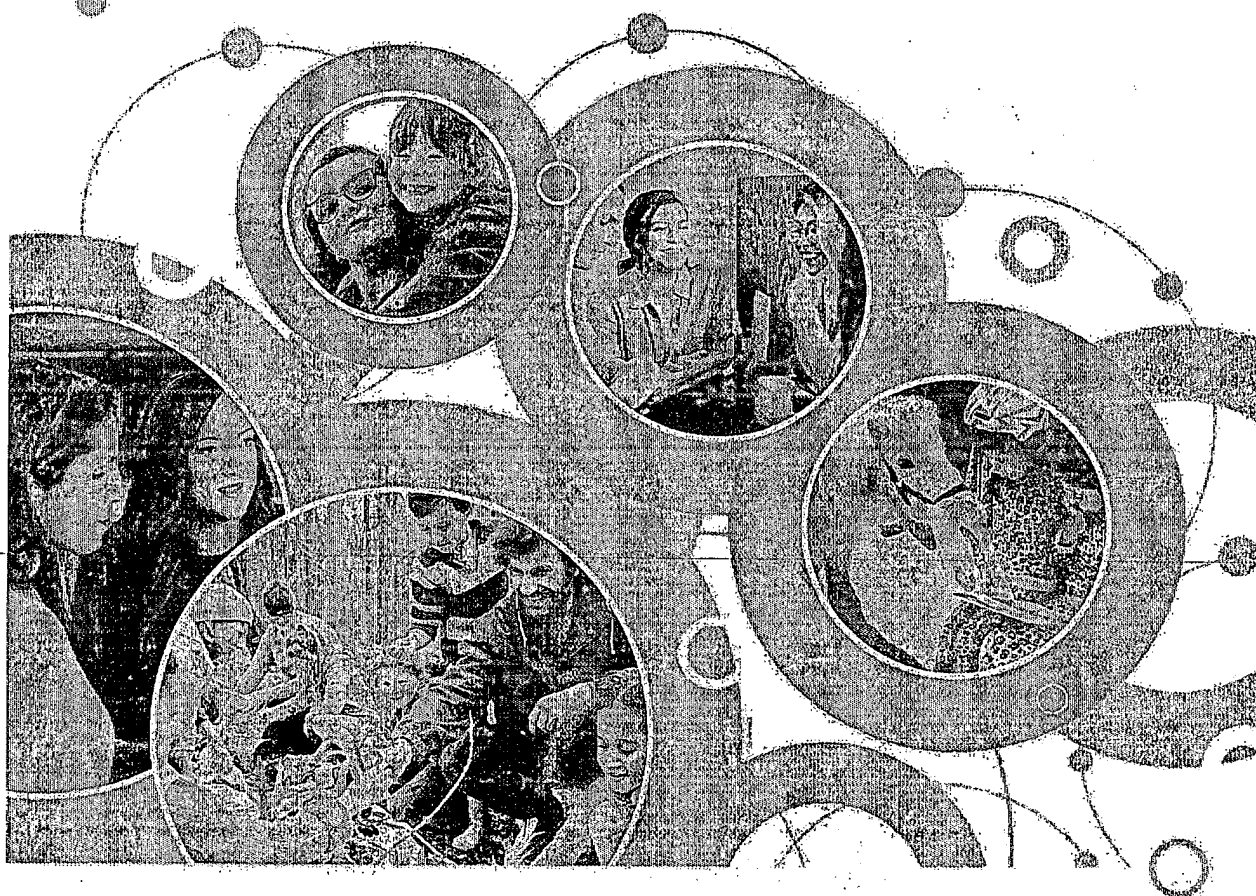


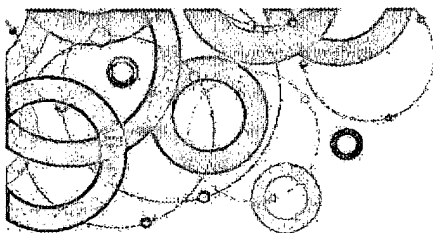
Impact Report

April 2023 to March 2024

29th Annual Report of the Trustees & Financial Statement
for the Year Ended 31st March 2024.



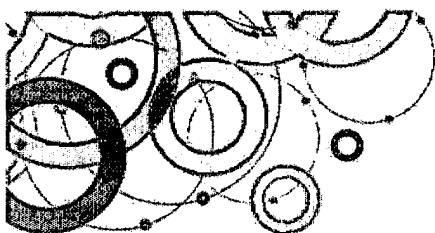
Inspiring Dreams, Changing Futures.



Impact Report 2023-24

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Trustees

Chairperson
Treasurer
Vice Chair
Vice Chair

Chief Executive Officer

Charity Registration Number

Charity Registration Number (Scotland)

Company Number

Registered Office

Auditor

Bank

Solicitor

Charity Information

James Inglis
James Hirons
Andy Cater
Emma Sharp
Wendy Evans
Amiya Kagalwala

Mandy Neville

1043601

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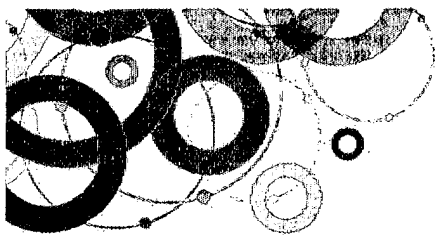
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The Penthouse
Coventry Road,
Cawston,
Rugby,
Warwickshire,
CV23 9JP.
Fruition Accountancy
29 Wood Street
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6JG

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

Anthony Collins Solicitor LLP
134 Edmund Street
Birmingham B3 2ES

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Chief Executive Officers Report

Introduction

As I present this year's impact report, I am reminded of the resilience, compassion, and innovative spirit shown by our team, trustees, and volunteers. This has been a year of dedication to our mission of providing empowering solutions for disabled and disadvantaged people of all ages to live happy, safe, and fulfilling lives. Against the backdrop of economic pressures, mental health challenges, and an ongoing need for social inclusion, our work has been a source of support and, we optimistically believe, to people we serve, I am truly grateful to each person who has partnered with us in this mission and to everyone who believes in our purpose.

Thank you for sharing our vision of a more inclusive and empathetic world. Your belief in what we do makes an essential difference.



Key Highlights and Developments

Advocacy and Empowerment

Our advocacy services have continued to assist people through complex and life-changing situations. This year, we broadened the reach of our support with new projects, including Self-Directed Support (SDS) advocacy in Moray and a successfully extended tender for the long-standing SDS project in Inverclyde. Further funding in the Southeast of England for specialist advocacy has enabled us to build on this important service for another year. We aim to continue supporting individuals whose voices need to be heard, demonstrating our commitment to justice, inclusion, and well-being in every way we can.



Community Support Initiatives

This year brought the acquisition of a static caravan in Northamptonshire, allowing us to offer respite holidays for families and individuals. In addition, our Family Matters programme in Lincolnshire and Peterborough which supports families in crisis due to challenges in mental health or disability. Partnering with local businesses through Business Networking International (BNI), we have also gained access to helpful resources and advice that support our operations and growth.

New Programmes and Funding

We were fortunate to receive funding for additional support programmes, including the Rose Scott Life Skills programme for adults impacted by economic difficulties. We named this programme in honour of our wonderful colleague who sadly passed away this year having given 19 years of truly dedicated service. We were delighted to be awarded funding for the Holidays, Activities, and Food (HAF) programmes for children in Warwickshire.

Education and Training

Our Academy for children and adults has grown and continues to provide tailored learning, coaching and support. Initiatives such as Equine Facilitated Learning have been a source of positive engagement for our participants, and we launched the Oliver McGowan Training to widen understanding on neurodiversity and learning difficulties, in health and social care settings. These projects, as well as our equine team's work in animal-assisted learning and the in-house Horse for Courses certificated programme, have enabled us to provide resources and experiences that many have testified to be beneficial.

Equine Programmes



Our equine-assisted activities remain an important and valued part of our offering. We have increased awareness and appreciation for this work through our social media presence, highlighting our therapy herd on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. We introduced a new young pony to the herd, offered and delivered children's pony parties and celebrated the successful completion of our apprentice's placement and welcomed him as a Professional Facilitator—an addition that strengthens our team.

Collaborations

Through a valued partnership with Cummins Engineering, we were able to enhance our Warwickshire services in both rural and urban bases. Additionally, our joint work with The Keyworkers' Collaborative has supported 80 children this year alone, helping many avoid hospitalisation. These partnerships are an essential part of our work, allowing us to meet community needs more effectively.

Challenges and Areas for Growth

Like many, we have faced economic pressures, staffing challenges, and increased service demand, reminding us of the importance of resilience and adaptability. We are focusing on recruitment and retention strategies to ensure we can continue supporting people who rely on us. Looking ahead, we intend to build on what has been achieved by expanding our

network, strengthening partnerships, and deepening our commitment to inclusive communities.

Looking Forward

In the coming year, our priorities will include:

Broadening the reach of our advocacy services to meet increasing needs.

Enhancing community support and family-focused programmes.

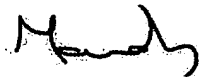
Expanding educational opportunities through The Academy and Equine Learning initiatives.

Building partnerships that allow us to respond effectively to pressing social and community needs.

Thank You

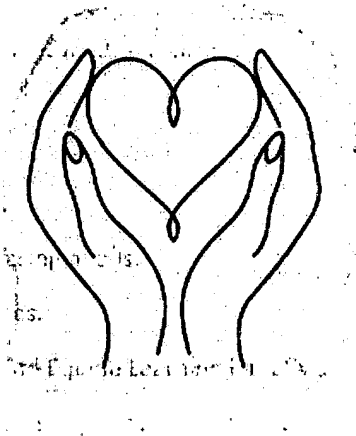
To everyone who supports us, whether through giving time, resources, or words of encouragement, please know how essential you are to our work. To our staff and volunteers who dedicate themselves each day, our trustees, donors, and partners, and to individuals we serve who inspire us in countless ways—thank you. We look forward to our 30th year of building together toward our mission of inclusion, empowerment, and positive community enhancement.

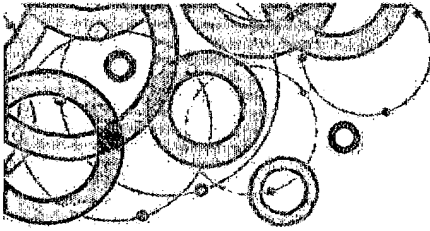
With sincere gratitude and full appreciation,



Mandy Neville

Chief Executive Officer





Chairperson's Report



As we celebrate our past 29 years of supporting people both young and old we can look back with justifiable pride on the real achievements we have made. Our founder and Chief Executive together with a dedicated team of staff have brought into being many new initiatives. Some of these have now become mainstream areas of support, some have been adopted widely by statutory education, health and social care services, and others we continue to operate ourselves and set the example of

highest quality provision in these fields. Our report describes our current activities in more detail. All have one thing in common – to provide life enriching support for individuals who would otherwise be at risk of being forgotten.

This year has been one of continuation of our existing projects and development of some new initiatives, particularly involving young people. In England we have grown our holiday schemes that provide rich experiences for the young people who attend them. These have been well received both by the attendees and their parents and carers. We have also extended our offer to schools to provide some alternative provision particularly for children who struggle with a standard school environment.



In the east of England we are proud of our youth groups and in Scotland our advocates continue to provide people with a chance to be heard when they are up against seemingly insurmountable difficulties that are blighting their lives.

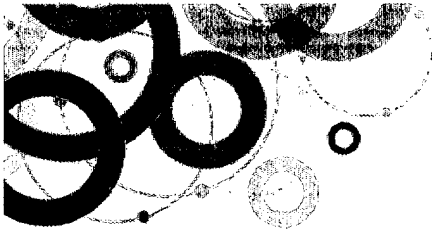
None of this would be possible without the strong support of our staff. They work with passion and compassion to support and improve the lives of people in our communities, and I am incredibly grateful to them all for supporting Circles Network and for igniting dreams and changing lives.

Best Wishes,

Jim Inglis

Chair of the Board of Trustees

None of this would be possible without the strong support of our staff. They work with passion and compassion to support and improve the lives of people in our communities, and I am incredibly grateful to them all for supporting Circles Network and for igniting dreams and changing lives.



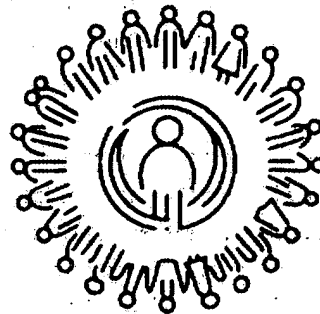
Report of the Trustees

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 people who are feeling vulnerable and marginalised. In 1994, founder and Chief Executive Mandy Neville, supported by a loyal group of friends, formed the first Circles of Support in the UK. This organisation was formed; 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 and sustained several 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.

