our strategic direction and operational development.



The cost-of-living crisis risks creating further divisions and inequality in our society. We are passionate about working in partnership to build a better one – a society where discrimination in any form is called out and addressed.

Tackling poverty

Rising costs of essentials alongside cuts to the welfare safety nets put in place during the pandemic started to have a serious impact on the lives of our clients.

The reversal of the Universal Credit top up which was introduced during Covid left our clients with a 20-25% reduction in their weekly incomes. We discovered many of our clients were skipping meals to feed their children and heat their homes.

Without the support of services such as the St Giles Pantry, many of our clients would have become malnourished and sunk into increasing levels of desperation and poverty.



St Giles Children and Families
Caseworker

We are finding shoplifting has risen which previously we hardly saw. Young people are looking for ways to help out at home which is increasing their risk.

The Pantries

Our Pantry network extended over this year to include Pantries in Yorkshire, the Midlands and a further Pantry in London. This has been critical given the increasing levels of food poverty our clients were experiencing which could have had knock on effects on their physical health and levels of motivation.



Gareth, former client now a volunteer at the Midlands Pantry

I was given access to food which is more nutritious. I was also given support with budgeting as well. I drew up a budgeting plan, that's been helpful. I feel more positive now and less stressed.

Alongside food, the Pantries also act as hubs where people can benefit from one-to-one advice and support from our Peer Advisors on site at the Pantries. Friendly, knowledgeable and credible, they address any issues which might be compounding the situations of the people using the Pantry.

Client Crisis Fund

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we were able to continue our client Crisis Fund, first established as a response to Covid and lockdown related emergencies, to help people out with essentials such as food vouchers, clothing, IT equipment for schooling and training and top ups for utility bills and other unexpected expenses.

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St Giles Caseworker

The Crisis Fund was utilised several times. The teams delivered laptops to young people requiring them especially as quite a few had to give back the school laptops post lockdown.

The Fund was an invaluable safety net for our clients over this year. It gave them a one-off cushion in the event of emergencies whilst we worked with them to find long term solutions.

For many of the young people we work with, it covered the costs of IT equipment to help them access education, skills and employment opportunities. Without this, many would have been more vulnerable to child criminal exploitation.

Looking ahead

We have re-evaluated our services as a result of the cost-of-living crisis which shows no signs of receding in the short term. If someone does not have their basic needs around food and warmth met, they are unlikely to be able to make positive progress towards employment and independence.

Our clients were already disproportionately affected by poverty so our focus for the future will be to fight their corners, ensure their voices are heard and involve them in shaping our services.

Alissa

When we first met Alissa*, she was recovering from addiction, physical and mental health issues and was living in fear of drug dealers. The support, care and shared lived experience of her St Giles caseworker inspired her to make positive changes. Her caseworker explains:

When I met Alissa to go through our Initial Needs Assessment, she disclosed she had been a victim of domestic abuse, had a criminal record and was using crack cocaine. She was very open about what her life was like, how her children were and said she wanted to stop drugs. She had also been diagnosed with COPD and mental health issues.

I told her a bit about myself and my previous life with crime and drugs and she couldn't believe it. I told her how I had changed my life around and she said she wanted the same as her children are disrespectful due to the drug use.

Alissa was not living in her home as she was scared that drug dealers would come there and hurt her, so I made a referral so she would get rehoused. I even went to her home to take pictures so they could be placed on Home Swapper to get a move.

However, there other issues with the rent as the council have paid her housing provider over £65,000 but they said she owes rent which she doesn't. I have referred her to the St Giles Benefits Advisor to sort this out as it is very stressful for her.

Alissa wanted to embark on a catering course but had lost her passport which meant she was very limited in what she could do so I successfully applied for a new one for her.

Doing the catering course made a change in her life, gave her something to get up for and her children were happy that she is doing something with her time. She also started an IT course so she was able to complete the homework she was given and St Giles purchased a laptop for her. She said this was like gold dust to her and she was so happy and grateful. We would also help her with the fares to get to her courses as money was very tight.

