



LUMINARY

IMPACT REPORT 2025





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Welcome

Welcome to our latest impact report. This report is a testament to the incredible journeys women undertake during our two-year programme. Each woman has faced significant challenges, and the resilience and strength it takes to even begin this journey is nothing short of extraordinary.

Our report highlights the profound difference two years can make, with 80% of women who completed our programme reaching “Independence” (see pg 13). What’s more, by the end of our programme, 76% were in employment, education, training or volunteering.

As powerful as these numbers are, it’s the women’s own stories that bring our work and impact to life. Too often as women, we’re not given the space to share our lived experience, and when we are our voices are often diminished.

At Luminary we always want to centre women’s voices and experiences at the heart of our work, using them to build understanding and insight, and inform decisions about our practice and programme. Supporting women to reflect on and tell stories, on their terms and in their own words, is not just central to our approach but also to building a more inclusive



and just future for all. We hope you’ll find the stories in this impact report as meaningful and insightful as we do.

Another highlight this year has been expanding our pathways to employment. Not only do we work with our sister organisation, Luminary Bakery – who offer work experience and paid apprenticeships (pg 26) – but we’ve increased our network of supportive external partners to widen the range of placements available to women (pg 24).

Our ability to expand and deepen our work, including our training programme (pg 18), progression support work (pg 20) and mentoring programme (pg 30) is only possible because of the generosity and belief of our funders. We’re proud to recognise and celebrate their support on page 38.

Our extraordinary community makes Luminary what it is. From trainees, graduates and alumni, to mentors, staff, trustees, Advisory Panel members, funders and partners, each of you plays a vital role. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you contribute.

Aoine Wilson
Interim CEO, Luminary Ltd

Our Mission & Model

Mission

Luminary works alongside women who have experienced multiple forms of disadvantage, including gender-based violence. We offer a holistic programme combining training, dedicated support work, community building and employment pathways. We use a trauma-informed approach to help women achieve empowerment, employment and independence - breaking the cycle of poverty, violence and disadvantage.

The Four Phases of the Programme

The programme is structured into four distinct phases, each lasting six months. As women progress through the phases, the level of support gradually reduces—encouraging independence, autonomy, and personal agency.

Phase 1: Baking as a Tool

Trainees attend weekly baking classes, earn their Level 2 Food Hygiene qualification, and engage in Holistic Development sessions. These sessions focus on life skills such as resilience, self-compassion and setting healthy boundaries. Women are also supported by a Progression Support Worker for 24 months and have access to 16 weeks of therapy as well as Community Events & Well-being Wednesdays.

Phase 2: Exploring Employment

Phase 2 centres on employability. Women join weekly workshops covering topics like career exploration, workplace rights, CV writing and interview techniques. They also begin work experience placements to apply their learning in real-world settings. Trainees can join our Advisory Panel from this point and use their voice to influence the shape of the programme.

Graduation

At the end of their first year, we celebrate each woman's journey with a Graduation Ceremony - recognising the commitment, courage and hard work it takes to invest in themselves and their future.

Phase 3: Guided Pathways

Graduates finish the structured part of the programme and are matched with mentors for six months. They meet monthly to continue developing their employment pathways and put into practice everything learned during year one. Graduates are also considered for paid apprenticeship opportunities from this point.

Phase 4: Steps to Independence

In the final phase, progression support workers ensure every woman has what she needs to take her next step. Whether it's starting a new job or enrolling in further training, Phase 4 is about equipping each woman for a confident, independent transition.

Luminary Alumni

Women are celebrated at an Independence Party and become Alumni. They are encouraged to attend our Community Events & Well-being Wednesdays and join the Advisory Panel.



Women We Support

Luminary supports women who have experienced multiple disadvantage, including gender-based violence.

To join our programme, women must meet the following criteria:

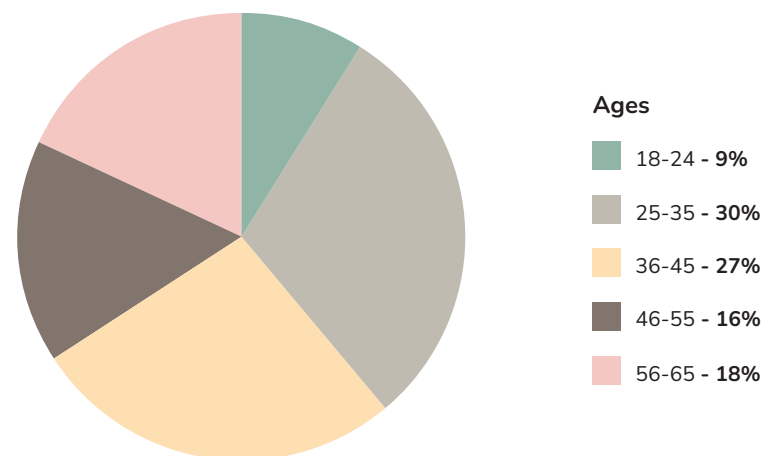
- Experience of Violence Against Women and Girls
- Have experience of one or more of the following:
 - homelessness
 - the criminal justice system
 - adverse mental health
 - the social care system or similar disadvantage
- Have the full right to work in the UK
- Be unemployed or underemployed / on a low income
- Be aged 21+ & physically able to participate in practical training
- Be able to read and write equivalent to English as a Second Language Level 1
- Not educated beyond GCSE level.

We require a referral from a professional partner who is working with the applicant. Our top ten referrers this year have been:

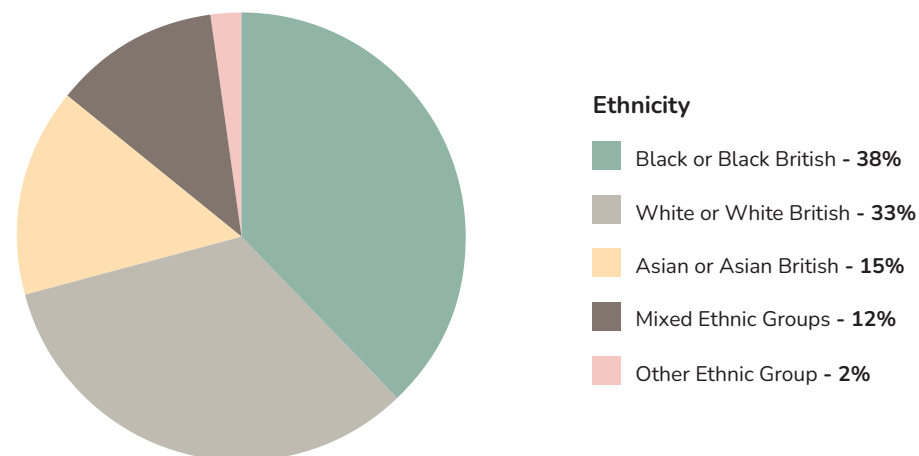
- Solace Women's Aid
- Advance Charity
- Pause
- Women at the Well
- St Mungo's
- Turning Point
- Ella's
- The Running Charity
- Refuge
- Beyond the Streets

