

Impact Report 2021

26th Annual Report of the Trustees
and Financial Statements

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Charity Information

Trustees:

Chairperson
Treasurer
Vice Chair
Vice Chair

James Inglis (Chairperson)
James Hirons (Treasurer)
Andy Cater (Vice Chair)
Andrea McTeare (Vice Chair)
Wendy Evans
Jane Harders
Amiya Kagalwala
Tony McTeare
Emma Sharp

Honorary President:

Oliver Russell

Chief Executive Officer:

Mandy Neville

Charity Registration Number:
Charity Registration Number
(Scotland):

1043601
SC038068

Company Number:
Registered Office:

2972700
The Penthouse
Coventry Road
Cawston
Rugby
CV23 9JP

Auditors:

Moore Thompson
27 Market Place
Market Deeping
Peterborough
PE6 8EA

Bank:

The Cooperative Bank
16 St Stephen's Street
Bristol
BS1 1JR

Solicitor:

Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP
134 Edmund Street
Birmingham
B3 2ES

Report from the CEO

Introduction and Backdrop

It feels somewhat emotional to be reporting on the last year, our 26th, a year of unparalleled danger where people were dying at a terrifying, escalating rate which reached almost five million worldwide. In April 2020 the pandemic was in full swing, the distinctive sound of ambulance sirens filled the air and fear lay all around. No-one could actually calculate the risk factor of living any kind of typical lifestyle and everyone, at every level, was having to adjust their daily habits like never before.

For the Circles Network team, alongside anxiety for our own households and loved ones, we knew that that our services and support were going to be needed more than we could imagine. From the on-set the leadership team were drawn together for weekly meetings, held on the Microsoft Teams platform so that we could figure things out collectively and support each other to show up as the best version of ourselves, come what may. At that point, we'd already decided to be there in person for people, as much as government guidelines would allow, despite the fact that PPE was almost impossible to get hold of and we were relying on neighbours and friends from other sectors to bring us whatever they could.

For services such as advocacy, we were able to find on-line solutions to staying closely in touch with people we support, attending face to face meetings only where necessary. For our community work, however, it was a completely different matter and whilst many practitioners from other organisations were not feeling able to leave their homes, our own staff teams were in fact, showing up to physically and practically support people in their communities. Even as things got a lot worse and several people fell ill with the virus, I have seen bravery and stoic determination from our team members who shone with courage in the unknown face of Covid-19.

Flexibility became a common theme and through each lockdown and every stage of guidance or otherwise, we kept all of our services live and responsive in the safest way possible. Indeed, the organisation grew in this year both in income generation and in the number of people we were able to support. Trustees, leadership colleagues, team members and volunteers all have great pride in our accomplishments and the clear benefit the organisation provided throughout. We are all saddened by the lives lost around the world, including family members, friends and so many disadvantaged and disabled people. The horrendous situation for the residents of care homes weighs heavily on our hearts.

Everyone has their own story to tell of this fateful year and although at the time of writing, the pandemic is not yet over, we do at least have vaccines available and a health service that has been nothing short of miraculous in serving the British public.

The Hill We Climb

Amanda Gorman breathed hope into our lives in January '21 at Joe Biden's inauguration with her incredible poetry.

"For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it,
if only we're brave enough to be it".



In the kaleidoscope of light that we have experienced this year, the organisation was gifted many acts of kindness, some of which you will read about in the pages to follow. I would like to draw attention to some truly meaningful gifts of light that helped us to continue to shine in this year:



as already mentioned, but worth reiteration, the courage, love, and resilience of our remarkable team



positive, practical encouragement and guidance from all of our Trustees



monthly meetings with Pilotlight that helped us stay centred and plan our way ahead



strengthened bonds with commissioners, families, and people we support



the adoption of a focus on self-care, as well as care for others, throughout Circles Network



Sir Captain Tom and all the other visionaries who lifted our spirits and inspired us to follow their examples



technical support from Zen Zero to set up the whole team with modern equipment, training, and support to create practical on-line platforms



investments from certain local authorities and health trusts in Peterborough, South Ayrshire, and West Sussex to grow our work in times of such uncertainty and from Inverclyde, Glasgow, Moray and Fife to extend our existing contracts and support our way forward



outstanding support from Anna Winiecka and her incredible community of Polish volunteers who adopted our Rugby Hub and spent many hours working on the grounds to improve the environment and facilities for the children and young people we support



the donation of special visors made and donated by Cummins along with a grant of five thousand pounds to help us through



grants for Covid-19 support from Tesco, West Sussex, and Peterborough



the achievement of a new vaccine, production, and development in under twelve months



the donations of equipment, vehicles, funds, and incredible support from Go Car Credit Ltd and The World of Cars



Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson of all through this difficult year has been that 'together we are stronger'. Bringing the dispersed leadership group together twice weekly has provided untold benefits for all.

Secondly, we worked on a pact of the 'power of positivity' and maintained a futuristic vision, keeping spirits high and continually promoting wellbeing and self-care for all.

Thirdly, the discovery that new growth was achievable, even in the most strenuous circumstances.




All colleagues embraced the use of technology, regardless of reservations, and used available platforms to digitally connect so that we could see people's faces. Once this became familiar practice, we realised how wonderful it was to work with team members from many miles away and so began to create project groups in order to streamline and update many of our processes. This has now become an embedded reality and has emerged into a variety of Communities of Practice (now renamed Circles of Practice) where team members from any team can join a circle of interest to them. Working outdoors as much as possible also taught us that we could bring people together much more safely and reduce the enduring loneliness that many families experienced. We became adept at creating pop-up workspaces in parks, towns, and country venues in addition to those in our own grounds.

Kindness provides a great triumph over fear, and we have seen unparalleled acts spanning our whole organisation. The size or degree of kindness mattered not, from cake baking and cooking for others to doorstep deliveries of care packages to people known to us in communities, through to the grants and additional funding to make our path all the smoother, we appreciated every gesture.



Looking forward

Having started new projects that include;

-  a keyworker scheme for some of the most severely troubled and vulnerable people in Peterborough and Cambridge
-  a recovery advocacy project supporting people whose lives were damaged through alcohol and or drug dependence in South Ayrshire
-  a new short breaks programme spanning West Sussex, enabling us to assist disabled and disadvantaged people with community-based person-centred support

We are delighted to progress all three, making each day count in our quest to ensure people feel included, have a sense of warmth and belonging and can push forward their own personal vision of fulfilment.

We plan further new start-ups in the coming year and have every intention of using our expertise and experience to assist thousands of people as they emerge from this pandemic with the added pressures of mental ill health and higher levels of anxiety. The team have created a wellbeing portal, free to anyone via our website. We hope to attract the relevant income to serve our communities well.



Gratitude

My heart overflows with thankfulness as I look back on the year. I'm grateful not only for the commendations, and compliments that we have received in abundance and of course for the incredible feats of achievement made by all team members. Indeed, I am overwhelmed by the personal messages and support that I have received from so many kind well-wishers.

I extend gratitude from all of us at Circles Network to the people we support, their families, our donors, Trustees, commissioners, stakeholders, and friends.

Somehow, we got through this sad and terrible year with an even stronger commitment to serve others with compassion, expertise, and great care.

Thank you.



Mandy Neville
Chief Executive Officer

Chairperson's Report

As we slowly emerge from the lockdowns and restrictions of the last two Covid years and return to some new form of normality we can look back at how we have coped with the challenges that we faced, and we also need to look forward to the kind of situations that we are likely to find ahead of us.

In Scotland we have carried out our advocacy work throughout the last eighteen months. Our advocates have continued working, albeit much of it on-line. Help has always been available to the people we support in a fast and efficient

way to help resolve any problems and issues in times of crisis as well as giving continuing help when people have needed it. In the East of England and in Sussex we continued to provide strong support to individuals and families and, encouragingly, we have also significantly expanded our activities in both areas. In the Midlands, our existing projects have continued, and we are pleased to have successfully expanded into new areas of work. Overall, we have had a very successful year and we are in a strong position going forward.

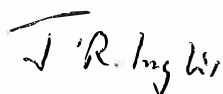


Our staff and volunteers have been stoical, resourceful, and as always, they have worked extremely hard to get the best possible outcomes for the people we help. I cannot thank them enough for the time and enthusiasm they have put into their work in these extremely stressful times.

We now have to look forward to the world as it is likely to be in the next few years. For many people the restored freedoms will be a welcome relaxation that will allow them to go about their pre-COVID lives, enjoying their work and their leisure, and getting back to meeting up with their friends and families. But others will have been adversely affected by the past two years and it will be more difficult for them to get back to their old way of life. In schools some year groups have only been in school for four weeks in the whole year. These children will have received lessons on-line but have missed out on developing the friendships and social skills that can only come from interacting with other people. For some older and more vulnerable people, loneliness and isolation have had very serious consequences. In those family settings where even in typical times pressures have been close to breaking point, the extra dimensions brought upon them by the Covid restrictions and consequences will have pushed some people over the limit. We have a great deal of expertise in all these areas, and

we can make a real contribution to assist people to rebuild their lives. We are committed to supporting those who have suffered during the pandemic and would like our help. This will be a big challenge over the next few years and our person-centred approach will be invaluable in helping to restore the lives of people who feel the ravages of this most difficult of times.

With thanks and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. R. Inglis'.

Jim Inglis
Chairperson
Circles Network

Report of the Trustees

This annual report highlights Circles Network's key services, events, operations, challenges and successes. It reviews the significant activities undertaken by the charity to further our purposes for, and with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on, public benefit.

Our Organisation

Circles Network is a UK-wide organisation, registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee, governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. Established with an educational objective to build inclusive communities, Circles Network supports thousands of people to be included in community life. The individuals we support are experiencing social exclusion or are at risk of being isolated through disability, long term illness or other disadvantage. For us, 'disabled people' are individuals, old and young, living with physical and/or sensory impairments, learning difficulties, autism, severe anxiety or enduring mental health differences and/or chronic long-term illness.

Circles Network is a leader in the development of Circles of Support and person-centred approaches. We continue promoting the tools and processes that underpin person-centred approaches to empower people we support and advocate with society's most vulnerable and marginalised people. In 1994, founder and Chief Executive Mandy Neville, supported by a loyal group of friends, formed the first Circles of Support in the UK. An organisation was formed; an organisation founded on the values of justice, advocacy, empowerment, and relationships.

We are guided by the philosophy of social inclusion and believe information, knowledge sharing and good practice leads to improved and self-determined lives. We have built a number of unique and exciting specialisms in distinct geographic areas.

Our ambition is to expand the reach of our services and increase the impact of our proven approaches in more communities across the UK and Ireland. Our success relies on a dedicated team of staff, volunteers and many partnerships with individuals, communities, local authorities, and other relevant organisations.

Our impact

Our daily interaction with the lives of thousands of individuals means we know we have a real and long lasting impact. To make evident the change we create, and nurture, requires robust monitoring and evaluation of our social impact. This progress

report demonstrates the social return on investment and our strategic achievements across our diverse programmes.

Our investment in service provision, and continuous learning, informed by disabled and disadvantaged people and their families, nourishes our dissemination efforts. Our collaborative ways of working with families, friends, community based organisations, local authorities and national networks influence service provision and policies. We are expanding understanding, expectations and horizons and contributing to the public good. Our Academy conferences and workshops increase our capacity to promote good practice and public benefit.

Critical to our success is the art of listening and valuing the lived experience of disability, disadvantage, and discrimination. The individuals, families, and professionals we have worked with for over 26 years, have enabled us to develop considerable expertise and establish our reputation in the social care sector. The person centred nature of our work means our projects and services are extremely diverse. This report presents an overview of our work during this financial year across the many projects, individuals and services that form our charity.

Our Strategic Achievements

At Circles Network we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive and live their best lives. **Our vision** is to create inclusive communities where all lives matter. We build inclusive communities on the foundations of justice, advocacy, empowerment, and relationships. **Our mission** is to support disabled and disadvantaged people of all ages in transformational and empowering ways to live fulfilling and inclusive lives.

Our work takes us into every dimension of life. Childhood and parenting, disability and transition, criminality and employment, family dynamics and diversity, mental health, loss and addiction are just some of the diverse and complex aspects of human experience in which we are involved. We work to build sustainable, inclusive communities where everyone belongs. Circles Network provides information, training and development opportunities to raise awareness and increase understanding the concept of inclusion.

Across the UK our work includes:

- Individualised support for disabled and disadvantaged young people, adults and children living in their own homes and communities. We facilitate Person Centred Planning that strengthens social capital by developing friendships (bonding) and building networks (bridging). We support people in planning and managing life's significant transitions – child to adulthood, relationships and parenting, marriage and bereavement, moving to independent living or into employment. We offer individuals with high level support needs and complex impairments the specific and in-depth support necessary for real inclusion.
- Advocacy with people living in a wide range of situations including secure units, prisons, community and hospitals. Unique coaching and advocacy for disabled children, adults and young people experiencing early childhood trauma, long term illness, addiction, age or caring responsibilities
- Development and delivery of alternative education provision for children and young people for whom mainstream education has not been a good fit. Innovative approaches and extra-curricular activities supporting the inclusion of disabled and

disadvantaged children and young people, including Equine Facilitated Learning, and outdoor learning that nurture diverse 'peer groups' to experience inclusion and feel valued.

- Training, mentorship and support to professionals and others wishing to work in a person centred way. Consultancy and training for statutory, voluntary and independent sector services and for parents, individuals and carers. A wide-ranging programme of courses, conferences, workshops and events, open to anyone.

Our work is uniquely tailored to individuals' needs and preferences, institutional settings and social contexts, as well as our funders' aims and contractual requirements. We structure our work across local teams, programmes and projects that are delivering on our five strategic aims.

Strategic Aim 1: Circles Equine – We will deliver the equine programme portfolio in Warwickshire. Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) provides therapeutic opportunities for people of all ages working alongside horses and ponies to develop and grow. Participants are supported to learn through natural horsemanship skills, neuro-linguistic programming, pony centred life coaching, mindfulness, and emotional resilience techniques.

Strategic Aim 2: Circles Advocacy - We provide professional, independent person centred advocacy for young people and adults across the UK. Our approach enables the person (or their chosen advocate) to express their views and choices on a wide range of issues. We ensure that their voices are heard by the people they need and want to relate to.

Strategic Aim 3: Circles Community – We will deliver community-based support services that assist people in the community to live rich and fulfilling lives. Our facilitators work individually with people of all ages to understand what they want in their lives, strive towards their goals and coach to overcome barriers and achieve great outcomes. We have developed approaches with children, young people and adults with high level support needs and complex impairments which offer the specific and in-depth support necessary for real inclusion. Young people leaving care are one particular group of people we work with to develop structures which promote and encourage full inclusion and citizenship in communities. We support parents and carers of disabled children and adults and foster parents looking after children who have experienced trauma and disadvantage.

Strategic Aim 4: Circles Academy - serves to disseminate learning on inclusion, diversity, and transformational experiences. Through the Academy we also offer alternative education to children and young people who learn more readily outside of a mainstream system or who need therapeutic provision to overcome barriers to learning.

Strategic Aim 5: Organisational excellence and resilience - Our success relies on a dedicated team of staff, volunteers and many partnerships with individuals, communities, local authorities, and financial supporters. Together we strive for change alongside disabled and disadvantaged children, young people and adults, their carers and families, and the wider communities to build inclusive lives.

Key Attributes

We are continuously searching out people who are the hardest to reach, and potentially highly vulnerable. Key to our success in having a positive impact on people's lives include our:

Independent status,
Specialist knowledge of disability and human rights,
Un-shifting value base of inclusion and equality,
Ability to draw alongside and engage with people at all levels,
Effective acclaimed methods of delivery,
Reputation for providing innovative services and support,
Timely response to offer solutions in a range of complex situations, and
Person-centred approaches,
Wide ranging public benefit.

Volunteers

People volunteer with us in many ways. We rely on this significant contribution of skills, experience and time. We receive voluntary inputs, contributions in kind, from hundreds of people including those who act as trustees, ensuring good governance; in operational delivery and service provision as facilitators, advocates and staff assistants; as specialists bringing lived experience by contributing to training and events; as administrators and event organisers; in communities as our Circle of Support members and community builders; and myriad individuals contribute in their own ways to fundraising and estate management.

Our Environmental Impact

Environmental impact is intrinsic to our mission and we are striving to reduce waste, recycle, minimise transport and carbon emissions, and save energy.

Reduce and recycle – The move to digitized communications and information management systems continues to reduce the volume of paper on a daily basis and reduces storage space required. We recycle waste materials at all our offices including paper, cardboard, glass and plastic. At our head office we compost food waste and manage our significant horse manure production to the benefit of local allotment owners.

Carbon emissions – Our projects are based in local communities and seek to employ local people. We encourage the use of public transport where possible. We purchased our small pool of cars on the basis of fuel efficiency.

We continue to invest in the significant shift to digital platforms and have seen a rise in collaborative ways of working which has greatly reduced the need for frequent travel.

Energy savings – All of our work hubs adhere to energy saving practices e.g. efficient light bulbs and good care in switching off electronic equipment and conserving heat.

Risk Review

The Trustees continue to review the major risks the company is exposed to, to manage and mitigate those risks. Our policies and procedures have been regularly updated and our risk register is reviewed quarterly.

Financial security, especially in the current COVID affected context, remains a challenge. Our fund raising strategy links to our business plan, and our senior leadership team work hard to secure the organisation's financial future. We continue to seek financial support from a variety of sources including trusts, foundations, and national charitable donors. We tender for and provide commissioned services for local authorities and offer fee paying service to individuals. We aim to achieve full cost recovery for all work undertaken. We manage resources by using an element of cross subsidy to counteract the ebb and flow of time bound projects and tendering opportunities.

Recruitment and retention of key personnel is increasingly recognized as a sector wide challenge. The variability of demand and income leads us to work with a significant portion of staff on zero hours contracts. We are continuously reviewing and taking the opportunities, as they arise, to strengthen our staff and volunteer teams. We favour internal opportunities for growth and promotion as much as possible. Our management structure nationally, and in each regional hub, is under constant review to ensure it is optimised. Our increased HR capacity has resulted in improved clarity about employment policy and practice, training to ensure continual professional development and statutory compliance, people reviews, and performance management.

Despite the pandemic, and detrimental impact of COVID related constraints on all operations, we have continued to provide services, delivering on targets and managing additional operational costs and significant adaptations to ways of working. We have remained operational for the entirety of the year with local closures being managed to minimize any occurrences of the virus among team members and individuals we support. We have successfully introduced new systems and changed behaviours to support uptake of government recommended practices.

The Board of Trustees

Members of the Board of Trustees (also the Directors for the purposes of Company Law) who served during the year and up to the date of this report are listed on page one. The Board of Trustees meet on a quarterly basis to review the work of the organisation and plan strategically.

The Board of Trustees consists of nine individuals who collectively provide a wealth of expertise in the many domains required. Regular audits ensure this group have the appropriate skills and are provided with training and development such that the Board is fit for purpose. There have been no new Trustee appointments during this financial year.