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 within 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 annual impact 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, NHS and social care partnerships and national networks, influences 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 28 years, have enabled us to develop considerable expertise and establish our reputation in the health and social care sector. The person-centred nature of our work means our projects and services are extremely innovative and 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 are valued. 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, learning support, mental health, loss and addiction, unpaid caring 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 deliver the equine programme portfolio in Warwickshire, open to people from around the UK. Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) provides therapeutic opportunities for people of all ages, working alongside horses and ponies, to develop, make positive changes and grow. Participants are supported to learn through natural horsemanship skills, trauma informed practice, 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 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 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 fostering and adoptive 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 provision 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,

person-centred approaches, and 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 a myriad of individuals contribute in their own ways from to fundraising and estate management.

Structure, Governance and Management

Circles Network operates under a Memorandum of Association. In conjunction with this Memorandum, the Articles of Association guide the governance of the charity. The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees who appoint a Chief Executive Officer to manage and run the charity.

No less than three trustees form the Board of Trustees, these are nominated and appointed by the trustees based upon their skills and lived experience. By a minimum, during induction, Trustees receive training in:

Safeguarding, sexual harassment, data protection and GDPR. All Trustees undergo an Enhanced DBS check upon appointment. New Trustees are supported to understand their role and receive support to access any training or information which they may require. Trustees attend quarterly board meetings and an Annual General Meeting.

The organisations structure includes:

Board of Trustees

Chief Executive Officer

Senior Leadership Team – Two Operations Managers and Finance Manager

Leadership Team – Area or Project Managers, Data Protection Officer, Coordinator of People & Safety

Operational Team – made up of advocates, facilitators, administrators and volunteers

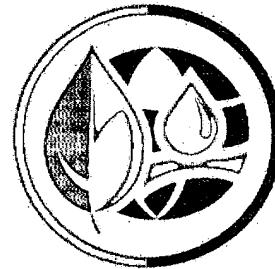
Pay and remuneration is reviewed on an annual basis by a panel made up of the CEO and senior leadership team. Local benchmarking is carried out and pay is equal to or higher than the living wage in the respective country of work. Remuneration for the CEO and Senior Leadership Team are reviewed by the Board of Trustees on an annual basis.

The Board of Trustees are volunteers and receive no remuneration, reasonable expenses will be paid.

Our Environmental Impact

Environmental impact is intrinsic to our mission, and we strive to reduce waste, re-use resources where possible, recycle, minimise transport and carbon emissions, and save energy.

Reduce and recycle – The move to digitised communications and information management systems continues to reduce the volume of paper daily and maximises storage efficiency. 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 driven by fuel efficiency.

During the pandemic we became increasingly agile in working across digital platforms which has greatly reduced the need for frequent travel.

Energy savings – All of our work hubs adhere to energy saving practices, involving lighting, heating, water and electricity usage.

Risk Review

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

Financial security, especially with the impending recession presents a challenge. Our fund-raising strategy links to our business plan, and our senior leadership team strive 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.

Recruitment and retention of key personnel post COVID and Brexit has become critical. The variability of demand and income leads us to work with a significant portion of workers on zero hours contracts. We continuously review and take action to ensure the well-being of both staff and volunteers. We provide development opportunities and promote from within where possible. This year we restructured the management team in line with our growing

needs. Our HR team are supported by external consultants, Peninsula, and work constructively to maintain governance and compliance.

For the second year running, whilst living through the pandemic we have continued to provide services, delivering on target and managing additional operational costs. 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 Trustees consist 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 as of 31st March 2023 was eight. Trustees are indemnified with third party indemnity insurance.

Trustees Responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Circles Network for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to;

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They 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.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Policy on Reserves

The unrestricted general funds of £1,613,515 include an amount of £250,000 built up over a number of years to match six months running costs of the central work of the organization. The balance of £1,363,515 is held to manage overall risk, a major factor being a loss or material reduction in funding. The designated funds of £90,615 comprise a buildings fund of £60,000 to provide for the purchase of, or addition to, a central hub in the future. There is also a fund for capital equipment of £10,000 and other purchases of tangible assets of £20,625.

Financial Review

At the end of the reporting period Circles Network had generated a surplus of £ 370,619. The total reserves at the end of the year was £ 1,903,222 including restricted reserves of £ 199,082. Liquid assets were £ 1,548,163 being deposit accounts and investments. The balance of fixed assets, debtors less current liabilities was £355,059.

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:

- as 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
Avon Valley School, Rugby
Bawnmore Infant School
BCE Training Consultants
Bilton Grange School, Rugby
BNi Rutland
Brook School, Rugby
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cambridgeshire Police
Communitas, USA
Coventry Rugby Club
Cemex
Coventry & Warwickshire CCG
Evergreen School, Warwick
Fife Voluntary Action
Guide Dogs Association
Jaguar Landrover
Lincolnshire County Council
McDonalds
Mind
Moray Health & Social Care Partnership
National Recovery Advocacy Network
NHS
Northamptonshire County Council
North Warwickshire Probation Service
Nurse Buddy
Peterborough City Council
Pets at Home
Princethorpe College
Quest
River House School, Henley in Arden
RINB
Rushey Green
Ryder Cheshire
South Ayrshire ADP
Spencers Ball
Signposts (Mid Sussex) Ltd
Tesco's Bags for Help
United Response
University of Reading
Warwick District Council
Warwickshire Mind
West Sussex Council
Zenzero

Apex Printers
Autism West Midlands
Baily Thomas Foundation
BBC Children in Need
Bilton School, Rugby
BNi East
BNi Bears
CAMHS
Cambridgeshire CCG
Clementine Business Coaching
Council of Disabled People
Care Quality Commission
COOP
Cummins
Fife Health and Social Care Partnership
Greater Glasgow NHS Trust
Inverclyde Health & Social Care Partnership
Learning Disability Wales
Make Good Grow
McMillan Cancer Support
Moray ADP
Moreton Morfell College
Network Rail
Noah's Ark, Australia
91: Untold
Nuneaton Youth Justice
Nyssadri, India
Peterborough CVS
Pets at Home Foundation
Queen Elizabeth School
RDA
Royal Artillery Centre for Development
Rugby Free School
Round Oak School, Warwick
Scottish Recovery Consortium
South Ayrshire HSCP
Sussex Partnership NHS Trust
St Edmunds Trust
The World of Cars
University of Coventry
Warwick Disability Forum
WCAVA
Warwickshire Young Carers
WRVS

Auditor

Fruition Advisory LLP were re-appointed as auditor at the Annual General Meeting.

This report was prepared in accordance with the special provisions of part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

This report was approved by the Trustees on 23/12/2024 and signed on its behalf by:



James Inglis (Chairperson)



3D & 4D Support-Midlands

3D Community Support offers continuous, personal assistance, meeting each person's individual requirements. This support is centred around the individual, delivered at their convenience, and focuses on their unique aspirations and goals.

4D Community Support is a targeted service primarily designed to provide intensive support to individuals navigating significant life changes.

Highlights

In March 2024 we had a Quality Assurance Review by Warwickshire County Council for our working age adult provision. The report stated: "Overall, the visit was positive, the ethos was clearly very person centred and focused on individuals and their outcomes. The people supported were all happy with the support they received."



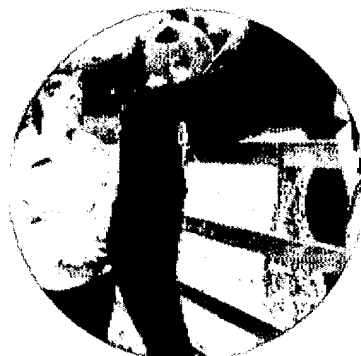
For Christmas celebrations we arranged an outing for a meal, attended by many people we support in the community. The feedback was positive from this, especially as people eat alone most alone. In the new year we implemented a weekly event, linking up with the Academy, Friday café where people plan, cook, and eat together.

One individual we supported in the community, with encouragement, started to take small trips out. This helped them overcome anxiety and reduced feelings of isolation.

Challenges

There were a few staffing challenges during the year, with team members moving on. This has impacted provision of support in the evenings and at weekends. Recruitment was delayed by slow DBS checks, taking up to eight weeks to complete. (outside of our control) To maintain provision, we pulled together as a team with staff from both Equine and Academy projects supporting in the community.

Due to statutory funding cuts the Community work is challenged by low price rises annually, that do not reflect the increase in costs for salaries and facilities required to deliver support. Circles Network are currently locked into a framework in which the stated criteria do not reflect the needs of the people who are being supported by the service.



Following the success of the Friday Cafe for the adults we support, we are looking at ideas to set up a youth group. This would be outside of school hours and be open to Academy students and Community participants with 'Short Break' provision.

In the post COVID era we have seen an increase of requests for support for adults on the supported living framework, especially from the community mental health teams. There has also been a decrease in young people coming into community from the Children's Disability team.

During this year we have strengthened relationships with social workers and care co-ordinators in both Adult Social Care and the Community Mental Health Teams.

We have partnered with the Nuneaton foodbank. This is part of the Trussell Trust and has allowed us to issue foodbank vouchers to individuals we support where there is need. Access has been provided to all projects in Rugby.

Story of Change: Kate

Kate has been supported by Circles Network for a little under a year. Kate was diagnosed with severe depression including thoughts of self-harm and suicide. The traumatic loss of her mum in a car accident in her early twenties has severely impacted her mental health; memories of this are often the trigger for episodes of low mood. We have helped Kate to enjoy positive memories of her mum and family life by helping her to find family photos and share the happy memories associated with them. Kate has begun to tell her story more positively, often laughing or sharing a joke about her mum with us. Together we have organised her photo albums and placed them where she can access them more easily to enjoy trips down memory lane.

Kate also experiences hearing loss and Keratoconus, a very debilitating degenerative eye condition severely affecting her sight. We have supported visits to Specsavers where hearing tests have been carried out and hearing aids fitted. This has given her a whole new lease of life as she can now enjoy listening to her extensive record collection together with her

facilitator. Music has always been one of her great passions, she says she used to enjoy dancing and singing along – we have not danced but we do sing along. Music uplifts her when her mood is low. We have also worked collaboratively with Kate's social worker to facilitate cross link surgery to stabilise and hopefully improve Kate's vision. This is important for her continued independence. Kate has said she does not feel as nervous about this now she knows she has our help and support. She is looking forward to being able to do some artwork after the surgery, this is another passion of hers.

Kate struggles to maintain a healthy weight which affects her asthma and mobility. We have worked together on healthy eating plans and often enjoy shopping for ingredients and cooking together. Her general diet has become healthier.

We have also facilitated Kate to join in with events in the common room at her assisted living accommodation, meeting other residents. Kate said she had not had the confidence to go alone, we are now planning a birthday 'get together' with her neighbours. Her self-confidence has grown over the last year, and she enthusiastically suggests visiting unfamiliar places and joining other community groups.

Story of Change: Graham

Graham has been supported by Circles Network in the community project for the last two years. He has a diagnosis of schizophrenia and experiences frequent bouts of depression. During this time, we have helped Graham with new accommodation and new employment. Since Graham returned from an overseas visit with his girlfriend his life has taken a downturn. He found himself negatively influenced by neighbours and for a period had locked himself away from the world in a downward spiral. After he cancelled a few sessions, we became concerned, and we managed to contact him to help him access the mental health team, where they gave him his missed medication. We slowly began to work on the tidiness and cleanliness of his flat and began to pull things together. During this time, it transpired that someone had registered a business at Companies House with Graham's address with Graham as the company director. We worked with him to fill in all the necessary forms to resolve the situation.

We have now changed support days for Graham so that we can take him to his mental health team appointments every four weeks so that he does not miss his prescriptions. His run of bad luck has not stopped and recently he was mugged. We helped him access the food bank and a welfare grant after this left him with no money. His relationship with his girlfriend has broken down and he has disclosed that he has been sending her money on a regular basis. We are looking into whether this can be returned in any way. As a result of this

we are coaching with Graham to avoid the chat rooms where he began this relationship. We are also encouraging him to address his gambling addiction.

At present Graham has begun to return his flat to order. He is starting to take more care of his personal hygiene, which had deteriorated along with his mental health. His medication is now better managed. We aim to work on a new CV with Graham when he has the focus, as he wants to gain employment within the landscaping or customer service sectors.

After such a turbulent time, Graham feels he is now starting to turn a corner and get his life and psychological wellbeing back on track.

Positive Feedback

To all the team at Circles Network,

I just wanted to take this opportunity, on behalf of Nick and I, to say a MASSIVE 'thank you' to you all for the all-round fabulous support you have given our lovable lad, Harry, over the years. He has honestly benefitted, beyond measure, from the time he has spent with you all.

Right from the beginning, when Neil spent just a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon with our lad, the focus has always been on Harry and making his time with you all as happy and interactive as possible!

