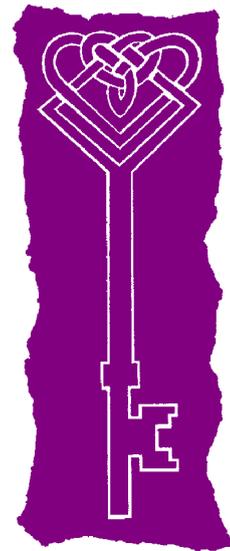


# OPEN SECRET Annual Report 2001 - 2002



*A confidential service  
for adult survivors of  
childhood sexual abuse*

*Open Secret is funded by the following  
organisations:*



Falkirk Council



*Here comes the feelings again  
 Intrusive memories of unspeakable acts  
 Done to my body by so many  
 And I struggle to breath – I need to flee*

*Here comes the screaming again  
 Babies in the darkness  
 Memories of unspeakable acts  
 Too terrible for words  
 And I flee to my safe place and be numb*

*Here comes the pain again  
 Terrible visions of unspeakable acts  
 Leaving me terrified, huddled in bed  
 Overwhelmed, horrified, praying for death*

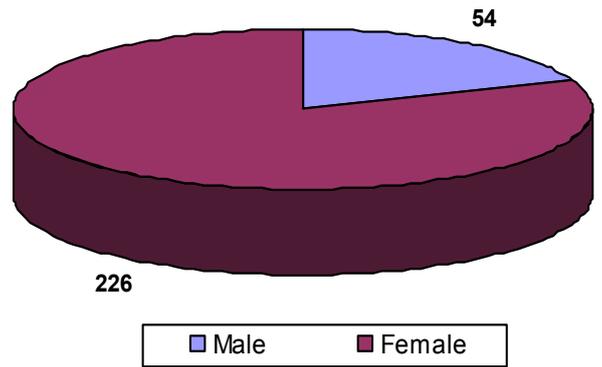
*Here comes the grief again  
 More images of unspeakable acts  
 That frighten me into crying for help  
 Shaken, hurting, longing for relief*

*Here comes the words  
 As I tell you about the unspeakable acts  
 And you challenge me to look at your face  
 And to find rejection and disgust there*

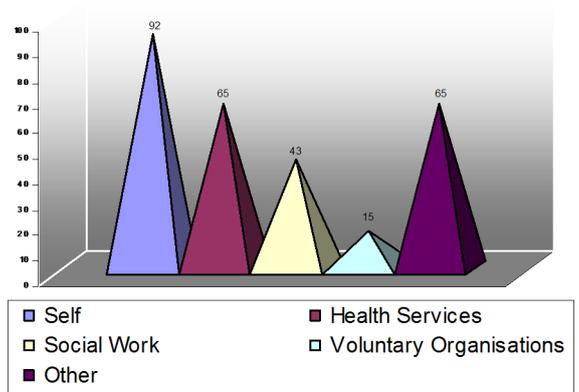
*Here comes the hope  
 As I look in your eyes  
 And find caring there  
 And I start to want to live again*

**Open Secret Statistics**

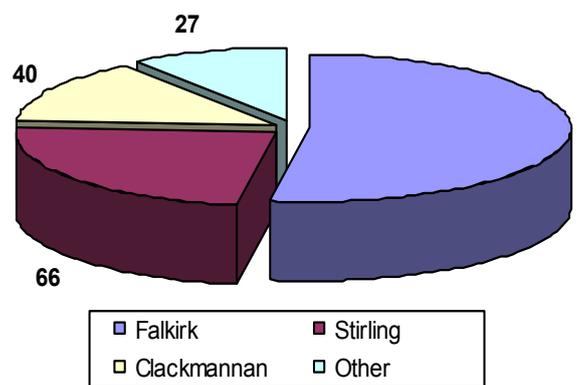
**1st Appointments  
 Apr 01 - Mar 02 by Gender**



**1st Appointments  
 Apr 01 - Mar 02 by Referral**



**1st Appointments  
 Apr 01 - Mar 02 by Area**



## **Sessional Workers**

Hilary Allen  
Ian Fuller  
Helen Lamb  
Jacquie Sharp  
Evelyn Logan  
Garnet Campbell

