

(formerly ESCA CancerSupport)







Annual Report 2023

Table of Contents

About Cancer Support Switzerland	04
Message to the President	05
A Word From the Director	06
Achievements in 2023	07
List of Services	08
Support Services	08
Perspective from a Medical Professional	10

Support Services	11
Rachel's Story	12
Spotlight on Caregivers Support Group	13
Our Work in Numbers	14
Community Fundraisers	16
Open House	17
Collaborations & Partnerships	18
Steps for Cancer Support	20
Acknowledgements	22
Finances	23
Governance	24

🚶 Cancer Support Switzerland Annual Report 2023

About Cancer Support Switzerland

Cancer Support Switzerland is a non–profit association made up of professionals and trained volunteers who understand the impact of a cancer diagnosis.

We provide emotional support, practical help and physical wellbeing activities in English to cancer patients, their caregivers and their families, free of charge. Our services are provided in English, but we welcome and support all nationalities.

Since 2000, Cancer Support Switzerland has been the only association of its kind to respond to the needs of the international community in the Lake Geneva region and has gradually expanded the reach of its services to all of Switzerland and neighbouring regions.

We have services and activities available online and in person.



In Geneva, **our main Centre** is a place where visitors can find support within a comfortable and friendly environment that includes trained volunteers as well as professional staff. We are also further developing our support in Vaud and Zurich.

Our online services ensure that support can also reach all corners of the country, as well as neighbouring regions. Thanks to the generosity and fundraising efforts of the community and the highly appreciated support of our donors, we continue to expand our cancer support network and offer help that is year-round, free of charge, and accessible to everyone.

OUR VISION

No one faces cancer alone.

OUR MISSION

To provide emotional support, practical help, wellbeing activities and a welcoming community in English to anyone affected by cancer.

OUR NEW NAME





In 2024, recognizing the growing demand for our assistance beyond Geneva and Vaud, we made the decision to rebrand as Cancer Support Switzerland. This new name reflects our commitment to extending our services nationwide as well as to neighbouring regions. Throughout this annual report we refer to ourselves as Cancer Support Switzerland, however the activities described took place in 2023 when we were still known as ESCA CancerSupport.

Message to the President

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Ramona Azarnia for her leadership and dedication during her tenure as President over the past three years. Her leadership has been instrumental in steering our organization through developing a strong new strategy and guiding its implementation as we grow and strengthen our offer, as well as guiding us through a rebranding to Cancer Support Switzerland.

We are grateful for Ramona's contributions and are pleased that she will continue to serve on the board and as a dedicated volunteer and we look forward to her continued involvement as we embark on the next phase of our journey.

Thank you, Ramona, for your invaluable leadership!





A Word From the Director

It has been a year of growth and transformation in many ways for our organisation, reflected by our recent name change to Cancer Support Switzerland. Building on the more than two decades of supporting people in the Lake Geneva region, our ambition is to reach even more people by extending our services across the country. A major milestone in 2024 will be establishing inperson counselling and support services in the Zurich region. At the same time, our online services will help ensure that support is accessible to people affected by cancer in the whole of Switzerland and neighbouring regions.

More people than ever reached out to us for support in 2023. We saw an increase of 39% in the number of new people contacting us – a remarkable rate of growth, which clearly speaks to the need for cancer support in English. This growth is also the result of our expanded outreach efforts last year, including a strengthened focus on connecting with the medical community.

Boosting support to caregivers was identified as a key need, which led to us to establish a new support group for caregivers, which meets monthly.

There were some staff changes. In November we were happy to welcome onboard Carine Karnouk as the new Counselling and Support Services Manager and Head Psychologist. Her rich experience as a counsellor and skills as a manager are a valuable addition to our organisation and are already helping us shape the way forward.

With our community model being

our key strength, volunteers remain the special ingredient of Cancer Support Switzerland. In 2023, we were incredibly grateful to have nearly 90+ of them, with 26 new volunteers joining our organisation during the course of the year. Our ability to support more and more people facing cancer is made possible through the dedicated work of these volunteers, as well as therapists, group coordinators, and staff, and thanks to the generous support of our donors and partners. Thank you for your precious contributions towards our vision of no one having to face cancer alone.