After three months, she said she hadn't smoked any drugs for a month. After a year, she remained drug-free and she said it was down to me! I had shown her that it could be done and so she tried.

Times are still hard for her and so St Giles has helped her and her family with food and utility top ups. The help that we have offered has been a life changer for her, she has a better relationship with her children as she has stopped the drugs and is trying to improve her life. Her housing is being addressed, her mental health is being addressed, she has ID, and her confidence has grown so much since she has been working with me.

She says she doesn't know where she would be if it wasn't for the St Giles and that there need to be more organisations like us.

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I told her a bit about myself and my previous life with crime and drugs and she couldn't believe it. I told her how I had changed my life around and she said she want the same as her children are disrespectful due to the drug use.



Supporting children and young people

Levels of mental health issues and vulnerability increased amongst the children and young people we support partly as a legacy of the pandemic and restrictions. A report from the office of the former Children's Commission Anne Longfield OBE estimated that 100,000 children became 'invisible' because of school closures as they never returned and disappeared off the radar. Poverty has compounded the situation.

Fortunately, we were able to further develop some of our key services addressing child criminal exploitation to help mitigate the impact of these issues. This included extending our schools-based embedded mentoring, expanding our hospital services working with young patients admitted as a result of violence and incorporating specialist support for families into our county-lines intervention services.

Spotlight on schools

The SOS+ Service works in educational settings to prevent children from becoming criminally exploited and help them stay engaged with positive opportunities. It works by:

- Equipping children and young people with awareness to become more resilient to becoming involved in gangs, exploitation and violence
- Increasing children and young people's engagement within education
- Heightening the knowledge and understanding of children, young people, parents and professionals of all aspects of gang involvement, exploitation and violence.

The team undertook a mapping and review of the SOS+ provision. This had evolved extensively over recent years, so a key early focus was to consolidate and standardise resources to ensure consistency of delivery.



The Embedded Mentor Model was identified as a development key focus. It was relaunched across London, the Southeast and Eastern of England, as well as being extended to the other St Giles regions, providing targeted support to young people at risk. The referral process for it was clearly defined and the team developed mentoring booklets and resources. Alongside this, impact measuring provided a clear structure on which further growth of the model could be built.

The team focused on the development of impact assessment tools alongside school and professional evaluative data (such as attendance, punctuality and behaviour). These measures, alongside case notes and observations, provided robust evidence of the impact of the SOS+ programme.

Supporting children and young people

Work in hospitals

Since 2015 we have been providing violence reduction work in hospitals through supporting young patients who have been admitted as a result of violence. The caseworkers intervene at a moment when the young person may have had their life flash before their eyes and are taking stock of their situation. As such they are most receptive to offers of help for a way out.

We provide this work in hospitals in London and the Midlands.

Fortunately, we received further funding to expand our service at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel to support more young people post discharge and also establish a new service within Whipps Cross Hospital in Leytonstone.

St Giles were highlighted in the NHS Guidance for Violent Reduction Service which was finalised in March 2022. The authors of this new guidance had been working closely with the St Giles Royal London team since the service was first established in 2015.

Focus on London:

Sadly, over this year the teams saw an increase in presentations due to overdoses and a rise in serious youth violence. Clients and their families saw changes in their circumstances, requiring further support from agencies and local authorities. Typically, issues emerged around lack of finances, increases in criminal activity and serious youth violence, more missing episodes, increasing substance misuse among young people and fractions within the home.

The findings highlighted that St Giles had influenced change within the NHS which is a massive achievement for this small, very hardworking team.

Our caseworker Tamecka Lumsden was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from Northwick Park Hospital as a Youth Champion for the second year and we secured further funding for the service.



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The cost-of-living crisis has affected many of the young people and families the Royal London Hospital team support and we have helped them access food, using some of our own pot of money we have set aside. The teams have delivered food parcels from the Pantry. The team did a lot of work around budgeting, money advice and supporting with accessing welfare benefits. We noticed an increase in self-harm and experimental drugs.

