

St  
Martin  
in  
the  
Fields

Charity

# Year in Review 2021-22



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# Director's foreword

Hello. Thank you for your support of St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity and welcome to our Year in Review. We have brought together a review of all our programmes in one place, so that you can see all the ways you supported people experiencing homelessness in 2021-2022.

As you may know, our vision is for everyone to have a safe place to call home and the support they need. Our goal is that homelessness is prevented and when it does occur, people receive the best possible support that enables them to secure and keep a safe place to live.

It has been a challenging period for everyone and a tumultuous time for people experiencing homelessness. Whilst the emergency response during the pandemic showed an exceptional collaborative effort to accommodate people, research indicates that further action is needed to ensure people move into more permanent accommodation<sup>1</sup>. The economic crisis has also put more people at risk, with UK inflation reaching a 40 year high in April 2022<sup>2</sup>.

But we know that homelessness is a problem that can be overcome. We know that people can find themselves in difficult situations and that, together, we can help them find a way out. Our supporters and frontline staff across the UK have shown that this is possible this year. Just a few highlights include: being able to temporarily increase our maximum grants for accessing accommodation from £500 to £1,000 between December 2021 and March 2022 thanks to our donors and investing in frontline service delivery in all four nations of the UK for the first time through the Frontline Fund.

We are not stopping now. Thanks to your support, we are embarking on a new strategy focussing on three key areas:

- **Evidence-led funding:** Investing in the most effective solutions that prevent people becoming homeless and support people to access a safe place to call home.
- **Effectiveness:** Supporting frontline workers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide the best possible support to people experiencing homelessness.
- **Influence:** Working with the public and decision makers to better understand how homelessness happens and what solutions work to address it.

We are also developing our monitoring and evaluation processes. This will help us continue to develop our activities, and we look forward to sharing information about the long-term difference you are making.

We would like to thank all our wonderful supporters who value and recognise our work and make it possible through their kind generosity. A significant proportion of our funding comes through the annual BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal, which has been running for over 95 years. We would also like to thank the Oak Foundation for their support of the Frontline Network. Lastly we would like to thank all the frontline staff we have worked with this year. We would like to leave you with one last call to action:

- If you are a frontline worker, please visit [frontlinenetwork.org.uk](https://frontlinenetwork.org.uk) to find community, funding and resources to support your work.
- To learn more about what your support has made possible, please visit [smitfc.org/stories](https://smitfc.org/stories).
- And to stay in touch with us throughout the year, follow us on **Twitter**, **Facebook** and **Instagram**.

**Tim Bissett**, Director, St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity

1. BBC, Covid homeless scheme not leading to permanent accommodation, warns charity, 27th August 2021  
2. Office for National Statistics, The cost of living, current and upcoming work: June 2022, 10th June 2022

# 2021-22 Overview

## The Vicar's Relief Fund (VRF)



**5,074**  
applications

**4,582**  
grants

**£1,820,134<sup>3</sup>**  
spent

**7,183**  
people supported

**Accessing Accommodation total:**  
**£1,425,889<sup>3</sup>**  
3,452 grants  
average  
£431<sup>4</sup>

**Preventing Eviction total:**  
**£141,004<sup>3</sup>**  
483 grants  
average  
£294

**Emergency Fund total (April to May 2021):**  
**£253,240<sup>3</sup>**  
647 grants  
average  
£304

<sup>3</sup> Figures for spend have been rounded to the nearest pound.  
<sup>4</sup> Our highest grant offer increased from £500 to £1,000 at the beginning of December 2021 for Accessing Accommodation.

We gave out the most grants in the **North West (17%)**. Most commonly we supported **single men (46%)**. People were more likely to have **mental health** as a support need (**68%**).

**“The VRF Fund has been a lifeline for many of the individuals I have supported, without this grant they would either have lost their property or not been able to pay the rent in advance/bond to secure a new tenancy.”**  
Frontline worker

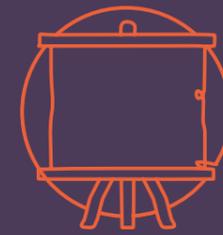
**“That’s what gave me the boost to be where I am now, and be in the position of knowing where I’m going again in life.”**  
VRF recipient

**“It is the only fund I know where decisions are made extremely quickly; something that [is] often critical when trying to ensure someone is not homeless or they can access accommodation as a matter of urgency.”**  
Frontline worker

**“I think the beauty of the fund is that it’s non-judgemental. As someone who applies for it, I always get the impression that it’s just fair.”**  
Frontline worker

**“I can just relax and enjoy the rest of my pregnancy now.”**  
VRF recipient

# The Frontline Network



## Training Fund

We provided £38,017 in funding, enabling frontline workers to **undertake 43 individual / group trainings.**



## Events

We hosted **10 national events** bringing together frontline staff, including our 2021 Annual Conference which featured 10 sessions, 22 expert speakers and nearly 500 attendees across all four nations.



## Local Networks

Our partners across the UK facilitated **70 local events** providing opportunities for frontline staff to connect, share knowledge and effect change.



## Annual Survey

We received **930 responses** to our fourth annual **Frontline Worker Survey** in November 2020, gathering the insights of staff supporting people experiencing homelessness.



## Digital communications

We shared **39 blogs** on our website, publicised 137 free or low cost events, and updated frontline staff through our regular monthly e-newsletter.



**“I feel the network keeps me up to date, it offers good information about training and networking events.”**  
Frontline worker, West Midlands

**“It is good to feel that we have a voice and some support.”**  
Frontline worker, North Wales

**“These [the Frontline Network and Vicar’s Relief Fund] have had a massive positive on my work. It’s led to positive outcomes for clients and made me feel supported in what I do.”**  
Frontline worker, South West England

**Service Delivery**  
We provided a total of **£800,000** to support the Connection at St Martin’s work with people sleeping on the streets of Central London. Furthermore, we have made **£1.5 million** available over three years to enable the work of six additional frontline organisations which support our vision of everyone having a safe place to call home and the support they need.

# A closer look at our activities

## The Vicar's Relief Fund

The VRF helps people experiencing homelessness through small, quick grants that prevent eviction or help with accessing accommodation. We award grants of up to £500, and we usually process grant requests in 3-5 days. We give grants to people across the UK through frontline workers who apply to us on their behalf.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, in 2021/22 the VRF was able to continue to award a high number of grant applications and also temporarily increase our maximum for Accessing Accommodation grants from £500 to £1,000.

This year, we also started collecting more detailed data around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This is so we can gain a better understanding of the groups we serve through the VRF, along with looking at the impact our grants have.

Over the following pages we hear Justin's story and take a closer look at how the VRF works in practice. We also share further information about the people who have benefited from our grants and our work to monitor EDI.



### Justin's story

Justin<sup>5</sup> was being helped by a housing charity in Sussex who provided him with accommodation in supported housing. However, due to cuts to funding by their local authority, the charity was forced to close, leaving Justin at risk of homelessness. Having experienced homelessness before, Justin was deeply stressed by this impending risk, as he knew exactly how damaging that previous experience was for both his physical and mental health. Without a guarantor or money for a deposit, it was impossible to find a property to rent.