Of the women joining our programme from September 2024 – August 2025:

Age of Women



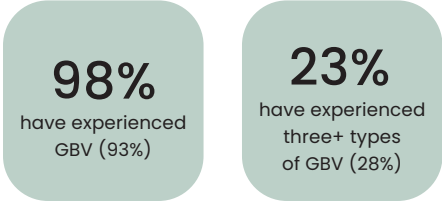
Ethnicity of Women



36% of women joining this year were mothers (20 in total with 38 children)



Experience of Gender-Based
Violence (compared to last year)



Domestic Abuse	79%
Sexual Violence	38%
Stalking	30%
Sexual Exploitation	16%
Honour-Based Violence	9%
Dowry Related Abuse	5%
Trafficking	4%
Prostitution	4%
FGM	4%



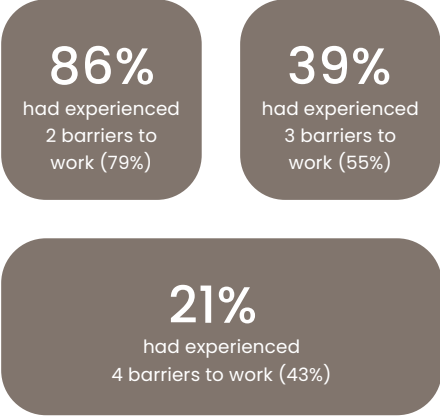
Here at Luminary, I feel seen, heard for who I am, not for what I've been through. I'm still healing...but now I feel I have something which I didn't have before which is hope, belief and people beside me.



Experience of Disadvantage
(compared to last year)



Barriers to Work
(compared to last year)





Nio's Story*

When I first came to Luminary, I thought, "Yeah, I'll learn how to bake, and then I'll leave." That was the plan. But it didn't go that way.

Before Luminary, I'd spent years trapped in self-doubt. I didn't talk much, and I didn't really understand myself. I went through substance and alcohol misuse for around five years, trying to cope in ways that only pushed me further from who I was. It wasn't until I joined Luminary that I was introduced to something deeper - holistic development.

That's where everything started to shift. I learned about setting boundaries, both for

myself and in my relationships. I found my voice again. The baking and cooking side was amazing and I do love it but what really changed me was the personal growth that came with it. Luminary taught me how to look after my whole self, and that's something I now use every day.

Life outside wasn't always easy. I had personal challenges going on, and at one point, during phase two of the programme, things became really tough. But Luminary created a safe space for me. When everything felt heavy, I could walk in, put that weight down for a while, and turn it into something positive. I learned that even on bad days, it's

still good to show up. That lesson has stayed with me: it's okay to feel sad today; tomorrow will be brighter.

Therapy through Luminary was another turning point. It helped me face my trauma and guided me through losing my mum. Having a support worker there each week made such a difference. I stopped running from my problems and started facing them. Before Luminary, I struggled to commit to anything. But being there taught me how to stay, how to build trust, and how to believe in myself. For the first time, I finished something and that gave me a sense of pride I hadn't felt in years.

As I grew in confidence, I started taking on new opportunities. I helped interview staff, supported at graduations, and even wrote a poem for one of them. I joined the Advisory Panel, spoke at events, and shared my story with other organisations. We even helped secure funding for Luminary.

It's not just about baking - it's about discovering who you are and realising you can use those skills anywhere. Graduation was such a powerful moment. I remember feeling proud, accomplished, and inspired watching other women cross the stage. Each of us had faced our own battles, and seeing that resilience - it was beautiful.

Work experience in the Luminary café was another highlight. I learned to use the coffee

machine quickly and loved working with customers. The environment showed me what a healthy, supportive workplace looks like. I'd love for there to be even more of those opportunities for women to grow their confidence in real-world settings.

Mentoring was a bit of a mixed experience for me. I showed up, but I didn't connect with it in the way I hoped. Still, I learned from it. My biggest growth came through the staff at Luminary and their encouragement and belief in me. They became my foundation. To this day, I'd hand out Luminary leaflets to anyone who'd take one, because I truly believe in what they do. I've told so many people about the programme. What they choose to do with it is up to them, but I'll always keep sharing.

That's why I'm still on the Advisory Panel. I want other women to fly too. Luminary helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel, and I want to be part of helping others find theirs.

Back then, I didn't have the confidence to finish anything. Now, I live independently, I believe in myself, and I'm even starting my own juice business. I can already picture my bottles sitting on the shelves in Waitrose and that's something I never would've imagined before Luminary.

Luminary didn't just teach me how to bake. It taught me how to believe I could build a life that feels good, grounded, and full of purpose.

Key Deliverables

From September 2024-August 2025 we delivered the following to support Luminary women:

166

training programme days

11

Well-being Wednesday workshops

1,612 hours

of apprenticeships at Luminary Bakery & with an external partner

82 days

of work experience - organised with Luminary Bakery & external partners

3,744 hours

of 1-1 support by Progression Support Workers

104

mentoring meetings with our volunteer mentors

202 therapy sessions

for 20 women with our two inhouse therapists

3 community events

including a Christmas party, International Women's Day and our summer event.

3 advisory panel meetings

2 training days for our panel

7 storytelling sessions

for women to tell their stories

Our Impact

Of the women who completed the two year Luminary programme:

76%

were in Employment, Education, Volunteering or Training. Target: 70%.

80%

reached independence with an average independence score of 79%. Target: 80%.

Two years ago, these women began their journey with a collective rating of just **49% independence**. Today, they stand **61% stronger** — empowered, self-reliant, and thriving.

In addition - four women from the programme were employed by our charity, and three by our sister organisation, Luminary Bakery. As a result, programme **graduates now make up 32% of our workforce and 23% of Luminary Bakery's**.

Calculating Independence

We measure independence by tracking women's progress across five key areas:

- housing
- money
- health & well-being
- relationships
- work.

Each trainee marks if she feels she is 'red', 'amber' or 'green' (RAG) in each area at the start of the programme and every 6 months. This guides the support they receive from their Progression Support Worker. We create an independence score using this data - viewing women with an average score of 70%+ as 'independent'. Every trainee's progress towards independence looks different. Their RAG rating may fluctuate as their ambitions & levels of confidence increase. Circumstances outside of their control may also lower their score, e.g. having to find new accommodation. We are immensely proud of the women who achieve their own independence targets.



Johanna's Story*

I remember when I had my first interview here. After half an hour it got too much, and I wanted to run.