Ahsan, St Giles Team Leader



Supporting children and young people

County lines interventions

London

We provide support for young people from London caught up in county lines through the MOPAC-commissioned multi-agency Rescue and Response service. Our team travel to anywhere in the UK where a young person has been sent to by the criminal gang, ensure they are safe and take them back to London. Ongoing support is then provided to help keep the young person protected from exploitation and channelled towards positive opportunities.

A Family Practitioner role was developed during this year as it was identified as imperative to the lives of families whose children are affected by county lines and serious youth violence. Although the role focuses upon assisting with implementing boundaries and minimising risk, the Family Practitioner also advocates with issues around housing, education, training and employment opportunities, benefits, debt, substance misuse, mental health issues and provides information, advice and guidance



regarding the well-being and safety of any other siblings within the family household.

Due to an increase in referrals, we introduced an Out of Cycle referral pathway, allowing referrals to be pushed through without waiting for our monthly case review and allocation period. This was to ensure that risk was reduced and we were able to meet with young people at a time which is considered as that 'reachable moment'.

Supporting children and young people

South Wales

The CLIC (county lines in Cardiff) project is delivered in partnership with South Wales Police and other partners to provide a coordinated support package for children, as both victims and/or perpetrators.

Our caseworker Becky engages children arrested in the Cardiff/Swansea area, assesses need and offers ongoing support. Some are children from London who she accompanies back to the capital and links into St Giles's services there. The support is not timebound and the young person can work with Becky for as long as they need her.

A significant amount of time is taken advocating on behalf of the young person with statutory agencies, especially the police. Last year, Becky accompanied young people to appointments with the police on over 80 occasions, encouraging them to open up, acting as a bridge and building trust and confidence.

Becky has also helped support clients with court appearances. They have asked her to come and meet them when they are struggling. In one instance a client ran away from court and they spoke to Becky. She persuaded them to go back to court and spoke to the judge.

This had a huge positive impact on the client's future.

Unfortunately waiting lists for specialist agencies have had a lasting legacy on heightening vulnerabilities. Sometimes it is impossible to access specialist help so Becky has broadened her practical and emotional support to cover this gap.

The project closely tracks the progress of each client across several areas. Becky has a caseload experiencing intensive and complex issues. Sometimes even the smallest progress can take months. However, by capturing small wins, e.g. a week's worth of solid school attendance, the young person is reminded that their journey is going in the right direction.



County lines interventions

South Wales achievements last year:

- 72% of young people have seen a significant increase in their levels of self-esteem
- 76% of young people we have supported are more empowered to make positive decisions
- Over 40% of the caseload have been referred into substance misuse services or had open, frank conversations with Becky around substance misuse even though many did not initially recognise their drug use as a problem

The Midlands

The team provide a cluster of projects across the region helping young people stay safe and engaged in positive opportunities. The foundation of these is increasing the awareness and safety of the young people they work with who are both at risk or involved in criminal exploitation. These include interventions in hospitals and custody suites, work in the community with young people at risk and schools-based work. Post-covid pressures compounded by uncertainty around funding for some projects have presented challenges for the team. Despite these, they had some fantastic successes across all their projects largely down to the reliability, relatability and cultural competence of the caseworkers.

Achievements over the year include:

- Young people who were reinstated into mainstream schools
- Increased attendance and attainment in schools
- Young people who achieved places into further education
- Reduced substance misuse and offending
- Young people wearing voluntary buddy tags
- More positive relationships with families and recognising positive healthy relationships with peers
- Gang exits and reduced anti-social behaviour
- Increased engagement with professionals and statutory services

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The worry will be as the cost-of-living crisis increases, more young people becoming involved with county lines, serious organised crime, serious youth violence. As this impact increases, the effect on families will be hard.

Bristol Through the Gates
Caseworker supporting young people on release from custody

Arnold

15-year-old Arnold* was in a desperate situation. He was in debt to a gang, at risk of serious violence and missing out on school. With care and support from our Rescue and Response team, his life had transformed.