Luckily, Justin's support worker found him a flat, and applied for a grant on his behalf from the VRF. This grant allowed Justin to pay the deposit for the flat, where he's been living since.

With help from the housing charity and his support worker, Justin has been able to get back on his feet, with support in navigating day-to-day struggles such as setting up a bank account and dealing with emotional difficulties. With help from St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity and the VRF, Justin has also been able to find a home.

5. Please note the names of people supported throughout this report may have been changed to protect their privacy.

**"But here I am now, sitting in a very lovely one bedroom second floor flat, not far from the beach, with the windows open and the sun streaming in and I can't quite believe how lucky I am."**

Justin



A person experiencing homelessness/insecure housing requires support

In 2021/22 we helped  
**7,183**  
people



They approach an organisation to support them, and a frontline worker registers and applies to VRF

We received  
**5,074**  
applications



The application is assessed by the VRF Team and the frontline worker receives a response within 5 working days

We awarded  
**4,582**  
grants

### Grant number and spend per category

#### Emergency Fund (EF) April to May 2021:

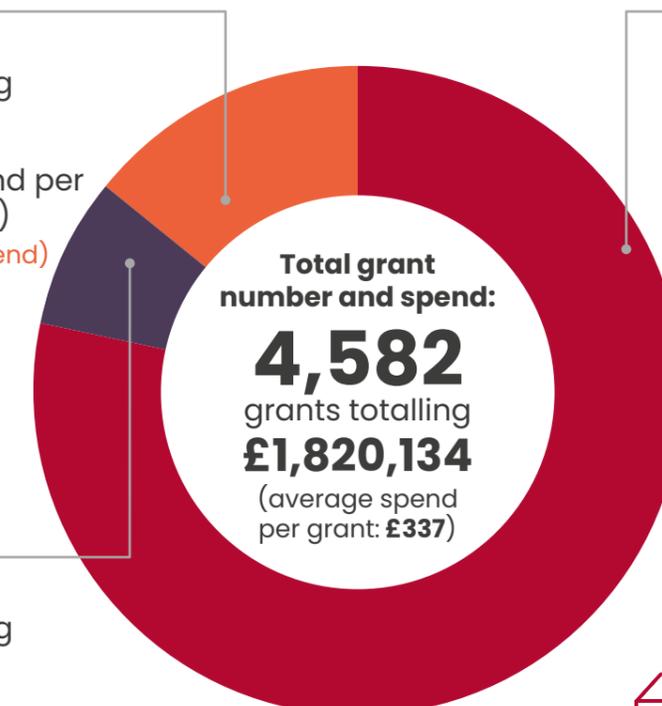
**647**  
grants totalling  
**£253,240**  
(average spend per EF grant: **£304**)  
(13.9% of total spend)

#### Preventing Eviction (PE)

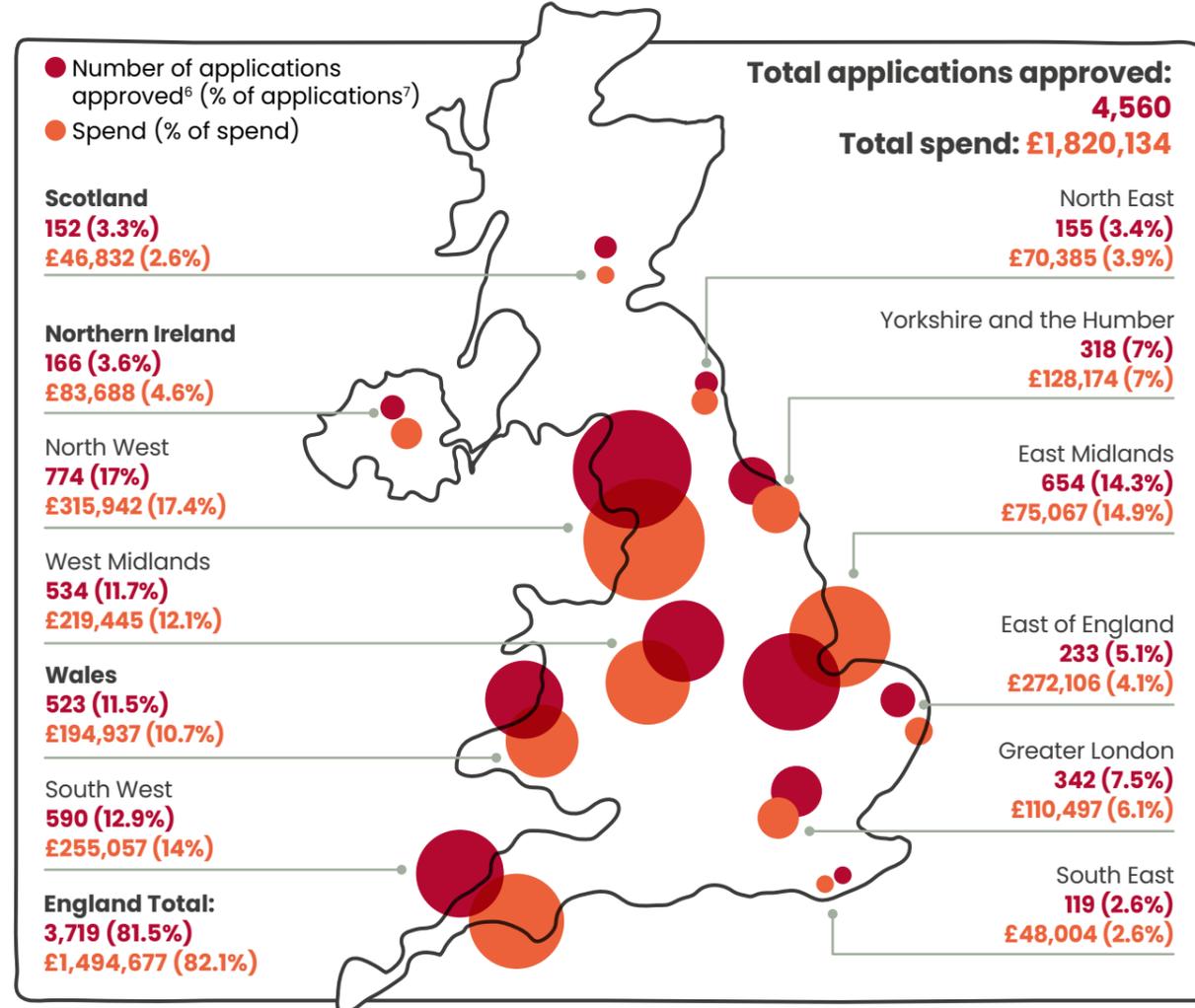
**483**  
grants totalling  
**£141,004**  
(average spend per PE grant: **£294**)  
(7.7% of total spend)

