



# ACCI Annual Report 2024-25



**We are  
powerful  
because  
we have  
survived and  
that is what  
it is all about  
- survival and  
growth.**

— **Audre Lorde**

# Table of Contents

<b>Activity Report</b>	
Audre Lorde Quote	1
Message from CEO Alicia Spence	3-4
Our Well-being Hub Report	5-7
Maya Angelou Quote	8
Mental Health Liaison Report	9-11
Nelson Mandela Quote	12
Outreach Report	13
Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Report	15-27
Members Thoughts	28-30
Therapeutic Counselling Services Report	31-33
Omari Housing Report	35-39
Susan L. Taylor Quote	40
Carers Group Report	41-43
Volunteers Report	45-47
Volunteer Thoughts	48-49
Good Night Project Report	51-54
Events & Awards Report	55-56
Telford Services Report	57-60
Referral Trends	61-66



# Message from the CEO

# Alicia Spence

This year has been one of significant challenge and growing demand for our mental health services. Against a backdrop of economic uncertainty and rising living costs, we have seen a marked deterioration in the mental health and wellbeing of the communities we serve. Referrals have increased steadily, with people presenting with more complex needs and requiring longer-term support.

At the same time, the organisation has faced substantial financial pressures. Increases in the National Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions have led to higher staffing costs across all services. While we strongly support fair pay for our workforce, these increases have not been matched by uplifts in funding or commissioned contracts. Rising utility and operational costs have further added to the strain on our resources.

As a voluntary sector provider, we continue to play a vital role in supporting individuals who are unable to access timely statutory mental health services. However, the gap between demand and available resources continues to widen. This has placed

pressure on our teams, increased waiting times in some areas and limited our ability to invest in service development.

Despite these challenges, our staff and volunteers have shown extraordinary commitment, compassion and resilience. Their dedication has enabled us to continue delivering safe, high-quality, person-centred support to those most in need.

Looking ahead, our priority remains sustainability. We will continue to work with funders, commissioners and partners to advocate for realistic and long-term investment in voluntary sector mental health services, while ensuring our resources are used effectively to maximise impact.

With the growing mental health needs of our communities, we remain committed to supporting recovery, resilience and well-being for all those who turn to us for help.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board, staff, sponsors, stakeholders, partners and above all our members for their continual support.

# Our Health & Well-being Hub Report



Life in our well-being hub continues to offer those who enter our doors, whether for a single visit or recurring Members, they are met with the same positive welcome and feeling of 'belonging'. Our Well-being Hub is the door to the ACCI world and all it offers. Staff in the Well-being Hub are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring all visitors are dealt with efficiently and their immediate concerns are addressed.

Working holistically, offers us the opportunity to gain use information/facts ascertained by well-being hub staff and process the requirements ensuring the needs of our visitors/members are channelled to the correct member of staff as quickly as possible thus reducing levels of anxiety and concerns.

In the Well-being Hub, lifetime friendship and support mechanisms are created and developed, many of these spanning over the 30+ years of the service. During this period we have also lost some of our lifelong members, at this time the true family values we foster at ACCI comes into effect. One example was losing our member, Hughlin Malcolm, one of our pool room geniuses, during this year. Hughlin's beautiful calm personality, laughter and smile will ever be missed. In December, we hosted our annual pool tournament where a trophy was dedicated in his honour.





Our well-being hub hosts many of the activities co-ordinated by our Health and Well-being Practitioner who has developed an intensive programme for our members. Daily and weekly activities help give those who visit the Well-being Hub, opportunities to gain new and develop new skills in a safe and nurturing environment. The hub gives hope to those who feel they are no longer part of any club or social groups bringing lost individuals into the family, a family that cares for each other, a family that supports each other, a family that creates new memories with each other.

On a daily basis, we continue to offer our freshly cooked meals to our members and their families.

A monthly menu is available offering hot, tasty, healthy meals which you can smell the beautiful aroma travelling through the building. During our harvesting months, fruits and vegetables which have been grown at the allotment by staff and members, are cooked as part of the meal.

Over the past year, we were fortunate to host several sessions in partnership with Period Matters, a local charity who donated female personal care items for members, visitors and their families, helping us acknowledge and address the issues of period poverty.



The hub is managed by staff and volunteers alike, and as a result of this, we are able to offer a wealth of expertise to all who enter. The Well-being Hub also offers those needing work experience an opportunity to develop academic skills. Being place in the hub, allows them to meet a wide range of individuals all at a different stages of their journey.

“

**Yes, meeting with the members and activities. It's a routine for me and it gets me out the house, I also enjoy baking on a Monday.**

”

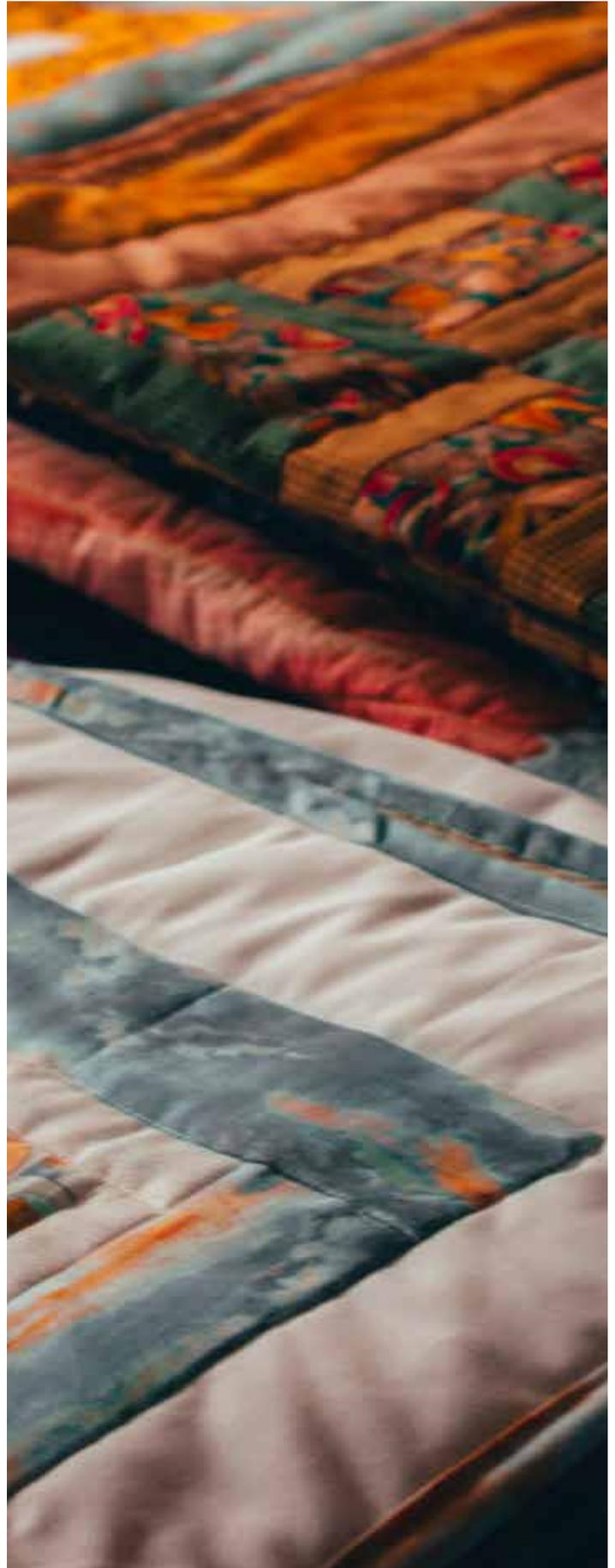
“

**I enjoy coming to the hub and attending the activities.**

”

We were fortunate to be contacted by Project Linus UK Charity, a group who produced handmade blankets and wanted to donate gifts, which we were able to distribute to the members and their families, helping them keep warm in those long cold winter nights.

In this financial year, we welcomed support from the Household Support fund. Our Well-being Hub continues to meet the needs of our Members and we are proud of all we offer.



**No matter  
what happens,  
or how bad it  
seems today,  
life does  
go on, and it  
will be better  
tomorrow.**

— **Maya Angelou**

# Mental Health Liaison Practitioner (MHLP) Report

Mental health in African Caribbean and Asian communities remains a complex issue. Challenges are rooted in historical, cultural and systemic inequalities. This is exacerbated by historical mistrust of the health care system due to negative experiences.

## The most challenges are:-

- Stigma: Mental Health stigma persists across all affected people and it discourages open discussion or to seek out help timely.
- Cultural Barriers: Cultural differences in expressing emotion and experiences can lead to misdiagnosis which will lead to inadequate treatment and support.
- Social Economic factors: Racism, poverty, unemployment and housing instability contribute to increased stress and mental health breakdown.
- Lack of representation: Limited diversity among the mental health professional can create barriers to effective care.
- Exposure to violence, racism and marginalisation.
- Lack of access to quality education and healthcare.
- Low rates of early intervention and preventive care. Most people will only access mental health services, when they have reached a crisis point, often via Mental Health Act Assessment or the criminal justice. This is why, here at ACCI, we continuously strive to make some meaningful progress in achieving some wellness, by working in a collaborative approach involving individuals, communities, professionals and policy makers.



Given that there is an over representation of Black and Asian people within the mental health system, there is increased need to focus on recovery and equality of these individuals. This calls for stronger links between the inpatient hospitals, community mental health teams, prisons, GP surgeries, social services and other charitable organisations like ACCI. The MHLP roll at ACCI is to liaise with all these organisations, so as to work seamlessly in supporting those individuals suffering from enduring mental illness on their recovery journey. The MHLP attends Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) meetings where clients / members of concern are discussed and an action plan is drawn together as a team.

