Yarl’s Wood Befrienders

Our mission

We offer befriending support to people held in Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre, aiming to reduce their isolation, reinforce their self-esteem, and affirm their human dignity.

What we stand for

**Human dignity**  – we listen with empathy and act with compassion

**Acceptance**  – we listen without judgement and act with respect

**Impartiality**  – we listen in confidence and act independently, of both the Centre management and of the UK Home Office

The Queen’s Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service 2005
Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2018

The Trustees, who are also Directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act, submit their annual report and income and expenditure accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018.

Full name Yarl’s Wood Befrienders (YWB)
Registered charity number 1143160
Registered company number 07652500
Principal address 43 Bromham Road
               Bedford
               MK40 2AA

Trustees (Directors) 2017 – 2018
Michael Bishop (resigned February 2018)
Barbara Conridge
Angela Huddart
Jenni Jackson
Juliet Jeater (appointed December 2017)
Julian Rowland (resigned August 2017)
Pauline Panter (appointed December 2017)
Nina Pavitt
Joanne Vincett

Independent Examiner Rob Baxter

Governance and management
The charity is a company limited by guarantee and registered charity. It is operated under the rules of its memorandum and articles of association dated 31.05.2011. It has no share capital and the liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.
Trustees are appointed on the basis of their commitment to the aims of the organisation and their willingness to devote both their time and talents to the cause. The Trustees are appointed at a board meeting following a formal application process.

Aims and objectives
The charity’s objectives (‘Objects’) are specifically restricted to the charitable relief of those detained in, or leaving, Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre (YWIRC).
So many thanks to so many...

One of the most gratifying aspects of being Chair of the Board of Trustees is the appreciation of how all those who contribute to our work embrace fresh ideas, and the resulting change and hard work needed to implement them. This past year has involved us all in plenty of the above. We all do this, of course, because we want to do the best we can for those we serve.

For the Board, this has meant changes in membership and the embedding of a new Working Group system that we introduced in Spring 2017.

from Chair of Trustees Barbara Conridge

Trustee matters

The Board reluctantly said farewell to two very valued members this year.

Julian Rowland, our Vice Chair, whose wisdom and integrity often challenged our thinking, left in the summer. Michael Bishop, our Treasurer, who managed our finances for 12 challenging years, resigned in March, and we are so very grateful to him for his dedication. He is happy to be able to hand over to Poonam Chand, our new Treasurer, leaving the organisation in a sound position financially.

We have been fortunate to welcome two new Board members, Pauline Panter and Juliet Jeater, both of whom are helping broaden our knowledge and experience.

I would like to thank all our Trustees for their dedication and work, much of which has been across the five new Working Groups.

Their remit is to develop policies to take to the Board for approval; also to help implement the practical tasks that arise from the expansion of our work.

Here is a brief overview of these groups, with some of their recent priorities...

Finance and Funding

This group sets financial priorities and oversees our accounts, ensures staff are paid and our spending is in line with funders’ conditions. It makes funding applications too; our successful Big Lottery bid is a shining example.

Quality and Impact

Recruiting and training new Befrienders is a high priority, as is giving out phone cards and clothing. Fun stuff like the Summer Fete and Christmas events come under this group, too.

People Management

The review of our many policies has been the main task of this group, those which apply to all volunteers and those specific to our staff.

Governance

This group ensures that we comply fully with Charity Commission rules and that Trustee’s roles are well defined and support the Board in setting the objectives for the future.
**Marketing and PR**

This group is responsible for promoting our work to the wider community, focusing on our website, our corporate identity and event planning, plus helping us garner local support.

**Staff matters**

None of this would have been possible without our wonderful, talented staff. Our Director, Caroline Clark, has continued to lead with energy and integrity, facing the challenge of three new staff members and a change of office with thoughtfulness and patience.

We miss Jess Anslow, our Co-ordinator, now on maternity leave, but gladly welcome Shirley McDonagh and Ali Brumfitt as job-share cover, each bringing very different skills.

Katrina Allen, our new Administrator, brings her considerable expertise to the management of the office, while Rachel Mitchell continues to work closely with our Treasurer to keep the accounts in order. Rachel has taken on the extra burden of producing final accounts, and it is due to her rigour that they are reliable.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to express my thanks to each staff member. We genuinely appreciate all you do. Thank you.

