

# Impact Report 2023-24



**Home-Start East Sussex becomes  
Lotus Families on 1st April 2024**

# Helping to keep East Sussex families safe and strong since 1996

A small, established independent East Sussex based charity with a focus on the prevention and recovery of abuse. Although we primarily work with women and children, our aim is to work with the whole family to prevent abuse and wider safeguarding issues, and aid victim-survivors along their journey to recovery.

## 2023-24 services

### **Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme:** Empowering Women to Rebuild after Domestic Abuse

A transformative 6-week group, complemented by one-to-one IDVA support, designed for women who have been subjected to domestic abuse and have now left their perpetrator. This service helps clients reclaim their confidence, process trauma, and equip themselves with the tools to keep both themselves and their children safe from future harm.



### **Child-to-Parent Violence Programme:** Restoring Parental Assertiveness and Strengthening Family Bonds:

A 9-week Whos' in Charge? group complemented one-to-one IDVA support for parent/carers dealing with violent or abusive child behaviour. The service helps parents break cycles of guilt and shame, rebuild relationships, and establish clear boundaries with safe, meaningful consequences..

### **"Lotus Blossom "Peer Support group:** Empowering Survivors to Lead:

Domestic abuse survivors are trained as facilitators, using their lived experience to guide others through the recovery process. By supporting fellow survivors, they not only accelerate their own healing but also play a key role in empowering others to rebuild their lives.

### **TNBI (trans, non-binary & intersex) IDVA Service:** Specialised Support for a Vulnerable Minority Group:

Tailored one-to-one assistance for TNBI survivors and their children, ensuring access to critical support including personalised safety & support plans. This service can provide the targeted care needed to feel secure and supported as they rebuild their lives.

## CEO Report

The charity has had an incredibly successful year, with our Domestic Abuse Recovery Programmes and Child to Parent Violence (CAPVA) Programmes delivering **outstanding outcomes**. Demand for both remains exceptionally high, and at 31 March 2024 were managing three-year waiting lists. In response, we have secured funding to offer triage support for parent/carers and their family members who are on the CAPVA waiting list. This will allow us to provide safety and support plans while they await a place on a group. We've also applied for funding to extend this vital approach to those waiting for the Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme.

Our innovative **peer support** service, which trains former Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme clients to become peer group facilitators, continues to grow. Additionally, we have created our first paid Trainee IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) role, with plans to recruit from among our peer group facilitators.

We are also proud to have secured funding for two pilot programmes: "Managing Money Safely in Relationships" and "Teenage Healthy Relationships", both of which will expand the range of preventative support and education we offer to families across East Sussex.

To better reflect our growing scope and expertise, we will officially **rebrand as Lotus on 1st April 2024**, leaving the Home-Start UK federation. We're excited to continue our work as specialists in abuse, with a focus on women, children, and families. Our gratitude goes to Home-Start UK for supporting us through this transition.

Our knowledgeable, skilled and professional team of staff and trustees, along with our peer support facilitators, are committed to providing **gold-standard services** empowering women to make their families safer and more secure. We are grateful to our funders and donors who continue to make this possible.

**Kate Lawrence**  
CEO





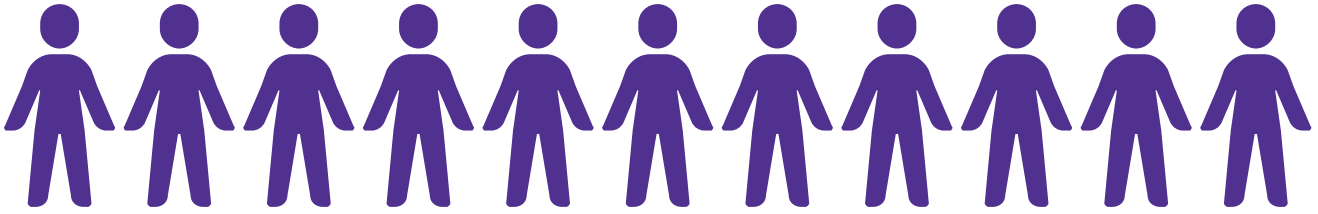
“ So glad I did this course, I was at such a low point. It has been funny, enlightening, challenging, thought provoking, informative, supportive and emotional.