As the years have gone by, everyone at Circles Network, headed by the indomitable Neil, has continued to develop and extend Harry's activities in numerous ways... always with a smile on their face and boundless energy and care.

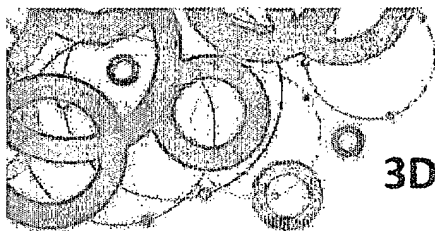
They provide a safe environment within which he can both express himself and learn to manage his diverse and unpredictable needs. Nurturing is central to the team's support, and they are always willing to adapt the sessions to meet Harry's ever-changing situation.

Harry looks forward to his weekly catch ups with the team with sooooo much enthusiasm and is quite desperate when he does not see them for whatever reason..

We really cannot recommend Circles Network highly enough and thank you again for all the energy and effort and care you have shown our son.

All the best,

Kate and Nick



3D & 4D Support-East of England

3D Community Support in Peterborough is a dynamic and vibrant service that offers support on a one-to-one basis to people of all ages and disabilities.

4D Community Support is an extension of 3D and offers more specialised support for individuals who have additional mental health differences.

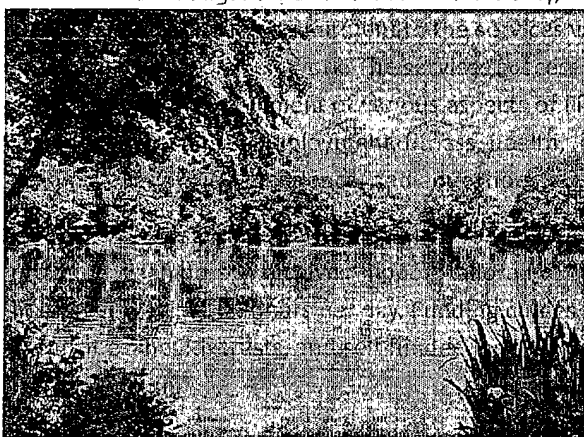
The service is led by a registered manager. The Hub, from where the team is based, is a registered location with the Care Quality Commission and has a rating of "Good."

The team vary in age, experience, and personality, but they share a common commitment to the services values and enthusiasm for their work. The services success lies in supporting the development of various aspects of life, including friendships, employment, fitness, health, accommodation, independence, and education.



Financially, the service operates on a fee-for-service basis, charging for the hours of support provided. Each person receives support tailored to their specific needs, ranging from two hours per week to 24 hours per day. Funding comes from various sources, including local authorities, health trusts, and self-funded individuals, ensuring a sustainable and diverse income stream.

Overall, the 3D Community Support service, alongside the 4D offshoot, is making a significant impact on the lives of individuals with diverse needs, enabling them to lead fulfilling and independent lives with the support they require.



covering its own costs through rental opportunities.

We achieved our goal of raising the funds to buy a cabin on a holiday park in Northamptonshire by December 2023. This was a huge effort by all those invested in the scheme. The cabin is situated at Overstone Lakes which is a rural location nestled in woodlands and just 45 minutes drive from both our base in Peterborough and in Rugby. The cabin will serve as a place for rest and recuperation for families and team members whilst

We were delighted to be invited to become trainers of the gold standard Oliver McGowan Mandatory training for learning disability and autism by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB. This training, developed following the tragic death of Oliver in 2016, is a mandatory requirement for all health and social care staff working in CQC regulated provisions. We will train our own teams to deliver this alongside experts with lived experience to health and social care professionals in the region and beyond. The impact of this training will become evident in the years to come through improvements in the statistics gathered in the Learning from Lives and Deaths report, reducing avoidable deaths and lengthening the life expectancy for people with learning disabilities and Autistic people.

There has been so much progress and development during this year, both for the individuals receiving support and, in the confidence and competence of the team members on all levels. People are thriving and celebrating their achievements.

There is no underpinning funding for these vital services, and it is a challenge to constantly balance the fiscal demands of the operations to ensure the consistency of quality and development.

Recruitment remains difficult. We only employ people who share the organisation's values and those who are resilient and compassionate. There is a national shortage of workers in the field of health and social care. We have needed a strategic approach to continuous recruitment to meet the demands of the service and maintain ambitious standards. We rely on our esteemed popularity and reputation to fill vacancies and grow the service.

We have developed our co-production initiative and now have an ongoing inclusion group, led by people who use the services we provide.

This group of individuals are actively leading on areas of development such as improvements to facilities, activities, and community issues. People we support are networking with local businesses to raise awareness of disability issues and engage community members in our work to provide support and mentorship to their peers.

The Oliver McGowan training has given people we support the opportunity to become paid employees at Circles Network. The sense of inclusion within this service is strong.

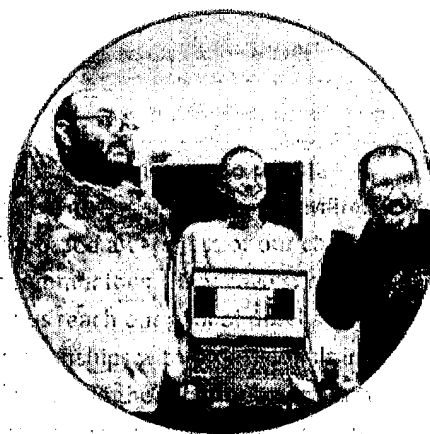
The pandemic has had a profound impact on the wellbeing of both our team and the people we support, including disabled individuals and their families. Many have faced heightened isolation, anxiety, and uncertainty, requiring the team to adapt with sensitivity and resilience. We have responded by prioritising compassionate, nurturing support, recognising that individuals may present with new or intensified challenges. This approach has strengthened trust and rapport, enabling us to address emerging needs with care. The dedication of our team in providing a safe, supportive environment has been essential in mitigating the pandemic's effects on the mental and emotional health of our community.

Partnerships have flourished this year, notably through our active membership in the Rutland BNI chapter, which has provided invaluable support across several fronts. Members have assisted with practical tasks within our facilities, increased awareness of our charity and the challenges faced by disabled individuals in our communities. They have supported our fundraising efforts and were instrumental in helping us reach our goal of purchasing a holiday cabin. We also maintain strong, collaborative relationships with professionals in health, social care, and educational authorities, as well as within the broader community. Our connections with other regional charities allow us to share expertise, learn from one another, and combine resources to better serve people in need.

Co-production Training

In December 2023 Martin and Adam agreed that they would like to get involved with the delivery of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training alongside facilitator Molly, who wished to develop her role and become a trainer.

In January, all three attended the train the trainer course delivered by Inclusion Gloucestershire to learn how to deliver for themselves the Tier One training.



The Tier One training is aimed at people who work in health and social care but do not have direct responsibility for delivering care to people with learning disabilities or autism. The course is designed to raise awareness of barriers to equitable health and social care and dispel myths surrounding learning disabilities and autism. It is a one hour online, live webinar that is interactive and delivered to up to 30 participants at a time.

Martin, Adam, and Molly have never trained others before, nor have they used Microsoft Teams to attend, let alone facilitate a webinar.

They spent time each week during January, February, and March, together, using the resources they had been delivered to develop scripts, learn how to facilitate a webinar, and get to know each other as a team.

After a great deal of preparation, they were ready to facilitate and record a live webinar, training members of the Circles Network team. They did a fantastic job of their on their debut on March 18th, 2024. Their live recording has been adjudicated by NHS England and they have passed, awaiting to receive their unique trainer identification from NHS England for them to roll out the training across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Story of Change - Jake

Story of Change - Jake is a young man with a learning disability who has been living in a care home since he was 18. He has been in care for a long time and has never had a family or a home of his own.

The story of transformation for a sixteen-year-old named Jake stands out as an example of success. At the age of twelve, Jake found himself entangled in a web of challenges that disrupted his education and strained his adoptive family unit to the point of near collapse.

In those turbulent four years, frustration, loneliness, and isolation manifested in aggression, exacerbating the family's sense of helplessness. At this critical time, Jake was introduced to Circles Network 3D community support project by his social worker.

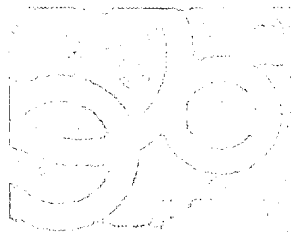
Education was fraught with setbacks for Jake. Facilitating a successful placement with an alternative education provider, the charity provided Jake with a tailored solution, marking a turning point in his educational outlook.

Throughout the years, consistent and flexible support became Jake's anchor. In times of need, stability and assurance that was instrumental in steering him away from the precipice of exclusion from formal education.

Circles Network's person-centred approach proved instrumental in Jake's emotional and social development. Feeling genuinely understood, he formed positive and trusting relationships with the adults in his support network. Circles Network became a sanctuary—a source of encouragement and affirmation giving him a sense of comfort and belonging.

As Jake reached the age of sixteen, his journey of change took a remarkable turn. He began to manage his behaviour effectively and so was able to make progress in school. He also demonstrated a remarkable improvement in his language and communication skills, aligning with age-appropriate standards. His passion for football, a constant amidst the challenges, took centre stage, as he proudly announced his selection for an adult football team—a milestone previously considered beyond reach.

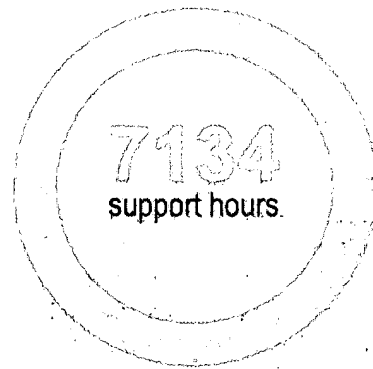
Jake's journey exemplifies the profound impact of sustained support from a determined team. With football now serving as a conduit for personal growth and success, Jake has a lifestyle worthy of his newfound commitment to growth.



3D & 4D Support-South East of England

3D Community Support project in the Southeast 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. 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 County Council. 4D Community Support is a targeted service, facilitating intensive support with an individual who is going through a period of change that they are adjusting to.

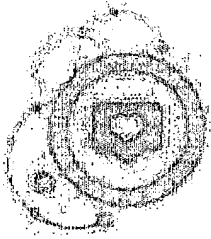
The team moved from Crawley Town football club into a new building, creating a better working environment for all and the capacity to expand the variety of services we offer. Stevie Ruxton became a member of the local BNI core group which has led to new partnerships, support from businesses and opportunities for growth, fundraising and development. The Southeast was the first area to launch the Rose Scott Life Skills project. This was delivered to people already being supported through Circles Network at the base. There was positive feedback from this and ignited a spark to make this into a self-standing project.



Finances have been the biggest challenge that the Southeast has faced over the past year. Whilst moving into the new premises was a big highlight, we have been unable to balance the cost due to a downturn in revenue. An action plan was put into place to explore every avenue to generate income, with two managers focusing their time on growth and development in the Southeast. Actions implemented:

- Several grants applied for
- Local businesses contacted for ongoing financial support
- Tenders explored and applied for
- Changes to 3D and 4D workstreams made
- BNI support
- Focused on recruitment
- Managed HR challenges within the team
- Commenced delivering the Rose Scott Life Skills project

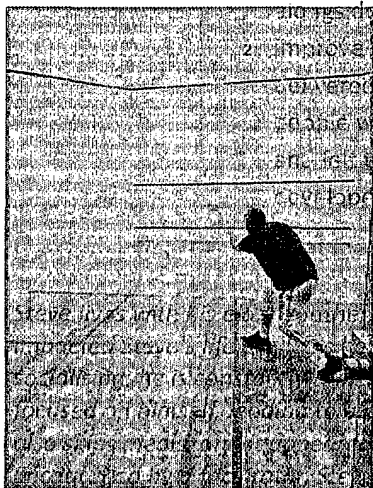
Retention and recruitment continued to be an issue within the Southeast. Whilst changing adverts, thinking of new and different ways to recruit and using different language made some difference, unfortunately it was not enough to recruit the number of facilitators needed to increase the volume of support required. Whilst it was imperative to still recruit facilitators, a decision was made to focus on new workstreams and tenders. Alternative Education and a partnership with SPFT NHS mental health services were identified as areas that could be developed.



In February the Rose Scott Life Skills project was first delivered in the Southeast. The project is funded by Barclays Bank and works alongside the community to develop life skills, with an aim to improve confidence, skill set and support employment. This was delivered to people already being supported by Circles Network. The people who attended the course described the sessions as "useful" and felt that they could implement the skills they had learnt or developed on throughout their day to day lives.

