

FIRST STEP →

Empowerment in Action

Finding strength to end silence



Annual Impact Report

2024 - 2025

First Step Leicester Leicestershire & Rutland
Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Registered No. 1165062



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a calm lake reflecting the surrounding landscape. In the distance, there are blue-toned mountains under a clear sky. A single, wispy white cloud is visible in the upper left corner. The foreground shows the dark, rocky shoreline of the lake.

First Step

empowering men to move forward
from the negative impact sexual
abuse has had on their lives

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First Step is an inclusive organisation. Throughout this document, use of the term 'male' includes all persons that identify as male or non-binary. Whilst terms may be used interchangeably depending on the narrative and context presented in this document, they each include all persons that identify in any of these ways.

Why we're here

An often unheard truth

Sexual violence against men is a significant yet often overlooked issue. Men can be victims of various forms of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and harassment. Often unrecognised or unseen by the world around, abuse can occur in a domestic setting, within an institutional environment,

Lack of awareness and support, societal stigma and stereotypes about masculinity often prevent male survivors from seeking help or speaking out, leading to underreporting and a lack of support services tailored to their needs. This issue can have profound psychological, emotional, and physical impacts on survivors.

Male survivors of sexual abuse often have long lasting emotional trauma, difficulty with building positive relationships with others, having intimacy with a partner and managing their emotions. The physical trauma associated with sexual violence can include debilitating health conditions and a higher risk of disease that can shorten their life expectancy:

- 49% increased risk for cancer in Trauma Survivors, who have experienced childhood trauma and abuse.
- 65% who have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have increased risk of heart disease.
- 85% have failure rate of back surgery for abuse survivors (as opposed to 5% of non-abused parties.)
- 5 times more likely to die after a heart attack with depression.
- 62% of repeated sexual abuse survivors have an increased risk of heart disease.
- 4.7 times more likely to develop irritable bowel syndrome if also have PTSD.

The combination of emotional and physical trauma can be life long and can prevent men from living full and active lives - further reminding them of the impact the abuse can have on them.

Supporting male survivors since 1997

Founded by a small group of committed volunteers led by two male survivors of sexual abuse (SA), First Step began as a peer-led community initiative and has grown into a professionally run Charitable Incorporated Organisation with our own centre and specialist staff team. Throughout our long history, the support of male survivors of SA continues to be at the heart of everything we do through increasing awareness, breaking down harmful stereotypes, providing a safe and non-judgemental environment where we offer accessible resources and support systems for all survivors and their supporters.

We are the only organisation that only supports male survivors of SA in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area, and across the East Midlands region. In fact, there are only seven primarily male survivor organisations in the whole of the UK. We strive to work closely with these organisations and are actively developing new partnership projects with them.



Locally, we work in close collaboration with our sister services that provide support to female survivors of SA including FreeVA, Quetzel, Rape Crisis, Juniper Lodge-SARC and Trade Sexual Health and other male survivor organisations such as Mankind, We are Survivors, Ben's Place and Survivors UK. These partnerships are vital for male survivors who need face to face support from an organisation that only supports male survivors, or who are unable to access local services and are able to access our support online.

With a specialisation in therapeutic counselling, our work has evolved over the years to include a range of therapeutic support pathways for adult male survivors; a unique service for children and young people aged 13 years and above; peer support for survivors, therapeutic support for secondary survivors (i.e. the friends and family of people who have experienced sexual abuse); and specialist projects, such as our specialist counselling provision in HMPs Leicester and Stocken.



Photo by Osama Madlom on Unsplash

Our Motivation

At First Step we are committed to helping create a world in which survivors can talk freely about abuse without fear, pressure or judgement; a place where male survivors, alongside secondary survivors and supporters, can readily access the help they need.

This includes therapeutic services, practical advice and support to meet their daily living needs. This help is designed to be accessible, kind, safe, free, confidential, and based on acceptance.

As a result, survivors can have a sense of hope and opportunity for their futures, embedded within a supportive community that is open, welcoming and understanding towards their experiences.

Our Vision

For a world where male survivors of sexual abuse are empowered to live life as they choose, where their experiences no longer define who they are and who they can become.

Our Objectives

To promote and protect the physical and mental health of male-identified and non-binary persons aged 13 years and above who have experienced sexual abuse, through the provision of counselling, support, information and practical advice.

To advance the education of the public in the subject of all matters related to the sexual abuse of male-identified and non-binary survivors aged 13 years and above.

Our Values

Our values reflect our identity and what we mean to one another including staff, volunteers, service users and their supporters, both internally and externally.

Welcome

I am delighted to present First Step Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's annual impact report for 2024-2025.

This year we have joined forces with several male SA support organisations across the country, helping create an impactful network of partners that seeks to ensure survivors have equitable access to support, wherever they are, without facing a postcode lottery. As partners, we have a greater reach and a clearer voice to bring this issue out of the shadows, remove any stigma and raise awareness amongst those who need us.

Closer to home, we have continued to deliver our core services to men and boys across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, planning our resources carefully to maintain a very short waiting list, which ensures that there is no delay for anyone who reaches out in need of our help. It takes a lot of strength to make that initial approach for help, so we are committed to being there at that very moment.

We have also outreached into places which are often overlooked, such as our county's prisons. People with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) including a history of trauma and sexual abuse are over-represented in the prison population, and we firmly believe that there is a role for First Step in helping them understand and come to terms with their past, so they can break their cycle of offending and secure a healthier future.

We could not deliver our services without the support of everyone around us. I'd like to thank our dedicated staff team and counsellors who keep our doors open every day, and our Board of Trustees who give their time to steering our charity through these challenging times.

First Step prides itself on being free of charge at the point of access for those who need support. Money should not be a barrier for those who need help. We can only achieve this through donations and fundraising, and I wish to express my gratitude to each of our funders, including the National Lottery, the Henry Smith Foundation, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, and agencies such as the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the NHS. Thank you also to those who have taken on personal challenges to fundraise for us; I have been absolutely humbled by those who have stepped up to help.

We look ahead towards a more challenging financial picture across the sector, with restrictions on public sector grant funding particularly making things look a little more uncertain. However, I am confident that First Step is well-positioned to meet this challenge; you will see in this report how we continue to go from strength to strength, and look towards a bright future in which we are there for everyone who needs us.

Jon Putnam
Chair



Reflections

Reflecting on the year gone by, I am amazed by the resilience and courage of male survivors of sexual violence, and the secondary survivors who walk alongside them. This year has been one of learning, and reaffirming our commitment to creating a safe, supportive space for those who seek our help.