Arnold was being exploited by a county line drug gang when he was referred to us. He had fallen into debt to the gang and was forced into dealing drugs in a frantic attempt to pay this off – a common feature of child criminal exploitation known as debt bondage. He was missing out on his education and his levels of confidence and self-esteem were very low.

His Rescue and Response caseworker spent a great deal of time speaking to Arnold to try and explore the underlying reasons for why he had become involved in county lines. Arnold had a speech impediment which was affecting him emotionally and making it difficult for him to communicate.

As trust grew between them, his caseworker began to advocate with education authorities to get Arnold accepted into mainstream education. He helped Arnold complete school applications to rejoin the academic year and as result he was accepted.

Given the amount of schooling he had missed, Arnold needed extra support. The caseworker helped source a one-to-one tutor so Arnold could catch up in time to sit his GCSE mocks. With his encouragement, Arnold progressed well and, as a result, his levels of confidence and self-esteem improved.

Arnold has now safely exited county lines and is now doing well in his education. His friends and family are astonished at the changes he has made. He has ambitions of becoming a screen writer and is working with his caseworker to get the skills he needs to make this dream a reality.

A portrait of a young man with dark hair and a slight smile, wearing a red and blue plaid flat cap and a blue zip-up hoodie over a dark jacket. He is standing in front of a light blue wall with a green mural of a person's face. A yellow callout box is in the bottom left corner.

“

Arnold has now safely exited county lines and is now doing well in his education. His friends and family are astonished at the changes he has made.

Supporting people to access education, training and employment

Education, training and employment support is provided across all St Giles projects as it represents one of the final steps on the road to independence for most of our clients.

The people we work with experience barriers requiring additional support alongside helping them progress into sustainable employment. These include long periods of being unemployed or economically inactive, domestic abuse, homelessness, lack of skills and confidence, having a criminal record and physical and mental health issues.

Our teams work with people at their own pace, giving them the time, patience and support they need to address underlying issues whilst increasing readiness for employment.

Last year, funding was secured or extended for a range of these projects working with both adults and young people, enabling us to provide much-needed services in this area at a time when the economic climate is having such a harsh effect on the lives of our clients.

Post pandemic challenges

The legacy of the pandemic coupled with the cost-of-living crisis meant issues which had always been barriers intensified considerably. Long periods of lockdown increased social isolation amongst our clients and presented extra challenges in sustaining levels of motivation. Another factor was continued anxiety over face-to-face contact, with many clients who preferred to remain receiving support remotely posing added challenges around engagement.

Our teams provided holistic support to overcome these issues, particularly around physical and mental health, housing, finance and debt. Continued access to a client fund, first introduced during the early stages of the pandemic, provided vital support with food, utility bills, IT and other educational equipment all of which helped us address practical barriers and sustain motivation.

Spotlight on the Wales Peer Hubs

Our national network of Peer Hubs train people from local communities who are experiencing disadvantage to become skilled, qualified professionals who then use their training and lived experience to provide support to others. The qualification they work towards is an accredited Level 3 qualification which they can then use in a range of areas. Local partner agencies can benefit from offering the trainees both volunteer and paid placements whilst they undertake the course. These trainees bring with them authenticity, lived experience and professional skills.

We have established Peer Hubs in Wrexham, North Wales and Cardiff. These represent two very different local communities with one being rural and dispersed and the other in the heart of a capital city.



Supporting people to access education, training and employment

North Wales Peer Hub

New courses training people to prepare for the Level 3 Advice and Guidance qualification got underway this year.

It took longer to make progress with some learners as many people found it difficult to regain their levels of confidence post-pandemic. Furthermore, many partner agencies were still operating on a remote basis which posed challenges in sourcing suitable placements for the Peer Advisor trainees.

However, the client fund was a vital resource in helping with travel costs which have presented barriers for some clients given the rural location of the North Wales hub. During tough times, it has also helped clients with luncheon vouchers and provision of IT equipment.

