



TalkFIRST

Family Mediation



Registered charity no. 1162110



Annual Report
2020



On behalf of the trustees of TalkFIRST, we are pleased to present this year's annual report. This is intended to give an overview of the trading and functioning of the charity, presenting a fair and balanced view of TalkFIRST's structure, objectives, activities and financial performance.



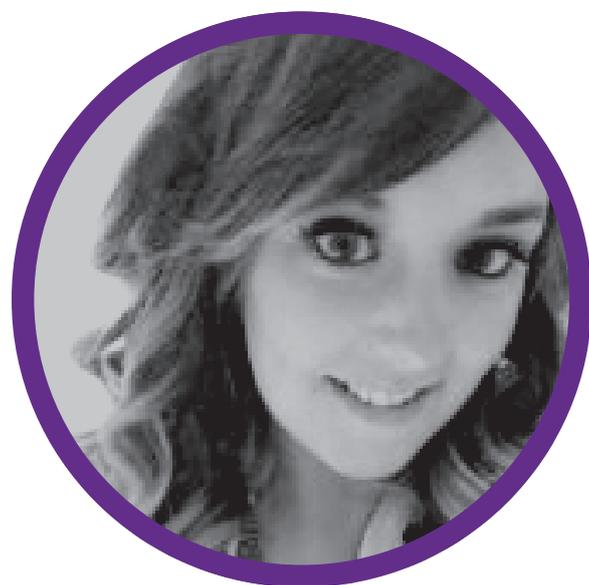
Steven Powell
Trustee



Martine Delaney
Trustee



Dean Owens-Cooper
Trustee



Emma Klieve
Trustee



Tracy Sheppard
CEO & Mediator



David Coghlin
Mediator



Christine Boydell
Administrator

About Us

TalkFIRST was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in June 2015 and was operational immediately. The CIO is a development of its predecessor Resolutions, a Community Interest Company, set up in 2012, operational from 2013.

All work, finances and staff were seamlessly transferred into the CIO. We are based in a central location in the borough, offering easy access from all areas.

Governance

The Trustees understand their legal obligations under charity law. They are committed to the integrity of TalkFIRST, ensuring legal compliance, that the organisation remains solvent, and uphold all aspects of our constitution. As with the policies that inform the charity's practice, the constitution is reviewed annually.

Trustees board meetings have taken place monthly, all meetings have been minuted to ensure transparency.

TalkFIRST charitable objectives, activities, purpose and benefits

Our charitable objectives are:

To support children, young people and their families who are at risk of family conflict, anti-social behaviour, criminal activities or relationship breakdown, through the provision of family mediation, family support and group work activities.