Strengthening Our Mission

Our core mission remains unwavering and over the past twelve months, we have seen an increase in demand for our services from those who live outside of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area. This reflects both the growing awareness of male sexual violence and the trust placed in our charity. While this rise is sobering, it reinforces the importance of our work and the need for continued growth.

Service Delivery and Innovation

We delivered on average between 55 and 60 sessions weekly, a mix of online and in-person, ensuring accessibility for both urban and rural clients. This hybrid model has proven invaluable, allowing us to reach those who might otherwise face barriers to support. We also deliver these services to secondary survivors, recognising the profound impact trauma has on families and loved ones.

Challenges and Resilience

Like many charities, we faced financial pressures and operational challenges. Despite these hurdles, I know our team will continue to be adaptable, supportive and encouraging as they are in everything they do, ensuring continuity of care throughout.

A Personal Reflection

There have been many moments that have stood out for me this year but the consistent thread that is always there, is the passion and commitment that all our staff, counsellors and trustees bring to First Step. This is not 'just another job or volunteer role' for any of them. Everyone understands the impact sexualised trauma has had and continues to have on our clients. It is a powerful reminder that behind

every statistic is a human being reclaiming their sense of self-worth, and that our efforts—every session, every conversation—truly matters.

Looking Ahead

As we enter the new year, our priorities are clear:

- **Reducing waiting times** - we work hard to keep these at a minimum. However, any time a client has to wait for therapy is too long so we will continue to do our very best to reduce these even further.
- **Investing in staff and counsellor development** - to maintain the highest standards of trauma-informed care. These are the lifeblood of any organisation.
- **Advocating for systemic change** - challenging stigma and promoting understanding of male sexual violence.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff, counsellors, volunteers, and supporters. Your commitment enables us to stand alongside survivors in their journey toward healing. Together, we are not just responding to trauma - we are building a future where every survivor is heard, believed, and supported.

Thank you for being part of this mission. Here's to another year of hope, resilience, and progress.

Beverley Radcliffe
Chief Executive Officer



Symon's story...

This case study follows the therapeutic journey of Symon (a pseudonym), a man in his 50s who sought counselling to address symptoms of PTSD, insomnia, agoraphobia, flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety. During assessment, Symon disclosed a history of repeated childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by multiple family members. His primary goals for counselling were to manage his anger and to better understand the mental and physical impacts of trauma.

Before starting counselling, Symon received initial "Support Sessions" through First Step. He presented as significantly older than his age, both physically and emotionally, reflecting years of living with unresolved trauma. Symon described a long and disheartening struggle to find an agency willing and able to support him - a process that deepened his negative self-perception and increased his hopelessness about ever feeling "normal" again.

Interventions

Therapeutic work was carried out using a person-centred approach, with an emphasis on building trust, rapport, and a positive therapeutic relationship. At the first session, a SWEMWBS Wellbeing Survey was completed; this is repeated every six weeks throughout his 24-week counselling programme to monitor progress.

Symon engaged with counselling openly and with commitment, although the process has been extremely challenging for him. At times he experienced intense anxiety, intrusive flashbacks, and on one occasion had a panic attack during a session. As part of helping him manage these episodes, we worked together on grounding techniques designed to help Symon self-soothe and regain a sense of safety when overwhelmed. Safeguarding remained central throughout, with regular check-ins on Symon's emotional state, risk, and coping strategies. A personalised safety plan was also developed.

Symon lives with a very supportive partner, whom he relies heavily on. While this support is invaluable, Symon often feels guilty and helpless about needing such intensive care. Exploring these feelings has become part of the therapeutic process, helping Symon develop greater self-compassion.

Despite the difficulty of the material and the emotional intensity of the work, Symon's attendance has been consistent. By week 22, he had attended every session and remained fully engaged in pursuing his goals. During this time, Symon has begun to practise self-care more regularly and has started to challenge deeply held negative core beliefs. He is gradually recognising his ability to make meaningful changes in his life. Recently, he has begun making decisions not only for himself but also in the best interests of his family—an encouraging sign of restored confidence and agency.

Conclusion

Symon presents very differently now compared to when he began his therapeutic journey with First Step. He smiles more, and the tremors that once accompanied him into sessions have largely subsided. Understanding the constant fear he lived with helped shape the therapeutic approach: maintaining a gentle pace where challenges were framed not as threats but as opportunities for compassionate exploration. Within a safe and trusting environment, Symon has begun to flourish.

He repeatedly expresses gratitude for the counselling and has shared that he is relieved and thankful that his search for support ultimately led him to First Step.



Our year in numbers

We received over 340 referrals for the period April 2024 to March 2025.

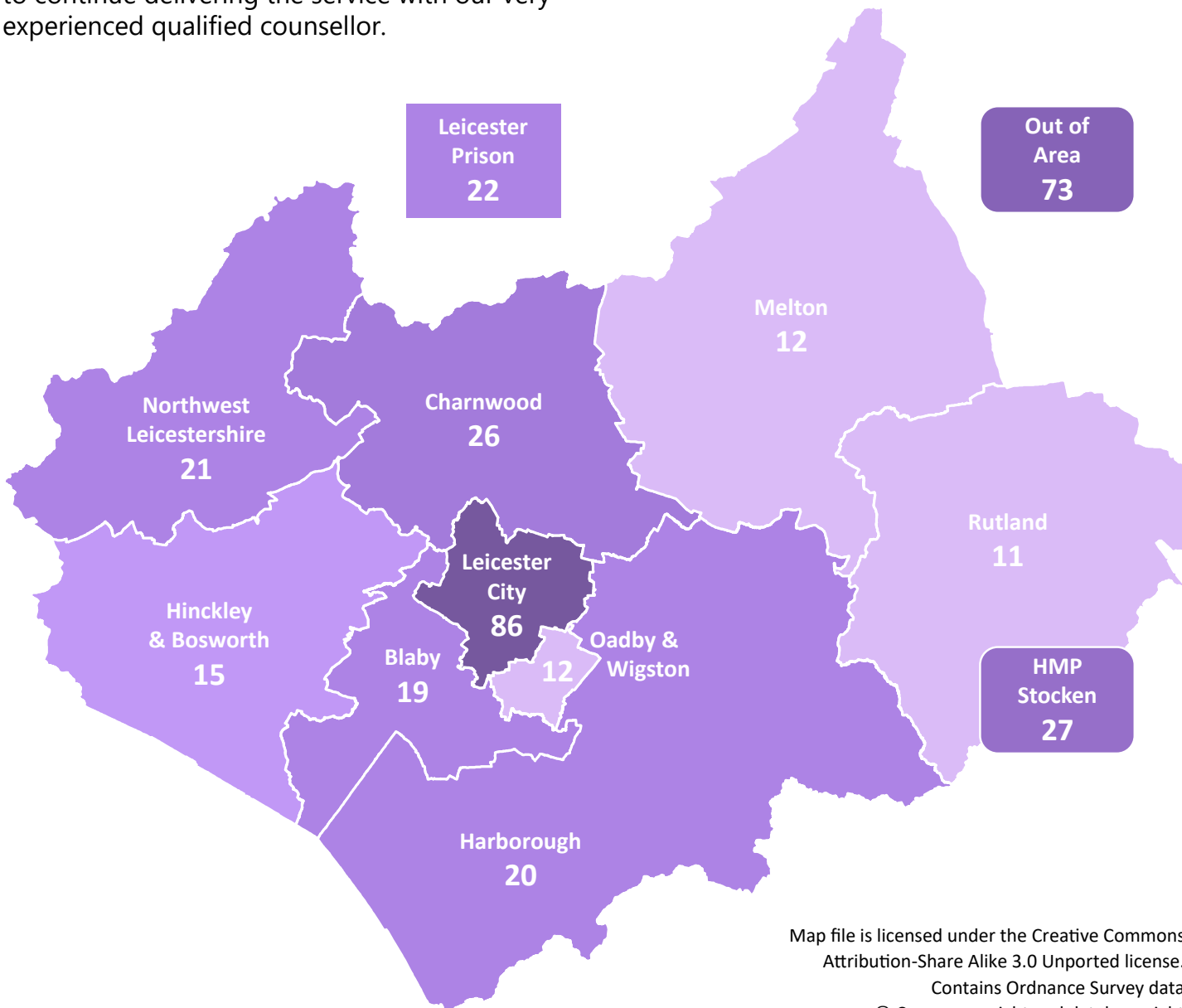
Many of the clients we support come from the Leicester City area and the number of our out of area clients continues to rise. These out of area clients are unable to access any local specific counselling or therapy.