It's been a rollercoaster I'm glad I got on!

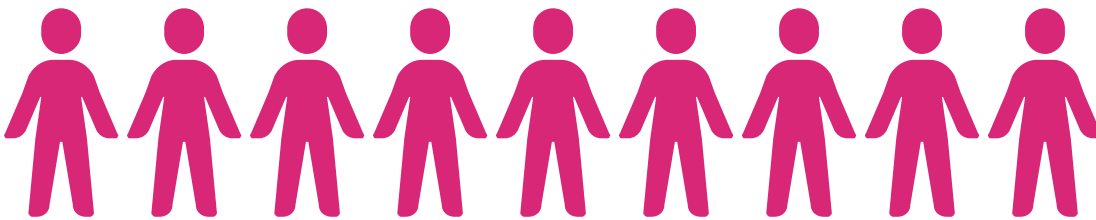
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# Our People

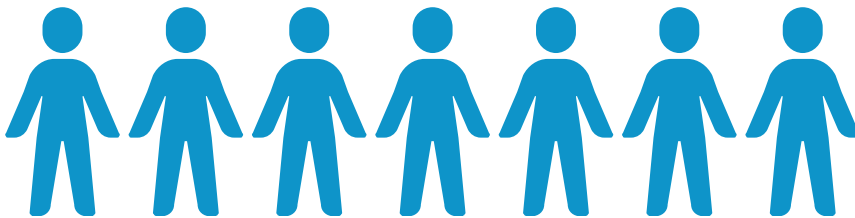
throughout 2023-24



**Eleven employees**



**Nine trustees**



**Seven peer support facilitator volunteers**

**Four Sub Contractors**

## One mission

Breaking the cycle of abuse by providing prevention, recovery, education, advocacy, support services, and resources for women, children and family members of all ages, fostering a society free from violence.



## Successes

**Launched Our First Evening Child-to-Parent Violence Programme:** In a ground-breaking initiative, we introduced an evening child-to-parent violence programme, allowing working parents to participate. Despite the challenge of managing the additional risk of more children being at home during sessions, the programme's success has paved the way for a second evening course in 2024-25.

**Empowering Survivors to Lead:** Our first group of Recovery programme alumni successfully delivered their first Lotus domestic abuse peer support groups. These graduates are now equipped to guide others in their healing journey, making a powerful impact on the recovery of fellow survivors.

**Developed an Innovative, Tailored Child-to-Parent Violence Programme for Local Families:** Recognising the need for a more relevant and impactful approach, we created a new programme to replace the now outdated "Who's in Charge?" group content. Tailored to address the unique challenges local families currently face, the new programme, launching in April 2024, is aligned with SafeLives Leading Lights Quality Standards—the gold standard for domestic abuse services.

**Proud Achievement for our Volunteers:** Our domestic abuse peer support facilitators were honoured with a prestigious volunteer award, recognising their outstanding service and transformative impact on survivors. Their dedication has not only empowered individuals on their recovery journey but also created lasting change within the community.

**Prepared to Deliver Cutting-Edge Support:** Our dedicated staff and volunteers completed DART training, enhancing their skills to effectively deliver our newly developed programme and provide top-tier support to those in need. DART training

**Outstanding Client Feedback and Impact:** We take pride in the overwhelmingly positive feedback from our clients. An impressive 94% of those who completed evaluation forms reported that their mental health and wellbeing had improved as a direct result of engaging with our services, highlighting the life-changing impact of our support.

## Challenges

**Navigating a Name-Change Amid Staffing Shortages and a Challenging Funding Climate:** Despite periods where we were understaffed and facing a difficult funding landscape, we have been diligently preparing for an exciting name-change. Our new name "Lotus" will strengthen our identity and broaden our impact.

**Rising Demand and Service Delays:** The continued high demand for our services in 2023-24 led to extended waiting lists. Unfortunately, the delay in offering support resulted in some clients disengaging before they could benefit from our programmes, highlighting the need for a triage approach and expanded capacity.