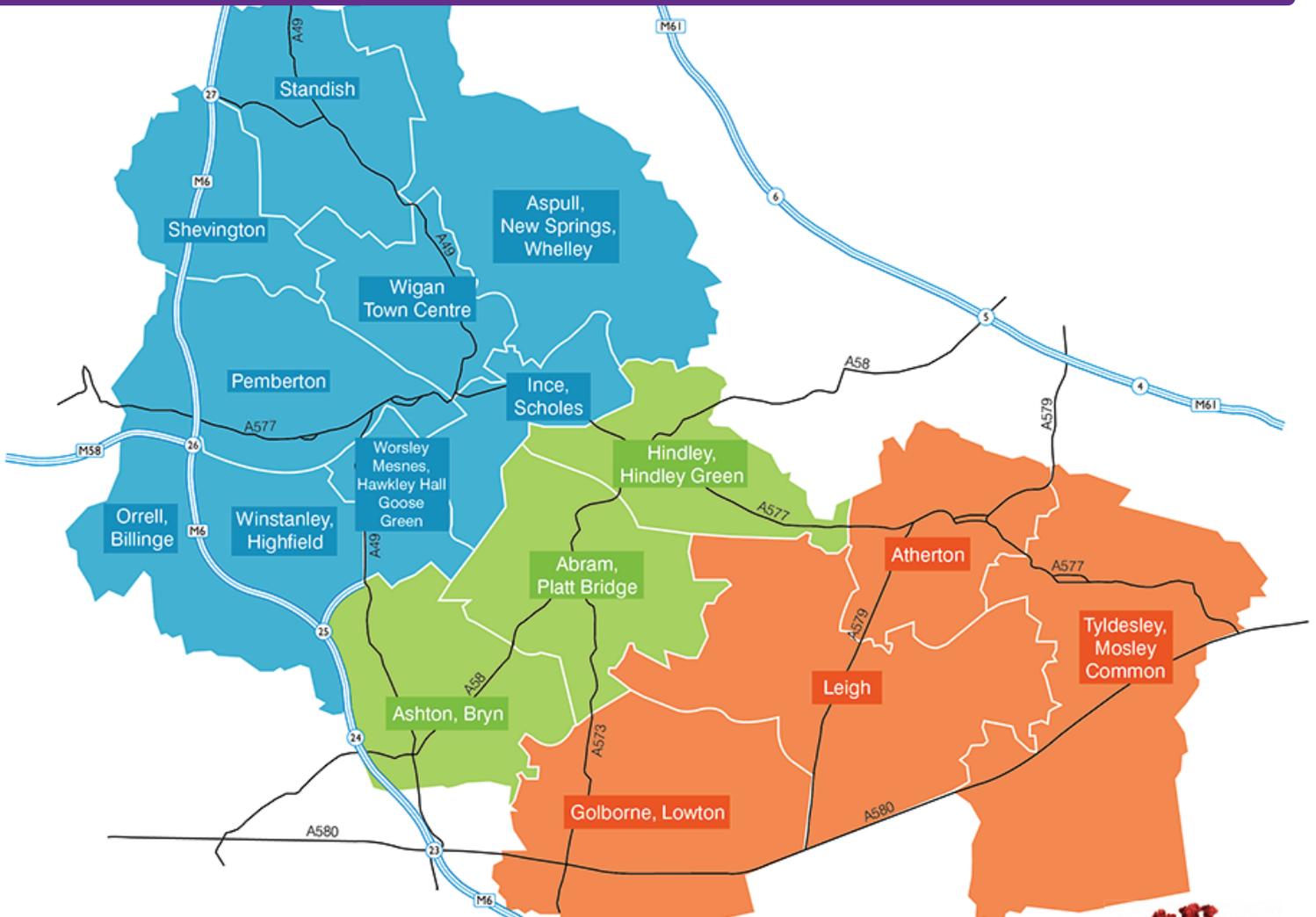
Our Mission Statement: *"empowering families, in all their forms, to build better relationships in a way that is right for them"*

To achieve our Charitable Objectives, guided by our Mission Statement, we provide person-centred relationship-based services for families. The term 'family', refers to none-blood, inter-generational, extended and step families of all ages.

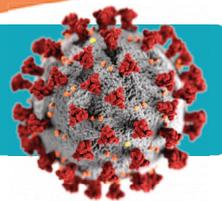
A recent grant funding award, means this service will continue and develop, in Wigan, enabling struggling families experiencing conflict and relationship problems the opportunity to alleviate their difficulties by working with our new Building Better Relationships programme.

The provision of family mediation through the Family Mediation Council (FMC) Accreditation programme enables separating couples to work with a FMC Accredited Mediator to resolve child issues or address financial and property matters resultant from separation and divorce.

Our services predominantly benefit the residents and communities of the Wigan Borough, with a smaller number of beneficiaries from further afield.



Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the charity



The COVID pandemic and associated restrictions have been challenging to the charity, however we have adapted and been able to continue service delivery to those in need. Whilst it has been difficult, the challenge has brought about positive change. We have been successful in securing funding that has enabled us to survive the impact, look at the way in which we work and explore new options.

The impact on the communities we serve and the families within has been considerable. Relationships have been strained further, where already they were troubled. We are fortunate to be able to respond, meaning that we did not experience significant detriment to service up-take.

Beneficiaries and outcomes

Total Number
Of People Supported

Children and young people reported improved relationships with key people in their lives and are more receptive to guidance and boundaries.

71

Children and young people reported developing better communication and conflict management skills because of resolving family difficulties

65

Through our monitoring chance process, parents/carers have report improved mental health with reduced anxiety and stress.

88

Separated parents/step parents reported improved communication and better coordination of family life.

78

Families reported that children and young people had more consistent, good quality contact with a non-resident parent.

41

As a result of more cohesive relationships, families reported reduced conflict with arguments less in frequency and intensity.

40

In total, this year we have completed:

- **52** individuals have made enquiries to the charity, and have received information, guidance and advice to help them make more informed choices about their situation.
- Working with **61** families
- **109** Individual preparation sessions (including cases that did not proceed beyond this point) and **70** joint mediation session, with each family having between one and three sessions.