Similarly, YWB would be nothing without its growing band of volunteers. The commitment and compassion they bring is humbling, so thanks to all of you, too.

Befrienders, whatever they do – visiting, helping run the drop-in and clothes bank, working in the office, shopping – are at the heart of YWB. On behalf of every detainee, we thank you.

Thanks also to our funders, without whom YWB would not exist. The Big Lottery grant will ensure that our running costs are largely covered. Our local funders make a huge contribution to our work, together with other charities, large and small.

Thank you all for allowing us to continue our work – which will carry on as long as needed.

> I am so happy when I see my befriender. Before I saw her it was very lonely. All the activities in here is not enough, I need that one-to-one. Her coming from the outside makes such a difference.
What a year that was...

It is always a daunting task to summarise the past year for our annual reports and, each time I have done this, it has surprised me to remember how much has happened each year. This year even more so.

We have experienced significant growth and development as an organisation, met many more women in detention, greatly increased our programme of practical support, had changes, both of personnel and in our office space, and successfully applied for a three-year grant from the Big Lottery.

Developing our services

I am very proud of our work this year to develop services in support of the women detained indefinitely in Yarl's Wood.

The most important development, which has impacted on all areas of our work, was the start of the drop-in sessions.

Our first session took place within the Centre on the last day of March 2017, and we held a total of 45 in the year (exceeding our target of 40 sessions). They take place on Thursday mornings from 10am to 12noon, and have proved more popular than we had expected with more than 1,500 attendances recorded over that time.

The sessions are designed to provide the women with a place to come and relax and be distracted from the stress and anxiety they experience on a daily basis. There is tea, coffee and biscuits, music in the background, and games, colouring, cards, puzzles and jigsaws. On average we were seeing 32 people at each session, though our busiest involved more than 50 women.

We met over 500 women from 51 countries in 2017-18, about twice as many as last year and mostly at the drop-in sessions. Of those, 297 felt the need of the additional support of a Befriender, while others felt that coming along to the drop-in was enough for them. In total we befriended 243 people this year, of whom 108 were seeking asylum.

The women we visited were detained for an average of 86.5 days. During 2017-18, the average befriending relationship was 52 days and the longest went on for over a year.

says YWB Director, Caroline Clark
With the advent of the drop-in sessions, we found ourselves providing phone top-ups to an ever increasing number of people. Previously, fortnightly top-up was provided to those we befriended, meaning that, at any given time, we were supporting around 40 to 45 people.

By the start of 2018, however, that provision had grown to more than 100 people, a level of support which quickly became unsustainable, both practically and financially. After consulting the detainees, we went back to our original process of providing top-up as part of our befriending service, rather than via the drop-in. In tandem with this, demand for practical support in the form of clothing, underwear, shoes and suitcases also significantly increased.

This year we provided 137 women (and a few men) with clothing. In order to decrease the delivery time from about 14 days and to make the process easier both for us and Centre staff, we have worked with Serco to set up a storage facility in the Centre. We work alongside the welfare and religious affairs teams to gather requests, share resources and deliver items within a few days of the request.

We are grateful to the House of Industry and the Feminist Review Trust which provided funding for both top-up and practical support, without which we would struggle to offer these essential services.

“I am very grateful for the phone credit. Family and friends at home can’t top me up from abroad. They want to say a big ‘thank you’ to Befrienders for helping me. They are very happy.”
Events

The 2017 summer fete (above) was our best effort yet, with more than 250 people coming along to enjoy the day. More people played the games, the Centre provided ice creams, and we gave out food goodie bags.

Feedback showed that 97% of detainees felt that the event made them feel happier, and 80% felt more connected to the outside world.

Chalgrave WI supplied everyone with a bag of goodies which included items like handbags, jewellery, make-up, toiletries, underwear, socks and scarves.

For the Christmas event, we and the WI made the decision to separate their gift giving from the party; this worked well, giving people two distinct events to enjoy. The card making was popular, as was the rodeo reindeer and the competition to guess the weight of the cakes. It is wonderful to see people who are often in low mood having fun, smiling and laughing.

"Except seeing you guys once a week, nobody seems to care. Nobody really asks you how you’re doing, it’s worse than isolation."

