

St Giles

Turning a past into a future

Impact Report

2022-2023



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Foreword from Duncan Gibson

Chair, St Giles Trust



As I reflect on my time as Chair of St Giles Trust, I am humbled by the journey we have embarked upon. Guiding St Giles Trust towards a future of even greater impact has been a privilege beyond measure.

Our vision is creating inclusive communities where the voices of those facing the greatest adversity can be heard, where opportunities flourish, and where positive futures are realised. In the past year alone, our dedication to this vision manifested in over 27,500 intensive interventions - each a resolute step forward in addressing the most complex challenges that our society faces.

Last year saw the launch of our five-year strategic plan, “Leaving no one behind.” Rooted in this plan are our unwavering commitments: to forge safety and stability for our clients, to empower them in overcoming obstacles and attaining their aspirations, to foster social inclusion, and to fortify the very bedrock of our local communities.

This period saw the expansion of our services, a testament to our responsiveness to emerging needs and our pursuit of innovation. We proudly extended the reach of St Giles Trust, including the remarkable growth of our Pantry network, our dedicated services for women, and our impactful services with our partners supporting people on release from prison.

Foreword from Duncan Gibson, Chair, St Giles Trust

Our hallmark is not merely in growth, but in demonstrable impact. Consider the success of the Peer Circles Project, a project which developed in 2019 and flourished into a lifeline for thousands facing severe and multifaceted disadvantages. The impact extends far beyond individual transformations, translating into substantial savings for public purse and a resurgence of emotional well-being for the people we support.

One story, among countless, illustrates this impact: that of Joe who was held back by addiction, depression, and a criminal record. Through St Giles Trust, Joe transformed into a beacon of hope for others. As a trained Peer Advisor, he increased his skills, grew his self-confidence, and harnessed his newfound passion for helping others through volunteering at St Giles Trust. Joe's journey has now led him to work as a Team Leader at a homelessness charity, where his firsthand experiences now guide others towards a more positive future.

Yet, we are striving to grow further, so that others like Joe are not left untouched by our work due to geographical constraints. It is our commitment to both expanding our services and disseminating best practices that propels us forward.

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Our hallmark is not merely in growth, but in demonstrable impact.

It is our remarkable team at St Giles Trust, whose unwavering commitment and compassionate professionalism redefine lives and reinvigorate communities. We are committed to developing our team so they can become the future leaders at St Giles Trust and other organisations far and wide.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our team and to my colleagues on the board, whose time and expertise steer us towards achieving our vision and aims.

Our commitment to tackling social injustice is only realised thanks to the generosity of our funders, partners and supporters who give time and resources to St Giles Trust. By continuing to work together, we can achieve a society where no-one is left behind, every voice is heard and every individual is valued.



Foreword from Tracey Burley

Chief Executive, St Giles Trust



During my first months at St Giles Trust I have been meeting the teams across our regions, listening and learning. I am struck by the commitment and passion of staff across the charity. This commitment is not just a typical prosocial workforce, the team are committed to our clients, the work and St Giles because it truly is the most remarkable place to work.

We are at a time when the work of St Giles Trust has never been more relevant – tackling social injustice and helping people who are disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

When I visited one of our Pantries, I learned first-hand just how vital our services are. I met a lady using the Pantry so she can obtain food for her and her young daughter. She had escaped an abusive relationship and lost her job as a dental hygienist. On top of that, she had been evicted from her home and lost all her possessions. She could not afford electricity and she was eating her daughter's leftovers. She has lost two stones and her daughter has now started wetting the bed. It was heartbreaking to listen to her situation. Thankfully, she and her daughter now have access to nutritious, affordable food at The Pantry and the friendly, committed staff who will provide her with care and support to help get her life back on track.

Our services address some of the most complex issues facing our society today - from young people involved in or at risk of criminal exploitation to adults experiencing multiple disadvantages, helping them gain the skills and confidence to achieve their full potential. They work across the UK, in both inner cities and rural communities, supporting people to change their lives and inspire other people to do the same.

Many of our clients are facing discrimination and barriers which intensify the challenges they face. Systemic changes are needed at societal level and St Giles Trust will play our part, starting with our own teams, the people we support and those who work with us. We have zero tolerance for discrimination occurring in any form amongst our clients, staff, peer advisors and volunteers. By tackling discrimination, we will help our clients achieve their goals which will benefit local communities and wider society.

As we move forward, we will aim to maximise the incredible work of our teams, strengthening our support services and enabling our staff to further improve the quality of their work. We know we cannot achieve our goals in isolation so will continue our commitment to working in partnership with other providers, sharing knowledge and respecting their expertise. By working together and recognising each other's unique strengths we can achieve the biggest impact.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who works at or alongside St Giles Trust for the warm welcome and their amazing, transformative work. I would also like to pay tribute to former Chief Executive Rob Owen for his leadership and vision, and for setting the foundations from which St Giles Trust can continue to help our teams and clients to thrive and flourish.

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Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our loyal funders, partners and supporters. Your generosity enables us to carry out our life-changing work.



About St Giles Trust

We help people held back by poverty, exploited, abused, dealing with addiction or mental health problems, caught up in crime or a combination of these issues and others.

We show people there is a way to build a better future – for themselves and those they care about - and help them create this through support, advice and training.

The people we supported last year face a diverse range of challenges.

We provide:

- Services helping individuals and families facing poverty
- Help for vulnerable young people involved in, or at risk of, criminal exploitation
- Services for adults and young people helping them access employment and training opportunities
- Specialist services for vulnerable women and families
- Prison and community-based support for people in the criminal justice system

We believe people have the power to turn their life around, regardless of their situation. Many of our employees have been in similar situations to the people we help and use their lived experiences to inspire and support others living through it right now.



Our vision and solution

We want to see a society where everybody – no matter what their background – has a positive future.

We believe that given the right support, from someone who has been there, people can be empowered to turn their lives around. We see the person behind the problems and help them turn their lives around, then train and support them to do the same for others.

Peer led services – those using people with lived experience of the issues facing the people they are helping – are at the heart of St Giles Trust's work. We know they bring our services additional understanding and compassion. This approach underpins our vision, enabling those we work with to become qualified and motivated workers within St Giles Trust. Their first-hand experience of clients' issues benefits both them and the clients they work with. What we do builds positive futures, saves lives, reduces crime and creates stronger communities.

Our impact



27,577

intensive one to one
interventions



5,446

clients engaged across
community service
projects



6

Pantry hubs tackled
food poverty



95,334

SOS+ session
participants



385

reduced county
lines and/or gang
involvement



148

Peer Advisors completing
the Learning to
Advise Course



4,047

people supported
by Peer Advisors



955

clients who found
employment and/or
education training

stgilestrust.org.uk

Overview of the year

April '22

Launching the WREN Project: In April 2022, we initiated the WREN Project, a one-year pilot scheme providing grants to grassroots community organisations across the East of England. This initiative aimed to empower women facing disadvantage by training them as Community Champions, enabling them to assist others in their communities. Throughout the year, a total of 118 women commenced training through the WREN Project, resulting in support for 1,463 women within their local neighbourhoods.



May '22

Nationwide Support for Wonder Plus Project: Our efforts in the East of England received a significant boost in May 2022 through collaboration with Nationwide. This partnership contributed to the Wonder Plus Project, funded by the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner, which provides crucial aid to women overcoming severe adversity. Additionally, the Pathway Out Project in Norwich marked its successful first year, offering tailored support to individuals within the criminal justice system who are experiencing drug-related challenges.

June '22

Engaging with Zahra Sultana MP in Coventry: Our Midlands Team welcomed Zahra Sultana MP from Coventry South to our Pantry on June 15. During her visit, Zahra met with Midlands Manager Steve Clarke and his dedicated team, who are committed to facilitating access to affordable, nutritious food and addressing underlying issues that contribute to poverty within the local community.

