

Business Plan



Executive Summary

This Business Plan has been prepared to confirm the actions we will take to deliver our vision and mission from 1st of October 2023 to the 30th of September 2024.

Its purpose is to;

- Inspire – through shared beliefs, values and goals, to build understanding, trust and commitment.
- Inform – by offering clear choices, options and priorities, enabled by evidence based decision making that responds to gaps and trends, driven by the needs of those we support, not opportunity.
- Influence – by clearly defining what is unique and special about A Way Out and understanding how we can work with partner organisations to achieve wider change.

And it is intended to be used by women, young people and families accessing our services, trustees, staff, volunteers and partners.



Background

A Way Out is an outreach and prevention charity which aims to engage, empower and equip vulnerable and excluded women, young people and families to live lives free from harm, abuse and exploitation.

A Way Out started in 2002 when the founder, Jessie Jacobs, who was brought up in the town of Stockton-on-Tees, met a young girl walking the streets trying to sell her body for sex. Moved by the abuse, poverty and addiction that was devastating the lives of women and young people across the area, Jessie started A Way Out with the aim of providing outreach and support to at risk women and young people.

Since 2002 we have reached thousands of women, families and young people across Teesside (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton) and have evolved our services for women over 18 to include ...



Liberty is an outreach, engagement and recovery service for adult women who experience multiple disadvantages (including addiction, homelessness, and mental ill health) are socially isolated, involved in on street sex work, and fear the consequences of accessing support (criminalisation, repercussions from perpetrators, having children removed into care, or being stigmatised by professionals). Proactive engagement, through street based outreach, peer networks and partner referrals, is combined with gender and trauma informed and personalised one to one and group interventions, so women can address the abuse, harm and exploitation they experience.

STAGE

STAGE provides trauma informed and personalised support for vulnerable women who have been groomed by groups of men for sexual exploitation and consequently experience multiple challenges including mental ill health. It is integrated within the delivery of Liberty and Phoenix Women to provide additional targeted support for women experiencing abuse, harm and exploitation.

The STAGE partnership is led by Changing Lives, includes the Angelou Centre, Ashiana, Basis, GROW, Together Women and the Women's Centre, and undertakes research into survivor experiences to influence policy and practice as well as providing targeted support.



Phoenix Women provides specialist support for adult women in the criminal justice system as they transition from the prison gates to the community recognising that pathways into offending for women are often different to that of men because of the abuse, harm and exploitation they experience and their sentences are often harsher. Trauma and gender informed, shame sensitive, and strength-based community and custody group and one to one support empowers women to move past previous offending and build a stronger future for themselves and their families.



Women accessing Liberty confirmed that the abuse, harm and exploitation they experience may have been reduced, or even prevented, had support been available sooner. **Unity** therefore provides the right support at the right time for children and young people (up to 25 years old) as they transition to adulthood including trauma informed and person centred one to one and group interventions as well as digital engagement and peer support. Unity includes:



The **Blossom Project** supports girls and young women aged 13-24 (or up to 25 years if they have additional needs such as learning difficulties / disabilities) , who experience multiple unmet needs and disadvantages. One to one and group, trauma informed and person centred, interventions build their resilience and prevent abuse, harm and exploitation and opportunities to lead campaigns, events and projects further ensure their voices are heard.



Evolve supports children and young people aged 9-16 years. Delivered within schools and the community as a 6-week educational program which equips them with the knowledge, awareness and resources they need to identify unhealthy relationships and how to access support.



The **VAWG advocacy project** reaches, engages and empowers girls and young women aged 16 - 26 who are experiencing or have experienced gender-based violence against them. Through collaborative assessment, person centred and trauma informed support, and advocacy, we ensure they know their rights and can recognise and address VAWG.

We have also developed services that provide additional support to those accessing our services and their families



The **RISE family project** provides one to one and group to increase wellbeing and improve relationships for families of individuals accessing other A Way Out services.



Our **Psychological Pathway** is integrated within Liberty, Blossom, Phoenix and our Family Project and provides additional support, including a non-engager strategy, one to one and group therapeutic support, as well as shame sensitive and solution focused interventions, for those who struggle to engage because of historic trauma and challenges such mental ill health. Staff and volunteers also benefit from additional support and opportunities for reflective learning, particularly when working with clients who face barriers to engagement such as discrimination and stigma or trauma.

The impact of our services is evidenced by recent external evaluation (Barefoot 2019 and Sunderland University 2022), involvement in national projects (e.g. STAGE - working with 7 other charities/public sector partners to support vulnerable women who have been groomed by gangs) and awards (e.g. NEPACS Ruth Cranfield 2019) as well as our track record of securing grants and contracts to develop and deliver services.

