



WELLBEING
OF WOMEN



The women's health charity

Annual Report 2023

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Contents

Introduction	3
Trustees' report	
About us	5
Ambassadors	6
Research	7
Communications and Advocacy	13
Education	15
Fundraising	17
Affiliations	20
Our year in numbers	21
Financial summary	22

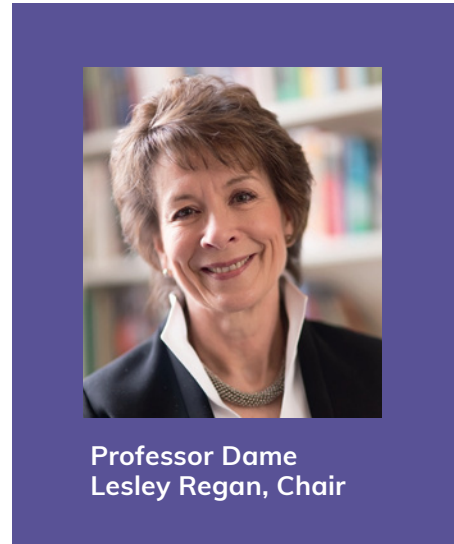
Introduction

2023 has seen another exciting year of progress for Wellbeing of Women in our mission to advance access to high quality healthcare for all women. We continue to fund cutting edge research into women's reproductive and gynaecological health, the empowerment of women to advocate for their wellbeing, alongside educating wider society about the need to provide women with the care they need.

This year, we continued to invest in cutting edge research that makes a real difference to women's lives, with over £750,000 going into new projects. We awarded 17 new research grants which will be led by 13 universities and NHS Trusts across the UK, addressing vital issues across the life course, from menstrual health to problems with fertility, domestic abuse and mental health; together with better understanding, earlier diagnoses and treatment of ovarian cancer. Importantly, our awards are also directly supporting the development of 14 of the next generation of leading women's health researchers. We have forged a collaborative new research partnership with the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health, focussing on taboo areas such as domestic violence and abuse, training for health workers to improve support for women with mental health disorders, and identifying the variation in side effects of different contraceptive methods to improve uptake in women from ethnic minority communities in the UK.

We also found new ways to encourage supporters to give, while informing them about women's health. The Better For Women Fund, launched in February, enables forward-thinking donors to invest in the future of women's health by focusing on one urgent need at a time. They can learn about each priority, while giving money to accelerate change. Thank you to Philip Jansen for hosting the event at the iconic BT Tower revolving restaurant.

In readiness for International Women's Day, we brought together a panel of inspirational women including Davina McCall, Mariella Frostrup, Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill, Alex Mahon and Liv Garfield to discuss the importance of prioritising



women's health to benefit women and girls at school, in the workplace, and across society.

In late 2023 we launched our new campaign, "Just a Period", to address the unacceptable normalisation of period symptoms and gynaecological conditions. A roundtable attended by a mix of MPs, doctors and celebrity ambassadors raised awareness of the need to educate and empower girls and women to be in control of their menstrual health from an early age. We shared an impactful film, which showed how heavy periods and pain affect many girls' and women's lives and prevents them reaching their potential. This campaign was seen by politicians and talked about in the media and continues to move women to share their stories with us.

Our work on the menopause goes from strength to strength, with over 2700 organisations now signed up to support employees going through the menopause via the Menopause Workplace Pledge. Over 500 people have attended our webinars discussing menopause support at work. We collaborated with Helen Tomlinson, the government's first-ever Menopause Employment Champion, to promote the pledge on the government's new menopause portal for employers, 'Help to Grow'.

We were delighted to launch our Employer Membership Programme which is a paid programme of information and guidance for organisations dedicated to improving women's health in the workplace.

Working to bridge the inequality gap in healthcare for marginalised women was key to some exciting projects this year. In September we launched the Health Collective, comprised of grassroots organisations representing women's voices from every community in our society. Together, we want to ensure that their voices are heard and influence policy, as well as providing a safe and supportive space for them to share experiences and solutions to common problems.

We also launched the Women's Health Community Fund in partnership with Holland & Barrett to help deliver resources to diverse and underserved communities. It funded 13 organisations to deliver 35 workshops or events, which reached 650 people.

This year's fundraising events included a literary lunch with Sue Barker CBE, our 35th annual Celebrity Cricket Match and our City Christmas Fair which raised more funds than ever. 75 people took part in fundraising challenges this year raising an impressive £95,000. Huge thanks to our supporters, fundraisers and volunteers, including our wonderful local branches, for all their efforts this year.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our new Ambassadors Dr Philippa Kaye, Lavina Mehta MBE and Mariella Frostrup and thank our existing ambassadors, who have once again done so much to help raise awareness and promote change this year.

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the outgoing chair of our Research Advisory Committee, Professor David Williams and give the warmest of welcomes to our newly appointed Chair, Professor Hilary Critchley.

The team I have the honour to lead at Wellbeing of Women have worked hard to improve women's access to vital care and raise awareness of the importance of ending the shame and stigma surrounding so many aspects of women's day to day health. I remain steadfastly committed to ensuring that women and girls are empowered with accurate information about their health and investment continues in high-quality research to pioneer new cures, tests and treatment.