Empowering Women in Yorkshire: The Footsteps Teams in York and Norfolk celebrated their first anniversaries. This dedicated team collaborates with women within the criminal justice system, offering them support to develop skills and confidence for rebuilding their lives. Some individuals even progress to becoming Peer Advisors, helping other women facing similar challenges.

Funding for the first female Peer Hub was secured in Wales - Boost is a five-year programme in partnership with the Wallich funded by National Lottery Community Fund. A new three-year Ministry of Justice contract was secured in June for a Wales-based finance, benefit and debt service.



July '22

Extending WMVRU Expect Respect: The West Midlands Expect Respect Project, funded by the Violence Reduction Unit, received an extension of 12 months through joint funding from Severn Trent. This initiative continues to make a positive impact by addressing issues related to respect and violence within the community.

Recognising Excellence for Power2: In July, the Power2 program in Wolverhampton received recognition for its exceptional efforts.

The project, dedicated to supporting at-risk young individuals to prevent exploitation and entry into care, secured the Innovation in Children's and Adults Services award at the MJ Achievement Awards.



Community Champions Embark on WREN Journey: In Great Yarmouth, the inaugural cohort of WREN Women Community Champions, began their transformative Learning to Advise training. This step marked the initiation of their journey towards becoming empowered agents of change within their local communities.

Initiating Friday Prison Leavers Project: Launched at HMP Leeds and HMP Wealstun, the Friday Prison Leavers Project, supported by the Ministry of Justice, strives to prevent re-offending and help rebuild lives. This intensive service particularly caters to those on short-notice or Friday release, bridging the gap in accessing vital support before the weekend.

Addressing Exploitation in Gwent: Responding to the growing concern of sexual and criminal exploitation, the opening of a new office in Gwent strengthens our commitment to safeguarding and supporting vulnerable young individuals. This collaboration involves partnership programs with local agencies to create a safer environment.

Combatting Bullying in Bedfordshire: In partnership with non-profit organisation Hear2Listen and funded by Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, St Giles Trust launched an anti-bullying programme. This initiative, designed to provide early interventions and long-term prevention, supports young individuals through school assemblies, preventative sessions, and personalised mentoring.

August '22

Impressive Results for Rescue and Response: Over the past year, the Rescue and Response project in London made substantial progress in countering county line exploitation. With nine out of ten young individuals referred to the project successfully exiting exploitation, the initiative's multi-agency approach, funded by the Mayor of London, is proving to be highly effective.

Celebrating Gill's Positive Impact: Our colleague Gill Gaunt, manager of the Leeds Pantry, was recognised on the Independent's Happy List. Described as "selfless, determined, and kind," Gill's efforts have significantly impacted the lives of individuals experiencing severe disadvantage.

Overview of the year

September '22

Milestone for St Giles Trust Cymru: A reception at the Senedd in Cardiff commemorated the ten-year anniversary of St Giles Trust Cymru. From its humble beginnings in Cardiff in 2012, the organisation's reach now extends across Wales, providing a diverse range of services to those facing adversity and disadvantage. The opening of the Swansea Hub further solidified this commitment.

Empowering Vulnerable Children through Partnership: Collaborating with Berkley Homes South East London, St Giles Trust embarked on a three-year partnership. This initiative is dedicated to empowering young individuals, helping them break away from gangs, make positive choices, and ensure their safety.

October '22

Celebrating 60 Years of Impact: October marked the continuation of our 60th-anniversary celebrations with events at the House of Lords and the St George's Centre in Leeds. These gatherings provided a platform for Peer Advisors trained through St Giles Trust to share inspiring stories and showcase the profound impact of their work.



Introducing the SMART Service: Generous funding from the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership facilitated the launch of the SMART service. This pilot programme, spanning six months, focuses on supporting men with complex needs across Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, aiding their resilience and transformation within the criminal justice system.

We secured funding for the first Welsh Pantri in Colwyn Bay from Welsh Government Landfill Tax Disposal Community Scheme. The Wales team won two national awards at the Wales Inspire Adult Learning Awards 2022 recognising our peer-led work in Wales.

November '22

Recognising Prison Reform Champions: Brendan Ross, London Skills and Employment Manager at St Giles Trust, received the 2022 Longford Prize for his exceptional contributions to prison reform. This recognition highlights his dedication and positive impact. Additionally, Junior Smart, founder of St Giles Trust's pioneering work in child criminal exploitation, was awarded an OBE for his outstanding efforts. We started work in Bedfordshire supporting young adults experiencing complex emotional challenges. We started work in Bedfordshire supporting young adults experiencing complex emotional challenges.

December '22

Spreading Festive Cheer: Our Patron Freddie Fox visited the Camberwell Pantry in December to participate in the Christmas Campaign. Engaging with children supported through our services, Freddie's involvement exemplified the spirit of giving during the holiday season.



January '23

Commending the Peer Circles Project: The Peer Circles project received praise from the Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Jonathan Ashworth. Described as an “excellent example” of providing support to individuals with complex needs, this initiative offers a vital service in challenging social and economic conditions.

Welcoming New Leadership: We proudly introduced Tracey Burley as our new Chief Executive. With over 15 years of leadership experience in the charity, not-for-profit, and public sectors, Tracey's appointment promises continued growth and impact for St Giles Trust. She joined us from Redthread, where she served as the Interim CEO.

February '23

Showcasing Pantry Work on Radio 4: The Coventry-based Pantry was featured on Radio 4's Inside Health, shedding light on the Pantry's role in addressing the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on public health. Interviews with Caseworkers and clients provided insight into the positive influence of the Pantry on the community. Our Pantry in Norwich first opened its doors to address poverty in the city and surrounding areas.

March '23

Farewell to Rob Owen OBE: We bid farewell to Rob Owen OBE, who led St Giles Trust for 15 years and transformed us from being a mid-sized charity with services largely focussed in and around the capital, to becoming UK-wide with leading services in areas addressing poverty, child criminal exploitation and social injustice.



Empowering communities: impact of our pantries in tackling poverty and social exclusion

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Fruit, bread and milk prices, the essentials have all gone up and it puts me off buying them – I’m really feeling the pinch. I feel I’m just not getting a lot of value for the money. But the Pantry has helped me with access to nutritious products. They have become a vital service.

Gareth, Coventry Pantry client

Amid the challenges posed by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, our commitment to combating poverty and social exclusion remained unwavering. Our innovative network of Pantries served as both a practical solution and a source of inspiration for sustaining our clients, fostering engagement, and nurturing a sense of belonging.

Expanding reach and impact

Operating in strategic locations, our Pantries have established a meaningful presence in London, Coventry, Leeds, North Wales and Norwich. We are excited to report that this positive trajectory continues, with a new Pantries set to open their doors in the next year. This expansion reinforces our dedication to reaching more communities and making a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

Nourishment beyond food

Beyond providing access to wholesome and affordable food, our Pantries have evolved into safe havens of support and camaraderie. Peer Advisors, a compassionate presence within each Pantry, extend a helping hand to people seeking guidance and assistance. These advisors contribute significantly to people’s emotional well-being by addressing their concerns and reducing the burden of isolation and loneliness.

Cultivating holistic well-being

As part of our commitment to holistic well-being, last year saw the introduction of 'warm hub' days in our Pantries. These days were dedicated to fostering meaningful connections and equipping people using The Pantries with essential life skills. From engaging cooking sessions that encouraged culinary exploration to budgeting advice that promotes financial resilience, these initiatives demonstrate our determination to empower our clients beyond immediate sustenance.

Transforming lives

The impact of our Pantries extends far beyond the realm of nutrition. Feedback from our clients underscores transformative changes in their lives. Physical and mental health improvements have become tangible markers of our success. Notably, a surge in motivation is evident among our clients, as they are uplifted by the supportive environment and opportunities for growth that our Pantries provide.