I had some rough time. I was picked up from the streets and where I was living by these ladies from an organization only for women. I started going regularly to see them, and I already knew that I wanted to definitely go back to work, be part of society again. Then they told me about Luminary. The consistency really helped me every week. You know, Thursdays - that was my day to do the baking and get out and about with the people.

It was quite difficult in the beginning. It was very overwhelming. It was very scary that everybody was so open and friendly. For me, it was difficult when too much help was offered. Maybe I needed a little bit of a slower approach, like a dog, you know, that's scared, and then barks. I think in the beginning, I was about to actually run away. And also I remember that the training team were mentioning to me once that they weren't quite sure if I actually can finish that course.

The baking was really challenging for me. It was really frustrating. But there was something about Luminary that kept me. I came back

week after week, and small wins - every day coming here. I really enjoyed the Well-being Wednesdays, coming together this one hour to do something creative. And I got loads of support as well with other things. For example, housing - it was very much a huge mess. I got support so this is now going into the right direction. But I was so lost, totally lost with everything. So I got lots and lots of support.

Phase two was different. It was more like a school format - working in groups. I got frustrated quite often, but again, people were understanding. Luckily, there were people from like, from my previous baking group. So, yeah, that helped to see familiar faces. Also the money management. I'm so much better with money now as well. I would have not been able to do it by myself. Normally I don't see positive things. I'm not confident in myself, so I'm looking at everything more, 'no one loves me'. But then the support worker tell me that Yeah, I can. I can actually take it on, and now I see it myself as well. I'm always happy to come and have my session with my support worker.

I also then started hotel school simultaneously. Yeah I took on a lot, but not too much. It was somewhere in 2024. March to July. I liked it. It was four days a week. It worked perfectly

to keep busy and getting out and about and prepare me to get back into a routine of working. I wanted to go back and work full time one day. I always have to remember - slowly, does it.

My support worker ask me if I'm interested in doing some therapy. I was thinking it could probably help me. Oh, my god. That was tough. So much was cried, so much. It was good. It was definitely a detox. I'm really grateful for that. Just to learn how to manage my emotions when things become overwhelming, and to find out where these things go. Also like to understand where this is all coming from, and then to find strategies not to fall into, like the deep emotion or getting too overwhelmed.

And it did help with finishing Luminary and hotel school because it was still in that that I got frustrated. I wanted to throw the towel. But I didn't run away. I stayed. That's one of the best things, is that I'm not having to do this. I still sometimes get the idea when things become too much - to just leave it. But with all the tools that I've learned here, you know, with support and the therapy and I can do it now.

I got so many recommendations also, to work on myself in other areas. I'm starting now another course called Feminism for Change, which is for women in recovery, and that's definitely something I'm looking forward to. And doing the Film for Change. I didn't even know it existed, and I wouldn't even know how to reach out for that.

I had the work experience. And yes, it was overwhelming. Oh my god. It was too much. It was a bit busy at the time as well as new

people and new systems. I was not ready back then. But when the opportunity came up for an apprenticeship, I jumped on it. And thank God I had help from my support work, because I had no idea how to, you know, write. I mean, I've started before, but, you know, write CVs and prepare for interview - that was tough. But then I got it. That was amazing. That was my goal - to get back into work, ideally in hospitality. I'm still learning the latte art. But the lovely staff is helping me a lot. I'm getting there. It takes time. I learnt that at Luminary to be patient. Don't rush it.

I was nervous but the manager inch by inch got me involved. She gave me feedback. There was a big list. By the end, we could also do it on the spot at work, to just talk maybe if something went wrong, and just take five minutes. So definitely the feedback helped and to be listened to as well. She wanted to give and receive feedback that was definitely a huge help. What I enjoyed most was working with the team - to build a rapport, not just the team, but the whole team and just interacting with the customers.

I'm now working on the Zero Hour contract in a cafe and I'm already thinking ahead of the next steps - how I can get involved within Luminary. There's so much take, take, take, take. I'm thinking I would like to give back. I remember how difficult it can be. It was all frightening. I know where some ladies are coming from.

I'm very grateful for everything. Even things I didn't like because it helped so much that Luminary has to offer the opportunities and challenges and everything is always there. And definitely, I took it all. Whatever was offered.

Monitoring our Progress

This year we worked with 100 women across the four phases of our programme (compared to 84 last year). 35 were mothers of children under 18 - meaning we indirectly supported 61 children.

Phase One: Baking as a Tool (0-6 months)

56 women were accepted on to our programme (filling 100% of spaces). 19% more women than in 2024-5.

44 women completed Phase 1. This is a completion rate of 79% (Target: 80%). 19% more women than last year.

41 women (73%) gained a Food Safety and Hygiene for Catering Level 2. 24% more women than last year

78% of those that finished Phase 1 achieved independence.

Phase Two: Exploring Employment (6-12 months)

42 started Phase 2 which was 68% more women than last year.

30 women completed Phase 2. This is a completion rate of 71%. (Target 80%)

54% of women who started the programme this year graduated, up from 51% last year.

83% of those graduating from Phase 2 achieved independence.

Phase Three: Guided Pathways (12-18 months)

23 women took part in mentoring with 100% being matched with a mentor. 74% of women met their mentor five or more times (Target 80%).

82% of those finishing Phase 3 achieved independence.

The Training Programme

Luminary's training programme is the cornerstone of our offering to women. The training room provides a safe, nurturing, yet professional environment that provides a platform to empower each trainee to reimagine a different future for themselves.

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It has given me hope and I believe baking is a tool for me to build resilience when I may start to struggle emotionally

TRAINEE

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Phase 1: Baking as a Tool

From Tuesday to Friday, four groups of up to seven women come to Luminary to learn the theory and science of baking and gain a Level 2 qualification in Food Hygiene and Safety Standards for Catering.

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Maria is an amazing baker! She has given me confidence when I [was] told all the time I will amount to nothing

TRAINEE

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The programme has made me feel less alone. I feel more confident and motivated and I appreciate having a support network and a sense of purpose.

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Coming to Luminary provides routine, a space to learn and grow and an opportunity to build connections with other women. Whilst learning to make flapjacks, carrot cakes and victoria sponge - they are also developing important transferable skills for employment such as:

- Confidence, self awareness & emotional resilience
- Communication skills, public speaking & building relationships with others
- Time management & professionalism

Alongside the practical training, Holistic Development workshops are woven into the training day, providing a safe space to encourage self-reflection and the development of confidence and autonomy. This is an opportunity to have each workshop centred on a discussion of the skills learnt in the training room, such as the power of self-compassion and the importance of setting boundaries in relationships.