South Wales Peer Hub

The team were extremely busy with a high volume of referrals for people looking to train through the Hub.

There was excellent feedback from the individuals undertaking the courses around the motivation, confidence and the spur it gave them to continue to make positive changes in their lives. Like other teams, their clients were affected by tight budgets which sometimes presented issues around covering travel costs and other essentials.

Peer Circles

The pan-London Peer Circles project supports people experiencing multiple and complex disadvantages to overcome barriers, positively progress and ultimately access employment opportunities.

Peer Circles is an employment support project with a difference, working with people at their own pace and providing added support to address underlying barriers.

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Peer Circles delivered cost benefit savings to the public purse in the region of £43-£76,000 per year for the clients in the sample.

These are typically a combination of severe poverty, substance misuse issues, mental and physical health needs and social isolation. It uses St Giles's peer-led approach of training and utilising people with lived experience to deliver support – over a third of the team working on Peer Circles are former clients of the project.

The team received a funding extension last year due to the project's track record of successful outcomes. We also undertook an external evaluation into its impact. One of the key findings was that Peer Circles delivered cost benefit saving to the public purse in the region of £43-£76,000 per year for the clients in the sample. It also found that some of the clients required at least 11 months of intensive support before they could move into work.

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She has been a pillar in my emotional wellbeing and a stabilising element in my life. The support has given me direction and improved my family connections – doing the training helped me to rebuild how to function and have some structure in my life. Working with her for 3 years, having the same person and consistency helps.

Peer Circles client

Supporting people to access education, training and employment

Alongside these benefits are many personal stories of people overcoming what previously seemed insurmountable barriers to eventually secure paid work. For many, it was the first time they had ever been able to do so.

The evaluation also highlighted the positive impact Peer Circles has had on other organisations supporting people with multiple and complex needs, describing it as a unique service with nothing similar available. In particular, the project was reported to have an impact in reducing the likelihood of re-offending, providing optimistic support for people with mental health issues and an ability to provide swift practical support to address needs which are barriers to positive progress.

Peer Circles is a Building Better Opportunities project funded by the National Lottery Communities Fund and European Social Fund.

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This is a unique project – it’s a much more person-centred approach than the usual job support. I’d be lost without St Giles Peer Circles project – for my clients it is a very important unique project in which they do very well.

Substance Misuse Organisation

Work with young people

Despite the large number of vacancies, the added barriers experienced by the young people we support mean many of these opportunities are difficult for them to access. Our work involves increasing their levels of motivation, self-belief and confidence alongside building skills and experience.

The south-London based Youth Peer Support project utilised our peer-led model to empower and enable young people to access training and employment opportunities. **The project went from strength-to-strength last year and by the end of the project we had engaged 140 young people, achieved 53 job starts (exceeding the target of 42).** 3 of the young people then went on to progress into better work following their initial job.



Belinda

Belinda* came to use our Pantry after she had been made redundant. With two children to look after, she was struggling with debt which was affecting her mental and physical health. With support from the Pantry, things started to look up.

Belinda initially used the Pantry for the school uniform exchange it offered as she could not afford uniform for her children – one of whom has medical issues which placed an added financial strain on the family.

After a few visits, Belinda then disclosed she was also troubled by debts due to the fact she had recently lost her job and was struggling with the costs of food, gas, electric and basics such as toiletries.

The Pantry Co-ordinator made an appointment for Belinda to go through her finances. They looked at what income she had, what she owed and created a manageable action plan so she could gradually reduce her debts.

After three months of support, Belinda had managed to reduce her debts considerably and was finding it easier to manage her finances. Her family's physical and emotional health improved with regular access to affordable, nutritious food. The Pantry also helped Belinda join a local wellbeing group so she could feel less isolated and know she is not the only one who has been through tough times.





Work in prisons and with prison leavers

Under the Ministry of Justice's Dynamic Framework, we partnered with The Wise Group to deliver services in the community for prison leavers.