As we reflect on our journey, it is clear that our Pantries have blossomed into catalysts of change, fostering hope, resilience, and progress. Our commitment to eradicating poverty and social exclusion is fortified by these outcomes, and we anticipate a future where the transformative power of The Pantries continue to shape lives for the better.



Empowering communities: impact of our pantries in tackling poverty and social exclusion

London

Over the past 12 months, The Camberwell Pantry has been a beacon of hope, bringing about transformative change in the lives of the community it serves. In this time, we have supported 217 households, including 272 adults and 109 children, by providing them with a weekly grocery shop, accompanied by wraparound practical and emotional support.

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The Pantry has been a lifesaver, without it I wouldn't eat a meal each day.

Louis, London Pantry client

Our holistic approach has yielded remarkable results, allowing 130 people to confidently step beyond the need for our service. By addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, we've achieved significant milestones:

- **Empowering Pathways:** 28% of individuals transitioned into further training, volunteering, or paid employment, marking a significant stride towards self-sufficiency.
- **Navigating Welfare:** 12% secured the rightful welfare benefits they deserved, ensuring a more stable foundation for their families.
- **Secure Foundations:** Our efforts have resulted in 3% of our members finding permanent housing, an accomplishment that stands as a testament to our commitment to holistic well-being.

Additionally, we are thrilled to highlight the story of Lei, a Peer Advisor whose journey has been nothing short of inspiring. Initially using The Camberwell Pantry herself, Lei embarked on a transformative path by pursuing a Level 3 NVQ in Advice and Guidance at St Giles Trust. Through her diligent efforts, she successfully completed the qualification, and today, Lei holds a part-time role at St Giles Trust.

Our commitment to making a difference extends beyond numbers. Through a comprehensive survey that garnered 72 responses from households benefiting from our service, we've gained valuable insights into the transformative power of The Camberwell Pantry:

- 93% of respondents shared that they are consuming more fresh fruits and vegetables, a testament to the positive impact on their nutrition and health.
 - 74% noted an improvement in their mental health, highlighting the profound influence of community support on emotional well-being.
 - 83% reported enhanced physical health, demonstrating the interconnectedness of physical and emotional well-being.
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- Financial security saw a marked improvement, with 87% of respondents attesting to a positive change in their finances, a critical step towards breaking the cycle of poverty.
 - 82% of respondents expressed a stronger sense of connection to their local community, showcasing the role of The Camberwell Pantry in fostering meaningful social ties.

The past year has been a testament to the incredible impact that The Camberwell Pantry has on the lives of individuals and families. Through dedication, compassion, and a commitment to comprehensive support, we've seen lives transformed, futures reshaped, and communities strengthened.



Empowering communities: impact of our pantries in tackling poverty and social exclusion

Midlands

In the past year, the Coventry Pantry has made a significant impact on the lives of those facing poverty and social exclusion. In the financial year from April 2022 to March 2023, the team received 133 referrals into the Pantry. However, it's crucial to recognise that these referrals didn't just support 133 individuals; they had a much broader impact - touching the lives of families, children, and the wider community.

Many of the people supported were grappling with the rising cost of living, making it difficult to meet basic needs. To address this, the team restructured the sign-up process, prioritising financial advice, benefits, and debt management. This proactive approach aimed to alleviate immediate financial anxieties and help clients access payment plans, grants, and allowances.

The Pantry team also offered in-house education, training, and employment support, successfully guiding individuals towards self-sufficiency. This enabled them to refer suitable candidates for specialised support, allowing time to focus more on individualised assistance.



The stories we heard from those using the Coventry Pantry were both moving and inspiring. Many had to choose between buying food and heating their homes, while others had to ration their water usage. Some even became conscious of energy-efficient foods, opting for microwave meals.

Additionally, the demand for mental health support increased, with waiting lists for professional help growing longer. Despite these challenges, there were significant successes. People upskilled through education and training, eventually securing employment.

The Coventry Pantry also continued to foster a sense of community and support. The team organised activities like cooking sessions, baking sessions, pumpkin carving, and Easter egg hunts, creating a welcoming and safe environment for all. Some individuals regained their confidence through our support and no longer needed our services, illustrating the Pantry's effectiveness in empowering individuals.

Through their assistance, many people reduced their debts, reintegrated into society, and even revisited the Pantry after leaving the service to update the team on their progress. This is an exceptionally dedicated team who went above and beyond, providing work clothes, water rate support, meal planning guidance, wellbeing and welfare support, health and medical referrals, CV assistance, job placements, successful grant applications, housing support, and practical assistance like identification and form filling.

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I would like to say that I had the best support through my bad times and upmost respect to Bianca and Hannah who supported me going above and beyond and for that I'm thankful.

Feedback from person using the Coventry Pantry

They also supported children of the people using the Pantry by sourcing prom dresses and laptops, ensuring they had access to education and social interactions. In the spirit of ensuring no child goes without, they provided Christmas gifts to every child under 16 whose parents were Pantry members.

In a heartwarming gesture, a volunteer hairdresser from the Coventry Pantry stepped up to give clients haircuts. Her dedication even led her to undertake a Level 3 Advice and Guidance course to become a St Giles Trust Peer Advisor, a testament to the positive impact our Pantry has on volunteers as well as the people using it.

Empowering communities: impact of our pantries in tackling poverty and social exclusion

The team had great support from our funders. Coventry Building Society were wonderful supporting the team with donations, gifts at Christmas for the children, and running debt advice sessions. Staff have also come in to help with delivery on a couple of occasions as part of their community support project.

These accomplishments highlight the unwavering commitment of our Coventry Pantry team to combat poverty and social exclusion, one life at a time.



Norwich

The Norwich Pantry opened its doors on February 1st 2023 (thanks to funding from Norfolk Community Foundation and the Lewin Trust). In a region known for its food production, it's disheartening to acknowledge that food poverty remains a significant concern in Norfolk. However, the Norwich Pantry is Part of the Nourishing Norfolk Network, initiated by Norfolk Community Foundation, which brings together local initiatives across Norfolk with the common goal of alleviating this pressing issue.

Since its inception, the Norwich Pantry has experienced an overwhelming surge in demand. A substantial portion of the people using it are hardworking families, underscoring the pervasive nature of this problem within our community.

Our dedicated team has forged invaluable partnerships with local businesses, who generously contribute an array of essential goods. Their support

has been instrumental in sustaining the Pantry's vital operations, ensuring that nutritious and affordable food remains accessible to all.

Situated at the heart of Norwich, the Pantry has transformed into a thriving nucleus, binding together the diverse fabric of our local community. It serves as a lifeline to both city dwellers and those residing



in the more remote and isolated outskirts. For those in outlying areas, where access to services and support can be scarce, the Norwich Pantry stands as a steadfast pillar of support, offering not just sustenance but also a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Leeds

The Leeds Pantry has continued to provide a vital lifeline to people in the city experiencing food poverty. In addition, the team provide a great deal of added support around social exclusion, family support and accessing other services. Many who have been former Pantry users progress to volunteer at the Pantry using their first-hand experiences and skills to support other people in the local community.

In summary

Our Pantries have become more than just places to access nutritious food; they are vibrant hubs of support, empowerment, and transformation. In the face of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, we remain committed to our mission of combating poverty and social exclusion. Our Pantries, strategically located in London, Coventry, Leeds, North Wales, and Norwich, have made a significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities.

Expanding our reach has been a key focus, and we are excited to announce the opening of new Pantries in the coming year, reinforcing our dedication to reaching more communities and making a lasting difference.

Beyond providing food, our Pantries offer emotional support through Peer Advisors who help address clients' concerns and reduce isolation and loneliness. We've also introduced 'warm hub' days dedicated to fostering connections and teaching essential life skills, demonstrating our commitment to holistic well-being.