# Our reach in 2023-24



individual cases supported

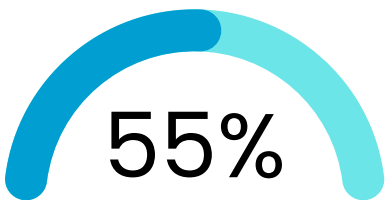


Unique direct clients supported

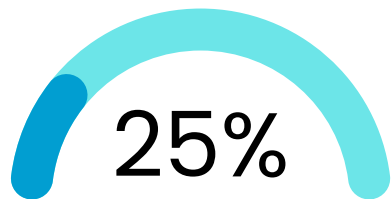


children indirectly supported

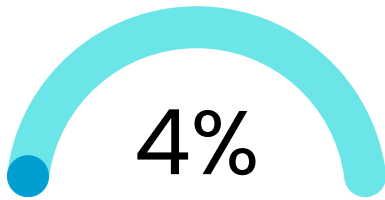
We are dedicated to a trauma-informed approach in every aspect of our work, ensuring our services are delivered with empathy and understanding.



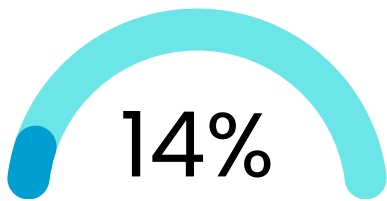
reported that they were living with a disability



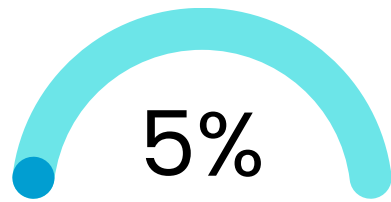
lived in the lowest 20% deprivation deciles (including refuge or temporary housing)



were aged 18-25



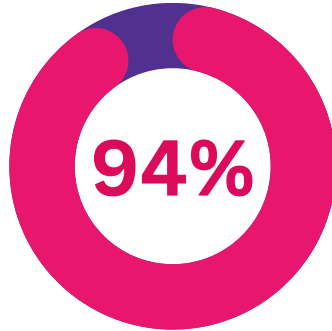
were from a marginalised ethnic background