Through the delivery of our services, and the completion of SWOT and PESTLE analysis and risk assessments (appendix 1), we have also learned that individuals who experience and/or are at risk of abuse, harm and exploitation ...

- face growing challenges including addiction, homelessness, mental and/or physical ill health including learning difficulties / disabilities, poverty etc because of the trauma they have experienced
- fear (often based on previous experience) they will not be taken seriously or will experience discrimination and stigmatisation and/or repercussions (e.g. criminal convictions) if they disclose abuse, harm and exploitation (particularly VAWG – violence against women and girls)
- find accessing services increasingly difficult (because of complex referrals, narrowing eligibility criteria, increasing exclusions etc) and often only receive support after abuse, harm and exploitation has taken place (e.g. when in contact with the police, attending A&E, taken into care etc) rather than when this could have been prevented
- are inherently resilient because of the challenges they face and have strengths they can build on.

And that we can best respond to this by continuing to;

- work with, rather than to or for, those we support to ensure they are equal participants in the process of designing and delivering, and monitoring and evaluating, our services, rather than just recipients
- provide specialist, and trauma and/or gender informed, interventions by building the skills and experience of our staff and expanding our services
- build our evidence base to better understand the complex and changing unmet needs of those we support and how best to engage and support them
- work collaboratively with partner organisations to share learning and resources, inform policy and practice, and promote wider system change



Vision / Mission (Why)

We believe that no one should experience or fear abuse, harm and exploitation (our vision).

We prevent abuse, harm and exploitation by empowering women, families and young people to overcome the challenges they face and tackling the injustice and inequality that they experience (our mission).

This is informed by values of

- love - being accepted without judgement or stigma
- hope - overcoming trauma and recognising potential
- freedom - living lives free from abuse, harm and exploitation

A Christian ethos of love, truth and justice underpins everything we do to support those with a Christian faith, another faith or no faith.



Approach (How)

The individuals we support (329 between 1st October 2021 and 30th September 2022) confirm (through monitoring and evaluation) that we are unique in

- providing multiple opportunities to engage (in-person or online) without complex referrals and assessments or eligibility criteria or the need for a specific diagnosis (e.g. mental ill health) – including proactive street / community based outreach to engage those who choose not to access other services because of previous negative experience (such as parents who have had children removed) or fear being discriminated or stigmatised (such as street based sex workers), as well as those who are ineligible or excluded.
- not placing arbitrary limits on who is eligible, the support provided and for how long, and instead offering opportunities to access and move between a range (or lifecycle) of support that follows changing needs – including increasing support rather than imposing sanctions or exclusions when disengagement takes place and celebrating achievements, no matter how small, to build hope for the future – specific examples of our holistic (wrap around) approach also includes our co-design of Stage and Sage Program to provide solution focused and shame sensitive interventions.
- providing gender- and trauma-informed, asset based, inclusive support that enables and addresses historic and/or recent abuse, harm and exploitation and overcome the inequality and injustice that lead to isolated and vulnerability – including flexible one to one and group support that addresses all the challenges faced, is responsive to changing needs, builds on strengths, and enables those using our services to ‘be’ before they are expected to ‘do’, so that informed choices about the future can be made – additional support (including access to our psychological pathway for ‘non engagers’) is available to address challenges such as addiction, homelessness, mental and/or physical ill health, learning difficulties / disabilities, poverty etc. - we are also partnering with ReNew to develop our specialism in forensic service provision.
- training/supporting (including clinical supervision) staff and volunteers to build consistent and positive relationships as ‘trusted adults’ (particularly those who do not have positive relationships with friends / family or wider support networks) and address trauma (including implementing our trauma recovery model and addressing the vicarious trauma staff and volunteers may experience).

- creating opportunities for voices to be heard and lived experience shared to influence the language, behaviour, and views of others and achieve wider system change - including participating in or delivering local/national campaigns to address the issues faced (e.g. 'reclaim the streets') and/or influencing policy and practice and co-designing services with partners such as local authorities, NHS, police etc.