ELINA VIITANIEMI
DIRECTOR

Achievements in 2023

227



2,000 HOURS OF DIRECT

SUPPORT PROVIDED



1 NEW SERVICE

ADDED

CHF 825,536

AMOUNT RAISED

90+

VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE

VOLUNTEERING HOURS IN 2023

5,191

HOURS IN TOTAL



1,615_h





1,519_h

3 AWARENESS



973_h

MANAGEMENT,
OPERATIONS & FINANCE



739_h

5 FUNDRAISING (INCL. STEPS FOR CANCER SUPPORT)



345 h



98% OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED

WERE **VERY** OR **MOSTLY SATISFIED** WITH OUR SERVICES

List of Services

Support Line/Email

Counselling

Prostate Cancer Support Group

Teen Support

Drop-In Centre

Library and Resources

Peer Support

Breast Cancer Support (Bosom Pals)

Online Support Group

Lausanne Support Group

Art Therapy for the Bereaved

Art Therapy for Cancer Patients

heART Space

Work and Cancer Coaching

Online Yoga

Yoga at the Centre

Pilates

Walk'nTalk Lausanne and Geneva

Look Good Feel Better

Gardening Group

Caregivers Support Group

Support Services

In 2023, Cancer Support Switzerland provided support to 227 individuals, totaling more than 2,000 hours of service. It was encouraging to see almost 40% more people were reaching out to us.

Providing support services to individuals affected by cancer is paramount for fostering resilience and improving quality of life. Our support services offer a lifeline of emotional, psychological, physical and practical assistance, addressing the multifaceted challenges that accompany a cancer diagnosis.







Expansion to Zurich

In response to the growing demand, we have expanded our services from Geneva, Lausanne and surrounding areas to Zurich, as part of our aim to provide support to individuals affected by cancer across Switzerland and neighbouring regions.



Expansion of Support Services Team

In November 2023, we welcomed Carine Karnouk as the new Counselling & Support Services Manager and Head Psychologist, taking over from Christian Holyoak. The team also grew, with the addition of Catherine Butterly as a couple's therapist, Catharine Viveash Beard as our first counsellor based in Zurich, Manali Kulkarni as a Pilates instructor, and three new Work and Cancer Coaches: Sunita Sehmi, Geoffrey Matthews, and Caroline Shaw.



Counselling

Counselling is one of the most used services at Cancer Support Switzerland. In 2023, our team provided counselling support to 99 individuals, with 717 hours of counselling sessions. These included one-on-one sessions and group activities. The services aim to enhance quality of life, reduce psychological symptoms, and improve coping mechanisms for people affected by cancer and their loved ones, including children, caregivers and the bereaved.



Capacity Building

Our support services team prioritised capacity building through participation in a training session centred on sexuality and cancer. In addition, the Peer Support volunteers attended training sessions on death and grief, and mental health first aid.



Satisfaction Survey

We also conducted a survey of the people we support to determine their level of satisfaction with our services and also determine what future services people might need or want. By listening to feedback and giving everyone a voice, we hope to improve our support services and make their experiences even better in the coming years. This is a process which will continue annually.



🚶 Cancer Support Switzerland Annual Report 2023

Perspective from a Medical Professional



ASHLEY MACHEN
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR
MULTIDISCIPLINARY CANCER CENTRES
HIRSLANDEN: CLINIQUE DES GRANGETTES

In my role as a breast cancer and prostate cancer nurse consultant, I see the immense impact that a cancer diagnosis has every day, not just on a patient's health, but also on every aspect of their lives.

For patients who are not fluent in the local language their sense of loss and fear can be even stronger as they try to navigate a shocking and complex situation in a language which is not their mother tongue.

Patients can be confident in decisions on where to receive quality medical treatment, but finding out about wonderful associations such as Cancer Support Switzerland – with their myriad of services available for free in English – can be a surprise and a relief. Every patient's needs are different: it takes a certain level of expertise and experience to identify the support needed in each particular circumstance. Complementary services such as

those between the local medical community and Cancer Support Switzerland enable holistic care and support for each patient.

I recently visited a patient who had just completed six months of chemotherapy followed by breast surgery. She explained how essential it had been for her to keep working during treatment. It had helped her stay focused, feel empowered, and to maintain her energy levels even when dealing with difficult side effects. Conversely, another was incapable of working during her treatment, and later struggled with reintegrating back into her workplace. Her concentration and energy levels were affected, and she had many questions about how and when to return to work, or whether she even wanted to continue in her profession.

These patients were able to receive support from a job coach at Cancer Support Switzerland to find ways to address their various challenges and to communicate effectively with their teams and managers. The service was invaluable, giving them reassurance and instilling a sense of wellbeing.