Story of Change - Steve

Steve lives with his elderly father, who is dependent on alcohol. This situation heavily impacted Steve's life. He feels he cannot leave his dad for long periods, and even when socialising, he is constantly thinking about or calling his father to check in. Steve rarely focused on himself, leading to a poor diet that negatively affects his health and weight. He also skips meals, and it appeared that a lack of food would trigger a seizure for Steve. Encouraged by a facilitator, Steve explored a membership at his local leisure centre. They discussed the financial implications with his family and decided it was a worthwhile investment. Steve began engaging in activities like badminton, squash, gym workouts, and aqua aerobics. Initially, his fitness level allowed only short bursts of activity, but he quickly improved. With newfound focus and motivation, Steve purchased sports equipment, and with the guidance of his Facilitator learned to use the booking app independently. He also received travel training to enable him to take the bus to the leisure centre. Although his father worried that Steve's epilepsy made bus travel too dangerous, Steve, his facilitator, and his dad had a crucial conversation about active risk-taking and independence. Steve expressed his strong desire to pursue this path, and they discussed steps to minimize seizure-related risks. Now, Steve visits the leisure centre several times a week. He has replaced fizzy drinks with water, lost weight, and become significantly fitter. He aims to eat three nutritious meals a day to sustain his energy for sports. Steve has mastered the booking app and confidently takes the bus to the centre. Steve's father regularly updates the Facilitator, expressing his delight at the positive changes in Steve's life. Steve has found a purpose, improving his health and independence.



Amy has a learning disability and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and has been receiving support from Circles Network for several years. She works full-time at a school for children with special educational needs, a job she is extremely proud of and can access independently. Despite her successes at work, Amy needed support in other areas of her life, such as managing her diet and weight, attending appointments, and managing her emotions and anxieties by channelling them into positive things. Living independently, Amy manages her daily life well. Over the past year, Amy and her brother agreed that she had made significant positive changes and become more independent, allowing for a reduction in her support. Initially, Amy felt very anxious about this change, but with time and encouragement, she came to see it as a positive step forward.

Amy continues to receive face-to-face support during school holidays when the lack of routine can impact her mental health and well-being. She has taken on cooking, meal planning, overseeing her home, and attending her appointments independently. For any concerns, Amy speaks with a facilitator on the phone once a week to create an action plan.

"Circles Network help me out a lot. They have been so lovely to me and that's why I like them a lot.

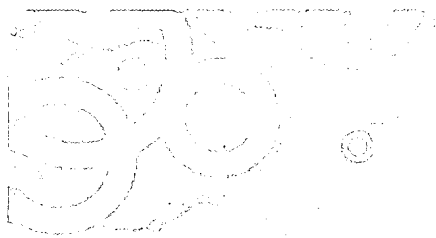
Circles Network take me out and we do new things and I get to see my friends. They take me to work where I can help other people which I really enjoy doing. They help me stay healthy and exercise.

If I didn't have them, I don't know what I would be doing, I wouldn't get out the house as much. I would get lonely as I wouldn't be able to see my friends.

I like when Circles Network help me to try new thing that I wouldn't be able to do on my own.

I love all the staff at Circles they are so lovely, and we have good time together.

It is going really well for me; I really like all the people there. My family love that I have Circles Network looking after me."



The Keywork Collaborative

The Keyworker Collaborative is a successful programme - working with families identified as having needs that meet the criteria for the Dynamic Support Register as described in the Care Education Treatment Review Policy within NHS England.



The aim is to support children and young adults up to the age of 25 who have learning disabilities and or autism; and their families, to have a voice, receive their care and treatment wherever possible in their local community through local services and avoid inpatient or out of area placements. If an admission to hospital is unavoidable, working on reconnection with their community as soon as possible is paramount.

The members of the Keyworker Collaborative work alongside the wider system to promote person-centred approaches and planning focused on an individual's strengths.

In the last 12 months there has been a steady increase in the number of children and young adults requiring Keyworker support. As a result, there has been a reduction in admissions and re-admissions to acute children's and specialist mental health wards and significant reduction in the need for emergency department care for young people identified on the Dynamic Support Register.



Circles Network employs three Keyworkers, a Coordinator, an administrator, and a Project Advisor as part of the collaborative.

Highlights

Recruitment - We were able to successfully recruit two Keyworkers this year. This completed the team; thus, we could meet the demands of the introductions that were made to the service.

Wider Collaborative Community of practice – this year saw the launch of the Wider Collaborative Community of Practice. These meetings take place online every eight weeks. The aim over year one was to have different presentations from each organisation and the services within the local footprint. By end of year one we aim to understand the wider collaborative and how we may support and help each other to improve outcomes for young people.

Collaborative Activity Day at Grafham Water – an activity away day at Grafham Water was hosted for people that were actively receiving support from The Keyworker Collaborative. Group activities are not easy for many of the young people, so we supported a small group and their siblings. Young people who attended did not feel overwhelmed and were comfortable in a relaxed environment. There were some amazing outcomes for the young people, some sharing conversations, some joining in with team activities and some simply attending a group event, something they rarely do. Everyone had a very enjoyable day.

Challenges

Team changes and turnover across the wider network have meant that knowledge about The Keyworker Collaborative is not always passed forward, and this can cause confusion on what can be offered. With this now recognised we have been reintroducing ourselves to all our wider networks through invitations to the Wider Collaborative Community of Practice.

The number and plight of children and young people seeking mental health services has become a pressing concern within the healthcare system. This year, we were having to prioritise communications and introductions for those at an elevated risk of immediate admission to hospital or those already within the Tier 4 mental health admission category. This approach reflects the critical need to efficiently allocate resources and provide intensive care appropriately.

Our latest approach has been that of specialist training - The Keyworker Collaborative team have completed in-depth training in trauma informed, strength-based practices and can complete restorative supervision and coaching. This training was identified as urgent due to the severity of situations that the team are working alongside. Fiona Plamer who delivered the training and has since gone on to have monthly meetings with the team said 'I have recently had the absolute pleasure of working with the exceptional Keyworker Collaborative over three days, where we trained in Trauma Informed Approaches, Strength Based Practice, and Trauma Informed Supervision and Professional Boundaries. I was consistently blown away by such a cohesive, empathic, and highly skilled group of people. They are open, transparent, deeply knowledgeable, and committed to what they do. They support one another completely, and I am sure that the young people fortunate enough to work with this service would agree. I work with a lot of services; and it is rare to see this level of cohesion, support, knowledge, and empathy all in one place. They are a fantastic group of people. Guys, it was an honour to work with you all, and I hope to get the opportunity to do so again.'



Fiona Palmer – Reflect training

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes and trends in the severity of the children and young people's conditions and situations. Post-pandemic, the complexity has increased, resulting in more children and young people requiring intensive and prolonged care. This often led to delayed discharge from hospital, as there is a need for more comprehensive treatment plans and resources before looking at staying safe in the community. Concurrently, the availability of health care and social care professionals has been strained, with staff shortages and increased demand limiting face-to-face contact. These challenges have compounded, contributing to a more complex and pressured environment.

The Keyworker Collaborative team attended a workshop with the Positive Behavioural Support team. This was facilitated by the Lead Commissioner for Learning Disability and Autism programme, as well as PBS Head of service. The purpose of this workshop was to have opportunities, to share current experiences and working practices and to plan for how we will continue to support and collaborate with each other. This was a productive workshop, team members enjoyed coming together for this face to face rather than via TEAMS. The outcome was the creation of a standard operational procedure.

Story of Change

"We are XX's parents and Rob acted as key worker for XX for the last two years.

Before the onset of a severe mental illness (ASD with severe comorbid OCD), we were a happy and prosperous family. XX was an exceptional learner and was performing very well in school. He is a creative thinker of mathematics, a future mathematician. Parents are scientists at the Department of Pathology, University of Cambridge. (sister) and XX were happy siblings. Everything fell apart during the lock-down when symptoms of OCD appeared. The symptoms were so severe that finally we had to admit him at the Darwin Centre. A new phase began, and we realised that the mental healthcare system is broken, and it is extremely inadequate as if there will be no difference if mental health care does not exist. The experience with the mental health care system is so bitter that we believe (and this belief is evidence based so it is a fact, and we can build an extraordinarily persuasive argument). Still, we believe it was the biggest mistake in our life to take him to the Darwin Centre or seek mental health care help. However, the experience with Rob was opposite. Presence of people like him makes a difference and raises hope during crisis moments. Our son is still alive and there is still some hope left because of him and two more people's contribution. In the system, we found only a few people are doing their job purpose-driven like Rob. He was creative everywhere in critical situations. He is a great listener, that is the key for his remarkable success dealing with the situation. It's not just about the patient, XX, but also in many group meetings (including multi professional meetings as well as meeting with the family) he handled many sensitive situations carefully and positively, in a creative way,

positive in a sense to bring the positive outcome, not just adhere to the rule "tick box job done".

We learned from his role. We are scientists and do purpose driven creative work performing experiments. We are now better listeners, and this improvement is observing and reviewing his role.

Many positive things we are not writing to reduce your read time and obviously we are forgetting some because he has so many good characteristics.

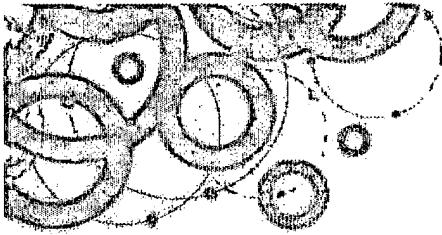
Wish him all the best and we will remember his great contribution bringing a positive outcome against all the odds. We will miss his presence, but the community needs his presence with their critical situations.

He is an angel in real life. When we say this, we cry.

Please feel free to ask any question you have,

Best wishes,

XX Parents.'



Family Matters

Circles Network has been delivering comprehensive family support intervention to families throughout Peterborough, funded by Peterborough City Council. Family Matters is considered by Peterborough City Council to constitute High Level Family Support.

The Council have urged Circles Network to develop this work due to the growing need for assistance, to work alongside families and statutory services to prevent harm to children and reduce the number of children entering the care system.



The introductions Circles Network receive are from the Alternative Resource Team. Circles Network have been invited to tender to become providers on Peterborough City Councils Pseudo- Dynamic Purchasing System for this service.

Family Matters embraces the philosophy that families are unique, resilient, and deserving of support that aligns with their individual journeys. It champions the well-being, choices, and aspirations of every family member while fostering a collaborative and empowering environment.

Family Matters is built on 5 key principles:

1. **Individual Empowerment.**
2. **Personalised Assistance.**
3. **Holistic Well-being.**
4. **Collaborative Approach.**
5. **Cultural Sensitivity.**

Our work with each family is time and outcome specific and usually lasts for a period of eight – 12 weeks.

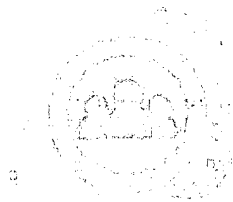
Circles Network have been successful in securing the tender submission to the Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System for Peterborough City Council.

The service has collaborated with various schools, to help bring more structure and meaningful engagement to children we have supported.

1. Child Empowerment
2. Personalised Assistance
3. Holistic Well-being
4. Collaborative Approach
5. Cultural Sensitivity

Family Matters started at the end of Quarter 2, with one family. The project has grown significantly, with two team members who have supported seven families over the last quarter.

Support with a child and his family abruptly ended following the rejection of an extension of funding. This impacted on his transition out plan, as we were not given the notice time to undertake this. We have encountered challenges in establishing communication with the Alternative Resource Team to ascertain the status of agreed extensions to our work, while actively collaborating with a family. Delays in receiving confirmation can pose significant challenges to both the family and the ongoing work. Moreover, a defined timeframe is imperative to facilitate a smooth transition of Circles Network's support from the family, safeguarding the integrity of the accomplished work. Now that Family Matters is on the Pseudo- Dynamic Purchasing System for Peterborough City Council, we are putting plans in place to meet with the 0-25 Team, to ensure Social Workers are aware of our work and we have a clear time structure and plan, so that we end our support in a positive and constructive way for the families.



There has been noted reluctance among a minority of parents to actively engage with the team, demonstrated through actions such as cancelling planned visits or exhibiting a lack of receptiveness towards suggestions and recommendations provided for their involvement. Despite these challenges, the team has demonstrated resilience and flexibility in their strategies, proactively devising alternative methods to foster parental engagement and encourage greater participation.

Being recognised as one of the providers on Peterborough City Council's Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System for family support services is a significant milestone for Family Matters. This opportunity enables us to extend our reach and offer vital support to more families in need. Over the next year we plan to grow our team and enhance our services to meet the increased demand and support more families effectively.

Strategic Plan for Growth

Recruitment and Training:

Expanding the Team: We plan to recruit additional experienced family support workers, social workers, and therapists to join our team. This will allow us to cater to the increased number of referrals and ensure that each family receives timely and effective support.

Comprehensive Training Programmes: New and existing staff will undergo training programmes focusing on the latest best practices in family support, trauma-informed care, and specific interventions tailored to meet the unique needs of the families we serve. All

team members will be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high-quality care.

