

impact report

2023



vetlife

Support for the
veterinary community

foreword

As we enter 2024 we see the need for our charity being greater than at any time in its history. We are proud to support the whole veterinary team.

We believe that our charity's unique position of being made up from the community we support, as well as following an evidence led approach to delivering that support, means we are rightly recognised as the charity for the veterinary professions.

This comes at a great cost, and we thank each and every person who has donated to us over the past year. The demand for this fundraising has increased to mean that we now need to raise in excess of £1M in 2024 to continue delivering services to our community. The proportion of our spend allocated to administration has fallen over recent years and I am deeply grateful for the dedicated commitment the small team show to our charity, and the amazing work they do.

On average, our Helpline volunteers have responded to a person in need 11 times each and every day of the year. This requires a colossal effort to facilitate 24 hour cover on both a phone and email support line.

Of these contacts, 4 each week have been referred to our Health Support service for additional professional psychological care while our Financial Support service has responded to over 5 applications each month.

My role as one of the Trustees of Vetlife is to ensure that as well as providing this service under our charitable aims, that we also leave behind us a charity which will continue to be able to deliver this care 5, 10 and 50 years from now. I am acutely aware that the reason we are able to achieve that is thanks to our tremendous fundraisers and supporters.

To all of you reading this report, I thank you, and I look forward to the year ahead with you.



James Russell
Vetlife President



about vetlife

Vetlife is a charity which provides support to members of the UK veterinary community and their families who have emotional, health or financial concerns.

Vetlife Vision

A UK veterinary community with high levels of physical and mental wellbeing.

Vetlife Mission

To provide support to members of the UK veterinary community and their families who have emotional, health or financial concerns, whilst seeking ways to prevent such situations in the future.

Vetlife strives to ensure that those engaged in the veterinary community are aware of the sources of help and support should they, or a colleague, need assistance. The Charity provides help where it can, and signposts individuals to additional sources of help as and when appropriate. Support needs vary according to circumstance and may involve short-term help to cope with an immediate crisis, or longer-term care for those adversely affected by age, ill health or disability. Wherever possible, the Charity seeks to enable beneficiaries to return to independence and self-sufficiency.

Vetlife finances and manages three services to achieve its mission:

Vetlife Helpline: provides confidential emotional support to anyone in the veterinary community by phone or anonymous email via the website. Support is provided by trained volunteers; vet surgeons, veterinary nurses, and others who have knowledge of the veterinary profession. Callers are referred to Vetlife Health Support where appropriate.

Vetlife Health Support: provides professional support for mental health issues, including those related to stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol, drugs and eating disorders. This service is available to vet, vet nurses and veterinary students and is provided by external supplier March on Stress.

Vetlife Financial Support: provides financial and other assistance to veterinary surgeons, registered veterinary nurses and their dependants, in the form of regular monthly grants or one-time special gifts.



2023 delivery & outcomes

- Vetlife Helpline received 4,042 contacts (3,503:2022). Of these, 2,251 (56%) were by email and 1,971 (44%) by phone. This is an average of 11 contacts per day.
- Vetlife Helpline volunteers gave 18,750 hours of time to support the veterinary community.
- A total of 198 (2022: 216) contacts were referred on to Vetlife Health Support for psychological support.
- 65 (2022: 47) new applications were received through Vetlife Financial Support.
- A new expert led resource was produced and widely distributed to support the veterinary community - **'Veterinary Professionals and Anxiety'**.
- The Vetlife Helpline Manager and our volunteers spoke at 6 Vet Schools to support student wellbeing.
- We exhibited at 21 key veterinary events to provide delegates with information on self-care and supporting others while raising awareness that Vetlife is there to help in times of need.
- Vetlife Helpline continued to support practices following bereavement by suicide (postvention) and other potentially traumatic bereavement, providing support tailored to practice need.
- Initial training was provided for 23 new volunteers.
- Ongoing training for all Helpline volunteers was provided both online and in person with in person training focussing on support for veterinary professionals experiencing mental health needs, and for veterinary professionals experiencing harmful substance use including alcohol. Training online looked at support for veterinary professionals facing morally challenging situations, and moral injury.



2023 delivery & outcomes cont.