Without a language barrier, patients are able to easily integrate into a safe and supportive community. They come to rely on those who are facing similar challenges in dealing with a cancer diagnosis, as well as the staff and volunteers of Cancer Support Switzerland.

The camaraderie patients experience when they engage in physical activities together is easy to see. Those who have participated in a Walk'nTalk, or yoga and Pilates classes, have spoken about their feelings of accomplishment in the face of fatigue and the uncertainty brought on by cancer treatments: there is pride and encouragement in sharing these moments.

It would be remiss not to mention the incredible *Oncolexic* – a project to which we were honoured to contribute. Cancer Support Switzerland produced this English-French phrasebook of terminology used in cancer diagnosis, treatment, for the long term. This handy tool helps patients express and understand the language used by local healthcare teams. The book is available free to anyone who needs it, and is available as a hard copy or an online download. It is appreciated not only by patients, but by local oncology nurses too.

The members of this large international community in Geneva are fortunate to have Cancer Support Switzerland, so that they never have to face cancer alone.

Support Services

In the pursuit of enhancing the wellbeing of those affected by cancer, our support services stand as a beacon of hope and compassion. This past year has been a testament to our commitment to providing comprehensive and empathetic care to individuals and families grappling with the profound challenges that cancer brings. From emotional support to practical assistance, we have worked to create a supportive community where individuals affected by cancer find solace and strength.

We have seen an expansion of our cancer support services this year. Our Caregivers Support Group was launched in the summer. Acknowledging the critical role caregivers play, this initiative aims to create a nurturing space to share experiences and get practical assistance. Through regular meetings and expert guidance, the group aims to alleviate emotional strain, provide essential resources, and foster a supportive community for those caring for loved ones amidst the challenges of cancer.

In response to the increasing demand for holistic wellness practices, we have added a third weekly yoga class for those navigating the challenges of cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. Yoga promotes emotional wellbeing, stress reduction, and overall quality of life through mindfulness, breath awareness, and gentle movement. Furthermore, with the arrival of our new instructor Manali Kulkarni, we have been able to reintroduce Pilates classes. These are aimed at strengthening the core, stabilizing muscles, and improving flexibility, in order to help mitigate the physical discomfort often associated with cancer therapies. Yoga and Pilates sessions are carefully tailored to address the specific needs and abilities of participants. The benefits extend far beyond physical exercise: sessions nurture the body, mind, and spirit, empowering people affected by cancer to thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally.



Having been diagnosed in the UK with primary breast cancer in 2011, it was a shock to have it return in 2017 as incurable, stage 4, metastatic breast cancer (MBC). My former healthy and exercise-motivated self had struggled with the initial diagnosis so this time, with my tribe by my side, I wanted to do this journey differently. My UK oncologist introduced me to a centre with a breast cancer support group, something I had previously avoided, and it was a lifeline of hope.

When my husband was offered a new job in Switzerland it was an exciting opportunity. My oncologist gave us his blessing as I was stable on my second line of treatment which I would be able to continue in Switzerland. I moved to Zurich in 2019, leaving our two young adult daughters in the UK.

Settled, we were able to take trips back and forth and have family visits. However with COVID-19, we became a family torn apart, trying to navigate the different national restrictions whilst supporting each other from afar.

I found Cancer Support Switzerland via Instagram, where I am sharing my journey of moving overseas with MBC. A follower living with MBC in Geneva pointed me to the group.

I was feeling disconnected and concerned at the time and wanted to chat with those going through the same.

With the pandemic, the support was online, so I could join the Bosom Pals coffee mornings for breast cancer patients and a second support group.

Meeting online in a safe and friendly space was mentally rewarding, and gave me purpose. We stand by each other in difficult times, helping each other heal in our hearts. Those with experience guide those who come behind. These groups have made me laugh, cry, reflect, and know that I am not alone.

In 2022 the cancer progressed to my brain, requiring surgery to remove a larger tumour and radiotherapy to zap smaller ones. Whilst there is nothing like face-to-face meetings, I am grateful that Cancer Support Switzerland offers online support.

Going through treatment is hard, but travelling to centres can also be tiring. I have visited the Centre once – it is a beautiful, relaxing and peaceful space. I wish I lived nearer! Everyone made me feel so welcome.

Thank you for being there, for what you offer and for your reach which has found me new friends near my village too.

Spotlight on Caregivers Support Group

As an organisation dedicated to comprehensive cancer support, we identified a pressing need for a specific service to address the emotional, practical, and informational requirements of those caring for loved ones battling cancer. We were thrilled to announce the launch of our new Caregivers Support Group in 2023.