Work in Prisons

We continued to deliver our much-needed counselling sessions to male survivors of non-recent sexual violence within prison. With funding from the Department of Health we were able to continue delivering the service with our very experienced qualified counsellor.

Forty-eight clients were seen and more than 250 sessions were delivered. The counsellor attended the prisons one day a week.

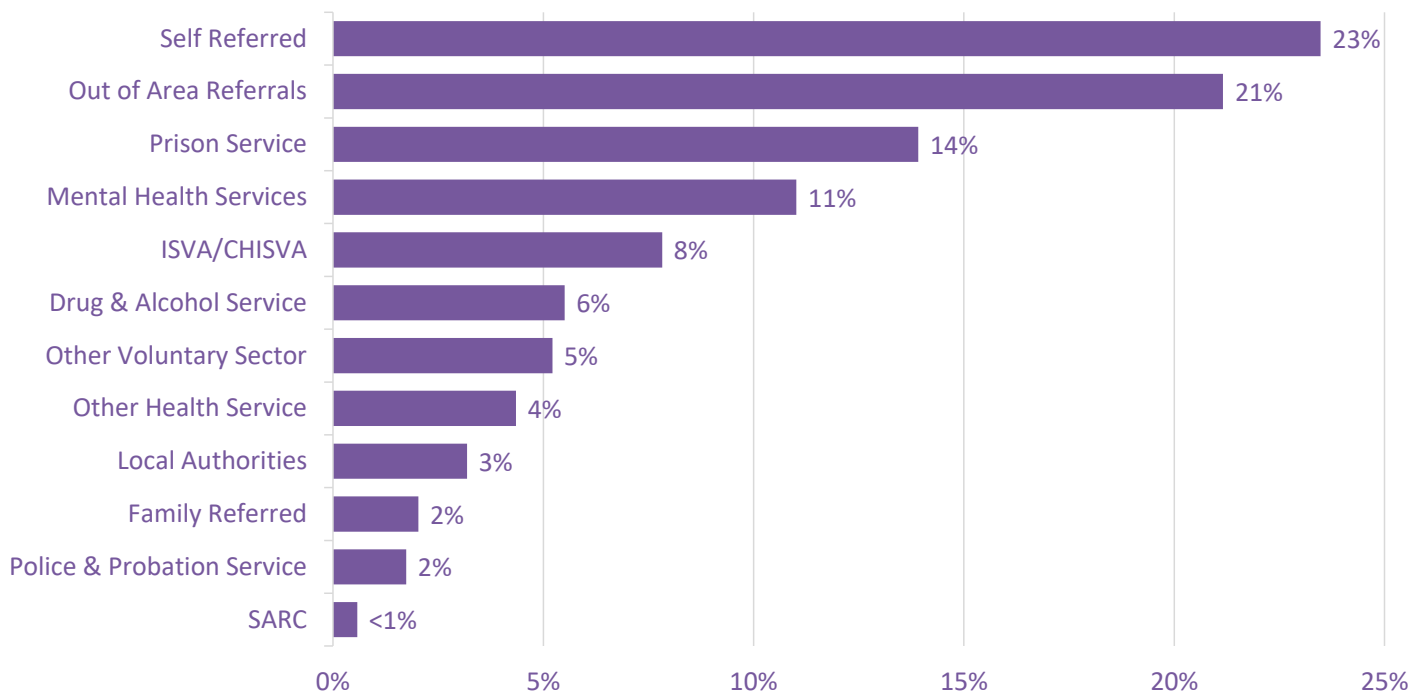
Many of the clients seen within the prison environment had never connected their criminal behaviour to the impact sexualised trauma had on them as children; our counsellor gave them the opportunity and space to explore this in more detail. The therapeutic work with these clients was of a much broader nature which entailed advocacy work on their behalf with several other prison related agencies.