I look forward to working with researchers, volunteers, partners, sponsors, and, most importantly, women to make a difference to women's health in 2024 and beyond. When we get it right for women, everyone in our society benefits – fact!



Professor Dame Lesley Regan, Chair



Jessica Ennis-Hill, Alex Mahon, Prof Dame Lesley Regan, Mariella Frostrup, Davina McCall and Liv Garfield at our BT Tower event.

About us

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Women’s health has seen a surge of activity in the last year and we’re proud to be playing our part by funding groundbreaking research, providing trusted health information and education, and ramping up our advocacy with new campaigns.

2023 was a year where our commitment to being led by women’s voices has been more fruitful than ever. We have built, maintained, and worked with communities online and in person to help us save and change lives of women girls and babies.

The Health Collective launched in 2023 with the aim of tackling women's health inequalities in marginalised communities. It is being led by grassroots organisations representing women's voices from every community in our society. It emerged out of the urgent need to do more to ensure all girls and women receive the best care, regardless of which community they belong to.

Complementing this, we set up the Women's Health Community Fund with corporate partner Holland & Barrett. This project provided resources to grassroots organisations in underserved communities to focus on closing the menopause care gap.

Our community fundraising had an incredibly successful year, 75 people took part in a fundraising challenge event, raising an incredible £95,000!

We also saw the power of our donors banding together as a community. Our forward-thinking philanthropists invested in the future of women's health via the Better for Women fund, helping to secure a future where no girl or woman is limited by her menstrual health.

We launched our “Just a Period” campaign using the power of our online community. The campaign was co-designed with our supporters, through focus groups, online testing, and crowdsourcing creatives from women across X, Instagram and Facebook. We hit our one-year targets for online campaign reach by the end of 2023, largely thanks to the online community of women and girls who support us.

Finally, as part of a wider women’s health community, we were able to work with more partners than ever to fund vital research across the life course and kickstart more research careers.

Ambassadors

Our Ambassadors are passionate supporters, dedicated to the mission of saving and changing lives of women, girls and babies. They use their influence to raise awareness of women's health issues, advocate for change, and inspire others to support Wellbeing of Women.

A snapshot of their activity in 2023:

- Ahead of International Women's Day, Davina McCall and Mariella Frostrup led a panel discussion on periods and the menopause to raise awareness of these critical life stages.
- We launched our "Just a Period" campaign with a roundtable attended by campaign ambassadors. Emma Hayes, Alice Liveing and Clare Nasir talked openly about their experiences of living with gynaecological conditions. Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP and Anneliese Dodds MP discussed why the Government needs to take periods seriously, while Dr Nighat Arif and Dr Aziza Sesay spoke about the challenges within women's health in the NHS.
- Together with Dr Nighat Arif, we launched The Health Collective. It emerged out of the urgent need to do more to ensure all girls and women receive the best care, regardless of which community they belong to. It is being led by grassroots organisations representing women's voices from marginalised communities in our society. We held our first meeting in September 2023.
- Dr Nighat Arif, Dr Philippa Kaye and Dr Aziza Sesay helped us educate women, girls and wider society with short educational social media reels.
- Rosie Nixon supported our Menopause Workplace Pledge by interviewing fellow Ambassador Dr Nighat Arif, charity supporter Lisa Snowdon and Menopause Champion Helen Tomlinson. This was used to create a series of short videos discussing their experiences, insights and tips for the menopause.

We are so grateful for the support of our Ambassadors. They are using their platforms to help us to save and change the lives of women, girls and babies.



Above Jessica Ennis-Hill, Alex Mahon, Philip Jansen, Prof Dame Lesley Regan, Mariella Frostrup, Davina McCall and Liv Garfield at the BT Tower event. Followed by our first Health Collective meeting. Then our "Just a Period" roundtable featuring Dr Aziza Sesay, Emma Hayes, Prof Dame Lesley Regan and Anneliese Dodds MP.

Research

Since 1964, we have invested over £68 million in more than 600 research projects. Many of these have led to medical breakthroughs in the care of women, girls, and babies, and have supported the careers of leading academic minds in women's health.

Our research projects in women's health aim to advance scientific knowledge, inform clinical practice, and ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of women, girls and babies. An important goal of our research is to address health disparities and promote health equity across diverse populations, and much of our funded research addresses this.

We currently have £4.5 million invested in almost 50 exciting research projects tackling women's health across the life course.

New funding

Our new awards continue to address a broad range of important health issues across a women's life course, from menstrual health and heavy periods to vulvodynia and vulval lichen sclerosis; from issues with fertility to domestic abuse and mental health; as well as the understanding, earlier diagnosis, and treatment of ovarian cancer.

Supporting the next generation

Our 2023 awards are directly supporting the development of 14 of the next generation of leading women's health researchers, who will help shape the future and for women and girls in the UK and beyond.

The charity is incredibly grateful for a second year to receive financial support from the Medical Research Charities Early Career Researcher Support Fund, to help support our dedicated early career researchers. This support recognises the vital role that charities play in nurturing research talent in the UK and supporting the people who will make future breakthroughs.