Caregiving is a demanding responsibility, often accompanied by emotional strain and a sense of isolation. Recognising this problem, the group aims to create a supportive space where caregivers can share their experiences, exchange insights, and derive strength from the collective wisdom of the community.

The group operates through monthly in-person meetings at our Centre. These sessions are facilitated by experienced counsellor Antonia Calame, and trained Peer Supporters who specialize in caregiving dynamics, offering

guidance on effective coping strategies, stress management, and practical problem-solving. The group also serves as an informational hub, providing caregivers with access to relevant resources, expert advice, and the latest developments in cancer care.

The purpose of the group is multi-faceted. Firstly, it aims to alleviate the emotional burden often experienced by caregivers, offering a compassionate space for them to express their feelings and concerns with people who are on a similar journey.

Secondly, the group provides valuable opportunities to equip caregivers with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complexities of cancer care. Lastly, by fostering a sense of community, the group seeks to reduce the sense of isolation that caregivers commonly face, promoting a network of mutual support.

The value of this new service lies in its ability to empower caregivers, enhance their wellbeing, and ultimately contribute to improved care outcomes for cancer patients. By addressing the unique needs of caregivers, we believe this support group will play a crucial role in strengthening the fabric of our community, and ensuring that no one faces the challenges of caregiving alone.



Our Work in Numbers

The 2022 statistics have been updated for accuracy following recent data cleaning efforts.

PEOPLE WE SUPPORTED

All people who used our services at least once during the year including our support line.

New people supported

250

227

198

200

100

93

SUPPORT INQUIRIES OF CANCER PATIENTS BY TREATMENT PHASE

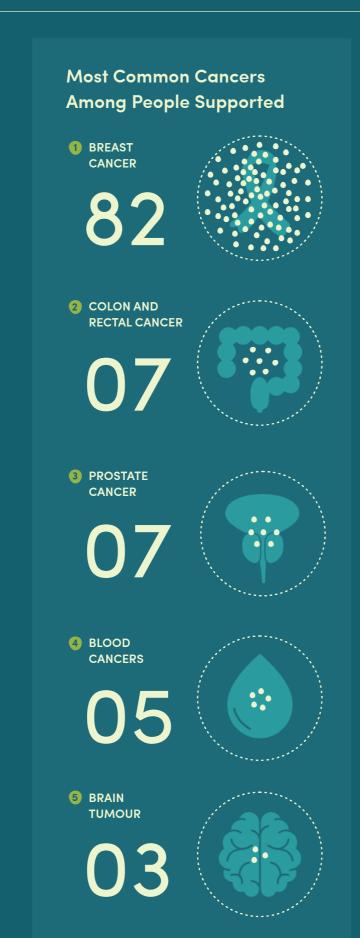
2023

2022

Newly diagnosed In treatment Post treatment

40

17



Who We Are Supporting

PEOPLE SUPPORTED 227

BY TYPE
People with cancer Caregiver Bereaved Other

138 48 21 20

BY GENDER
Female Male
180 47

BY NATIONALITY









































Peruvian













BY AGE GROUP

0-18 years

19-35 years



56-75 years





Community Fundraisers

Our Community Fundraisers embody the spirit of community engagement and support that is the hallmark of everything Cancer Support Switzerland does.

Beyond their primary function of generating financial resources, these initiatives serve as potent avenues for raising awareness about our organisation and the essential services we provide. Members of the community spearhead diverse activities ranging from fitness challenges to crafting homemade items, all with the shared goal of advancing our mission. We offer assistance throughout their efforts, collaborating on idea refinement, providing branded materials, and sharing their work on our communication channels.

One of our dedicated volunteers, Sue Hudson, epitomises continued support and passion for our cause. Throughout the year, Sue channels her talents and connections into various fundraising pursuits, including crocheting, cooking, baking and gardening, aligning her personal interests with our fundraising efforts. Her steadfast commitment to our cause yielded impressive results this year, culminating in a record-breaking donation of CHF 3,700. Sue's tireless efforts not only underscore her remarkable generosity as well as that of her friends in Geneva and the Pays de Gex, but also serve as a beacon of inspiration within our community, motivating others to join in our collective efforts towards a brighter future. We are grateful for her ongoing support!



The annual Open House provides an opportunity to welcome current and prospective clients, partners, and agencies to the Centre in Grand-Saconnex. On 30 March 2023, more than 100 people came to visit and learn more about Cancer Support Switzerland.