The impact of our Pantries goes beyond nutrition, as evidenced by client feedback. We have witnessed transformative changes in physical and mental health, increased motivation, and a sense of hope and resilience among our clients.

Growth and giving back – Adam’s story

Meet Adam Mewes. In September 2022, Adam joined our Norwich team, embarking on a path that would change his life and empower him to become a force for positive change in the lives of others.

With a background in sales, Adam was seeking a meaningful career change upon re-entering the workforce. His journey with St Giles Trust began with the “Learning to Advise” course, equipping him with the skills and knowledge needed to make a difference.

Shortly after completing his training, an opportunity emerged at the Norwich Pantry—an invitation to become a Peer Advisor Volunteer in February 2023. Adam seized this chance with enthusiasm and dedication, quickly establishing himself as a valuable asset to the team.

Adam’s journey did not stop there. His growing confidence and unwavering commitment to helping other people led him to secure a pivotal role as a Peer Coordinator with the Norwich team in August 2023, dedicating three days a week to this important work.

Alongside his role as Peer Coordinator, Adam is now also employed at the Pantry as a Support Worker. Each day presents a unique set of challenges, as Adam supports individuals facing a wide range of issues, from managing debt to navigating dietary needs on a limited budget. The impact of rising living costs has amplified the importance of mental health support, a need that Adam and the St Giles Trust team address with compassion and expertise.

“Yesterday I had two long support sessions. The first one was a gentleman who has mental health issues and so we had a look

“I’ve been at The Pantry from day one when it first opened. I really enjoyed it and fell in love with the project and what it stands for. I thought it was really worthwhile – my old job in sales seemed pointless by comparison.”

at where he could get support with these. The second session was with a couple with three children who were struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. They have a house to maintain. We are going to approach the council to try and get them some support and a council tax rebate.”

Adam highlights the Pantry's important role in tackling underlying issues. ***"I had an exit interview with a lady who had come to the end of her six months. She said the Pantry gave her headspace to look at the other issues in her life. It makes sense – when a family is sitting there worrying about where dinner is going to come from there is no space to think about anything else. But if you alleviate that one problem you can then start working on other things."***

He adds ***"Plus there is dignity. It's not like a food bank – people pay £3.50 and maintain their independence."***

Adam's story is not just one of personal transformation; it's a story of dedication to the community and a commitment to giving back. ***"I wanted a role where I could make a difference,"*** says Adam. ***"In the process, I've fallen in love with St Giles Trust and the people. It's special here—there is trust amongst the staff unlike other places I've worked."***

Adam's journey, alongside the people he assists, exemplifies the potential for transformation and empowerment that lies within all of us. As he continues his work, Adam is a shining example of how, with the right support and opportunities, anyone can overcome challenges and make a lasting impact on their community.



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I was having a chat with a lady about rhubarb crumble and mentioned to her how much progress she has made. She turned round and said the same thing to me: ***"when you first started out here you were so quiet. But you've changed."*** She's right – when I first joined I just kept my head down. But we've both grown.

Empowering lives: creating opportunities for employment

Secure, sustainable employment represents the final step on the road to independence for our clients. Many of them face additional barriers around long-term unemployment, mental health issues and looking for work with a criminal record. Our support is flexible and not timebound, meaning we can work with people at their own pace and guide them towards their career goals.



London

Across London, we are committed to combatting poverty and social exclusion, working tirelessly to empower individuals facing adversity to secure meaningful employment. Our endeavours in the 2022/23 fiscal year were made possible through generous funding from the Department for Work and Pensions, the European Social Fund, and the Greater London Authority.

Skills and confidence building

Our multifaceted initiatives catered to the diverse needs of both adults and young people. We focused on equipping them with essential skills, boosting their confidence, and guiding them on a transformative journey towards sustainable employment. Our clients often grapple with complex challenges, including mental health issues, prior involvement in the criminal justice system, and the unrelenting grip of poverty.

Addressing the crisis of poverty

For many of our clients, poverty is not just a statistic but a harsh reality. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated their struggles, rendering some jobs insufficient to make ends meet. This dilemma is particularly acute for those with children, as the high cost of childcare presents a formidable barrier to employment.

In response to these dire circumstances, we extended our support beyond conventional means. Our St Giles Pantry network, a vital resource for our clients, became a lifeline. To alleviate the burden of poverty, we covered the £3.50 weekly subscription cost for those in dire need. We recognised that poverty goes beyond financial constraints; it exacts a toll on mental health and overall well-being.

Furthermore, we went the extra mile by assisting clients in acquiring essential household items such as beds, bedding, clothing, and basic staples. These tangible acts of support not only alleviated their immediate concerns but also reinforced our commitment to their holistic wellbeing.

Building a stronger community

Through the London Peer Hub, we invested in training Peer Advisors, a programme that experienced renewed vigour amid the pandemic's challenges. The majority of trainees achieved their Level 3 Advice and Guidance qualification, while the remaining ones continue their dedicated pursuit of this valuable credential.

East of England

Located in Norwich, the East of England Peer Hub has continued to train and create employment opportunities for people in the local community who are experiencing barriers to employment. These include people like Adam (see page 24). The teams work continues to grow as they forge further local partnerships with other organisations who are willing to provide opportunities for the people training through the Peer Hub.

Yorkshire

Empowering transformation

Based in Leeds, the Yorkshire Peer Hub has remained dedicated to its mission of equipping individuals with lived experience of adversity and disadvantage to become qualified professionals, capable of providing crucial support to those facing similar challenges. Over the past year, our team has achieved notable milestones and shown unwavering commitment to our aims.

Expanding our team for greater impact

In the pursuit of our mission, the Yorkshire Peer Hub welcomed two new Trainer Assessors and a dedicated Peer Coordinator to the team. Additionally, we anticipate the arrival of our newest team member, the Trainer Caseworker, due to join us in August.

Relieving the financial burden of learners

Recognising the financial strain that travel costs can impose on our learners attending weekly training sessions, we have taken proactive steps to ensure that this burden does not hinder their progress. The team has proactively covered these expenses, demonstrating our commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible learning environment.

Celebrating remarkable achievements

Within the local community, remarkable progressions have unfolded. A dedicated volunteer, who successfully completed the Learning to Advise course, is now actively pursuing a Level 3 qualification in Advice and Guidance. This individual is also providing invaluable support to our Peer Coordinator by assisting with interviews for prospective learners.

Furthermore, we take immense pride in the journey of our colleague, Amy, who embarked on the Learning to Advise course and has since ascended to the role of Peer Coordinator. Currently on the verge of qualifying as a Trainer/Assessor, Amy's remarkable journey highlights the transformative potential of the Peer Hub initiative.

Embracing long journeys, unlocking potential

These achievements are testament to the transformative power of our Peer Hubs. They underscore the immense dedication of our team, the resilience of our learners, and the impact we collectively strive to achieve. As we continue our journey, we remain committed to our mission of reducing poverty and social exclusion, one empowered individual at a time. Together, we are driving positive change and building a brighter future for Yorkshire and beyond.



In summary

St Giles is dedicated to breaking down barriers and empowering individuals facing adversity to secure meaningful employment. In the fiscal year 2022/23, our efforts were made possible through generous support from the Department for Work and Pensions, the European Social Fund, and the Greater London Authority.

Many of our clients grapple with complex challenges, including mental health issues, prior involvement in the criminal justice system, and the unrelenting grip of poverty. Our services cater to diverse needs, equipping clients with essential skills, boosting their confidence, and guiding them on a transformative journey towards sustainable employment.

Empowering transformation – Gary’s journey from struggle to inspiration

After grappling with addiction for 27 challenging years, Gary realised that it was time for him to initiate profound changes.