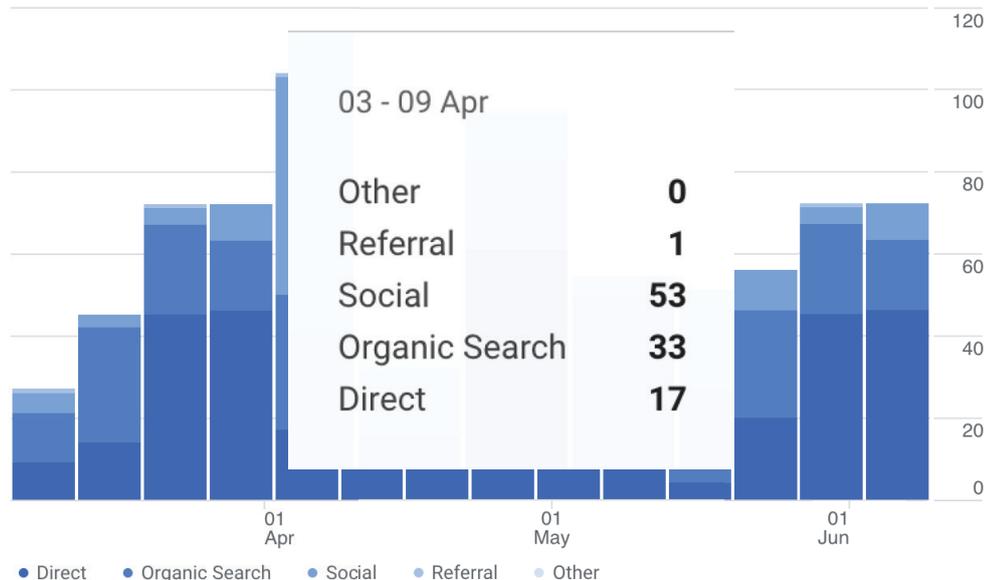
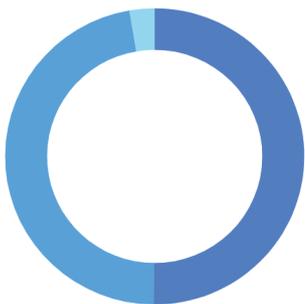


Digital Investment and Impact



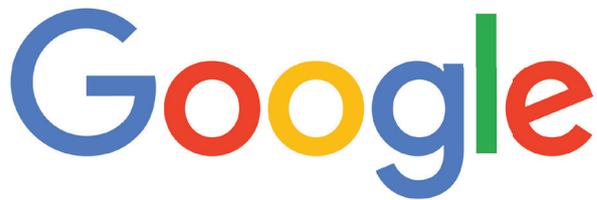
We can see from analytic data that social media has had a massive impact in the website traffic we receive. We can also see that over 47% of people browse on mobile devices; we have updated and made our website mobile responsive and continue to provide updates to help with our search engine ranking. We have a Google listing which enables people to find us in a number of ways and are continuously spreading awareness of what we do at TalkFIRST.

Sessions by device



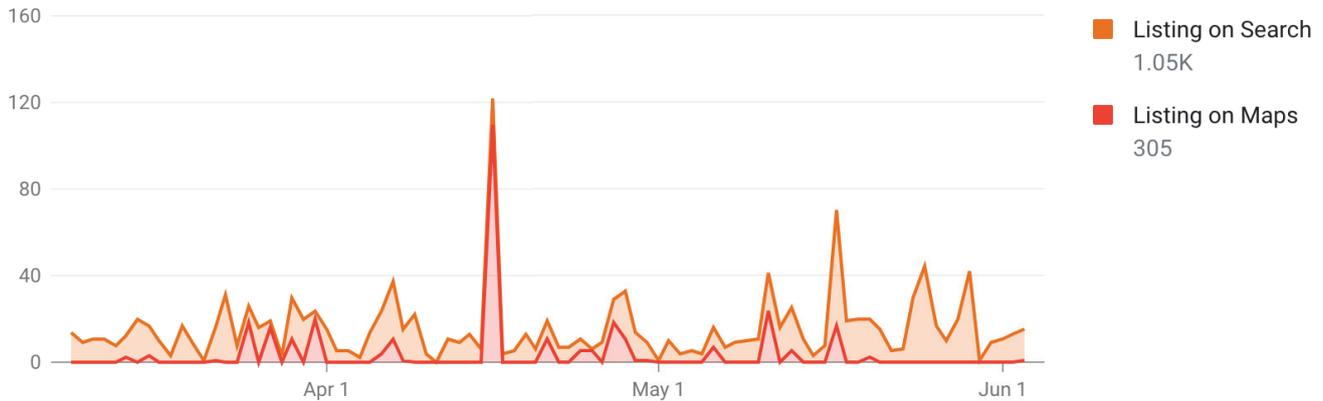


We are steadily growing our facebook audience organically by posting relevant content on our page and in local groups.