During the event, the activities and support services, as well as the counsellors, coaches, and management are introduced in person. Discussion is encouraged, allowing the organisation to be presented and explored from all angles.

We were honoured to have
Dr. Nicolas Mach, Deputy Head of
the Oncology Division at Geneva
University Hospital (HUG), join us as
one of our special guests. Dr. Mach is
the Head of the Clinical Research Unit
in Oncology and the Head of the HUG
Cancer Centre. His presence added
great value to our event, as he
reflected on the importance of support
for the international community and
our joint efforts in caring for cancer
patients and their families.

Hanadi, who used our services, provided a heartfelt testimonial about the personal support she received from us, further emphasising the significance of our services. We were delighted to have various NGOs, companies, and individuals who share an interest in our services attend as well. Their presence reaffirmed the importance of cancer support and the impact of our work.



INFO STANDS

The information stands for Cancer Support Switzerland bring public visibility to our organisation and reach a large number of people who might be interested in what we offer. This could be people who have or have had a diagnosis of cancer and their families and friends, or healthcare workers whose patients could benefit from our services. To this end, the information stands are set up in different clinics and hospitals, often in association with a cancer-themed event such as breast cancer awareness, lung cancer prevention or palliative care. The stands can also be displayed in businesses, international organisations and the like to support ongoing staff health wellbeing activities. They form part of our link to schools in Geneva, presenting opportunities to the older pupils to volunteer for Cancer Support Switzerland activities as part of the community service module they are required to complete for school.

Stands are staffed by trained Cancer Support Switzerland volunteers who answer questions and promote our range of services.

Having a presence at cancer-themed events enables links with sister organisations to be forged, strengthening the wider cancer support community. Building these relationships also enables us to orientate visitors to more appropriate organisations if we are unable to help them directly. At these events visitors can also sign up to volunteer with our organisations and there may be some associated fundraising.

This year we were present at 28 events in Geneva and Vaud cantons and showcased our services to hundreds of people. Beyond direct engagement with people with cancer, their families and friends, the information stand volunteers have strengthened our position in the network of like-minded organisations, enabled openings with human resource teams in local and international organisations, and increased the visibility of Cancer Support Switzerland with health service and cantonal authorities.

MEDICAL OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

A Medical Outreach Committee was formed in 2023 to guide our work in creating and maintaining connections with hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers. Over the year, we presented our services to a record number of teams in healthcare establishments. Our aim is that every cancer patient who may benefit from our services is aware of the support available to them and their loved ones early on in their cancer journey. Partnerships and collaborations are crucial to our work, and we are grateful to be part of a network of organisations with whom we can ensure that the varying needs of people faced with cancer are met.

Some highlights this year included organising a one-day workshop for World Cancer Day with other Geneva-based cancer organisations and healthcare institutions and, later in the year, participating in events and outreach for Pink October and Movember. We collaborated with the Union for International Cancer Control to develop trainings for managers and staff on work and cancer-related issues, which we hope to take to other organisations in the future. We also established a number of new connections with organisations within Switzerland and beyond.



COMPANIES WITH CORPORATE TEAMS

Sponsor: Firmenich

ACE & Company	2
Firmenich	
Hirslanden: Clinique des Grangettes	3
Harsch	3
Beckman Coulter	3
IMD	13
Intuitive	15

Steps for Cancer Support

The 4th annual edition of **Steps for Cancer Support** was a triumph, raising more than CHF 140,000.

Strengthening the hybrid model became a new focus for the event in 2023.

PARTICIPANTS BY TYPE:

74 OPEN TEAMS

74 CORPORATE TEAMS

43 INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

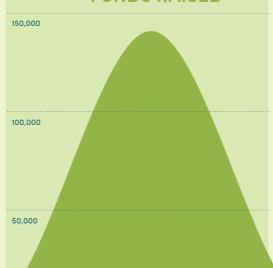
Nearly 1,500 participants from 17 countries walked more than 331 million steps - the equivalent of following the Equator around the globe 6 times.





CHF 140 K

FUNDS RAISED



2 During the 20 days of the event we had a total of four community walks in Geneva, hosted by the American International Women's Club, The Hub, and ourselves.

3 We raised a total of

CHF 140,943

from registration fees, donations, and grants to support our services.

We would like to thank all donors and participants for helping us fundraise to make sure that no one faces cancer alone.