A total of 24 volunteer Financial Support Area Representatives attended annual on-going training in March 2023. March on Stress delivered training to volunteers on how to hold difficult conversations with applicants and/or Beneficiaries who experience mental ill health and those at high risk of suicide. This training was used to help build confidence to engage in supportive mental health and wellbeing conversations with the people we support.

Applications to Vetlife Financial Support continue to grow, with a 38% increase during 2023. This increase led to an urgent appeal for more Area Representatives to support our Beneficiaries.

Some of the most common reasons for application included:

- Loss of income
- Change in household: divorce, separation, or death of a significant other
- RCVS fees: annual renewal fee, registration fees
- Health concerns
- Priority debts

Grants have also been provided for specific items or services, for example, white and brown goods, rent and deposits and access to specialist support with debt and State benefits. A wide range of help and support was also available for daily living costs.

We have a deep commitment to address the needs of our Beneficiaries and have made significant steps to closely monitor how support is provided by regularly reviewing our Grant Making Policy and through feedback from Beneficiaries and volunteers. This allows valuable insight into the difference we are making to the people we support.

Feedback from Financial Support Beneficiaries:



Thank you very much for the financial support, it is of great relief to me.



I am overwhelmed by your kind generosity. Thank you so much for everything.

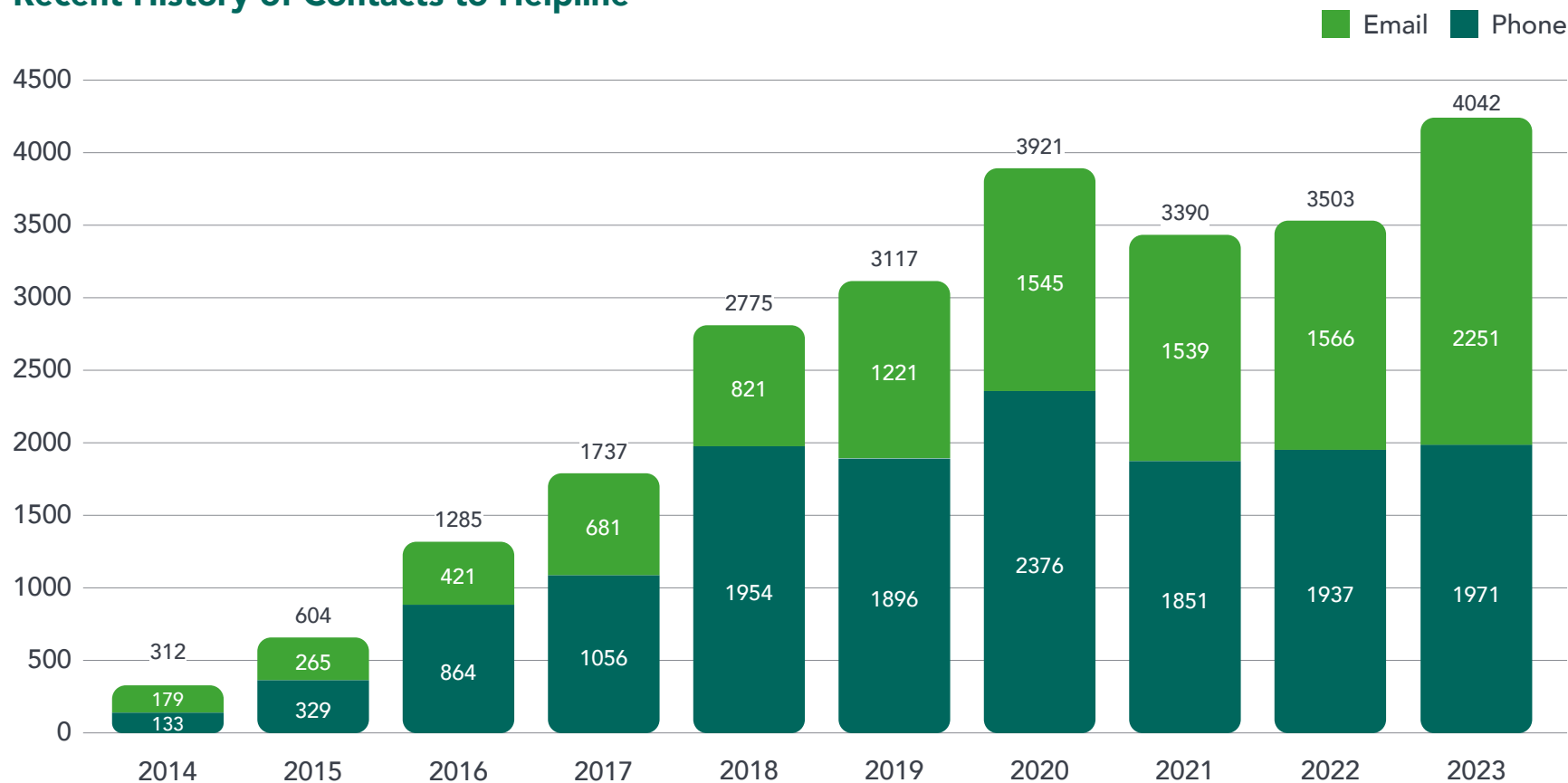


I appreciate everything you have all done, I feel a bit embarrassed but I'm very thankful for the support.

helpline contacts handled



Recent History of Contacts to Helpline



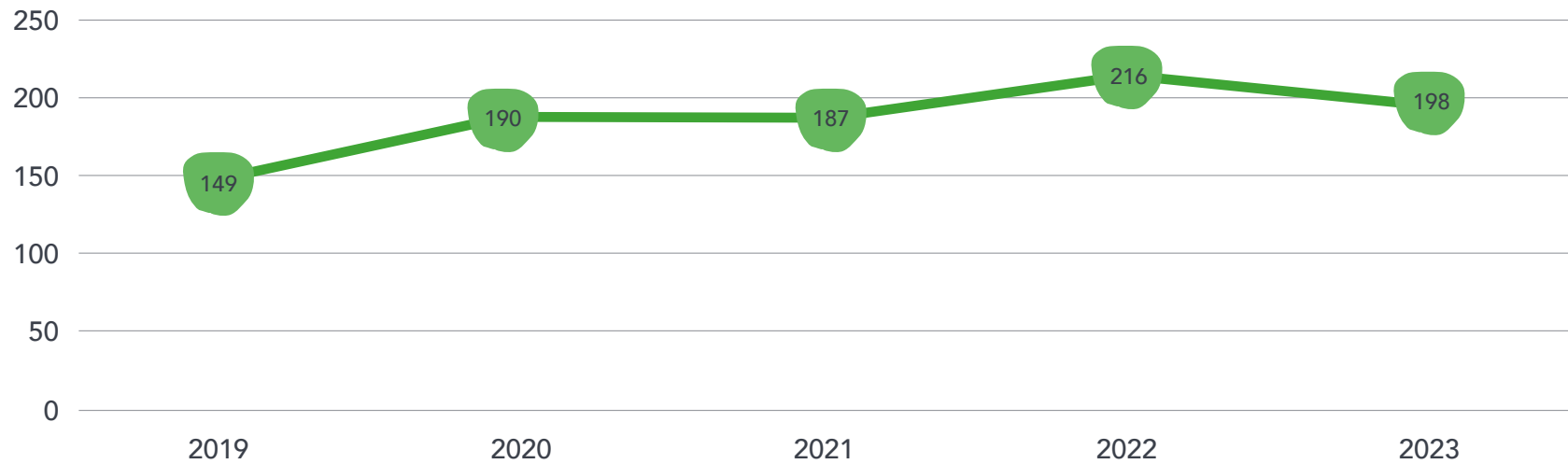
Following a surge of demand during peak Covid periods the contact rate has returned to that of steady growth. However, the severity and urgency of calls has steadily increased.