Partnerships

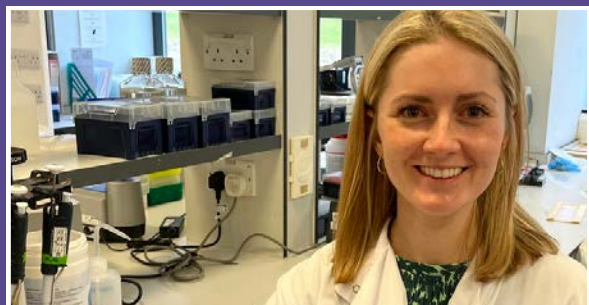
Much of the research we invest in is made possible thanks to collaborating with other like-minded organisations, and this year we were excited to announce a new research partnership with the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health. We awarded partnership grants with six esteemed partners in 2023 and the list of partners continues to grow.

Research Advisory Committee

Our research is selected, monitored, and evaluated by our eminent Research Advisory Committee. We thank them, and the expert peer reviewers from around the world who freely give their time to help the charity, for all their support and dedication. These individuals are collectively responsible for ensuring we keep our reputation for funding the highest quality research.

This year we said goodbye to our Committee Chair, Professor David Williams, whose tenure came to an end. We owe a debt of gratitude to David for guiding us through the COVID-19 pandemic. Through his leadership we have continued to fund outstanding research and can see an exciting future for our work in women's health. We now look forward to working with our newly appointed Chair and Deputy Chair, Professors Hilary Critchley, and Dilly Anumba.

A final thanks must go to the researchers in receipt of our funding, whose ideas, passion, and unwavering commitment is central to the charity's mission to save and change the lives of women, girls, and babies. A very special thanks also goes to all the women, girls and people across the UK who are involved and contribute to the amazing research that we fund.



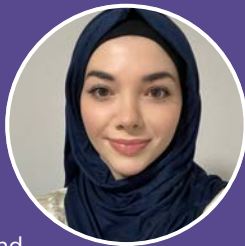
Above: Dr Marianne Watters

New projects awarded in 2023

Periods & menstrual health

Dr Dania Badran – Heavy menstrual bleeding

Using new and informative technologies to study the mechanisms that cause heavy menstrual bleeding, a condition affecting the lives and wellbeing of one in three women.



Dr Jackie Maybin & Dr Gemma Sharp – Heavy menstrual bleeding

Identifying the top ten research priorities for problematic menstrual bleeding, a debilitating condition affecting one in three women.



Sexual health & wellbeing

Dr Pollyanna Cohen – Sexual health & mental health

Developing effective training resources for mental health professionals to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes among women with mental health disorders.

Funded in partnership with the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health.



Pregnancy & birth

Dr Anna Sydor – Domestic abuse

Determining optimal ways to identify and improve support for women experiencing coercive control, a risk factor for other forms of domestic abuse affecting at least 2–3% of women.

Funded in partnership with the Royal College of Midwives and Burdett Trust for Nursing



Dr Michael Wilkinson – Fetal growth restriction

Exploring how blood vessels in the placenta are affected by fetal growth restriction and the use of steroids as a potential therapy for this complication in pregnancy.

Funded in partnership with the British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society



Ms Jacana Bresson – Postnatal care

Exploring how poor sleep following birth can impact women's physical and mental health and ways to improve it.

Funded in partnership with the Royal College of Midwives and Burdett Trust for Nursing



Dr Charlotte Williams – Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy

Discovering the factors that make women from different ethnic backgrounds vulnerable to hypertensive disorders in pregnancy to identify women at risk.



Dr Amie Wilson – Caesarean section

Using the C-WHY system – a tool used to classify caesarean section – to explore patterns in the reasons for and outcomes of caesarean section.



Funded in partnership with the Royal College of Midwives and Burdett Trust for Nursing

Dr Evangelia Vlachodimitropoulou – Sickle cell disease in pregnancy

Investigating the safety and effectiveness of hydroxyurea – an established treatment for sickle cell disease – in pregnancy.



Dr Jennifer Jardine – Hypertensive disease & cardiovascular health

Using health data to identify women at risk of future cardiovascular disease and ethnic differences in long-term outcomes following hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.



Funded in partnership with the British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society

Mrs Michelle Anderson – Perinatal mental health

Identifying and preventing mental health issues in the postnatal period in women who undergo a caesarean section with general anaesthetic or are admitted to intensive care.



Funded in partnership with the Burdett Trust for Nursing

Contraception & abortion care

Miss Fatima Nabage – Contraception

Looking at the side-effects from contraception experienced by women from ethnic minority groups to improve access to contraceptive services.



Funded in partnership with the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health

Fertility

Dr Jemma Barash – Female fertility preservation

Identifying research priorities in female fertility preservation to improve care for people seeking fertility preservation.



Gynaecological conditions

Miss Athena Lountzi – Vulvodynia

Identifying research priorities for vulvodynia, a painful condition of the female genital area that affects 8–10% of women.



Funded in partnership with the British Society for the Study of Vulval Disease

Dr Sophie Rees & Dr Caroline Owen – Vulval lichen sclerosis

Providing reliable health resources for patients with vulval lichen sclerosis, a chronic inflammatory skin condition affecting the genital area.



Funded in partnership with the British Society for the Study of Vulval Disease

Gynaecological cancers

Dr Robert Hollis – Ovarian cancer

Investigating different subtypes of endometrioid ovarian cancer to identify patients most at risk of failing treatment and relapsing.