LGBTQ+ parent/carers

# Overall outcomes

*Across all Services*



**Improved safety/  
reduced risk**



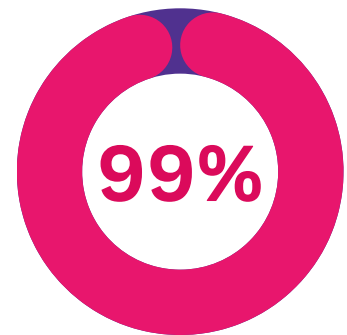
**Improved mental health**



**Service had a positive  
impact on their children**



**Service had a positive  
impact on their partner  
relationship**  
(if applicable)



**Improved social support/  
reduced isolation**

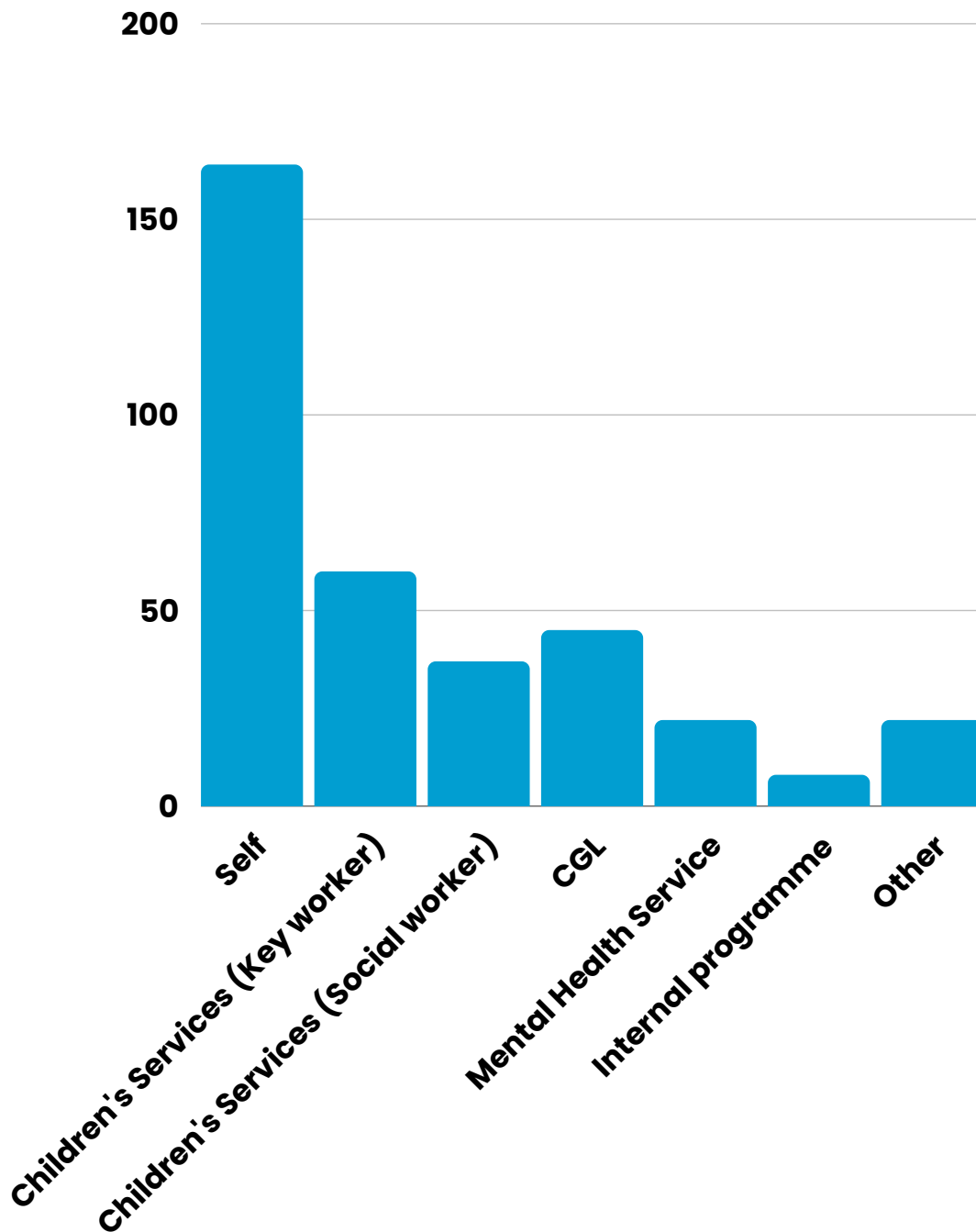


## How do clients access our services?

We welcome referrals directly from individuals as well as from professionals acting on behalf of those they support.

The demand for our services has surged, with a **43% increase in referrals** compared to 2022-23, highlighting the growing need for our support.

### Referral Sources



“

I am stronger after completing my course. It was one of the hardest things to actually face what had happened to me.

I never really had any compassion for myself but after hearing other women speak my experiences, it really brought it home to me. I am and always will be grateful to you and the team for helping me every step of the way with such kindness and understanding.

”





“

Life-changing is the word for how this has been for me, there aren't enough words to thank you all

”

“

My GP was so impressed with the improvement in my mental health that he will be recommending Lotus to other patients

”

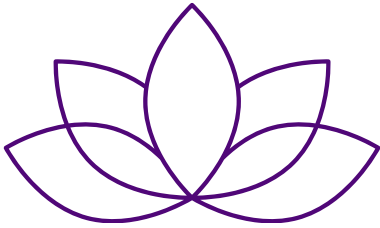
“

I don't feel lonely anymore or like I'm facing it alone

”







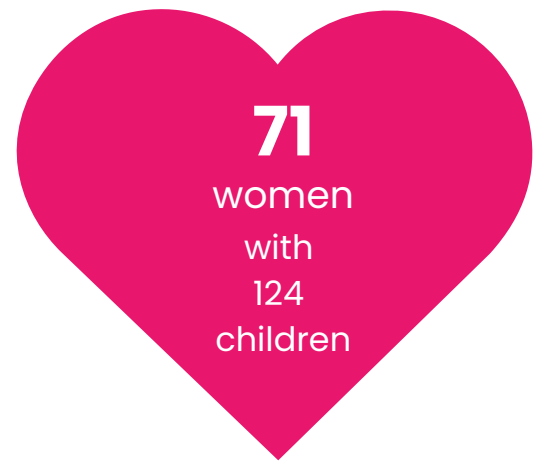
# Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery Programme

Empowering Women to Rebuild after Domestic Abuse

**Lotus Domestic Abuse Recovery group is delivered in line with SafeLives Leading Lights quality standards, the benchmark for excellence in domestic abuse services.**

Since its launch in 2019, the programme has empowered and supported over 400 women on their journey to recovery.