This past year, we have received referrals from the usual sources such as the local inpatient hospitals, GPs, Social Services, Criminal Justice, Police, Probation, Modern Slavery Advocacy and families within the community. ACCI's reputation has reached far afield in the West Midlands and unfortunately we had to turn down a good number of out-of-area referrals. The MHLP has worked tirelessly to support our members to maintain optimum level of functioning in their own living environments. This took the form of educating and explaining the importance of compliance with their prescribed medication. Amongst our members, there are some who continue to use illicit substances which interfere with their prescribed medication. To mitigate this we refer our members to 'Recovery Near You'. Thus working with other agencies we have successfully evaded some potential hospital admissions. However, despite our robust support, we have had hospital admissions of a number of our members. Also, we had two members who ended up in prison due to committing crimes, while under the influence of mental illness and substance misuse.

Despite our limited resources, we made an effort to reach them and the MHLP attended ward review meetings for those in local and out-of-area psychiatric hospitals. This serves to reassure our members that we are always there for them even when the going gets tough. The MHLP continuously liaised with ward managers of the local hospitals to repatriate our members in a timely manner.

On a positive note, after working hard supporting our members to uphold their mental wellness, I am happy to say that we have had two successful outcomes where one of our members remained stable and enrolled into university and she has qualified as an adult nurse. This was outstanding, as she had been in and out of hospital for a couple of years before engaging with ACCI. Another success story is of a member who suffered from Schizo-effective Disorder and had to discontinue her nursing course. She had a number of hospital admissions before she was referred to ACCI. The MHLP supported her to comply with her prescribed medication.

We encouraged her to engage in social activities offered in the Well-being Hub, where she participated in the activities and slowly gained her confidence back. She informed me that she would never pursue nursing due to suffering racism at the university and on her placement. She insisted that she wanted to work and was confident enough to apply for jobs and secured a job with HMRC and has been working for a year now and vows that she will never stop taking her medication and still maintains her relationship with ACCI. This goes without saying that people can overcome the effects of Psychosis, Anxiety and Depression with the correct treatment and support from the medical team, family and the community at large.

**A good  
head and  
a good heart  
are always  
a formidable  
combination.**

— **Nelson Mandela**

# Outreach Report

For many individuals suffering with mental ill health living in their own home is one of the greatest achievements. The environment a person lives in often reflects the state of their mind and thought process. Thus, if their home is messy or untidy, they may not be able to have clear thoughts to deal with the pressures of life and their journey of mental health.



**Home is where the heart is.**



Our Outreach Team has been tasked with ensuring our members feel comfortable in their own homes, by supporting them with daily tasks such as accompanying them to shopping, appointments and providing home care support, developing routines etc. For some members, it is the support of the Outreach Team that enables them to maintain a good home environment and some stability in their lives. Living in the community can be a very lonely place for some members but having their weekly calls from the Outreach Team acts as a safety net. The Outreach Team is also able to monitor both personal care and home care, and as such, can often detect early warning signs of a member becoming unwell which may help to avoid major issues or relapses.

The Outreach Team acts as a bridge between community living and the Well-being Hub. Our Outreach Team support and encourage our members to

come in and use the full services thus aiming to reduce long periods of isolation.

An element of the Outreach Teams' work, is supporting in the assessment of our members mental health and well-being. The team works with our Mental Health Liaison Practitioner to make home visits, to undertake assessment of the individual's mental health prior to us contacting other services to raise issues of concern. We have worked closely with external support services such as Social Workers, Housing Officers, Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPN), GPs and families to ensure our members are receiving the best care available and help them feel supported when they are going through crisis. If a member is becoming unwell; we can work with the external services to identify what the best care package looks like, for example increasing monitoring visits, support with monitoring daily medication, admissions to hospital appointments with GP etc.

If and when members are admitted to the hospital, our Outreach Team will continue to keep regular contact through phone calls and making hospital visits, often taking them their personal items and even a hot meal.

The team is able to attend their weekly review meetings, this is pivotal as Outreach staff can contribute to the discussion given that they engage with members on a regular basis and just when they have had a relapse. It also enables appropriate discharge to be in place e.g. utilities, food etc., thus ensuring members well-being is maintained following a period of hospitalisation.



# Health & Well-being Practitioner Report

## Talent Lounge

ACCI Talent Lounge happens once a month. This is a safe place for our members to showcase their talents and it's a great opportunity for all members to build confidence and develop their skills and talents. Members will perform in poetry, singing, dancing, drumming and storytelling. Each month they perform with new confidence and boldness. These afternoons are enjoyed by everybody.

## Bowling

Every month our members enjoy an exciting outing to the bowling alley. This gathering not only allows them to socialise and have a great time, but also serves as a thrilling event to anticipate. Some members embrace a friendly, competitive spirit, which adds a fun dynamic to the experience. The frequent bowling sessions not only foster camaraderie but also provides an opportunity for skill improvement with each visit. Following the games, the group head out for a meal. Members look forward to this every month.





## Women's Group / Men's Group

This is a safe space for our women and men to connect who have and share similar experiences. Its a safe place where they can openly discuss their challenges and share coping strategies with each other and staff. It's a nice social time where they get involved with numerous activities, art, baking, sewing, playing dominoes, soap-making, men talks women talks and much more.

## Weekly Sewing Class / Art classes

Every week, our members engage in enriching art and sewing classes that nurture their creativity, skills and techniques. These classes serve as a canvas for their imagination to flourish, allowing them to express themselves freely.



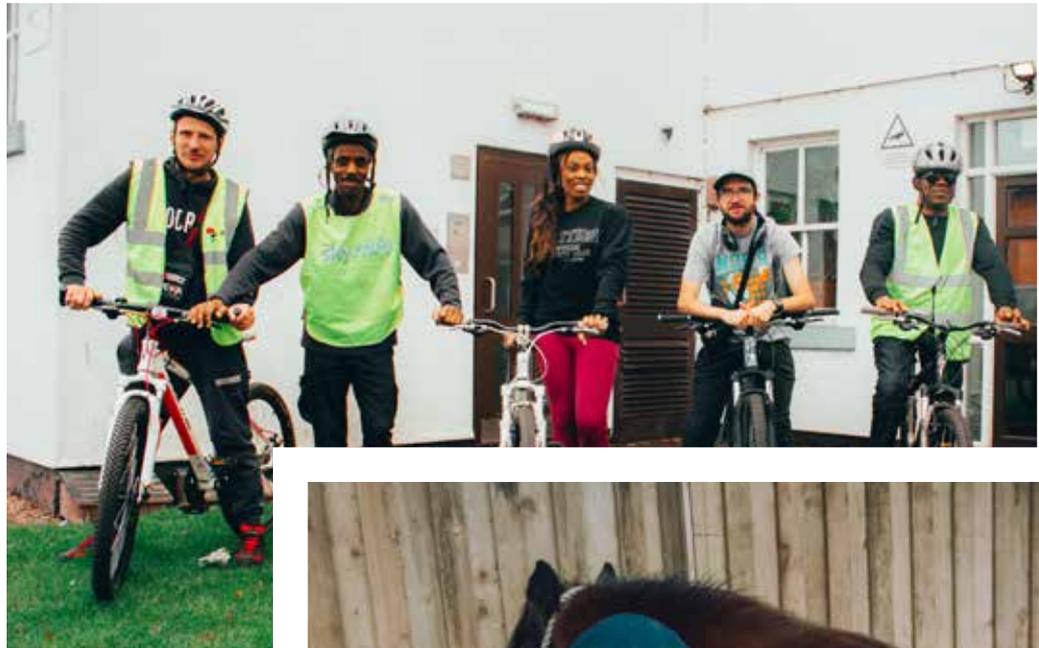
## Football

Tuesday Football: This activity benefits our members with mental health conditions, by fostering community and social connections, Being part of a team enhances self-esteem and confidence, making football a significant tool for promoting mental well-being. Participation in various tournaments across the West Midlands offers additional goals and challenges.



## Walks, Bike Rides, Farm, Football, Gym

Activities that incorporate Fitness is powerful. A good practice of Health and Fitness is medicine for many common mental health and physical challenges. Through delivering our walking, cycle programme, farm and the gym weekly, we have seen a positive impact on depression, anxiety, confidence and much more.



## One-to-one and group Rehabilitation and pain management sessions

Members facing mobility issues and those experiencing aches and pain, have the opportunity for personalised sessions in our rehabilitation clinic. This initiative has proven to be incredibly beneficial and we have witnessed Members, who have gone through these sessions. The positive physical transformations have not only been amazing for their bodies, but have also led to improved mental well-being and lightening their burdens. This rehabilitation programme has truly made a significant impact

Our Monday Farm Therapy sessions, offer members the chance to spend time outdoors and connect with nature in a peaceful, rural setting. Activities include caring for animals, planting, harvesting, and gentle walks around the farm. These hands-on experiences help reduce stress and anxiety, boost mood and build confidence through meaningful participation. Working alongside others also encourages friendship, teamwork and a sense of belonging all of which play an important role in supporting positive mental health and overall well-being.



## April 2024 International Women's Day

In the month of April, we proudly celebrated International Women's Day, creating a truly inspiring event that brought women together to empower one another and showcase their talents. Throughout March, in preparation for this special day, our women participated in poetry workshops, crafting powerful and heartfelt pieces that they later performed at the event.

Their performances were remarkable, reflecting both their creativity and personal journeys. Importantly, the men in our community were also involved, sharing their own poems dedicated to uplifting and inspiring the women. This added a meaningful layer of mutual support and solidarity. The celebration featured a vibrant fashion show, where women from our sewing group proudly showcased outfits they had designed and made themselves. In addition, there were exercise demonstrations and pain management techniques, offering practical tools for self-care and well-being. To further encourage self care, the day included pamper treatments, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all. The atmosphere was filled with joy, confidence and a strong sense of community. By the end of the event, the women left feeling empowered and inspired, having embraced the theme of this year's International Women's Day, 'Count Her In'. It was clear they truly felt counted in, showing up in strength and unity to celebrate themselves and each other.