#### Accessing Accommodation (AA):

**3,452**  
grants totalling  
**£1,425,889**  
(average spend per AA grant: **£431**)  
(78.3% of total spend)

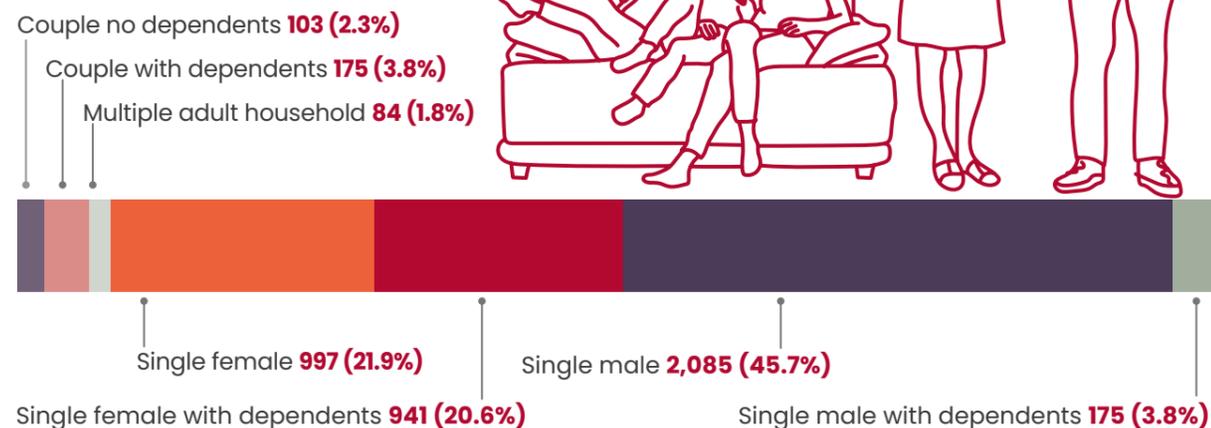


## Our grants cover the whole of the UK

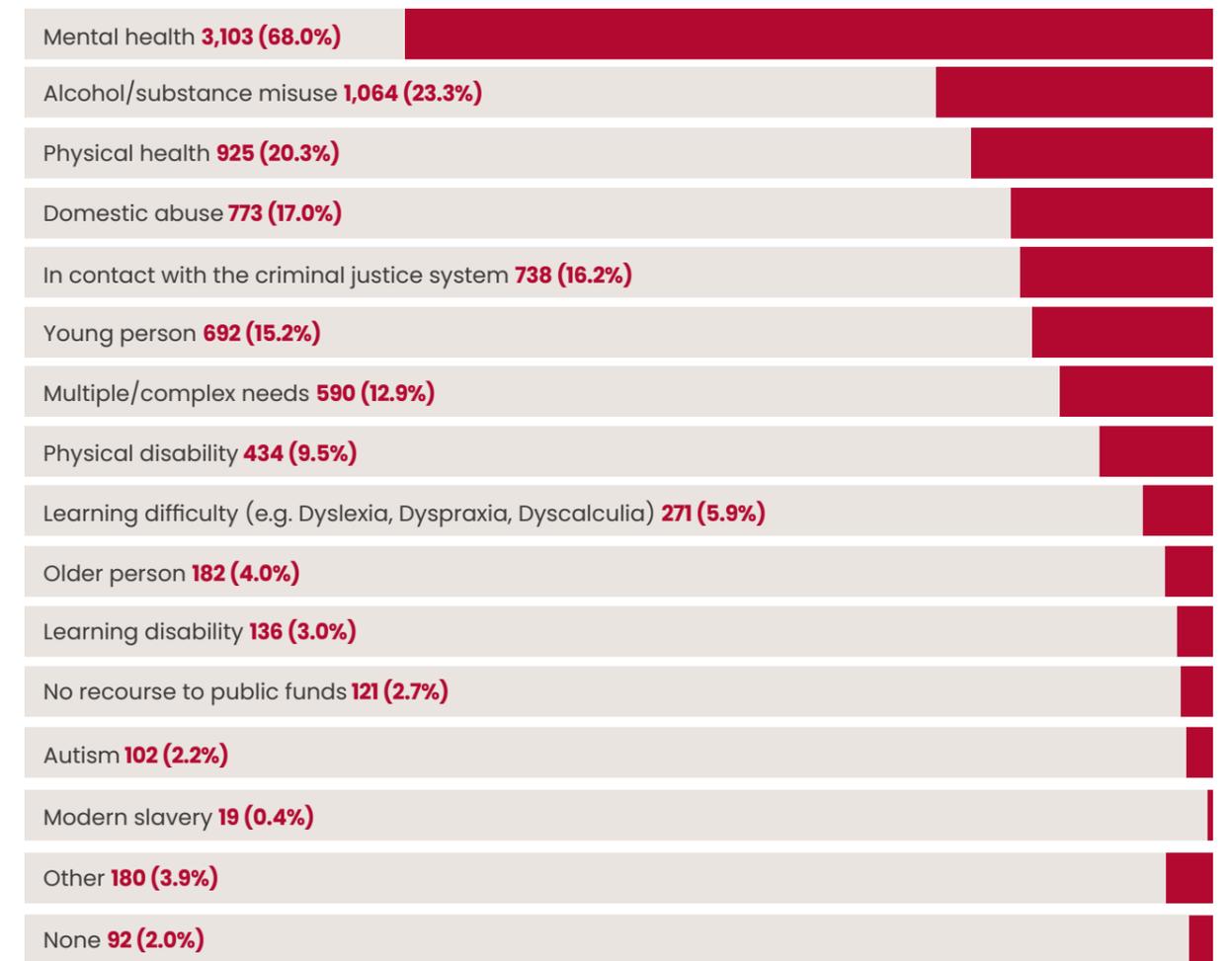


6. A note on these figures: these are different from total of grants awarded as total of grants include the Emergency Fund where up to 3 grants can be awarded for 1 application.  
7. Some percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding up.