This is multi-agency work delivered in partnership with HM Prison and Probation service and a range of other providers. Our role is supporting the wellbeing of prison leavers, using trained staff with lived experience to help the clients stay engaged, have a positive structure and stay motivated on their path to successfully re-integrating back into society.

The cost-of-living crisis is an area of concern to these teams as rising costs coupled with very limited budgets and other support services may increase vulnerability amongst the clients.

Wales

St Giles Wise started providing the Personal Wellbeing contracts in Wales in June 2021. There are eight contracts in total covering the whole of Wales with four providing specific support to 18-25 year olds and four for men over the age of 26. They support men on probation around a comprehensive area of needs.



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We feel that we haven't experienced the worst yet with regards to the cost-of-living crisis and this is something the team are aware will have an impact.

Wales Personal Wellbeing Team

The team are highly regarded and the high number of referrals to them reflects this. **They supported 725 clients from June 2021 to end of March 2022** in areas around emotional wellbeing, family relations, lifestyle and associates and social inclusion. The team work well with partner agencies and have regular meetings to ensure collaboration and joint working.

In the north of Wales, the Peer Advisor Programme is training prison leavers to work towards the accredited Advice and Guidance qualification whilst undertaking practical work experience. This has provided a vital stepping stone to help the men gain the confidence, skills and experience to access employment opportunities and positively progress.

East of England

In partnership with The Wise Group the team provide comprehensive support to women leaving prison in Norfolk. Many of the women have multiple needs around issues such as severe poverty, homelessness, substance misuse, domestic abuse and both their physical and mental health. The project uses a peer-led approach using other women with lived experience to help the women get the services and support they need. Like other teams, the cost-of-living crisis has had a harsh effect on the lives of the women they work with and a lot of the team's focus has been to ensure their basic needs around food, shelter and safety are met.

Given the rural location of much of this work, the team also need to cover large, dispersed geographical areas. They work closely with others St Giles teams in the region including the Wonder Project supporting women in the community in the criminal justice system and the Norwich-based East of England Peer Hub.

Work in prisons and with prison leavers

Yorkshire

Through Ministry of Justice commissioned work in partnership with The Wise Group, the Yorkshire Team provide support for women leaving prison in North Yorkshire to help them successfully resettlement into the community. Like their East of England colleagues, the team cover both rural and urban locations using women with lived experience, meaning the women are supported by someone who has been in the same situation they are currently in.

In partnership with Shelter, we also support men in prison or leaving prison to prevent them from being homeless on release.

This involves helping them maintain the accommodation they already have or find new accommodation. There is a direct link between homelessness and re-offending so this important work helps prevent people resorting to crime because they have nowhere to live.

Engaging People on Probation

Our peer-led approach training former prisoners as Peer Advisors is supporting the Probation Service through Engaging People on Probation. St Giles trained Peer Advisors are working as mentors to offer emotional and motivational support to people leaving prison. We are proud to be part of this partnership as it recognises the important role of lived experience in helping prison leavers to resettlement.



Caitlin

We first came into contact with Caitlin when she was released from prison. She has had a turbulent time battling mental health issues, a near fatal accident and resulting trauma. Since coming out of prison she was supported by our Yorkshire Footsteps team and has trained as a Peer Mentor. She is now employed on the Engaging People on Probation project helping others to rebuild their lives after prison. She is also a talented poet. She tells her experiences on life after prison here:

My first year home after custody was a bit of a mishap. I found myself dipping my toe in and out of my old life. I was still finding myself at the end of every painful situation I was caught up in until I took decided to figure out what kind of persona I was giving to attract the kind of people I was attracting.

Just over a year later, my peer mentor in St Giles introduced me to a course. It consisted of learning how to become myself a peer mentor.

Myself and the others on the course have made friendships, trust and created a healthy work environment with people from lots of different backgrounds all accepting each other. Everyone has so much different knowledge and understanding to bring to each session.