health support

referrals for psychological support



Recent History of Referrals for Psychological Support

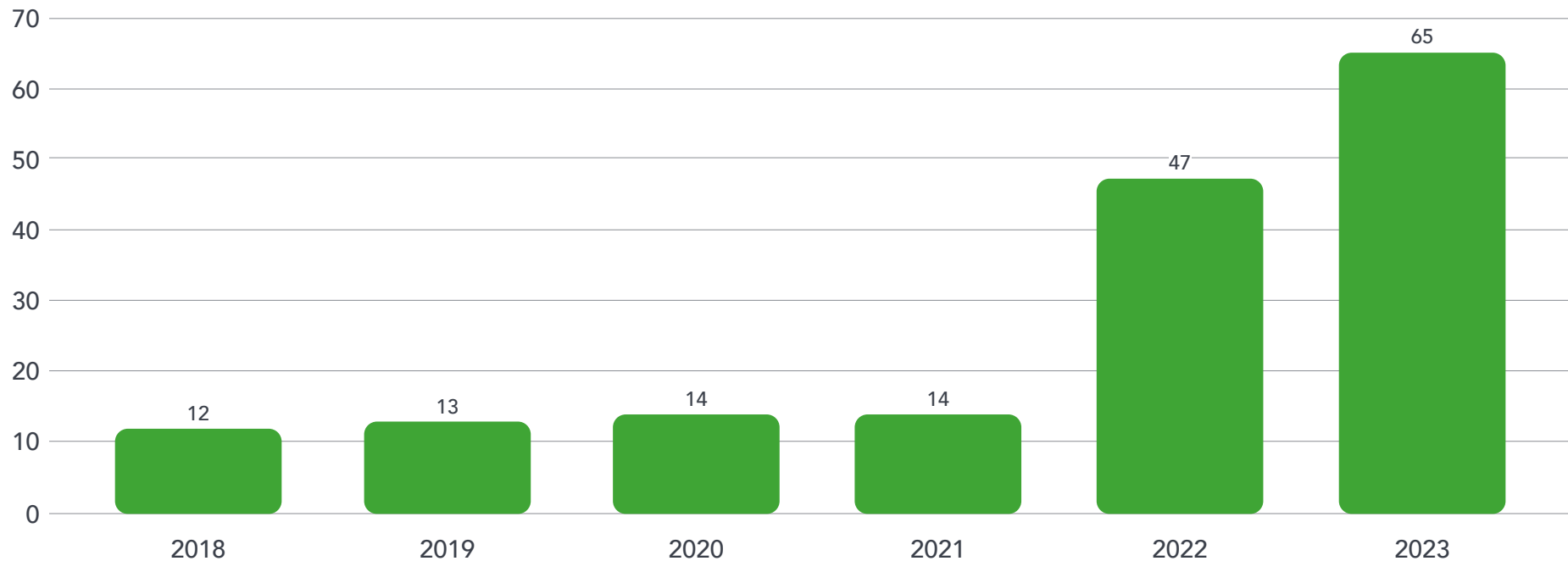


financial support applications



Vetlife has recorded unprecedented numbers of applications for financial support in 2023 by those in the veterinary community facing significant monetary difficulties. Total supportive grant payments exceeded £100,000.

Recent History of Applications for Financial Assistance



The substantive increase in distressed applications for financial support has resulted in the need to increase both employed staff and volunteer representation on assessment panels and in direct support of applicants.

testimonials from beneficiaries 2023



They have been more than helpful and understanding of my situation. I feel like I now know it's not just me that feels like this.



Vet Health Support was excellent... enabled me to talk freely about my ongoing mental health struggles in a safe space.



Thank you so much... I appreciate every one of you I've spoken to at Vetlife. I appreciate your time and concern you've shown. So, a huge thank you to you all for taking some of that pressure off me.



Always very kind and understanding, have helped get me the support I have needed.



I felt comfortable talking about my situation and being completely honest. I genuinely felt like I mattered and that I was understood.

feedback from Safeguarding Audit 2023

Vetlife seeks to achieve a high standard in its safeguarding responsibilities and conducts a regular audit of its Safeguarding procedures. This was carried out by the independent assessor SAFEcic in 2023 from whom any recommendations for further improvements are followed up by the Safeguarding Working Group.

Amongst comments received in this most recent report were:



The Trustees should be justifiably very proud of the exceptional dedication of personnel at all levels and the charity's achievements, particularly the recent inclusion of veterinary nurses as beneficiaries.



The charity has a very strong safeguarding culture with a golden thread running from the Board, through personnel to the beneficiaries and back again.



The charity has always been prudent with resources and budgeting so donors and supporters can be confident all monies are spent wisely.



March on Stress is exceptionally well managed with robust safeguarding procedures and policy in place. They produce a very strong, informative, evidenced, and detailed quarterly Board report. They also commission external independent clinical notes audits. There is a strong contract in place with the charity. Vetlife can, quite rightfully, have every confidence in the services they provide which are excellent.