A transformative 6-week group, complemented by one-to-one IDVA support, designed for women victim-survivors who have left their perpetrator. This service helps reclaim confidence, process trauma, and equip women with the tools to keep themselves and their children safe from future harm. It is delivered as a single sex service to ensure the inclusion of women from orthodox religions and women with an ongoing fear of males.



across five programmes



**6%** of women were from the **LGB** community



## Direct feedback from clients revealed that:

- 100%** are now **more confident to recognise different types of domestic abuse**
- 100%** reported that **their wellbeing had improved**
- 100%** are now **more likely to have a future free from domestic abuse**
- 100%** reported that the group had helped them to **plan to make positive changes in their life**
- 100%** feel **less isolated** after meeting the other females in the group

"Before I did the Programme I was very apprehensive... I felt ashamed and isolated, like it was my fault. Having done the programme I have completely transformed the way I feel."





“My son has a better understanding of the reasons behind the group’s parenting structures and surprisingly agrees with them! Implementation is still an ongoing process, and there is room for improvement, but he knows why the system is important for his long-term success and wellbeing.”

## Child-to-Parent Violence Programme

Restoring Parental Assertiveness and Strengthening Family Bonds

**The programme offers support and strategies to any parent/carer experiencing abusive or violent behaviour from their child/teen (aged 8-17).**

A 9-week Who's in Charge? group with one-to-one IDVA support for any parent-carer struggling with violent or abusive child behaviour. The service helps parents break cycles of guilt and shame, rebuild relationships, and establish clear boundaries with safe, meaningful consequences..

"A life changing programme. So glad I joined it. Allowed me to see where the relationship between me and my children was going away and take action"

"They feel more secure now I am more consistent."

After several years of delivering the national Who's in Charge? group, with additional IDVA support, we recognise the need for a more relevant and impactful integrated approach.

Following extensive research, drawing on international best practice and most importantly, feedback from clients who attended the programme, we have created our new programme which includes the role of technology, risks around child exploitation and children who are neuro-divergent.

We will launch the new **Lotus child-to-parent violence programme** in April 2024 which is aligned with **SafeLives Leading Lights Quality Standards**—the gold standard for domestic abuse services

This year the programme supported:



Direct feedback from clients revealed that:

- 95%** reported **increased knowledge of ways to manage risk from their child(ren)**
- 96%** are **more confident about their role as a parent**
- 100%** are **more likely to be able to manage their child's behaviour** in the future.
- 90%** reported their **relationship with their challenging child(ren) was better.**
- 100%** feel **less isolated** after meeting parents in a similar situation.



**9%** of parent/carers were **men**

**5%** of parent/carers were **LGBTQ+**



“

Lotus Recovery and Lotus Blossom are the only places I've ever found where I, alongside others, can be completely honest about how I am feeling and be faced with no judgement

”



# Lotus Blossom

## Empowering Survivors to Lead



### Lotus Blossom on-line Peer Support Groups provide a nurturing space where survivors come together to offer mutual support and guidance

We train ex-clients to become group facilitators, so they can use their lived experience to guide others through the recovery process. By supporting fellow survivors, they not only accelerate their own healing but also play a key role in empowering others to rebuild their lives.

Our peer support groups provide a warm and welcoming environment for survivor-led healing and growth.

4 trained  
peer support  
mentors

ran 5 groups  
supporting

"It's a healing and a learning process being on the Lotus Blossom groups with women who have survived, and are surviving the abuse they have experienced"

28 group  
members

100%

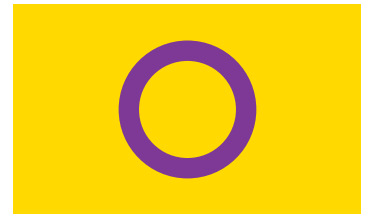
said they felt **inspired by other women** on the group to **keep moving forwards**

100%

said they felt **empowered** by the way they have been able to support other women