Map file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right

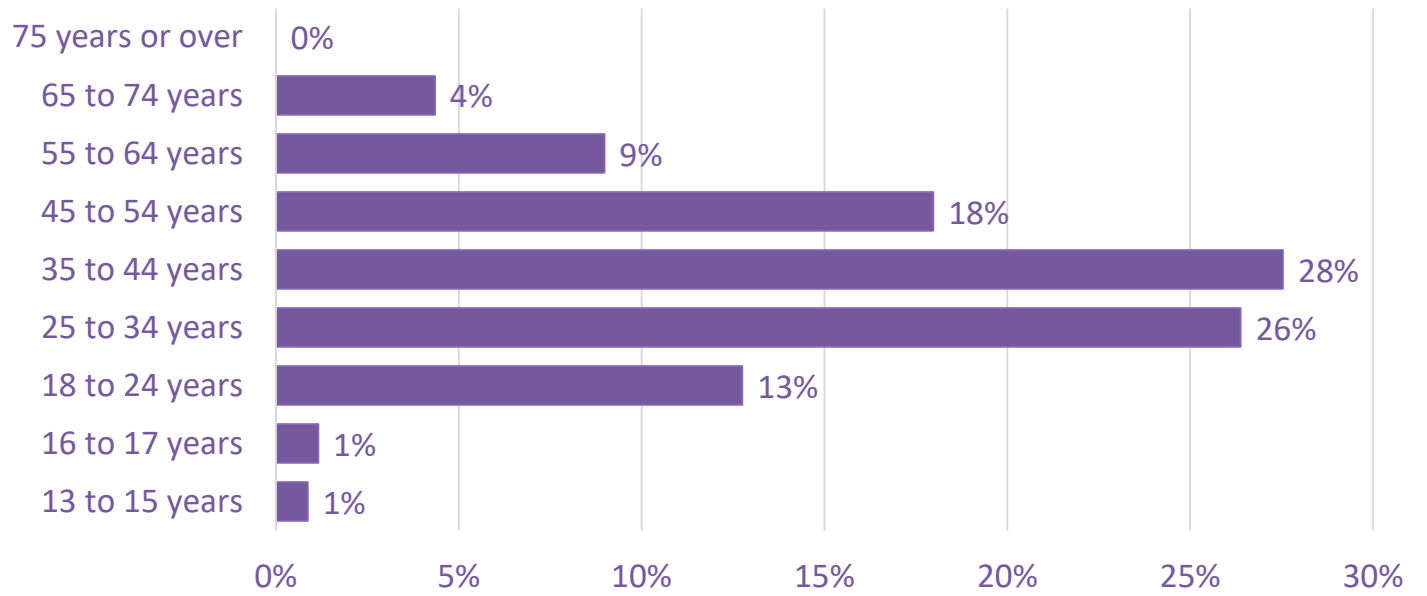
Referral Source

Most referrals continue to come directly from clients themselves, showing that word-of-mouth remains a powerful indicator of the positive difference our support makes. Our website also plays an important role, capturing people who find us through online searches.



Age at Referral

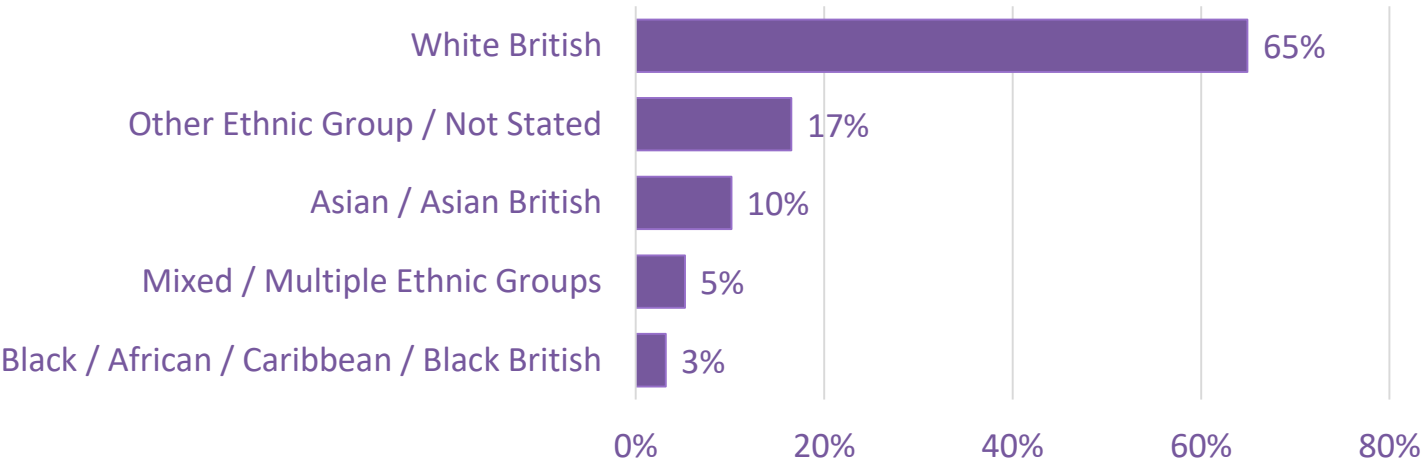
This year we have seen a steady growth in younger men accessing our services.



Our year in numbers

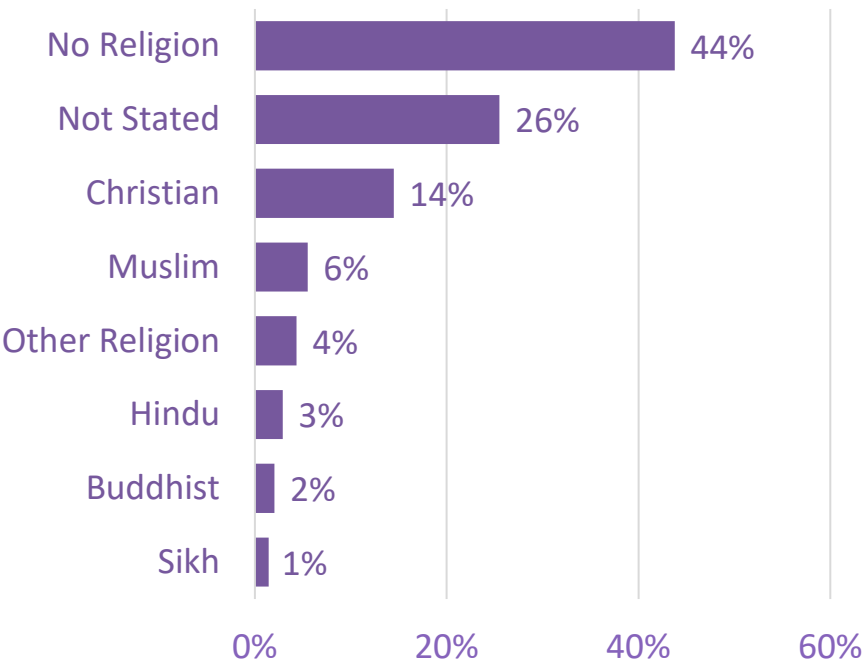
Ethnicity

Nearly two thirds of service users were recorded as White British, which did not reflect the multi-cultural profile of Leicester City and the wider community.