The Trustees of the charitable company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the company in the event of it winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31st March 2020 was nine. Trustees are indemnified with third party indemnity insurance.

Trustees' Responsibilities

Charity regulations and company law require the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare financial statements on an ongoing basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will keep operating.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006 and with the 'Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities'. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Policy on reserves

The Trustees intend to build unrestricted general funds of at least six months' running costs for the central work of the organisation. A bridging fund for externally funded projects is essential to manage the risk of a reduction or sudden end to funding. This remains a challenge in times of austerity. We have a buildings fund to provide for the purchase of an accessible central hub in the future. In addition we allocate a reserve fund for capital equipment and technology and a fund for the development of publications for dissemination of our work.

Policy on investments

The income of the company comes principally from tenders, which are sometimes received in advance of the expenditure being incurred. It is the company's policy to invest the unspent grant income in suitable investments whilst maintaining a prudent balance between security, profitability and liquidity.

Statements as to disclosure of information to the auditor

In accordance with company law, as the charity's Trustees, we certify that:

- so far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- we have taken all the steps that we ought to have taken in order to make ourselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's Auditor is aware of that information.

Partnerships and Networks

Circles Network works in partnership with many community based groups and charities. In particular, the charity the Lifecare Charitable Trust receives management support directly from Circles Network. Some of our key charitable partners include:

Age UK
Arc School, Napton
Aldingbourne Trust
Autism West Midlands
Avon Valley School, Rugby
Bailey Thomas Foundation
Bawnmore Infant and Primary School
BBC Children in Need- England
BCE – Training Consultants
Bilton School, Rugby
Bilton Grange School, Rugby
BNI East
BNI Rutland
Brook School, Rugby
CAMHS
Cambridge County Council
Cambridge and Peterborough Clinical
Commissioning Group
Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation
Trust Cambridge Police
Clementine Business Coaching
Conwy Connect
Communitas, U.S.A.
Council of Disabled People
Coventry Rugby Club
CQC
Cemex
Coventry & Warwickshire CCG
Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust
Crawley Town Football Club
Cummins
Ever Green School, Warwick
Fife Council
Framework4change
Go Car Credit Ltd
Greater Glasgow NHS Trust
Guide Dogs Association
Inverclyde Council HSCP
Jaguar Land Rover
Learning Disability Wales
Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Lincolnshire County Council
McMillan Cancer Support
MIND
Moray Alcohol and Drug Partnership Moray
Health and Social Care Partnership Moreton
Morrell College
National Recovery Advocacy Network
Network Rail
NHS
Noah's Arc Organisation, Australia
Northamptonshire County Council

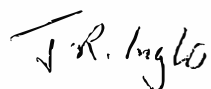
91 Untold
North Warwickshire Probation Service Nuneaton
Youth Justice Team
Nurse Buddy
Nyssadri, India
Partnership Mid and North Wales Peninsula
Peterborough City Council
Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services
Pets At Home Foundation
Pilotlight
Phoenix School, Peterborough
Princethorpe College, Rugby
Queen Elizabeth School
Quest, Rugby and Nuneaton
RDA
River House School, Henley in Arden
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Royal Association of the Deaf
Rugby Free School - Secondary
Rugby School
Rushey Green
Round Oak School, Warwick
Royal National Institute for the Deaf
Ryder Cheshire
Scope
Scottish Government
Scottish Recovery Consortium
South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership
South Ayrshire Council
Spencer's Ball
Sussex Partnership NHS Trust
Sussex Oakleaf
Signposts (Mid Sussex) Ltd
St Edmunds Trust (Eddie's)
Tesco Bags for Help
The Edmund Trust
The Welsh Assembly
The World of Cars
Timebanking UK
United Nations, Moldova
United Response
University of Coventry
University of Reading
Warwick Disability Forum
Warwick District Borough Council
Warwick University
WCS
Warwickshire College
Warwickshire County Council
WCAVA (Warwickshire)
Warwickshire Young Carers

West Sussex Council
WRVS
ZenZero

Auditor

The auditor, Moore Thompson, are newly appointed this year 2021 .

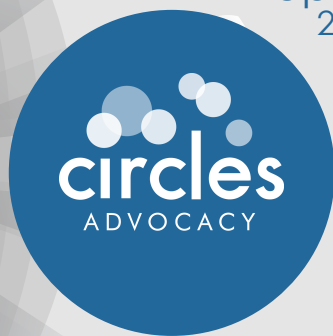
Approved by the trustees on 12th November 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.R. Inglis'.

Jim Inglis

Chairperson Circles

Network



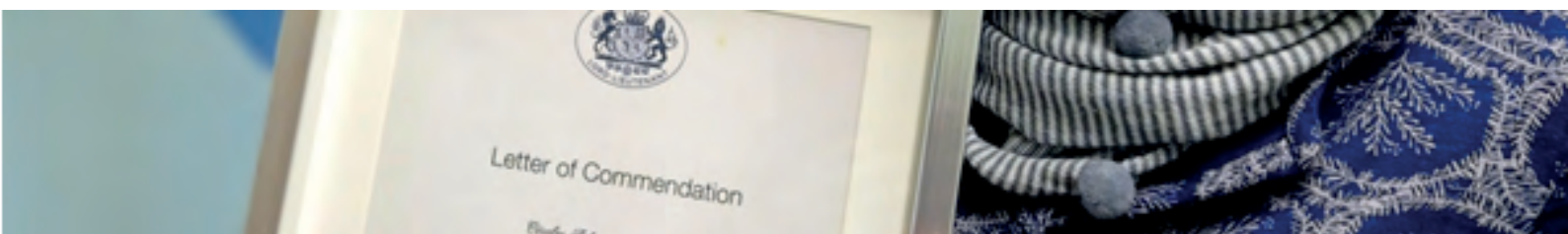
Circles Advocacy Moray

Circles Advocacy, Moray, provides independent, professional, issue-based advocacy to adults living in Moray. Our key focus is on supporting those people with issues relating to health and social care, including this stage, supporting parents whose children are 'Looked After' or part of child protection procedures.

181
The number
of people
supported

Priority is given to people who have been detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act.

Our main aim is to support peoples' views to be heard, provide information to enable people to make informed choices, and ensure their rights are upheld.



Continued provision of advocacy throughout lockdown including face to face meetings, where essential, and supporting advocacy partners to access mental health tribunals, children's hearings and other critical meetings by providing or supporting them in the use of technology.

161
The number
of new
introductions

Accessing Talking Mats training for all advocates enabling improved communication for people with language or spoken communication difficulties.

Delivering training as part of Adult Support and Protection (ASP) module 2, to raise awareness of the role of advocacy in ASP investigations and meetings, to social workers and other professionals. This has led to an increase in the number of people accessing advocacy support during ASP investigations and meetings.

Continuing to provide advocacy throughout lockdown despite all the difficulties. This was made possible with good planning and a flexible team of people who responded to every change in guidance and each new challenge with good humour and positivity.

Team members working from home under such difficult circumstances and not having the direct support of colleagues. The effect of this was partly reduced through regular team meetings. With careful management, the team found they could always rotate a presence in the office, ensuring that people were aware that we remained operational.

165

The number
of advocacy
hours
available

During the pandemic, we made significant changes to accommodate availability during all times and to stay connected as a team. This was especially important for those joining the team during lockdown. We tried several ways to overcome this, but none were successful until we agreed to try formal peer discussions. This meant that the team met together online every two weeks and could discuss issues and support each other.

9

The number
of employees

We have held the sessions as free flowing discussions and as more structured learning sets. Both were helpful and it has been agreed that the person presenting the issue can decide which style suits them best.

The sessions have been productive in terms of learning and enabling individual advocates to assist people well, they were also effective as building team connectiveness, support and trust.



Story of change:

Michael had been admitted to hospital following a fall. He no longer required to be in the general hospital but was not able to return home, due to reduced mobility. The plan was to transfer him to his local hospital, but they refused to accept him.

Prior to being admitted to hospital, Michael had lived with his sister for over 50 years. She was his full-time carer, as he has a learning disability and complex health conditions. They were both dependent on each other. His sister felt totally lost without her brother and had separation anxiety, along with other worries, which were impacting on her physical and mental health.

Michael's sister does not drive and must rely on public transport, which was unreliable, she had concerns about using the bus due to the Covid Pandemic. Moving Michael to anywhere other than his local hospital would mean that they would not be able to see each other.

Michael has no capacity without her support and has limited speech so could not voice his views, even using augmented communication systems.

It was acknowledged that a further separation from his sister would be detrimental to his longer-term recovery.

By advocating for Michael, on a non-instructed basis, to his support team in the hospital, the advocate was able to explain the impact of their decision. The result was that he was transferred to his local hospital where they agreed to work with Michael to improve his mobility, which will allow him to return home to his sister's care.



Story of change:

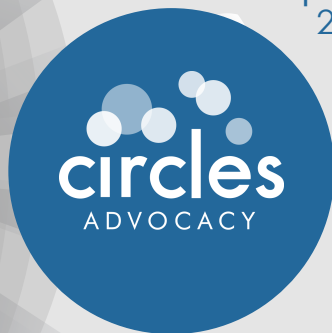
Sally, who has mental health and drug and alcohol issues, was referred to Circles Advocacy whilst in prison, for support to attend Care Programme Approach (CPA) meetings on her release.

At the first CPA, the social worker chaired, set the agenda and explained that the aim of the CPA was to quickly establish a robust care package that met Sally's needs. Sally was afforded little chance to speak. Sally told her advocate that she was disappointed that the social worker and Mental Health Team had set the agenda. She felt disempowered and said, 'What's the point? They just talk amongst themselves; it's their meeting and I am forced to go.' and 'I didn't even get the chance to ask what extra help is available to help with my recovery.'

A Statement of Views was compiled by Sally with the support of her advocate. The social worker agreed to use it to set the agenda for the next CPA where all of Sally's views, concerns and issues were given priority and fully covered.

Afterwards, Sally said she felt like it was now a meeting that she was in control of; she felt There was time given to fully discuss her issues and the professionals were now listening to and responding to her. She felt the changes and new emphasis of the meetings were more positive than the previous meeting, and over the next couple of meetings, Sally set the agenda, talked, and controlled more of the discussion.





Circles Advocacy

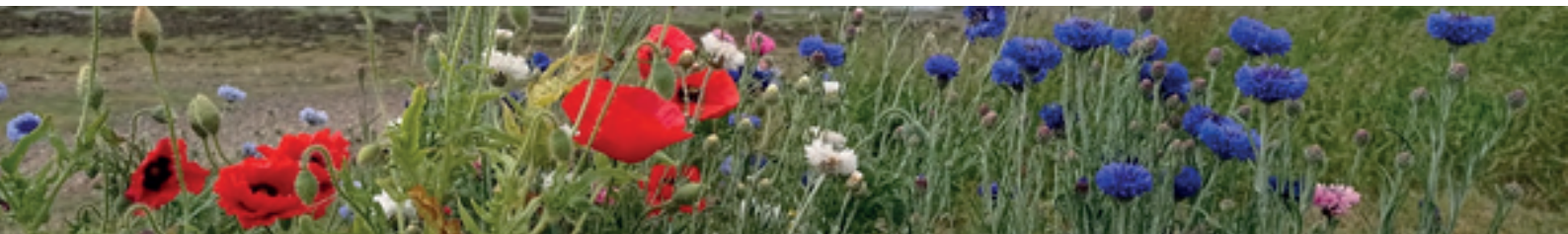
Drug and alcohol service, Moray

Delivered
throughout
lockdown.

Circles Advocacy in Moray provides independent, professional, issue-based advocacy to adults living in Moray including those who have, or have had, issues relating to the use of drugs and/or alcohol which have created barriers to accessing appropriate support and services.

This includes matters relating to health and social care, supporting parents whose children are 'Looked After' or part of child protection procedures and those who have been detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act.

Our main aim is to support peoples' views to be heard, provide information to enable people to make informed choices, and ensure their rights are upheld.



Some highlights from this year include:

Technology
used to
connect.

The continued provision of advocacy throughout lockdown including face to face meetings, where essential and supporting partners to access mental health tribunals, children's hearings, and other critical meetings, by providing or supporting people in the use of technology.

Accessing Rights Based Advocacy training for two of our advocates.

Delivering training as part of Adult Support and Protection (ASP) module 2, to raise awareness of the role of advocacy in ASP investigations and meetings to social workers and other professionals. This has led to an increase in the number of people being supported by advocacy during ASP investigations and meetings.

Continuing to provide advocacy throughout lockdown to those with Drug and Alcohol issues. Our links with Arrows direct service had been developing well with the advocate feeling that those who attend the drop-in sessions were starting to accept him. This had to stop because of lockdown but relationships with the workers in Arrows have been developed so that introductions have continued to come in via that service. This was enhanced through the production of posters with QR codes which were laminated and distributed to all pharmacists in Moray, who have regular contact with people with drug and alcohol issues. The lamination and QR code meant the posters were COVID compliant.

Working from home and not having the direct support of colleagues on a daily basis. This has been reduced through regular team meetings and peer support.

28

The number of
people
supported

A national group has been developed for services that provide advocacy for people with drug and alcohol issues. Circles Advocacy Moray is part of this group, which provides peer support to advocates and acts as a conduit for directing issues to national bodies and government. In addition to this, following discussions with the group, we plan to recruit a volunteer advocate with lived experience to enhance the advocacy service provided in Moray.



Story of change:

Lisa

Lisa was introduced to Circles Advocacy by Arrows. She had previously had difficulty controlling her use of alcohol and substances. This had led to her children being placed in kinship care. She had limited contact with them as their kinship carer continued to have concerns regarding her use of alcohol and substances. Lisa wanted increased contact but had no paperwork relating to the kinship order and did not know where to start.

Lisa was supported to find a solicitor and provided with information regarding kinship care and her rights. The advocate enabled Lisa to exercise her parental rights; to obtain school reports on her children which had been withheld by the kinship carer. The advocate also supported Lisa to meet with her solicitor via social media, providing her with the technology to do so and prepared a list of questions with her, before the meeting, so she was able to ask the solicitor for all the information she needed.



Story of change:

Craig

Craig was referred to Circles Advocacy to assist him with meetings regarding his children and his associated housing problem. As a homeless person, without a secure tenancy, he was unable to see his children. On meeting Craig for the first time, he disclosed to his advocate that he was feeling low and felt his current situation threatened his successful continuing recovery from recent drug and alcohol problems.

Craig and his advocate drew up an action plan which included supporting him to attend meetings, to articulate his position and for the advocate to write a letter to the local authority, on his behalf, explaining why he needed his temporary tenancy be turned into a secure tenancy, thus allowing him to have his children stay overnight and weekends. Craig felt having an unsecure tenancy was one of the main barriers which was stopping him seeing his children.

Over the next month Craig and his advocate attended two meetings and Craig felt positive progress was being made, and then the COVID lockdown was implemented and access with his children was stopped.

Craig asked his advocate to concentrate on the housing issue. Craig felt not having a safe and secure home for his children to come to during this pandemic was now the main barrier. A letter was duly submitted, sharing Craig's views with the Housing Department and highlighting his rights. After a couple of weeks Craig sent his advocate a text saying that the Housing Department had agreed to his request, and he was on his way up that afternoon to sign a secure tenancy. He was already preparing to have his children stay over for the whole weekend, after being given confirmation, from his social worker, that this was also now possible.





Circles Advocacy Fife

Circles Network in Fife provide advocacy to the entire Fife region and have a large remit which includes supporting individuals who experience mental health difficulties, dementia, disability, chronic illness, acquired brain injury, learning differences and autism.

The team also provide advocacy support for children under 16 years who are subject to compulsory measures under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment Scotland) Act 2003.

1306
The number
of people
supported

This year the team continued to provide advocacy throughout the Covid 19 pandemic and the restrictions this enforced. The team followed the guidelines put in place by the Scottish Government and have maintained a flexible approach to ensure that advocacy has been accessible for everyone at a time when many services were closed or running at a reduced level. We continually found new ways to connect with individuals where face to face contact was not feasible, due to the restrictions in place, throughout this time. Despite the challenges of the pandemic our dedicated team have provided face to face contact where other forms of communication were not appropriate, to ensure that everyone received the level of support that they needed. Where face to face contact was provided the team followed the guidelines, procedures and ensured protective equipment and processes were in place. We have also managed to host placements for social work students, albeit remotely, this has been a learning curve for everyone involved.

We have successfully recruited and inducted three new Advocates this year.

385
Direct support
hours delivered

The challenges we faced this year were dominated by the ever-changing government restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The team initially worked from home, which was completely alien, but they soon adapted and supported each other through the difficulties each member of the team experienced. Circles Network created a raft of strategies in self-care and mental health support for staff and volunteers, to prepare for extraordinary demands.

Initially, working from home changed the way we provided advocacy as we were unable to support individuals face to face. The team questioned whether this was actually independent advocacy, on occasions where we relied on other professionals to facilitate contact, either through telephone or video. We discussed this regularly and held rich conversations with other professionals who were asking similar questions about their own roles. In the end, we were all doing our best in a situation we had never previously experienced. Ultimately the team pulled together well to overcome the challenges they faced both professionally and personally, we were all too aware of the impact on the wellbeing of the people we support and the team therefore, creating a positive, supportive environment was paramount.

The advocacy issues raised changed considerably as people faced intense loneliness and were cut off from the usual supports and services. We introduced daily or weekly well-being calls to complement our advocacy responses, and this was very well received.



We submitted a funding application for a new advocacy carers project in March 2021. This is a grant funded project which would support carers through the journey of Power of Attorney and Welfare Guardianship, the new project is funded by the Health & Social Care Partnership. We know that many individuals remain in hospital after they are well enough to be discharged should Power of Attorney not be in place. This project in the short-term will work with those individuals and families affected and in the longer-term will aim to prevent this occurring by working alongside carers before capacity is reduced. We have been successful with this application and will start the project in the new financial year.



Story of change:

Mr Brown was in hospital for some months as he was unable to walk, he was then transferred to another hospital for rehabilitation. He was increasingly distressed and believed that he would not be able to manage at home on his own. He was also concerned about how he would physically be able to visit his wife. He received an assessment which stated he was unable to live on his own so he decided he would like to join his wife in the same care home in or around the same area. Circles Advocacy and his social work team collaborated to follow his wishes and make this happen. He was allocated a room in the same care home as Mrs Brown, and they are able to spend their days together. Mr Brown hadn't believed this could actually happen and is now extremely grateful for the support he received from all professionals involved.



Story of change:

William is a 67-year-old man with a learning disability who had lived with his parents his whole life. He was introduced to Circles Advocacy at a point where his situation suddenly changed as his father was no longer able to care for him due to his own increasing care needs. William was placed into a residential care home until a suitable placement was found. An advocate worked alongside William to determine where he wanted to live. William explained that he felt too young to be in a care home and wanted to try and be as independent as possible. His advocate relayed these views back to William's social worker and a meeting was arranged to negotiate the best placement for him. It was proposed that he would be matched with a Shared Lives Carer and move into their home. The advocate worked alongside William to gain his views and make sure that he understood what this would mean. William agreed to this and wanted the advocate to be there during his first meeting with his Shared Life Five carers. William explained that he felt everything went well and was happy to move to this placement and thanked his advocate for helping him achieve an outcome that he was happy with.