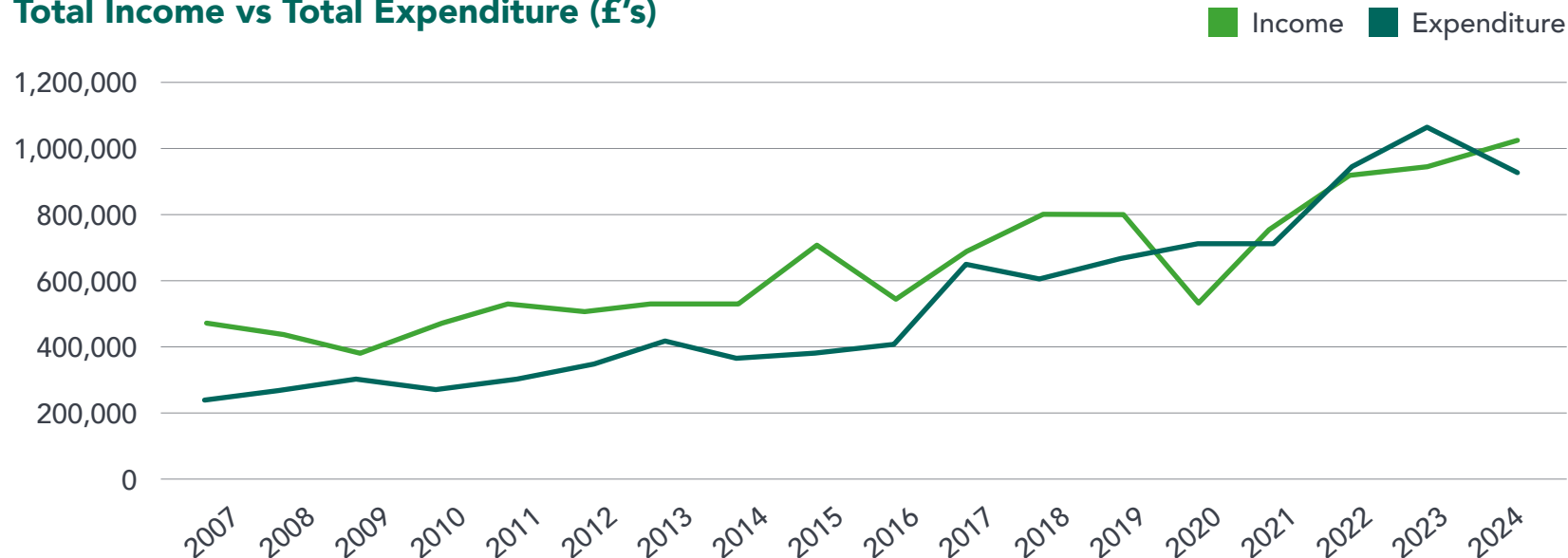
finances

Vetlife has successfully maintained a positive fundraising to expenditure balance for many years, enabling regular increases to the investment portfolio to be achieved to provide heightened income security.