Eunice Clayson  
Linda Grierson  
Mark McSherry  
Sheila Turner  
Rosina Prior

## **Chairperson's Report**

My first impression of Open Secret was the warmth of the welcome I received. When I started my training to take up the post of volunteer support worker, I was hugely impressed by the breadth and depth of the knowledge of all the members of staff. As a one-to-one support worker I was constantly overwhelmed by the courage shown by the clients who came into Open Secret. I became aware through my own experience of the stress and strain that the staff face on a daily basis. Two years on the Management Committee has provided an insight into the practicalities of supporting and supervising a dynamic organisation, which is constantly growing, changing and developing.

The Management Committee is a team with a diverse membership. However we all share a good knowledge of Open Secret and a common goal, which is to serve the organisation in the best way that we can. We try to achieve this by working closely with the Project Manager to support, supervise and encourage in all aspects of the work that is undertaken by the project.

Open Secret keeps on growing to the credit of all our staff, volunteers and sessional workers. This means that the Management Committee has devoted much of its time over the last year to supporting this growth. This has meant being involved in the appointment of new members of staff and spending considerable time developing new financial procedures.

Our focus for the next year will continue to be updating and developing policies and procedures to take into account new legislation and becoming more involved in funding and networking.

The Management Committee would like to thank all the staff, volunteers and sessional workers for all their hard work over the past year. We are also indebted to our funders and the organisations and individuals who offer us their support.

**Lesley Thynne, Chairperson**

## **Treasurer's Report**

This has been a busy and eventful year, but we have come in on, or around budget once again, whilst continuing to offer a quality service with increased demand in all three communities.

We had funding totalling £198,024 from a number of bodies including Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils, The Community Fund, The Scottish Executive, Lloyds TSB, Consignia, Corn-ton Vale and Forth Valley Health Board, and of course generous donations from individuals, warmest thanks to you all, keep up the good work.

This year has been a year of renewals at Open Secret including the refurbishment of the Alloa

office, new bookcases and books for our Library at Falkirk and the purchase of new computers for the Falkirk office.

The refurbishment of the Alloa office was carried out with funding received from The Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The new computers will enable better reporting of our finances, as well as allowing us to produce a lot more of our own brochures, leaflets etc. All this will enable us to offer a better service to our survivors.

We have also used money from the development fund to organise the upcoming conference (27<sup>th</sup> September 2002) which looks like it will be a huge success, raise Open Secret's profile and put us well and truly in the forefront of everyone's mind.

The above would not have been possible if it were not for our funders and the individuals who support Open Secret, and we would not have this support if it were not for the quality service we provide. My thanks go to Catriona and her staff, the volunteers, sessional workers and all other members associated with the project, WELL DONE!

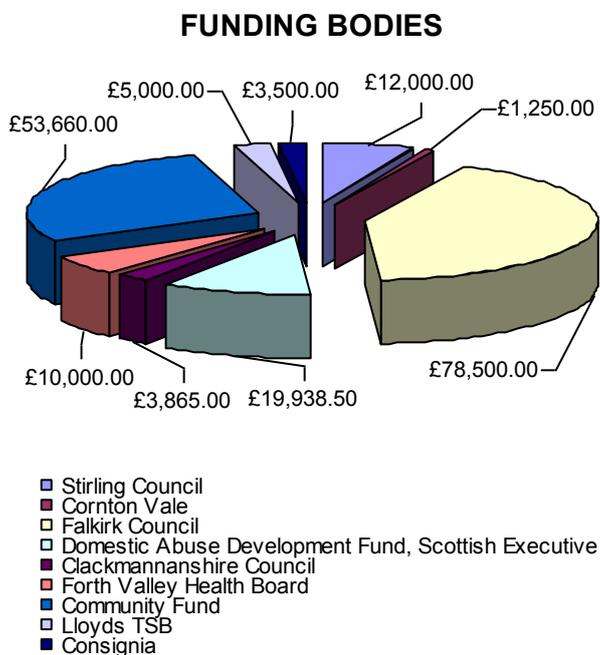
I hope next year will be as rewarding as this one has been and with a sustained or improved quality of service and will hopefully be able to obtain an increased amount of funding which can only be of benefit to the project as a whole.