## They help support people who are single, in multiple adult households and/or have dependents

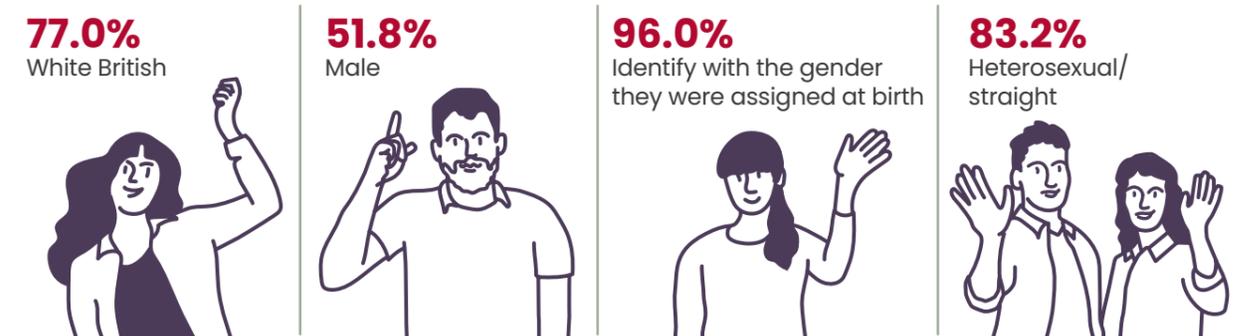


## People benefiting from our grants had a wide range of support needs



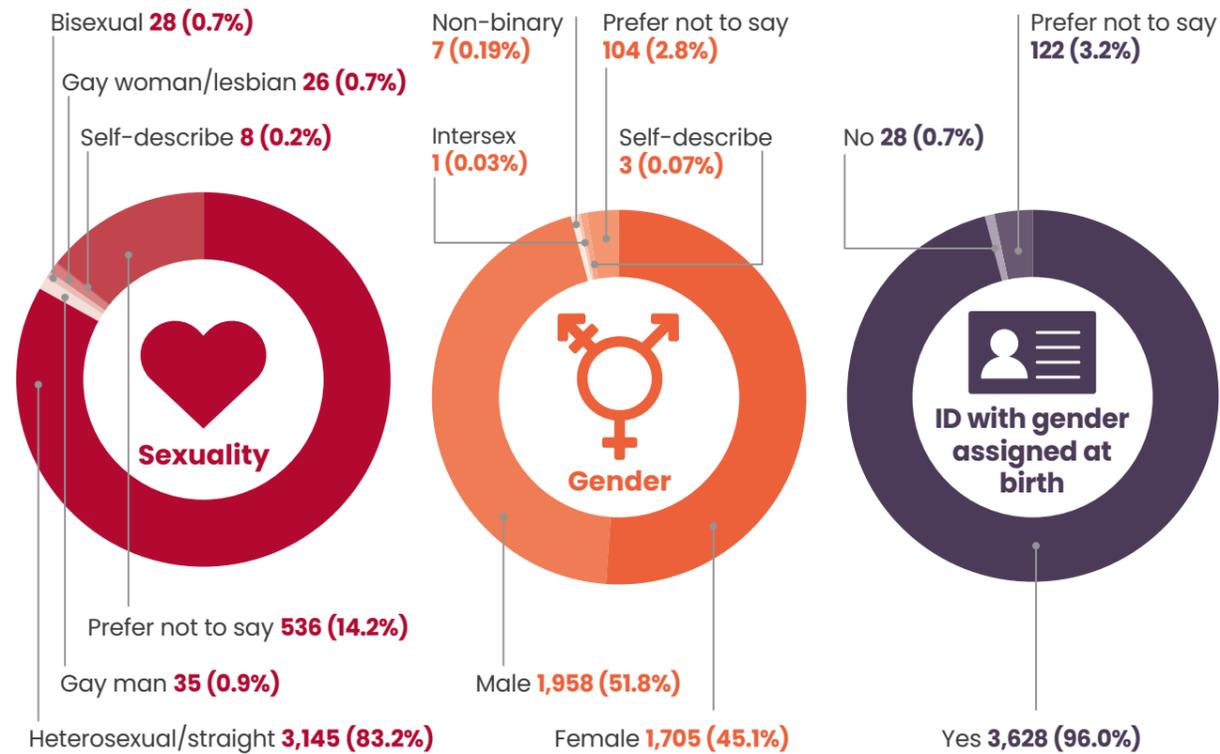
## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We are working towards ensuring that the VRF is inclusive in the way it supports people experiencing homelessness. We introduced new ways of monitoring who we support in June 2021 and will use this to look at what we need to do to improve this. From the current VRF, we have EDI information for 96% of applications between May and March 2022. Tables containing further EDI data can be found overleaf, overall we found that currently people supported by the VRF were more likely to be:

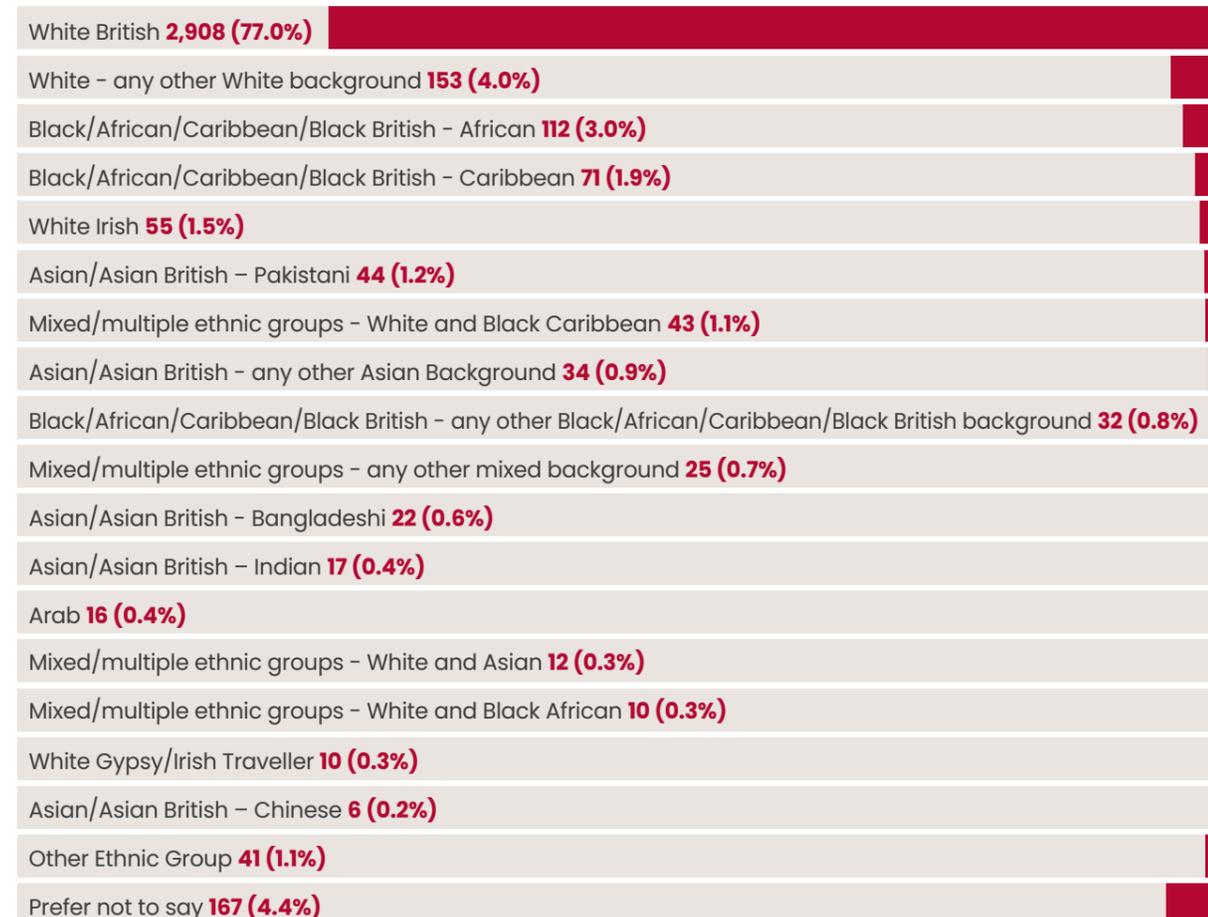


**Please note:** this information is reported by the frontline worker, and so comes with the caveat that those being supported may not wish to disclose answers to these questions and some frontline workers may not feel comfortable asking them. This will affect the accuracy of the data, however, we still feel that the data is valuable so that we can collect information about the groups currently served by the VRF and look to examine which groups are underrepresented.