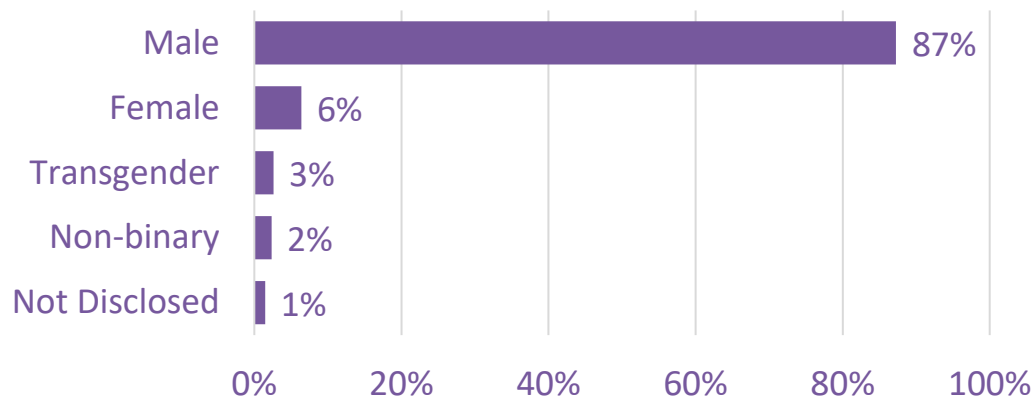
Religion

Over half of service users either did not declare a belief, or explicitly stated they did not believe in any religion. Of those that declared a belief in a specific religion, the majority identified as Christian, with Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh declared in smaller numbers.



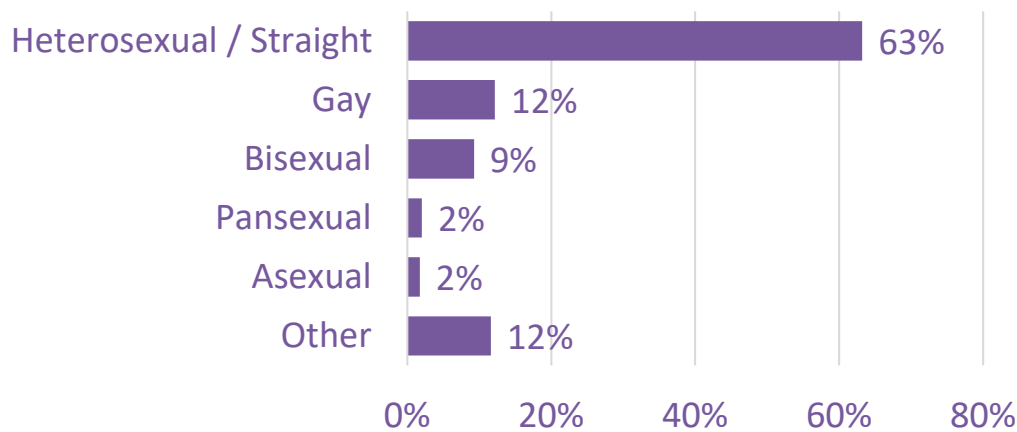
Gender identification

The majority of service users identified as male. More than 1 in 10 identified as other genders at the time of being referred to First Step.



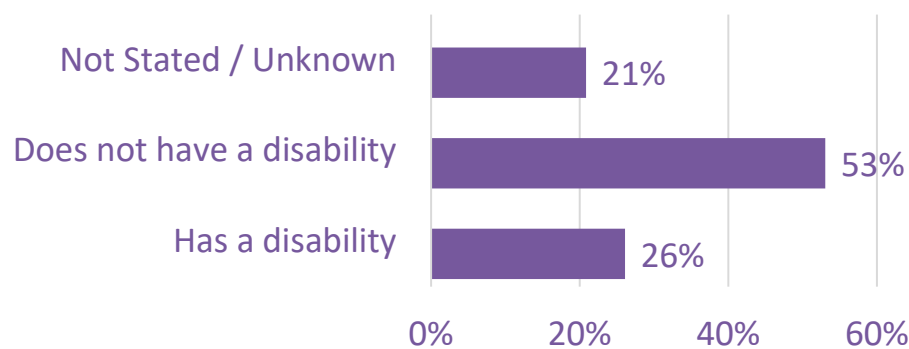
Sexual Orientation

Around 1 in 4 service users identified with a sexuality that is different to heterosexual/straight.



Disability Status

Many of the men we work with live with some form of disability, with most also presenting with mental health-related needs. This rise in complexity highlights the importance of highly experienced counsellors. In some cases, clients have self-diagnosed their conditions prior to seeking support.



Service delivery

Over the course of the year, we saw increased levels of activity in terms of the number of sessions we delivered and ways in which we were able to support our service users.

We received 345 referrals in total including referrals from our out of area and prison projects. We conducted 221 assessments and delivered 2488 counselling sessions to 307 adults, children and young people. This included 255 sessions to more than 40 clients in prison, the prison counsellor also meeting with other professionals. Our out of area counsellors delivered 698 sessions to 68 clients who do not have a local male survivors counselling offer. Although our in-person counselling sessions were less than the previous year, our online counselling sessions increased from 153 sessions delivered in the previous year (an increase of more than 350%).

We facilitated 60 peer support group sessions. These sessions are highly valued by clients who have completed their counselling sessions and still wish to gain support from other male survivors. These sessions are peer led and facilitated by qualified counsellors.

An important element of our service delivery is the support we offer secondary survivors, those people who are close to the survivor who may have also been impacted by the disclosure, often hearing about it for the first time when the survivor comes to see us. We supported 9 secondary survivors delivering 61 therapeutic emotional support sessions.