Thanks to everyone who supports Open Secret and here's to a new year filled with hope for everyone.

A full copy of our audited accounts is available on request from our office.

**Elsbeth Hewitt, Treasurer**

**Open Secret Funding**



**Who Are We?**

**The Team**

Manager -	Catriona Laird
Development Officer -	Pauline McGee
Parent Support Worker -	Evelyn Kennedy
Volunteer Co-ordinator / DGW -	Patricia Weir
Group Development Worker	Lorraine Muldoon (Job share)
Stirling Development Worker -	Sue McDougall (Job share) Hazel Walker (Job share)
Clackmannan Development Worker -	June Finlayson (Part-time)
Administration Worker -	Traci Kirkland
Clerical Workers -	Carol Ritchie (4 hours)
-	Carolann McLellan (3 hours)
-	Angela Wallace (4 hours)

**The Management Committee**

Chairperson	Lesley Thynne
Treasurer	Elsbeth Hewitt
Members	Margaret Sinclair Dawn Gray
Falkirk Council Link Officer	Cathy McNaughton

New members to be elected today

**Please Volunteer**

**The Volunteers – as of September 2002**

Janice Archer	Ann Brannan
Jan Burns	Cath Carr
Eleanor Collin	Sally Forshaw
Jim Gardiner	Maureen Gillies
Dawn Gray	Lorraine McColl
Mary McDonald	Anne-Marie McIntosh
Linda McLean	Marijke Moerman
Rab Mercer	Kathleen Norrie
Helen Oliver	Fiona Potter – Irwin
Val Rose	Haldis Scott
Julie Sharp	Jacqueline Sharp

## A Sense of belonging .....

This is what I felt when I came into contact with Open Secret in November of last year.

I was looking for support in dealing with my childhood sexual abuse. I had been a user of services provided by the medical profession for twenty years and never felt that anyone really understood me or knew what I needed.

I was allocated a support worker whom I quickly felt had a clear understanding of what I had been through and the impact of this upon me and the difficulties I had in trusting and relating to people. I felt she really believed in me. I had never ever felt like this before.

I had spent many years trying to look after other peoples needs, keeping people happy and putting a face on for the outside world.

I have been encouraged to see myself as important and it has been so good for me to be able to talk about my issues without feeling guilty, selfish or attention seeking.

I, now have contact with an Open Secret be-friender, who really listens to what I have to say and this gives me a sense of relief. I no longer suppress my feelings and I am beginning to develop trust in this relationship. I know that before I would have sought to reject anyone offering support.

In the past ten months I have been in crises several times but I do feel I'm coming out the other end.

I have felt encouraged by Open Secret staff whom I have relied upon to remind me of my many strengths and abilities. To have my skills recognised has been a powerful force in my recovery.

Today I am in the process of working alongside the staff in giving something back to the project and hopefully other users of the service.

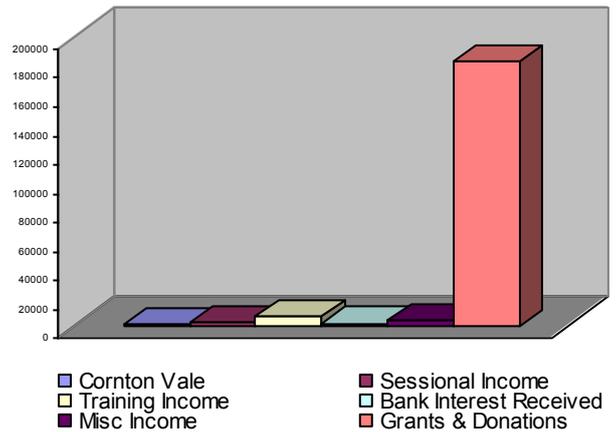
It feels good to know that whilst I have received support from the project, I am in a position to offer something back in return.