1306

The number
of new
introductions

Rosie has been thankful for the service she has received from Circles Advocacy. She has experienced a lot of anxiety during the Pandemic and having advocacy support has "helped her through". Rosie expressed that she always felt better after speaking with her advocate.





Circles Advocacy South Ayrshire

Circles Advocacy in South Ayrshire provide an advocacy service for individuals subject to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) 2007 and the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. We provide support at a range of formal and informal proceedings including; Mental Health Tribunals, Care Programme Approach meetings, Social Work engagements /reviews, Children's Hearings, Looked After Child meetings and DWP health assessments among many others.



We deliver 'issue based' one to one and collective advocacy and actively promote non-instructed advocacy, enabling us to support individuals who are not in a position to access our service independently.

We provide information to assist individuals in making informed decisions, supporting them to express their own needs and have as much control as possible over their own lives. We support people affected by mental health issues, learning disabilities, chronic illness, physical disabilities, people living with alcohol and addiction, brain injuries, dementia, autistic spectrum disorders and adults at risk of harm.

Our service works in partnership with a range of stakeholders, and recognises that advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.

The biggest highlight of the year came about when we were awarded funding to work with the local ADP (Alcohol and drug Partnership) to employ a recovery advocate. This is a fully funded pilot project. Our recovery advocate has now gained their National Recovery Advocacy Practice Award and this will allow them to join NRAN (National Recovery Advocacy Network) thus giving access to the Scottish Government in respect of lobbying and policy and legislative change. They are currently working towards completing their SVQ level 3 qualification.

5

The number
of employees

We have been involved with the South Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership's Strategic Planning events and helped to contribute to the new Integration Joint Board (IJB) Strategic Plan for 2021-2031.

The Service Manager was invited to join the first local Third Sector Mental Health Providers Forum which links representatives from the Third Sector together to discuss topics of common interest, share knowledge and experience, and identify areas of good practice that contribute to, and influence planning, of third sector mental health services.



The main challenge for us, as with everyone else, was dealing with the emerging pandemic last year and working through and adapting to the significant changes in our working and personal lives as the situation progressed. Having such a close team has proven to be vital in navigating this difficult time. We have provided support to each other and the people we provide advocacy for and have adapted to the many changes. We have utilised technology to communicate to our partners, each other, and the wider community to continue to operate as normally as we could. An operational plan was created and updated regularly to inform staff on the sometimes rapidly, evolving situation. We initiated new methods of working and communicating and continued our service whilst many organisations were ceasing to run. We utilised this technology to support partners to become involved in meetings and Hearings that were increasingly being held remotely. We also used technology to connect with the community to provide awareness raising presentations. During the pandemic, we were approached by the local Alcohol & Drug Partnership to begin a pilot Recovery Advocate post within our office, which has grown from strength to strength through the pandemic and has just been extended.

348
The number
of people
supported

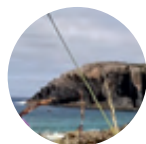
Another challenge, has been the restrictions put in place that limited our contact with our advocacy partners. When restrictions were relaxed at certain points over the year, we took steps to alter the layout of our office to allow people to come in to attend initial introductions and to meet with current advocacy partners. We put up screens and rearranged the layout to adhere to social distancing guidelines which allowed us to meet with partners in the office.□



Prior to Covid, we were undertaking collective advocacy in a local care home. This ceased due to Covid restrictions but has since been started up again once it was safe to do so. We altered the way in which this took place though, by conducting smaller collective advocacy circles to allow for social distancing to be adhered to and to allow residents the opportunity to engage again.

During the pandemic we also recruited our recovery advocate. The recruitment was conducted both remotely and face to face, with the first interview being conducted online over Zoom, and the second interview face to face with the other interviewee attending remotely.

This was an approach that we had never done before.



184
The number
of new
introductions



Story of change:

Deborah contacted Circles Advocacy in South Ayrshire to ask if we could attend a Children's Hearing with her. She was not confident to attend the Hearing on her own due to her mental health. She told us that she did not feel that her child's social worker was listening to her views and that they were not communicating all the positive changes she had made to the panel members. As well as her social worker, she had been told that her ex-partner would be attending the Hearing along with his solicitor. She was very distressed at the thought of being in the same room as her ex-partner, as there was a court ordered non-harassment order in place which meant that he was not supposed to have any contact with her. She had been told by her social worker that the order stated that it was okay for him to attend the Hearing as it was a legal setting and the order could be suspended for the duration of the Hearing, to allow him to attend.

Deborah was not in agreement with this and again, felt that she was not being listened to.

With Deborah's permission we contacted the social worker to pass on her concerns and contacted the Children's Reporter to ask them to make the Panel aware of Deborah's fears about seeing her ex-partner. We asked the Children's Reporter to ensure that, should her ex-partner attend the Hearing, that they were shown to separate waiting rooms. We also asked that the Hearing to be split into two, to allow Deborah and her ex-partner to be heard by the Panel separately. The Panel went ahead and Deborah did not encounter her ex-partner, despite his presence at the Hearing. Deborah was able to share her views with advocacy assistance, without the extra worry of facing her ex-partner.



Story of change:

Steven contacted our office looking for some information around getting some help to apply for a bus pass as his old one had expired. Our advocate gave him the details on how to do this. Through conversations with Steven, he told us that he had been receiving letters from his bank regarding a loan that he had taken out. He told us that he had been ignoring the letters as he felt that he could not deal with opening them due to his mental health. Steven admitted that he had built up some debt and was now scared to open his mail. Steven agreed to bring them to the office and allow us to open them with him. He brought in several letters regarding a loan that he had taken out a couple of years ago with his bank. Some letters were from his bank and the more recent ones were from a debt agency who the bank had passed his debt to. The debt company were looking to recover over £3000 from him. After further conversations with Steven and with his consent, we contacted the local money advice team on his behalf and arranged an appointment to speak to one of their advisers. We attended this appointment with him to support him to speak to the debt adviser to produce a repayment plan. A plan was agreed upon and Steven now feels a lot better knowing that the debt is now being managed in a way that he can afford.□





Circles Advocacy Glasgow

Circles Advocacy Glasgow provide a professional, independent advocacy service for individuals detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 or the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995. We are based in Glasgow and operate at Rowanbank Clinic, which is a medium secure setting, the low secure wards are based at Leverndale Hospital, our service also provides three months of community provision for those who are discharged from these services. Predominately Circles Advocacy, Glasgow provides support to those who have offended and are detained due to their mental health which as a result means they are involved with Forensic services. The core funding of our service is received from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde as well as the West of Scotland Forensic Directorate. The areas of service covered includes male and female admissions, male and female rehabilitation, the national learning disability unit, pre-discharge and community outreach.

472
The number of
CPA Meetings

We deliver 'issue based' one to one and collective advocacy and actively promote non-instructed advocacy, enabling us to support individuals who are not in a position to access our service independently.

We provide information to assist individuals in making informed decisions, supporting them to express their own needs and have as much control as possible over their own lives. We support people affected by mental health issues, learning disabilities, chronic illness, physical disabilities, people living with alcohol and addiction, brain injuries, dementia, autistic spectrum disorders and adults at risk of harm.

Our service works in partnership with a range of stakeholders, and recognises that advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.

Highlights from the past financial year have included, firstly the way in which the team adapted and supported each other during the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. For example the way in which the team managed to continue achieving many positive outcomes for individuals despite many unforeseen challenges posed by working remotely. Also significant was the continued impact independent forensic mental health advocacy has had with regards to positive legislative change on a national level.

The start of the financial year was signified by a full national lockdown with our service being considered 'essential'. However, precautions within the hospital meant that service delivery had to be carried out remotely, with some exceptions where face-to-face meetings were essential. Our team adapted quickly by reverting to telephone ward drop-ins, attending formal meetings virtually and using all avenues available for keeping individuals informed of their rights. The team were able to keep expectations realistic during the sudden and rapidly changing restrictions. We continued to provide each other with emotional support, as well as affording advocacy support to those we advocate for during these unprecedented times.



In addition, our team have achieved many positive outcomes for individuals. To highlight a few examples; we have resolved forty complaints prior to escalation, we have advanced our knowledge and understanding of adapting material into easy-read format that is appropriate and meaningful to those who require it. This enabled people to have their views heard on important issues such as guardianship. We have also been able to successfully maintain positive relationships with other organisations to ensure that individuals are able to share their experiences and views on issues relating to care, treatment, and legislation.

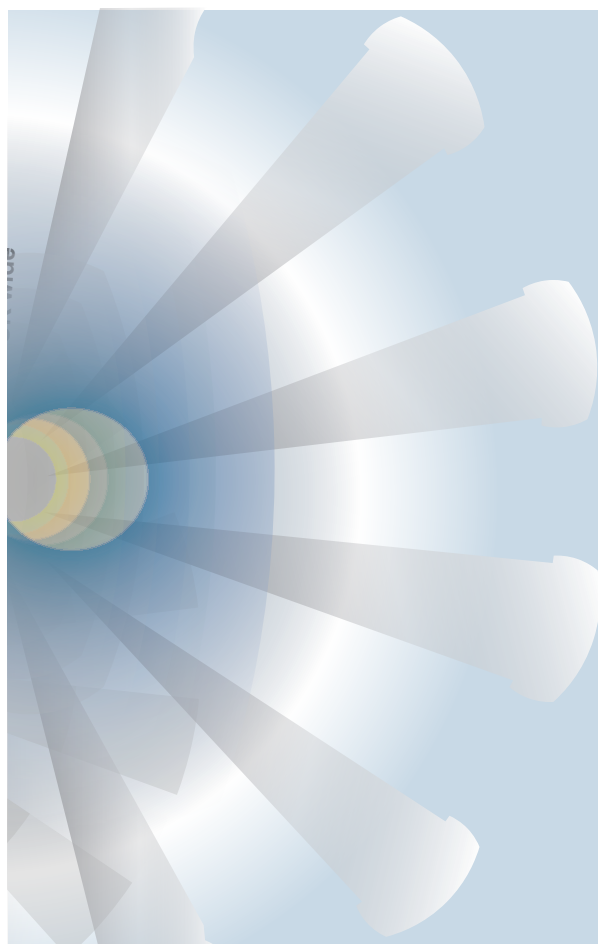
Finally, our team were able to support the Independent Forensic Review Call for Evidence and progressed the important issue of voting rights to members of the Scottish Parliament for their attention. By being involved in these issues, our service has continued to advocate for individuals' rights with the aim of promoting positive change on a national level.

Challenges that the team have faced this year have included the incorporation of flexible and remote working. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Glasgow team went to full remote working at the beginning of March 2020. As restrictions began to loosen, the team began to gradually reintroduce some days within the clinic and within the Glasgow office. Challenges with remote working have included lesser opportunities to attend both Rowanbank and Leverndale hospital. This led to initial introductions being completed over the telephone, which may have been a barrier in forming a stronger relationship with

individual's supported in comparison to face to face introductions. It was also noted that not everyone would be willing to or able to speak on a telephone. To overcome this, advocates were able to arrange video conferencing with any individuals who would prefer this as an alternative method. Advocates also attended the clinic one day per week (minimum) to ensure that all individuals had the opportunity to access independent advocacy. The team have increased presence gradually in line with government guidance with an aim to return to full time office-based working.

A further challenge for the Glasgow team during the pandemic has been the risk of reduced well-being, increased isolation and less opportunities to learn from one another in an office environment. With the introduction of home working, the team have been less likely to ask for support from their peers should they require it. To overcome this, the team are in constant virtual contact through the day via MS Teams. This platform can allow for the team to ask for support when required and acts as a medium to stay in touch with each other for general conversation. The team have a video conference meeting every morning to catch up on advocacy related issues, to share relevant information and to stay connected.

Despite the challenges of home working, the team have worked well over this period and many of them have expressed preference for blended/flexible working. Home working has seen increased engagement and additional outcomes for those who we support. The team have continued to achieve excellent results, proving that despite the challenges of Covid-19, we have continued to ensure the voices of those who we support are heard.



The end of this period has seen some significant changes within the team. The previous Service Manager, Adam Ovington, has moved on from the service, as well as Forensic Advocate Sophia Buts. The Glasgow team would like to take the opportunity to wish them well with the future. Since their departure, Rhiannon Harrison has smoothly transitioned into the role of Lead Forensic Advocate and Laura Millar has taken over as Service Manager in Glasgow. The Glasgow team welcomed a Strathclyde University Social Work student, Scott Lewis, on a 90-day working placement. Scott has since moved into part time employment with the Glasgow team with an aim to move into full time working later in the year.

17000
The number
of ward
drop ins

Within the next period we aim to focus on ongoing training of the team. We will identify areas of development and have monthly to bi-monthly training sessions in-house to recap and build on knowledge of legislation and rights in many relevant areas.

We have been moving onto a new coaching style of supervision and management to ensure the team are maximising on their strengths and interests. The Glasgow team hope to welcome more volunteers in the future and provide great opportunities for students to develop

knowledge of forensic advocacy, whilst allowing for the team to build themselves into strong mentors and leaders. The use of volunteers will hopefully allow the team to place greater focus and drive forward collective advocacy, increase presence on social media sites and introduce the use of Tik-tok to share Mental Health related content.

102
The number
of mental
health
tribunals



Story of change:

Jock approached Circles Advocacy in late 2019 and explained that not long after he was first recalled to low secure hospital, his property had been broken into and although nothing was stolen, his home had been “completely trashed”. Jock’s family and community care team had notified police and raised this as a criminal incident at the time, however the police had advised that they would not be able to investigate this matter due to a lack of evidence.

Police officers further disclosed to Jock’s Forensic Community Psychiatric Nurse (FCPN) that they believed Jock may have caused the damage to his property himself, as they had found paperwork relating to his history of mental illness.

Jock’s FCPN had tried to follow this up with police and assured them that there was no possible way Jock could have done this, as he had been recalled and detained in hospital prior to the break in. Despite her efforts, the FCPN was unable to pursue this matter on Jock’s behalf any further and advised him to make a complaint to Police Scotland, as she felt they had not carried out a sufficient investigation into the break-in.

Jock’s insurance company were satisfied that Jock could not have stolen items and damaged his own property due to evidence that was supplied by medical professionals regarding his detention in hospital at the time in question. The insurance company subsequently paid full and final settlement for the items which were stolen and damaged during the incident.

Jock raised this issue with an advocate almost three years after the incident, as he felt he could now pursue a complaint against the police. With advocacy support, Jock lodged a complaint with Police Scotland regarding this matter. Jock was keen to highlight that not only did he feel there was insufficient investigation, but also that he had felt discriminated against.

Police Scotland allocated a local police inspector to oversee the complaint and an advocate supported Jock with interview processes and follow up meetings. Both Circles Advocacy and Police Scotland were able to keep Jock informed at each step of the process, and an advocate was able to liaise with Police Scotland regarding this matter at times when Jock felt unable to do so himself. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 the complaints process took longer than usual, but Jock was updated regularly.

Finally in August 2020, the Police Complaint concluded; the complaint was upheld stating that initial police officers had failed to carry out a sufficient investigation. Jock was very happy that the complaint had been upheld, and that his request for prevention of this happening again to someone else in future had been respected. Police Scotland agreed to take corrective action and implement further training for the initial investigating officers, as per Jock's request. Jock was informed of his right to escalate the complaint to the Police Independent Review Commission, however, Jock declined as he was satisfied with the outcome.

Jock actively participated in the complaints process and felt listened to by his advocate and Police Scotland. Jock was given all relevant information on his rights throughout, and the advocacy team acted in accordance with his wishes from beginning to end. Jock was regularly updated during the process and asserted that he had felt he had been able to talk openly with his advocate about his opinions and options throughout. With advocacy support Jock had felt able to speak up during the initial complaint investigation, and during subsequent meetings. Furthermore, Jock felt positive about his contributions to the discussions that were had with regards to this issue. Jock stated he had felt that the advocate had "represented his views and wishes at all times" and had been given relevant information during each stage of the process which enabled him to make informed choices when going forward with the complaint. Jock asserted that he "couldn't have done it without advocacy support" and was appreciative of the service. Most importantly, Jock received a formal apology from Police Scotland for the failure of a sufficient investigation, and subsequently felt he had been taken seriously, and that he hoped to have been able to prevent this kind of issue re-occurring in future.



Story of change:

Davie was absolutely discharged from Rowanbank in 2020. Davie has spent the last 20 years in and out of secure hospitals and after a year off his medication - whilst still detained at Rowanbank - Davie was told he does not have a mental disorder and was able to go back to community without an order in place.

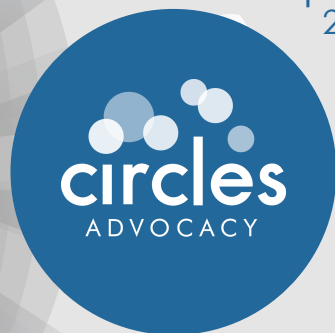
Davie had continuous advocacy support whilst in hospital, however, was independent and could, for the most part, advocate for himself. Circles Advocacy attended a CPA

with Davie in late 2019 where it was said that Davie was not a risk to himself or to others. This notion would suggest that Davie does not meet the criteria for a Restriction Order, or perhaps even a Compulsion Order to be in place. An advocate explained Davie's right to appeal and the criteria which is necessary for a Restriction Order to be in place. This includes "being a serious risk to themselves or to others".

With this information, Davie was able to advocate for himself by securing himself legal representation and decided to appeal against his order. Circles Advocacy supported Davie at the Mental Health Tribunal, however, did not need to put anything forward on Davie's behalf as he was able to speak up for himself. The tribunal agreed that Davie no longer has a mental health diagnosis and can be absolutely discharged into the community, meaning that he is no longer on a hospital order.

An Advocate has continued to support Davie into the community. Engagement with Davie and support required has increased since his move although has come with limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that his advocate was unable to do a home visit with Davie, so all support has been over the phone. However, this has not meant a limitation on the support that Davie has had. He has been supported to write complaints to virgin media, access his medical records and is currently in the process of being supported to apply for housing in another area. Circles Advocacy empowered Davie to self-advocate, by supplying him with tools and knowledge on how to progress issues on his own. Davie has reported that advocacy has been his greatest support upon moving into the community and has stated that his advocate "helps me the most". Davie also reported "advocacy saved my life."





Circles Advocacy Inverclyde

Circles Advocacy in Inverclyde delivers a free, independent service to individuals aged 16 and over who reside within the boundaries of our four main towns of Greenock, Gourock, Port Glasgow and Kilmacolm, and to the outlying villages of Bridge of Weir, Inverkip, and Wemyss Bay: comprising a population of over 78,150 people. We deliver advocacy to our outlying communities by providing drop in hubs within community resources, and we offer home visits to individuals who are unable to access our main hub, which is situated in the heart of our community.