# May 2024

## Mental Health Week

As part of this year's Mental Health Week, which embraced the national theme 'Move for Our Mental Health,' our members, staff, and local community truly rose to the occasion. To mark the week, we organised a cyclethon with an ambitious target: to complete a marathon distance over the week by cycling five miles each day. Thanks to the support of our organisation (ACCI), everyone was equipped with a bike and biking accessories. This meant that even those in the community who didn't have their own bikes were able to get involved and take part. The enthusiasm and dedication shown by all participants was remarkable. Not everyone felt confident cycling outdoors, but that didn't stop them from getting involved. Those who were less comfortable riding outside, still took on the challenge by completing their miles in the gym on stationary bikes. This gave everyone an opportunity to participate in a way that suited them best, building their fitness and confidence at their own pace while still being part of the wider-community effort.

This daily commitment wasn't always easy, it pushed many outside their comfort zones and proved to be a real challenge. However, the rewards were clear to see. Completing the five miles a day goal not only boosted participants' fitness, stamina and resilience, but also provided vital support for their mental health. It encouraged everyone to get outdoors, be active and connect with others, reinforcing the important link between physical movement and emotional well-being. In doing this, we also saw fantastic physical health improvements, including weight loss and reductions in blood pressure among participants. This made the initiative even more meaningful, showing just how much of a difference regular activity can make. Overall, this was a fantastic success, that demonstrated the power of community spirit and highlighted the positive impact of staying active on both mental and physical health.



## June 2024

### Food Hygiene Course

Members from ACCI successfully completed a Food Hygiene Course. The training was an intensive, full-day session which required focus and commitment, but all participants performed exceptionally well and demonstrated great determination.

The course has provided members with a valuable accredited certificate, which not only enhances their personal development, but also opens up new opportunities.

With this qualification, members are now able to volunteer at ACCI and food-related roles, this marks an important step in building confidence, independence and employability.



## July 2024

### Members' Holiday Torquay

Our recent Members' holiday to Torquay was a truly memorable experience, filled with laughter, relaxation and adventure. Members' were delighted to spend time away together, enjoying one another's company and creating new memories. Members' took full advantage of the beautiful seaside setting. Days were spent strolling along the beach, soaking up the sea air and taking in the stunning coastal scenery. A highlight for many was the boat ride, where members were able to view the coastline from the water and truly appreciate the beauty of the English Riviera. Shopping trips and visits to the surrounding towns gave everyone the chance to explore local culture, while evenings were spent enjoying the entertainment provided at the hotel.

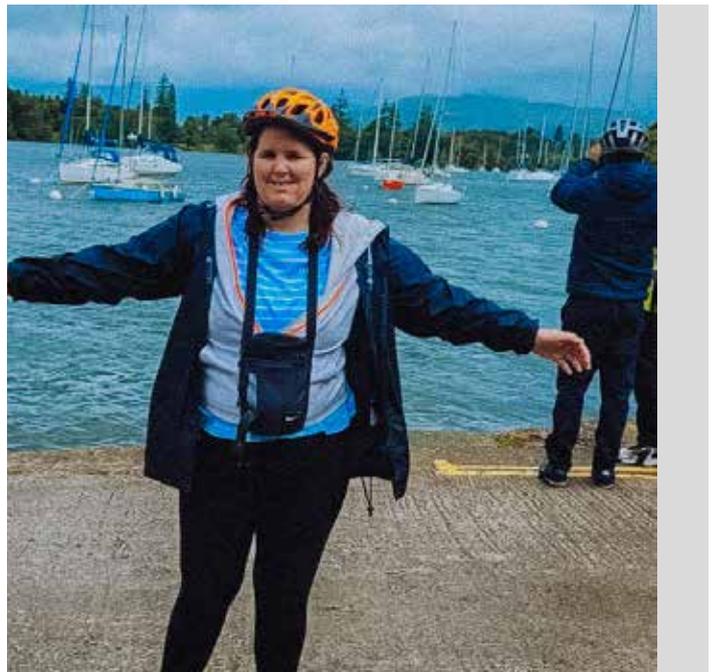
Several members also chose to unwind with the hotel's leisure facilities, including the spa, swimming pool and gym. For those seeking something extraspecial, the Fire and Ice experience proved to be a favourite. This unique thermal journey, alternating between heat and cooling experiences, left participants feeling both refreshed and rejuvenated. From relaxation to adventure, there was something for everyone. Whether exploring the local towns, keeping active in the gym, or simply relaxing by the sea, the holiday offered a chance for members to break away from routine, bond with one another and make lasting memories. Overall, it was a great holiday that will be remembered fondly.

## August 2024 Summer Holistic Programme

Our Summer Holistic Programme, offered Members a refreshing and revitalising experience, designed to support both physical and mental well-being. The programme included a variety of fun and engaging activities such as boxing sessions, bike rides, kite flying, rounder's, tennis, drumming and Pilates, all aimed at improving fitness, confidence and overall happiness.

Members also enjoyed theatre trips and outings to Dudley Zoo, creating opportunities for social connection and shared enjoyment. We even organised a special trip to the Lake District to provide dedicated one-to-one support for a Member who would benefit from extra time and attention — a meaningful experience that reflected our commitment to individual care.

In addition, the programme featured interactive discussions led by a nutritionist, exploring how healthy eating habits can positively influence both physical health and mental wellness. Together, these activities created a truly holistic and uplifting summer experience that encouraged growth, confidence and well-being among all participants.



# October 2024

## Mommy Fit Programme

In October, we proudly launched Mommy Fit, a programme designed to support mothers in a safe, welcoming space. The day began with open discussions around birthing experiences, followed by a body MOT which included diastasis recti checks, tailored exercises and nutritional guidance.

### The aim of Mommy Fit is to:

- Help moms rebuild physical strength
- Support pelvic floor health
- Boost confidence and self esteem
  - Create a sense of community and belonging



Since its launch, Mommy Fit has continued throughout the months with weekly classes, focusing on the above goals. We have also built a strong collaboration with New Cross Hospital hosting events throughout the year which have been very successful.

Mothers attending have shared how much they value the programme, not only for their health and fitness but also for the friendships and support networks they have developed. Many have found playmates for their children and a space to connect with others who share similar experiences.

For some, Mommy Fit has been more than just exercise it has been a lifeline. We've welcomed moms who were experiencing isolation, as well as mothers referred from women's refuges. The programme has offered them a tower of strength, providing encouragement, empowerment and community each Wednesday.



Looking ahead, we are excited to expand Mommy Fit, reaching even more mothers and continuing to build a supportive, empowering environment where women can rediscover themselves and thrive.



## **November 2024**

### **Visit to the Grand Theatre – Community Panto Project**

As part of ACCI's ongoing partnership with the Grand Theatre, Members were invited to take part in the Grand Theatre Community Panto Project, celebrating 130 years of Panto at the Grand Theatre. The project involved creative art sessions held at the centre, where Members contributed their own artwork inspired by the rich history of pantomime.

Members were later invited to the Grand Theatre to view the completed exhibition, where their work was proudly displayed. The visit was a moment of pride and joy for participants, who were delighted to see their creations showcased in such an iconic venue. It also provided an opportunity to engage with theatre staff, share experiences and learn more about the theatre's journey and community engagement initiatives.

## **December 2024**

### **ACCI Blackpool Trip / Christmas Party**

Each year, ACCI Members look forward to their fun-filled trip to Blackpool, a highlight of the year! The group enjoys strolling along North Pier, riding the Festival Tram and taking in the spectacular Blackpool Illuminations that light up the seafront. There's always time for shopping, laughter, and the classic seaside treat; fish and chips by the shore. The trip always gets everyone into the Christmas spirit and we finish the year in true ACCI style with our much-loved Christmas Party, a joyful celebration of togetherness and good times.







## January 2025

### January Summary

### Wellness Challenge

We kicked off the year with our January Wellness Programme encouraging both Members and the wider community to start 2025 with a focus on health and well-being. Participants enrolled in our Marathon in a Month challenge, where they aimed to complete the distance of a marathon through activities such as walking, cycling, or swimming.

Alongside this, Members also took on the 'No Sugar for 30 Days' challenge, promoting healthier eating habits and mindful nutrition choices. The results were phenomenal, many participants reported weight loss, improved blood pressure, increased energy levels and an overall boost in motivation. Most importantly, Members developed sustainable healthy habits that have helped set a positive tone for the year ahead.





## February 2025 Month of Love

In February, we celebrated our Month of Love, focusing on themes of love, self-care, and self-worth. Throughout the month, we dedicated time to nurturing our Members' well-being through a series of relaxing and uplifting activities. Members enjoyed in-house pamper sessions, including soothing foot spas, while some from the Women's group, had the opportunity to enjoy a spa

day at the Village Hotel, complete with a meal and time to unwind.

We were also joined by guest speaker, Sabrina Davies who delivered an inspiring talk on love, self-love, the pillars of love and the importance of knowing one's self-worth. Members found the session deeplyengaging and empowering, reflecting on how vital these topics are for personal growth and confidence.

To complement the theme, Members also took part in flower arranging sessions, creating beautiful floral displays for themselves and their loved ones. It was truly a beautiful month of connection, self-reflection and celebration of one another.



## March 2025

### March Celebrating Women / Women's International

March was a truly inspiring month, as we came together to celebrate International Women's Day and honour the incredible women within our community.