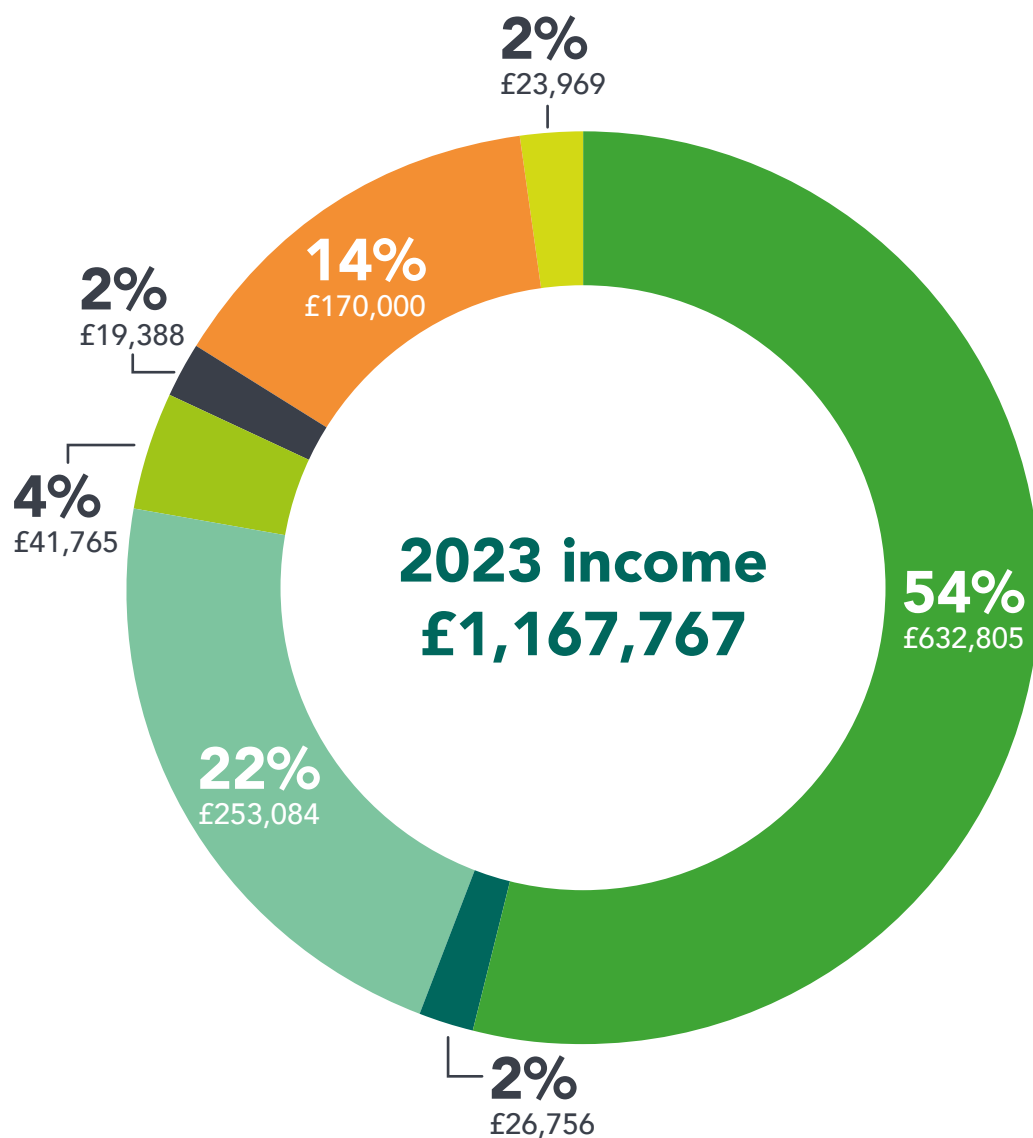
Despite what was predicted and budgeted to be a small cash deficit for the year, with the outstanding work of the charity, and the generosity of supporters, we ended 2023 with a small surplus.

The Charity moves into 2024 in a strong financial position, able to continue to provide much needed support to the veterinary community. However, as that need continues to grow, we remain focused on maintaining, and increasing income levels to ensure sustainability for the future.

