



2024-25

# Impact Report





# We are bridging the gap

In 2024-25, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Swindon rose at a higher rate than was the case nationally.

By December 2024, the number of people facing homelessness in Swindon had risen by 25% compared to the national average of 14%. <sup>1</sup>

This trend covers a period of rent increases averaging 9% in Swindon and an ongoing rise in the cost of living. We also continued to respond to demand from refugees and migrants particularly those leaving Home Office accommodation upon receipt of refugee status.

For our clients, the ability to access stable supported living accommodation for an average of 2 years means we're not just addressing the immediate threat of homelessness but putting in place foundations for sustainable independent living in a very challenging economic climate.

<sup>1</sup> Shelter (2024) At least 354,000 people homeless in England Today. Available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/at\\_least\\_354000\\_people\\_homeless\\_in\\_england\\_today\\_](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/at_least_354000_people_homeless_in_england_today_)  
Also see MHCLG (2025) Statutory Homelessness in England: October to December 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-october-to-december-2024/statutory-homelessness-in-england-october-to-december-2024>

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	Introduction from our chair	<b>3</b>
<b>About Us</b>	Our mission, vision and values	<b>4</b>
	Why we matter	<b>5</b>
<b>Our Impact</b>	2024-25 Impact in numbers	<b>7</b>
	2024-25 Impact in stories	<b>8</b>
<b>How we work</b>	Our Finances	<b>9</b>



# Introduction from our Chair

Within our 2023-24 impact report, we said we wanted to increase our capacity to support more of those who are referred to us by our partners as well as increasing the proportion of clients moving on to independent living each year.

We started the 2024-25 year as we meant to go by **growing the number of bedspaces by 10%, investing in In-form** to improve service delivery, data collection and impact analysis, and **expanding the staff and contractor teams** to manage FCH properties and deliver support work.

We've maintained this momentum throughout the year and are optimistic that our 2025-26 report will also outline some fantastic progress and growth.

In March 2024 **we celebrated our 5th Anniversary** and in the same year Nelson Ocholla joined us as the fourth member of our board. Nelson brings over a decade of experience in accounting and finance to the team and we look forward to seeing the impact of his fantastic breadth of experience on the organisation over the coming years.

First Choice cannot deliver the support that it does without its numerous partners in and around Swindon. Our thanks to those who work with us to support our clients by providing pro-bono support, gift-in-kind donations and ultimately third party service provision where necessary.

**August 2025**

**Ruth Deacon**, Chair of Trustees





# Our mission, vision and values

Our **vision** is of a world where everyone is able to access and enjoy a good standard of living.

Our **mission** is to support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to sustainably combat housing insecurity.

## Compassion



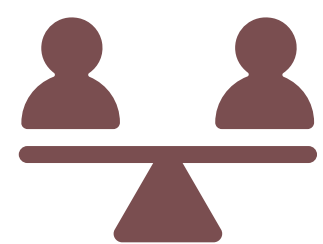
We extend a helping hand.

## Respect



We embrace diversity and differences.

## Equality



We foster a fair and inclusive environment.

## Safety



We prioritise the wellbeing of all.

## Trust



We build relationships based on openness and reliability.