5174
The number
of direct
support hours
delivered



The service is generic and promotes equal opportunities for individuals who require advocacy from time to time with their issues. Being a generic service means that we support individuals who are: Elderly, Carers, Homeless, Learning Disabilities, Learning Difficulties, Autism, Physical Disabilities, Mental Ill Health, Individuals Detained under the Mental Health Act, Acquired Brain Injury, Alcohol Dependency, Drug Dependency, Dementia, Ethnic Minorities, Women in Refuge, Parental Rights, Prisoners, and individuals with long term health issues.

455
The number
of people
supported

We support individuals regarding their specific issues, providing information about the options that are available to them; however, advocates do not give advice. Our support can be short or long term, depending on the issue and the support the individual requires, and we go at a pace the individual is comfortable with.

We work in partnership with many local organisations, since advocacy is important to ensure social inclusion, social justice, equality and fairness. We are jointly funded through the Health and Social Care partnership for the core service, and we receive further funding from the Scottish Government to deliver the Self-Directed Support Project.

Some major highlights from the year involved:

Delivering one to one advocacy to 455 individuals whilst in the grip of the covid 19 lockdown.

Being equipped with new laptops and mobile phones and software to facilitate the continuation of our service delivery, enabling the volunteers and advocates to access our shared folders whilst working remotely.

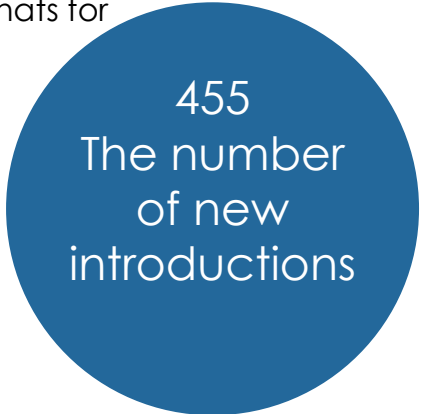
Resolving a total of 420 issues with positive outcomes for our advocacy partners.

This year brought many Covid related difficulties. In particular;

As team members worked from home it became a challenge to display our 'open door' policy that always worked so well in the office when issues developed. This was overcome by having weekly Zoom meetings, daily office WhatsApp chats for our team and by putting morning wellness calls in place. We also introduced 'open door' Zoom time so that team members had the opportunity to speak face to face and discuss issues of concern.

Another challenge faced was when the rules for covid-19 eased up a little, staff were very keen to support people who had found it a challenge receiving advocacy by telephone. The advocates started face-to-face meetings with their advocacy partners. Before we knew it, advocates were organising three or four appointments daily. We needed to quickly address this by ensuring covid health and safety protocols were being adhered to. With a dedicated team, it was tough to rein in such enthusiasm alongside the desire to support people in the best way possible. Importantly, we were forced to apply safety measures that reduced any potential cross contamination ensuring safety for our team and that of any vulnerable individuals we work with.

One area of development that we are keen to progress, is the relocation to larger premises. We did begin the search before the pandemic hit but have been grounded by circumstances in that quest. For now, we have smartened up the office base with a lick of paint and some new additions of furnishings. Hopefully, we can soon progress this desire.



455
The number
of new
introductions



Story of change:

Olivia introduced herself to the advocacy team. Her first words to the advocate were, "I hope to God, you can help me". On our first meeting, Olivia explained that her mother passed away when she was ten years old. Olivia's father was not involved in her life, and her social worker placed her in the care of her aunty and uncle. This placement happened in the mid Seventies. While Olivia stayed with her aunt and uncle, she did not have her own bedroom, instead her bed comprised of two chairs pushed together. This deprived Olivia of her own private space and stopped her from having her friends over to stay. Olivia had also been sexually abused by a male cousin.

An advocate supported Olivia over a two-year period. During one of their many meetings, Olivia disclosed to her Advocate that the sexual abuse began when she was extremely young and continued until she left her uncle's home on the day of her sixteenth birthday. Olivia's advocate wrote to numerous organisations requesting support to discuss this historic sexual abuse. Her advocate also wrote to the Chairperson of the Scottish Child Abuse Enquiry. Although extremely sympathetic, unfortunately they were unable to assist because Olivia's situation did not qualify under their terms of reference.

In December 2019 Olivia's advocate wrote directly to the Deputy First Minister for Scotland to present her case. The Deputy First Minister was unable to meet with Olivia but offered her the opportunity to meet two senior members of the Scottish Abuse enquiry in February 2020. Olivia was overcome when she heard that she would be able to tell her story to these representatives of the Enquiry. Olivia's issue highlights one of the principal strengths of independent advocacy; that we do not have time constraints and can keep working with an individual until some form of outcome is achieved.



Story of change:

Malcolm had heard about us through a local group that he attended. Someone at the group had accessed advocacy before and Malcolm decided that he required independent support. Malcolm lived in a top flat and he owned his own home. He was finding it very difficult to climb the five flights of stairs to his flat, as his mobility had become much worse in recent months. Malcolm uses a walking aid; he stated he was very isolated as he could very rarely go out, and then only with the help of his cousin who came to visit him every eight weeks. Malcolm had lost touch with all his friends since losing his mobility.

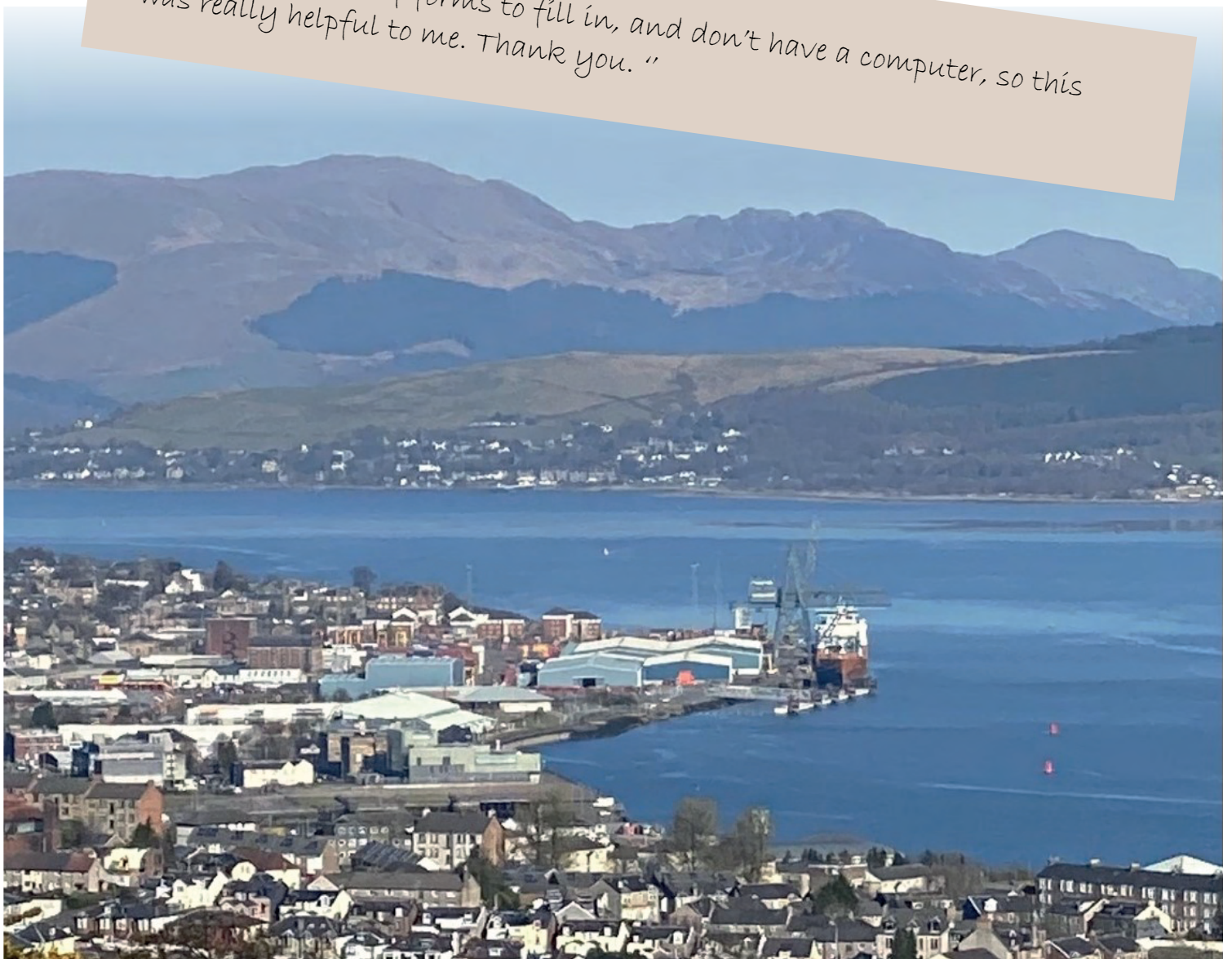
Two advocates went to meet Malcolm at home. Malcolm thought that he would have to sell his home, which had five bedrooms and had become too big for his purpose. The advocates informed Malcolm that he would not have to sell his home if he did not want to, and he could still apply to the common housing register as his needs had changed. Malcolm was surprised to hear this, as he thought he had a long wait in front of him before he could even register his interest. First, his advocate supported Malcolm to complete a housing form. This must be done online, but Malcolm does not have a computer and cannot go out to access the local library computers. Malcolm's advocate was able to take a laptop and internet-enabled phone to his home to facilitate the

application. The advocate visited Malcolm every week over a matter of months, they also supported Malcolm to request a home visit from an Occupational Therapist to assess his mobility. Once this had been performed, it enabled Malcolm to be on the list for mobility housing. After adding his mobility requirements to the application, Malcolm was offered a home with easy access and a garden, which enabled him to park his mobility scooter. Malcolm was delighted with his move and is now settled into his new home.

"It's great to have this service. It balances out the situation as it can be so one-sided. With advocacy the patient's anxiety levels reduce..."

"The staff was very helpful and well-mannered, made you feel welcome... could not do enough for us. 10 out of 10."

"I hate any kind of forms to fill in, and don't have a computer, so this was really helpful to me. Thank you."





Circles Advocacy

Self Directed Support, Inverclyde

Self-directed Support (SDS) was introduced in Scotland on 1st April 2014 following the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. This introduction means that people receiving social care services in Scotland have the choice, control, and flexibility to meet their personal outcomes. Local Authorities are required to ensure people are offered a range of options on how they receive their social care services and support. Circles Network's SDS Project aims to raise awareness and understanding of SDS and the processes across Inverclyde amongst people accessing services, their families, and carers by sharing information, supporting them to put across their views, and by facilitating peer groups. This project works on a one-to-one basis with individuals to support them with the issues they come across in relation to their own self-directed support package. The aim is to encourage individuals to participate in managing their own care, and to provide group support through SDS peer groups. These groups are led by individuals who have personal experience of self-directed support who are happy to share their journey with others, to help them think creatively and understand the processes more clearly. Our project is funded directly through the Scottish Government.

41

The number
of people
supported

We have worked with several individuals who are interested in Option 1 - Direct Payment via Self-directed Support. A breakthrough this year was realised when two different individuals, who both have parents recently diagnosed with dementia became interested, through our support, in recruiting Personal Assistants to support their mothers whilst they go to work. They decided to create a more flexible system of support that suited the needs of their families. At the present time both families work with agencies that have proved unsuitable to adapt around their working lives. They are now moving forward with the option they have chosen. Another highlight concerns a gentleman who is disabled and has terminal cancer. He is considering a Personal Assistant to support his wife with his deteriorating health needs and to help him maintain as much independence at home as possible. Initial introductions have been made to the community care and assessment team and SDS advocacy is looking forward to supporting the families to achieve a suitable outcome.

5174

The number
of direct
support hours
delivered

One challenge we faced during this year was the delivery of supporting peer groups. Initially we delivered this via Zoom, nonetheless individuals did not want to continue attending due to being overwhelmed by Covid, self-isolation, or looking after their loved ones. We took this on board and cancelled our peer group sessions. We then initiated regular advocacy wellbeing calls to individuals from these groups, this enabled us to keep in touch with everyone so that no one fell through the gap and felt totally isolated. We delivered PIP, food parcels, and starter packs for individuals who were self-isolating.

2080
The number
of volunteer direct
support hours
delivered

Another challenge we faced regarded our volunteers. Not all our volunteers had internet access or laptops. We quickly resolved this by providing volunteers with laptops and access to the web. This made quite a difference in that our volunteers could stay engaged with their advocacy partners, attending meetings, and gaining outcomes for the individuals they support.

Our peer support advocate secured a new post just before lockdown leaving us in quite a difficult position. We plan now to rehire with regards to this position once lockdown moves to level 1 and our peer groups can take place in a more relaxed environment. Other team members were able to assist with delivery of wellbeing calls and attending relevant meetings online, ensuring that no one was left to struggle alone.



Story of change:

Stephen's mother introduced him to the project. Stephen lives with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. He has very limited verbal communication but can point to things he wants. His mother was looking for ways to engage Stephen within the community, and the possibility of some daytime activities. She had heard of Self-directed Support (SDS), and she wanted to know more about this and whether Stephen could benefit from a package of care that would fit his needs. Stephen's advocate provided various information leaflets for his family to read over and arranged a follow up visit to meet with Stephen the following week. During the first home visit his parents showed Stephen a pictorial easy read guide explaining the role of an advocate. They also gave his advocate a detailed history of the reasons why Stephen had disengaged with various services and providers who had supported him in the past.

Stephen found the constant changing of staff by one provider challenging. On returning home from the day centre care or being out in the community for a few hours he took his frustrations out on his parents. This went on for a lengthy period. Stephen's advocate agreed to research a range of new options open to him.

Since Stephen no longer wished to go out or engage with his former support services, the advocate suggested looking at a different approach. SDS can fund the employment of a Personal Assistant (PA, and Stephen's parents wanted to pursue this with his father being the Personal Assistant employed. It is required for there to be special circumstances for a close relative to become a PA under SDS, and this was further complicated as Stephen was under a Welfare & Financial Guardianship order in relation to the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000, with his father named on the application as a substitute. This would also prevent him from being his son's Personal Assistant. Due to the complexity of having his father removed from the Guardianship and the length of time the court process would take, Stephen's parents decided on a different course of action. They submitted a request for Stephen's brother's partner to become his PA, constituting a switch from Option 3 to Option 1 under the Self-Directed Support (Scotland Act 2013).

Stephen had an appointed Social Worker and a Community Mental Health Nurse who visited regularly, and who felt that Stephen would benefit from this form of care. The family's request was being considered at the local authority's monthly Resource Allocation Group (RAG meetings, but on each occasion further information was required to make a decision. Stephen's parents were becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress and some of the guidance from social workers.

His parents asked for support to submit a written complaint to the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP regarding the lack of support from Stephen's appointed social worker, and the slow decision process to change the SDS options. An advocate supported them to make the complaint, and to request the appointment of a new Social Worker, an updated care plan and an Option 1 agreement including 28 hours of support, which was what Stephen had received from the previous provider. The HSCP accepted the complaint with the result that a new Social Worker was put in place, the care plan was brought up to date and the budget for a PA was agreed at 28 hours.

Stephen's advocate also supported them to register with the Scottish Personal Assistance and Employee Network (SPAEN who assist with payroll, employer insurance etc. The final RAG meeting agreed to the approved budget for 28 hours of support and the switch from Option 3 to Option 1. As financial guardians Stephen's parents would manage the weekly hours and the agreed care plan; Stephen's brother's partner would become the Personal Assistant.

Following 14 months of persistence with Circles Advocacy support, the family thanked us for helping to ensure that Stephen received his choice of care package.



Story of change:

Jonathan is a gentleman with Type 1 Diabetes. He was introduced to the service by his family after being admitted to Inverclyde Royal hospital. His daughter and son, who are joint welfare attorneys were becoming very concerned about the care he was receiving, both within the hospital and at home. Jonathan had been receiving home care from agencies chosen and administered by the local authority under Option 3 of Self-Directed Support. Although he and his family had made numerous complaints regarding his care at home, no changes had been made.

An advocate attended the hospital and explained the purpose of their visit to nursing staff, who then introduced the advocate to Jonathan. During this first visit Jonathan's advocate explained how the advocacy service supports individuals and discussed our confidentiality protocol and other key points.

The advocate went on to chat about Jonathan's concerns regarding his care. Jonathan stated that he now felt fit and well enough to be discharged. However, social workers, nursing staff and doctors had different views because Jonathan is not able to recognise when his sugar levels are becoming dangerously low, which can lead to a diabetic coma.

Jonathan was clear that he wanted to return home. To facilitate his return, he wanted his care package reviewed, with a potential for this to be increased if necessary, and he also wanted to be switched from Self-Directed Support Option 3 to Option 1, which would provide a direct payment he could use to purchase support of his choosing. He wanted his daughter to manage the direct payment.

A multi-disciplinary team meeting of all the professional agencies involved in delivering Jonathan's care in the hospital had been scheduled by a social worker and the discharge team. The advocate attended the meeting at Jonathan's request and put Jonathan's views across in relation to a planned discharge. The advocate also asked for a switch of Options to result in the implementation of a different care package. He explained that Jonathan wanted this because numerous complaints had made no difference to his Option 3 package. Both social work and nursing staff were concerned that no care could be put in place at home after 8pm due to various logistical issues. Jonathan's daughter and son both agreed to be included in the support plan and undertook to ensure that their father had sufficient care, including checking his blood glucose levels, and providing him with a snack.

It was agreed to arrange a discharge date for Jonathan. In addition, the discharge team confirmed they would regularly contact the re enablement team for a 4-to-6-week period to see how the support plan was working. The daily care visits would increase from four to seven. The Social Worker also agreed to contact the local authority finance team during this period, to arrange a Self-Directed Support Option 1 agreement, enabling Jonathan's daughter to take over the management and payment of his care package.

Jonathan and his family were happy that Circles Advocacy had enabled them to reach this outcome.

"I was very pleased with the outcome, thank you so much to you, and the whole team."

"Good friendly, helpful staff, make everything seem more positive."

"Excellent service. Although no expert in the issue the advocate consulted, kept me updated on progress and resolved the issue very quickly."



Circles Community

3D Community, Midlands

3D Community support provides a wide range of people who all have varying degrees of personal support needs with assistance that embraces a host of approaches, 3D Community Support offers one-to-one support and small group sessions. We organise an enormous choice of opportunities for people to build friendships, engage with a wider peer group and reach personal goals. Therapeutic, emotional, and practical support is available to help people grow in confidence and enrich their lives.

3060

The number of
direct support
hours delivered

Our team of facilitators are passionate about offering a level of service that adapts to the ever-changing requirements of the people who involve Circles Network as their chosen provider; via community-based sessions, home visits and using the Rugby Hub site, we bring people together in an inclusive and friendly way.

Funding is secured through commissioned services direct from local councils, some individuals choose to self-fund or use direct payments. Support is varied both in the overall period and the level of support provided and can span two hours per week through to 24 per day.