Funded in partnership with the British Gynaecological Cancer Society

Prof Ahmed Ahmed – Ovarian cancer

Using genetic analysis to predict treatment responses and health outcomes in women with ovarian cancer.



What has our research achieved?

Pregnancy

Dr Jane Cleal – Treating infertility

Unsuccessful pregnancy can be caused by inappropriate endometrial receptivity, in which the womb lining is unable to receive an implanting embryo.

The research team has found structural differences in the womb lining of women who experience unsuccessful pregnancy, identifying genetic and cellular markers that affect its

ability to receive an implanting embryo. This work could lead to the development of a clinical test that predicts a woman's likelihood of successful pregnancy.



Professor Nicola Robertson – Treating birth asphyxia

This research has found that the natural hormone, melatonin, could be a safe and protective treatment in babies at risk of birth asphyxia, when a baby doesn't receive enough oxygen before, during or just after birth. This finding is of particular importance for babies born in low-income and middle-income countries where 96% of cases occur.

The team are continuing to explore how a combination of melatonin and a tiny amount of alcohol could be an even more effective treatment, as well as melatonin combined with an antibiotic.



Dr Angharad Care – Treating preterm birth

PPROM stands for Preterm Prelabour Rupture of Membranes. This describes the situation when your waters break before you're in labour and before the baby is due. When this occurs before 23 weeks' gestation it is a serious complication of pregnancy with high rates of morbidity for mothers and babies.

This research has helped to provide more clarity on the outcomes for mother and baby when PPRM occurs before 23 weeks.

The results should be used in counselling families with PPRM before 23 weeks' gestation, and to update clinical guidelines. They also show that maternal sepsis is a considerable risk that needs more research.



Funded in partnership with Little Heartbeats

Dr Shuby Puthussery – Improving access to antenatal care

The research team has developed and implemented a community-based intervention to improve the number of women from an ethnically diverse and socially disadvantaged community starting antenatal care within the recommended 12-week period of pregnancy.

Findings show that women who received the intervention felt it addressed an important issue and provided valuable information

in a way that was acceptable to the community.

The team's next steps are to test out the intervention in more communities across the UK.



Funded in partnership with the Burdett Trust for Nursing

Dr Heather Garthwaite – Improving outcomes following fertility treatment

Clomifene citrate is a medication taken by some women experiencing fertility issues and is associated with the risk of multiple pregnancy.

The research team explored whether the use of ultrasound scans during fertility treatment with this drug reduced the risk of multiple

pregnancy. These findings are the first to provide evidence for national guidelines on the use of ultrasound in this context.



Gynecological Cancers

Dr Samar Elorbany – Treating advanced ovarian cancer

Using a cutting-edge technique, the research team have identified different populations of immune cells in high-grade serous ovarian cancer. Findings show that chemotherapy promotes an anti-tumour effect on some of these cell populations, but a pro-tumour effect on others.

This work has provided a foundation for research into drugs that inhibit the cells that have a pro-tumour effect.

This could lead to the development of immunotherapies that help the body respond better to chemotherapy and improve clinical outcomes in patients with advanced ovarian cancer.

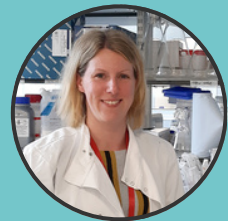
Dr Sarah Kitson – Preventing womb cancer

This research team has developed and validated an accurate model for predicting a woman's risk of developing womb cancer over the following decade.

The team now plans to explore whether women are happy to have this risk assessed in the first place and, if they are found to be at high risk, will invite them to take part in a clinical trial to try and reduce this risk using

weight loss advice and/or a hormone-releasing coil.

This work could ultimately lead to a greater understanding of the role that weight loss and the hormonal coil have on the risk of developing womb cancer.



Dr Narthana Ilenkovan – Treating ovarian cancer

This research has identified a gene mutation in a molecular signalling pathway in patients with low-grade serous ovarian carcinoma, a type of ovarian cancer that tends to affect younger women and is resistant to current chemotherapy options.

Findings show potential points in this pathway that could be targeted

with new combinations of chemotherapy.

This work has provided insight into the molecular profile of this type of ovarian cancer and, with further research, could lead to better treatment options for this patient group.



Personalising care for menstrual health conditions

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Dr Varsha Jain is an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Trainee and Clinical Fellow based at the University of Edinburgh.

I've been involved in research since I was a medical student, and I really liked the way that research challenged my brain. It allowed me to ask questions which I couldn't do in a clinical setting.

In 2019, I was awarded a Wellbeing of Women Clinical Research Fellowship to undertake a PhD on heavy menstrual bleeding at the Centre for Reproductive Health at the University of Edinburgh.

One in three women and girls of reproductive age will suffer with heavy periods at some point in their lives. Roughly a third of these will end up having a hysterectomy because existing medications don't work.

I wanted to understand what was happening in the lining of the womb (endometrium) in women with heavy menstrual bleeding. The gynaecological conditions adenomyosis and fibroids are often the underlying cause, so I studied samples of the endometrium from women with these conditions to be able to understand why these women were suffering with heavy periods.

I found that the endometrium from women who had fibroids or adenomyosis wasn't responding as it should be to a hormone called progesterone. This is really important because a lot of the medications that we use to treat heavy periods are based on the way our bodies interact with progesterone. My research has provided some insight into why the mainstay of treatments might not work to treat heavy bleeding in these women. Hopefully this can be used to develop new drugs that could work better and prevent hysterectomy.