Enhanced Services:

Holistic Family Support: We will continue to offer a comprehensive approach to family support, addressing not only the immediate needs of children but also supporting parents and carers through mental health services, parenting workshops, and stress management techniques.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

Building Partnerships: We will actively seek to build partnerships with local schools, healthcare providers, and community organisations. These collaborations will help create a network of support around each family, ensuring comprehensive care and resource sharing.

Engagement with the Council: Maintaining a strong, collaborative relationship with Peterborough City Council will be crucial. Regular meetings and feedback sessions will help align our services with the council's objectives and adapt to any changing needs in the community.

Community Outreach:

Feedback and Improvement: Creating platforms for families to provide feedback on our services will be essential. This will help us continually improve and adapt our programmes to better meet the needs of the community.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Regular Assessments: Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will help us track the effectiveness of our interventions. Regular assessments will ensure that we are meeting our goals and providing the best possible support to families.

Data-Driven Decisions: Using data collected from our services, we will make informed decisions to refine and enhance our programmes continually. This data-driven approach will help us identify gaps in services and areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Being part of Peterborough City Council's Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System is an exciting development for Family Matters. By strategically expanding our team, enhancing our services, building strong partnerships, and engaging with the community, we aim to support more families effectively. Our commitment to continuous improvement and collaboration will mean that we meet the growing needs of families in Peterborough, helping them navigate their challenges with resilience and support.

As Family Matters is a new initiative, we do not have specific pre-Covid references for this project. However, families have reported the significant impact of Covid-19 on their

dynamics. Many of the families we support experienced domestic violence during this period, leading to substantial trauma that has affected children's development and parents' mental health. For many families, school serves as a form of daytime respite for parents. Consequently, the lack of school attendance, changes in routine, and absence of support networks during the pandemic have created ongoing challenges. We are actively addressing these issues in our post-Covid-19 support efforts.

During the period, Family Matters has successfully developed and strengthened partnerships with various schools, enhancing the support provided to families. This collaborative approach has involved meetings, discussions with teaching staff, sharing of resources, assessments, and Positive Behaviour Support Plans, to create cohesive support systems for children and parents. By working closely with school staff, Family Matters has identified and addressed specific needs more effectively, resulting in tailored interventions. The strengthened partnerships have also facilitated smoother transitions for children between home and school environments, fostering a more supportive and integrated community network. This collaborative effort is expected to continue yielding positive outcomes, enhancing the overall well-being and development of the children and families involved.

Story of Change - Simon and Family

Since the commencement of our engagement, Circles Network has provided support to Simon and his family, navigating through a period marked by familial strain. Our commitment to person-centred working became particularly important when faced with Simon's regression and subsequent avoidance of positive interactions with others.

Circles Network embarked on a strategic intervention to support Simon's parent, by attuning to the family's evolving dynamics. A dedicated team member collaborated with his parent over a six-week period, offering tailored recommendations to navigate the challenges they faced. This involved a meticulous structuring of home visits, transitioning into concise yet impactful sessions.

The resulting transformation unfolded gradually. Simon, initially reticent, began to re-engage within the family home environment. Small yet significant strides were taken, evolving from shared games to collaborative activities such as baking and den building. The recalibration of our approach proved instrumental in rekindling a sense of connection and joy within the family unit.

As Christmas approached, a noteworthy milestone was achieved. Our team member extended an invitation for Simon to visit the Circles Network hub, a proposition that successfully culminated in Simon stepping beyond the confines of his home after a six-week hiatus. The allure of Santa's grotto acted as a catalyst for this breakthrough, resulting in an environment of shared enjoyment and festive camaraderie.

This narrative underscores the efficacy of our person-centred approach and strategic interventions in positive change within the family unit. The successful reintegration of Simon into community activities speaks to the resilience of the individual.

Kirsty and Family

At just 11 years old, Kirsty's life was fraught with challenges. Diagnosed with ADHD, she also battled severe constipation and overflow incontinence, a result of withholding her bowel movements since she was five. Despite having an ACE (Antegrade Colonic Enema) Stoma inserted in November 2019 to facilitate regular bowel washouts, Kirsty refused the treatment, risking severe health complications. Dr. Owen, her doctor at Leicester Royal Infirmary Hospital, warned of the life-threatening dangers if she continued to refuse the washouts.

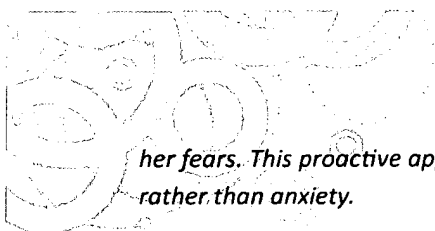
Kirsty attended Junior School, struggling academically and emotionally. Her EHCP Plan indicated she was working significantly below age expectations, requiring tailored learning strategies. Although articulate and able to express her needs, Kirsty's verbal aggressiveness and physical outbursts, directed at her mother, made home life chaotic and stressful. Her erratic sleep patterns, despite being on Melatonin, resulted in chronic lateness to school and a general lack of routine.

Her mother, Maria, also grappling with mental health issues and awaiting an ADHD assessment, felt overwhelmed. The strained relationship between Kirsty and her father, alongside the absence of consistent support from her grandparents, compounded the family's difficulties.

The intervention of a Team Member from Circles Network marked a pivotal change in Kirsty's life. Circles Network implemented a structured reward system, incentivising Kirsty to complete chores and improving her independence. This system, which involved redeemable points for treats like meals out and shopping trips, transformed mundane tasks into opportunities for growth and bonding. Kirsty's successful preparation of Spaghetti-Bolognese under a team member's guidance highlighted her growing skills and confidence.



To further strengthen familial bonds, Circles Network encouraged weekly cooking sessions between Kirsty and her mother, Maria. These sessions became a platform for open communication and boundary-setting, vital for both Kirsty's emotional stability and the mother-daughter relationship. A team member also addressed Kirsty's anxiety about transitioning to secondary school. A visit to Peterborough City Hospital, where Kirsty explored the environment and learned about different medical departments, helped alleviate



her fears. This proactive approach enabled Kirsty to face new experiences with curiosity rather than anxiety.

At school, despite not participating in SATs, Kirsty found solace and joy in art, spending her time drawing and enhancing her creative talents. A team member's introduction of a transport training programme aimed to build Kirsty's confidence in navigating her school bus route independently, became a crucial step towards self-reliance. Maria's upcoming surgery was a significant source of anxiety for both mother and daughter. A team member's coordination with Tony, Kirsty's father, to care for her during this period highlighted the need for clear communication and structured support. However, Tony's reluctance and the lack of cooperation from Kirsty's grandparents underscored the ongoing familial tensions.

Despite these challenges, Maria's pursuit of a Psychology A level course amidst unemployment demonstrated her commitment to personal growth. A team member's consistent support helped Maria navigate these tough times, providing much-needed stability and reassurance. Success of the reward system, coupled with Circles Network's targeted interventions, significantly improved Kirsty's emotional well-being and independence. The positive impact of activities like creating a One Page Profile and engaging in regular check-ins with Kirsty underscored the importance of personalised support.

The journey was not without setbacks. Family conflicts and personal care challenges highlighted the need for continued intervention and monitoring. By implementing a supportive and structured environment, Circles Network helped Kirsty, and her family, navigate their challenges with resilience. The transformation in Kirsty's life has given new strength to her whole family.

"I only worked with Venetia and Courtney for around twelve weeks, but the impact they have had will last a lifetime. The support, validation and assistance has been immeasurable. From helping Kirsty with anxiety and independence to supporting with issues surrounding her dad and grandparents, including complexities around the social care team. Kirsty and Venetia created a friendship which was brilliant to see and has helped her confidence blossom.

I just wanted to say a massive thank you for absolutely everything.

Danni Broughton"

Youth Groups -Peterborough

Circles Network continues to run seven Youth Groups which are funded by Peterborough City Council as part of their Community Short Breaks portfolio. Our main large group is called 'Fun United', which is for 11–19-year-olds and held for two hours on Wednesday evenings (term time), and then for two five-hour sessions per week during the holidays. Our other large group is called 'Circles Stars' and is for 7–19-year old's. This is a dance-based group which takes place on Saturday mornings. Our Small Groups are divided into two age brackets, 7-11- and 11-19-year old's. These take place on Monday evenings (term time) for two hours per age group, and Saturday daytime (throughout the year) for three hours per age group. The children and young people that attend the Monday sessions are also provided with two five-hour sessions per week throughout the holidays. The Holiday Only sessions provide children with five hours of support for one day a week during the school holiday periods.



At the end of 2023, we were thrilled to secure our youth group contracts for an additional three years, following the conclusion of our current five-year contract in March 2024. This success was achieved through extensive work, addressing various questions, and gathering valuable feedback from parents, guardians, and group members. We will maintain all our current groups with a few enhancements starting in April. Our two Monday Small Group sessions (ages 7-11 and 11-19) will be combined into a single group for ages 7-19, moved to Tuesdays, and extended to three hours instead of two. This change ensures members will no longer miss sessions due to Bank Holiday closures and benefits families by providing additional respite and enabling more activities. Additionally, we will remove age brackets from our Saturday Small Groups, grouping members based on their needs and interests instead.



This year, we witnessed outstanding examples of teamwork within our youth group team. New team members were warmly welcomed and effectively trained by our current staff, helping them get to know all group members and how best to support them. In September, three of our youth group team members were promoted to senior youth workers/facilitators, recognising their progression and key contributions to mentoring colleagues, particularly during the summer holidays. The team works cohesively, offering

advice during sessions, supporting one another, and suggesting approaches to enhance the experience for our members. They maintain a primary focus on the children, working towards members' set outcomes and ensuring they have positive and enriching experiences with us.

The summer holidays were a resounding success once again, with our youth group team providing sessions every day from Monday to Saturday for both our Small and Large Groups. The team worked collectively to ensure that members had a good time, enjoyed their summer, and created memorable experiences. This period is always challenging, but everyone demonstrated flexibility to support members both at the hub and out in the community. We held two staff preparation days prior to the holidays to review responsibilities, activity schedules, and care plans, serving as reminders for long-standing team members and introductions for new team members.

Most of our youth groups have been at full capacity for some time, with substantial waiting lists due to limited funded spaces. The high demand for these groups in the local area exceeds available spaces, resulting in longer waiting periods for some individuals. For our Small Groups, we regularly check in with social workers, especially when any members have low attendance. For our Large Groups, we closely monitor attendance and have informed all parents of our Fun United Large Group that starting April 2024, with the new contracts, attendance must be maintained at 80% or above to retain their space. This measure is necessary due to the growing waiting list and the need to ensure fair access for all interested members.

During school holiday periods, particularly half-terms, we experienced lower staff numbers as our university-attending staff did not receive the shorter breaks. To address this, we conducted extra preparation and planning before these sessions so that everyone understood their role and responsibilities. Despite the smaller team, we coordinated effectively to ensure essential tasks such as gastronomy feeds and personal care were performed without delay. The team also planned engaging activities that captivated members while still focusing on their individual outcomes.

This year, we ensured that more team members received PROACT SCIP training, enhancing their confidence and competence in managing differences in communication and behaviours and working proactively. Moving forward, we aim to have even more team members complete this training, as it has proven invaluable in expanding knowledge and reducing incidents during our sessions. This training has enabled a new approach within our team, encouraging them to understand the reasons behind behaviours and what individuals are aiming to communicate. We have shared the principles and reasoning behind this training throughout the team to create a unified understanding and approach.

In the next financial year, our project manager plans to complete the PROACT SCIP instructor training. This will enable her to train more team members, significantly benefiting our

project given the positive outcomes we have already observed. We currently have Positive Behaviour Support plans in place for members who need them, but we aim to expand these plans using the comprehensive PROACT SCIP template. This will further individualise our service and support members in remaining regulated.

Additionally, we plan to create communication passports for individuals, detailing their expressions, behaviours, and body language, along with our interpretations of what they mean. This will be particularly useful for non-speaking members and will help new staff better understand and support them. The communication passports will enhance our ability to meet members' needs and provide them with a sense of satisfaction and understanding.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to see a rising demand for support within the local community. The closure of various local clubs during the pandemic, some of which have never restarted, has created a gap in services. This has left many individuals without access to group activities or settings, leading to challenges in social interaction. Many of our members who had not previously experienced group activities are now struggling with how to interact with peers appropriately, make friends, share resources, and build trust with others outside their family homes. This lack of social experience has become a significant hurdle for some.

Our dedicated team, with their extensive experience, are well-equipped to support each member in a person-centred way. They offer reassurance to both members and their families, demonstrating patience and understanding. The team designs activities to meet individual needs, the building of relationships and creates a supportive environment where members can learn and grow socially.