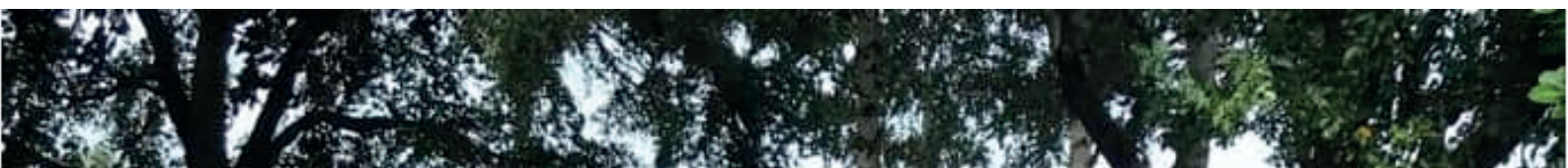
With COVID restrictions still very much in play during the initial months of 2021, the 3D Community support team faced a challenging time but adapted to meet the requirements of the people we support to ensure a safe, high-quality service was provided.

During the year there were several highlights to reflect on. To mention just a few, we would spotlight the frequent collaboration with our Peterborough hub as this enabled us to not only look at how another team works, but to harness cross-site skills to enable productive sessions during the pandemic. Online sessions brought together facilitators and children from both sites and were useful because they bypassed the main hurdles of COVID – i.e. no interaction in person, limited access to facilities – and created a real feel of community online and via a virtual platform. Dance and music sessions were particularly successful.

The 3D Community team has operated a much more integrated approach this year as we needed to ensure we communicate clearly throughout the COVID pandemic; health and safety protocols, safe working practices and cohesive team communications have been streamlined and improved during this challenging time.

No
Pause
in support.

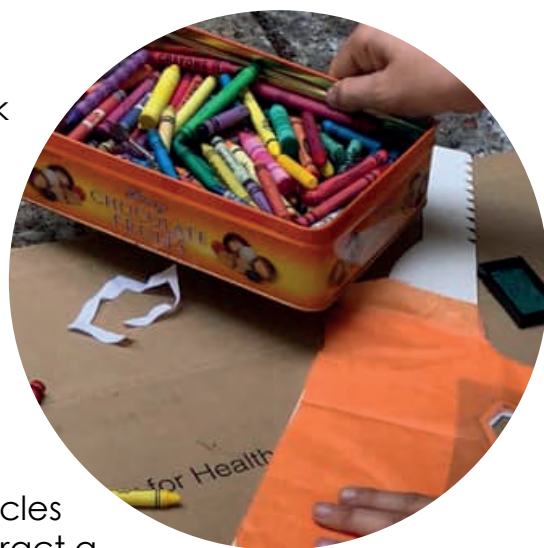
The requirement to be as COVID-safe as possible for much of 2020 and 2021 has meant we have engaged in outdoor sessions more frequently. Although these have sometimes been weather-dependant, it has meant that we have had to adapt and learn to deal with whatever circumstances occurred, appreciating the open spaces around the Rugby Hub for their beauty and leisure potential. For many of the children who attended, this proved to be a hugely positive experience because of the way it persuaded them into nature and encouraged a more active lifestyle and a new learning environment in which to observe things differently and find joy in natural settings.



With COVID restrictions still very much in play during the initial months of 2021, the 3D Community support team has faced a difficult time and has adapted to meet the requirements of people we support to ensure safe, high-quality service is consistently provided.

Recruitment and general staffing have presented major hurdles to overcome in the last 12 months; having to work around the ever-changing COVID landscape has meant that we implemented regular testing of team members and individuals and COVID safe measures were maintained. To ensure enough resources were available to facilitate sessions within, we were also forced to create additional space.

Recruiting via social media and COVID-safe 'open evenings' using video conferencing and face-to-face meetings has had positive results, and as the need for Circles Network's expansion developed, we've been able to attract a strong cohort of staff and volunteers. This is an ongoing task and as we gain traction, we plan to continue to attract more employees to fulfil roles.



Also, face-to-face support with the most vulnerable people we support was a major concern. Wherever possible, we made this happen but for those people needing to shield from society, this was not always an option. As with many other business sectors, the reliance on virtual connectivity became essential because of COVID safeguarding. Many people we support are not computer savvy, nor have access to devices, which means communication and support opportunities are compromised. We countered this by, where applicable, through working with carers to provide a virtual link where we could host sessions and maintain contact with the most vulnerable people to ensure they had a degree of familiarity and normality in this new unorthodox world. The ability to maintain contact was crucially important.

5

The age of
the youngest
person
supported

A major development this year emerged through local need, in that the pandemic was negatively affecting the mental health of people of all ages.

We were approached by social workers from the Warwickshire locality who asked if we could tailor our service accordingly and support individuals known to them. Each situation was completely different, and we have strengthened and built a growing team of facilitators and coaches to respond to people who needed close support. It seems highly likely that as the pandemic continues so the levels of fear, anxiety and loneliness will increase in our communities. Our aim is to be there to provide relevant and person-centred approaches that improve lives and reduce suffering.



Story of change:

We support Alice, a 72-year-old lady who lives alone and who, after a serious car accident, resulting in life-changing injuries including issues with her memory in addition to some mobility loss. She has a live-in carer to help with many tasks but has led a mostly independent life.

Feeling isolated was something that became a huge emotional and mentally challenging burden on Alice as she had previously led an active life. Without a close circle of friends or family, her social contact diminished, and this led to an increasing sense of isolation.

Circles Network became a hugely important part of her life, particularly the EYD group. Enrich Your Day is where older participants have social sessions and share experiences. Alice attended these sessions in addition to 1:1 support 3 days each week. There is a strong bond of friendship between the group members.

With the initial UK lockdown and subsequent reduction of contact, especially for older people and those with high-risk of compromised health, Alice's support had to be decreased because of her existing medical status. This enforced isolation quickly led to her feeling sad that the progress she'd made in her daily life had now disappeared. Her live-in carer helped but we recognised that Alice needed a much greater degree of contact to help her regain a sense of purpose. The team organised regular phone calls with different members of support staff.

With the help of her carer, this progressed into regular video calls to stay connected with other members of the EYD group. With easing of government rules, face-to-face support recommenced and this was a huge positive step forward for Alice, as it allowed safe, outdoor support to happen several times each week. However, due to the prolonged period of isolation, Alice's mobility has deteriorated dramatically, which was noticed by the Circles Network team. After several weeks of regular visits, which included activity sessions at home and visits to the local area in her wheelchair, Alice's condition was noticeably improving, and she remarked at how much better she felt having someone to see her and interact in activities she enjoyed. Encouragement from both the support team and her carer had led to some big improvements in Alice's mental health and through a 'memory folder' where she can log things of interest (crafts, painting etc), she now feels she has a purpose once more.

A very touching comment Alice made was;

"I would feel lost without Circles Network. It's so very true what they say; you really don't know what you have until it's gone, I always knew that Circles was important to me but after missing it for so long this year I now truly know that it is a part of me and I can't be without it."



Story of change:

For the last four years we have supported Beth, a young girl diagnosed with learning difficulties and ADHD. Beth loves spending time at the park, exploring unfamiliar places, music and media, dancing to the rhythm and giggling at her favourite movies. Throughout COVID Beth has continued to access our support within the community accompanied by two facilitators each session.

Until recently Beth has struggled with her mobility issues due to having joint laxity; this can hinder her ability to walk for extended periods of time without a wheelchair. However, with visits to various parks three times a week, Beth has been able to build strength and gain confidence to explore local parks and their play equipment and to walk further distances over time. When Circles Network first supported Beth, she was unable to access places without her chair; today we can visit a park without needing to bring a wheelchair with us.

Beth has been supported by several facilitators and has made a special friendship with her regular facilitator who has worked closely with her for the last three years. He has helped her to enjoy activities, expand her vocabulary and improve her physical mobility. Beth loves to chant and sing different words, tongue-twisters and rhymes with her facilitators and family.

During Beth's sessions, the team has expanded her interactions with others when out and about within the community. Recently Beth formed a bubble with another participant of

similar age (whom we also support), and they meet once a week. The two children play together in their own way, having learnt to interact, and discover each other's interests and shared joy. Beth can remember the other child's name, ask for high fives and push the child in her chair or on park equipment. Additionally, the other child has helped to encourage Beth to use the swings and slides, which she can find awkward due to balance and vestibular difficulties. With COVID restrictions easing, Beth has been able to access the hub for the first time since we started supporting her in recent years. She is a very friendly girl, and so interacts with other participants at the hub during visits; she also got to know other facilitators whom she had not met in person before. At home Beth has a small exercise trampoline, which she enjoys, and at the Rugby Hub has been able to climb up onto our large trampoline in the garden by herself. Beth also met our horses on the yard and danced and sang with new friends she attracted.

Recently Beth's family have invested in a decommissioned London taxi that has been modified to suit her needs; facilitators also have access to this vehicle. The taxi has a TV that can play Beth's favourite movies and television shows whilst on the move, sensory lighting, wheelchair access and multiple seats for the whole family or other carers are also great features.



An activity where we turned PPE used throughout COVID into fun masks



Circles Community

3D Community, Peterborough

3D Community Support Peterborough is a thriving service. It offers individualised support to people who require one to one support in their own home, the community or, based at or centrally located community hub.

16,152.45
The number of
direct support
hours delivered

We support children, young people and adults of all ages and all abilities. We strive to provide an excellent service that meets, and often exceeds the expectations of individuals and their families. Our team of facilitators are highly trained and very importantly adhere to and promote the values and ethos of the organisation. They demonstrate this by working in a truly person-centred way putting inclusion at the heart of their everyday practice.

The service is registered with the Care Quality Commission and the registered manager is based from the community hub. The service is rated as "Good" in all key lines of enquiry.

People access the service in a variety of ways, by self-funding or funding from the local authority or Clinical Commissioning Group. Introductions into the service are usually by recommendation based on our reputation and longevity.

The whole team have worked tirelessly during the pandemic. They adapted very quickly to unprecedented circumstances and developed systems and processes in order to ensure that this essential service was safely maintained for those who needed it.

During the summer months, and due to many people being unable to access education, the team supported more people and delivered more hours than they ever had before. The team creatively developed activities and opportunities for those they worked alongside so that they continued to achieve and develop new skills. The acquisition of additional premises supported delivery of the service enabling people to have more space and to stay safe.

37

The number
of employees

We had the highest influx of new introductions during the summer months, we had 21 people commence a service with 3D Community Support this year.

The obvious challenge of the year has been the Coronavirus Pandemic. Initially it caused uncertainty and concern for people and the business. The effects went in waves throughout the year. During the first quarter it was a period of getting used to the new normal and providing emergency services for those most in need.

As the restrictions lifted and staff returned from Furlough we were inundated with requests to provide support to people unfamiliar to the team. During the wintertime, many people became sick as a result of catching the virus and this impacted on delivery and morale. The leadership team have focused on the wellbeing of everyone, and this has supported the team to pull through and they are stronger than ever.

Keeping up with the demand for services has been challenging given the fluctuation of staff and recipients being sick or shielding. There has been a need to recruit staff throughout the year to keep up with demand, but we have managed to do this safely by careful selection and holding 1st interviews remotely before meeting face to face with potential employees. Our reputation as an employer as meant that we had had a steady flow of successful applicants and we have been able to manage their training and induction safely using new technology.

There is an ever-increasing need for individualised and person-centred services for people who are experiencing isolation and ill health. It has been recognised that there is a gap, locally, in services for children and young people who are attempting to transition back into the community after periods of time in hospital due to poor mental health.

21

The number
of new
introductions

We took the idea of 3D Community Support and went on to develop a new service, 4D Community Support. This is a similar model of delivery but requires team members to be specially trained in areas of mental illness such as eating disorders, OCD, self-harm, anxiety and others. We have piloted a new piece of work and have recruited specifically for a person to support/coach a child being discharged from long stay hospitalisation to successfully return to the family home and pick up on life. We are hoping to develop this service over the coming months and to employ and upskill more team members so that they can meet the diverse needs of this cohort of children and young people.



Story of change:

Alex is eight years old. He has struggled to remain in school due to his behaviour that has been difficult to manage in a traditional educational environment. Alex usually attends The Hub fortnightly on Saturdays, since March 2020 he has attended twice weekly. He has become confident, articulate and has formed many friendships with his peers. His sessions are varied. The facilitators working alongside him have developed strategies to engage and enlighten his adventurous and loving nature. Alex is far better equipped to return to school in September 2021. Our facilitators will guide and support his educators to enable Alex's growth and progress by sharing their experiences and learning.



Story of change:

Wan is 14 years old. He was introduced to Circles Network during this year. His social worker was very worried as he had some unique hobbies that were deemed dangerous, and his family were unable to supervise him. This conflict led to Wan becoming aggressive at home, refusing to eat and unsettled during the night-time. Wan has autism and ADHD. He has always struggled at school. He says it's because he likes "old things". Wan is a pure explorer and inventor. His favourite hobby is to dig in old tips around the city, finding whatever he can. He then researches his finds and creatively restores them in some way.

He is supported by the team in Peterborough Monday to Friday each afternoon. Team members support Wan to continue his adventures but help him to stay safe. He now has a pair of boots and a spade that he dons when he is in search of his finds. Team members are helping him find places to explore that are open to the public and don't pose a risk of infection (rather than old rubbish dumps).

Wan has made all sorts of creations whilst at Circles Network. The most incredible being an old-fashioned record played that he built from bits of Lego, a motor, a needle, paper and plastic. He tried one of the records on it and we were so amazed

that we could hear music. Wan's mum reports that he is far more settled now. She said that is because he knows he is going out and that he looks forward to his trips every day. He is eating well too and sleeping much better

56

The number
of people
supported





Circles Community

Youth Groups, Peterborough

Circles Network continue to run four Small Group Youth Clubs, which are funded by Peterborough City Council as part of their Community Short Breaks portfolio. Small Groups take place on Monday evenings and Saturday daytimes and are based at The Hub in Peterborough. Both Monday groups are offered two five-hour day support throughout the holidays, alongside children and young people referred to the Holiday Only club, which provides them with five hours support for one day per week during the holiday period only. We also continue to run two large groups, 'Fun United' is for 11–19 year-olds on Wednesday's evening, during the holidays they are offered two five-hour groups which are offered on different days to the small groups. 'Circles Stars' is for 7–19-year old's, this is a dance-based group which takes place on Saturday mornings between 10-12pm.

715

The number of direct support hours delivered

Three main highlights from the year include:

- 1 The success of Zoom United, at a time when this technology was very new, we created a group to support children, young people, and their families very effectively. Whilst Zoom was not a medium everyone was keen to use, it was accompanied by weekly 'Funday Monday' newsletters which incorporated a British Sign Language sign for everyone to learn, a nature activity such as making insect houses and a quiz or wordsearch activity. Families commented on how they enjoyed receiving these, undertaking the activities and felt the support of Circles Network though a very unsettling time.
- 2 Throughout the last year we have successfully continued support for those who needed it, both face-to-face and

remotely. We have had many new introductions who have successfully started attending the Youth Groups and working towards their individual outcomes.

- 3 We have an ever-increasing number of staff, who have worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic. Two of the Youth Group Facilitators have been promoted to Trainee Lead Facilitators and are undertaking their Level Three Diploma.

45

The number
of people
supported

The first and biggest challenge we have faced this year was the Lockdown due to the pandemic. It was important that the children, young people, and families who we support, continued to feel supported and be supported during this time. We undertook red, amber, green (RAG ratings for everyone we supported, to identify who needed our support and how. Some children and young people had additional support during the week as they were not attending school and either they and/or their family needed time away from the home. Zoom sessions were set up for those children and young people who attend Fun United, as well as weekly newsletters to everyone on our registers, with information and various activities for them to undertake at home. These were all opportunities for families to know that we were available for support, be this via telephone, emails, texts, or face to face.

Another challenge we have had has been with regards to the large Fun United group reforming their face-to-face group. In general, this has been successful, fun, and new friendships have been formed which have supported confidence building. Some of these friendships have been especially formed over Zoom, as fewer members were attending and were meeting three times a week and members became very close to each other, discussing their days, concerns and asking each other questions to get to know each other better. However, one of the young people 'Holly' was seen to be mocking a peer 'Leo.' Leo is very fond of Holly and enjoys her company and friendship.

14
The number
of new
introductions

Holly seemed unaware of this and thought it was funny that he would do anything she asked him to do. One day she asked him, whilst undertaking an activity within a sub group of the club, to 'stand up and turn around.' Leo did this and was met with Holly and some of her friends laughing at him, which encouraged her to ask him to do more. This was quickly noticed by staff, who asked Holly to come and have a talk with a member of staff in the office, in a friendly and non-confrontational way. These observations were discussed with Holly, and she was reminded that she had come a long way and made so much progress

from when she first started coming to Fun United. She was reminded how proud we are of her for this and for being a role model to some of the other members, who look up to her. Once the situation was explained to her, she became more aware of her actions and was given support to reflect on how these could make Leo feel. This prevented a potential 'bullying' situation, particularly because Holly did not understand that her behaviour would be portrayed by others as bullying. It has supported her to role model friendship in a positive way with her peers and promotes the friendly, kind, and inclusive youth group that we are so proud of.

Over the past year we have used Zoom as a means of supporting children and young people remotely during the pandemic. There were so many achievements and unplanned positive outcomes that came from using this technology and going forward we can use it in a variety of ways.

For example – as a means of transitioning new members into the groups, sometimes this can be a particularly stressful and worrying time for both the person themselves and their family. We can use zoom to show them around the youth group virtually and prepare them for a real visit.

We can also use Zoom to support children and young people who are unwell. Parents have commented on how the online sessions have given their child the stimulation they have needed whilst also providing parents with some respite, therefore reaching out to children who are unwell, perhaps due to ill health or hospital treatment, gives them some additional support with their familiar network of friends.

These were all opportunities for families to know that we were available for support, be this via telephone, emails, texts, or face to face.



Story of change:

Story of Change: 'Harvey' written by his mum and some input from Harvey

"When Harvey joined 'Circles' a few years ago we were not sure if he would enjoy it or want to stay....

Harvey has Global Developmental Delay (which affects his communication) ASD, Dyspraxia & Anxiety (he also suffers with migraines & eats non-edible objects). A home visit by Venetia was made & we were all put at ease by her complete enthusiasm, professionalism, and love for what she does. Initially Harvey joined a small group (which was only him & 3 Circles workers to begin with) this was perfect as it allowed Harvey to be the centre of attention & was based around his interests but most importantly allowed him to settle in. His confidence grew and he looked forward to going. He really bonded with the lovely staff and most enjoyed "playing board games with Justine and going to Ferry Meadows to play football with Louise." (Harvey's words)

The holiday club was a Godsend for us as a family. Harvey loves to be busy and go on adventures but to have that bit of respite allowed us to spend time with our other son, get jobs done and ensure we do not burn out.

Harvey joined the larger group 'Fun United' at first, he was a little unsure but he has now made friendships & enjoys "the baking activities, doing board games and playing pool." Justine was also there so that was a good transition for Harvey.... due to his delayed & limited communication he needs to be familiar with an adult to communicate his needs and wants confidently.