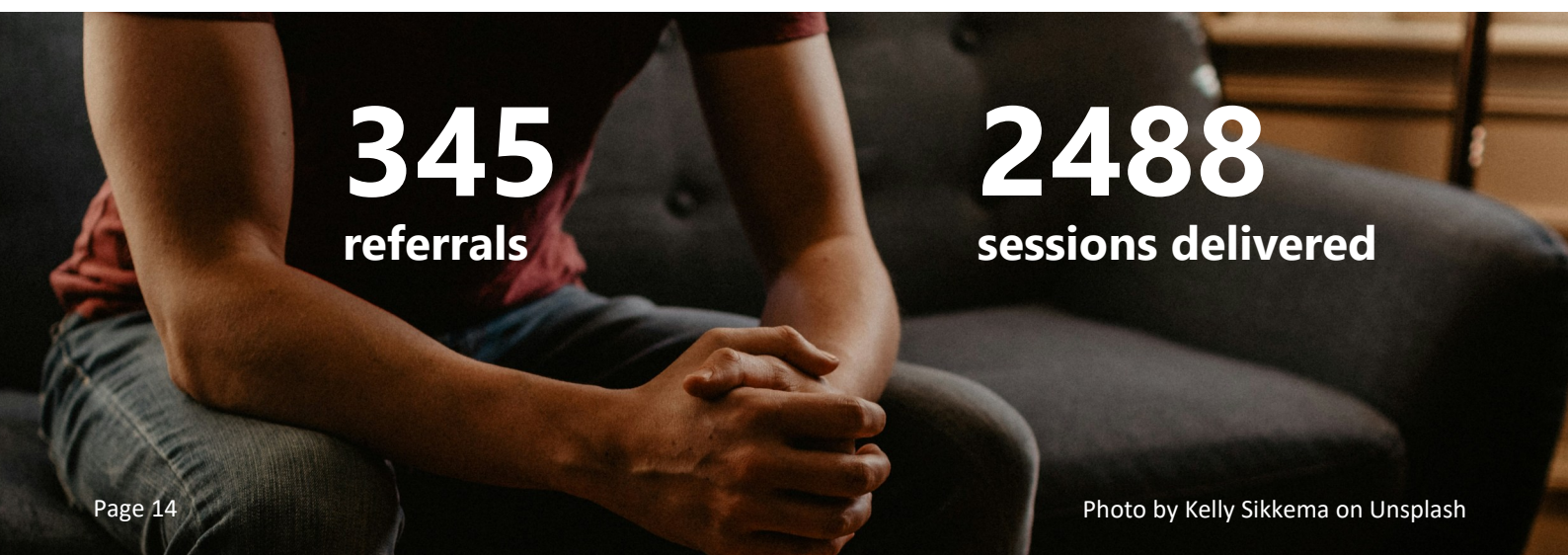
Client Assessments at First Step

Whether the assessment is conducted in a therapy room at the First Step premises or via a computer screen for our Out of Area clients, we approach all assessments of clients with care, warmth, and a professional understanding of trauma informed practice.

An assessment is to gain relevant and required information from the potential client for First Step to make an informed decision regarding the appropriate level of potential support moving forward.

We recognise and understand the importance that the client is treated with great warmth, compassion and understanding from the offset. In many cases the client may be anxious, apprehensive, even scared of attending their initial assessment appointment.

We strive to give the client the option of which gender of staff member they would prefer to complete the initial assessment with, to reduce any potential barriers or preconceived perceptions that the client may have and therefore empower the client's choices. Should support with First Step be deemed appropriate following the assessment, the client will also be given the choice of which gender of allocated counsellor they would prefer to work with. Again, this is to avoid any potential implicit barriers the client may have, and to empower the choices they can make in receiving support from First Step.



345
referrals

2488
sessions delivered

- **19% of clients are from a non-white British background**
- **26% of clients supported had a disability**
- **25% of clients identified as gay, bisexual, pansexual or asexual**

For many clients, this may be the first time they have sought help or spoken to a professional organisation, and therefore from their initial contact with First Step we will explain, with transparency, why we need to collect certain information and demographics. We will also explain that part of the assessment will involve a subtle and caring level of questioning regarding their trauma, and how this will enable us to gain an understanding and context to the trauma they have experienced.

It is imperative that the level of questions regarding the client's trauma are not too explorative or overwhelming at this stage and is approached with gentleness and care. This is to avoid emotionally triggering the client and provoking a greater level of emotional distress.

The First Step staff member completing the assessment can gain a greater therapeutic understanding of how and where the client is in their processing of their trauma by how they react, how they explain, and how they respond when exploring this element.

Should it be deemed, following assessment, that First Step is not the most appropriate service for the client, we will explain our professional decision with the client and seek to refer them to a service that is more fitting to their mental and emotional needs until such time that the client has the capacity to engage with First step safely and therapeutically.

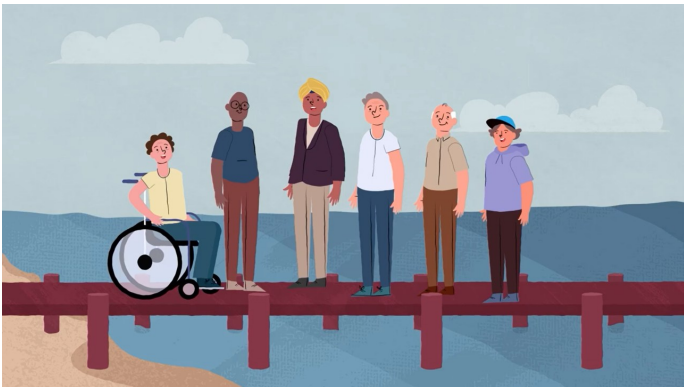


Activity and impact

We continue to work to develop partnerships with other relevant organisations and to raise awareness of our support offer. We formally work in partnership with FreeVa, Quetzel, Leicester Rape Crisis, Mankind, We Are Survivors, Survivor's West Yorkshire (Ben's Place) and Survivors UK and the local SARC. We also work informally and receive referrals from Trade Sexual Health, Victim First, VitaMinds, CHISVAs, IDVAs NHS services such as GPs, hospitals and CAMHS, Police, Probation Services, Turning Point and Schools and Universities.

Authentic Voices

Authentic voices give us an invaluable insight into the impact sexualised trauma can have on someone and how seeking help and support can feel almost like an insurmountable mountain to climb. So, we wanted to hear what it felt like for clients who came to us and the difficulties they overcame.



Rather than just using words, a group of male survivors who had taken those first steps to seek help co-produced a short 4-minute animated film which powerfully demonstrates how each of them felt and the courage it took to reach out for help.

This film can be found on our YouTube channel - [First Step Leicester - Taking the First Step](#)

Taking the First Step

Some members of the group also co-produced a small card that can be handed to professionals such as GPs, hospital staff and other individuals that survivors may struggle to communicate with.



The card explains, without having to go into any details, that they may need more time and patience throughout the appointment or may prefer someone of a particular gender.



Medical appointments, and medical examinations in particular, can be triggering for some.

Community Awareness Raising of First Step at Leicester Pride

A vibrant, joyous occasion with a happy atmosphere - Leicester Pride 2024 was a celebration of all things unique, individual and community.

We were privileged to again be invited to set our stall up in the Trade Health marquee. The place was buzzing with excitement and anticipation of what the day would bring. Lots of people came in to speak to us, were inquisitive about what we did and wanted to know how to contact us for support.

We were proud to walk alongside hundreds of others during the parade and to see the streets lined with people cheering us all – no animosity, just a shared understanding of what we were all celebrating, but also of the fight it had taken to get there.

A special thank you to Catherine, David and Terry who volunteered to help us on the day and to all those who came to say hello and thank us for the work we did. It was a very special day.



Mental Health Community & Voluntary Sector Networking Event for Mental Health

First Step was invited to attend a VCS mental health event providing a valuable opportunity to network with other professionals working within the mental health sector from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and in collaboration with the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trusts "Better Mental Health for All" aim.

Through this event we were able to develop important links with Dear Albert, a peer support Drug and Alcohol recovery service, LAMP, Turning Point and P3 - all of these services complement the wrap around that First Step provides clients that come to the service for support.