Monitoring and evaluation

As our services develop, it becomes ever more important to monitor and evaluate them, to make sure they are meeting the needs of those we serve, both appropriately and effectively.

This year we introduced a feedback form, used at intervals throughout the year, for those who have a Befriender. The results confirm both the need for and the benefit of Befrienders for people detained far from home, with few visits and under a great deal of stress.

This year we also ran focus groups with a number of the women we befriend to discuss our services with them and to assess their thoughts about what we provide and the way we provide it.

We include a selection of their comments throughout this report, to provide a flavour of their thoughts.

Feedback gathered at the drop-in sessions, from a total of 267 respondents, proved to be reassuringly positive, with 94% saying they felt happier after attending the session.
Our volunteer team

We continue to grow our team of enthusiastic, reliable, caring volunteers.

We began the year with 49 Befrienders and had set ourselves the target of reaching 60 by the end of this year – a target which we just achieved, with the final two completing their training in April 2018.

We are also very lucky to have a number of office volunteers who help with administrative work, either in the office or up at the Centre organising the clothing.

In May 2017, in order to check in with our volunteers and make sure they feel valued and appreciated, have enough training and are offered a range of roles to suit their skills and interests, we compiled and distributed an in-depth online survey...

A summary of our findings

• 38% (14 people) have volunteered for less than a year, reflecting our growth this year.

• of those who befriend, 53% call or text in between visits, 44% have sign-posted to other charities, and 25% have contacted solicitors on the detainee’s behalf.

• Befrienders feel strongly that their visits positively impact the emotional wellbeing of the people they visit, with 94% of them believing that visits decrease feelings of isolation and 97% feeling that they made them feel more supported.

• Befrienders feel they can offer the women impartiality, unconditional support and friendship, physical contact (hugs); non-judgemental listening; time; kindness, compassion, reliability, trust, confidentiality, and care.

• volunteers themselves feel that they benefit hugely from the role, with 60% saying they had made new friends, and 55% said they had improved their skills. And, gratifyingly, 97% said they felt valued and appreciated by YWB, which is extremely important to us.

"Since day one we are connected. I don’t feel like I am inside when she visits. She’s like the mother I never had. I feel like we are in the park or something. I can’t wait for her to visit – to feel like I am free and a child again. She makes me feel very good, like I’m not in this hole."

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Due to the individual nature of befriending, we decided to instigate an annual review meeting for all volunteers, trustees and staff in January 2018. This ensures that we meet all our volunteers face to face at least once a year and bring them up to date with any necessary developments and information.

This year we reviewed some of the policies we developed during the year and introduced people to the recent data protection regulations (GDPR) which will affect how we gather and store people’s personal data. This is particularly important for us as the information we are privy to is often very sensitive.

Another introduction was a system of long-service recognition for five, 10 and 15 years’ service – grateful thanks to Crystal Dickinson, Michael Bishop and Rosemary Kelly who have all given more than 15 years’ service to YWB.

In addition to the annual review, we ran four training sessions for volunteers; one on dealing with suicidal thoughts and feelings, delivered by John Simpson from Bedford Samaritans; one on bail applications by Tom from Bail for Immigration Detainees; one on trafficking, led by Pauline Panter (YWB trustee and volunteer, and former Chair of Bedfordshire Against Modern Slavery), and one on boundaries.

Community outreach

We organised a varied timetable of events over Refugee Week this year: production of The Asylum Dialogues at the Quarry Theatre by Ice and Fire, a group which explores human rights stories through performance; a Gospel Choir concert in Rushden; and a full house at The Place theatre for The Scar Test, a play by Hannah Khalil based on the experiences of women detained at Yarl’s Wood IRC.

Last July, 46 people came along to our annual meeting at The Place theatre (above), which featured a performance of The Bundle by Journeymen Theatre, followed by Bedford Community Arts Choir performing songs from

"I was so happy the first time I met befriender. I felt like I was outside. It’s very, very nice – please don’t stop it. When you are feeling depressed, lonely and low and you see the phone call from Befrienders you feel blessed and better."

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the Odyssey Project, created in collaboration with the women in Yarl’s Wood, and overseen by Music in Detention.

Later in the year, in October, we held a quiz at the White Horse pub which raised £300 – a lot of fun as well as quite a challenge.