We have complete confidence in Caroline and her amazing team & the service they provide. It is so important as parents that your child/young person's individual needs are understood and to know Harvey's medical needs are met. Due to his migraines Harvey cannot be around screens too much but they have completely understood this & always produce engaging & fun things for him to do.

When Lockdown hit Harvey was completely isolated (he could not attend school due to his vulnerability to Covid) and we only left the house to exercise. Venetia engaged with us straight away & set up a virtual meeting (just short sessions so they were ok for Harvey to attend) we all looked forward to the inventive ideas she came up with & Harvey loved the various quizzes. "Venetia is funny & nice"! Most importantly he had others of his own age to talk to & we could have a moment of downtime knowing he was having fun. In this time, I really noticed a difference in Harvey he was talking more to me (I was with him all day and he did not have the pressure of school) and started to share more with Venetia and Justine & the others and really grew in confidence. This was evident the few times he hosted his own Disney & Star Wars quizzes (something he never would have done) Obviously the great modelling had rubbed off... In fact, I will say 'without a doubt 'Virtual Circles' was the best thing about Lockdown!'

When Harvey ventured back to the hub and 'Fun United' the relationships and confidence that had been gained remained and he loves his Wednesday nights playing various board games with the friends he has made.

Harvey is nearly 19 so it is possible that Harvey's (& our) journey with Circles could be ending. This would no doubt be a huge loss to Harvey & us as a family with Harvey only at college 4 days (and no family nearby) it is very much needed support. We want Harvey to build upon his new found confidence, self-esteem and to continue to make positive friendships.

Thankyou Circles!

The Armitage Family"



Story of change:

'Aamina' written by her mum:

"When Aamina first arrived at Circles she was not used to engaging with her peers and she lacked that ability to understand others and be understood in order to make friends. She was very anxious and it was something I had to talk her into rather than her going willingly. But we all, as a family, needed that bit of a break, and she needed to socialise with her peers and engage in different activities (as she very often refuses to at home). I have to admit that I did not expect Aamina to settle in so well. Although for the first few months she was still rather

anxious about going and would be very reluctant to share her experience once she returned home. However, bit by bit, things started to improve and now she simply does not want to miss a single session! She made friends and is always very chatty when I come to pick her up and cannot wait to tell me all the adventures that she's had! She is also learning how to ask for help from other adults and communicate her needs (which is something she really struggles with). As much as it is important for Aamina to spend some time away from me in order to develop different skills and not to be reliant on me for everything, it also made a huge impact on the rest of the family. Being a single parent and having a child who requires so much care means that I struggle to spend any quality time with my eldest child, who, as a teenager, wants to engage in different activities that Aamina is physically unable to participate in. So, the time that Aamina spends at Circles allows us to do just that. I am forever grateful to every single member of staff who continues to support my daughter and provide her with plenty of opportunities to engage with other children, make friends and participate in different activities 'independently' (and by that I mean without me being present)."





Circles Community

3D Community, South East

The 3D Community Support in the South East offers one to one and group support either in the community or in individual's homes. Many of these individuals are experiencing social isolation and are looking to expand their social circle and broaden their general life skills.

2070

The number of direct support hours delivered

The support provided is truly person centred, ensuring that all elements work for the individual. We connect with people in a setting and at a time which works for them, providing support on the same days each week with facilitators that they know. This allows for the foundations of trust and positive working relationships to be built, paving the way for amazing outcomes for both the individual and facilitator. Most of the individuals supported, are funded by the local authority, West Sussex. Support plans with chargeable hours are in place and this ranges from two hours per week to seventeen hours per week. There are also individuals who self-fund their support and they too have agreements in place for their support hours - ranging from two hours to six hours per week.

New Premises

Finding and moving into the new premises at Crawley Football Stadium was a real highlight this year. Having a base for people to come together and reconnect had been missing in the South East since the loss of The Hub in 2019. New friendships have been made in The Cabin over a cup of tea or a bowl of nutritious food prepared by people supported through 3D. These friendships have been encouraged outside of Circles Network and arrangements to meet up in the community have been facilitated. For those who do not have family or friends in their local area this has created a stable friendship network outside of their support hours.

Support

The support of Crawley Town Football club has been amazing. Generous donations such as PAT testing, fire extinguishers, minibuses and a promotional

video are being made. Filming in each location including Scotland is underway! This video will allow us to promote and show how our support really can enrich people's lives. This will in turn, encourage individuals and families to be supported by Circles Network, inspiring people to join the team or allowing organisations and local authorities to promote the unique work that Circles Network delivers.

A large orange circle containing the text "Promotional video created".

Promotional
video
created


Growth

The growth and expansion of the numbers of people reached and worked alongside in the South East has progressed recently with a staff team that has doubled since the start of 2020 the team have been able to provide efficient support for individuals with an elevated level of consistency. 24 people have been supported throughout the last fiscal year and although some people have only participated for a brief time 3D support has had a positive impact on all these individuals, paving the way for further growth and development within their lives.

Covid - 19

Covid has changed everything about our lives including the way we have been able to provide support for people. Navigating through the pandemic and keeping up to date with the ever-changing guidance has been difficult. Our focus has always been that of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the people supported through 3D and the team we employ. This has at times meant that support had to be paused, team members were placed onto furlough, and we had to change the way we work. Getting back to building community, sharing and togetherness had to be put aside, which was alien to our nature. Risk assessments, RAG rating and weekly leadership meetings allowed us to work safely and consistently throughout the organisation, providing safety measures, reassurance, and continuing to help people to shield whilst remaining connected by phone and video calls.

Supporting the people, we work alongside to understand and feel safe in an ever-changing world was another challenge. Providing them with tools such as easy reads, exemption cards for those who struggle to wear masks and allowing individuals the time to express their feelings and emotions was, and still is necessary. Sadly, we ceased to run the previously successful Saturday Circles group last year due to the financial implications of the group which had been exacerbated by Covid. Many of the team took redundancy and one staff member took on a new role in 3D.

A large orange rectangle containing the text "Although Covid is still very much part of our lives, and will be for the foreseeable future – here in the South East we are enjoying spending time together, sharing food and activities and planning memorable trips in a safe way.".

Although Covid is still very
much part of our lives, and
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future – here in the South
East we are enjoying
spending time together,
sharing food and activities
and planning memorable
trips in a safe way.

A large orange circle containing the number "24".

24

The number
of people
supported

Regrowth and stabilising

With the changes that have occurred in the Southeast over the last few years, regrowth, expansion and creating stability has been crucial. However, with COVID this was made harder and at times had to be put on the back burner. Relationships with social workers needed re-starting and many teams within the local authority were unaware of Circles Network and 3D Community Support. Much time has been spent on forming new relationships and promoting our service through attending meetings, sharing leaflets and documentation, getting our service noticed for the right reasons. Many professionals have struggled to understand that Circles Network is an inclusive organisation who do not have closed or strictly defined categories on the people they choose to work alongside. This is quite different from many other providers. Recommendations from Social workers and Extra Care officers have seen the number of introductions in the last year rapidly increase with 16 new people introduced,, even with three lockdowns barring the take up of services.

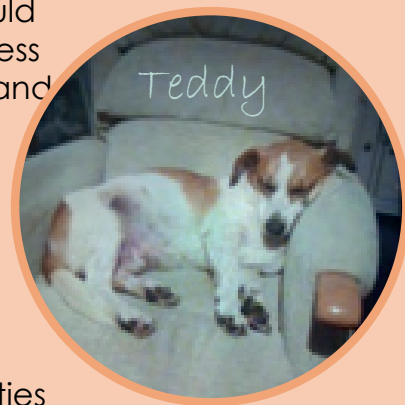
The past year has been successfully focused on regrowth and on stabilising the provision in South East. Plans are now in motion for developing future projects and new areas of work. The Supported Living Framework for adults in West Sussex has been applied for and we are waiting to learn the outcome. If successful, this is due to commence in early August 2021. A successful meeting with the Children and Young People's Commissioner for West Sussex happened recently. The Commissioner was keen for Circles Network to apply for the Short Breaks framework in the South East which we have agreed to do and in the long term replicate the 3D project that we deliver in Peterborough. In the short term she invited us to develop a Family Fun Day through the framework. Recently, there have been new introductions from Family Support at West Sussex who are keen for us to develop our services for families. It is an extremely exciting time to be reintroducing working alongside families. In September we are due to begin our Community Garden working alongside Crawley Community Church and other organisations within the local community. This will be a grass roots up project which will give people a task-based focus, a new challenge or just somewhere to spend time with people. It is hoped that individual and group sessions will be held at the garden, and this will become an expansion of The Cabin.



Story of change:

Circles Network began working alongside Ian in May 2020, he lives alone, and his siblings live far away. Due to Covid Ian has been unable to meet up with his friends and the anxieties he experiences daily have been exacerbated. Ian was given the all clear from bowel cancer in December 2020 but is struggling with dietary restrictions which has led to Ian gaining weight. He is keen to shed this and to feel better. Ian stopped using public transport as wearing a mask and the reminders of social distancing on buses made him feel extremely anxious. This restricted how much he accessed the community independently and met up with his friends. Ian had suggested to his Facilitator that the company of a dog may help him and so the Facilitator spent many months supporting Ian to navigate through Covid restrictions to help him in finding the right dog. Ian and his Facilitator finally found a shelter that had what looked like the ideal dog for him and Ian took Teddy home for a s trial week. Four weeks later Teddy and Ian are the perfect match and have settled into their new life together. Ian now has company he craved, someone to talk to and share his anxieties with when he is at home. Having to take Teddy for

walks means Ian is getting more exercise, going further than he would have on his own. This will have a positive impact not only on his fitness and weight but also on his mental wellbeing. Ian gets very anxious and seeks guidance and approval before making decisions. Now he has to make decisions for Teddy he is becoming more decisive. Ian is beginning to socialise more; he has introduced his friends to Teddy and they have joined Ian and Teddy on their walks. Ian is due to return to work soon and will need to use public transport again. He has planned with his Facilitator to do some travel training on the buses with Teddy who will help make him feel safe and help alleviate his anxieties



Story of change:

Maria's success story

Maria sadly lost her husband and child in a car accident on Christmas day 2019 in Pakistan. This left Maria with a head injury which impacts her own and her children's life daily. Grief, financial difficulties, chronic pain, plus navigating a new way of life without her husband and child was completely overwhelming her. Maria's life became insular, filled with worry and uncertainty for her and her children, who at 9 and 11 are classed as young carers.

Written by Maria:

"Since receiving support from Circles Network:



I can share my feelings with my Facilitator, and I feel Circles Network are part of my family. I am now able to allow myself to smile more, I was very emotional and tearful but now I smile more and share funny stories with my Facilitator.



When I first started having support, I did not go out but now I feel more confident, but I still do not go out on my own now. This is something I am working on with my Facilitator. I have gone for a walk with my children, had a tour of the football stadium and fed the ducks. I have gone to the park with my lodger and children. I also walked to the local supermarket with two other friends which is a very big step for me.



The children have never asked if they go could play at their friend's house but now, they do as they are more confident in being able to leave me.



For Eid I cooked a meal for my family and facilitators. I was confident in entertaining and making the meal and before I would not have felt that I could do this.



I am able to guide the children more with washing, checking if they have eaten and doing their homework.



My Facilitator has supported me to use the Brain in Hand tool on my phone, this helps me to remember appointment and calls. It has assisted me to prepare for an upcoming event that I was worried about and helped me to find solutions to the problems I was facing."



From the Facilitators' point of view:

- Maria has a circle of support that has allowed both her and her children to focus on grieving together. Before, there were so many issues to manage that they were unable to grieve.
- The children were not confident in leaving Maria alone as they would worry that she could not manage by herself. They now attend school more frequently.
- The children are spending more time outside and have even started swimming lessons.
- Maria smiles every day and wears much brighter colours, an indication of the shift in her mindset.
- Maria has systems in place that allow her to be more in control her of life and independence.
- Maria has systems that support her to manage her emotions and anxiety by allowing her to input solutions to the worries she is facing through the Brain in Hand app.
- Maria has attended appointments that she would have been unlikely to go to if on her own.
- Maria has been supported to get house repairs that were causing a risk to her and her children.
- Maria now has lodgers that provide support, companionship, and extra financial stability.
- Maria is becoming more confident with cooking, especially cultural dishes that remind her of her husband.
- Maria is slowly beginning to access the community again and complete her own food shop with support.

"From the experience I had with Circles Network, I found that the staff were all proactively supporting with my patients. They went above and beyond their duties by caring about the wellbeing of families, which positively affected my patients' health."

Jacky Yuan – Learning Disability Health Facilitation Nurse



Circles Equine

Taking The Reins, Midlands

Taking the Reins is an Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) project, based in Warwickshire, offering EFL sessions to disabled and disadvantaged children and young people from across the UK. Individuals accessing Taking the Reins are supported to strengthen their relationship building skills, improve self-determination and develop and strengthen emotional regulation. The project is supported by a grant from BBC Children in Need.



125

The number
of new
introductions

Despite the global pandemic and the associated restrictions, the Taking the Reins team were able to adapt the approach to meet the needs of children and young people with vulnerabilities. The children supported this year included disabled children with learning, sensory or physical impairments, those suffering bereavement and loss, and young people experiencing mental ill health and other traumatic experiences.

COVID-19 exaggerated existing challenges the children and their families faced. This coupled with inconsistency and withdrawal from even the most basic of support services, pushed many families into a crisis.

Through Taking the Reins, we continued to provide essential face to face support for most of the children and young people this year. We adapted group sizes where necessary and facilitated 1:1 support in an outdoor, COVID secure environment. We facilitated virtual group sessions where face to face wasn't possible, ensuring that we continued to deliver therapeutic equine interventions to those most in need. As we responded to emergency requests, we were able to support Aviana, a young 8-year-old girl who had started to run away from home due to her increasing anxiety. We also supported young people who were feeling suicidal as all sense of normality and connection stopped. The Taking the Reins project supported many families whose children live with profound and complex disabilities and were unable to attend school so were left to be cared for by family members at home, round the clock during the whole year.

"he looks forward to and is excited about attending this support every week and never stops talking about Mimi, the pony he works with".

During a time of uncertainty, fear and social isolation we provided a safe and peaceful environment for children to socially connect and build relationships as restrictions allowed. As connection and friendship have never been so important, participants have been able to keep in touch, strengthen existing friendships and build new relationships with humans and horses. We have witnessed the support network for each child flourish as a natural consequence of this.

Working alongside the horses has provided a sense of belonging and acceptance. Whilst participants have accessed the project virtually or face to face, learning to trust without fear of judgement has led to many magical and life changing moments.

We have celebrated the resilience and determination each participant has demonstrated this year. So many children were left with significant levels of anxiety, driven by lack of routine, loss of loved ones or feeling unsafe in a world which, for many, was already filled with uncertainty. We have observed children overcoming barriers as they have successfully worked with a pony, without any form of halter or restraint. We have cheered for ponies as they have jumped over poles and encouraged them to reach for the stars with help and support from their human handlers. Children have developed their emotional literacy as they have expanded their vocabulary to describe emotions such as anxiety and anger. We have supported participants to observe what the horses were communicating and introduced the use of colour to support them to describe these.

7

The number
of employees

Taking the Reins has focussed on introducing healthy coping strategies which have been practiced alongside the horses. These have included the use of mindfulness and breath work. Young people who took these strategies forward have been able to communicate their worries and fears more positively, reduce the number of episodes where they have caused harm to themselves or others whilst they experienced high levels of anxiety, resulting in less panic attacks and much reduced occurrences of self-harm.

The pandemic and the necessary restrictions put in place in order to reduce the spread of coronavirus presented a great challenge to the project, however, as an organisation, we responded swiftly and creatively to overcome this through the implementation of alternative and virtual support. For example, the delivery of pony focused video calls and sending photos and relaying stories of the individual's preferred ponies.

Unfortunately, we faced the additional challenge of team members having been required to isolate. This has included individuals who were contacted by test and trace or those who contracted COVID-19 themselves. All team members have made a full recovery and we worked closely with Public Health and the Health and Safety Department to review our already robust procedures. As a result of this we added extra measures to control the risk of transmission, ensuring that we remained Covid secure throughout the continually changing situation.

Whilst working towards the roadmap to recovery from this awful pandemic, we planned to facilitate many more group sessions for children and young people. Much of the face to face work we have facilitated this year has been on an individual basis. Whilst this type of support has had benefits, especially whilst many children and young people were experiencing a crisis, we wish to provide many more opportunities for connections with other children so that friendships can flourish between peers.

We endeavour to facilitate person centred support, connecting communities and creating relationships which will continue to develop and strengthen past the point when Taking the Reins support ceases.



762
The number
of direct
support hours
delivered

6
The number
of volunteers

125
The number
of people
supported



Story of change:

Jamie and his sister Lucy were introduced to Taking the Reins following a traumatic event which Jamie had been exposed to. This event negatively affected Jamie's behaviour knocked his confidence and resulted in him experiencing terrifying nightmares. The effects of this trauma also rippled outwards and significantly affected Jamie's family putting additional pressure on daily life in a situation that was already fearful due to the fear and anxiety the nation was experiencing because of COVID-19. As both children were still at the very beginning of their school life, their family and the professionals working alongside them were concerned about the turmoil Jamie was experiencing as a result of this.

Both children had no previous experience of working around ponies and on their first session were nervous and did not know what to expect. Because the traumatic event had changed Jamie's view of the world and the people around him, he was unsure of meeting a new adult, let alone a four-legged animal which was much bigger than him! To begin with both children would lower their heads and speak very quietly between each other. In only their first session both siblings felt an immediate connection with one of the Shetland ponies. The children instantly lifted their heads and held them high as they quickly noticed the little pony walking directly over to them from the hedge line at the back of the paddock. The children enjoyed spending time stroking their newfound friend, who stood peacefully, offering a sense of safety and security. As the siblings returned for their sessions each week, they started to realise it was alright to trust again and that relationships can be safe and fun. As both siblings worked together to lead their chosen pony over a course of obstacles or as part of some mindfulness work, their confidence grew from week to week, resulting in them stopping and changing direction with their pony using energy and intention only. As both children started to feel empowered and realised the control they could have over their own environment, the family reported a significant change in the children at home. Both children were happier, visibly more relaxed and most importantly smiling and laughing once again. Jamie spoke about his nightmares and about his friendships at school helping him to process what he had experienced without any pressure. Jamie began to open up about his feelings at home and was able to articulate his worries and concerns. As a result of Taking the Reins Jamie, Lucy and their family moved forward with renewed hope and positivity for the future.



Story of change:

Navaeh and Ashton's parents contacted us at the end of January following a month of national lock down and described feeling at 'breaking point'. Navaeh who is eight and Ashton, 16 are siblings and both have Autism. Despite Ashton being 16, he requires constant supervision due to his developmental age being much less mature and his significant vulnerabilities within the community. Prior to the pandemic the family had contacted the local authority as they were desperate for support.