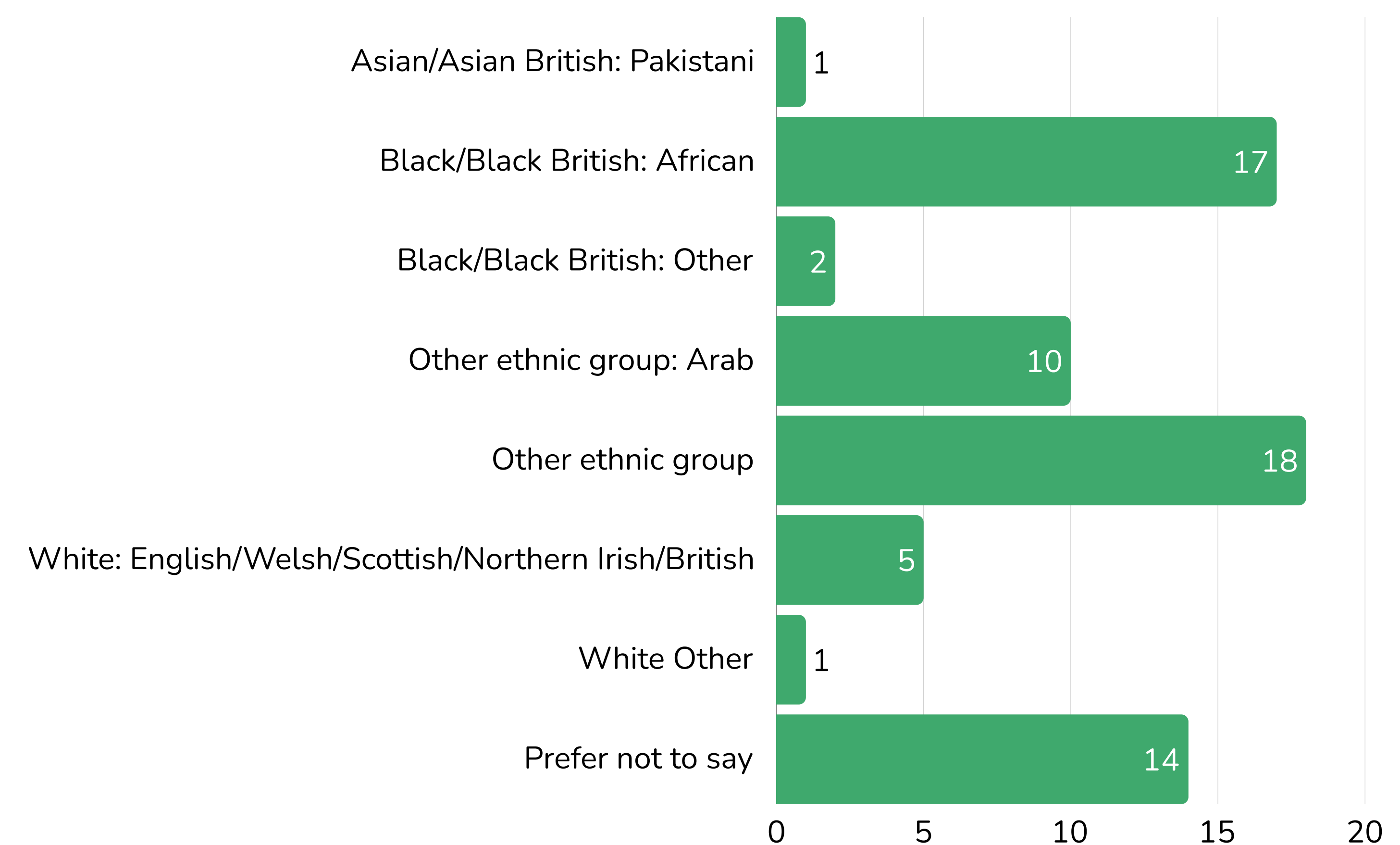
# Why we matter

In 2024-25 we not only saw an increase in the number clients supported but, crucially, an increase in the proportion of our clients who were refugees and migrants.

First Choice housing is a BAME led organisation whose management and board is made up of people with lived experience of the challenges that our clients face. These challenges include housing insecurity and homelessness, migration, underemployment, socio-economic disadvantage and racial inequality.

The teams lived experience allows us to help our clients navigate complex systems, to overcome challenges and take up opportunities that create long lasting positive change in their lives.

We are sensitive and responsive to our clients' aspirations in a way that enables us to develop appropriate programmes as we continue to grow our capacity to engage more clients in the co-production of our programmes and services.



The graph above shows ethnic demography of clients who resided in an FCH property in 2024-25.  
Total of 68.