We hosted a warm and welcoming 'Coffee and Afternoon Tea Party', creating a space for Members to connect, share stories and celebrate womanhood in all its beauty and strength.

As part of our celebrations, we also held a 'Mommies Matter' seminar, designed especially for new and expectant mothers. This empowering event was delivered in collaboration with several partner organisations, offering valuable discussions around motherhood, well-being, and support. It provided an opportunity for women to learn, share experiences and feel uplifted, knowing they are not alone on their journey.

To add a touch of glamour and self-confidence to the day, participants were treated to makeovers and a makeup tutorial, led by a professional makeup artist. Members learned new beauty techniques and left feeling refreshed, radiant and more confident in themselves.

The month was a powerful reminder of the strength, resilience and grace of women, a celebration of sisterhood, self-care and empowerment.



**The Month of Love reminded me how important it is to take care of myself.**

**The pamper session helped me to slow down and really relax — something I don't do often enough.**

— **Member Thoughts**

“

**Taking part in the Marathon in a Month really motivated me to get moving again after Christmas. I walked and cycled my miles and by the end of the month I felt fitter, lighter and so much more positive. It gave me the push I needed to start the year right.**

”

— **Member Thoughts**

“

**I really enjoyed doing the Food Hygiene Course. I haven't studied in a long time, so at first I was nervous, but the support I got made all the difference.**

**Passing the course has given me a big confidence boost and I'm proud to say I can now work in the ACCI Tuck shop. It feels like a real achievement and has helped me believe in myself.**

”

— **Member  
Thoughts**

# Therapeutic Counselling Service Report



Our Therapeutic Counselling services continues to receive weekly referrals for Talking Therapy. This service remains an integral part of the ACCI service. Working with some of the most traumatised Members of the community, our service aims to offer these individuals an opportunity to off-load and find strategies to cope with past traumas and re-focus on their lives. Working with our Counselling team has enabled individuals to begin to 'unpick' and 'identify root causes'. In this current climate, the opportunity to share the concerns with professionals, provides individuals with new chances and hope for the future.

Within this financial year our service became part of the Talking Therapy Plus Model, who funded hours through the NHS

on a pilot course. This new approach to counselling offered us a more structured approach whilst still working within the parameters of the holistic service we offer. We began part of a delivery team of six partners who were able to offer up to 10 sessions of Talking Therapies to our referrals.

As part of the exit strategy, our Counsellor worked with other members of staff, to encourage their clients to access the other services provided at ACCI e.g. the well-being activities to help reduce isolation and improve their overall mental health and well-being.





Our Counselling offers, include a mix of counseling styles comprising of:

Face-to-face Talking Therapy we continue to offer these sessions and provide a safe therapeutic space for those who wish to come into the building. This also enables them to witness and access the well-being activities on offer as part of our holistic service.

Walk and Talk sessions, where a Therapist and client conduct a therapy session, whilst walking outside in a public place, such as parks or other natural settings and are especially popular during the summer months.

Virtual Sessions - Employed members in need of counselling support but reluctant

to take time off work to avoid disclosing mental health condition to employer. We have been able to offer virtual online and tele-counselling therapy delivered at a time convenient to individuals to protect their anonymity, non-employer disclosure status and, to minimise disruption to their daily working life.

The future of our Counselling Services - The Falomi Counselling Service has been in existence for over 10 years. One of the challenges we face is the long-term sustainability of this service by securing a long-term funding stream. We are currently in the process of submitting an application to National lottery for a further three years. however, our vision is to look for a more longer-term solution for this well needed service.

# Case Study

## Background

AA, 42-year-old man, came to therapy, extremely anxious and depressed. At the time he did not mention his suicidal ideation but explained later that at his first session of telephone counselling, he was in a car park contemplating suicide. AA said “his life had no meaning and that he was about to split up from his wife, who was ‘his world’”. They were packing up their belongings in boxes. AA had no self-worth and felt useless. He was an unhappy child and the best part of his life was when he met his wife as a teenager.

## Work

The Counsellor, who is an Integrative Psychotherapist, used various approaches to work with AA, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, the Gestalt empty chair technique and a generally Person Centred Approach, giving AA the power to direct the sessions and say what he wants from counselling, with the counsellor being not only non-directive but non-judgemental, empathetic and congruent. Once AA started to trust his counsellor and a therapeutic relationship was developed, he began to relax and share his story and develop a different way of thinking and saw how he could improve his circumstances and start making plans for changes to his life. AA revealed that when he was 5 years old, he and other young boys were messing around at a wedding, and his father told him that he will deal with him when he got home. At home, father asked his mom and siblings to leave the room while he beat him with an electric wire. His mom cried when she saw him, he could not sit comfortably. His father always put him down and said that he would never come to anything in life. He always tried to earn his dad’s approval but only got it when he did something good. He went to

University and did well but still with no approval from his dad. He, his brother and his father worked in the family business. He got up at 5 am to get ready for work to open the shops. He is okay at work because his dad works in a different shop, but when his dad would come into his shop he would get very anxious and stressed. Sometimes he took his frustration out on his wife. AA and his wife lived with his parents initially, along with his brother and his brother’s family, but eventually realised that he had to move out because his wife was not happy. He and his wife bought a house but they were still not happy. This was because he had many road rage incidents when they would travel together. Finally, she refused to travel with him anymore or go on holidays together. Unpacking his thoughts to see what was behind the road rage, took him to his past and his relationship with his dad.

## Impact

Through counselling, AA was able to value himself and realise that he had achieved so much through University and his experience at work. He decided to make changes in his life. AA worked on himself and this has helped to build his relationship with his wife. They are back together. He has also given his notice to his dad to leave the family business and he has received his share of the business (1/3). He has started his own business and is doing extremely well. No more road rage and his wife now travels with him and they are going on a holiday. He wished he had believed in himself earlier and had the courage to walk away from his dad. He said counselling saved his life, and his marriage, it has also given him a new outlook on life. He wants to give back something to ACCI by volunteering his service to help someone.



# Omari Housing Report



## Atiba House

Provides accommodation and support to eight male Members.

## Yahimba House

Provides accommodation and support to five female Members.

## Omari Flats

Provides accommodation and support to nine Members, male and female.

## Floating Support

The Floating Support Service is not linked to accommodation. It is not normally provided by a person's landlord. Irrespective of his or her housing situation, a person might need support with issues such as budgeting, life skills, drug or alcohol misuse, avoiding offending or issues of isolation and vulnerability. We offer this as a stand-alone service, without providing or arranging accommodation linked to the support.





## Manager's Report

ACCI is committed to ensuring that we provide a sustainable supported housing service which enables our Members who are vulnerable adults navigating the life challenges of living with issues of mental health. Our aim is to help Members live as independently as possible, for as long as possible, as a valued member of the community and thrive, irrespective of any obstacles that may arise.

The aim of our management and staff, is to improve health, well-being and socio-economic outcomes for our Members who need support to live independently in the community. We also try to ensure that Omari Housing, as a service delivery agency, is affordable, practical and representative of the needs of the community.

The challenges of providing supported housing in terms of client needs, provider types, delivery models,

commissioning practices and funding mechanisms, have been very challenging over the last year, especially due to the increased cost of living, NI and Pensions, as well as increased direct operating costs. These factors are inter-connected across supported housing localities. This results in a fragmented system which is funded and delivered in different ways to varying degrees, depending on where you live and this leads to uneven rates of provision and access to services dependent on current government priorities and the perception of your services value or relevance as decided by your local council through the assigned commissioners.

Despite the current challenges, we remain resilient and able to demonstrate the need for our ongoing services which are vital to the local community in Wolverhampton.



Members of the Wolverhampton Healthwatch Oversight Group

## Partnership Working

Working with partners is essential in helping to provide the right homes and environment for our Members, in our supported housing units. We are continuing to work closely with:

- The Local Authority
- Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- CMHT (Community Mental Health Team)
- RMN (Registered Managers Network)
- Wolverhampton Multi-Agency Hoarding Panel
- Wolverhampton Healthwatch Oversight Group
- Black Country Stakeholders Mental Health Forum
- Green-Square Accord (Housing)
- Midland Heart (Housing)
- CPN's (Community Psychiatric Nurses)
- Consultants (Penn Hospital)
- GP's
- I.C.B. (Integrated Care Board)
- Funders.

I am currently the Co-Chair of the Black Country Registered Managers Network and a panel member for Wolverhampton Healthwatch Oversight Group.



## Staff Development & Training

A.C.C.I.'s Training Manual continues to be the catalyst for our staff training and development. All staff members attend training on a regular basis, where the mandatory core health and social care subjects are covered. We also continue to undertake formal qualifications through our partnership with Dudley Collage. Four members of staff successfully completed their NVQ Level 3 in Health & Social Care. A very well done to them.

We will continue to further develop Omari Housing Services, with excellence at the forefront of our delivery strategy to our Members and will continue to develop the staff team through positive leadership, motivation, encouragement and training to ensure that all the vulnerable people that we work with on a daily basis, live their lives as comfortable and independently as possible



**Whatever  
we believe  
about  
ourselves  
and our  
ability  
comes true  
for us.**

— **Susan L. Taylor**

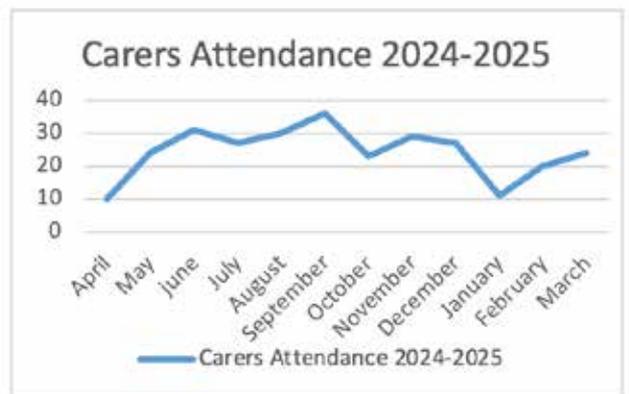
# Carers Group Report



2024-25 was another busy and productive year for the Carers Group. The dedication and commitment of members continues, along with increased membership.