Three months into our course we were invited to the first anniversary party of Footsteps – a St Giles service helping women who are in the criminal justice system. Whilst at the event I was given an amazing opportunity to share my story and poetry with others who attended.

I left grinning from ear to ear with the amazing opportunities I realised this had given me.

Meeting people at St Giles who have been eager to spread my story further than the event and get the message out there that if I can change my life, then honestly so can **anybody** else. Coming from a girl who didn't see any means to an end, but only wanted life to come to end. Becoming the woman I am today, I assure anyone reading this... If I can do it, you can do it! I saw my life unravel in front of me and I never thought this would be possible.

Since then, I have had a job interview to work alongside probation and help others see their full potential after custody.

I want to finish this by saying: to my old self - the girl who made me who I am today - I hope that you're as happy as I am. We made it and I'm so glad we survived to see just how beautiful life was about to get.



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To my probation worker, my therapist and my psychologist I can't thank you enough for the support and faith you had in me to get me where I am today. And especially thank you to St Giles for giving me the opportunities to help others achieve the things I have.

Supporting women, children and families

For nearly 15 years, St Giles has been providing services for females to address the specific issues they experience. These relate to their roles as parents, care-givers and to issues around relationships, child criminal and/or sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

Some of the barriers facing our clients are intertwined with wider issues affecting the whole family. We provide family support services to address underlying factors around poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse, gang involvement and similar issues.

Our aim is to help families develop the skills and confidence to become independent and able to manage any future issues themselves.

Post-pandemic, a lot of external services our teams had previously referred to were still not fully open or closed permanently. As a result, they experienced challenges around a lack of local support services and appropriate activities for client well-being. This meant the teams took on additional elements of work, particularly in areas relating to mental health which became an increasing area of need.



These services are provided both as standalone and through specific strands of wider projects.

Family support: Wales

The team expanded their existing children and families service into Swansea. They also developed a new service helping young people leaving HMP Bristol, providing support to those caught up in a cycle of risk and re-offending in the community linked to drugs supply. Issues around poverty, returning to education post-Covid, mental health issues and long waits to access mental health services were prevalent. Family poverty is making young people vulnerable to child criminal exploitation. This has been compounded by rising levels of violence and often wider family involvement in criminal activity.

Good joint working with other teams in St Giles offset challenges the team faced which helped to close the gaps left by statutory services. Many of the young people supported through these services gained employment or were diverted back into education.



Family support: London

We provide services for families affected by gang involvement to help reduce risk and advocate on the family's behalf. During the summer, our team ran a six-week programme over the holidays to keep children and young people diverted and engaged. Holidays are sometimes a risky time of boredom for some young people whose families cannot afford holidays and mostly remain working during the summer months. With no school and time on their hands, the risks of criminal exploitation increase.

Supporting women, children and families

Our caseworkers brought together young people from four London boroughs to undertake activities and engage in group sessions.

Typically, some of the young people would have been in conflict with those from other boroughs during summer. The programme meant they could collaborate on sessions around county lines, gangs, exploitation and learn basic first aid. The young people also went on residentials around team building, took part in music sessions, health and wellbeing, healthy relationships, candle making, graffiti art and were all provided with employability sessions.

The programme ran successfully, keeping the young people occupied, encouraging positive attitudes and increasing their skills and confidence.



Support for women in the criminal justice system

Women in the criminal justice system experience specific issues which are distinct from men. We provide services to support women leaving prison and those who are at risk of entering the prison system. These are through the Footsteps Project delivered in partnership with The Wise Group (provided in Norfolk and Yorkshire) and Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner-funded **Wonder Project**. The start of the Yorkshire Footsteps project also represented a growth in our geographic reach as it was the first time we had been able to deliver services in North Yorkshire.

Last year, the teams worked hard to help women who were disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Poverty has been a big factor in increasing women's vulnerability to exploitation, offending and domestic abuse. Our work has involved ensuring the women get the support and services they need to stay resilient and able to make positive progress.