## Gender and sexuality



## Ethnicity



# Frontline Network

The Frontline Network works both nationally across the whole of the UK and on a more local level with partner organisations. Our work aims to support frontline staff, amplify their voices and highlight best practice in the sector.

## Frontline Network



**Who are frontline workers?**

We define a frontline worker as anyone directly supporting people experiencing homelessness. This includes people working in the public, statutory and voluntary sectors in roles such as outreach, housing, social work and probation.

At a national level, we offer funding, community and resources. This includes:

- Providing funds for frontline workers to access training;
- Hosting events to share best practice, for example our annual conference;
- Sharing relevant news and opportunities via our website and digital communications;
- Conducting research with frontline workers to learn from their insights; and
- Amplifying the voices of frontline workers to influence decision makers.

Locally, in 2021-22 we worked with 12 partners across the UK who provided regular opportunities for frontline staff in their areas to come together, share knowledge and effect change.

Frontline staff have faced numerous challenges in their work to support people experiencing homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to affect how services can be delivered, and the cost of living crisis has led to increased need across the UK. In this context, we felt it was all the more vital that staff could access funding, community and resources to enable their important work. The following pages share a summary of our activities from the last year.



**“Thank you for organising this training and the literature you sent out last week [...] The content was so relevant, very informative and thought provoking.”**

Universal Credit training participant

**“Frontline workers’ voices are often overlooked or ignored this is a great platform to [ensure] that we are heard.”**

Frontline worker, Northern Ireland

# National work

## Supporting access to training

Our Training Fund is open to frontline workers who want to develop their knowledge and skills, but for whom cost is a barrier to undertaking training. By supporting staff to be effective in their roles, the Fund has a positive knock-on impact for people who are accessing support.

During 2021-22 we provided **£38,017 in funding** to enable frontline workers to **undertake 43 individual / group trainings**, on subjects as diverse as trauma-informed practice, resilience and substance misuse awareness.



### Our Partnerships Officer, Naomi Tremain, explains the importance of access to training:

Supporting people who are experiencing homelessness requires a broad range of knowledge as well as specialist skills. From benefits and housing law to mental health and psychologically informed environments, via counselling skills and motivational interviewing.

In these ongoing challenging times we are seeing new and emerging needs across the sector and the pressure on frontline workers to meet these needs is greater than ever.

Recognition of the importance of investing in the people who work on the frontline is at the heart of what the Frontline Network is all about, and we launched the Training Fund in 2019 in response to feedback from frontline workers that they wanted funding for training.

Prior to joining the Frontline Network as Partnerships Officer, I worked and volunteered in the homelessness sector since 2004. I spent the last 5 years in client-facing support roles across several London-based services with a focus on substance misuse, mental health and young people.

Some of the most worthwhile training I did, which has served me in both work and life, was around trauma and its impact on health and wellbeing. Learning trauma-informed ways of working, basic cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and mindfulness techniques equipped me to work with clients in a more person centred, strengths-based way – and has helped me to look after my own wellbeing too.

A brilliant training course can cast a whole new light onto our ways of working, and the Training Fund is here to help make that possible.



## Bonny Downs Community Association's story of accessing the Training Fund



Like many of us after eighteen months of working through the pandemic, the staff at Bonny Downs Community Association in London Borough of Newham needed to take a step back. Bonny Downs provides a range of services to the community, from a nursery to an over 65's club, a food bank, a new food pantry, advice and advocacy services, space hire and much more besides. As part of this they work on issues of homelessness, poverty and inequality. Unfortunately, during the pandemic, the charity experienced a huge spike in demand for their services:

**"We really had to go up another gear to support some people who were, it is not an exaggeration to say, [...] in desperate need. The food bank, for example, in the previous three months before lockdowns began, served something like 270 families. In the next three months, we served 2,000 families."**

Steve Bynon, Adult Services Director, BDCA

Steve said that it was only when we started to come out of the crisis situation that was Covid lockdowns, that the staff began to slow down and realise the emotional impact that the crisis has had. The team needed to take some time out together to consider what they had achieved and how it had affected them, and to identify what they needed as a team, and as individuals to help build resilience and wellbeing moving forward.

**"That's one of the things we are always aware of, obviously, after the acute situation we had over the pandemic, we are very aware of the question: who is helping the helpers? The people giving themselves every day, and they're just giving out, and they're not really getting anything back. So, it is great that we can invest a bit of time and energy and resources into their care. And give them, hopefully, some skills that they can take with them into the future."**

This was where the Frontline Network Training Fund was able to help. Steve applied for funding so that his team could attend a bespoke workshop session on Building a Culture of Resilience and Working Better Together.

**"Having that time together was really invaluable. Thinking about the past, but also thinking about the future and thinking about, for ourselves, what is it that we need? And as a team, how can we support each other?"**

They worked with a wonderful trainer, who helped them look at things they could build into their lives, to support their resilience. They worked on staying positive and developed techniques to ensure they stayed kind and generous, even in those situations of high tension and times of difficulty. Steve shares St Martin's belief that, by supporting frontline workers, you are in turn improving the support and services available to people experiencing homelessness.

## Bringing frontline staff together

Over the last year we have hosted 10 national events bringing together frontline staff. This included training events covering topics such as accessing Universal Credit and best practice for supporting LGBTQ+ young people facing homelessness.

Additionally, year round we continue to share information and resources via our communications with frontline staff. We shared **39 blogs on our website**, **publicised 137 free or low cost events**, and updated staff through our regular monthly e-newsletter.



## Amplifying frontline voices

Listening to lived and frontline experience is crucial to addressing homelessness. We know staff have a first-hand insight into how to prevent and relieve homelessness. And yet, with cumulative and time-sensitive workloads, it is often difficult to feedback frontline expertise. At the Frontline Network we aim to bridge this gap by amplifying the voices of frontline workers and connecting them to decision makers.

A key way that we do this is through our Annual Frontline Worker Survey. Each year, we gather insights from hundreds of frontline staff across the UK, asking them questions on a range of areas including access to accommodation, wider support such as health and benefits, frontline worker wellbeing and the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness. We then publish our findings in a report and share evidence with decision makers to influence policy and practice. We also regularly submit survey data in response to government consultations and calls for evidence related to homelessness. Finally, we use the findings to inform our own activities, including the theme and design of our Annual Conference.