“To date, the vast majority of clients referred to us by our partners have identified as male. This then presented a challenge when women were referred as we could only offer mixed gender accommodation (crucially this meant shared bathroom facilities). It’s fantastic that we’re moving slowly towards mitigating some of these practical challenges as well as upskilling the staff team to be able to deliver appropriate support to women with complex and often different needs to our male clients.”

**Betty Honsou**

Director of Client Services FCH



*Illustration above shows gender demographics of FCH clients in 2024-25: 63 out of 68 clients identified as male with the remaining 5 identifying as female.*

**94% of the clients we supported in 2024-25 identified as male,** this has been the case for FCH since we began operations in 2019. To an extent, this reflects the gender demographics of the total population of those experiencing homelessness locally and nationally.

We’ve focused very much on trying to increase the number of women we support and **can report that we’ve been able**

**to get to a position where this was possible in 2024-25.**

Working with local landlords, we have found properties offering the appropriate facilities to ease the pressures or concerns that may arise around mixed gender accommodation. We intend to phase into single sex or single occupancy housing provision in the future.

**We are very thankful to those landlords that continue to work with us to allow us to expand capacity to respond to this growing need.**



# Our impact in 2024-25

In 2024-25 we provided supported living accommodation to 68 people who were otherwise at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The figure of 68 includes those who had already been with us as the financial year started. Overall, we received 84 referrals in 2024-25, this includes people who we were unable to accommodate.

## The power of dedicated support

Our results over the last few years tells us that personable, relatable, and dedicated support works to help get our clients ready to move on into independent living. Each of our clients has a named support worker to help them set and work towards goals from the very start of their time with us. We track our interactions with clients and client engagement in support available including weekly or biweekly support meetings, English lessons, counselling sessions, and services provided by external partners as appropriate. Our support workers invest in finding ways to improve week by week.

3

clients achieved family re-unification

5

clients learned to drive

31

Clients entered Education, Training and/or Employment

4

Clients began volunteering locally

8

Clients moved on to independent living (through the PRS)\*

\*PRS - Private Rental Sector

© First Choice Housing



# Tom's Story

Tom first heard about First Choice Housing (FCH) from his coach at Seetec. At the time, he had been trying to complete a course he had been referred to by his coach but was finding it difficult to fully engage because of challenges at home. Eventually, his coach suggested that he come talk to FCH about alternative accommodation as his home life had grown increasingly tough.

Tom moved into his shared FCH house in August 2023 with support from Betty, our Director of Client Services. Between then and early 2025, he's completed a course with The King's Trust, learned to drive, started working and improved his relationship with his parents. When we spoke to him in early summer 2025 he said:

“ Things have improved with my parents because of having some space. Dad lives in South Wales and has said that me and my siblings are welcome to come live with him and my step mum as long as we're doing something like getting training. I'm interested in welding; I've done bits and bobs of it here and there. I'm thinking of doing an apprenticeship perhaps in Cardiff or around there.

My boss at the job I have now says they'd like to keep me on but demand falls drastically after summer so they may not be able to afford to pay me if they keep me on. If they can keep me on, I'd like to try and work for another year and maybe move closer to my workplace. Then in September 2026 maybe I'll move to Wales for an apprenticeship.

”





# Our Finances

Our **direct programme** costs for 2024-25 included: rent and property costs (e.g. HMO compliance, furnishings and maintenance, cleaning and utility bills) and staff wages.