The graph indicates consistently high levels of attendance even during the colder months. The numbers and activity evaluation demonstrates the commitment of members and the value placed on the service and the benefits it provides.

Members meetings continue on a monthly basis, with intermittent fortnightly activities such as flower arranging, soap-making, meals out, health advice, theatre visits and exercise sessions.



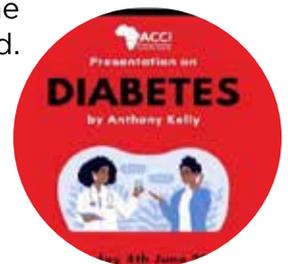


Additionally, members support ACCI's programmes eg the Gala, AGM and World Mental Health Day. We see progress in the lives of our members by their continued willingness to engage in activities.

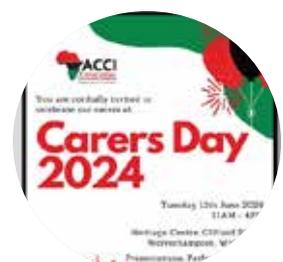
ACCI recognise the importance for Carers to stay abreast of relevant issues for both themselves and their 'cared for'. Responding to this, meetings are designed to provide members with information, frequently done by inviting presentations from outside agencies such as Diabetic Awareness, Wills and Power of Attorney, Severn Trent Water, City Council (on scam prevention). The partnership with the Grand Theatre has proved very successful, during the year about four hundred tickets were offered free or at reduced prices.

Due to the high incidence of diabetics within the group and the wider community,

a Diabetic Awareness event was held in a local church, to which the wider community was invited. The interest was such, that an additional session was requested. The two sessions were attended by 84 participants.



As in previous years, ACCI acknowledged National Carers Day, the theme 'Honouring our Carers'. The event was attended by members, local community groups, including a delegation from Birmingham Carers Group and some statutory agencies.



“

**What a great day,  
I feel so happy when  
I am with the other  
carers I love the  
support network  
it is so good for me.  
I will be a carer for  
my son until God  
takes me home**

”

ACCI continues its membership of the Wolverhampton Dementia Action Alliance, feedback from which is related to members. Annually, the DAA encourages its members to have an event to mark national Dementia Action Week. In an effort to raise wider community awareness of dementia, and address the stigma associated with the issue, the Church of God of Prophecy agreed to host a dementia themed service. There has been increased inquiry from the community about available dementia service, an indication of the increased incidence and need for culturally appropriate services.

In conclusion, the Carers Group continues to play its role in enabling ACCI's aim of providing a holistic model of care.





# Volunteers Report



In June 2024, our Volunteers 'Volunteer week 40th anniversary', two of our volunteers and co-ordinators visited the Wolverhampton Civic Centre.

The purpose of this event was to promote awareness of ACCI, who we are and what we do within the community and with this opportunity, promoting awareness, have been effective and very fulfilling for individuals who may need the support we offer and other organisations.

Some of the key roles done by our volunteers during Volunteers Week 2024 includes:

- Befriending (Supporting Members one-to-one with activities)
- IT skills (Creating PowerPoint and TV presentations to display highlights about ACCI, and our monthly activities during the day)
- Hospitality (serving hot and cold drinks, cakes and snacks to our Members, when required)
- Leading and assisting in group activities (for example, Book Club)
- Catering
- Handing out food parcels to those in need



Presentation on Diabetes by Anthony Kelly in Wolverhampton, this was an event awareness on Diabetes, simultaneously, ACCI took the opportunity to inform the community about the services we offer. It was also an opportunity for our Volunteer to support our Carers during this event.

## **The Mount Hotel – ACCI Sponsors Appreciation Event July 2024**

Attending the Sponsors Appreciation Event, was an opportunity to meet some of our Members, Staff, Board Members, Volunteers and the role they play in enhancing the services at ACCI.





## ACCI Carers Event June 2024

Carers Day was an opportunity to support, acknowledge and appreciate our Carers for their time, support and compassion in helping people.

## Our Volunteers at ACCI

At ACCI we value our volunteers' time, skills and commitment to give back to the community and here are some of their comments:



**Volunteers provides opportunities for individuals to give back whilst gaining new skills and developing personal goals.”**

**- Volunteer  
Co-ordinator**



**Volunteers are extremely valued asset to the work of ACCI. This week provides an opportunity to celebrate and pay tribute to our volunteers.**

**- Alicia Spence  
CEO**



“

**I enjoy volunteering, looking after Members, making teas and coffees which I have been doing for a few years now. Every day is different and ACCI is a safe place where I love volunteering. I take it serious to the point where I was doing a Maths Course and passed First level, the tutor was pleased and put me up for an award. At ACCI I bake on a Monday.**

”

— **Volunteer  
Thoughts**



**Volunteering at ACCI has been a warm, inclusive and rewarding experience. From the very beginning, I was made to feel genuinely welcomed by the staff who went out of their way to ensure I felt part of the ACCI family. This strong sense of community creates a supportive and encouraging environment where future volunteers will feel valued and appreciated. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved, particularly with Member support and activities within the Well-being Hub. Volunteering at ACCI has felt like more than just giving my time, it's been an opportunity to become part of something bigger, where my presence has been truly felt and my efforts have been celebrated.**



—— **Volunteer Thoughts**





# Good Night Project Report

The Good Night Project was launched by the City of Wolverhampton Council in response to the cost-of-living crisis, which highlighted that a significant number of residents, including children, were being forced to sleep on floors without access to appropriate beds or bedding.

Delivered in partnership with us, the project aims to ensure that vulnerable families, particularly those with young children, have access to safe, warm and suitable sleeping arrangements.



Outputs and Impacts (Last 12 Months)  
Over the last year, the Good Night Project has delivered the following support to residents across the city:

- 621 beds distributed
- 674 mattresses provided
- 246 bedding sets supplied
- 24 cots delivered

Our support has enabled hundreds of families to move from unsafe or unsuitable sleeping conditions, into more stable and dignified home environments.

## Ongoing Demand

Despite the significant support provided, demand remains consistently high. The project continues to receive an average of:

- 25 referrals per week
- 4.06 referrals per day

This sustained level of referrals, demonstrates an ongoing and unmet need for essential household support within the city.

## Geographic Distribution of Need

Referrals have been received from all areas of Wolverhampton, with the highest levels of demand recorded in:

- St Peter's - 177 referrals
- Heath Town - 176 referrals
- Bushbury South & Low Hill - 122 referrals

The lowest levels of referrals were recorded in:

- Penn - 15 referrals
- Tettenhall Regis - 18 referrals

## Partnerships and Donations

We have worked closely with local businesses, voluntary organisations and community partners. We are also part of the Council's City Homemakers initiative, benefiting from items donated through the 'Too Good to Chuck' scheme, operated at Shaw Road Household Waste and Recycling Centre.



**Demand has remained high over the last twelve months, with a notable increase in requests for children's beds and bedding. The provision of bunk beds has enabled many children to move from co-sleeping arrangements with siblings to having their own bed.**

**- Phil Dixon,  
Project Co-ordinator**







# Events & Awards Report

ACCI hosted two Sponsor Appreciation Events, bringing together Members, guests and sponsors to celebrate partnership and collaboration.

The event highlighted the importance of collective support in advancing the organisation's mission and recognised the valuable contributions of sponsors in supporting our continued growth and impact.

## Annual Gala

We marked our 37th anniversary with a gala event held at Wolverhampton Racecourse, themed Moving Forward and attended by over 500 guests.

The evening celebrated the organisation's legacy and future, recognising Members, showcasing cultural performances and hosting an African marketplace.

The event raised donations to support vital mental health services, made possible through the generous support of sponsors and the wider community.

## MBCC Awards

On Saturday 29 November 2024, we were honoured with the Charity of the Year Award at the 2024 MBCC Awards.

This recognition reflected the dedication and commitment of our staff, the continued support of our community and the strategic guidance provided by the Board of Trustees. Our collective efforts played a significant role in enabling the organisation to achieve this milestone.

The award marked an important moment of achievement for us and served as encouragement to continue advancing our mission through compassion, hope and meaningful impact.



# Telford Services Report



At the heart of the ACCI Telford Project, is our commitment to supporting African and African Caribbean communities by ensuring they feel heard, valued and connected to local mental health services. Many community members experience barriers such as stigma, cultural misunderstanding, and isolation. ACCI has worked to reduce these barriers by building trust, creating safe spaces and offering culturally informed support.

Following an invitation from Telford & Wrekin Council, ACCI partnered with Mind Telford, to take part in weekly Calm Cafés in Oakengates and at the Meeting Point in Telford. These sessions became welcoming spaces where people could meet others, talk openly about their experiences, and access informal mental health support.

Alongside the Calm Cafés, ACCI provided practical advice, one-to-one support, workshops and community activities.

We also delivered seminars and cultural events that brought people together, strengthened relationships and reinforced a sense of belonging. Our approach focused on community connection, shared experiences and mutual support, helping individuals feel less isolated and more confident in seeking help.

## Workshops

Although ACCI does not have a permanent base in Telford, this did not prevent us from being visible and active within the community. Over the year, we delivered regular workshops in accessible and familiar community venues, including Park Lane Community Hub, Hadley Community Centre, TACT in Wellington, Brookside Community Centre and Arlestone Community Centre.