In addition, it gives women validation that they're not alone in the fact that their heavy periods aren't getting better with these drugs.



My long-term goal is really to be able to personalise the healthcare that we're providing to women who have heavy periods when it comes down to this progesterone difference that might be occurring. If I can understand what's happening at an individual patient level and be able to tailor their medication, I think that will be a huge win for patients.

Ultimately, knowing which treatment will be most effective means that women won't be suffering with debilitating symptoms for years or decades.

Wellbeing of Women has been a huge help for me and my PhD which would not have been possible otherwise. The work the charity does is immensely important. The focus on women's health throughout their lives means that problems such as heavy periods, which are generally quite taboo and don't come up so often as funding calls, can be highlighted and they can be researched. Heavy periods are under-researched and we just don't know enough about them, without the funding and focus from Wellbeing of Women, we wouldn't be able to move forward for our patients.

Communications and Advocacy

“Just a Period”

In September 2023, we launched the “Just a Period” campaign to address the unacceptable normalisation of severe period symptoms and gynaecological conditions.

Millions of women and girls suffer with severe period pain, heavy bleeding or irregular cycles that disrupt their lives. Instead of getting the treatment and support they desperately need, they're often dismissed and told it's “just a period”.

The campaign seeks to drive better education and information for all by sharing the impact these problems can have on women and make sure there is good information and education available for anyone who needs it. We want to educate and empower girls and women to be in control of their menstrual health from their first period to their last.

The campaign was off to a flying start with a roundtable discussion hosted by Dame Lesley Regan, which was attended by a mix of politicians and campaign ambassadors such as Dr Nighat Arif, Emma Hayes and Clare Nasir. We had widespread media coverage for our survey showing the devastating impact that difficult periods can have on women's lives. We also launched a moving short film showing women's experiences and created an information hub on our website to educate and inform.

We worked with Naga Munchetty on BBC 5



Live to raise awareness of the lack of women's health research funding and our Chief Executive, Janet Lindsay, gave evidence at the Women and Equalities select committee about the challenges that women face getting help for period problems.

We launched the first in a series of campaign Instagram Lives hosted by Dr Aziza Sesay and started creating educational clips for TikTok. By the end of 2023, we had smashed our digital reach targets as more people were learning about menstrual health.

Our impact:

- Over 70,000 views to our campaign video on Instagram, we encouraged our followers to share their experiences in the comments
- 30,000 views to our campaign webpages
- Reached over 2,000,000 people on social media

Case study: Tanya Simon-Hall

Tanya started having bad periods, with severe pain and vomiting when she was 20. She went to the doctors about them, but nothing was done. They told her, ‘It’s just a period’.

By 2019, Tanya's periods were really bad. She had trouble picking up and dropping off her son at school and going to work.

Tanya went to two different clinics for scans. The second clinic found adenomyosis and sent the results to her GP. When the doctors rang to tell her, she'd never heard of the condition.

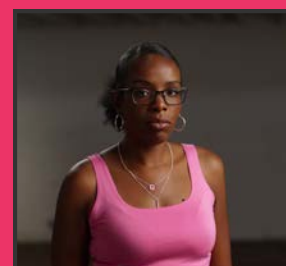
Tanya says that rather than explaining, they ended the call.

“My reaction was, ‘What’s that!?’ and they said, ‘OK, bye!’ There’s not enough information out there for women suffering every month, who are looking for help. I wasn’t given any information when I was diagnosed.”

That’s when Tanya went to see a gynaecologist. They said she also had rectal vaginal endometriosis and found three big nodules.

Because of other pre-existing conditions, the current treatments for endometriosis and adenomyosis aren’t an option for Tanya. Instead, she manages her symptoms through diet and lifestyle.

To tackle the lack of information out there, Tanya has started running workshops with teens to help them understand their periods. She says, “We need to educate ourselves so we can see the right specialists and ask the right questions.”



Menopause Workplace Pledge

Our first campaign, the Menopause Workplace Pledge, continued to gather momentum throughout 2023.

It was first launched in October 2021, in partnership with HELLO! Magazine and supported by Bupa.

Over 2700 organisations signed up by the end of 2023, including well-known names such as the Labour Party, Gatwick airport, Pfizer and Reed.

A poll of organisations who have signed the pledge shows that more than 9 in 10 employers (94%) felt that signing the Menopause Workplace Pledge has contributed to improvements in support in their workplace.

During 2023, we organised our first two webinars aimed at those who have signed up. They looked at new guidance by the British Standards Institute (BSI) about menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace and the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as a tool to help alleviate some menopause symptoms. Over 250 people watched them stream live, with more watching later.



We worked with Hello! Magazine, Lisa Snowden, and Dr Nighat Arif to produce three short videos to promote the pledge and the importance of menopause support at work for Menopause Awareness Month in October.

We collaborated with the government's first-ever Menopause Employment Champion, Helen Tomlinson, by publishing a Q&A with her on our website and social channels. Helen has also been a key public supporter of our Pledge.

The Menopause Workplace Pledge was shortlisted for two national awards in May 2023. The campaign was shortlisted for a PPA Award, which celebrate outstanding achievements and innovation in UK specialist media, and a 2023 Digital Publishing Award.