Neither child was attending school due to lockdown and their mother explained that she was exhausted with trying to home school and take care of them. Ashton benefits from routine and any changes must be communicated in advance. Because of the pandemic, unfortunately this was not possible and sudden changes to routines and not knowing when it would end had spiked his anxiety levels. Navaeh was struggling with anxiety and was not sleeping for more than two hours at a time and was experiencing regular panic attacks. Navaeh and Ashton's parents were noticing their children's mental well-being escalate to crisis point and were utterly helpless as they felt unsupported, despite continuously asking for help. Ashton had started to spend much of his day pacing the hallway, having regular meltdowns, not leaving the house, and self-harming.

Although nobody in the household had any notifiable health needs, understandably they were also feeling anxious about the sudden rise in Covid cases. It was clear to us that this family was in critical need and that virtual support (as advised by the local authority) would not be accessible for Ashton and Naveah. When we offered face to face support, outdoors, in a COVID-19 secure setting the children's mother sobbed with relief. She explained that she was so grateful to have secured some much-needed support for her children and that even a small amount of respite for her and her husband once a week would be incredibly beneficial. The children's parents were caring for Navaeh and Ashton around the clock due to their interrupted sleeping habits and extreme anxiety. During the daytime both parents were doing all that they could to support Ashton whose violent outbursts were negatively impacting on Naveah. In addition, the siblings' relationship was breaking down in other areas. Navaeh and Ashton's mother could instantly see the children relax around the ponies, something which she explained she had not seen for at least a year. The children took immense pleasure in getting to know the ponies, brushing them and working together to support a pony to achieve a challenge. The siblings smiled, giggled, and laughed as they used chalk to decorate the ponies and learnt how to recognise when their anxiety was rising and how to manage this through controlling their breathing. This led to a reduction in Navaeh's panic attacks and improved sleeping, Ashton was no longer pacing as much, and the family were able to leave the house to go for walks together. Both Ashton and Navaeh's parents are thankful for regular respite each week and the positive impact Taking the Reins has had on all the family.

"we can't believe she has left the house"



Circles Equine

Taking The Lead, Midlands

Taking the Lead is an Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) project, based in Warwickshire, offering EFL sessions to disabled and disadvantaged children, young people and adults from across the UK. The project offers sessions on an individual or group basis at a subsidised rate during each week, with additional activity days during school holidays and runs a children's club every Saturday.



2,287
The number
of hours
available

Taking the Lead has been one of the only services in Warwickshire which continued to provide face to face support to individuals who were some of the most in need during national lockdown. All of the individuals we supported had been affected by the global pandemic. So many of the participants would have suffered greatly without the support from Taking the Lead. We have supported families in crisis situations as their children have been admitted to hospital on multiple occasions due to mental ill health as a result of severe escalation in behaviour and suicide attempts.

Not only has the support taken place at our Rugby hub alongside the ponies but we also

provided support to a young person within the hospital setting as we worked closely with professionals to provide a family centred package of support to avoid their child being placed in an emergency residential placement. We facilitated life changing support to a young person who returned home full time during the first national lockdown, following three years in a residential setting due to her complex needs. During this time Taking the Lead worked very closely with the young person as they worked alongside the horses to support her to identify positive ways to manage her sensory and emotional needs. The calming effects of the horses gave this young person the first full week of not feeling incredible anxiety for many years. The results of this support included a huge reduction in significant incidents she would typically experience, highlighting the fact that this individual no longer requires residential support.

Through a period of incredible uncertainty, we have ensured that all the participants we supported remain socially connected. Whenever it was possible we facilitated small group sessions as part of our Saturday and holiday clubs. Carefully designed activities gave all participants the chance to learn new horse care skills, try something new, build confidence and learn how to be present in the moment. These clubs have provided consistency in a COVID secure setting, outdoors in nature, with plenty of room for social distancing. This service has been so important for all who attended, as the increase of families contacting us with concerns surrounding their child's mental health as the effects of isolation from their peers and every day had taken its toll. We adapted the group size and who we were able to provide face to face support to, in line with government guidance whilst facilitating virtual sessions for those who were shielding or unable to attend due to restrictions. We have witnessed friendships strengthen and flourish between participants which we hope will last for many years to come.

52

The number
of people
supported

We have supported school aged children and young people through the mental health intervention for school children framework. As the waiting lists for child mental health services continue to rise, so it has been essential for us to offer intense early interventions through Taking the Lead. We have supported children as young as 8 who have experienced suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviours. We've worked closely with children who have experienced trauma as a result of witnessing domestic violence and with those who have very low self-esteem. Working with the horses empowered one young person so much that she went from being selective mute to finding her voice. The skilled facilitator team have supported each participant to build a relationship with their ponies and to

understand the emotions the ponies were mirroring to them. Taking an embodied approach, we have facilitated sessions around safe places, as participants have engaged in guided meditations with their chosen horse. All families have shared positive feedback about the service with some participants moving onto a group or continuing with 1:1 sessions to support their emotional wellbeing.



The project inevitably felt the impact of Covid-19 which has hindered our reach with regards to the number of people we have supported. As a result of a rise in cases locally we have managed team members self-isolating and the ensuing re arranging of support with flexibility and good grace. We increased our online and social media presence through regular and seasonal postings, which were well received, raising the profile of the organisation and the Equine projects.

Face to face support was also negatively affected by the pandemic, leading to the creation and provision of online resources and tailored video group sessions, including virtual quizzes and educational video calls for established group sessions.

As we hope that COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease we plan to engage with many more local schools. We have already started to build these relationships and wish to develop and strengthen this. We are aware there is a fast growing need for mental health support in schools which has only been impacted further due to the global pandemic. Taking the Lead plans to support schools to respond to this need through an alternative way of working alongside horses.

Horses can offer: opportunities for deep relaxation, ways to raise self awareness particular around fight, flight, freeze responses, support with emotional regulation and build communication skills and self worth. We also plan to facilitate opportunities for schools to enrich their duty to facilitate relationship education. Children and young people can greatly benefit from working alongside horses to develop relationship building skills, whilst they learn to recognise the signs of healthy and positive relationships. The equine herd also demonstrates so naturally well the importance for setting healthy emotional and physical boundaries and we have already seen many great benefits for children who have already accessed the project.



7

The number
of employees

34

The number
of new
introductions

6

The number
of
volunteers



Story of change:

Porche has a diagnosis of Global Development Delay, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Deficit in Attention and Motor Perception, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. Porche often appears as humorous and energetic. Due to the challenges she faces life has not been easy, Porche has experienced great adversity in her very early years which has impacted on her development and how she sees and responds to the world around her. Whilst Porche has a stable, loving family she finds it very difficult to regulate her emotional states and this can result in her behaviour escalating which can include violent meltdowns directed at herself and others. Three years ago the decision was made that Porche should move into a residential school setting due to her behaviours associated with the challenges she faces everyday. The world is often a very overwhelming place for Porche and even with her loved ones close by, it was very difficult to manage. Following three years at a residential setting Porche and her family were not prepared to not be able to see each other during the first national lockdown so Porche moved back home. Taking the Lead facilitated regular essential support to Porche throughout the week.

As she had such regular and close contact to the equine herd she instantly felt relaxed, her body language changed, her facial expression was often a smile and her sleep patterns greatly improved. As one week turned into two and continued to progress throughout lockdown Porche was experiencing very little incidents where she was struggling to regulate. With the support of her facilitator team and working alongside the horses, Porche started to use newfound ways of coping with her emotions and sensory needs. Porche went from experiencing multiple significant incidents which often resulted in hospital admissions or treatment to suddenly experiencing none, due to the significant reduction in her anxiety. The horses literally co-regulated with Porche, she had instant access to the herd to give hugs and strokes to, with no fear of judgement. Porche began to develop her independence which included her understanding of the importance of nutritious and healthy food, meal preparation and cooking. Porche enjoyed taking responsibility of the morning feeding routine for the ponies and quickly picked this up and was able to demonstrate her knowledge and confidence in this. The support Porche has accessed through Taking the lead has confirmed the fact that she no longer needs to rely on residential care. Porche and her family have plans of her returning home and attending college next academic year. Porche is dreaming and planning for the future with hope and aspiration.



Story of change:

Carl is 17 and lives in local authority funded residential care. Carl is a very active young person who enjoys the outdoors and having contact with animals. Unfortunately, due to Carl's individual needs, professionals have found it challenging to secure a suitable educational establishment for him. Carl was quite deflated; this had negatively impacted his self-worth and he was feeling isolated. Whilst Carl requires a little extra support due to his diagnosis of ADHD he is a thoughtful, chatty and polite young person. The negative impact his educational circumstances were having started to be reflected in his behaviour at home. There had been a rise of incidents whereby Carl had escalated physically towards his care team. Carl was also

becoming oppositional with his peers within the home and there were concerns that these challenges would be reflected during contact with his biological parents which could lead to further relationship breakdown. Carl's team of professionals were concerned for his wellbeing and how this may impact on his placement within the home. During Carl's first visit to Taking the Lead he instantly felt at ease in the setting. Carl enjoyed the access to lots of outdoor space, contact with Hudson the dog, Maia the cat and the equine herd, in particular Sol. Carl instantly engaged well within the session, posing many questions to his facilitator, keen to explore and learn more. As the weeks went on Carl developed a special relationship with Sol. Carl's verbal communication started to slow down and he began to be present and grounded in the moment. Carl regularly spends time stroking Sol, and Sol can be witnessed falling asleep upon Carl's shoulder. Carl has begun to feel a true connection to himself and the environment around him. He has started to develop valuable social skills. Professionals have fed back that Carl's Taking the Lead sessions are the highlight of his week. Carl has greatly benefited from building a relationship with a trusted adult, outside of his home setting. There has been a clear reduction in incidents in addition to Carl developing his level of empathy for others. Taking the Lead has avoided a placement breakdown for Carl which would have been very trauma inducing at a time that Carl's sense of self was already negatively impacted. Carl continues to access weekly Taking the Lead sessions and has also secured a placement at college. We look forward to continuing our support for Carl as he develops empathy and coping strategies to regulate and manage his own emotions and behaviour and prepares for adulthood.





Circles Academy

Alternative Education Provision, Midlands

Circles Academy offers a practical alternative educational provision based in Warwickshire. Through a therapeutic approach the provision offers a range of vocational courses, specialising in rural education and animal care for children and young adults who experience challenges within the classroom environment. All courses are adaptable and achievable, providing individuals with the opportunity for re-engagement and transition back into mainstream education where appropriate and possible.

Circles Academy remained open during the global pandemic following government guidance as an alternative provision. We continued to support young people with vulnerabilities to access education and therapeutic support during times of uncertainty. We became the one consistent centre of safety and support for all the students accessing our alternative provision. For two young people who were already experiencing significant amounts of changes and uncertainty due to multiple placement moves, as they were accommodated through local authority care, we were described as their lifeline.

1,423.5
The number
of hours
available

We supported one young person to successfully re-integrate into mainstream education following a period of exclusion. Despite the unexpected changes with regards to his home placement, this young person was able to benefit from working alongside the horses to strengthen his resilience. Enough to cope with difficult changes. It allowed a successful transition back into school. Working with the horses supported this young person to develop a better sense of himself and understand his emotional triggers, whilst identifying strategies to support these and develop his social skills. Equipped with these tools and a personal profile that travelled with him, we were able to facilitate a therapeutic ending at Circles Network as he transitioned into mainstream school.

We have successfully developed working relationships with several new schools across Warwickshire this year. As we continued to work closely with the education team within the local authority, we also worked alongside schools who have directly commissioned us to provide alternative education to students who were struggling in school full time. The reasons behind these challenges varied from children who were at risk of permanent exclusion, individuals experiencing ill health, including mental ill health, and those who were transitioning to a residential setting due to challenging and complex experiences. Despite the challenges these students faced, with careful planning, target setting and person-centred approaches all the individuals achieved and, in some cases, exceeded their targets whilst accessing provision at Circles Network. We successfully supporting individuals to belong, to find their passion, aspire to achieve and believe that they can.

As children and team members were required to isolate and periodically continue to work during scary and uncertain times, this did provide challenges with regards to working environments and delivery. The team worked hard to adapt working environments and learning spaces to ensure they were as COVID secure as possible. We adapted the delivery of education, when necessary, which included facilitating virtual lessons via a live video link outside on the yard, dropped education and care packages to people's front doors and wore full PPE, as agreed by the local authority to deliver education and support within the home if the child was required to isolate. We worked through concerns for the wellbeing of the young person and his family, always ensuring their preferences and views were heard and met where we could.



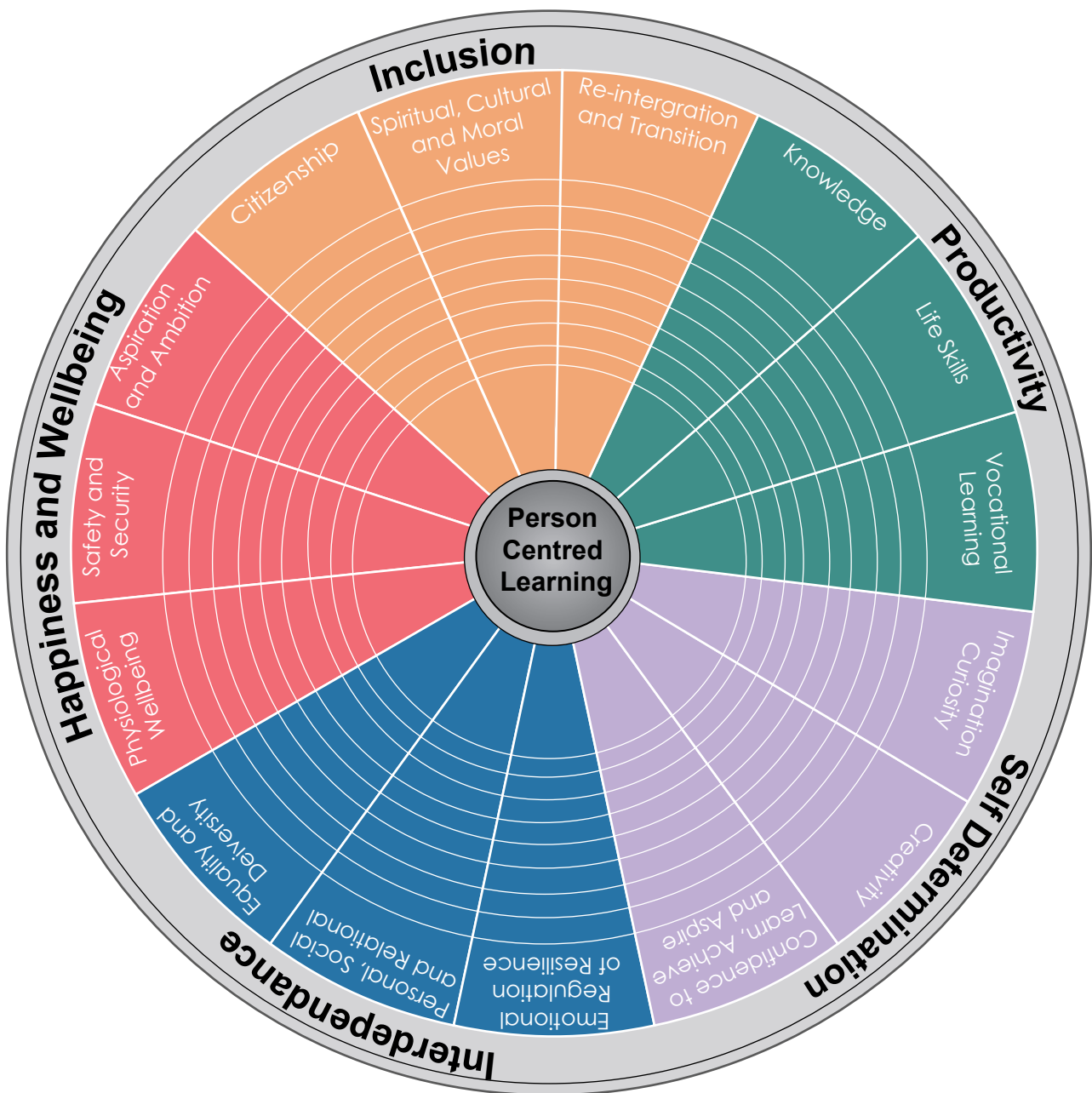
34
The number
of new
introductions

Whilst we have continued to facilitate therapeutic support and curriculum enrichment, we have regularly been contacted with requests for young people who are looking for long term provision. As we are not currently a registered independent school, we are unable to respond to these requests, coming from children and young people who are often very much in need.

We plan to widen our reach, engaging many more schools within the Warwickshire area. As we aim to support a larger number of children and young people, including post 16 learners we plan endeavour to develop and extend the educational packages we offer. We intend these packages to include national accredited qualifications to ensure that we enhance our broad and balanced curriculum, meeting the educational needs of everyone and ensuring that the young people have every opportunity to continue to flourish as they move into further education, employment, or training. We will continue to embed our person-centred ethos and values, building from our existing curriculum wheel to success.

The Curriculum to Success

Circles Academy's curriculum, based on the values of inclusion with a broad and balanced, person centred approach.