Phase 2: Exploring Employment

In Phase 2, the baking comes to an end and all trainees attend a session on Mondays to work on their employability and independence skills. Workshops include:

- Exploring career aspirations & our strengths
- Interview skills with the support of Smart Works
- Money Management with the support of CAP UK
- CV and application writing
- Mental health at work
- Managing conflict and understanding our rights at work.



Trainees are also offered work experience so that they can apply their skills in real-work settings. Using Luminary's self-assessment tool, they can also track their progress in key employability areas such as problem-solving, attention to detail, teamwork and maintaining a growth mindset.

The training programme concludes with a graduation ceremony, celebrating the achievements of trainees as they complete the Luminary training element of our programme. This summer, 30 women graduated at the iconic Roundhouse in Camden. The celebration offers a powerful moment for women to feel proud of their accomplishments, and share the occasion with family and friends - recognising the commitment, resilience and determination it takes to complete the first year of their Luminary journey.



Progression Support Work

Over the past year our team of six Progression Support Workers has delivered **high-quality 1-1 progression support to 96 women, totalling 3,744 hours**. This marks an increase from last year's 3,276 hours of support provided to 84 women.

Progression Support Workers build strong, trusting relationships with each

woman - offering personalised support and advocating fiercely on her behalf. Their role is to champion every trainee, ensuring she leaves Luminary with greater independence, renewed confidence and a solid foundation for the next stage of her journey.

Between September 2024 and August 2025, the team provided

Employment	Housing	Money	Health	Relationships
157 sessions	86 sessions	88 sessions	27 sessions	41 sessions
including help with job applications.	liaising with landlords and local authorities.	managing benefits and contacting providers.	accompanying women to medical appointments.	safety planning for women at risk of gender-based violence.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is central to Luminary's work, and we are committed to ensuring women receive expert support during times of crisis. This year, we have responded to 66* safeguarding cases, guiding women to the right services and resources.

*None of the concerns relate to the behaviour of Luminary staff or associates, or constitute a breach of our Safeguarding Policy.

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Luminary provided beds and mattresses to help them settle in and create a safe and stable home.
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Types of Safeguarding Concerns

- Mental health concerns - **35%**
- Domestic abuse - **12%**
- Suicidal thoughts - **11%**
- Emotional / Psychological Abuse - **11%**
- Sexual Abuse / Exploitation - **8%**
- Suicidal attempt - **6%**
- Substance misuse - **5%**
- Abortion/Miscarriage - **5%**
- Harassment - **5%**
- Physical Abuse / Harm - **2%**
- Self-Harm - **2%**
- Financial abuse - **2%**

Progression Support Worker in action

Luminary is supporting a refugee who cares for her three children and her disabled husband. Over two years, the family were living in a single hotel room with no access to cooking facilities. The strain of this had a severe impact on her mental health. Our Progression Support Worker, Amanda, contacted the woman's housing officer to request more suitable accommodation. Hitting a dead end, Amanda then escalated the case to the local MP. Unfortunately, they were unable

to intervene. Refusing to give up, Amanda referred the family to Shelter, who connected them with a solicitor. After months of persistent advocacy, the family was finally moved into an unfurnished, three-bedroom flat. Luminary provided beds and mattresses to help them settle in and create a safe and stable home. With Amanda's help, she's completed a barista training and has now started a patisserie course at college. For the first time in years, she feels hopeful and has the chance to build the life she imagined when she first sought refuge here.



Sophia's Story*

I felt like I gave up. I applied for so many jobs and I wasn't getting anywhere. I kind of lost hope. I was like, all right, forget it.

Then this organisation signed me up, and I done my interview with Luminary. It was in the summer last year. I was surprised when I got a phone call to join. I didn't think they would, like, accept me but they did. I was very happy to join. I was excited. It felt good to join something and keep my mind occupied.

When I came to Luminary, I realised that, oh, there's different ingredients, there's different ways of making it, and I was able to learn a different recipe. Measurements were very important. Timing - making sure you take it out on time, leaving it to set, following a recipe. I like the Victoria sponge, and I also like the cinnamon roll. I love the carrot cake. Having a teacher support you and not make you feel bad - that made me feel confident. Getting help from the other class as well made me get confident, like I didn't feel ashamed or embarrassed.

And they set rules like, if you arrive beyond a certain time, you wouldn't be able to bake. So it encouraged people to get there on time. Once I was late. So I was like, Okay. I had to take accountability. The rules are the rules, and every reaction has a consequence. I felt gutted a bit. There were also words about lateness and missing. They mentioned that if it continues, you could be at risk of being kicked off. That was

one thing I kept in mind. Same way in Luminary, same in my job. If I keep going in there, not showing up, I'm at risk of losing my job. So that became a part of my life very quickly.

My final bake, I was a bit nervous to make it but in the end, it was a beautiful cake. Very creative. Big! My family enjoyed it cos I took it home. My son immediately fell in love with the cake. He took a pic. And I said, Oh, my God, I made it! That moment for me was special. I will never forget.

It's also a place where they give you support with like mentoring and like if you're going through something financial, they're able to support you in different ways. I'm not really good with money management. So they did teach that. They also gave you, like, a little, app or something where you can manage your money. So that was a good thing. They'd show you different videos of graduates, and, you know, their story, which gave me encouragement. I met my support worker regularly. I was able to connect with her. She was very supportive. She was really, really friendly. She was able to, like, check on me.

With counselling, I enjoyed the person. They really were lovely. Yeah, you know, I connected with them. I was able to talk about myself - my life story. I was able to express how I feel, and be honest and open, because I've had so many counseling sessions in the past. But sometimes

I just felt like I'm not able to repeat myself. But I said, you know, let me give it a go. And I did. I loved it. I was able to let out my enemy.

Then when I got to the stage where I was graduating, I was really excited. I was happy that I was able to wear a graduation outfit. I never thought in my life, yeah, that I would ever wear one. And I said, You know what? I want to make myself proud. I want to make my family proud that I'm wearing that hat and I'm able to take a picture. Because I don't think I'd ever take a picture like that again. I was meeting new people, speaking to my friends, their family members, meet my classmates. It was a very lovely moment listening to people's speeches. Like a lady - she was scared, you know but to see her speak in a crowd of people, and feel so confident and happy. That made me feel good to see her just so blooming and beautiful that day.

Before, I wasn't too confident. I wasn't working. I didn't know what I was gonna be in life. I didn't know what I wanted. So when I joined, I was able to feel out what I want, what I'm good at, and then, you know, gain my confidence, learn about the workspace, what success is, you know, a bit of everything. Then I done work experience with them once. I actually enjoyed the work for a few hours. I was like, you know what, I think I can give this feeling a try. I'm gonna search for jobs like this.