Employer spotlight: Pfizer UK Limited

The UK arm of the pharmaceutical company Pfizer signed up to the Menopause Workplace Pledge in 2023. For them, it was the natural next step to formalise their commitment to menopause support.

Tess Neal, Pfizer's UK menopause lead, says, "It's a great feeling to know Pfizer takes menopause support in the workplace seriously and is standing shoulder-to-shoulder with so many other like-minded organisations."



Education

Our health-education webinar series has continued to grow in popularity and success throughout 2023. We hosted 11-webinars, bringing together leading experts and voices of women with lived experience to discuss conditions like pelvic floor health, hyperemesis gravidarum, and contraception. Our webinar videos were watched more than 13,000 times on YouTube in 2023.

“Being part of the webinar has been life changing for me. By the end of it I felt so much more confident about my pelvic health, and that there is hope.

I feel that I was with knowledgeable, articulate friends who went to the trouble of sending a follow-up email with not only a link to the webinar, but with links to such useful organisations and websites. I no longer feel that I am on my own.

You helped to educate society on women’s health conditions.”

Pelvic Floor Health Webinar Attendee

We tested new ways of reaching broader audiences, including short form educational content, we launched on TikTok, and started an Instagram Live series. Our health experts have been vital in creating this engaging and trusted information, ranging from Dr Philippa Kaye discussing bone health and menopause, Dr Nighat Arif busting common period myths, to Dr Aziza Sesay demystifying the menstrual cycle.

In the second half of the year, we expanded our health information pages, including setting up a period hub for our “Just a Period” new campaign. These pages were viewed more than 17,000 times in 2023, helping to empower people with knowledge to support their health journey throughout the life course.



Dr Aziza Sesay breaking down periods and the menstrual cycle

Spotlight on Menopause Xplored

Following a successful pilot phase, we launched Menopause Xplored in September 2023. These free interactive workshops provide education on menopause for small and medium businesses (SMEs) based in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes areas. During each workshop, attendees are immersed in a woman's experience of menopause at work using VR headsets.

Afterwards, a free-flowing conversation, facilitated by menopause expert, Diane Danzebrink, encourages attendees to think critically about their own work environments and what changes could be made for inclusivity.

Starting in Oct 2023, we held 3 workshops and reached 28 businesses and 31 employees.

The sessions have been very well received with a 4/5 rolling average score "How knowledgeable do you now feel about the menopause?" and a 4.5/5 rolling average score when asked "To what extent do you now feel comfortable discussing menopause with colleagues at work?"

The Menopause Xplored initiative is funded through a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency.

Employer spotlight: Aimmi

Charlotte is the Head of Employee Engagement & Wellbeing at Aimmi, a company with 180 employees.

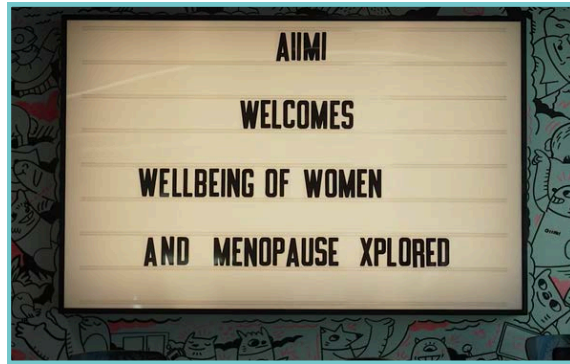
"I had an employee go through a terrible menopause experience last year, which was when I first became interested in the topic. I created our first menopause policy, because I wanted to make sure that employees had the support, they needed to feel comfortable and productive at work.

"Since then, I've been on the lookout for training opportunities for all managers. I believe it's essential that they have the knowledge and tools to support their team members during this transition. During my research I came across Menopause Xplored and decided to join the workshop, to see if it would be valuable for our teams.

"The workshop was very informative. They provided a lot of advice on how to support team members going through menopause and gave us practical tools to implement in the workplace.

"One of the highlights of the workshop was the use of virtual reality (VR). It gave me a good feel for what women might experience during menopause, and it helped me understand some of the challenges they face.

"The workshop prompted me to make some changes to our policies and practices. One of the first things I did was update our menstrual and menopause policy to reflect the new knowledge and insights I gained. I wanted to ensure that our policy was as inclusive and supportive as possible for women going through this transition."



Above: Menopause Workshop

Fundraising

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2023 was another good year of fundraising for the charity. We continued to build relationships and opportunities with existing and new funders as we expanded our women's health education and advocacy work.

As always, the year was dotted with fundraising events including;

- dinner at the top of the BT Tower to launch our philanthropic Better for Women Fund
- a literary lunch with Sue Barker CBE, who received a standing ovation
- our annual Celebrity Cricket Match bringing together cricket greats and keen amateurs to compete in an exciting match whilst raising funds for the charity
- the City Christmas Fair which raised more funds than ever!

The Better For Women Fund, launched in February, is a philanthropic fund to enable forward-thinking donors to invest in the future of women's health, by tackling one urgent need at a time. The current focus is menstrual health and in October members met with Dr Marianne Watters to hear about her research into menstrual fluid.