"I didn't realise how much it was going to help me when I signed up. Even though we are the Peer Group Facilitators, we get as much out of the group as the group members do. Every single week we learn and we're empowered by the women we spend time with"





## **TNBI (Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex) IDVA Service**

**Domestic abuse recovery support for  
victim-survivor minorities**

Since 2022, we have offered an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service for Trans, Non-Binary, and Intersex (TNBI) individuals who may not be eligible for our Domestic Abuse Recovery groups. We recognise that TNBI individuals face an elevated risk of domestic abuse and encounter distinct challenges, such as discrimination and difficulties accessing services that aim to balance intersecting protected characteristics. For example, some domestic abuse support services, including ours, implement single-sex criteria to ensure that vulnerable survivors from other protected groups, such as women from orthodox religious communities (who might not be able to access mixed-gender public spaces unaccompanied) or those with trauma-related fears of men, are not excluded.

Additionally, TNBI survivors are more likely to experience homelessness, mental health issues, and social isolation, all of which increase their vulnerability to abuse. Our dedicated IDVA service can provide TNBI individuals with the personalised, one-to-one support they need. This ensures their safety and dignity, effectively overcoming the barriers they often face when accessing mainstream services. By delivering tailored care, our service can play a crucial role in reducing risks and improving outcomes for the TNBI community.

Although the charity did not receive any referrals into this service this year, we believe that it is important that we are able to respond to the unique needs of TNBI people.

# A Fond Farewell to the Home-Start Federation



The last year has been incredible for Home-Start East Sussex, in particular the demand for, and success of, our domestic abuse recovery and child to parent violence programmes. The leadership team have recognised that it's time to step forward.

**We are excited to announce that from 1 April 2024 our name will change to Lotus Families and we will wave a fond farewell to the Home-Start federation.**

We have been running a very successful Home-Start scheme since 1996 but this departure is the right time for us, as we now do more than support families with preschool children at the start of their parenting journey, which is what Home-Starts are renowned for. The change of name is an acknowledgement that we are a family charity with a specialism in abuse.

Even though we will have a different name, we are still the same people and our quality services that families and referrers know and love remain, so anyone supported by us will still get tailored, quality support. However, we are now ready to start developing new projects that support families to be safer and stronger.

# Our Supporters

We deeply appreciate and rely on the invaluable support and funding provided by our generous donors, enabling us to continue our vital work in assisting East Sussex women and children to prevent or recover from abuse.  
Thank you.

## Funders 2023-24



Sussex  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner



The  
Henry Smith  
Charity  
founded in 1628



Nationwide  
Foundation



LLOYDS BANK  
FOUNDATION  
England & Wales



COMMUNITY  
FUND



W



Wealden  
District Council



Lewes District Council



Masonic  
Charitable Foundation

Garfield Weston  
FOUNDATION



NatWest



CHALK  
CLIFF  
TRUST



Sussex  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



With generous donations from:  
ND, DOC, AW, RM, JL and Volunteer Gift Aided  
expenses



easyfundraising



You shop. Amazon gives.



Eastbourne  
LOCAL LOTTERY



LeWES DiStriCt  
LOCAL LOTTERY

## Plans for 2024-25 are focused on enhancing our impact and reaching more clients with critical support:



**Change our name to Lotus Families:** To better reflect our growing scope and expertise as a family charity with a specialism in abuse.

**Transition to a Triage Model of Delivery:** We will implement a triage system to prioritise clients on our waiting lists, providing them with immediate safety and support planning. This is essential in addressing urgent needs and reducing risks while they wait for further services.

**Launch of Our New Child-to-Parent Violence Programme:** We will roll out our newly developed integrated group and IDVA programme to replace the outdated "Who's in Charge?" group. This updated programme reflects the unique challenges faced by our families and provides more effective tools for managing child-to-parent violence in the 2020s.

**Webinar on Managing Money Safely in Relationships:** We will introduce a new webinar specifically designed for women who have experienced or are at risk of financial and economic abuse. Offering practical advice on financial safety, this resource is crucial in empowering women to protect their financial independence and security.

**Webinar on Healthy Relationships for Young People:** "Relationship Goals" aimed at 13-16-year-olds, this new webinar will educate young people on the fundamentals of healthy relationships, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to recognise and avoid abusive behaviours early on.