Then a job offer in a cafe came up. Me and my support worker said, okay, we can apply. I'm with Luminary, the support's there. I was surprised when they said, if you want the job, it's here. I was happy. Doing the job more made me realise this is the job for me. It's a

place where you can express yourself - where you get to be you and do what you love.

I was taking stuff more seriously, because, again, I've walked away from so many jobs. When somebody didn't go well, or, you know, I wasn't happy, but me being at Luminary I was able to take that into my job. Despite what goes on, I'm able to keep calm, not stressed, getting there on time. I'm used to doing stuff that I never thought I'd be doing.

I'm finally working. I'm finally doing something. I can see myself going somewhere. I'm able to communicate with customers. That was something that I wasn't really keen on. I was very shy, um, but I was able to gain confidence in the weak areas. Now I'm making coffee, sandwiches, introducing different menus. I'm able to put it on the CV.

Now I can see maybe down the line - I might drop that floor because I've got more confidence. I'm getting there. Am I saying I don't make mistakes? Of course, I do. Yeah, but it's something that I'm flying through. I'm getting up early, finishing at a certain time, doing different things. I'm able to do an interview and articulate myself. I'm able to answer questions and not feel shocked or just quiet or scared to answer something.

I'm hoping to get my license. I'm hoping to have a stable home. Yes, I'm living in a hostel. I'm hoping for those two things by the end of phase three. Now even if I applied for somewhere else, I wouldn't feel shy, I wouldn't feel scared, because I've actually got the experience from Luminary. I'm able to support my family. I'm able to say I'm working. I have a purpose.

Work Experience & Apprenticeships

Work experience is an important step on the pathway to employment. At Luminary, we partner with Luminary Bakery to offer all women on Phase 2 a one-day work experience placement in either their bakery site or cafe. This year 25 women took this opportunity giving them a reassuring and supportive step back into the working world.

We also partner with a range of external companies to offer short term placements of 3-5 days. 15 women took part in placements with external companies totalling 56 days - a significant increase from previous years. Overall this year, 33 women took part in work experience placements, totalling 82 days.

The Power of Apprenticeships

This year - two women completed 6-month apprenticeships with Luminary Bakery - one in the cafe, and one in the bakery; and two women undertook 2-month apprenticeships with a corporate partner in their restaurant. For some women completing the programme future employment, though desired, feels out of reach and too much of a step up from their current situation. Apprenticeships

facilitated by Luminary Bakery, and external employers, provide a pathway to employment that may have previously felt unattainable. They provide a trauma-informed space, supportive management and purposeful training in order for trainees to accomplish work goals. Through our internal research, many apprentices said they did not think they would be in their current job had they not completed an apprenticeship.

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The teams are amazing, everyone there took care of me and welcomed me so much. I have gained confidence and hands-on experience. It has been a privilege.

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RESTAURANT APPRENTICE, CORPORATE PARTNER

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I really enjoyed work experience in the Luminary Cafe, starting to learn barista skills & experiencing latte art. Team collaboration was also fun & learning to manage tasks together

TRAINEE

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Work experience has many benefits for women on the Luminary programme, including:

- Uncovering forgotten skills & reinforcing their belief that they can succeed.
- Gaining exposure to different roles & potential career pathways.
- Feeling welcomed and valued & working in a team towards shared goals.
- Developing skills and hands on experience.
- Enhancing their CVs, securing references and sometimes even job offers!

We wouldn't be able to run our work experience programme without the support of our external partners - notably Marshall Wace, Vacherin and BM Caterers who have offered extensive opportunities to our women this year. We wish to also thank Wood Street Bakery, Marie et Marseille and Ford Money and the many new partners that we are excited to bring on board for 2025-26.

Work experience and apprenticeships bring benefits to our partners too including:

- A deeper sense of purpose and meaning to people's roles.
- Opportunities for employees to build skills in coaching and inclusive leadership.
- Contributing to community and social responsibility impact goals.
- Access to committed new talent.

*In our ten years of partnership with Luminary, we've hosted Luminary women in our kitchens, coffee bars, hospitality suites, and head office. Our teams enjoy working with each and every one. Our staff often comment on how fulfilling it is to support them to build their confidence, learn new skills, and discover their strengths - **Cathy Storr, Sustainability Manager, Vacherin***

*We are proud to partner with Luminary. The impact they deliver is truly long-lasting. Luminary won Marshall Wace's Charity of the Year in 2024 and, as part of the award, there was an opportunity for work experience. Trainees consistently demonstrate diligence, professionalism, and a positive attitude. The guidance and support provided by the Luminary team are exceptional—thoughtful, compassionate, and deeply effective. **Marshall Wace***



Luminary Bakery & Message from Director



Working with Luminary Bakery is really amazing!

EMEALIA - GRADUATE

Our impact this year:



892 hours of apprenticeships completed (up from 681 last year).



26 days of work experience placements delivered.



2,869 hours of paid employment worked by Luminary graduates (up from 2,483).



23% of our workforce are Luminary graduates.

What a year it's been for Luminary Bakery! In a time when so many cafés and bakeries across London have closed their doors, we are proud to stand strong — not just surviving but innovating and growing.

Our social enterprise continues to provide women on the Luminary charity programme with a professional environment where, for many, they gain their first foothold in the working world through apprenticeships, work experience and paid employment. This year, Luminary Bakery has proven that hospitality can be both excellent and impactful.



When the opportunity came up for an apprenticeship, I jumped on it! What I enjoyed most was working with the team. I am definitely proud of the things I've learned – interpersonal skills, barista skills – interacting with the customers. That was amazing – to get back into work. That was my goal. I'm really happy and confident.

APPRENTICE WITH LUMINARY CAFE //

Behind these numbers are women stepping bravely into new opportunities — from first taster days, to apprenticeships in our kitchen and café, to permanent employment on our team. Their journeys are a testament to their strength and the power of our partnership with the Luminary Charity.

Our growth has been fuelled by innovation and partnership. After years of serving our community from our Camden Cafe, we sadly closed the cafe at the end of March. However, this is not the end, but a new chapter. Thanks to the support of Vacherin, Company of Cooks and Compass Group, we have opened a brand-new production kitchen — a space that allows us to increase capacity, take on more apprentices and serve even more customers across London. More recently, with the backing of the Beazley Group, we invested in a new electric vehicle to deliver our goods sustainably, reinforcing our commitment to the planet as well as to people.

Our Hackney café remains a hub for community and connection, while our

growing corporate, wedding cake and e-commerce channels continue to showcase the best of what Luminary Bakery offers: food made with pride, culture and purpose.

Every coffee purchased, every cake ordered, every partnership formed is an investment in women's futures. In this tough hospitality climate, our supporters keep our ovens warm, our mission alive and our impact growing. Luminary Bakery continues to stand strong through creativity, purpose and partnership, and we invite you to keep eating, sharing and celebrating with us.