PROCEEDS:

CHF 47,008

Registration Fees

CHF 93,935



4 After the challenge finished, we hosted our first Awards Ceremony at our Centre for the top teams and individuals in the stepping and fundraising categories.



included a group walk and an information stand to raise awareness.

1 We hosted our

first Kick-Off Event next

to Lake Geneva which



Acknowledgements

OUR FUNDERS INCLUDED:

Oak Foundation

Fondation pour la Recherche et le Traitement Médical

Marguerite Foundation

République et Canton de Genève

Fondation Philanthropique Famille

Fondation Alfred & Eugenie Baur

Vitol Foundation

Kent-Mullen family

Schroder Stiftung

Ernst Göhner Stiftung

Commune de Bellevue

Ville du Grand-Saconnex

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

This was a busy year for everyone at Cancer Support Switzerland, not least for our incredible team of volunteers. As our organisation evolves and expands, our volunteering team remain our constant: everpresent, ever-ready to offer support in any way they can. Without our volunteers, eight of our support services wouldn't exist, we couldn't run our information stands, spread awareness of our services, or run events such as Steps for Cancer Support and the Open House. Our volunteers are the beating heart of everything that the organisation strives for, and as we move through change in 2024, we are lucky to know we can depend upon this special group of people. Thank you to each and every one.

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY

We want to extend our appreciation to everyone who generously contributed, those who joined Cancer Support Switzerland as members, and to the loved ones and friends who made donations in memory of someone dear this year. Our Support Team regularly assists cancer patients and their families during the last moments of a loved one's existence, and these contributions honour the invaluable assistance we provide.

Finances

In 2023, our income appears to have surged by 65%; however, it's important to note that this figure is artificially inflated due to the creation and release of a provision associated with a restricted donation. When adjusted for this, our real income increased by 28%, to just under CHF 750,000. This adjusted figure is a highly encouraging reflection of our stakeholders' positive perception of our services. Similarly, we should highlight that adjusting for the release of this provision, our deficit would have been close to CHF 100,000.

The implementation of our 2023–25 strategy objective to diversify our income sources is demonstrating early signs of success, and this momentum will be further accelerated in 2024 as we establish a permanent presence outside our historical base in the Lake Geneva area.

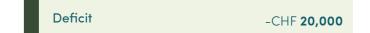
On the expenditure front, our current spending levels now fully capture the investment in paid resources aimed at laying the foundation for growth. Specifically, expenditure on our counselling services has seen a substantial increase of 60%, indicative of the significant demand for our flagship service. Expenditures on other support services and awareness have risen by 12% and 40%, respectively.

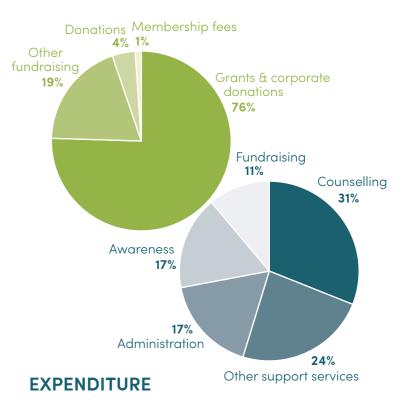
The spend on fundraising and administration has increased but the increase compares favourably with our income growth and our overall growth in programmatic expenditure (38%). The Board will continue to monitor this element of the budget to ensure that any increases are justified by a real need.

A full version of the audited financial statements is available on our website.

INCOME AND DEFICIT

Grants & corporate donations	CHF 622,000
Other fundraising	CHF 159,000
Donations	CHF 34,000
Membership fees	CHF 9,000





Counselling CHF 262,000 Other support services CHF 200,000 Administration CHF 146,000 Awareness CHF 142,000 Fundraising CHF 94,000

Governance

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2023 MANAGEMENT TEAM

President

Ramona Azarnia

Vice President

Janet Voûte

Treasurer

Dave Mason

Secretary

Bill Laneville

Members:

Dr. Conny Vrieling

Jessica Silberman Dunant

Korin Avigdor

Robert Leigh

Thea McFarlane

Stephen Wann

Dr. Gregory Wirth

Director

Elina Viitaniemi

Counselling and Support Services Manager

Christian Holyoak (until November)

Counselling & Support Services Manager /

Head Psychologist

Carine Karnouk (from November)

Volunteer Coordinator

Nicola Bowers

Centre and Operations Coordinator

Anne-Liis Lääne-Sáez

Communications and Awareness Manager

Alana Dunsmore



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