I am firmly of the view that what works best is a community development approach and I see myself as proof of this.

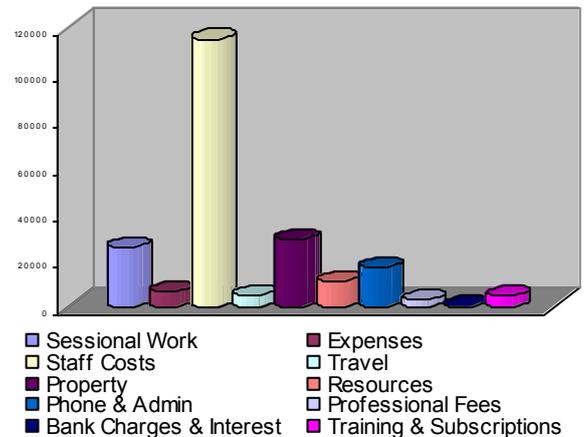
I was pleased to be asked to contribute to the projects annual report and I hope that my experience will encourage others to come forward and begin their own journey.

## Elaine, Survivor

## TOTAL INCOME



## TOTAL EXPENDITURE



## April 2001–March 2002 Manager's Report

Open Secret has continued to develop and expand over the year and the pace of work maintains a steady fast rhythm.

Two hundred and seventy nine people were offered an individual service by Open Secret indicating that demand for this service remains very consistent. Evaluations of our service indicate that people are happy with their contact. We try to remain responsive to feedback and constantly change or adapt our systems – it keeps all of us alert!

Our staff group has grown to twelve; a number of them part-time and we have eight sessional workers and twenty-five volunteer support workers. The development workers are a very experienced, knowledgeable and committed team brimming with ideas and creativity.

In the last year we have had a number of staff changes. Traci Kirkland took over as Administration Worker in April 2002.

June Finlayson moved to Clackmannanshire as part-time Development Worker in February 2002.

We have developed our work in prison settings

this year – both Cornton Vale and Polmont YOI. There has also been an increase in spot purchasing of our services particularly from West Lothian and North Lanarkshire.

It demands creativity to resource our activities and it has put demands on our core infrastructure.

We have acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining a high quality service particularly as our external support services in administration, finance and resourcing have not increased. Lack of funding for core support services is an issue throughout the voluntary sector and not exclusive to Open Secret.

We have acknowledged the complexity of our funding arrangements and have now appointed a finance worker temporarily for seven hours per week and would hope to formalise this position.

The Management Committee also began a programme of work drawing up financial regulations and operational frameworks and we are committed to an on-going programme of work developing Management structures in Open Secret.

Operating from three bases in Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire is exciting but challenging and we have made efforts to ensure good communication systems.

We invested in new technology and equipment and also provided staff training. Rosina Prior, our computing consultant, has ensured that we are raring to go in using our new sophisticated equipment for training and presentations.

We have also set up a new access computing package to analyse statistics and information.

We are now asked more regularly for information particularly for briefings on issues to MSP's and we hope to collate relevant and useful information to inform debate.

We are increasingly aware that as the political agenda in Scotland has addressed issues of domestic abuse and violence we have struggled to remain actively in the debate due to resource pressures. We participate in two cross party groups at the Scottish Executive – Men's Violence Against Women and Children and the Child Sexual Abuse Group.

We are committed to dealing with prevention and protection as well as provision of services so networking, responding to consultation documents, training and collating information are vital aspects of our work – all have resource implications.

Also, if workers in sexual abuse projects work solely in providing services, the work can be onerous and taxing. We would not be effective role models or effective in supporting others if our vi-

side those of their child's.

## **Evelyn Kennedy, Parent Support Worker**

### **What I Can Do**

For some to be able to say 'I can do this' may seem somewhat commonplace; others may consider it an arrogant statement, but for myself it is one of the biggest steps I have made on my recovery from childhood sexual abuse.

Why?