Training and Development

During the course of the year First Step staff, counsellors and volunteers were able to receive a series of training courses, including:

- Pre Trial Therapy
- Safeguarding
- EMDR Training
- Mental Health and the Body: Treating Trauma

Our Impact

We use several outcome measurement tools to demonstrate the impact of First Step including SWEMWBS (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Score) at intermittent stages of a client's counselling journey and client feedback surveys once the counselling has concluded. However, the biggest impact often happens within the counselling sessions, and the counselor can see how far the client has grown in confidence, how much improved their relationships are and how they now manage their own mental health and realise the need for self-care.

Stephen's story...

'Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us.' (Samuel Smiles)

Stephen (a pseudonym) engaged with First Step in HMP Stocken after a previously bumpy beginning to his counselling journey. Already sceptical, he had previously engaged with another counsellor who he said, 'totally let him down.'

It became apparent very quickly that Stephen would need extensive therapeutic support from several professionals. Following a strategy meeting our counsellor worked closely with his substance misuse worker, wing staff, the Head of Health & Wellbeing at HMP Stocken and Probation, both internal Offender Management Unit (OMU) and external probation officers.

This allowed for wraparound holistic care to be put into place and ensure all safeguarding protocols were followed. As the therapeutic relationship between Stephen and his First Step counsellor developed, he was able to begin disclosing the extent of the abuse he had suffered.

'My dad was an alcoholic, and it was like living with two people; 'good dad' if he wasn't drinking and 'bad dad' if he was. I think this happens to me when I drink which is something I find difficult to think about.'

Me, my brothers and sisters often got caught up in the domestic violence within our parents' relationship and we went to several refuges for our own protection; the violence got really bad and although it wasn't directed at us, if we got in the way we got battered.

My dad died when I was 9 years old and I was so confused, almost didn't believe he'd died. I was so sad, relieved that the violence would stop but I also believed dad would come back.

The day after his funeral I was put into care by my mum, they just turned up to take me away

but everyone else stayed at home. I felt so abandoned and betrayed, devastated. She said I could come home soon but I never did. I used to wait for her to visit me, but she never did that either.

I suffered every day in that place; sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse every day. It was organised abuse within children's homes where we were taken to different locations and then raped.

Lying awake at night, hearing footsteps coming down the corridor and preying they wouldn't come into my room, that I hadn't been chosen for the night. I can't tell you what that felt like, not daring to move, holding my breath as if that made any difference.

I was also abused by the people within the home who were supposed to protect me. Every one of the staff seemed to have different specialities in physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They used sex to degrade and humiliate us, we tried to protect each other but we couldn't. Those scars run so deep I can't even begin to tell you; they stay with you forever.

When I left care I struggled with my memories, so I drank and took drugs to block them out. Didn't matter how much I drank or used it never went away; I chased oblivion by taking anything I could get my hands on.' I honestly think the stuff I've struggled with all my life like my anxiety, depression, addiction and anger are because of what I went through in the care system.

My adult relationships were a mess, and I couldn't cope with life. My two older children lived with their maternal grandmother and my baby son died shortly after birth, devastating both me and my partner.

We were 'two already damaged people', broken beyond anything I could imagine. I didn't grieve; I just took as much as I could of whatever I could get my hands on. You need money for drugs though, so I did stuff which kept getting me sent to prison.

The thing is, every time I came out of prison it was all still there, the nightmares, the flashbacks, the pain, the anger and just the overwhelming hopelessness. I hated myself; I was disgusted and ashamed by my experiences, so I took drugs, drank, committed crime, went back to prison. It became a never-ending circle that I couldn't get out of.

I didn't think I would ever be able to forgive myself for my past but through my counselling sessions I'm now in a place where I can do this, and I've been able to discuss things I buried for years.'

Stephen's counselling journey tells a powerful story, not only through its narrative but through the hope, strength and courage that he displays.



Staff and volunteers

Staff

Our staff and counsellors are the heart of First Step, bringing exceptional dedication, compassion and professionalism to every aspect of the work. Each member of the team is committed to creating a safe, supportive and trauma-informed environment, where survivors feel valued, understood and empowered. Their resilience and empathy underpin everything they do – from the first point of contact to the final counselling session – and they continually strive to provide the highest quality service despite the pressures and limited resources faced by the charity sector. Our counsellors bring a wealth of specialist expertise working sensitively with complex trauma and adapting their therapeutic approach to meet each individual's needs. Alongside them, our staff ensure the smooth running of the organisation, offering warmth, reassurance and practical support to survivors and their loved ones. Together, they embody the values of First Step and uphold the principles that guide our charity, demonstrating every day that healing begins with kindness, professionalism and a belief in each person's capacity to rebuild their lives.

Sessional Workers & External Consultants

Clinical Supervisors

First Step ensures that all counsellors receive clinical supervision in line with BACP guidance, to maintain ethical and quality counselling practice as well as to ensure that each counsellor's own well-being is maintained whilst working with traumatised clients. We have five clinical supervisors who work with our placement, volunteer and qualified counsellors. This clinical supervision is mandatory.

Counsellors

At the end of March, we had ten placement counsellors and six qualified counsellors to deliver counselling to clients with complex needs.

External Consultants

We also use the services of an external management consultant from 3 Worlds Consulting to support us with our monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes who also conducted an external evaluation of our prison counselling service. In addition to outsourcing externally our IT, Payroll and accounting functions, we also retained the services of a social media consultant to update and maintain our social media presence.

Trustees

The Board of Trustees continued to serve First Step on a voluntary basis, offering their experience and expertise to support the operational and strategic development of the organisation.

Inline with the organisation's policy on Trustee resigning their roles after three years, Mark Evans and Mick Studley stood down and immediately reapplied to serve as a volunteer Trustee. Both were re-elected by unanimous vote at the AGM.

At the AGM, Mark Evans stood down from Chair having served in the role for three years. Jon Putnam was elected to the role of Chair, Mark Evans was elected to the role of Vice-Chair and Mick Studley was elected to continue in the role of Honorary Treasurer.

One Trustee resigned during the period, one new Trustee joined.

Partnerships

Our partnerships play a vital role in helping us develop, strengthen and deliver services that male survivors and their supporters rely on. We are grateful to the organisations and funders who work alongside us, enabling our charity to meet increasingly complex needs with compassion and professionalism.

Referring a male survivor to a partner agency is never a simple handover; it requires sensitivity, clear communication and a shared commitment to the individual's wellbeing. By working collaboratively, we ensure that each person receives the most appropriate, holistic support available, without ever feeling dismissed, rejected or 'too much to manage.'

Partnership working allows us to create a seamless network of care, ensuring survivors are supported at every step of their journey.