The Wonder Project secured funding from Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner to extend its work helping women in the county who are involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of becoming so. This was particularly crucial during the post-pandemic period and as the cost-of-living crisis started to emerge.

The Wonder Project uses our peer-led approach to enable women to train as qualified advice and guidance professionals who then support others going through similar situations. Some of the team are former clients on the project which helps increase levels of engagement on the Wonder Project.

Work with girls and young women

We provide support for girls and young women who are at risk of criminal and/or sexual exploitation and also work those who have already become involved. The young women are in often complex situations as they often regard their exploiters as their boyfriends. By providing both emotional and practical support, we aim to raise their levels of confidence and self-esteem so they are able to recognise exploitation and build resilience to it.



Supporting women, children and families

Expect Respect supports girls and young women who have multiple levels of need and risk, with some clients requiring very intensive support and others who are at less risk. Expect Respect within the Midlands secured extra funding allowing the team to deliver the Healthy, Trusted Relationships and Lifestyle Programme. This has enabled the team to offer group sessions to clients who may not have the same high levels of need to the most complex cases supported in Expect Respect service but nevertheless require support. Typically, young women are on the waiting list for Expect Respect for 6-8 weeks, during this time they can access the Healthy, Trusted Relationships and Lifestyle Programme which ensures they are in receipt of support when they are vulnerable.

The WREN Project

Funding from the Government's Tampon Tax Fund enabled us to launch The WREN (Women Rising Enabling Neighbourhoods) Project which helps to extend our peer-based model of working to women in local communities in Norfolk and Margate. WREN offers small grants to grassroots, community organisations working with women experiencing disadvantage. These grants go towards creating community champions amongst women being supported by the organisations, upskilling and empowering them to go on and help others.



Mark

Mark* was initially resistant to offers of support, thinking his situation was beyond help. However, his St Giles caseworker did not give up and eventually Mark opened up to her. She explains what happened:

Mark was first referred a while ago. I called him, texted and left messages on many occasions but he never responded. I kept his case file open because I wanted to keep on trying.

One day I noticed a status on his WhatsApp stating, **“I’ve had enough of this game”**. I felt this was a little alarming and a possible cry for help, so I immediately sent him a message saying that as a man it is okay to feel low and to ask for help. I told him a weak man cannot recognise his weaknesses, yet a strong man works on his weaknesses and makes them his strength.

He replied to me saying **“you can’t help me”** and from this we continued to exchange messages. There was a lot going on. He had a son. He was involved in crime and at risk. His partner was being treated for cancer.

I managed to obtain secure accommodation for Mark and his son so they were away from negative associates. I also got him support to deal with his partner’s cancer. We looked at ways to upskill him so he could start looking for work and had no need to return to crime. As he started to trust me, he asked for help around lots of other things regarding childcare options, cooking, money management, support for his depression, anxiety, and paranoid thoughts and feelings and much more.

He is now doing his very best to turn his life around in every manner and I feel extremely proud of him as a result of this.

I could have let him be and given up on him, but I did not. As a result of my patience and perseverance I have managed to get through to a troubled young man. I have tackled very serious issues with him which will not only have a positive impact in his life but that of his son, partner, mother, and the general public.



“

He is now doing his very best to turn his life around in every manner and I feel extremely proud of him as a result of this.

Thank you to our funders and supporters

We are extremely grateful to all our supporters and funders whose generous and loyal support has helped our clients transform their lives. You have enabled some of the most vulnerable people in our communities to stay safe, nourished, empowered and included. On behalf of our teams and clients, a huge thank you.

“

Our clients come to us feeling downtrodden and often lost and unable to move forward, all who have been on our project have had opportunities to progress onto their next steps which is employment, further study or further volunteering.

Lisa Owen, North Wales
Team Leader

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St Giles Trust

Georgian House
64-68 Camberwell Church Street
Camberwell
London SE5 8JB

020 7703 7000
info@stgilestrust.org.uk
stgilestrust.org.uk