The workshops were designed to be inclusive, informal and community-led. Activities included poetry, music, digital art and art therapy, table games, and group discussions. These sessions encouraged people to share their stories, express emotions creatively, and connect with others who had similar life experiences. For many participants, this was the first time they felt comfortable engaging in group activities related to well-being.

We also ran gentle physical and holistic well-being sessions that introduced breathing exercises, relaxation techniques and calming practices. These sessions focused on practical tools that participants could easily use at home to manage stress,

anxiety and low mood. By sharing these skills in a supportive group setting, participants gained confidence and felt empowered to take control of their own well-being.

## Outdoor Activities

Listening to the community, we learned that many people valued opportunities to spend time outdoors and connect with nature. During the summer months, ACCI organised gentle group walks to local beauty spots such as The Wrekin, Silkin Way and Apley Woods. These walks offered a relaxed and social environment where participants could talk, build friendships and enjoy the calming effects of being outdoors.

For many community members, these walks became a highlight of the week. They supported physical health, reduced feelings of isolation and created space for informal peer support. Being in nature helped participants slow down, reflect, and experience a sense of peace away from everyday pressures.

We also delivered an eight-week summer cycling programme in partnership with the Telford Bike Hub, using bicycles based in Telford Park. Cycling along the Silkin Way was a particularly meaningful experience, especially for participants who had never accessed these routes before. The programme helped people build confidence, improve fitness and reconnect with their local environment.

With an average of 10 participants per session, the cycling programme demonstrated strong community engagement and demand for activities that combine physical movement, mental well-being and social connection. These shared experiences strengthened relationships and encouraged participants to remain active beyond the programme.

## Home Visits and Outreach Services

ACCI implemented a comprehensive home visit and outreach programme that has been highly effective in addressing the needs of African and African Caribbean communities in Telford. These visits helped to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, ensuring individuals could access appropriate and culturally sensitive support. By meeting individuals in their own homes, ACCI created a safe and familiar environment where people felt comfortable discussing physical, emotional and mental health concerns. Our team's understanding of cultural beliefs and values played a crucial role in building trust and delivering meaningful support.

Home visits provided both practical assistance and emotional support. Many individuals faced complex challenges, including chronic illness, mental health difficulties and social isolation. ACCI staff offered compassionate, person-centred support, ensuring individuals felt listened to and understood. This holistic approach enabled us to address both physical and emotional needs effectively.

In addition, ACCI provides counselling services in Wolverhampton, which residents in Telford are able to access through our referral programme.

## Additional Support

ACCI provided emergency food and clothing donations to individuals and families experiencing crisis. We recognise that unexpected circumstances can leave people without essential items and our donation programme ensured immediate access to basic necessities.

We also supported individuals requiring assistance with Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications. Navigating benefit systems and tribunals can be challenging, and our team provided guidance, advocacy and referrals to appropriate services to ensure individuals could access the support they were entitled to.

Although ACCI does not offer housing provision outside Wolverhampton, we supported families across areas including Dawley, Woodside, Randlay, Newport, Apley and Hadley through donations of furniture, furnishings and household items. During the year, ACCI also organised a range of social and cultural activities, including day trips to Barmouth in Wales, attendance at the Liverpool Music Festival, local music and poetry events, as well as cinema and theatre visits. These activities promoted social engagement, cultural enrichment and overall well-being.



## Conclusion

The ACCI Telford Project has made a meaningful difference to the lives of African and African Caribbean community members across Telford. Through workshops, outreach and additional support, we created safe, welcoming spaces where people felt respected, understood and supported.

Our community-focused approach ensured that individuals were not treated as service users alone, but as valued members of the community with lived experiences, strengths and voices. Creative activities such as poetry, music, and digital art, enabled participants to express themselves, while group discussions and reasoning sessions, encouraged shared learning and mutual support.

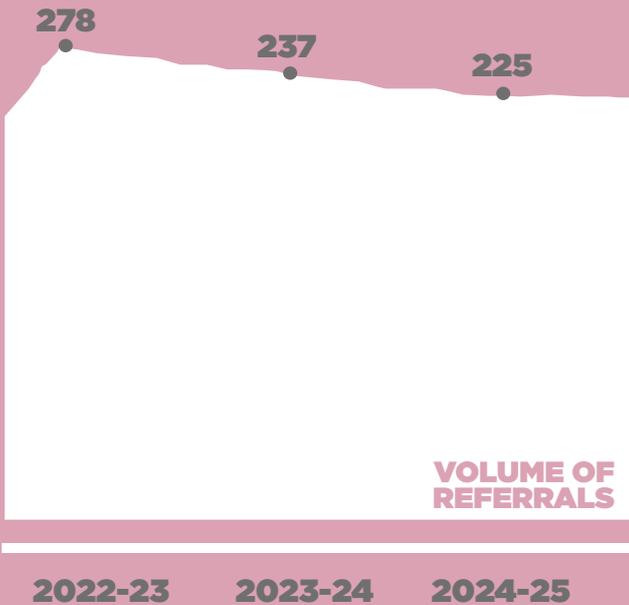
By integrating holistic exercises and practical well-being techniques, participants gained tools they could use in everyday life to manage stress and improve their emotional health. Just as importantly, the project helped rebuild confidence, reduce isolation and strengthen community bonds.

Feedback from participants, highlights the positive impact of the project, with many continuing to attend sessions and engage with ACCI's wider support services. For some, these activities were a first step towards seeking further help or reconnecting with their community.

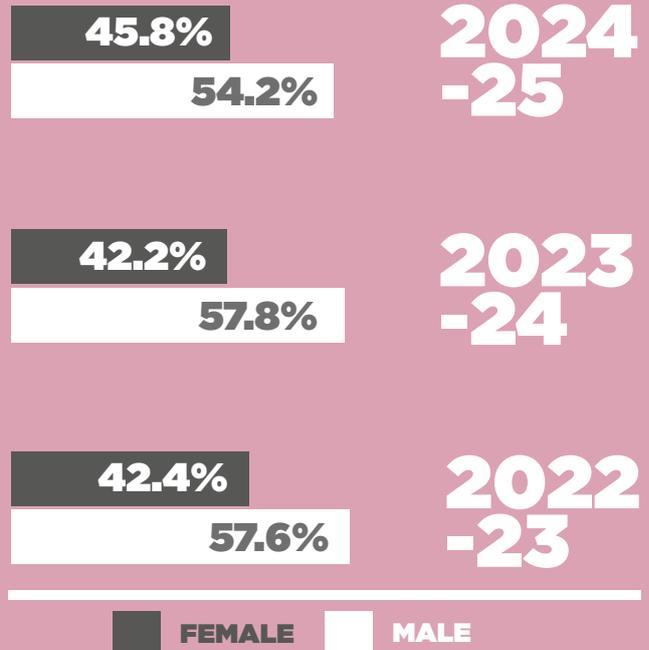
Overall, ACCI's work in Telford during 2024-2025, provided a trusted lifeline of culturally sensitive support, empowerment, and connection. The project has laid strong foundations for continued community engagement, improved well-being and lasting positive change.

# Referral Trends

## Total Referrals



## Referrals By Gender

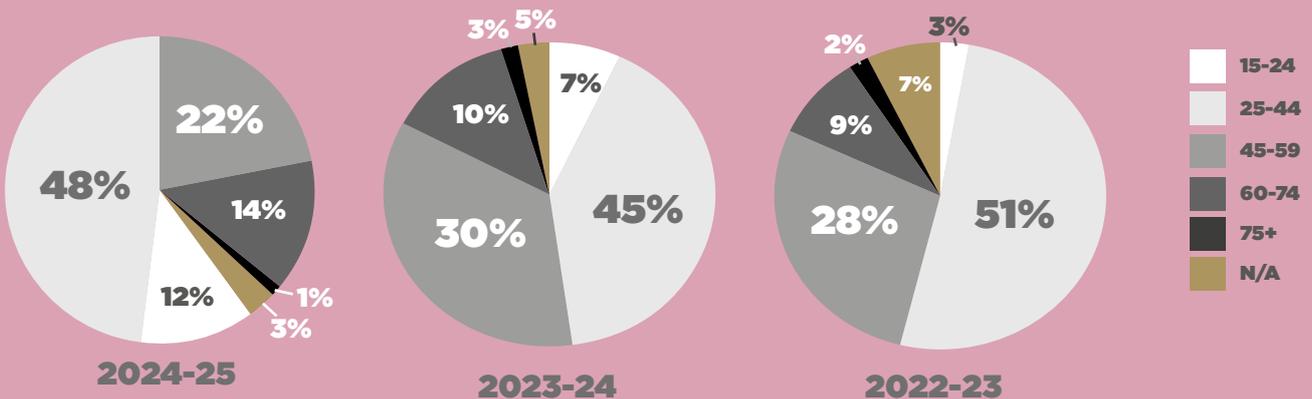


The organisation received very slightly fewer referrals in the 2024-25 operational year than in the year before, a 5% decrease, though it should be noted that the complexity of the referrals coming in has increased as care services across the region have been affected by funding constraints.

The last year has seen a slight increase in the proportion of female referrals compared to previous years.

## Referrals By Age

There were notable increases in the proportion of young (15-24) and old (60-74) people referred to ACCI in the last year, from 7 to 12% and 9 to 14% respectively, with only 70% of referrals falling into the 25-44 and 45-59 age groups (compared to 75% and 73% in previous years).



## Referral destinations

Counselling, Housing & Benefits support and Well-being Hub activities were once again the three most used services provided by ACCI, with a further significant increase in the use of Housing & Benefits/Welfare Rights Support (linked to Housing & Benefits) - now the destination for 42.7% of referrals altogether compared to just 33.3% in 2023-24.