Finance

Building sustainability

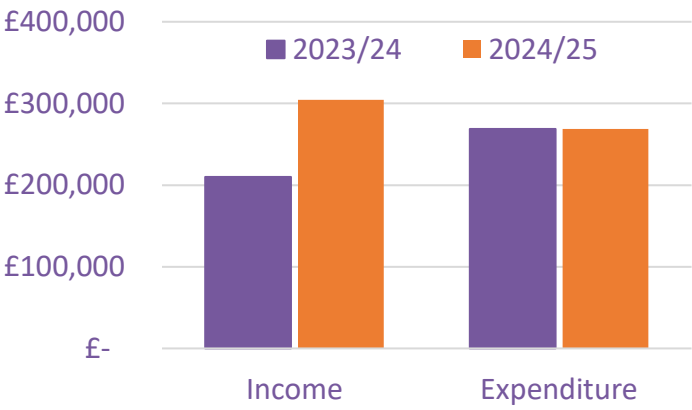
First Step received financial support through the award of government grants, from grant making trusts and foundations, and from private individuals who recognise the value of the work we do.

Income for the year increased by more than 40% whilst expenditure remained constant.

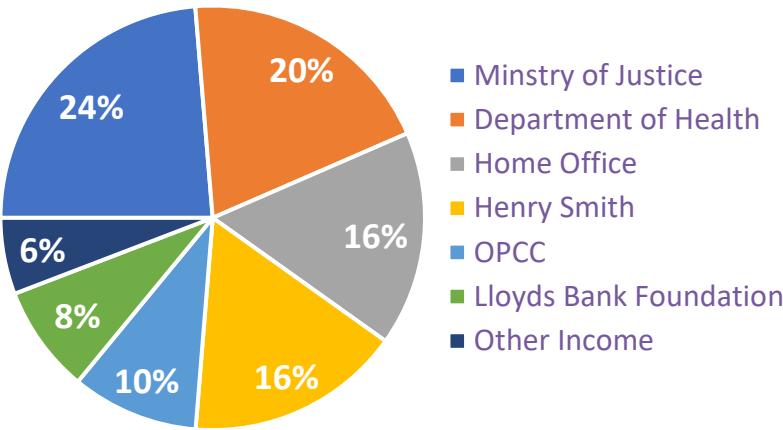
Over the last three years First Step has been successful in securing additional funding streams to support its work. This has reduced dependency on a small number of key funders as it moves towards establishing a longer term, sustainable platform from which it can continue to confidently grow as an organisation.

Towards the end of the year, First Step secured a three year funding commitment from the National Lottery, which it will start to receive in the year 2025/26. This will cover core staffing costs and help underpin plans for growth and longer term development.

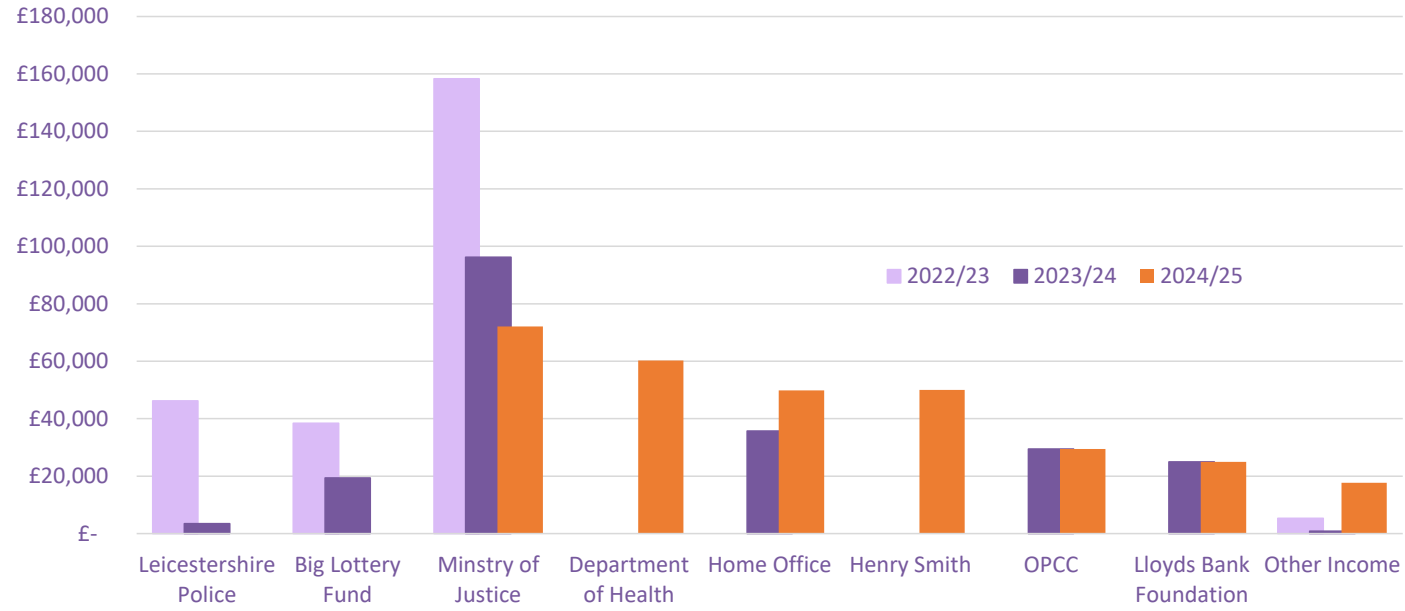
Total Income and Expditure



2024/25 Annual Income Sources



Annual Income Received by Funder



Next steps

Looking ahead

In the year ahead, we remain committed to continuing our vital work with survivors and secondary survivors, ensuring that the services we deliver are of the highest quality and grounded in compassion, safety and professionalism.

We will diversify our funding streams and further strengthen our governance, policies and operational practices so we remain resilient and well-positioned for the future. Increasing the diversity of clients who seek our support will remain a priority and we will continue identifying and addressing barriers that prevent people from accessing our services.

Many survivors face additional challenges alongside the trauma – such as housing, debt, employment, or navigating healthcare – and we aim to provide guidance and advocacy where needed, helping create more opportunities for them to live stable, fulfilling lives.

We will continue raising awareness of who we are and what we do, building our reputation locally, nationally and globally through strong partnership working.

We remain committed to securing long-term funding for our prison counselling service and increasing the number of counsellors supporting out-of-area clients, ensuring the waiting times remain low or removed altogether.

Finally, we will explore alternative premises to ensure a safe, welcoming environment with the space needed to meet growing demand.





To find out more about the services and support available from First Step please visit our website or contact us directly:

www.firststepleicester.org.uk

0116 2548535

contact@firststepleicester.org.uk

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