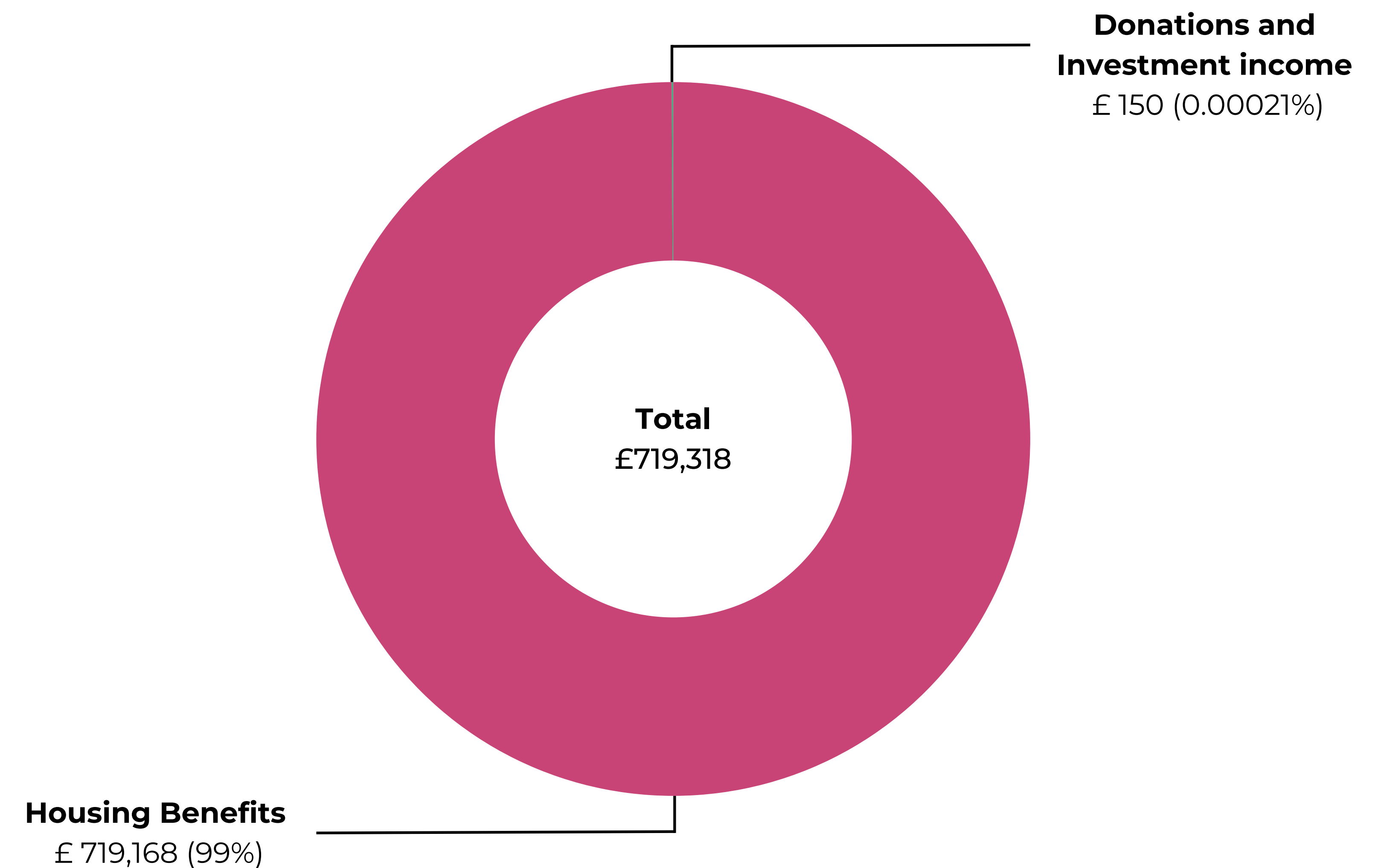
Our **support costs** included office rent, telephone and internet, professional and accountancy fees, Insurance, Interest and charges, and ongoing subscription costs including those associated with our website.

We are glad to report that we are increasingly improving our reserves position relative to our policy. At the end of 2023-24 we held approximately a third of the required amount as stated within our reserves policy. As of 31st January 2025, we were holding two thirds of the appropriate amount.