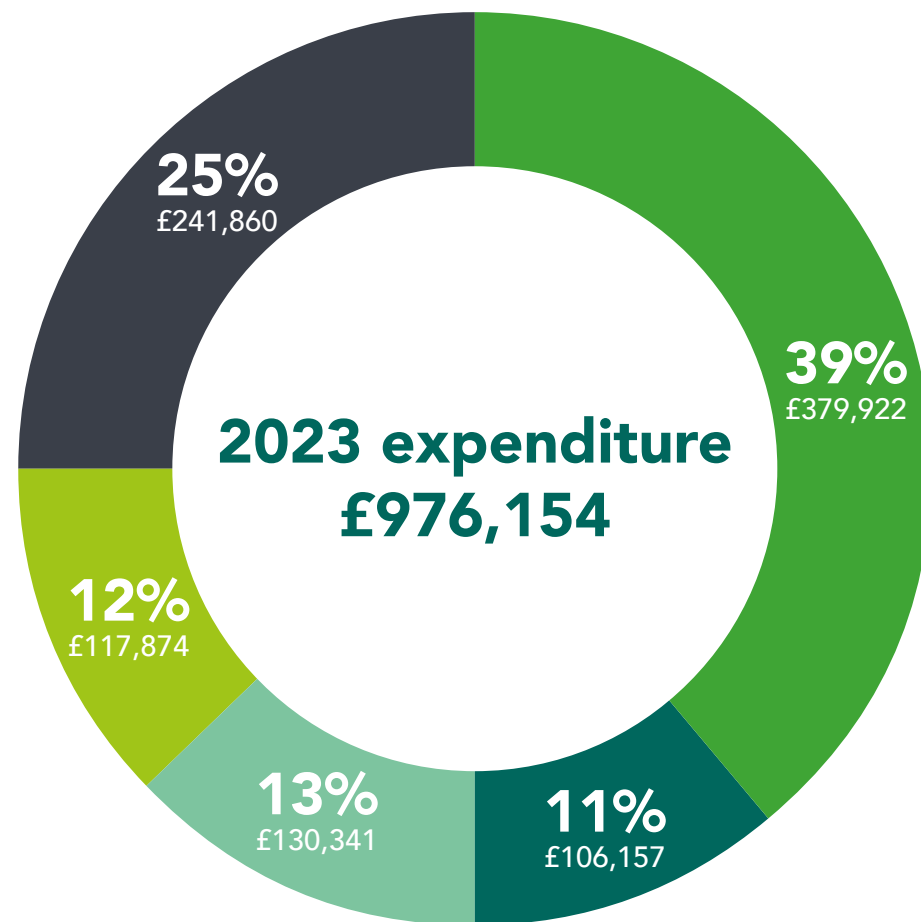
Total Income vs Total Expenditure (£'s)



Steady growth in income over 16 years has recovered following decline in Covid lockdown period helped by donations in 2023. However, the charity continues to face increasing mental health and financial challenges amongst the veterinary community in the current socio-economic environment.



- General donations
- Bungalows
- Investment income
- Legacies
- Subscriptions
- Health Support donations
- Helpline Donations



- Administration
- Comms & Fundraising
- Financial Support
- Helpline
- Health Support

fundraising overview

Vetlife were delighted to see donations through fundraising activity in 2023 amount to **£632,805** (54% of total income) received in donations.

Contributions from Vetlife Day and Active October initiatives made up part of this total.

Other notable fundraisers in 2023 include:

- Vet **Oscar Sinfield** rode past every vet practice in Somerset in his fundraiser 'Ride Somervet' which raised £4,600.
- **Georgina Friend** swam a relay across the channel in aid of Vetlife raising £3,495.
- **A group of 20 colleagues** from Northampton Vets for Pets abseiled down the Northampton Tower – the tallest permanent abseil tower in the world raising over £1000.

Vetlife likes to thank donors via its social media channels and monthly e-newsletter.

For donations of **£10,000** and above, supporter logos will feature on the Vetlife website.

Donations of over **£15,000** are gratefully acknowledged by full page advertisement in key veterinary publications including Veterinary Record and the Vet Times.

Generous donations of over **£20,000** are announced via press release to the veterinary media (subject to donor's approval) and also receive our public thanks in a full page advert in the veterinary press. These donors also feature in our annual Impact Report.



In 2023 **£632,805**
(54% of total income)
was received in donations.



raising awareness


Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn were used extensively to raise awareness of the charity and the issues for which it offers support.

By close of 2023:

 had **11,720** followers;

 had **7,828** followers;

 had **1,886** followers;

 had **2,412** followers.

The total reach for Vetlife content in 2023 on Facebook was **220,706**, Twitter was **133,113**, Instagram was **25,551** and LinkedIn was **54,818**.

Vetlife thanks all its supporters who share Vetlife posts and messaging through their marketing channels, providing a superb way to support the charity.

Vetlife also thanks the following publications for their support in provision of promotional space:

Vet Record

Vet Times

Veterinary Edge

MRCVS Online

VN Online

In Practice

Vet Nurse Times

BVA News

Improve Veterinary Practice



thank you

Vetlife offers special thanks for their generosity in 2023 to the following supporters:

The Cencora Impact Foundation

The Dashlight Foundation

IVC Evidensia

Linnaeus Veterinary Limited

VetPartners

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

Veterinary Defence Society Limited

The Zoetis Foundation

Vet Dynamics

For more information on supporting Vetlife,
please visit www.vetlife.org.uk or email
info@vetlife.org.uk.