By focusing on each member's unique needs, our team helps them navigate the complexities of social interaction, ensuring they feel valued and understood. This approach not only aids in their personal development but also contributes to a more inclusive and supportive community.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our partnership with our PROACT SCIP trainer who is readily available to provide advice and additional training for team members. This collaboration has been invaluable in reflecting on incidents and suggesting new approaches to try. With this expert support, we ensure our team is well-equipped to manage challenging behaviours proactively and compassionately, continuously improving our practices to benefit our members.

We have also bolstered our partnership with the Local Authority. This year, we presented to the transitions team, sharing insights about our work and the positive impact we have on our members. Additionally, we have continued to meet quarterly with commissioners from the Local Authority enabling a stronger and more collaborative relationship. These regular interactions allow us to align our goals, share progress, and ensure we are meeting the needs of the members effectively. We also met with other managers from services that are

providing Community Short Breaks to children in the local area, gaining clarity about what each other provides to disseminate this information if required.

Our partnerships with parents and guardians have been a focal point of our development efforts. We actively seek their regular feedback, asking for suggestions on improvements and new activity ideas. This ongoing dialogue helps us remain responsive to the needs and preferences of our members and their families. By incorporating their input, we create a more engaging and supportive environment that reflects the voices of those we support.

Equally important is our commitment to involving members in the development of our sessions. We continuously ask for their feedback and ideas, ensuring that our activities and approaches resonate with them. This inclusive approach empowers our members, giving them a sense of ownership and embeds their positive experiences with us.

Story of Change - Katie

Katie joined our youth groups in 2019, bringing with her a friendly and welcoming spirit, always eager to meet new people. She settled in well, quickly making friends and becoming an integral part of the group. However, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered our lives and presented unique challenges, especially for disabled children and their families.

During the pandemic, we implemented a RAG rating system to prioritise support for our members. Katie was rated as "red" due to her family's high level of need and the significant behavioural challenges she exhibited at home. Her parents faced the daunting prospect of managing these behaviours in isolation, which threatened the stability of their family. Recognising the urgency, we ensured Katie received regular support, forming a small group of members from various projects who, along with a core team of staff who were not furloughed, continued to engage in meaningful activities. Throughout the pandemic, Katie and her family built a strong and trusting relationship with our team. We became a lifeline during this confusing and stressful period, providing much-needed stability and reassurance. Katie struggled to understand why she couldn't go out or attend school, but our consistent support helped her navigate these challenges.

As restrictions lifted and our youth groups resumed, Katie transitioned back seamlessly. Her bond with our team and the consistent support she received had a profound impact, easing her return to group activities. She continued to thrive in the youth club, maintaining long-standing friendships with two peers and occasionally welcoming new ones.

After her 18th birthday, Katie moved into a supported living situation, which presented new challenges. Her parents struggled with the transition, and Katie initially faced difficulties in her new home, such as refusing to shower and avoiding the upstairs of the house. We provided support during this period, helping her adjust to her new environment. Despite these challenges, Katie showed remarkable resilience.

While Katie continues to experience occasional challenges, the frequency and intensity of these incidents have decreased. Our proactive approach and unwavering support have been key to this progress, and we remain committed to helping her achieve her goals.

It is with mixed emotions that we prepare to say goodbye to Katie as she approaches her 19th birthday and transitions out of our youth groups in the next financial year. We are incredibly proud of her journey and the significant strides she has made. Her story shows the positive impact of our youth groups and the power of truly person-centred support.

Michael

Michael began attending our youth groups in August 2019 when he was just 7 years old. As one of the first members to join our Small Groups, his journey with us has been both transformative and inspiring. Being non-speaking, it took time for our team to understand his unique ways of communication, which included vocalisations, facial expressions, and body language. His parents were understandably anxious about the new environment; but we were committed to providing the support needed for Michael to thrive. After a break during the Covid 19 pandemic, Michael began attending our Saturday Small Group in addition to the Monday evening and holiday sessions.

Initially, Michael struggled around his peers, especially when they were louder, which often led to dysregulation and behaviours such as hitting out and hair pulling. These episodes were distressing, and he would often become tearful. Over time, Michael gradually adapted to the presence of his peers, the environment, and our team. Although he continued to exhibit hair-pulling when experiencing strong emotions—whether very happy or upset—we observed significant progress as he settled in.

During holiday groups, the noise levels sometimes upset Michael, but we persevered by introducing him to quieter rooms and areas, encouraging him to spend time there instead of in larger, busier spaces. This adjustment helped him feel more comfortable and focused. Michael struggled with eating in noisy settings, so we arranged for him to eat in quieter areas, allowing him to concentrate better during mealtimes.

The team encouraged Michael to participate in activities with his peers, and he particularly enjoyed sensory activities like bubbles, textured stories, parachute games, and music sessions where staff would sing. He also loved trips to the park to use the swing. These activities not only engaged him but also helped him build trust and connection with others.

Over time, Michael has become much calmer and more self-assured. He now independently takes himself to quieter areas when needed, demonstrating his growing ability to self-regulate. Transitioning to the afternoon group on Saturdays has also been beneficial, as he is less tired and much less tearful. We rarely see hair-pulling incidents now, and our team have become agile in giving him space when he is happy or becoming disrupted, to prevent such

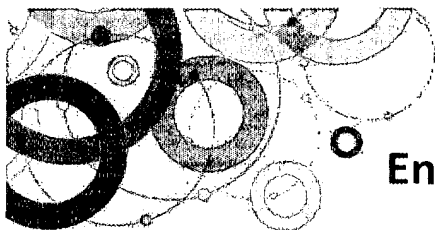
behaviours. We also ensure toys are readily available for him to grab, providing comfort and distraction.

Michael's journey with us has been one of remarkable growth and development. His ability to adapt, coupled with the consistent support from our team, has led to significant improvements in his behaviour and overall well-being.

Feedback

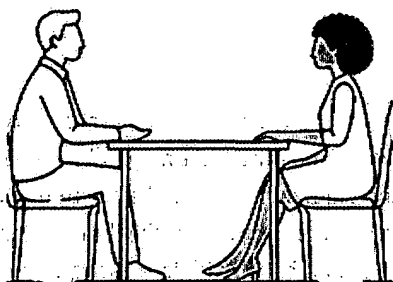
'Lowri loves coming to club, she goes in happy and always comes out happy. For her to have a safe, secure place outside of our home is a wonderful gift towards her gaining a tiny bit of independence, and this is what I want for her. I can leave her at Circles knowing she is looked after, safe, and know that if she seizes, you know exactly what you need to do. As a parent of a child with severe SEN and intractable epilepsy this is invaluable. You provide a lifeline for me, as well as my family- thank you so much!'

Liz Judge (parent)



England Advocacy & Empowerment

The Advocacy and Empowerment Project, located in the South of England but with a nationwide reach, is a vital initiative dedicated to providing crucial advocacy services to individuals across the country. The project team comprises a *highly skilled and experienced* advocate, trained in health, social care, and education settings, possessing qualifications such as an Independent Mental Health Advocate and a BSc (hons) in Psychology and Counselling Studies.

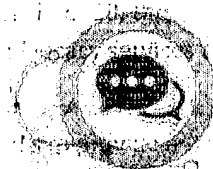


With a primary focus on empowering and supporting vulnerable individuals, the project ensures that their voices are heard, and their rights are upheld in various care settings. Currently funded by Frimley and Berkshire ICB, the project delivers essential advocacy services to individuals in their care.

The project's advocate works to provide a voice for people who may otherwise struggle to express their needs and preferences in healthcare and social care settings. By offering independent support, the advocate helps individuals navigate complex systems, understand their rights, and make informed decisions about their lives.

Drawing upon their expertise in mental health advocacy and psychological studies, the advocate ensures that each person's unique needs are addressed with empathy and professionalism.

This is the second year Circles Network have provided advocacy with people who Frimley ICB are responsible for. The ICB were have a shortage of advocates in their area and have fed back that they have been impressed by the specialism and professionalism demonstrated by the Circles Network advocate who is working alongside people who have complex circumstances and challenges.



The advocate successfully supported one individual with their move into supported living, avoiding residential care away from their local community. The advocate's involvement was

key to ensuring the person's wishes were heard above professionals and family members leading to them having greater independence and self-determination.

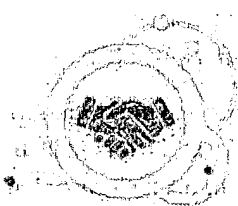
The advocate supported a family member of one individual to raise concerns and avoid a very unsuitable housing arrangement for their brother upon his discharge from a long stay in hospital. Professionals and the person's family agree that he should move from hospital into the community, but professional practitioners were not listening to the family's knowledge about his wishes and needs. The advocate ensured that professionals did not misuse their power and enabled a balance and shared decision making. His discharge has been delayed but a much better plan for his move is now underway and he is looking forward to a successful discharge with support in place which will meet his needs and enable him to thrive.

The advocate has capacity to support more people, but introductions have been minimal. Circles Network are working on a strategic plan to expand the service and work in partnership with more than one statutory authority and in the private sector.

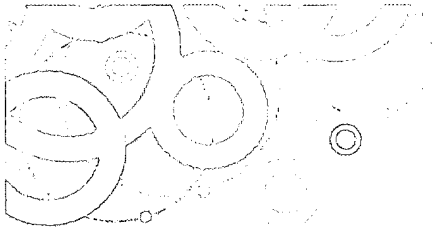
The advocate has reported the people they support often experience delays in decision making and a lack of action from professionals due to both inadequate services and housing being available in the community. This leads to unnecessary lengthy discharges from hospital.

We plan to widen our reach across the south of England. We will achieve this through a targeted marketing plan.

Most of the people the advocate supports have been living in secure hospitals since before the pandemic. Their discharge has been delayed in part due to the pandemic but also due to the socio-economic changes in the community since the pandemic. These individuals have become institutionalised making their move into the community more complex.



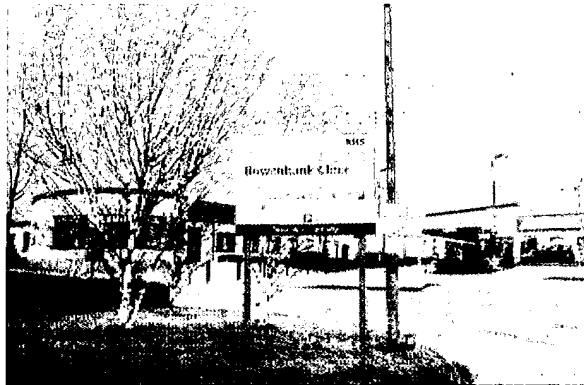
Circles Network have a strong partnership with commissioners at Frimley ICB. The advocate has particularly good working relationships that have developed over time with the people they are supporting and their families. The advocate has worked effectively to establish communication with the professionals involved in the care of those they advocate with.



Glasgow Forensic Advocacy

The Circles Advocacy Glasgow Service provides 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 based at Leverndale Hospital, and our service also provides three months of community provision for those who are discharged from these services. Predominately, Circles Advocacy in Glasgow provides support to those who have offended and therefore in touch with Forensic services because of being detained for mental health treatment. 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 we cover include male and female admissions, male and female rehabilitation, the national learning disability unit, pre-discharge, and community outreach.

One of the most significant highlights of the past financial year has been the progress that was made by the Collective advocates regarding the food concerns experienced by individuals in hospital. In a system where many of the patients can make very few choices on a day-to-day basis, something that could feel insignificant, can have an extremely detrimental impact upon the wellbeing of this population.



The food served at mealtimes has been raised as a set of ongoing complaints for several years, led by the collective group, with support from Circles Advocacy and with backing from NHS leaders. The issues raised concerned the quality, quantity, and meal choices within both Rowanbank and Leverndale hospitals. Individuals approached Circles Advocacy with a collective complaint as they felt it was unfair that they had little input or choice over their meals. After a tasting session held last year, individuals were able to rate some proposed items as well as existing meal choices on the menus. This helped the catering company decide which potential items would be popular additions to the menu, and which items could be replaced. As of March 2024, these items have been incorporated into the menu for individuals to choose.

Furthermore, to reduce the number of mistakes being made with the food being sent to the ward, a new method of placing orders has been proposed which involves staff using iPads instead of physical paperwork. So far, there have been some slight adjustment issues.

However, we will remain involved in taking forward such matters over the coming months to ensure that the changes made have resolved the disagreements. Whilst we recognise that there is still further work to be done, we have remained persistent over the years to implement change.

Another highlight for Circles Advocacy is that we saw several patients being discharged from Rowanbank Clinic to continue their rehabilitation under lower levels of security. As part of this process, advocates were involved with extensive security tribunals over the past year. On several occasions, Circles Advocacy were able to inform individuals of their right to request a 28-day excessive security order rather than the usual three-month period. This led to individuals requesting this at their hearings and several people had these granted, meaning that they were held in conditions of excessive security for two months less than they otherwise might have been. Circles Advocacy not only made individuals aware of this right but were also able to inform current practicing mental health lawyers of this right as they had not shared this information with their clients. Both individuals and their legal representatives were grateful for advocates sharing knowledge as our team continue to nurture positive working relationships with all parties. Effective working relationships with professionals throughout public and private services are vital to ensuring the best outcomes for people we are advocating for.