Together, we are building futures worth celebrating.



Leila Siassi
Managing Director

Lara's Story*

Before Luminary, I was employed in 2008, so it was 16 years before I went into employment again. I found out about Luminary through my advocate. I was going through a historical abuse police case, and my advocate recommended Luminary to me. It was really stressful to think of doing two years of Luminary, but I'd been trying for so long to get into work, so I thought maybe I should just give this a try.

The baking teacher was amazing. I learned so much about being in a work environment from her. I really enjoyed the baking but it was what I learned about myself baking in a work environment that surprised me. Phase Two was really helpful because I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do. They were covering things like Myers-Briggs, figuring out what your strengths were. We worked on how to manage situations in the workplace, which was really good because I was anxious about going back into the workplace after having been out of work for a long time.

When I was going through Luminary, I had a support worker who was amazing. I lost my confidence quite badly halfway through Luminary. My support worker then suggested some voluntary options, because I was interested to see whether I was ready to work in mental health. It was having someone believe in me and say, "I think this would work well for you." I kept believing that there was something I could do that I feel would give me purpose and help improve my depression. A lot of people say "oh just go and be a carer in a care home". I was like "That would totally drain me." Luminary respected that, and they were like "let's find what would work for you."

I actually found the classmates a bit difficult. Because I'm very empathetic there were situations where I felt I wanted to rescue people. I take on other people's problems and I try to fix things. I learned through Luminary to resist that. This massively changed my relationships in my own personal life because of the help of the support worker. I was being taken advantage of by people in my life. I got the confidence to stop seeing people and put more time into friendships that were better for me. Whereas before I was giving my time for free to everybody, Luminary helped me to look after me and then make time for friendships that were going to build me. Now I've got great friendships that are more balanced, and because of that I had more time to do my volunteering and my work.

I used to go to quite a lot of Well-being Wednesdays. I was actually quite stressed at that period of time - there was a lot going on. Things like colouring in, and chatting with the women, are really lovely. I think it's also a really good way to help women realise that those well-being techniques are really important to help you no matter what you're going through. You need to make time for that. You need to calm the body so it can continue to function; you can't be in fight-flight all the time. So that was a good, practical way of supporting me to get into that practice.

I saw a counsellor through Luminary and she was very good at helping me with grounding. That was really powerful for me because I was juggling quite a few difficult things at the time. I was also trying to do work experience. She really supported me through that. She also helped me when I was discovering I had ADHD.



My mentor at Luminary was really good, because she helped me find out what my options were. She also encouraged me to do my writing, and although I didn't continue the writing when I started office work, that writing is what also helped me find my way into work. The writing helped me therapeutically see different ways of seeing struggles that were holding me back.

I did work experience in Covent Garden in the most amazing place. I loved it but my body just was kicking off. I had severe nausea and IBS. I did get a bit freaked out that I would never be able to work in an office. I remember when I started in the office in my current job my doctor said "oh so you're not allergic to it!". With great relief I said, "no!". The office I work at seems to suit me better, because the need is so great that you feel like you're really making a difference.

In myself, I would say what's changed is I value my time more. Before I came to Luminary, I didn't believe I could charge money for my time. I was scared to be employed. I wanted to do volunteering for the rest of my life. I just didn't want anyone to pay me, because I thought, if you pay me, I'm gonna let you down or make myself sick trying not to. Luminary helped me realise that that was just a fear that wasn't true. When I started volunteering in my current work place, I realised that I was able to work harder and do more than some other people.

And that really started to shift my view. My colleagues also were a strong support to realise I should be paid.

Financially, it's obviously been much better. I've got extra money now so I can afford to do things that help me. I have purpose. Before I had none. I felt like my life was just disappearing with nothing to show for it. I was on the sidelines of society, helping everybody to continue their lives, but I didn't have my own life. So it feels like now, at last, I have a life and respect. I feel like I'm contributing to society. I mean, I was always contributing, but unfortunately in our society it's not valued when you're not employed - there's shame that can come along with it. Something that Luminary taught me was that even if I finished Luminary and I was volunteering, that was already a success story. It was like less haste more speed.

What else has changed? I think my confidence with work is also a big thing, because even if I decided to not live in London anymore, even if I didn't work at this organisation, I feel I would have the confidence to work somewhere else now. I feel I could be of value to a charity or an organisation. In my job, I have referred ladies who are in Luminary now. And I think what is good is for them to see me now. They would never believe that I was where I was, because I've helped them.

The Mentoring Programme

Mentors on their experience

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I think there's nothing better than giving your time to support someone else to achieve their own goals. And we all need someone at one point in time to help us grow.

KEMI,
LUMINARY MENTOR

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A mentee may not get much of an opportunity to think about herself and her needs and what she might be good at. Seeing one of my mentees achieve her goal was very rewarding. She thought when we first met, that it was an unreachable dream. But it wasn't. It was great to be involved in that experience with her.

OTILIE STEVENSON,
LUMINARY MENTOR

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In Phase 3, graduates are paired with a Luminary mentor (a professional woman who volunteers her time) who offers them 1:1 tailored support and guidance around employment. They meet once a month for six months, with women deciding the timing and content of their meetings. This is crucial to having an increased sense of influence and agency over the support they receive.

Mentors help women set realistic expectations and identify pathways to achieving their goals. This may include accessing courses, applying for jobs or navigating barriers. Mentoring builds confidence and aspiration as well as expanding women's professional networks.

This year we matched 23 women with a mentor and 17 of them met five or more times. Mentors have a wealth of work experience and skills and we couldn't run our programme without them!

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There was a lot going on in my life at the time. Having a mentor, that helped because where I came from – for me to get back into the system – I needed a lot of help. There were things I wanted to learn. We made a plan and I stuck to it. I never felt like I was wasting my time – I enjoyed our conversations. She was friendly and that helped me. It was all part of my development. I didn't come here just to bake cakes. I came to get a job and I did!

GRADUATE,
NOW EMPLOYEE OF LUMINARY BAKERY

//



Therapy Services

At Luminary, we know that offering access to specialist therapy is a crucial component of our programme. Women have access to 16 sessions with our two in-house qualified therapists. One therapist specialises in Somatic Experiencing Therapy, which helps women reconnect with their bodies and release trauma held physically. The other specialises in EMDR therapy, a highly effective approach for women experiencing PTSD.

This year, we supported 20 women with therapy sessions. By combining therapy with our training and progression support work, women are better able to process trauma, learn approaches to regulate their emotions, and restore a sense of control and agency over their lives. In turn, this helps them to fully engage with the other opportunities Luminary provides.