Gary’s adversities took root at a young age when a period of ill health disrupted his education, setting the stage for his future struggles. Despite facing difficulties in school, Gary discovered his passion for Rugby, which became his focal point. He dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of becoming a professional Rugby player, pouring his energy into this aspiration. Regrettably, an early setback—a broken leg—shattered his dreams. This misfortune, coupled with his youth, led him down a path of drug involvement and association with criminal gangs, culminating in a harrowing experience of being stabbed four times.

“Looking back for a large portion of my life I battled back and fore with crack cocaine addictions where I would spiral for a few months and then I would stop. I would take myself away from my local area, use fishing as a distraction and stay away from drugs only to slide right back in the moment I got home.”

In a courageous turn, Gary decided to confront his inner demons by confiding in a family member. This pivotal moment paved the way for him to seek assistance from Recovery Cymru. During this phase, Gary encountered St Giles Trust Cymru, which resonated with his desire to make a positive impact. He felt a strong calling to become an advocate for young people standing at a crossroads in their lives. By sharing his own lived experiences, he aspired to educate those vulnerable to the allure of gangs and drug experimentation, demonstrating the vastly divergent trajectories life can take.

“For most of my life I lived with a mask on, putting on a front but inside my mind felt weak. It took me a long time to find the right support and now I truly recognise the power of support! My life has changed completely. I am now committed to my own wellbeing and really enjoying working with young people in my placement. I feel like if I had a mentor all those years ago that had lived experience, I may have taken a very different path. That said I am not ashamed of my journey or my experiences and now after engaging in the Aspire Hub Peer Advisor Programme I am passionate about supporting others and that allows me to be myself and be proud of who I am now.”

Upon starting the programme, Gary had apprehensions about re-entering an educational setting, owing to his limited formal education and dyslexia. Undeterred, he displayed remarkable perseverance and wholeheartedly engaged in the programme. Since embarking on his journey with St Giles Trust and immersing himself in a work placement that involved mentoring young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system, Gary's dedication has soared. Moreover, he has chosen to channel more of his time and energy into advocating for tailored support systems aimed at addressing crack cocaine addiction. Collaborating closely with substance support providers, he has played a pivotal role in developing comprehensive support packages.

***“Doing the St Giles Aspire Peer Advisor Programme has really raised my confidence, the support and encouragement I have received has been fantastic. I found the training really relevant to work towards my goals as being a Support Worker and the awareness I have gained of professional boundaries and safeguarding has been really useful for my progression.*”**

I never thought I would be here and am now looking forward to working towards achieving the Level 3 NVQ in Advice & Guidance and getting a formal qualification! This has been a great opportunity”.



“

Doing the St Giles Aspire Peer Advisor Programme has really raised my confidence

Supporting children and young people: tackling child criminal exploitation

Our ongoing efforts to support children and young people involved in or at risk of child criminal exploitation have remained consistently active. The dynamic nature of emerging trends, like the utilisation of vapes as grooming tools, has required our teams to remain vigilant and adaptive to evolving signs of exploitation. These teams have demonstrated a commitment to early intervention, swiftly identifying potential risks and providing necessary support.

One of our primary objectives has been assisting young individuals exploited by county line drug gangs, ensuring their safe departure from these dangerous circumstances.



London

An August report on the Mayor of London-funded Rescue and Response service highlights that an impressive 9 out of 10 young individuals aided through this multi-agency initiative managed to significantly reduce or entirely halt their involvement in county line activities. Within this framework, our role involves delivering intensive support to the young people, aiding them in reconstructing their lives post-exploitation.

Our preventative initiatives within schools and educational environments persistently strive to enhance awareness and resilience among children and young people. This mission has acquired a heightened significance during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, which has increased the vulnerability of some children and young people.

Our work within London hospitals, aimed at aiding young victims of severe violence, continues to generate profound transformations in the lives of both these young individuals and their families. We are currently operational in five hospitals spanning

East, North, and North West London. Our teams tackle complex cases requiring extensive time, dedication, and creativity in the provisioning of support.

East of England

The team have continued to provide services supporting and preventing children and young people at risk over the past year. Schools-based work providing groupwork and one-to-one support has continued to flourish, helping young people stay resilient and protected from harm. We have also provided anti-bullying intervention work in schools across Bedfordshire.

An analysis of representation rates at two of the hospitals we work in has shown significant reductions - just 5% at The Whittington Hospital and 3% at Newham Hospital



Midlands

Our engagement with children and young people in the West Midlands has expanded across various contexts, including hospitals, schools, the care system, and police custody. Our overarching goal is to provide immediate and lasting interventions that ensure their safety and support.

The West Midlands hosts a significant number of young people with complex needs, coupled with a scarcity of resources and opportunities tailored to addressing these needs. Despite many young people engaging with St Giles Trust, the challenging contexts they inhabit—marked by high-risk behaviours—make staying free from exploitation a formidable challenge. Notably, a substantial portion of the young individuals we assist are neurodiverse, and many have faced school exclusion, rendering them particularly susceptible to exploitation.

Supporting children and young people: tackling child criminal exploitation

Our team devoted to supporting young women at risk of grooming and exploitation has grown considerably, a testament to the high demand for their services. In response, the team devised a Healthy Relationships course for young women. This initiative facilitates individual assessment and encourages open discourse about trauma, fostering engagement and effective group work over a span of 7 weeks at the Wolverhampton Hub. Post-course completion, young females deemed high-risk undergo ongoing work with allocated Caseworkers, bolstered by supportive feedback from the schools. Funding from the West Midlands Violence Partnership facilitated a transformative residential trip for young women. This experience, including activities such as countryside exploration, coastal walks, raft building, and kayaking, underscored the potential for positive change. The feedback from these excursions has been overwhelmingly positive, reaffirming the team's invaluable support.

The expansion of hospital-based A&E projects, now encompassing Sandwell/City Hospital and Walsall Manor Hospital due to additional funding, remains a cornerstone of our work. Collaboration with partners across all relevant domains persists.

The current cost-of-living climate has impacted young individuals and their families, necessitating supplementary support to ensure adequate nutrition and safety provisions.



Our team's dedication to fostering engagement has led to remarkable progress, encouraging young individuals to transcend their comfort zones and achieve newfound accomplishments. Through intensive one-on-one support, our Caseworkers guide young individuals in identifying and working towards their goals.

Engaging with young individuals demands sustained effort, enabling them to confront past challenges, establish trust, and channel their potential towards achieving personal goals. Our Midlands team remain steadfast in achieving this for their clients, striving for lasting impact and positive change.

Wales and the South West

Wales

St Giles Trust has expanded its reach in Cardiff and Vale in response to the ever-growing challenges faced by young people in the region. Our vital service for Children and Families has been extended for an additional two years. The escalating cost-of-living crisis has left young people more vulnerable to involvement in drug-related activities. This vulnerability has been further exacerbated by the scarcity of suitable employment opportunities and lengthy waiting lists for essential support services, particularly those related to mental health.

In a significant stride forward, we established Wales's inaugural embedded mentoring project within a secondary school in Cardiff. Our emphasis on preventive work and early interventions in schools has strengthened over the past year, ensuring that young people receive the guidance they need to navigate challenging circumstances. We've also broadened our services to include specialised support for girls at risk in Newport. Furthermore, our commitment to safeguarding children and young people extends to Gwent, where our efforts to support those at risk of serious organised crime, county line exploitation, and youth violence have been extended for an additional year.

Impact in Gwent (2022-2023):

- Total Young People Supported: 2042
- Year Groups 7-11 Reach: 1968
- Empowering Awareness: One of our dedicated Caseworkers conducted county lines awareness sessions for 50 students at Neath College.
- Empowering Girls: Across three schools in Newport, our service reached 24 girls, providing them with essential support and guidance.