Circles Advocacy Glasgow team supported individuals to regain over £11,000 pounds that was rightfully theirs. This included refunds, compensation, and backdated benefits payments. Whilst every individual's situation is different, through years of experience advocates have a good understanding of financial eligibility and entitlement for people detained due to mental ill health. We can often spot when someone has been potentially underpaid or may be entitled to something that they are not currently receiving. Through informing about eligibility. Supporting people through the process of claiming payments and receiving backdated sums can make life changing differences. We have strengthened our working relationship with Nick Tarlton from gemap Scotland who has helped enormously with benefit related issues.

An ongoing challenge has been our work on the national collective issue regarding finances for individuals on Transfer for Treatment Directions. Circles Advocacy facilitated various collective sessions and supported the collective group to compose a letter to the Scottish Executive requesting more finances than the current £20.15 per week. The Scottish Executive replied to say that it was a concern best raised with Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) as they can speak about eligibility of benefits. Circles Advocacy liaised with the collective group and supported them to write a letter to DWP. A response was received. However, this was unsatisfactory, so we supported the group to rebut some of the points raised in the reply from DWP. We are continuing to work with the on this issue. Whilst there

has not been a rapid resolution, we continue to utilise the open line of communication with the DWP to raise people's views and ensure that their concerns are put forward. Hopefully, persistence could develop into an opportunity to participate in some further research, and to liaise with those supporting people within prison and other parties who may share an interest in advocating for anyone impacted.

Story of Change - Cammy's Story

Cammy has been awaiting transfer to a low security setting since April 2023 and had both of his excessive security appeals (s.268 and s.269) granted, meaning that he should be moved on as soon as possible. Cammy disclosed to an advocate that he had been involved in some minor incidents which the clinical team felt made him no longer suitable for a move to low security. Cammy was disheartened by this and frustrated that it had taken him so long to get to this point despite being accepted to a low security setting in April. Circles Advocacy made Cammy aware of his legal right to challenge the revocation of his excessive security appeals and informed him of the criteria required for a tribunal panel to grant a revocation order. Initially, Cammy was hesitant as he felt that "both the doctors from here and low security are saying I'm not ready now." The advocate asked Cammy how he felt about low security and whether he was ready. Cammy said, "I do think I'm ready cause I don't have much else left to complete here at Rowanbank and I feel that revoking my appeals is a bit harsh given what's actually happened." An advocate supported Cammy to contact his lawyer and explain the situation. Cammy's lawyer felt that he had a compelling case to argue against the revocation and let Cammy know that he would be up to discuss the hearing over the coming weeks. An advocate also attended the lawyer's meetings to support Cammy, as per his request.

On the day of the hearing, the Circles Advocate reminded Cammy of how the hearing is structured and how it operates. When it was their turn, the advocate read aloud the statement that Cammy had prepared with them in the lead up to the hearing date. Circles Advocacy proposed that Cammy feels a revocation is disproportionate given that he had breached security measures at a low level. After reading the statement, the advocate let the panel know that Cammy had been taking some notes throughout the hearing about other professionals' evidence and offered to read these for Cammy if he wished, or that he may raise these on his own if he felt comfortable. Thus, promoting his independence and participation in his hearing. Cammy chose to raise these issues on his own and made an effective contribution to the tribunal hearing, with the support of an advocate on offer should he want it.

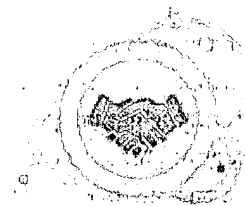
The tribunal panel decided that they agreed with Cammy's reasoning, and that the Health Board had not successfully proven that revoking excessive security was justified in the situation. Cammy was thrilled at this news and thanked Circles Advocacy and his lawyer for supporting him through the process and keeping him informed. Cammy said, "I wasn't even sure about challenging it cause didn't think I'd win against two doctors, thanks for your help."

Taylor's Story

Taylor is an individual who was recently admitted to hospital to receive treatment for his mental health. Taylor has ongoing appeal cases regarding his deportation back to the country he was born in. As a result of his precarious asylum situation, Taylor is unable to claim any government benefits until a decision is made on his case. When Taylor first came into hospital, he did not have any of his own clothes and had no cash or personal items. An advocate met with Taylor soon after he was admitted and discussed how we could support in getting him access to some clothes and financial support. Through liaising with nursing staff, we were able to locate some items of clothing for Taylor to wear in the meantime until contact was made with Social Worker about getting his personal things from his community address.

Due to the ongoing asylum claims, the usual methods of supporting with financial issues were not available to us. Through research and liaising with Social Work colleagues, it was discovered that Taylor may be able to receive money from the Social Work team under the Social Work Scotland Act (1986) Section 12. An advocate referred to the Welfare Rights Advisor requesting that his case be treated as a priority as he is without access to anything.

After not hearing back within the allocated 14 days, the advocate contacted the Team Leader for the relevant local authority involved in Taylor's case. It was advised that the Human Rights Assessment could not be completed until after the Christmas break but that they would ensure Taylor was first in line for an assessment slot. Circles Advocacy continued to keep Taylor informed and reassured him that we would be chasing up the Social Work team at every opportunity to make sure the process did not any longer than necessary.



Taylor has now been assessed and deemed eligible for the Section 12 Payments which will be sent into the Patient Affairs team where he can withdraw cash from the ward.

Below is a quote from an individual who received support from Circles Advocacy for years whilst in Rowanbank before moving on to a different hospital.

"To all the Circles staff. Thank you for all your help and support, friendship, and compassion. Take care of yourselves."

other services across health and social care have increased and therefore the people accessing advocacy are waiting longer for responses and their concerns to be resolved.

Managing introductions in relation to individuals moving on from hospital has been a challenge to the high priority level and the short timescale we have available in visiting and gaining views. Again, the team have worked progressively and extremely flexibly to accommodate these introductions and ensure we were visiting and gaining views in the appropriate timescale.



We are continually exploring new ways to deliver effective advocacy and have considered reducing face to face advocacy or removing our offices spaces. Whilst we have somewhat reduced face to face advocacy, it remains an especially important accessibility method for many people that we work alongside.

The support individuals now receive in the community is quite different than before the pandemic hit our communities. This is due to struggles recruiting team members in support services and across the health and social care industry. We have witnessed an increase in individuals wanting to access advocacy for issues that are not in our Advocacy remit and wanting our knowledge of local services and supports to help signpost to the correct services.

As part of our Advocacy role, we continuously develop partnerships with other services and professionals. With the many practitioners from statutory and voluntary sectors who interact with people we support, also with lawyers and community leaders.

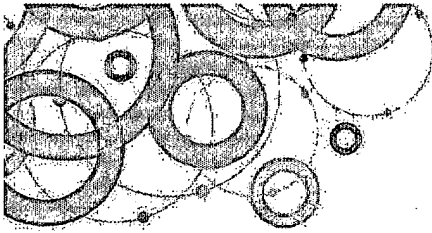
We are renowned providers of advocacy awareness presentations to student nurses, social workers, mental health officers, and newly qualified professional practitioners.

We are proud to be part of the advocacy forum, feeding information into the HSCP alongside other advocacy services in Fife.

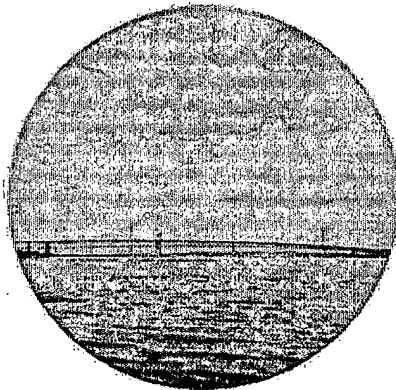
Story of Change - Abby

Abby was introduced to Advocacy as her children had been moved out of her care by social services due to suspected neglect and domestic violence by her ex-partner. Circles Advocacy supported Abby to access a solicitor. Abby had made the decision to ask her ex-partner to leave the home, an advocate supported Abby with social work reports and with various meetings, we also supported her to fully understand her rights. Abby then worked with the social work team and now has her children back in her care. Abby now has support in place to help with needs due to her physical disability and has monthly welfare meetings scheduled to ensure she has full support and can move forward positively.

Marion



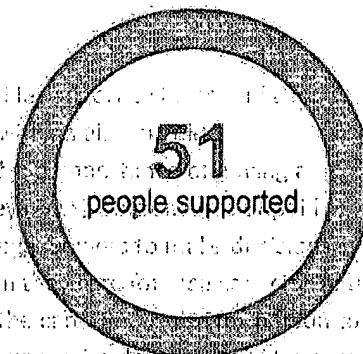
Fife Unpaid Carers Advocacy



This project provides advocacy to unpaid carers throughout Fife with an aim to guide understanding of the importance of having a Power of Attorney (POA). This ensures unpaid carers have the legal powers to make decisions should the person they care for lose capacity, and to support both the carer and cared for person to choose and arrange a suitable Power of Attorney. The project also supports carers who find themselves in a situation where due to not having Power of Attorney in place a Guardianship is required

Three positive outcomes which we have achieved this year include:

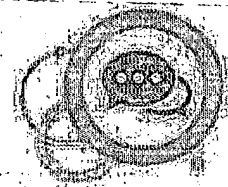
We have seen an increase in people using the service. We have secured and been invited to deliver awareness raising talks to promote the project. We have access to funds to help people who will struggle with the cost of POA.



One major challenge has been the lack of assurance that the funding will be allocated for further years.

Recruitment has been a struggle, support from HR was needed to assist people to apply for the post. We plan for more awareness raising with other services/projects promoting the project to a wider set of stakeholders. Increasing accessibility to welcome greater numbers of carers is an important development to pursue in the coming months.

Following the isolation that occurred for people during the pandemic, opportunities to network with other projects and services is hugely important, especially since the closure of several local resources. We plan to assist with solutions for rebuilding a strong system of support locally. We have access to funds to help people who will struggle with the cost of POA.



Strengthened partnerships with other carer services will be of particular value in extending our work and opportunities for shared forums and meetings will be initiated and validated.

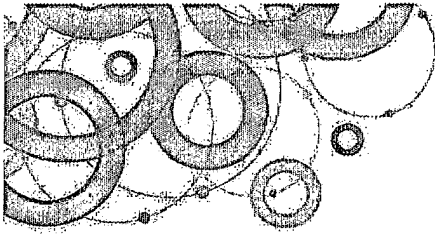
Story of Change - Beth

Beth is an unpaid carer for her brother Alex. They contacted Circles Advocacy as they wanted Beth to be appointed as Alex's power of attorney for welfare decisions should this be needed for the future. Beth and Alex expressed that they felt overwhelmed and had no idea where to start in the process. Both Beth and Alex came into our office to meet with an advocate. The advocate spoke with them about POA and provided information on solicitors that could take this forward. Alex asked the advocate if they would call a solicitor close to where he lives to ask for costings and availability of appointments. The advocate made the call while both were present and as they were happy with the costing, they asked the advocate to arrange an appointment. The advocate acted on this request and provided the information of what to bring with them to this appointment. The advocate offered support at the appointment however, Beth and Alex felt able to attend alone. They provided feedback that the advocate's guidance was vital to get them on the right path to ensure that a Power of Attorney was in place and felt sure this service will help many others in the future.

Ann

Ann introduced herself to advocates at the project for support and information with regards to Power of Attorney. Ann's mum was in the initial stages of Dementia, and she was beginning to have difficulties dealing with her financial affairs. The bank refused to let Ann conduct any banking arrangements for her mum. The advocate met with Ann and her mum and explained the process. They wanted to go ahead with a solicitor's appointment, as the advocate explained to them that a solicitor was able to arrange a capacity assessment. The appointment went well, and the solicitor agreed to proceed as Ann's mum could answer the solicitor's questions appropriately. The Power of Attorney document was drawn up and a second appointment was made to sign it. Ann asked the advocate to assist at this appointment as well. At the next appointment a week later, the solicitor conducted another assessment of Ann's mum's capacity and was then happy to proceed. The document was signed, and the solicitor sent it off to be registered.

"Thank you for making this seem so easy and explaining it to us so my mum could understand it as well. This is such a good service."