Davina McCall at The BT Tower event



Above our annual Celebrity Cricket Match, followed by Sue Barker at our Fortnum and Mason lunch and our Christmas Christmas Fair

Appeals

Our Women and Girls Fund Appeal and Big Give Christmas Appeal raised over £38,000. In October we raised funds to help us to continue to invest in menopause support and education. In December, our appeal raised funds to support our “Just a Period” campaign, working to ensure that no one’s pain, or heavy bleeding is dismissed.



Community fundraising

Our amazing network of branches continued to raise funds with events throughout the year with homemade jam sales, afternoon teas, lunches and speaking events in Brighton, East Riding, Great Yarmouth, Northern Ireland and Wealden.

Our Wealden branch even organised a charity lunch with famous antiques expert, Catherine Southon from Antiques Road Trip and Bargain Hunt.

75 people took part in a fundraising challenge event in 2023 raising an incredible £95,000!

Our superstar community fundraisers, Natasha and Mike Dickinson, organised a team of 30 people to take part in the Manchester 10K and half marathon. Natasha has supported Wellbeing of Women over the years, and we are so grateful for her support.

Other exciting events that our fundraisers took part in included the London Marathon, London Landmarks Half Marathon, Hackney Half and Great North Run to name a few!



Fundraiser Natasha Still and her amazing team of runners who took on the Manchester 10K and the Manchester Half Marathon

Launch of a new fundraising initiative

Building on our Menopause Workplace Pledge and growing number of corporate supporters, we were delighted to launch our Employer Membership Programme which is a paid programme for organisations dedicated to improving women's health in the workplace.

The EMP provides evidence-based information, policy templates and guidance, best practice, case studies and events. We plan to grow the programme in the coming years to simultaneously support women in work and raise funds for our research, education and advocacy.



WELLBEING
OF WOMEN

Employer Membership
Programme

Partnerships

We continued to work with key corporate partners such as PwC, Bupa, Reckitt, Vitabiotics, BGC, Bolt Burdon Kemp, and FSCS. In addition, we launched a new partnership with Holland & Barrett to fund grassroots organisations providing localised menopause support and information to underserved communities, and embarked on a new partnership with skincare brand, Vichy Laboratories, launching in 2024.

Holland & Barrett



Women's health community fund

Fareeha is a freelance dietitian with a particular focus on South Asian diets. She shares why menopause support is needed in her community and the motivation to apply for the Women's Health Community Fund.



Women's Health Fund recipient Fareeha Jay

“There are two reasons why menopause support is needed for South Asian women. One is that this is a taboo topic, and shame is associated with it. Secondly, there is a lot of guidance on diet for perimenopause and menopause; however, that guidance is not culturally tailored to the needs of South Asian women.

“The Women's Health Community Fund has enabled me to run these sessions online but has also helped me amplify my voice, which I cannot do alone. It's a lot more than funding. It's about providing me with a platform to showcase my work.”.

Trusts and Foundations

Wellbeing of Women would like to thank the many generous trusts and foundations whose support in 2023 has made a meaningful difference to the lives of women, girls and babies. These include the Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation, The Burdett Trust for Nursing, Garfield Weston Foundation and The National Lottery.

We would also like to thank the pharmaceutical companies who are helping to make a positive and lasting impact on women's health: Besins Healthcare, Gedeon Richter, GSK, Hologic, and Theramex.

Affiliations



We would like to recognise our esteemed research partnerships and thank the groups that work with us to support women's health.