South West:

In the South West, we've amplified our efforts to support young people making the difficult transition from HMP Bristol back into the community. An additional Through the Gates Community Worker has joined our team, significantly enhancing our capacity to provide crucial support to young men leaving prison. Additionally, we've launched an innovative mentoring project focused on young people in South Gloucestershire, further solidifying our commitment to creating a brighter future for all.

Yorkshire

In the heart of Yorkshire, our dedicated team is making a significant impact in the fight against child criminal exploitation. This work is primarily focussed within the communities of Leeds and Bradford, both known hotspots for violent crime.

Our team has extended its reach to encompass 36 schools across these areas, actively engaging with young people who are either involved in or at risk of child criminal exploitation. Our mission is clear: to raise awareness of the complex issues surrounding criminal exploitation, peer pressure, and grooming, all while equipping young individuals with the essential skills and knowledge needed to safeguard themselves from harm.

Acknowledging the harsh realities faced by some of the children and young people we support, we understand that poverty further complicates the issue. Many of them struggle to access basic necessities, such as proper nutrition, making it difficult to stay motivated and engaged with support services.

In response to these challenges, our team has adopted a holistic approach. Beyond our core mission, we have expanded our efforts to ensure that these young individuals receive not just knowledge but the care they need to thrive.

One significant step we have taken is providing food to children and young people in need. This initiative not only helps address immediate hunger but also contributes to their overall health and well-being. Proper nourishment empowers them to stay motivated and engaged with our positive support services.

By combining our preventative work with compassionate efforts to alleviate poverty-related challenges, our Yorkshire team continues to make a profound difference in the lives of young people in often very vulnerable circumstances. Together, we are paving the way for a brighter, safer future, where every young person has the opportunity to reach their full potential.



In summary

St Giles Trust is dedicated to supporting children and young people involved in or at risk of child criminal exploitation. We adapt to emerging trends and challenges, like vaping for grooming, and focus on early intervention and risk identification.

In London, our Rescue and Response project, funded by the Mayor of London, has achieved impressive results, helping young individuals reduce their involvement in county line activities. We also provide support for those recovering from violence-related incidents and offer support to neurodiverse, excluded, and at-risk young people.

In Wales, we have expanded services to address the cost-of-living crisis and introduced mentoring projects in schools. The work extends to Gwent in safeguarding efforts.

In the South West, we have assisted young people transitioning from HMP Bristol through mentoring projects. In Yorkshire, we engage with young individuals in high-risk areas, addressing both criminal exploitation and poverty-related challenges.

Vital support from our funders has helped us make a substantial impact in these regions, touching the lives of thousands of young people and providing them with the tools and opportunities they need to build better futures.

Engaging and protecting – Richard’s story

One Friday evening, a call reached our dedicated team in Cardiff from the South Wales Police. They had arrested a young man named Richard* on suspicion of a drug-related offence. However, the police sensed there was more to this situation than met the eye. Despite their efforts to coax information from Richard and encourage him to open up, he remained reticent, only expressing that he felt secure in police custody.

Recognising the need for a deeper intervention, the police reached out to St Giles Trust, and our Caseworker, Cara, promptly responded by attending the police station. In a confidential conversation with Richard, Cara’s independent and compassionate approach earned his trust,

Without hesitation, Cara took immediate action upon receiving this critical information. She collaborated closely with the police to establish safeguarding measures for Richard. An emergency meeting was convened, with Cara actively participating. The consensus was that Richard should be provided with emergency accommodation, located outside of Cardiff, and facilitated by Children’s Social Services. This decision not only ensured his safety but also granted him a respite period to collect his thoughts and regain his composure.

Cara’s involvement and swift actions were pivotal in this situation. Her proactive measures brought to light the dangerous situation Richard had been groomed into. Had it not been for her dedication, Richard might have been released from custody, unwittingly returning to the clutches of his exploiters.

prompting him to confide in her. It was clear that the police’s instincts were right – Richard revealed to Cara that he was a victim of criminal exploitation and faced significant risks to his safety. The reason for his reluctance to cooperate with the police soon became evident.

*Richard’s name has been changed to protect his identity



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The consensus was that Richard should be provided with emergency accommodation... This decision not only ensured his safety but also granted him a respite period to collect his thoughts and regain his composure.

Empowering women, nurturing families: transformative services in action

Our commitment to advancing the well-being of women, children, and families remains resolute and impactful. Over the past year, our specialised projects have not only thrived but have also made profound differences in the lives of the women we support and their families.

East of England

Empowering women through WREN

Introducing the Women Rising Enabling Neighbourhoods (WREN) project – an initiative fuelled by a one-year grant from the Government's Tampon Tax Fund. WREN's mission was to uplift grassroots organisations by providing them with small grants to train women facing disadvantages, empowering them to become community champions. The ripple effect of these champions' support extended far and wide. The journey saw 118 women join WREN, with 78 successfully completing City and Guilds Assured Learning to Advise training. These efforts resulted in 101 training certificates awarded and 25 women securing paid employment. Notably, the impact reverberated as WREN Community Champions provided support to an additional 1463 women within their local communities.

Wonder Plus Project: six years of triumph

In its sixth year, the Wonder Plus Project has continued to be a beacon of strength, funded by the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk County Council Public Health, and bolstered by the Nationwide contribution in May 2022. This combined support has fortified its mission to guide women within the community to transcend adversity and forge positive futures. By enabling women in Norfolk to overcome severe disadvantages, the project has facilitated their progression towards achieving their aspirations.

East of England Footsteps

This service has continued to support women in the criminal justice system across Norfolk, Suffolk, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire, helping them address underlying issues holding them back from making positive progress. It works in close partnership with a range of other providers.

Yorkshire

The vast rural expanse of North Yorkshire poses unique challenges for women with complex needs, including issues surrounding transport, childcare, mental health, and connectivity. Our resolute team secured funding for a rural unit vehicle and a dedicated staff member.

This pioneering approach effectively takes gender-specific, multi-agency support to these remote areas. Aligned with the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and the Whole System Approach, this initiative stands as a testament to our commitment to help women who may not have easy access to support mechanisms.

Yorkshire Footsteps

Our support aids the women in resettling, accessing essential assistance, and building the skills and self-assurance to flourish within their communities. Through the Yorkshire Footsteps Project's remarkable journey, over 200 women have found solace and empowerment in its first year. Many have emerged as St Giles Trust Peer Advisors, paying forward their positive transformations by guiding others toward a brighter path.

Rising substance use, particularly alcohol, as a coping mechanism for financial stress, has highlighted the need for our services. In rural areas, where financial constraints curtail access to essential services, our interventions remain a lifeline. By fostering resilience, motivation, and empowerment, we ensure women and their families can progress confidently towards independence.



In summary

In a year marked by resilience and progress, our commitment to empowering women, nurturing families, and combating social exclusion has yielded transformative results. From the Women Rising Enabling Neighbourhoods (WREN) project in the East of England, which empowered over a hundred women and had a ripple effect across communities, to the ongoing success of the Wonder Plus Project in Norfolk, bolstered by vital support, our efforts have continued to uplift those facing disadvantages.

In North Yorkshire, we addressed unique challenges with innovative solutions, providing essential support to remote areas. Moreover, our Yorkshire Footsteps Project has empowered over 200 women transitioning from prison, fostering hope and transformation.

As we confront new challenges, we remain steadfast in our mission to nurture every woman's potential and transform every family's future.

A Journey of resilience with Yorkshire Footsteps – Susan’s story

At Yorkshire Footsteps, our dedicated team is committed to empowering women by providing them with essential advice, services, and support. They stand as advocates for women facing extraordinarily vulnerable circumstances, guiding them through stressful and often traumatic times with compassion and determination.