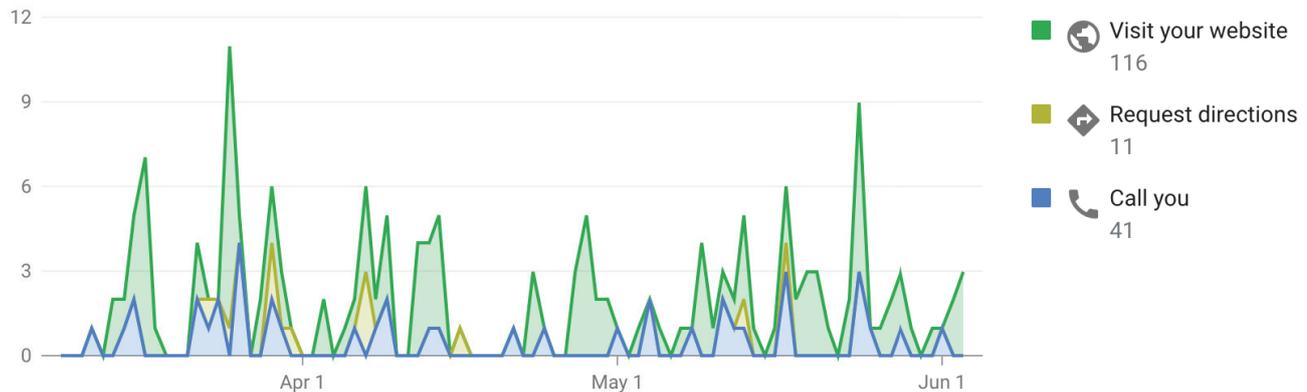
1 quarter ▾

Total views 1.36K



1 quarter ▾

Total actions 168



From our Google listing we can see the amount of calls, request for directions and visits to our website. Prior to this listing TalkFIRST would not have been visible to these potential customers.

Financial Review

The financial aim of TalkFIRST is to be financially independent and secure.

We commenced operating this financial year with an opening balance of £50,320. The turnover for this period was £89,305.

The main source of income during this period was grant funding, from The Big Lottery (now The Lottery Community Fund) from whom we received £70,740, from 'Awards For All' and some smaller awards from a several grant-makers, some of which were for Covid response initiatives.

The grant funding was restricted for specific projects, and spend in accordance with all funders satisfied with end of project financial reporting and with spending in line with predictions.



Trustee benefits and remuneration

All trustees act in a voluntary capacity, giving their time and expertise for free. None have received any remuneration or other benefits, for their role as trustee at TalkFIRST, aside from reimbursement of expenses.



A word from one of our trustees

At the start of 2020, I excitedly enquired about becoming a Trustee for the Board of Trustees at TalkFIRST. I had a genuine passion for family mediation and felt I had the time to give back to a local community. I wasn't quite sure what I expected when I signed up to be a Trustee, but attending board meetings virtually wasn't quite it.

The global pandemic brought upon a lot of unprecedented circumstances and a unique set of challenges, particularly for someone new to a Trusteeship.

However, my experience has been very positive and I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to grips with my new role.

With the pressing demands of the pandemic, I learned more than I anticipated in a very short period of time as the need for more frequent virtual board meetings increased.

However, I was able to learn more about my fellow Trustees and the wonderful employees that work for TalkFIRST.

Over the last eighteen months, the demand for family mediation significantly increased and the Board switched their focus to the COVID-19 response. As part of this, technology was implemented to enable the charity to meet an ever-growing demand for services. Like many others, TalkFIRST invested funds in the implementation of video conferencing software to enable families to continue mediation and seek assistance. It was hoped that this would help reduce the impact of the pandemic on families most at risk. For those wishing to engage remotely, TalkFIRST will hopefully continue to offer services remotely where appropriate.



As with other industries, the pandemic forced the charity to consider the long-term goals with sustainability at the core of the objectives. Recently, the Board reviewed the goals set in the previous year and it was noted that real progress had been made towards the goal set despite the difficult environment. This was a real positive takeaway and it was a great motivator for the Board to work towards the goals set for the next 12 months.

- Emma Klieve

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