### Our 2021 Annual Frontline Network Conference

We were delighted to host our fourth Annual Frontline Network Conference in 2021, after our 2020 event had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. The day involved **10 sessions, 22 expert speakers, and nearly 500 attendees** across all four nations. As previous years, this was all accessible for free to frontline staff. The conference was adapted to take place online, due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

Under-pinning our 2021 event was the theme of **'Overcoming Barriers'**. We hosted a range of amazing speakers who highlighted the interesting and creative ways they were working to navigate and overcome challenges. Sessions ranged from topics such as accessing accommodation and specialist healthcare support to crisis management and conflict resolution. Dame Louise Casey, Chair

of the Institute of Global Homelessness, provided a keynote speech reflecting on her experiences of working in the homelessness sector and answered audience questions. Finally, at the end of the day we brought together a panel of representatives from across the UK to discuss how frontline staff can overcome barriers in their roles going forward. Feedback included:

**"A great way to be connected to other frontline staff, share ideas and good practice."**

**"I also really enjoyed Baroness Casey's opening plenary- she is a really inspiring woman!"**

**"A chance to see the bigger picture."**

### Frontline Network Annual Conference 2021

# OVERCOMING BARRIERS

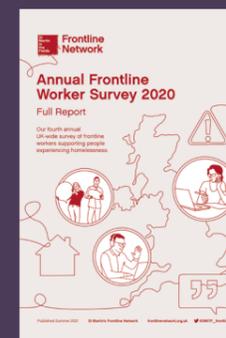
**FREE**  
to attend

Tuesday 24th June, 10am-4.30pm  
This event will be fully online

@SMITF\_frontline  
#OvercomingBarriers

### Publishing our 2020 Frontline Worker Survey

In November 2020 we undertook our fourth annual Frontline Worker Survey. We received 930 responses from frontline workers supporting people experiencing homelessness across the UK. The survey findings were published in a report in Summer 2021.



In their responses, frontline workers told us how the COVID-19 pandemic had heightened and reshaped need when it came to homelessness. In particular we heard concerns about the pandemic's contribution to people's financial difficulties, poor mental and physical health and relationship breakdown. Furthermore, accessing vital support services (such as healthcare, welfare support and employment, education and training) was challenging due to high demand, reduced capacity and 'digital exclusion' (where people have found it hard to access online services, compared to face to face).

However, there were areas where real progress has been made since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We saw an exceptional collaborative effort on the frontline to accommodate thousands of people who were homeless. Frontline staff described improvements in access to emergency accommodation and explained how greater partnership working had helped them to better support individuals. Overall, the response to the pandemic has shown that with significant attention and resourcing, positive change can happen. With renewed focus and collective action, systemic and practical barriers can be overcome for good.

**You can read the full report on our website.** The results of our latest 2021 Frontline Worker Survey have also just been published, and results can also be found on our website.

Key findings included:



**84%** of workers found specialist accommodation difficult to obtain since the COVID-19 pandemic started.



**82%** of frontline workers found it harder to access support for mental health issues for people they worked with since the COVID-19 pandemic started.



**Only 2/3** of frontline workers agreed they felt healthy and safe to perform their role.



**30%** of frontline workers felt they did not have enough time to do their job effectively.



**68%** of frontline workers felt that commitment from their nation's Government to preventing and relieving homelessness had increased since the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Local work



At a local level, we work with a group of organisations, our Partner community; who facilitate a mix of geographically placed and thematic Local Networks. Our Partners are key to our way of working and how we reach and support frontline staff across the UK. Through our Partners, our aims of regularly connecting frontline staff; to network, share experience/ expertise and amplify their voices to decision makers are cemented.

Over the last year we've been delighted to see the launch of three new Local Networks: a new thematic network focusing on women's experiences of homelessness in Leeds, a new partner to facilitate our existing South Yorkshire Frontline Network and our first Northern Ireland Frontline Network.

Each of our Local Networks does extensive and varied work, informed by the insights shared by frontline workers. In total, 70 local events took place over the last year, providing regular opportunities for frontline staff to come together and effect positive change in the sector. Over the following pages we provide a flavour of the kind of work taking place across the UK.



## Our Local Networks

- 1 **Scottish Frontline Network**  
Cyrenians
- 2 **Frontline Network Wales**  
Cymorth Cymru
- 3 **Northern Ireland Frontline Network**  
Homeless Connect
- 4 **Pan-London Migrant Frontline Network**  
Praxis
- 5 **Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Frontline Network**  
Streetlife Trust
- 6 **Coventry Frontline Network**  
Coventry Citizens Advice
- 7 **Plymouth Frontline Network**  
Path
- 8 **Leeds Women's Homelessness and Housing Frontline Network**  
Basis Yorkshire in partnership with Together Women and Leeds Women's Aid
- 9 **South Yorkshire Frontline Network**  
Depaul UK
- 10 **Person-led, Transitional and Strength-based (PTS) Frontline Network**  
Mayday Trust
- 11 **Brighton and Hove Frontline Network**  
Justlife
- 12 **All in for Change**  
Cyrenians, Homeless Network Scotland and Scottish Community Development Centre



## Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Frontline Network

**The Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Frontline Network has been facilitated by Streetlife Trust since 2017.** Over the last year the Network has hosted bi-monthly meetings to bring together staff working in homelessness and associated services. This has provided an open forum to share information, ideas and good practice in relation to new legislation and initiatives, as well as troubleshoot problems.

A particular opportunity for frontline workers to share their insights took place when the Network brought together frontline staff to discuss the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative funding in Spring 2022. This funding is key in enabling councils and their partners to deliver services to reduce rough sleeping. Through the Network, a meeting was set up to connect frontline staff with representatives from the local authority Housing Options team. This provided a space for key issues to be raised and then built into funding proposals, such as the need for quality training for staff on topics such as trauma informed care.



## Brighton and Hove Frontline Network

**The Brighton and Hove Frontline Network has been facilitated by Justlife since 2016.** Recent activities from the Network have ranged from virtual coffee breaks for colleagues to catch up and make new connections, to meetings between frontline staff and the local Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Commissioning Team to discuss strategic priorities for the City.

**"Workers have had to navigate delivering services to some of the most vulnerable people in our society with constantly changing restrictions and limited staffing (due to colleagues isolating and an emerging recruitment crisis)."**

Kate Standing, Network facilitator

The Network has also recognised the huge challenges of working on the frontline during a pandemic, and so its focus on supporting frontline worker wellbeing has continued. For example, in October 2021 it created a safe space for frontline staff to reflect on the impact on workers when supporting someone who dies, or is dying, and talk about how to support one another, drawing on learning from the Museum of Homelessness, and their Dying Homeless Project.



## Coventry Frontline Network

**The Coventry Frontline Network has been facilitated by Coventry Citizens Advice since 2017.** The Network's quarterly forums have provided valuable spaces for frontline workers in Coventry and the wider Midlands area to raise issues and identify best practice. Meetings are attended by homelessness organisations, advice agencies and housing providers, along with council staff and the Department for Work and Pensions among others.

In late 2021, a key issue discussed was the withdrawal of the £20 a week uplift to Universal Credit, which coincided with the end of other Covid support measures such as furlough and extended eviction notices. A Network meeting posed the question: "What support do you think clients will need to cope with this change?". Frontline workers discussed best practice such as the importance of clear communication with people affected and support for those who may face deficit budgets as a result of the withdrawal, as well as the need for wider change to ease financial pressures in the longer term.