Meet Susan*, who, when we first encountered her, was on the path to recovery from a deeply abusive relationship, carrying a heavy burden of debt. Susan’s bore the scars of emotional abuse which had left an indelible mark on her and her family. Though the abuse was not physical, the damage was profound, as Susan herself admitted that she’d prefer physical abuse over a single day in the emotional turmoil she had endured.

Susan’s journey to recovery was facilitated by her St Giles Trust Caseworker, who provided a substantial amount of emotional support. She reassured Susan that she was not alone and that countless other women had faced similar situations.

The first step was connecting Susan with other organisations capable of extricating her from her predicament, and she was introduced to a colleague who could help address her debts. Initially hesitant, Susan had a change of heart upon learning that this colleague, too, had overcome domestic abuse. This connection initiated the gradual reduction of her debts.

In addition to her financial struggles, Susan had to navigate the daunting terrain of the Family Court without legal representation. However, her Caseworker secured Legal Aid and found a dedicated solicitor who would stand by her side, providing vital support during the challenging times ahead.

At certain points, Susan would disengage from her Probation Officer, potentially putting her at risk of further sanctions. Her Caseworker took the proactive step of coordinating meetings with Susan and her Probation Officer, ensuring that Susan

received support and advocacy when she needed it most.

*Susan’s name has been changed to protect her confidentiality.

The scars of her past abuse continued to manifest in various aspects of Susan's life. To address this, her Caseworker helped her connect with a specialised domestic abuse support agency, offering her a safe space to work through her experiences and come to terms with them. Beyond this, her Caseworker dedicated a significant amount of time to provide emotional support, helping Susan manage her anxieties and frustrations, and assisting her in developing strategies to cope.

Although Susan's complex situation has not yet fully stabilised, the support of Yorkshire Footsteps has made an enormous difference in her life. Her Caseworker observed, "Susan now arrives at our meetings with a smile, making eye contact, with unbitten nails and clean clothes."

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Susan now arrives at our meetings with a smile, making eye contact, with unbitten nails and clean clothes.



Empowering people to overcome hurdles – work in prisons and with prison leavers

Our long-standing commitment to working within prisons and with people leaving prison continues to empower people to make positive contributions to society and build brighter futures.



Peer-led approach

Central to our success is the St Giles Trust's peer-led approach, with 40% of our trained staff having first hand experience with the criminal justice system. Evaluations of our work have shown that this model significantly increases the likelihood of individuals engaging with our services and magnifies their impact. It is particularly essential for the prison population, which includes some of the most disadvantaged members of our communities. Many of them face stigmatisation while attempting to leave their past behind and reintegrate into society.

Our approach becomes incredibly powerful when individuals are guided by someone who can genuinely say, ***"I've been there myself – I understand what you're going through."***

Supporting prison leavers

Leaving prison is a particularly vulnerable period, and the risk of recidivism is high when individuals are released into homelessness, poverty, and a lack of support. In collaboration with HMPPS, through St Giles Wise we assist hundreds of people successfully reintegrate into their communities. Our role is to support their wellbeing, utilising our peer-led approach to ensure they receive essential services, establish a positive structure, and receive support as they rebuild their lives. Specialised services are available for women to address their specific needs and provide a safe and supportive environment.

Peer consultants with the Probation Service

We harness the unique skills and insights of individuals who have lived through the criminal justice system by supporting them to work as Peer Consultants with the Probation Service. This three-year project aims to help reshape the Probation Service's approach to engaging with people on probation. Peer Consultants play a central role in evaluating current approaches, identifying opportunities for positive change, and facilitating their implementation.



Empowering people to overcome hurdles – work in prisons and with prison leavers

Peer Advisor training in prisons

St. Giles Trust's Peer Advisor programme has been a cornerstone of our work in prisons for over two decades. Participants in the programme work towards an externally accredited qualification in Advice and Guidance while helping their peers as part of their vocational training. The 12-module foundation equips trainees with essential knowledge in areas such as housing, family law, domestic abuse, disclosure of convictions, and mental health. Graduates can apply their skills through voluntary work placements, sometimes in the community via temporary release.

We have secured funding to deliver peer-led training in seven prisons across five regions with the aim of providing a pathway to sustainable employment. Over the past year, several of our community-based services have welcomed individuals on temporary release from nearby prisons, enriching our services while offering a direct path to paid employment. The Peer Advisor programme not only enhances the confidence, skills, and employability of people who have been in prison but also supports others facing similar challenges. The acquired skills are highly transferable and open doors to a range of careers.

Supporting the children of people in prison

Children often bear the hidden burden when a family member is in prison. Our work in Yorkshire continues to be a lifeline, supporting families affected by it. This work assists individuals in maintaining strong family ties and reducing the risk of intergenerational offending. Through our peer-led approach, we empower people to actively engage with their families both during their custodial sentences and upon release.

Employment support for people in prison

We remain committed to helping individuals overcome the employment barriers posed by their criminal records. Our peer-led approach serves as a bridge, providing structure, regular income, and stability. This vital work is funded through the ESF CFO3 project, partially financed by the European Social Fund.

In summary

Our commitment to working within prisons and with individuals leaving prison empowers them to make positive contributions to society and build brighter futures. Central to our success is the peer-led approach of St Giles Trust, where 40% of our trained staff have firsthand experience with the criminal justice system. This model significantly increases individuals' engagement with our services and magnifies their impact, especially among the most disadvantaged members of our communities. We support prison leavers during their vulnerable transition period, ensuring they receive essential services and support to rebuild their lives.

Our Peer Consultants with the Probation Service play a pivotal role in reshaping approaches to probation, and our Peer Advisor programme equips trainees with valuable skills and employment opportunities. Additionally, we support the children of people in prison and help individuals overcome employment barriers posed by their criminal records. Together, we continue to make a positive difference in the lives of people affected by the criminal justice system.



Initiative and determination – Amanda’s* story

When we met Amanda, she was serving a sentence after being groomed and convicted of county lines activity. She now works as a St Giles Trust Caseworker, using her experience of finding employment and building positive friendships to mentor women in similar situations.

During her time in prison, Amanda had begun to believe that there was nothing out there with a positive future for her. However, she saw a poster for St Giles Trust on the prison board. Through the Peer Advisor course, Amanda learnt valuable mentoring skills, met other women on the course and began volunteering so that she could give back to young girls in her position. Amanda was moved to the Open Wing of the prison and had a role as an Induction Orderly, which meant that she had an integral role in helping other women adjust to life inside prison. Amanda began to feel more hopeful for her future.

As well as structured learning modules in Advice and Guidance, Amanda took part in a 4-day residential trip to Holyhead, Wales with other women who were on Release

on Temporary License (ROTL). The group activities on this trip increased her self-confidence and gave her fulfilling friendships with a group of women in a similar position. It was important for Amanda to take the next steps towards secure employment, and St Giles Trust helped her secure a placement in an A&E department working with young people who had been admitted to hospital as a result of violence.

After successfully completing the Peer Advisor Programme, she worked as a St Giles Trust Caseworker on the Expect Respect programme. Amanda understands how she had been groomed into county lines activity and uses her first-hand knowledge to mentor young women and girls who have similarly been coerced into county lines. Amanda even returns to the open unit of her old prison to give talks to women currently serving their sentence and, through her hard work, she is recognised as a role model for what they can achieve.

Amanda has used her empathy, initiative, and determination to create a positive future for herself and other women.

*Amanda’s name has been changed to protect her confidentiality.



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Amanda has used her empathy, initiative, and determination to create a positive future for herself and other women.

What our clients say

Amy was very friendly and explained things well, she made me feel comfortable to share my thoughts and experiences.

I feel motivated to make an effort because Charlotte and St Giles has given me renewed hope, that i can be a productive member of society.

The level of support from Charlotte was amazing, I felt like I had a friend I could rely on. I would like to thank Charlotte and St Giles for everything you have done. All the time that has been spent with me, i am so grateful to all of you.