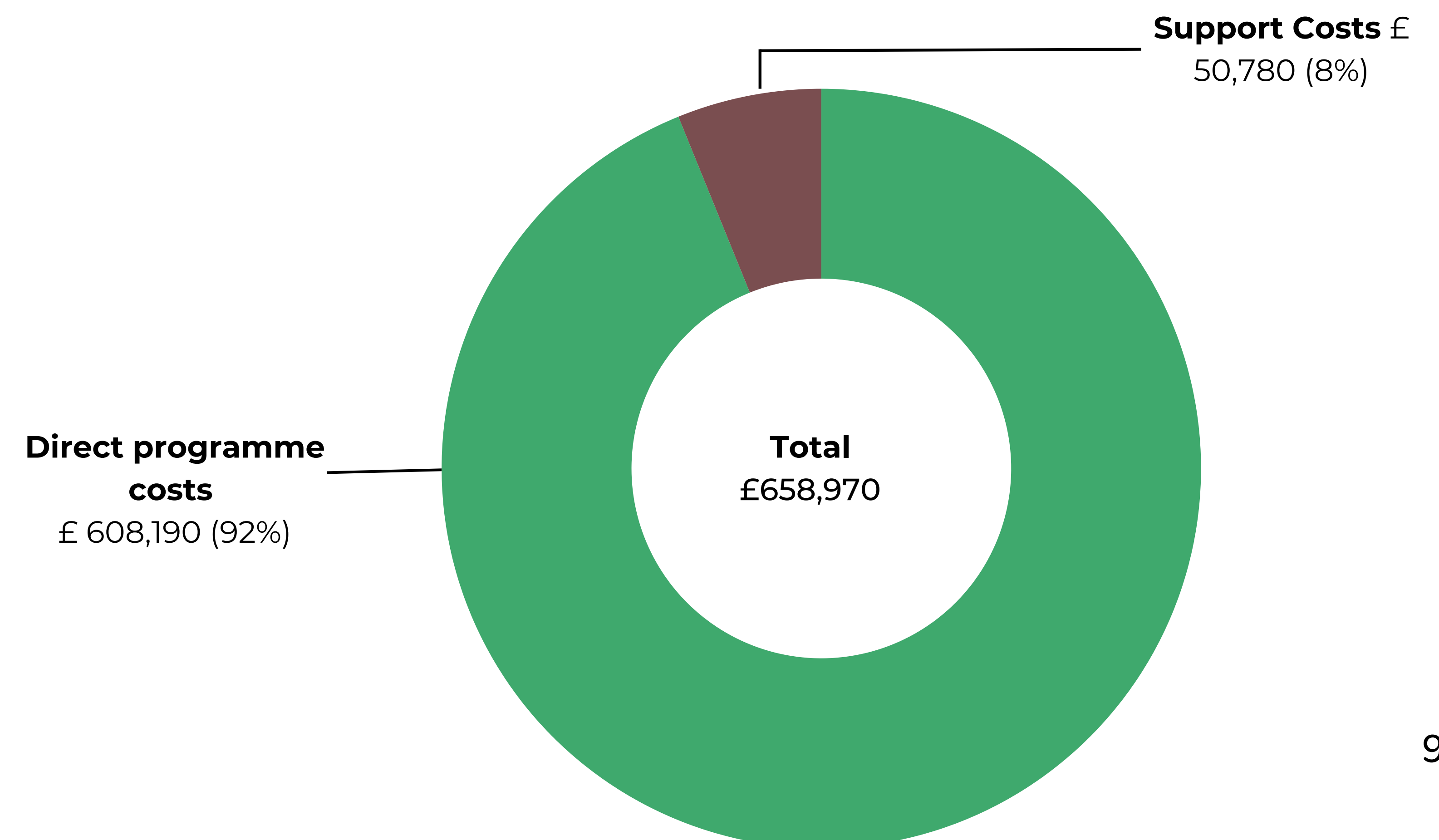
We recognise that this does mean we are still not meeting our policy but we are confident that we are moving in the right direction and will continue to work on increasing these reserves throughout 2025-26. It should be noted that we continue to hold strong working relationships with our partners including Swindon Borough Council.

Further information is available on the charity's Financial Statements for year ending 31st January 2025.

## Breakdown of income



## Breakdown of expenditure







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