Story of change:

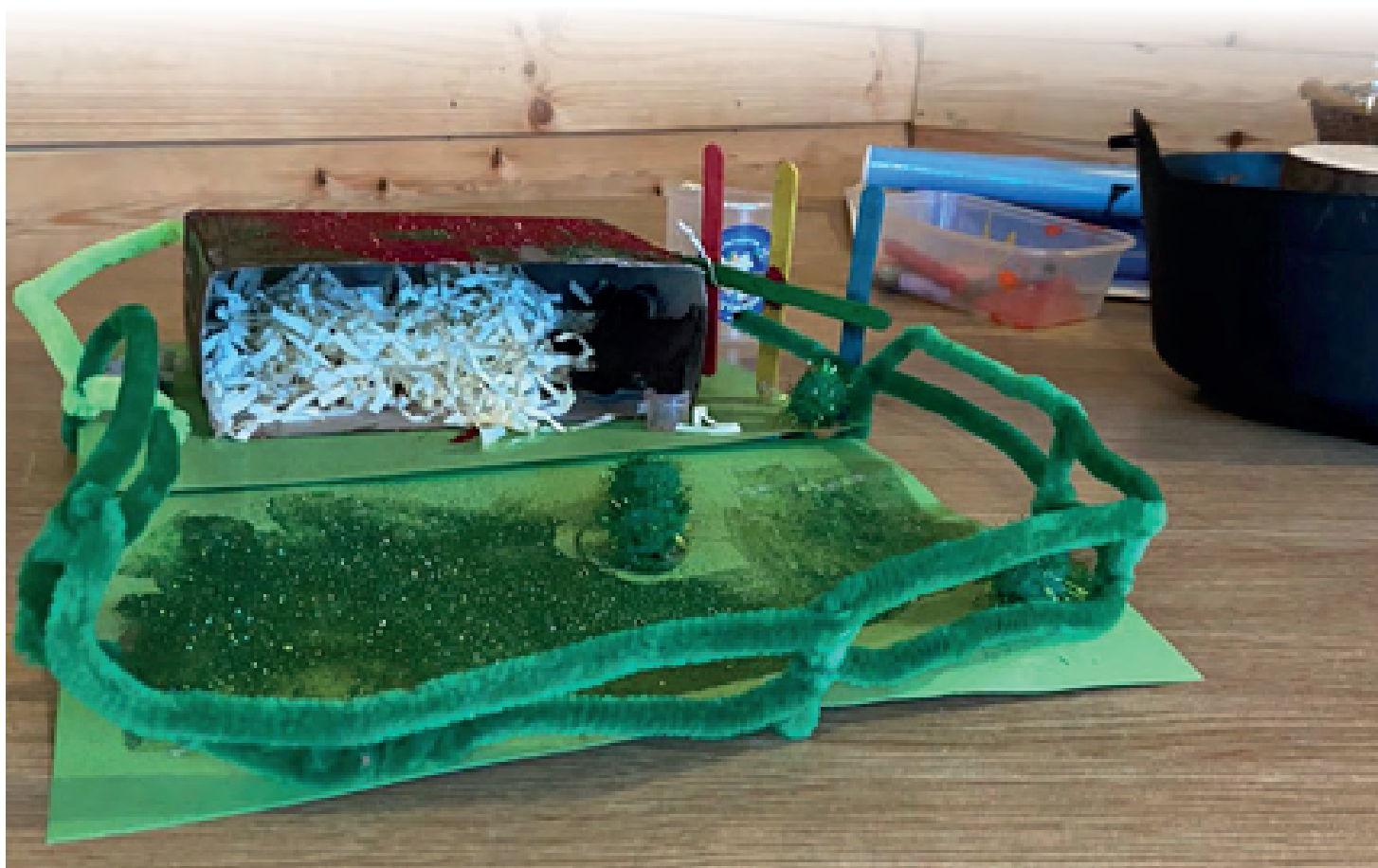
Circles Academy supported a young person of secondary school age. This young person had experienced an uncertain year and had experienced lots of changes in their personal circumstances; in addition, to the turbulence caused by COVID-19. The individual had only managed seven short weeks of mainstream schooling in year 7 before being at risk of permanent exclusion. Following a number of placement breakdowns and moves across the county within local authority care, this understandably impacted on their capacity to regulate and was reflected in their behaviour at school and their interactions with peers. It was clear that this individual was feeling a huge amount of shame and was cautious of trusting others. During their first visit to Circles Academy this individual was supported by their social worker and new foster parent. The young person was quiet and appeared unsure of walking into the field to meet the horses. Despite their concerns about the mud they made the decision to enter and walked over to the biggest horse Sol, and there was an instant connection. This young person learnt about Sol's background and changes in his home before coming to live at Circles Network. As the weeks went on the young person built positive relationships with the facilitator team and started to share their feelings and communicate their worries. As they worked with Sol to support him to overcome his own worries the young person's confidence blossomed. Through regular partnership working with all authorities involved the Circles Academy team were able to advocate on behalf of the young person and support them through another placement breakdown before moving into residential care. Throughout this period, we provided therapeutic support and educational opportunities to develop their knowledge of horse care. As the young person prepared to start a new school, we were able to incorporate transition planning tools into weekly sessions to capture their wishes and feelings. Through the facilitation of equine facilitated learning the young person began to explore their triggers and develop coping strategies which could be used within a school setting. As a result of this support the young person successfully transitioned into a new mainstream school with much greater confidence for learning and a belief in themselves.



Story of change:

Maddison was halfway through her secondary school education. She attended a local mainstream school and was introduced to Circles Academy for two days a week following a successful visit as she was at risk of permanent exclusion. Although Maddison initially appeared hesitant and unsure, we instantly received feedback from her school that she loved it. Maddison had become a looked after child, although she had not been accommodated by local authority care for long, she had experienced multiple placement moves in a very short space of time. Maddison had learnt to keep people at arm's length to protect herself and often did this through explosive anger and defensive behaviours. Not all of the adults in Maddison's life had been trustworthy, nor kept her safe. As a result of this Maddison didn't always view the world around her as a safe, secure place to be. She had also experienced losses and relationship breakdowns. Despite all of this, Maddison felt an

instant connection to two of the equine herd; George and Sol. Maddison displayed a huge amount of care and thoughtfulness for their feelings and was incredibly in tune with their emotions. Maddison was quick to build her confidence around the horses and was able to relate to both the fight and flight responses that George and Sol often reverted to when they sensed danger. Maddison displayed a high level of emotional intellect as she openly shared her own experiences and the reasons behind this. Although Maddison thoroughly enjoyed her time with Sol and displayed an increase in her self-worth as she learnt quickly how to groom and handle him, she said she found relationships worrying. Relationships come to an end in Maddison's world, and she openly shared her resistance to working directly with the horses as she was concerned about this. Maddison worked with her educators to identify her preferred learning style, this helped her to develop an understanding around her classroom experiences. She expressed an interest in making money when she was older and having her own business. Maddison wished to link her love of beauty and animals together. She worked with her educators to explore business opportunities and careers within the equine industry. Maddison remained focussed as she researched, asked questions, answered questions and was clear around her likes and dislikes in this subject. Maddison planned a business idea, and with support she thought through every small detail from uniforms, to staff and to equipment. Maddison identified her estimated income and worked her out all her out goings. Finally, she created a business plan. Maddison appeared truly inspired and motivated by this work and started to identify the route to achieve these dreams. Although this lesson was not originally planned, this naturally arose from Maddison's curiosity. This benefited Maddison's determination and aspirations and linked into several areas of the curriculum. It is a great example of the



Maddison's 'perfect equine environment' as she used her creative spark to think about safe boundaries, space, shelter, ventilation and access to food and water, to name a few.

Independent Auditor's Report

to the Trustees of Circles Network

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Circles Network for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activity, Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the period then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charity's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given the Trustees' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing the report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or

- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemption in preparing the Trustees' Report and from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 3, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditors under Section 44 (1)(C) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and under the Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with regulations made under those Acts

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



Matthew Upex
Senior Statutory Auditor
For and on behalf of Moore Thompson

27 Market Place
Market Deeping
Peterborough
PE6 8EA

Dated: 09.02.2022

Financial Report

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31st March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds 2021 £	2021 Total £	2020 Total £
Incoming Resources					
Donations and Legacies		1,749	-	1,749	11,062
Investment Income		120	-	120	288
Income from Charitable Activities		1,156,819	150,992	1,307,811	1,247,079
Other Income		527,267	-	527,267	444,547
Total Income	2	1,685,955	150,992	1,836,947	1,702,976
Expenditure					
Charitable Activities	3	1,440,509	149,115	1,649,919	1,668,921
Cost of Raising Funds	3	14,592	-	14,592	14,149
Total Expenditure	3	1,515,396	149,115	1,664,511	1,683,070
Net Income for the Year		170,559	1,877	172,436	19,906
Unrealised Gain / (Loss) on Investment Assets		28,472	-	28,472	(7,304)
Exceptional Items	18	(14,520)	-	(14,520)	-
Net Movement In Funds		184,511	1,877	186,388	12,602
Total Funds Brought Forward		602,616	4,231	606,847	594,245
Total Funds Carried Forward		787,127	6,108	793,235	606,847

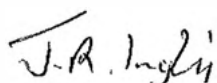
The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities. Detailed comparative data for 2020 is included in Note 19.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31st March 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2020 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible fixed assets	7	37,230	57,719
		<u>37,230</u>	<u>57,719</u>
Current Assets			
Debtors and prepayments	8	223,879	186,175
Investments	9	260,202	232,938
Cash at bank and in hand	10	482,084	241,093
		<u>966,165</u>	<u>660,206</u>
Creditors:			
Amounts falling due within one year	11	210,160	111,078
Net Current Assets		756,005	549,128
Net assets		<u>793,235</u>	<u>606,847</u>
Unrestricted Funds			
General Funds	14	696,502	461,160
Designated Funds	14	90,625	141,456
Restricted Funds	14	6,108	4,231
		<u>793,235</u>	<u>606,847</u>

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provision of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The notes on pages 84 to 94 form part of these accounts,

Approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 12th November 2021 and signed on their behalf by:



Jim Inglis
Chairperson

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st March 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Cash flow from operating activities:			
Net cash generated by operating activities		248,793	(23,065)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Purchase of property, plant & equipment		<u>(7,922)</u>	<u>(36,827)</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		(7,922)	(36,827)
Cash flows from financial activities:			
Repayments of borrowing		-	-
Cash inflows from new borrowing		-	-
Bank interest received		<u>120</u>	<u>288</u>
Net cash generated by financial activities		<u>120</u>	<u>288</u>
Increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		240,991	(59,604)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		<u>241,093</u>	<u>300,697</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		<u><u>482,084</u></u>	<u><u>241,093</u></u>

A Reconciliation of Net Movement in Funds to Net Cash Flow from Operating Activities

	2021 £	2020 £
Net Movement of funds	186,388	12,602
Adjustments:		
Depreciation Charge	28,409	27,140
Bank Interest Received	(120)	(288)
Decrease/(Increase) in Debtors	(37,704)	(44,130)
Increase/(Decrease) in Creditors	99,083	(28,132)
Unrealised Surplus on Investments	(28,472)	7,243
Fixed Asset Disposal	-	2,500
Fund Adjustments	1,209	-
	<u><u>248,793</u></u>	<u><u>(23,065)</u></u>

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2021

1. Accounting Policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the charity's financial statements.

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Companies Act 2006. Circles Network meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historic cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

Going Concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the trustees believe that no material uncertainties exist. The trustees have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure is sufficient with the level of reserves for the charity to be able to continue as a going concern.

Critical Accounting Judgements and Key Sources of Estimation Uncertainty

In the application of the accounting policies, Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying value of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates. The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised, if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affected current and future periods.

The areas where these judgements and estimates have been made include the following for the charity:

Depreciation and residual values

The Trustees have reviewed the asset lives and associated residual values of all tangible fixed asset classes, and have concluded that the asset lives and residual values are appropriate.

Income recognition

All income from grants, donations and other sources is included in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which it is receivable. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included.

Expenditure recognition

Expenditure is recognised in the year in which they are incurred. Expenditure includes any attributable Value Added Tax which cannot be recovered.

Certain expenditure is directly attributable to specific activities and has been included in those cost categories. Certain other costs, which are attributable to more than one activity, are apportioned across cost categories on the basis of an estimate of the proportion of time spent by staff on those activities.

Fixed Assets

Fixed assets costing more than £750 have been capitalised and included in the statement of financial position and are stated at cost less depreciation.

Depreciation

Depreciation is charged on a straight line basis over the expected useful economic lives of the assets as follows:

Office equipment	5 years
Furniture & fittings	3 years
Motor vehicles	4 years

The useful economic lives of the assets are reviewed annually.

Operating Leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

Investments

Investments are held as current assets and are included in the balance sheet at market prices ruling at the balance sheet date. Any increase or decrease in the value of investments is included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Pensions

For the vast majority of employees, the charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable for the year are included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Restricted and Designated Funds

General Funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for any other purpose. Designated Funds are general funds which have been set aside for a specific purpose. Restricted Funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes.

Financial Instruments

Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at amortised cost with the exception of investments, cash at bank and in hand, and short term deposits which are held at fair value. Financial assets held amortised cost comprise trade and other debtors. A specific provision is made for debts for which recoverability is in doubt. Cash at bank and in hand is defined as all cash held instant access bank accounts and used as working capital. Financial liabilities held at amortised cost comprise all creditors except social security and other taxes, accruals and provisions.

2. Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2021	Restricted Funds 2021	Total 2021	Total 2020
Training and consultancy	-	-	-	-
Advocacy	986,962	106,958	1,093,920	1,056,683
Circles of Support	-	-	-	4,348
Community Support	420,761	-	420,761	391,594
Support for children and families Central services	183,698	44,034	227,732	231,914
	34,239	-	34,239	18,437
CJRS grant income	60,295	-	60,295	-
	1,685,955	150,992	1,836,947	1,702,976

3. Resources Expended

	Salary Costs 2021 £	Depreciation 2021 £	Other 2021 £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Charitable Expenditure	1,296,230	28,409	325,280	1,649,919	1,668,921
Costs of Raising Funds	-	-	14,592	14,592	14,149
	1,296,230	28,409	339,872	1,664,511	1,683,070

4. Net Income for the Year

This is stated after charging.

	2021 £	2020 £
External Audit Fees	12,192	11,250
Accounts Preparation Fees	2,400	2,900
Depreciation	28,409	27,140
Operating Lease Expenditure	104,006	109,529
	147,007	150,819

5. Employee Information

Salaries and Wages	1,195,996	1,153,240
Social Security Costs	69,835	66,596
Total Salary Costs	1,265,831	1,219,836
Pension Costs	30,478	28,971
Total	1,296,309	1,248,807

Included within staff costs above are termination payments amounting to £Nil (2020: £Nil)

The number of employees whose emoluments (including pension contributions) as defined for taxation purposes amounted to over £60,000 in the year was as follows:

Salary Ranges	2021 Number	2020 Number
£80,001 - £90,000	1	1

In respect of the employee with emoluments in the above range, contributions of £13,471 (2020: £13,471) were made to the defined contribution pension scheme.

The average number of employees during the year (full time and part time) was 97 (2020: 101)

Key management personnel are considered to be the Board of Trustees together with the Chief Executive Officer and Regional Managers. The aggregate remuneration of key management personnel is as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Wages and National Insurance	276,378	278,200
Pensions	20,936	17,659
	297,314	295,859

6. Trustees

	2021 £	2020 £
Trustees and Board Expenses	-	-
	-	-

The trustees received no remuneration during the year (2020: £Nil). There were no Trustee expenses paid during the year for travel to meetings (2020: £Nil)

7. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Office Equipment £	Furniture & Fittings £	Motor Vehicles £	Total £
Cost				
At 1 April 2020	95,990	21,484	109,873	227,347
Additions	345	3,366	4,212	7,923
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2021	96,335	24,850	114,085	235,270
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2020	85,778	10,706	73,144	169,628
Charge for the year	4,251	7,029	17,132	28,412
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2021	90,029	17,735	90,276	198,040
Net Book Value				
At 31 March 2021	6,306	7,115	23,809	37,230
At 31 March 2020	10,212	10,778	36,729	57,719

8. Debtors

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade Debtors	205,940	138,017
Prepayments	16,939	7,187
Other Debtors and Accrued Income	1,000	40,971
Total Debtors and Prepayments	223,879	186,175

9. Investments

	2021 £	2020 £
Funds Network	260,202	232,938

The funds comprise listed investments, none are material (more than 15% of the total value)

10. Cash At Bank

	2021 £	2020 £
Current Accounts	480,239	239,341
Cash in Hand	1,845	1,752
	482,084	241,093

11. Creditors - Amounts Falling Due Within One Year

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade Creditors	33,933	9,510
Taxation and Social Security	53,872	14,985
Accruals and Deferred Income	120,582	82,488
Other Creditors	1,773	4,095
Total Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year	210,160	111,078

12. Capital Commitments and Contingent Liabilities

There are no capital commitments or contingent liabilities as at 31 March 2021 (2020: £Nil)

13. Other Financial Commitments

As at 31 March 2021 the charity had a total minimum lease payments payable under non-cancellable leases as follows:

	2021 £		2020 £	
	Land & Buildings	Other	Land & Buildings	Other
Within 1 Year	74,615	-	54,500	-
Within 2 to 5 Years	-	-	-	-
	74,615	-	54,500	-

14. Movement in Funds

	Balance at 1 April 2020	Income	Expenditure	Gain / Loss on Revaluation	Exceptional Items	Transfers	Balance 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£		£
Unrestricted Funds							
Designated Funds							
Tangible Assets	20,625	-	-	-	-	-	20,625
Capital Equipment Renewal	10,000	-	-	-	-	-	10,000
Investment Revaluation	50,831	-	-	-	-	(50,831)	-
Buildings Fund	60,000	-	-	-	-	-	60,000
	141,456	-	-	-	-	(50,831)	90,625
General Funds	461,160	1,685,955	(1,515,396)	28,472	(14,520)	50,831	696,502
Total Unrestricted Funds	602,616	1,685,955	(1,515,396)	28,472	(14,520)	-	787,127

	Balance at 1 April 2020	Income	Expenditure	Gain / Loss on Revaluation	Exceptional Items	Transfers	Balance 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£		£
Advocacy							
Self-Directed Support	4,231	106,958	(106,826)	-	-	-	4,363
Supporting Children & Families							
Taking the Reins	-	44,034	(42,289)	-	-	-	1,745
Total Restricted Funds	4,231	150,992	(149,115)	-	-	-	6,108
Total Funds (Including Designated)	606,847	1,836,947	(1,664,511)	28,472	(14,520)	-	793,235

15. Analysis of Net Assets Between Funds

	General Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets	37,230	-	-	37,230
Investments	169,577	90,625	-	260,202
Cash at Bank and in Hand	475,976	-	6,108	482,084
Other Net Current Assets	13,719	-	-	13,719
Total	696,502	90,625	6,108	793,235

16. Grants and Donations

The grants and donations for the year ended 31st March 2021 included funding from the following sources:

Avon Valley School
BBC Children in Need - Midlands
Fife County Council
Global Giving Foundation
Greater Glasgow Health Board
Inverclyde Council
Peterborough County Council
SM Parents Grant
South Ayshire Council
The Moray Council
The Scottish Government
West Sussex County Council
Wheres My Lunch Ltd
World of Cars

17. Related Party Transactions

During the year the charity occupied premises belonging to the Chief Executive and paid rental expenses of £18,000 (2020: £18,000). At the year end £Nil (2020: £Nil) remained outstanding. This rental is significantly below market rental and has been agreed with the Board of Trustees.

During the year, transactions amounting to £Nil (2020: £Nil) were incurred on behalf of the Life Care Charitable Trust, a related party due to there being some common Trustees. This resulted in the overall position being a debtor of £94 (2020: £144), which is included within other debtors.

18. Fraud

During the year, the charity became a victim of an external fraud which amounted to £14,520. Only £7,260 was recovered by the charity's bank post year- end. The remaining balance of £7,260 is not recoverable. The charity has reviewed its internal control and procedures and implemented the necessary measure to prevent this happening in the future.

19. Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31st March 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	2020 Total £
Incoming Resources				
Donations and Legacies		11,062	-	11,062
Investment Income		288	-	288
Income from Charitable Activities		1,098,512	148,567	1,247,079
Other Income		444,547	-	444,547
Total Income	2	1,554,409	148,567	1,702,976
Expenditure				
Charitable Activities	3	1,524,585	144,336	1,668,921
Cost of Raising Funds	3	14,149	-	14,149
Total Expenditure	3	1,538,734	144,336	1,683,070
Net Income for the Year		15,675	4,231	19,906
Transfer Between Funds		17,500	(17,500)	-
Unrealised Loss on Investment Assets		(7,304)	-	(7,304)
Net Movement In Funds		25,871	(13,269)	12,602
Total Funds Brought Forward		576,745	17,500	594,245
Total Funds Carried Forward		602,616	4,231	606,847



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