A number of groups and individuals have shown their care and support of the people languishing in detention by donating clothing, gifts and financial support.

We were delighted to welcome both our MP, Mohammad Yasin, and the High Sheriff, Vinod Tailor, to our offices during the year. We were also very proud, in February 2018, to win the High Sheriff’s Award for Citizenship (North Bedfordshire).

**Staff changes**

We were both happy and sad in January when Jess left us temporarily to have baby Isla. We are looking forward to having her back with us next January. We were fortunate to have a number of strong candidates for her maternity cover, all from our Befriending team. In the end, Ali Brumfitt and Shirley McDonagh were selected to job share, and both started with us in January 2018.

As a result of the Big Lottery funding, we have been able to appoint a new Administrator, Katrina Allen, who started in April 2018, just after we moved into a larger and quieter room in the CVS building (pictured on P3).

*Director Caroline Clark receiving the High Sheriff’s Award for Citizenship from Vinod Tailor, the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire.*
Money matters...

During my second year of overseeing fundraising, monitoring and evaluation for Yarl’s Wood Befrienders, our fundraising team ended the financial year having raised £117,560, the most in the history of the organisation to date. Given the concurrent 20.2% increase in our essential expenses, however, this was just 5.5% short of our initial break-even target.

We have grown steadily as a charity this year, both in terms of demand for our services and volunteers to meet that demand.

In the light of this, we re-evaluated our funding sources and targeted those which prioritise women, vulnerable and marginalised groups, people with mental health issues, and isolated and incarcerated people.

We successfully sought several new sources of funding in a highly competitive landscape. These organisations included the Feminist Review, the Hilden Charitable Fund, the Mark West Fund and the Panacea Fund (through the Bedford & Luton Community Foundation).

We continued to be generously supported by our longer-term donors: AB Charitable Trust, the Bromley Trust, the Harpur Trust, the House of Industry, Odin, St Albans Mission Giving, St Andrews Bedford, the Verulam House Fund and the Wixamtree Trust. Donations from individuals and groups all added up too – these made a significant difference in our ability to operate day to day and, ultimately, to help the women we serve cope better in detention.

Due to our increased publicity in the form of presentations and articles we were persistent in building awareness, both of our work and of the injustice of the UK’s immigration policies.

We were proud to receive the High Sheriff’s Citizenship Award (for North Bedfordshire). Often under-acknowledged, activity such as this contributes to our long-term funding by positioning us as an established and effective organisation.

Looking ahead

I am delighted to report that our team secured £384,744 of core funding for three years from April 2018 from the Big Lottery’s Reaching Communities fund. This greatly improves our sustainability, will enable us to add a second weekly drop-in session and focus on recruiting Befrienders with vital language skills. It has enabled us to hire a part-time administrator, and includes funding for skills training and for evaluating the impact of our services.

Invigorating times are ahead; with more stability in our income, we can concentrate on making a meaningful difference to detainees.

Trustee and member of the Finance Working Group
Joanne Vincett takes the message about immigration detention to the Open University in Milton Keynes

from Trustee Joanne Vincett
Our grateful thanks...

...to all who have made our work possible through donations, fundraising events and grants (full list overleaf) particularly to these organisations which were generous enough to donate £500 or more:

- AB Charitable Trust
- Scott Bader Commonwealth Limited
- The Bromley Trust
- Christmas Puzzle
- Feminist Review Trust
- Jill Franklin Charitable Trust
- The Fulmer Charitable Trust
- The Harpur Trust
- The Hilden Charitable Fund
- The House of Industry Estate Trust
- The Northwick Trust
- The Odin Charitable Trust
- Panacea via BLCF
- People Not Borders
- Rosmarinus Charitable Trust
- St Alban’s Mission Giving
- St Andrew’s Church, Bedford
- St Peter’s Church, Bedford
- Verulam House Fund Trust
- Mark West Fund for Women
- The Wixamtree Trust

Our grateful thanks for their support to the Cathedral & Abbey Church of St Alban

Our Chair of Trustees, Barbara Conridge, gladly receives a cheque from the Dean of St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church, The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John
# Finance matters...

We would first like to extend our formal thanks to Michael Bishop, who resigned this year as Treasurer of YWB after more than 15 years’ service. We are indebted to him for his guidance and wisdom over the years.