It means so many things. I know I can take care of myself and trust myself to look after my son, and look after him well. Oh, but this is no big deal. Perhaps not for many, but when you believe you are hateful and full of shame it's incredibly hard to believe you have rights.... A voice.... and my goodness an opinion. Self-doubt is a thief. For some of us our childhood means **all we are is this**.

What does this mean?

I grew up believing I had the 'Midas Touch'. Come near – and something awful would happen. An exaggeration. No. Not for me. For years as a way of coping with this fear I erected emotional boundaries that no one could cross, just in case people discovered how awful I really was – and neither could I, lest it be too true. Now, after years of working through various issues I can say I am OK, along with the rest of the milling crowd. I no longer live believing I am the cause of BAD things happening, both to others and myself. Significant to this self-belief comes the ability to make my own decisions without having to rely on others, who must know better than me, surely! In addition, I can make mistakes... not know the answers to every problem and not be responsible for everyone else. The list goes on.

This translates in my having a life I can call my own, facing reality and coping with it and myself is part of what I perceive as becoming whole. Not having family support means often it is my counsellor I turn to. Realising that everyone needs a crutch now and then is recognition of our frailty as humans nothing more nothing less. This is a major concession for someone like me who lived a façade unable to admit vulnerability even to myself.

I believe counselling is a tool. It is a means whereby an individual gets in touch with who they REALLY are. And thus, it enables them to become what they want to be. Open Secret recognises the individuality of each person and offers various set-ups in their remit towards enabling those who suffer as a consequence of things done to them.

## **Caroline Wylie, Service User**

abusing parents, mothers in particular, this can be seen often as a crucial factor in the healing process of their child or young person and also the adult survivor.

We have also found, from experience, that non-abusing parents all too often find themselves in the impossible situation of being required to work with systems which they can find difficult to understand and which they often experience as failing them, whilst at the same time they are expected to cope with whatever emotional, physical and practical changes have arisen out of the disclosure of sexual abuse, even as their own needs go unmet.

We believe that it is essential for non-abusing parents to be provided with opportunities to consider the impact of abuse upon themselves and their families in an environment where they can feel safe enough to be open and honest about their feelings and empowered to identify effective coping strategies.

The services provided to non-abusing parents tend to mirror, in many ways, those services provided to adult survivors using our project. This is essentially because of our recognition that their feelings and coping strategies can often run almost parallel to those of survivors.

For the majority of women who use our service following their child's disclosure, they acknowledge that what they need most is to speak to another mother, someone in a similar situation. In groups the women are able to share their experiences of the devastating effects of child sexual abuse upon themselves and their families and they can gain tremendous strength from one another.

The groups cover issues such as how it felt when the abuse was disclosed; the need for information about the systems they encounter and about abusers. The women wish to know their rights and often speak of how they have felt threatened and powerless particularly regarding the legal system.

Some of the women have had the opportunity to meet with staff from local social work services and the police family unit in a joint endeavour to improve systems and future communications between non-abusing parents and services and others are interested in lobbying for change, challenging systems which they feel have further abused their children and allowed abusers to walk free.

In our experience of providing support for non-abusing parents over the past eight years, the need for workers to establish good working relationships with them continues to be for them of the utmost importance. For this to be truly effective they indicate that what they require is for their own needs to be taken into consideration along-

sion and priorities were limited and limiting. Our mission statement is bold but gives a clear message as to our stance.

**- To respond to the changing needs of survivors and their communities and to raise awareness by challenging and confronting societal denial surrounding childhood sexual abuse -**

We work from a community development perspective and have an investment in responding to all community health initiatives including social inclusion strategies, social justice strategies, community planning, local authority plans, mental health service plans and in particular the Scottish Partnership on Domestic Violence.

We would like to thank those who have supported us this year and believed in the value of our approach. We value your contribution and encouragement of our work. It makes Open Secret a unique environment for workers and service users working in partnership together.

**Catriona Laird, Project Manager**

## **Groupwork in Open Secret**

The groupwork programme continues to expand in Open Secret.