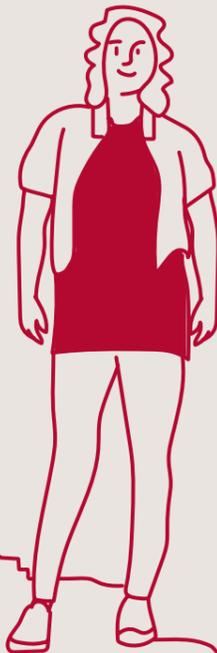
## Frontline Network Wales

**The Frontline Network Wales has been facilitated by Cymorth Cymru since 2020.** The Network has hosted regular online meetings across Wales, listening to the views of frontline staff on different topics. The focus of these events has ranged from discussing changes to the work environment as COVID restrictions eased to asking how recruitment and retention in the sector can be improved.

Emerging reports and recommendations have subsequently been shared with government, commissioners and services. For example frontline workers' insights have fed directly into the Welsh Government's new task and finish groups set up to develop a workforce training, development and recognition framework for the sector. At times, Members of the Senedd have also joined Network events, for example to explore priorities for the government's upcoming term.

**"Frontline Network Wales participants have genuinely influenced policy this year - gaining recognition and securing support for themselves and their peers."**

Katie Dalton, Director of Cymorth Cymru



## Leeds Women's Homelessness and Housing Frontline Network

**The Leeds Women's Homelessness and Housing Frontline Network launched in 2021 and is facilitated by Basis Yorkshire in partnership with Together Women and Leeds Women's Aid.**

This newly formed network brings together frontline workers providing intensive support to women in Leeds. It is a much-needed forum given the lack of gendered focus and initiatives on homelessness and includes increased attention on hidden homelessness, Domestic and Sexual Violence and other traumatic experiences more often experienced by women.

To date, activities have included linking frontline staff with Leeds City Council to discuss strategies to address hidden homelessness and free training around domestic abuse in homelessness settings.

**"Frontline workers are an important part of making changes to lives and to systems."**

Catherine Tottie, Network facilitator

## Northern Ireland Frontline Network

**The Northern Ireland Frontline Network launched in 2021 and is facilitated by Homeless Connect.** The Network offers a regional focus, led by frontline workers and designed around their needs.

The Network has already taken the opportunity to amplify frontline workers' voices by feeding into the Housing Executive's Supporting People (SP) Strategy 2022-2025. The SP Programme is one of the key funding streams for the homelessness sector in Northern Ireland, worth £72.8 million annually. The Network submitted a consultation response, sharing evidence gathered through the Annual Frontline Worker Survey and a further local survey asking network members for their insights on relevant points of the strategy. The response advocated for further resources to enable staff to better support people facing homelessness:

**"Service providers in the homelessness sector are under enormous pressure at the current time [...] We implore SP to do everything in its power to find a way to get more resources."**

Consultation Response to the Supporting People Strategy 2022-2025



## Pan-London Migrant Frontline Network

**The Pan-London Migrant Frontline Network has been facilitated by Praxis since 2016.** The Network offers support to frontline staff who work with people experiencing homelessness in London related to immigration status.

Following the deadline for registration on the EU Settlement Scheme on 30 June 2021, the Network brought together staff to discuss what next for EU migrants experiencing homelessness. This event featured speakers from Workers Rights Centre and Thames Reach to discuss concerns and possible solutions. Over the last year the Network has also reviewed the Nationality & Borders Bill, hosting an event where frontline workers could discuss the implications for homelessness and how to mitigate these where needed.

**"In this perfect storm, it is more important than ever that everyone who needs access to a safety net has it, regardless of the fine print on their visa."**

Bethan Lant, Network facilitator



## Plymouth Frontline Network

**Plymouth Frontline Network has been facilitated by Path since 2017.** A key focus of the Network over the last 5 years has been building relationships between frontline staff and the various organisations that provide essential services. In Autumn 2021 the Network teamed up with the Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Advocacy Team, to help ensure that people facing homelessness have access to welfare benefits where needed. This has involved organising training sessions to explore available welfare support and examine Access To Work benefits and the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application.

Another priority of the Network has been promoting trauma informed working. Frontline staff locally were surveyed to ask whether they would benefit from receiving training on

preventing sexual harm. Through joint efforts with the Trauma Informed Plymouth Network & Together 4 Childhood, the Network subsequently raised enough funding for five training sessions to take place in the City. Trauma informed working, reflective practice and listening to people with lived experience of accessing homelessness services has also been raised at workforce development groups in Plymouth to further highlight their importance and the work that needs to be done.



## PTS Frontline Network

**The Person-led, Transitional and Strength-based (PTS) Frontline Network was facilitated by Mayday Trust between 2017 and 2022.** The Network provided a space for PTS Asset Coaches to come together and reflect on how they work alongside people going through tough times. In particular the Network's events explored how to move away from mindsets and behaviours around 'fixing', towards approaches which focus on individuals' strengths and agency.

**"The work of a strength-based practitioner is to listen, be curious and reflect with the individual to contextualise their experiences and to work alongside them on the things that the person feels are the most important."**

Wisdom from Strength-Based Working report



## Scottish Frontline Network

The Scottish Frontline Network has been facilitated by Cyrenians since 2016. The Network facilitates quarterly events, providing a regular opportunity for frontline workers in Scotland to network, share expertise and experience, and link to decision makers.

An example of this has been the Network's response to the rise in counterfeit benzodiazepines (benzos), following an increase in drug related deaths and non-fatal overdoses in Edinburgh. In response to this development, the Network set up an online working group for frontline staff to share experiences and support each other. Frontline staff identified a lack of reliable information about benzos and how to best support people experiencing homelessness. As a result, the Network organised two training sessions in partnership with Crew, a specialist harm reduction and outreach charity in Edinburgh.

**"I feel more confident in identifying the risks of using street Valium and being able to pass harm reduction advice on to my client group. It will allow me to have more open and honest conversations with my clients – which will in turn build healthy trusted relationships and hopefully improve engagement and lead to clients receiving the support they need."**

Training participant

Following the training events, the Network collated key themes and shared this insight with the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce to inform their work on tackling Scotland's challenge with drug related deaths by identifying strategies that would make a difference to those most at risk.

## South Yorkshire Frontline Network

The South Yorkshire Frontline Network has been facilitated by Depaul UK since 2022, prior to this it was facilitated by Target Housing. This year the Network has reached new frontline workers across Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley. Staff from a wide range of organisations and roles have been invited to get involved, including those working outside of traditional homelessness agencies but who still support people experiencing homelessness and who have housing insecurity.

Some of the words frontline staff chose to describe a recent Network meeting included: "friendly", "reassuring", "knowledgeable", "supportive", "hopeful" and "positive".

**"As a strong and vibrant community of interest there is a will and an energy and through this we can influence and effect change."**

Janet Kent, Network facilitator

## All in for Change

In addition to the Local Networks listed above, we have also part-funded the All in for Change programme since 2019. All in for Change is an inclusive programme using a collaborative effort to end homelessness in Scotland. The programme is driven by a Change Team of people from across Scotland – experts in what homelessness looks like on the ground, for those most affected by it. The team is made up of Change Leads, bringing together diverse knowledge from people with recent experience of homelessness and those working in a frontline role.