This unique approach is summarised in appendix 1 (infographic)



Actions / Priorities (Who, What, Where and When)

Our long term goal is that women, families, children and young people who are at risk of or experience harm, abuse or exploitation have access to support that provides



- Compassion – using a non judgmental approach that builds on individual strengths and addresses recent and/or historic trauma.
- Connections – creating opportunities to access support through proactive outreach and by building trusting relationships.
- Care – providing the right support at the right time in the right place whether someone is in crises, needing support or advocacy to address immediate needs, or ready to make lasting changes.
- Choice – building hope for the future through individuals having the freedom to make informed decisions and opportunities to achieve their potential.
- Community – enabling lasting change and providing support at times of need by building positive relationships with friends, family and the wider community.
- Change – addressing the causes of injustice and inequality, and wider stigma and discrimination, by ensuring that learning from lived experience is used to change the language, behaviour, views, of other individuals and policy and practice of organisations.



This includes working with other organisations to prioritise outreach, facilitate referrals, coordinate support and share learning to create new opportunities to prevent abuse, harm and exploitation and, particularly, to engage and support those whose needs are not met by other services.

Our priorities including working with:

- the police, probation and others within the criminal justice system to reduce the risk of clients becoming a victim and / or perpetrator of crime and prevent reoffending - including creating new opportunities to address the causes and consequences of offending such as trauma.
- local authorities, the NHS and their partners to ensure addiction, homelessness, mental health, poverty and other services provide coordinated and holistic support – including identifying and addressing unmet needs and gaps in provision or creating new opportunities for intervention / prevention.
- charities and community groups to increase our impact through collaborative working including as a subcontractor to larger organisations delivering universal services – including providing additional support for clients with protected characteristics and/or higher levels of unmet need and unmanaged risk

Our objectives over the lifetime of the business plan are therefore to:

Board Sub Group	Priorities	Outcome
	review our processes and procedures, including internal meetings, to identify further efficiency savings	reduce core costs and/or increase capacity to develop new opportunities
	explore opportunities to share 'back office' support with other organisations	
	consider other options for office / delivery space	more flexible delivery of services and/or reduce core costs
	ensure all services achieve a balanced budget within the financial year	increased financial sustainability
	increase our (particularly unrestricted) income from commissioning, fundraising and trading	sufficient resources to respond to the increasing and changing needs of those we support
	continue to develop our planning and reporting to ensure effective and efficient financial management	proactive management of increasing financial risks
	continue to invest in staff skills and experience through in house and external learning and development opportunities	increased recruitment and retention
	review contracts and job descriptions and provide training and supervision so staff can work across different roles and teams.	more efficient and effective delivery of services and opportunities for personal development
	define core roles and move to permanent staff contracts wherever possible	increased retention through greater job security
	increase staff capacity and/or secure partner support to expand the recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers	greater capacity to deliver our services and opportunities for volunteers to gain skills and experience

Board Sub Group	Priorities	Outcome
Performance and Quality 	achieve the trauma quality mark	demonstrate that our trauma informed and responsive approach is integral to everything we do
	continue to develop our monitoring and evaluation methodology and review our key performance indicators	informed decision making based on a greater understanding of the needs of those accessing our services and how best to meet them
	use wider learning to inform the ongoing development of our business plan / strategy	develop innovative and creative solutions to the internal and external challenges we face
	seek opportunities to influence others and share learning through external evaluation and research and/or networks, workshops and meetings	address injustice and inequality through wider system change by influencing the policy, procedures and practice of other organisations
Strategy Governance and 	combine Blossom, Evolve, and VAWG into Unity	prevent abuse, harm and exploitation through coordinated outreach and support for children and young people
	integrate the delivery of Liberty and Phoenix Women	address abuse, harm and exploitation through coordinated outreach and support for women (including those within the criminal justice system)
	develop a long term plan for our psychological service	continue to develop our psychological pathway as an integral part of our services
	establish RISE as an integral part of all our services	ensure families of those accessing our services can also access support
	build our network of partners across the North East and beyond	develop new opportunities for collaborative working and wider influence
	expand the delivery of our services across Teesside and potentially the wider North East and Yorkshire and/or develop new services e.g. housing, mental health, training etc	address gaps in provision and unmet needs and reduce our reliance on a small number of funders and partners



Monitoring / Review

We will monitoring progress in achieving our business plan by

- using a balance scorecard to measure our success in achieving internal and external targets (appendix - KPIs).
- capturing further quantitative and qualitative data as part of the ongoing monitoring of our services.
- providing reports to staff and Board meetings.
- confirming progress made in our annual report.
- including evaluation within bids and tenders wherever possible.

and then use learning from this to review our business plan annually.

Evidence will also be used to co-design services with those we support, , in individual supervision and team and board meetings, and in workshops / meetings with partners, to create shared learning and identify and promote opportunities for continuous improvement