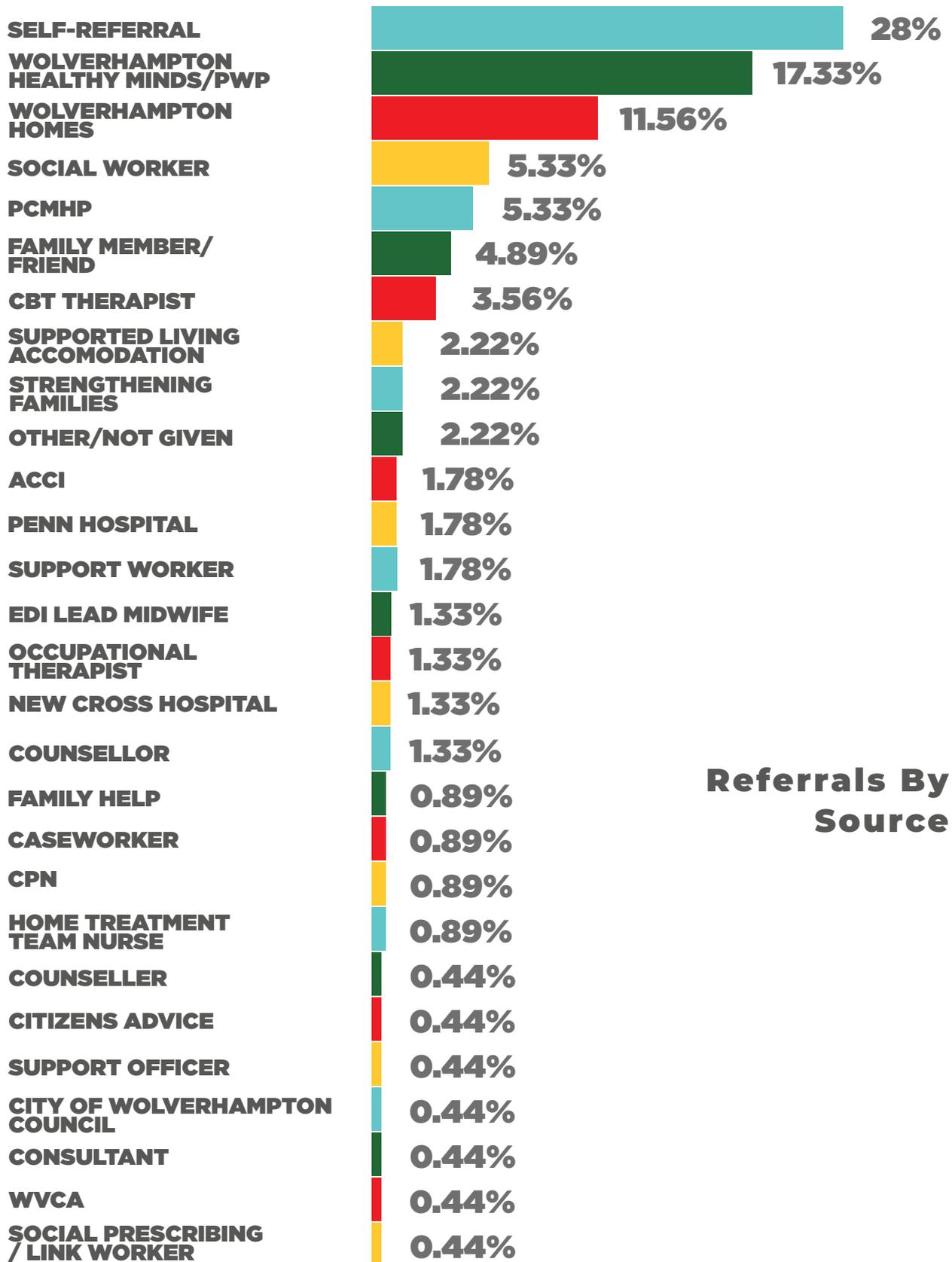
The resident Mental Health Liaison Practitioner (listed as Forensic) handled an increased proportion of referrals this year, also taking some referrals directly from patients at locations such as Penn Hospital.



## Referral by source

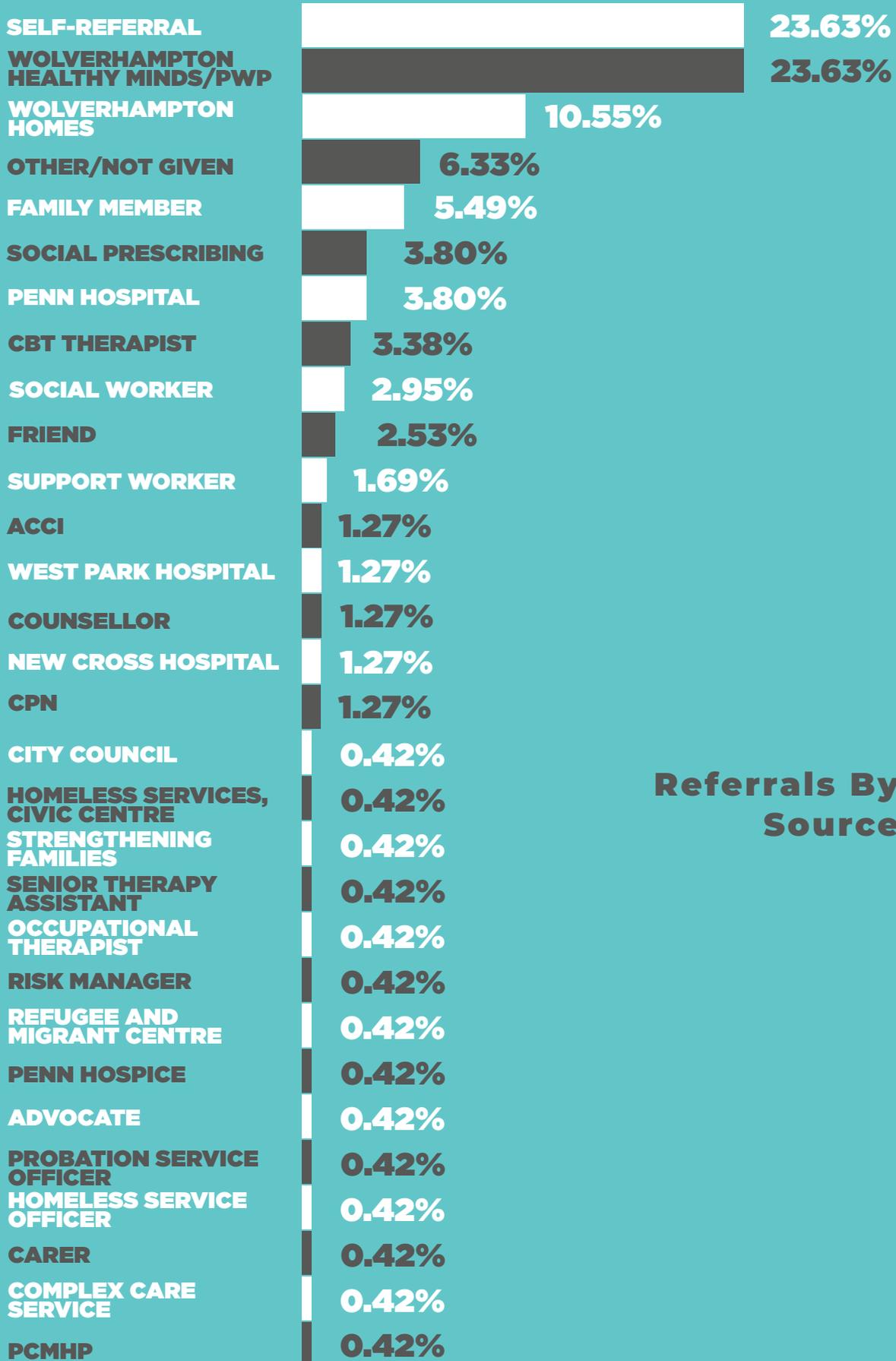
Self-referrals, Wolverhampton Talking Therapies (formerly Healthy Minds) and Wolverhampton Homes were by far the most frequent sources of referrals, but the chart below shows the diversity of people and organisations who chose to use ACCI’s services.