### The Change Team's recent work to influence change in Scotland has included:

- Engaging with 184 people with experience of homelessness or working in the sector to explore progress being made towards ending homelessness in Scotland. The National Conversation included workshops and an online survey and resulted in a report informing policymakers of progress and challenges on the ground.
- Shaping the design of proposed new legal duties to prevent homelessness in Scotland, feeding into the Prevention Review Group and recommending how the duty would be best implemented.
- Meeting with the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities to discuss the impact of a new National Care Service on people experiencing homelessness.



# Service Delivery

## The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

The Connection at St Martin's supports people sleeping rough to find a way off London's streets. They get to know every person they work with, understanding what they need to recover, helping them build on their strengths, and supporting them to find their own way home.

### Our funding

We provided a total of £800,000<sup>8</sup> to support the Connection at St Martin's work across a variety of work programmes:

<sup>8</sup> The total expenditure adds up to £800,001 due to rounding up.

Category	Programme	Spend (£)
Immediate Need	Engagement and Assessment Team	181,905
Immediate Need	Street Engagement Team	30,000
Accessing Accommodation	Housing and Resettlement	247,647
Overcoming Barriers	Migration work	80,502
Prevention and Independence	Recovery and Opportunities	88,867
Immediate Need	The Bridge	110,700
Immediate Need	Triage Service in E&A	37,804
Workforce Development	Training for new service model	22,576

### Headlines

Looking at the data for the 9 months from July 2021 – March 2022:

- **537 people** were referred into the Connection's Triage and Brief Intervention team<sup>9</sup>
- **929 people** were reached by the Street Engagement Team
- **44 people** moved into their own accommodation
- **205 people** were supported to discuss their situation with an immigration specialist
- **176 Recovery and Opportunities** sessions were held with individuals
- **An average of 25 people** were accommodated and supported by The Bridge each quarter
- **142 people** were referred to the Intensive Casework Service<sup>10</sup>
- **All staff** were trained in a new service model that met the changing needs in the London Borough of Westminster in response to the challenges of the Covid pandemic

### Individual Stories

Alexandru was referred to the Skills and Opportunities Coordinator for support in finding a job by his case worker, from the Triage and Brief Intervention team. He was supported to get a place in hotel accommodation for a few weeks as Alexandru had been rough sleeping for some time. Alexandru was very motivated to secure employment. He wanted to build on his existing skills and start long term planning for the future. The Connection spoke to him about a job opportunity with one of their corporate partners, Clear Channel. Another individual had a successful placement there and they had found Clear Channel to be excellent employers and so the Connection were confident in proposing the job vacancy to Alexandru. They discussed the job with Alexandru, and he was interviewed by the Clear Channel Operations Manager at The Connection. The interview went extremely well, and he was offered the job on the spot!



<sup>9</sup> The Triage and Brief Intervention team works with people to see what assistance they might need and provides short-term support.  
<sup>10</sup> The Intensive Casework Service works with people who need support over a longer time.

## Frontline Fund

In 2021, we made £1.5 million available over three years to fund organisations which support our vision of everyone having a safe place to call home and the support they need.

We received 81 applications from organisations across the UK and entered into a multi-year working partnership with 6 successful organisations. Each are receiving a share of the Fund, enabling them to deliver their existing services more effectively, and/or develop new and innovative ways of providing support for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

### Geographical locations<sup>11</sup>

- 1 Caring in Bristol
- 2 TGP Cymru
- 3 Legal Services Agency
- 4 akt
- 5 Pathway
- 6 Extern

11. Pathway's project is working across sites in England.



### About the Frontline Fund recipients

**Caring in Bristol** deliver projects around homelessness that engage a community of volunteers, bringing people together to make change.

*“Over the next three years, this partnership will enable Caring in Bristol to carry out our ambitious plans for Project Z, a floating support service for young people experiencing a complexity of support needs and at risk of homelessness in Bristol. We can support more young people, reach areas where there is greatest risk and further evidence our relationship-based approach to support.”*

Ben Richardson, Director of Caring in Bristol

**TGP Cymru** is a leading independent Welsh children's charity working with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised children, young people, and families in Wales.

*“TGP Cymru's Team Around the Tenancy are extremely grateful to be receiving this funding to continue our important work with young people across North Wales who are being pushed into homelessness or who don't have a place to call home.”*

Sophie Ann Morris, Manager at TGP Cymru

**Legal Services Agency (LSA)** is a Scottish law centre and charity committed to defending legal rights and using the law to effect social change.

*“We are very grateful for the funding and delighted to be partnering with St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity in order to provide a service focusing on early intervention to prevent homelessness for people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.”*

Aaliya Seyal, Chief Executive Officer at LSA

**akt** supports LGBTQ+ young people aged 16-25 in the UK who are facing or experiencing homelessness or are living in a hostile environment.

*“We are very grateful to St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity for investing in akt, the national Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans youth homelessness charity, so that we can develop a much needed and innovative new service across Greater Manchester to help some of the most vulnerable in our community.”*

Hayley Speed, Assistant Director of Services at akt

**Pathway** is the UK's leading homeless healthcare charity, working with partners to create improved models of care for people experiencing homelessness.

*“We are delighted to partner with St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity to help provide the legal advice needed in securing more stable outcomes for our patients and help improve even more lives across the UK.”*

Alex Bax, CEO at Pathway

**Extern** is a leading social justice charity across the island of Ireland who speaks up for and supports more than 21,000 children, young people, individuals, and families each year to overcome challenges, empower positive change and support family unity.

*“We are delighted to have secured such generous funding from this new partnership with St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity. This will enable us to offer counselling to some of our most vulnerable service users who are often unable to access many mainstream services due to having been engaged within the criminal justice system.”*

Danny McQuillan, CEO of Extern

## Closing comments

Thank you for taking the time to read our Year in Review. None of this work is possible without the generosity of supporters and the dedication of frontline workers.

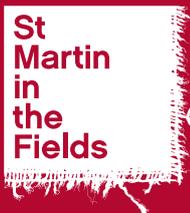
If you are interested in learning more, you can always find more information here:

- If you are a frontline worker, please visit [frontlinenetwork.org.uk](https://frontlinenetwork.org.uk) to find community, funding and resources to support your work.
- To learn more about what your support has made possible, please visit [smitfc.org/stories](https://smitfc.org/stories).
- And to stay in touch with us throughout the year, follow us on **Twitter**, **Facebook** and **Instagram**.

We are delighted to hear any feedback you have about this report so we can make future publications even better. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@smartinscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@smartinscharity.org.uk)

Everyone should have a safe place to call home. Thank you for believing in this vision.





# Charity

## **St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity**

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If you have already donated to make this work possible, thank you. If you are interested in donating again, we are very grateful. You can donate at [smitfc.org](http://smitfc.org) or, if you would like to discuss your donation, please contact us at [info@smartinscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@smartinscharity.org.uk).

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