When I was first referred to Kelly, I was very upset, over the months I have regained my optimistic outlook on life, I was very close to either cracking up or completely giving up. I'm grateful for the help Kelly gave me.

Kelly has a very calm nature and listens intently, I looked forward to our conversations.

Charlotte was truly helpful from day one. I had a huge panic attack on the phone and she helped me stop spiraling out of control, this is something that we worked on, and eventually, I got full control of my panic attacks.

Sarah has been very supportive over the last year and feel I can talk to her about anything at any time.

She has helped me with clearing my debts, helping with mental health services and job seeking, I have now cleared a massive chunk of my debt and am in contact with multiple services.



Karl's journey: a tale of resilience and transformation

When 18-year-old Karl first met St Giles Trust, he was a young man experiencing the challenges of autism and mental health issues. His journey with us began with reticence and apprehension, but through patient and persistent support, we have witnessed remarkable growth and transformation.

Karl's life had been marked by a unique set of hurdles. Neurodivergent and with a history of neglect and self-harm, he had been unable to attend a mainstream school. His confidence had withered away, and his social circle was limited to his mother and three sisters. The outside world remained a distant and intimidating place.

His Caseworker, Russ, embarked on the task of connecting with Karl. Despite initial non-responsiveness, Russ persevered, recognising the importance of establishing trust. Slowly but steadily, Karl began to open up, taking tentative steps towards a brighter future.

Russ approached Karl's education with care and insight, understanding the significance of his impending GCSE exams. He encouraged Karl to invest in his studies, framing it as a gateway to future employment opportunities. Recognising Karl's vulnerability to stress and agitation, Russ ensured that their interactions remained relaxed and encouraging.

Karl's home environment, filled with the bustling activity of his siblings, presented a less-than-ideal setting for focused studying. Russ intervened by securing additional study hours at school and accompanied Karl during his study sessions, providing unwavering support. Karl's confidence blossomed as a result, especially in the lead-up to his exams.

As Karl's school journey neared its end, Russ initiated conversations about his post-school aspirations. Karl expressed interest

in becoming a lifeguard at a leisure centre, but doubts lingered. Russ suggested a path to First Aid certification, a versatile skill that could open doors to various professions. Karl embraced this opportunity and emerged from the training with newfound confidence.

Karl's name has been changed to protect his confidentiality.

Wishing to revisit his old swimming baths, Karl faced the challenge of navigating public transport. With Russ's guidance, he embarked on a journey to rebuild his confidence and plan his travel routes. Karl's successful journey to and from the swimming baths marked a significant milestone, as he navigated unexpected route changes without succumbing to stress.

As Karl's confidence continued to grow, he and Russ explored a range of lifeguarding and computing courses, opening doors to exciting possibilities. However, an unforeseen setback caused Karl's mental health to deteriorate. Through it all, Russ's support remained steadfast, rooted in the belief in Karl's potential and talent.

Karl's journey isn't just about overcoming challenges; it's a testament to his resilience and determination. His creativity shone through as he crafted a bench from upcycled wooden pallets,

showcasing a blend of practicality and ingenuity. With ongoing support, we aspire to help Karl carve out the bright and promising future he rightly deserves—a future he has worked hard towards.

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His journey with us began with reticence and apprehension, but through patient and persistent support, we have witnessed remarkable growth and transformation.

Supporting and empowering our team

We recognise the invaluable contribution of our dedicated team, many of whom have personal experiences that drive their commitment to their work. Some have overcome long periods of hardship or are relatively new to the world of employment. Our unwavering commitment is to provide them with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to perform at their best.

The Skills Centre: fostering continuous growth

To ensure our team's continuous growth, we've established the Skills Centre, a dynamic platform that offers ongoing training and support. This comprehensive programme covers a wide array of areas, from IT skills to specialised knowledge relevant to working with our clients. Furthermore, our team undergoes mandatory training in crucial areas such as safeguarding and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

The Skills Centre work with our Internal Communications Manager who plays a pivotal role in leading all-staff communication, with weekly updates addressing common questions regarding IT and workplace issues, thereby ensuring a seamless and supportive work environment.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI): our commitment

Fostering an inclusive culture is at the core of St Giles Trust. Our aim is to create a positive atmosphere for our teams and the individuals we serve, built on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

EDI steering group and committee: driving change

In June 2022, we established an EDI Steering Group comprising our leadership team and two dedicated staff members. They are working closely with the broader St Giles Trust team to set clear EDI goals and guide us in achieving them. Additionally, an EDI Committee was formed to ensure accountability and provide oversight of EDI at the board level.

Empowering through engagement: listening and taking action

In November 2022, our Executive Team engaged with our staff across St Giles Trust through a series of staff events. During these events, we reinforced our unwavering commitment to EDI and actively sought suggestions and feedback from our team. Many of the resulting actions from these meetings have already been implemented, with others in progress.



Employee Resource Groups: amplifying voices

Our Employee Resource Groups are an embodiment of our commitment to raising awareness and promoting best practices. In the wake of the George Floyd killing, we established the first one through the Black Lives Awareness Group (BLAG). Over the past year, we've expanded this initiative to include additional Employee Resource Groups: the Neurodiversity Forum, the Women's Network, the Muslim Staff Group, the Menopause Support Group, the Mental Health Awareness Group, and the Visible and Invisible Disabilities Group.

In collaboration with our Black Lives Awareness Group, we commissioned an external Race Equality Survey and conducted interviews to capture staff experiences related to race and progression at St Giles Trust. Our Neurodiversity group is actively working to create neuro-inclusive branding and resources while shedding light on the support available to our staff.

Our commitment to our team's growth, the values of EDI, and fostering an inclusive work environment are at the heart of St Giles Trust, and we will continue to strive for excellence in these areas.

Yousef's story – a journey of resilience and determination

Yousef came to St Giles Trust after his life took an unexpected turn when an injury forced him to leave his job. He faced the prospect of dwindling savings as he grappled with a language barrier, as English was his second language.

Yousef had a clear vision of his future, desiring to not only enhance his language skills but also transition into the field of marketing, aligning his career with his aptitudes and aspirations. With the help of a translator, Yousef articulated his ambitions to his dedicated St Giles Trust Caseworker.

Recognising the importance of education and experience, Yousef's Caseworker enrolled him in an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course, aimed at improving his English proficiency. Additionally, a Business Administration course was chosen as his initial stepping stone towards entering the world of marketing.

As his savings ran out, Yousef faced the daunting task of applying for Universal Credit. The process proved to be stressful and bewildering, compounded by the realisation that several months might elapse before his first payment arrived. In these dire circumstances, Yousef's Caseworker provided a lifeline by referring him to the St Giles Trust Pantry Network, where he found not just nourishment but also a compassionate and understanding support system.

Yousef was determined to help himself and maintain some of independence. With the guidance of his St Giles Trust Caseworker he secured a part-time job as a delivery driver. This flexible employment arrangement allowed him to accommodate his college commitments while keeping his dream of completing his studies and pursuing a career in marketing alive.

Yousef's journey exemplifies the power of support and determination. With St Giles Trust's assistance and his own resolve, Yousef is on a path to realising his full potential and achieving his dreams.

Yousef's name has been changed to protect his confidentiality.

A portrait of a man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a plaid shirt over a white t-shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with a window on the right.

“

I am less stressed because you had given me a good and progressing way to start my career. I just realised that I couldn't skip the steps. Thank you.

Message from Yousef

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.

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I am so glad that I got the opportunity to work with Charlotte. It has made going through, what I can only describe as hell, a whole lot easier. Charlotte would always say, please reach out if you need me. Even if this was not on a scheduled session, I felt supported.

Woman supported by the East of England team



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Photos: Jason Hill
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St Giles

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