## Referrals Sources (2024-25)



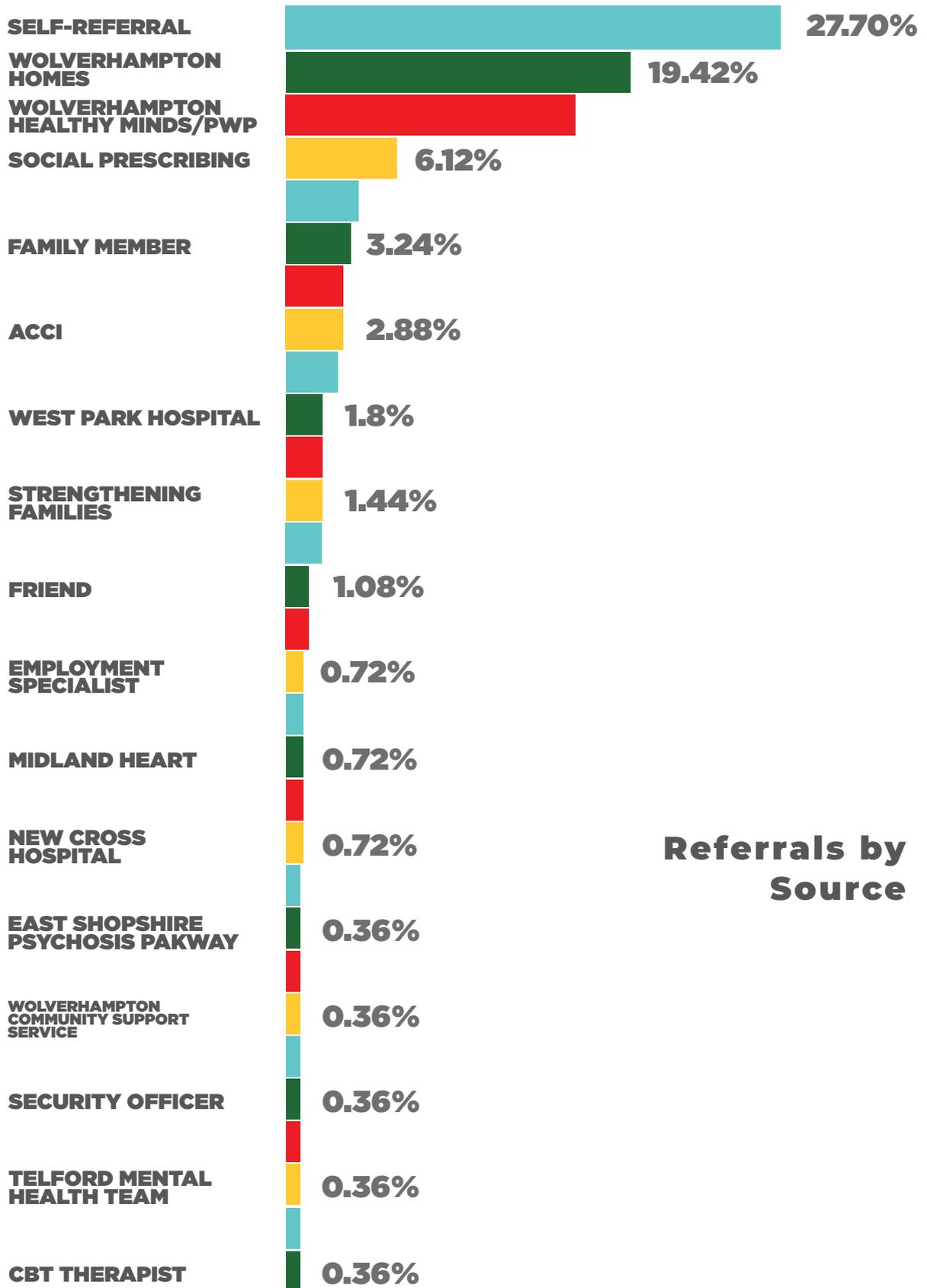
**Referrals By Source**

Referrals Sources (2023-24)



Referrals By Source

## Referrals Sources (2022-23)

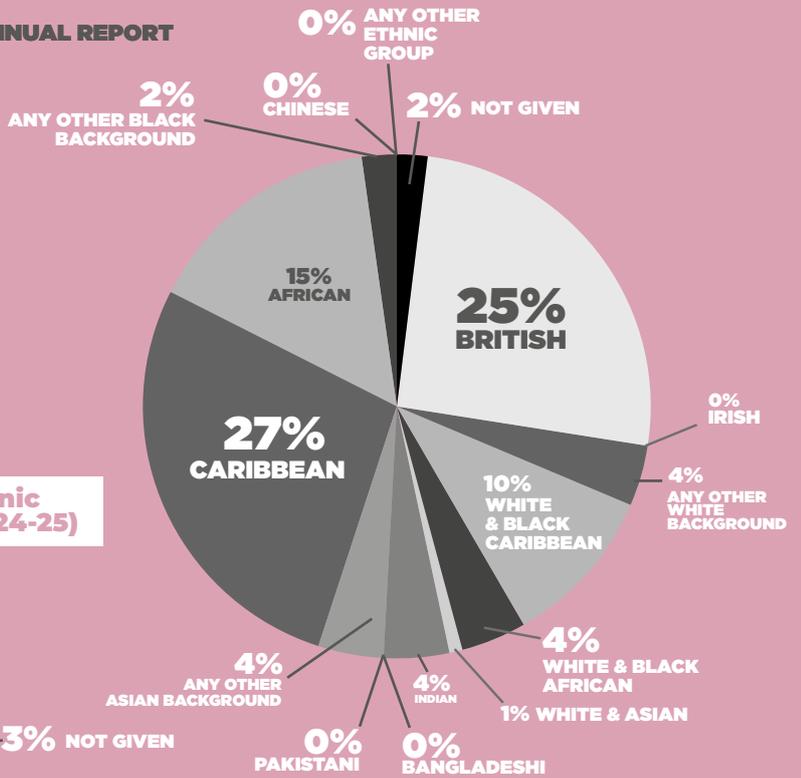


**Referrals by Source**

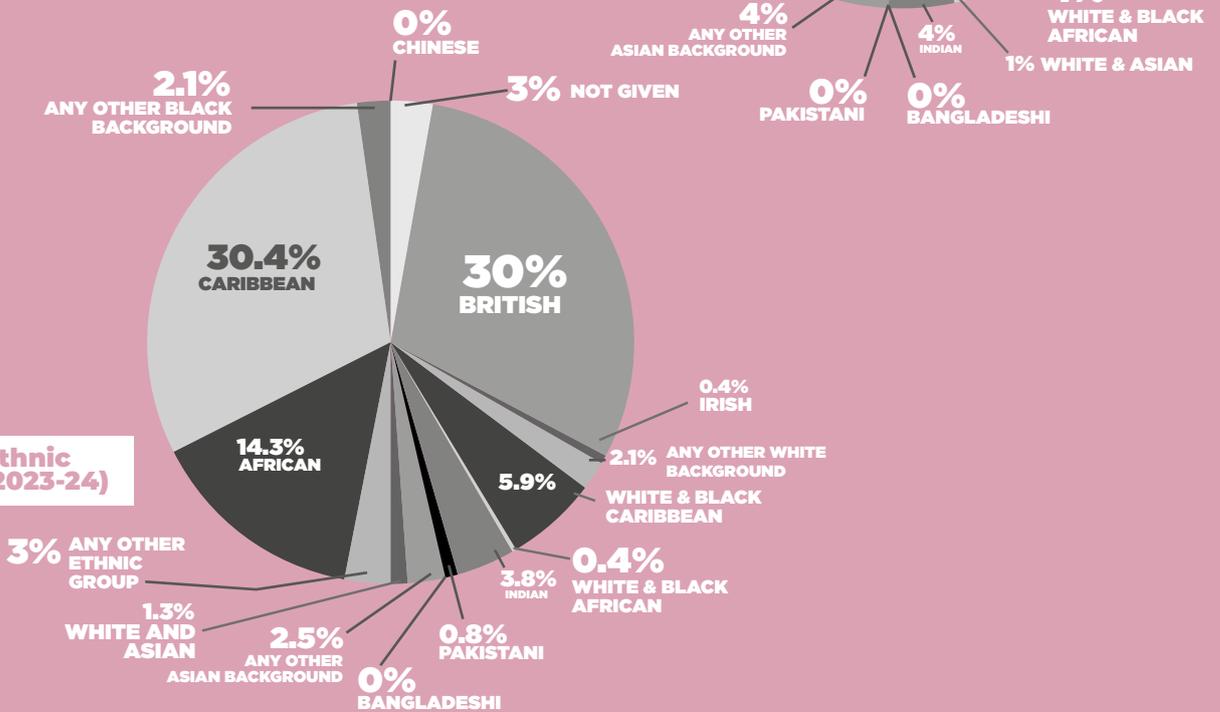
**Referrals By Ethnicity**

The ethnic makeup of the people referred to ACCI is as varied as ever. There was a drop in the percentage of those referred who identified as British (30 to 25%) and Caribbean (30.4 to 27%), alongside a particular increase in people with a mixed ethnic background.

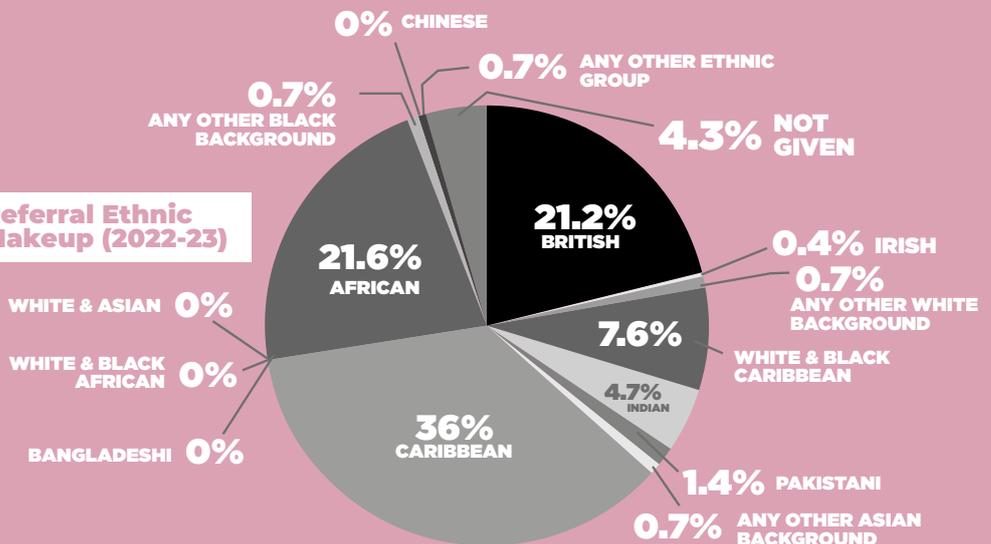
**Referral Ethnic Makeup (2024-25)**



**Referral Ethnic Makeup (2023-24)**



**Referral Ethnic Makeup (2022-23)**



# ACCI Annual Report. 2024-25

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