Well-being & Events

The women we support are often isolated or displaced from their communities - a common consequence of gender-based violence and other forms of marginalisation. A core part of our work involves helping women create and maintain a supportive community. Through this, they not only develop friendships and a sense of solidarity but also get to witness the strength and progress of other women, which can be a powerful source of inspiration and motivation.

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...they not only develop friendships and a sense of solidarity but also get to witness the strength and progress of other women

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Well-being Wednesday

To foster community and strengthen women's well-being, we hold fortnightly "Well-being Wednesday" workshops for women at all stages of our programme - including alumni. These sessions, run by our Progression Support Workers, give women the chance to learn new techniques for self-care - from yoga to gnocchi making! They are optional and informal sessions, where women have the chance to focus solely on themselves - nurturing all aspects of well-being including physical and mental health, social engagement and nature connection.



Community Events

Our Women's Involvement Champion organises three community events each year, including for International Women's Day, a summer gathering and a Christmas party. These events help to nurture a strong community of women - a sisterhood where women can support one another long after the Luminary Programme has ended. This is a valuable opportunity for our alumni to stay connected with Luminary - and for women from different phases to get to meet and build relationships. Most importantly, these events reflect our commitment to celebration, joy and friendship - bringing together our staff, alumni, trainees, trustees and Advisory Panel as a vibrant community.



Violet's Story*

I live in a refuge. When I say refuge, people often think it's a place for refugees or asylum seekers. But it's a safe place for women. I fled violence. From the refuge I was referred to Luminary. My caseworker referred me here while chatting with her, she just discovered that I am interested in baking. To be very honest, before joining Luminary, I didn't know what to quite expect. I live with PTSD, anxiety and depression, so I was at a place where I was defined by my PTSD anxiety and depression, and I was at a place of fear.

Camden is the first place I traveled out of my borough. For eight to nine months, I used to live in my room. I didn't go out. I would go once a week just to buy groceries because I was so scared. Plus my panic and triggers, I was scared that I won't be able to secure a place at Luminary.

I came for the interview with Jess and Grace. Grace called me to say I had a place. She explained that my support worker will get in touch with all the details. And I was really happy, but it was a very, very big struggle for me to get out of my borough. I don't travel much by train, so I used to take the bus for two hours, and I would come here, because my ex used to travel by train, so I'm so scared that I would see him.

And so when I entered Luminary, I thought I'll be removed from the course, because I probably don't fit here. But walking into Luminary was like walking into a space where kindness is a default setting. People were like, so kind, and that gave me confidence.

When I got panicked or triggered, there were a few times. I was just so scared. It felt so overwhelming that I didn't want to stay.

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walking into Luminary was like walking into a space where kindness is a default setting.

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But instead of pushing me away, they supported me. That meant so much. It was a big relief. I slowly grew in confidence.

We discussed a lot of stuff. We had a session on boundaries. You're helping yourself by creating a boundary because you know, if you, if you do things you don't want to do, or you're not ready to do, you're upsetting yourself. So if you were not ready, you can say no, it is okay. So like Luminary didn't just give me a kitchen to bake. It gave me a community. I met a lot of people, and nice people, and we are still friends. It gave me a space to heal.

I was sent on a work experience from January for five days. It was a law firm. First, I didn't know that I could work around men. And eventually it just went so well, I realised that I am able to do it. I accidentally broke a lot of glasses, staff came and I was shaking. I was so scared. But they all made me feel so relaxed. They are like, it's okay, doesn't matter. You are not hurt. That's all that matters.

Luminary, it's amazing, even on our graduation day, like a couple of people volunteered to speak. On the day I decided to talk, I was so brave. I was absolutely not prepared. I didn't know what I was gonna say, but I wanted to talk. I wasn't perfect, but I just felt I was happy I could do it.

So, yeah, I mean, I think Luminary kind of brought out things which I had, but I didn't know. It was kind of a block.

Every session has helped me in some way, it was not just about the baking. We had to come up with a product, and we had sent our product to the Luminary panel. I made a PowerPoint presentation, and that's not something I thought I would do. I've now finished Phase 2 and started Phase 3 today. And now I have a mentor. I met my mentor today, and she's extremely nice. She said that she really understood my struggle. She said, okay, you send me your CV, and we can collate all of your experiences, and we'll see where you fit.

I am also now doing a paid apprenticeship. I never thought working would be possible again for me. I just thought I'd never be able to work again, and today I believe that I will have a good job soon. Because nobody wants to live in one room forever. I want to be around people. Here at Luminary, I feel seen, heard, for who I am not for what I've been through. I'm still healing, and there are, like, days when I'm really low, but now I feel I have something which I didn't have before, which is a hope, belief and people beside me, community beside me.

I can say, before luminary, I was surviving, yeah, now I'm becoming.

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Hearing someone else's story and being able to say 'that's what I've been through' - I've seen the power of that...We are not alone, there is a driving force of empowered women pushing together for better situations for everyone.

ADVISORY PANEL MEMBER

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Advisory Panel & Women's Involvement

At Luminary, we are committed to placing women's voices & influence at the heart of our charity. We believe that our growth and development should be shaped by the insights, experience and recommendations of women in our community. Centering women's voices is essential to valuing and honouring unique stories of women and increasing the effectiveness of our work through rooting it in lived experience.

As part of this commitment, we set up our Advisory Panel, managed by our Women's Involvement Champion - a role that can only be held by a woman who has completed our programme. Currently, we have seven members on our Panel and they meet 3-4 times a year to offer advice and guidance to us, including our Board, on many aspects of our work. Being on the panel builds women's

confidence and supports the development of their influencing and advocacy skills, as well as skills in team work.

This year, we launched our *storytelling project* with the support of The Old Fire Station, Oxford - experts in the storytelling approach. Together, the Advisory Panel and staff took part in training to become story collectors and editors. They went on to collect the powerful stories shared in this report, contributed by women in Phase 2 and Phase 4 of our programme.

This project fosters connection and solidarity among women, while giving them the space to tell their story in their own words and on their terms. It also strengthens the capacity of the Advisory Panel and deepens our organisational learning.



Our Funders & Partners

We simply wouldn't be here without you.

Whether you've supported us from the very beginning or have recently joined our community of funders, every contribution plays a vital role in enabling us to create lasting, meaningful change.

We don't have the space to list everyone here and many of you choose to remain anonymous. Please know how deeply valued you are.

Principal multi-year supporters include:



the Aesop Foundation



We would also like to thank the Schroder Charity Trust, The Payne Greenburgh Trust, The February Foundation and Pulse as well as all the individuals and smaller organisations and companies that support us.

Key supporters include:



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...every contribution plays a vital role in enabling us to create lasting, meaningful change.