Our expenditure has continued to grow, this year by 20%. Much of this relates to staffing costs and this year has included maternity costs and overlap staffing expenses, as well as salary increases following a benchmarking exercise.

The continued expansion of our provision of practical support for the women we meet is reflected in increased Detainee Support costs. We continue to fill the gap which exists following the closure of the HIS Church market in 2016-17.

Our income development was healthy, and allowed us to cover our increased expenditure with a shortfall of just £6,528 on our planned income. We ended the year with reserves of £55,582, with the prospect of quarterly payments from Big Lottery funding starting on 6th April.

We are in a strong financial position to continue our development in 2018-19.

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## Income & expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total 2017</th>
<th>Unrestricted 2018</th>
<th>Restricted 2018</th>
<th>Total 2018</th>
</tr>
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<td>116,060.00</td>
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<td>16,060.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>505.00</td>
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<td>27.00</td>
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<td><strong>£116,565.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,500.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,060.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>£117,560.01</strong></td>
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## Resources Expended

| 74,136.00 | 74,046.75 | 10,500.00 | 84,546.75 |
| 4,516.00  | 8,063.14  | -         | 8,063.14  |
| 1,480.00  | 3,789.84  | -         | 3,789.84  |
| 5,995.00  | 6,317.93  | -         | 6,317.93  |
| 1,263.00  | 1,005.60  | 157.00    | 1,162.60  |
| 8,798.00  | 10,809.34 | 4,560.00  | 15,369.34 |
| 2,918.00  | 2,715.63  | -         | 2,715.63  |
| 832.00    | 566.68    | -         | 566.68    |
| 395.00    | 403.48    | -         | 403.48    |
| 144.00    | -         | -         | -         |
| 2,697.00  | 1,153.60  | -         | 1,153.60  |
| **£103,174.00** | **108,871.99** | **15,217.00** | **£124,088.99** |
| **£13,391.00** | **-7,371.98** | **843.00** | **-6,528.98** |
| 48,720.67 | -         | 5,000.00  | 62,111.67 |
| **£62,111.67** | **-7,371.98** | **5,843.00** | **£55,582.69** |

*Audit position:* for the year ending 31/3/2018 the company was entitled to exemption from official audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The financial statements have already been submitted to an independent examiner for reviewed and approval. The deadline for submission of financial statements is 31/12/2018.
## Grants & donations

### Restricted

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<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feminist Review Trust</td>
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<td>Harpur Trust</td>
<td>£10,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>People Not Borders</td>
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<td><strong>Total restricted</strong></td>
<td><strong>£16,060.00</strong></td>
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### Fundraising funds

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<td>Community Gospel Choir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pub Quiz (White Horse)</td>
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<td>The Yard Theatre (Removal Men)</td>
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<td><strong>Total fundraising</strong></td>
<td><strong>£878.30</strong></td>
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### Unrestricted funds

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<tr>
<td>AB Charitable Trust</td>
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<td>Beatrice Hankey</td>
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<td>Bedford Local Meeting (Quakers)</td>
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<td>Bromley Trust</td>
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<td>Charity Quiz (Woburn Sands)</td>
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<td>Christmas Puzzle</td>
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<td>Churches Together in Redbourn</td>
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<td>Fulmer Charitable Trust</td>
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<td>Hilden Charitable Trust</td>
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<td>House of Industry</td>
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<td>Online &amp; Individual Donations</td>
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<td>Panacea Charitable Trust</td>
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<td>Pavenham Christmas Lights</td>
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<td>Rosmarinus Charitable Trust</td>
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<td>Scott Bader Commonwealth Ltd</td>
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<td>Soroptimist International</td>
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<td>St Alban's Mission Giving</td>
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<td>St Mary's Church, Oakley</td>
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<td>St Peter de Merton / St Cuthbert</td>
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<td>Verulam House Fund Trust</td>
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<td>Wixamtree Trust</td>
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<td>Womens' Breakfast Club, Fletwick</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total unrestricted</strong></td>
<td><strong>£100,594.71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total funds**

**£117,560.01**
She’s more like family, that Befriender – very supportive, and I really look forward to her visits. She likes my life stories and says she is looking forward to the next episode. Sometimes, I don’t notice the time, she doesn’t dig into my case, just listens – you feel blessed and better.