Over the year up to fourteen groups have been offered over three council areas including:

Women's Support Group  
Men's Group  
Moving Forward Group  
Options and Choices – Falkirk College  
Parents Group / Partner's Group

### *Creative groups:*

Music Workshop  
Writing group  
Drumming group  
Art group

### *Bodywork*

Health and Relaxation group  
Yoga group  
Self – Harm group

### *Development*

Personal and Professional Development group for Volunteer Support Workers

In August 2001 we brought an Edinburgh Festival play to Falkirk – 'Adult Child Dead Child' and this played to a packed audience in Falkirk Voluntary Centre.

We received £850 from the Venture Fund to purchase musical instruments and £3,500 from Stepping Stone Fund for creative writing groups.

Groupwork provides a holistic and positive approach to healing - breaking silence and providing fun and laughter while developing interpersonal skills, and learning to trust emotions, trust others and develop potential.

## **Training**

Open Secret runs its own marketed training programme each year and this has become increasingly more popular, offering multi-disciplinary training and also generating income.

Our training days included basic and advanced training on working with adult survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.

- Working with adult survivors who experience learning disabilities
- Working with issues of self harming behaviours
- Working with adults, who misuse alcohol
- Inner Child work

Our internal training for volunteers runs over a three month period and is quite intense and demanding but most people complete the course to provide a service in Open Secret.

This year we acquired eleven new volunteer support workers. We hope to move towards accreditation of our volunteer course.

Anyone interested in undertaking volunteer training should contact Patricia Weir at Open Secret.

External training has included

- Keeping Safe training for parents in nurseries and Family Centres
- Victim Support training throughout Scotland
- Link Housing
- Quality Action
- Basic Awareness – Criminal Justice workers in Social Work Services
- CLASP training
- Introduction to Stress Management for Falkirk District Association of Mental Health
- Post-graduate Nursing students – University of Stirling (Inverness Campus)
- Child Protection Diploma (University of Dundee) Joint social work and Police training on Child Protection..
- Zero Tolerance conference for young people.

## Talks

Women's group  
Women's Gilds  
Child Protection Committee  
Shotts Prison  
Samaritans conference  
HNC Students conference, Falkirk College

Self – help Forum  
Sexual Health Degree Unit – Stirling University  
Clackmannan County Hospital  
Ward 19, Falkirk Royal Infirmary

## Workshops

Supporting Survivors  
Games People Play  
Importance of Play  
Relaxation

## **Open Secret in Clackmannanshire & Stirling**

Open Secret's work in Clackmannanshire and Stirling continues to grow and become well established.

Our office at 19 Mar Street, Alloa is now furnished and decorated and looking swell. It has proved to be an excellent venue for groups and the last volunteer training took place there earlier in the year. In February 2002 my clerical worker, Carol and I transferred to work entirely at Stirling and Open Secret's former Volunteer Co-ordinator, June Finlayson, took over at Alloa. She is helped by her clerical worker, Angela. June is her usual creative self and has developed imaginative ways to encourage survivors to access the project and look at issues related to their childhood sexual abuser. In addition to one-to-one support work and women's therapy group, June plans to run drop-in sessions and an art group.

The most exciting development in Stirling during the last year was obtaining an attic office at 76 Port Street. It has sloping floors, a leaking roof, low ceilings and no central heating, but does have 5 rooms and is beloved by all who manage to climb the steep stairs to reach it! We been able to run a women's therapy group and have held workshops on self esteem, colour therapy, aromatherapy and feng shui. Referrals for one to one work have continued to rise and we have employed two sessional workers, Ilene Easton and Jacquie Sharp. We did secure limited finance from Cornton Vale Prison but unfortunately it is not sufficient to allow us to meet the high demand for one to one work with the women there.

In March we learned that Open Secret's application to the Domestic Abuse Development Fund had been successful and that we would receive money from the Scottish Executive to appoint another part-time development worker in Stirling. Yet more growth for Open Secret!

## **Sue McDougall, Development Worker**

## **Working with Non-Abusing Parents**

Within Open Secret, parent support is recognised as being a hugely significant area of our work. We believe that in providing services to non-