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A very special thank you to Vacherin. This year marks a decade of our partnership. Not only do they support us financially - their funding helped develop our beautiful training space - but through many other ways including mentoring and providing invaluable work opportunities. This year, they've gone above and beyond by organising a series of incredible fundraising events in support of the Luminary Charity and Luminary Bakery - including a wonderful dinner at the Southbank Centre in May to the awe-inspiring Three Peaks Challenge in October. Their dedication has been nothing short of extraordinary. We truly cannot thank you enough for this remarkable partnership.



Our Goals for 2026

Targets

80%

women complete Phase 1 of our Employability and Independence Programme.

80%

of women who start Phase 2 complete the year and graduate.

80%

of women who start Phase 3 engage in our mentoring scheme for six months.

70%

of women who complete our two-year programme are in Employment, Education, Volunteering or Training.

80% of women who complete our two-year programme reach independence, measured through our independence indicators.

A message from our Co-Chairs



Diane



Jacqueline

At the centre of this report are Luminary women whose courage, resilience and determination shape our work and give it purpose. Our Theory of Change captures our aims in three words - *employable, independent and thriving*. These words are not simply an organisational ambition, but rather describe the transformation we see in the lives of the women who join our programme.

This year, we have been inspired again and again by the determination of our trainees and graduates, as they move from dependence on services to shaping their own paths with strength and purpose.

// Our Theory of Change captures our aims in three words - *employable, independent and thriving*.

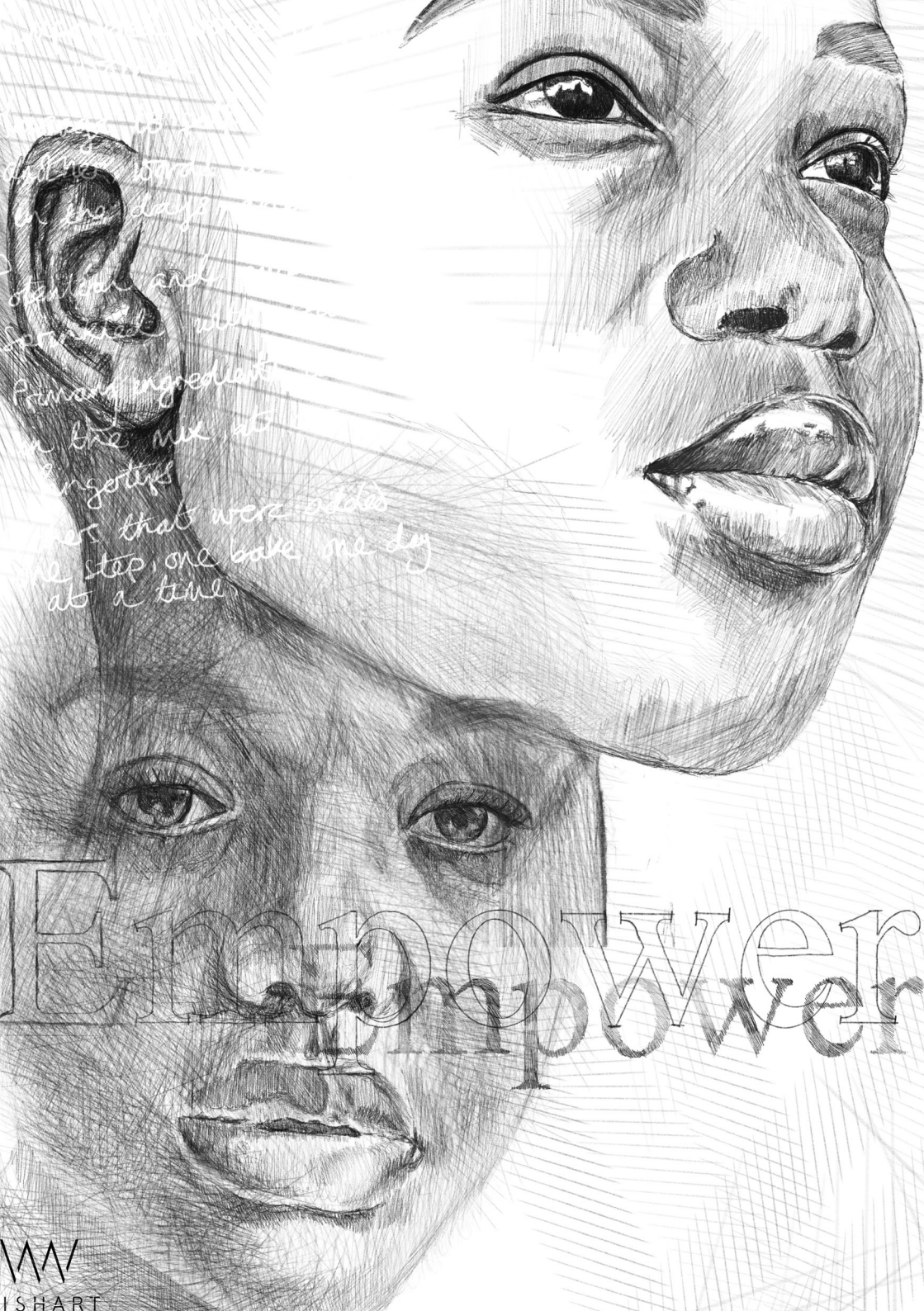


Looking ahead, our commitment is to stand alongside Luminary women to:

- Increase their participation and amplify their voices in shaping our programmes
- Expand and deepen the range, type and quality of external partnerships and work experiences that align with their aspirations.
- Strengthen our growing community of participants and graduates, empowering them to take ownership of their shared future.

The Board are incredibly grateful to our staff team, including our Interim CEO, whose commitment and expertise makes this work possible. Most importantly, we thank the Luminary women whose trust, honesty and determination continue to shape our work and drive our impact.

Diane Feeney and Jacqueline Milton
Co-Chairs of our Board of Trustees



Janice Whyne (@jjsmuse)
Artwork: Wishartworks

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Empowered women empower women.

Message to self and one another; words to remember in the days ahead.

Potential and purpose, sprinkled with passion.
Primary ingredients already in the mix-at, our finger tips,

Others to be added one step, one bake, one day, at a time.

Women on a mission, determined to make it.

Envisioning a future you dared to dream of.

Reframing the narrative, rewriting the ending—resilience like yeast making us rise.

Editors of our stories, no ghost writers.

Dignity is our right and don't you forget it.
Dignity is your right. Don't let them forget it.

Women empowering women.

On your marks, set, go! Showing up for ourselves and others on the journey.

Owning to the rhythm of 2/4 time. Time well spent renewing our minds.

Embracing the unknown, facing our fears.
From flapjacks to final bake, you will find your flow.

Now is the time, ready for action, your new beginning has begun.

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LUMINARY