The Thompson Family Charitable Trust

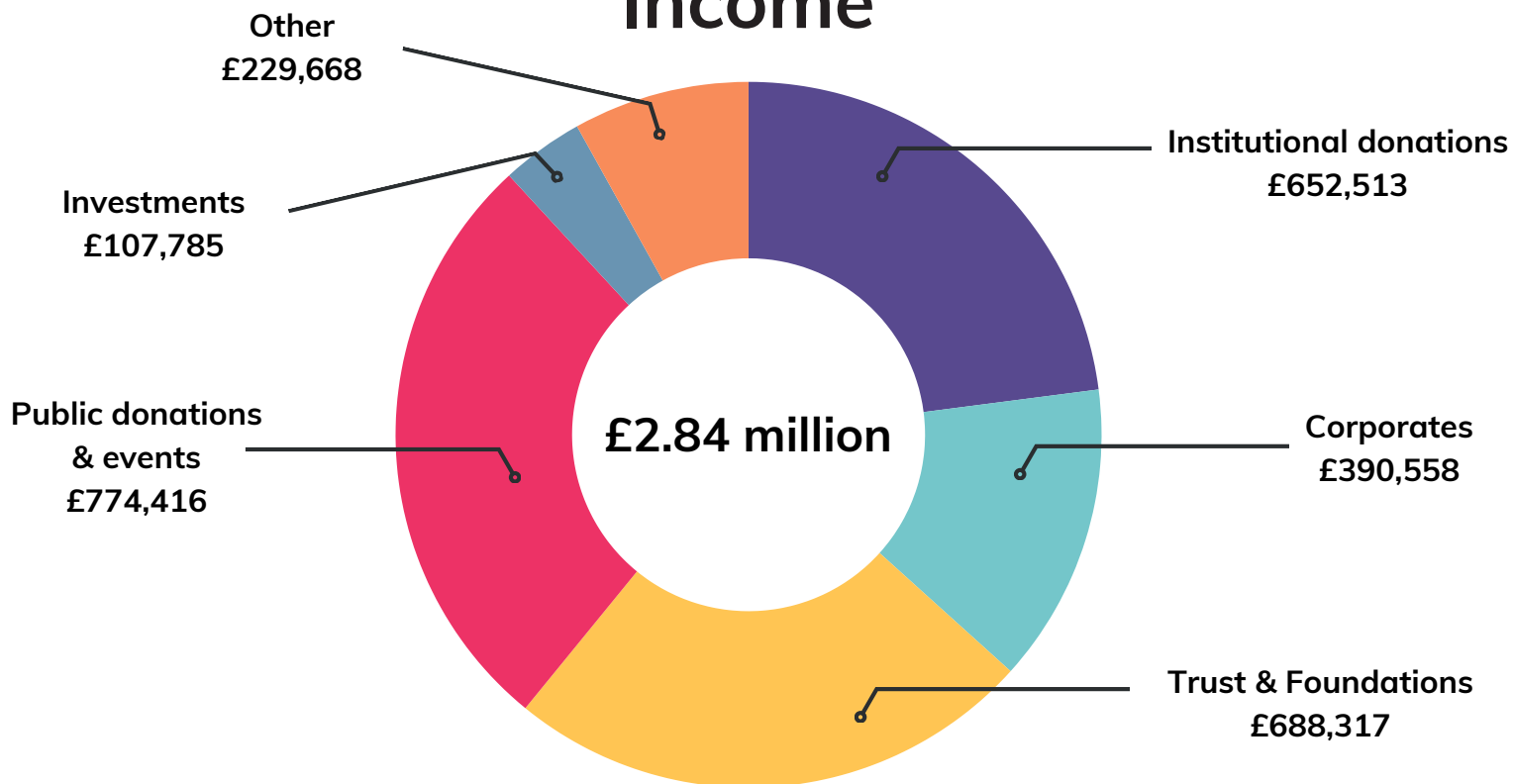
Our year in numbers



Financial Summary

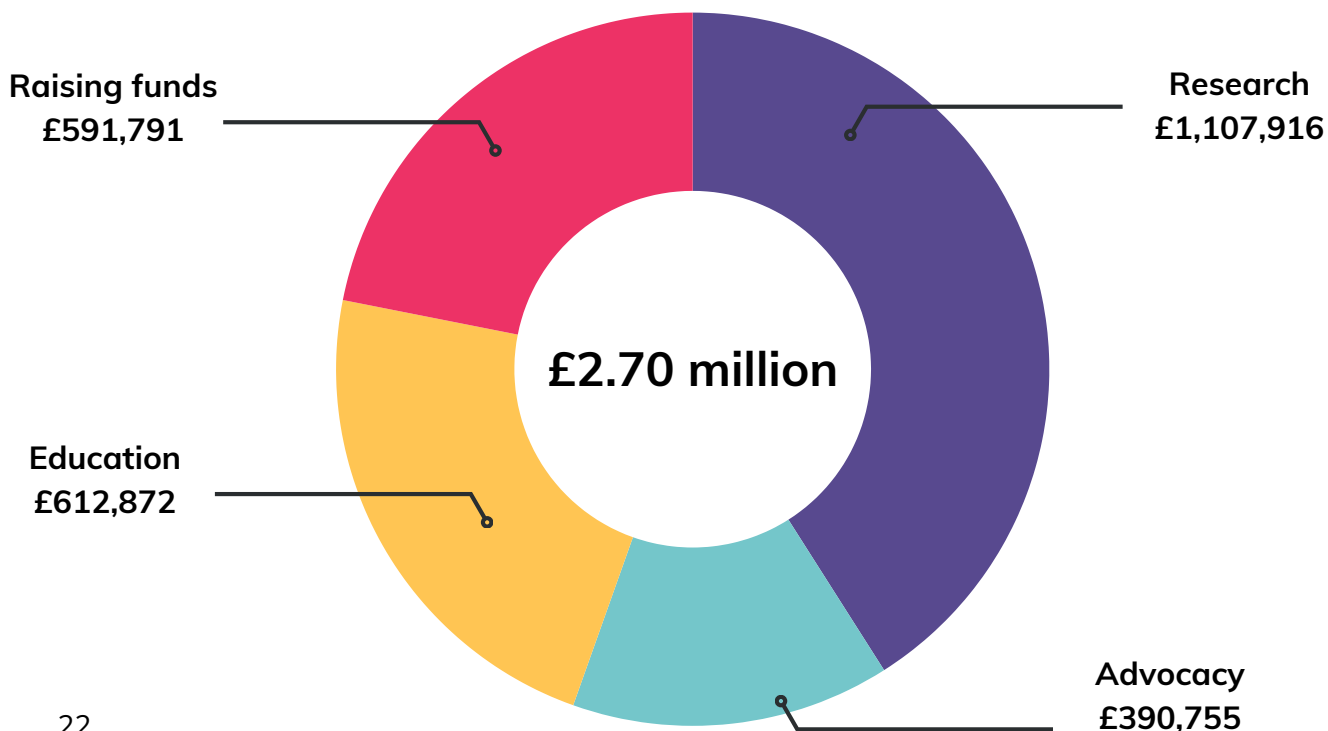
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Income



Income, 'Other' includes trading activities and donated services

Expenditure





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