Fife Recovery Advocacy Project

Circles Network provide independent Advocacy to individuals across Fife who have or are accessing Drug & Alcohol services. This is a Peer Advocacy Service provided by people with

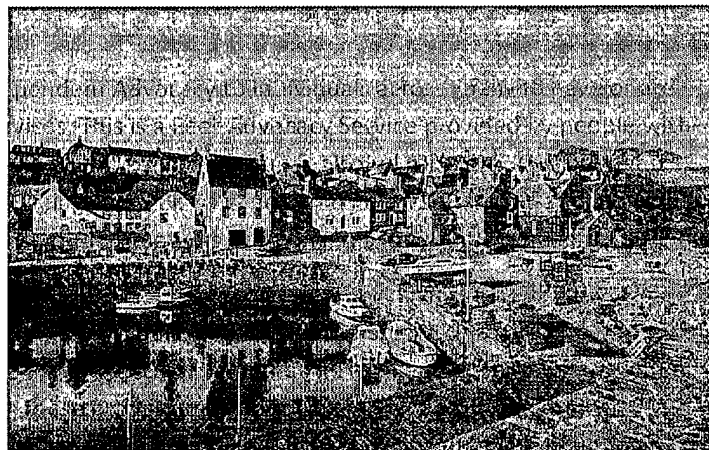
lived experience of drug & alcohol recovery. Our project is being sought by a wide variety of professionals and individuals and the situations and concerns for people requesting support are increasing.



We continue to work in partnership with a variety of groups that are accessible in the Fife area and staff members within these groups are introducing individuals to the project. We were invited to visit Calderglen Residential rehabilitation centre in Blantyre Glasgow to present a talk on our project and how we support individuals. The centre is requesting support

for people who are ready to leave rehabilitation services and move to Fife. Recruiting and maintaining team members with lived experience of recovery has proved a bigger challenge than anticipated.

A lack of information about secure funding is an added concern that causes stress to team members.



We are delighted to have established a good relationship with services and projects such as rehabilitation accommodation, to support the transition for people moving to Fife from periods of treatment.

We were awarded our funding prior to the pandemic and so it has taken longer than expected to fully establish this work.

Community groups and partnership working has been strengthened due to our visibility within various support groups. This makes introducing and connecting with individuals easier and faster.

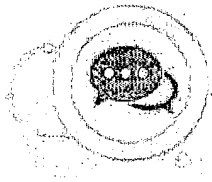
challenge than anticipated.

Story of Change - Julie

about the funding is an added concern that causes stress to team members.

We are delighted to have established a good relationship with services and projects such as rehabilitation accommodation, to support the transition for people moving to Fife from periods of treatment.

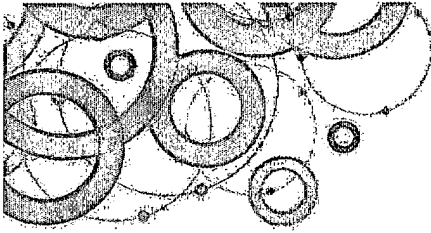
We were awarded our funding prior to the pandemic and so it has taken longer than expected to fully establish this work.



Julie had been going back and forward between addiction services and her GP regarding the dose of her Suboxone maintenance medication. Julie contacted Circles Advocacy for help with this as she felt she was not being listened to at her appointments. An advocate contacted Julie for a chat and to find out some background information relating to her situation. Julie explained she had an appointment with her addiction services doctor and asked that an advocate attend alongside her. At this appointment, the doctor looked back through Julie's notes and asked her questions about her drug use. Julie was currently prescribed a maintenance dose of Suboxone daily, a normal maintenance dose of Suboxone is between 14mg and 16mg daily, significantly higher than her prescription. Following a discussion the doctor agreed to increase her dose to 16mg daily from the date her next prescription starts. Julie was happy with this outcome.

David

David came to Circles Advocacy for help after speaking with one of his friends who had previously received support from this project. We met with David for a chat regarding his treatment at Addiction Services and how he felt he was not being listened to, feeling "fobbed off" with excuses and false promises. We met with one of the senior addiction nurses where an advocate explained how upset David was regarding his treatment. The nurse listened to what we had to say and agreed to give David the reduction he had been asking for. They also changed David's collection days at the chemist from six days per week to three days per week. David was elated with the outcome of the appointment and hopes this is the start of eliminating his dependence on prescribed medication.



Circles Advocacy, Inverclyde

Circles Advocacy in Inverclyde delivers a free, independent service to individuals aged sixteen 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 76,700 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 office, which is situated in the heart of our community. The service is generic and promotes equal opportunities with a human rights-based approach for people who require advocacy. We support individuals who have the following characteristics:

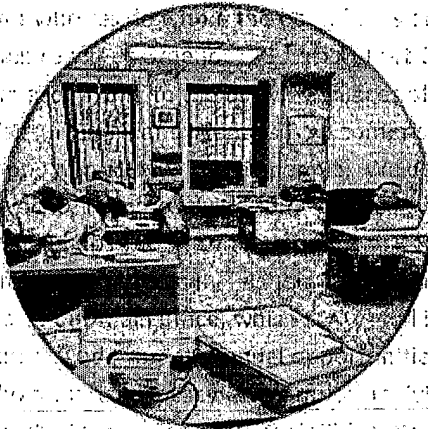
Elderly status, Caring responsibilities, Homelessness, Learning Disabilities, Learning Difficulties, Autism, Physical Disabilities, Mental Ill Health, Detention under the Mental Health Act, Acquired Brain Injury, Alcohol or Drug Dependency, Dementia, Ethnic Minority Background, Individuals with mental health issues, Prisoners, and individuals with long term health issues. Advocates support people who are subject to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, The Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, and the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. We work through identifiable issues, providing information about the options that are available. Our support can be short or long term, depending on need, 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 receive additional funding from the Scottish Government to deliver the Self-directed Support Project.

Three highlights this year include delivering one to one advocacy to 599 individuals, and

The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, The Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, and the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. We work through identifiable issues, providing information about the options that are available. Our support can be short or long term, depending on need, at a pace the individual is comfortable with.

We work in partnership with many local



resolving 555 issues with a positive outcome for advocacy partners and giving our office a complete make over through decorating and upgrading.

When we decided to decorate the office and improve street presence, we couldn't find appropriate local funding or affordable help. The decision was made by the team that we could do it ourselves and save precious resources. The team gave up their weekends and we not only accomplished sprucing up the front office, a complete make over was accomplished. This has been a talking point in the community with visitors commenting on how good it all looks.

We are challenged by the increased number of new introductions from the growing refugee community where individuals require additional time to process a language that is not their chosen one. We have now tapped into the Refugee Integration Team who provides translators, and the NHS for people detained in hospital.

One area of development is within the refugee community. We have developed partnership collaboration with the new Refugee Integration Service provided by HSCP. This partnership is working well, and we envisage more introductions will be forthcoming.

Story of Change Mary & Jules

Mary and Jules found themselves facing an unexpected chapter. Mary had been informed that the home that Jules has lived in for 30 years was going to close due to funding issues. Faced with the impending closure, Mary was deeply concerned about the lack of information and support for her brother. The prospect of Jules being uprooted without any say in the matter left Mary feeling helpless. She knew that Jules, who had limited communication abilities, needed someone to help him navigate this uncertain journey.

Desperate to ensure Jules's voice was heard, she sought the assistance of an advocate who could provide the support needed during this difficult time. Upon their first meeting with the advocate, Mary poured out her concerns. She expressed how Jules was being overlooked in the decision-making process. The advocate listened attentively, recognising the importance of ensuring Jules's rights and preferences were respected.

The advocacy journey began with a detail of his needs. The advocate spent time with Jules, observing his routines, understanding his non-verbal cues, and discovering the unique aspects of his personality. Through patience and empathy, the advocate established a connection with Jules, creating an environment where he felt comfortable expressing himself. Mary's fears of Jules being unaware of his options started to dissipate as the advocate worked diligently to gather information about potential living arrangements. They engaged with care providers and authorities involved in the relocation process, advocating for transparency and inclusion of Jules in the decision-making.

Recognising the importance of communication, the advocate ensured that Jules received information in a way that he could understand. Visual aids, simplified language, and constant reassurance became essential tools in breaking down the complexities of the impending move.



As the process unfolded, the advocate became Jules's voice, articulating his preferences and needs to the relevant authorities. Mary witnessed a transformation in her brother, as he began to understand the changes happening around him. The advocate not only supported Jules in the decision-making process but also provided emotional support to Mary.

In the end, thanks to the advocate, Jules transitioned to a new home that considered his unique needs and preferences. Mary, now found solace in knowing that her brother's voice had been heard, and he had an advocate by his side throughout the transformative journey. The story of change for Mary and Jules highlighted the profound impact advocacy can have in preserving the dignity and rights of individuals during times of upheaval.

Paul

Paul came along to our office with his brother as he had attended a meeting at the social work department and was not happy when they spoke about putting him into care. Paul's brother had accessed our service before and told him about advocacy and how it would support him. Paul stated he needed an advocate as he was terrified of what was going to happen if no one was listening to him.

Paul said he navigated his days in a whirlwind of chaos. He stated that alcohol often served as his anchor in a sea of troubles. Amidst the chaos, Paul found solace in his home. Paul said he had always been a spirited soul, but his love for alcohol had become a constant companion, blurring the lines between his desires and the grip of addiction. As days folded into nights and responsibilities became a haze, he realised that his brother was becoming genuinely concerned about him.

The social work department had become aware of Paul's struggles and sought to intervene. They deemed it necessary to consider a care home for Paul, believing it to be in his best interest. Paul, fiercely independent despite his challenges, vehemently opposed the idea. Feeling lost and unheard, Paul complained to his brother, came along to the Advocacy Service, and was introduced to an advocate. The advocate listened with empathy and gave Paul the time to talk and explain his issues. The advocate understood the complexities that brewed beneath Paul's chaotic surface.

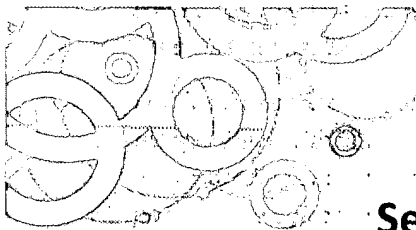
With the advocate by his side, Paul found a newfound sense of hope. The advocate became his voice, his confidante, and pillar of support. Together, they navigated the maze of social work meetings and GP appointments. The advocate made sure Paul's opinions were heard,

his desires understood, and his concerns addressed. In those meetings, where Paul once felt drowned and unheard the Advocate helped him articulate his wishes clearly. The advocate encouraged Paul to highlight his aspirations and painted a picture of a man striving to reclaim control of his life. It was an uphill struggle, the social work system, while well-intentioned, struggled to perceive beyond the surface, Yet the advocate's persistence and Paul's determination began to carve a path towards understanding.



Through the advocate, the social work team began to see Paul as a person striving to regain his footing. Slowly, they acknowledged his preferences and autonomy. It was not an easy journey. There were setbacks, moments of frustration, and times when Paul felt his resolve faltering. But his advocate remained a steadfast companion, reminding him of his worth, his voice, and his right to choose his own path. Eventually with his advocate's support and Paul's determination, a compromise emerged. Instead of a care home, a support plan was tailored specifically to Paul's needs while allowing him to retain his independence. It included regular check-ins, counselling sessions, and support groups to help him manage his addiction.

Paul's chaotic life did not magically transform overnight, he found a glimmer of stability in his life. He realised that being heard was not about the volume of his voice, but the depth of understanding and empathy of those who took the time to listen. Paul and his brother often pop into the office to say hello to everyone.



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. People receiving social care services in Scotland have the right to operate 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

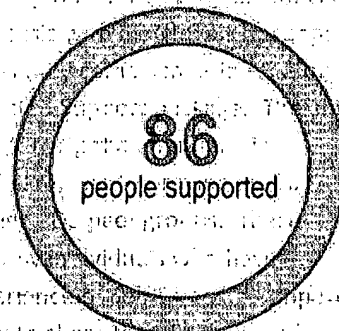


to raise awareness and understanding of SDS and the process across Inverclyde amongst people accessing services, their families, and carers by sharing information, supporting the communication of their views, and by facilitating peer groups. This project works on a one-to-one basis with individuals to support with the issues they come across in relation to their Self-Directed Support package. The aim is to encourage participation in managing individualised care, and to provide group support through SDS peer groups. These groups are led by individuals who have personal experience of Self-Directed Support, and are happy to share their journey with others, to help them think outside of the box and understand the processes more clearly. Our project is funded through the Scottish Government.

highlight of the year was in securing the self-directed funding for a further three years. This was fantastic news as we have diligently developed the project over the years. This result will enable the team to continue to grow and develop the project.

Another highlight this the year was securing the funding to enable team members to participate in the Level 7 Brokerage Award. Two members are enjoying the learning and are committed to achieving this award.

The best highlight for the team was gaining sixty positive outcomes for advocacy partners. Many organisations are still coming to terms with the aftermath of the covid pandemic, with many of their staff leaving, being on long term sick, unable to recruit, along with long waiting lists. It has been an achievement to have continued through relentlessly.

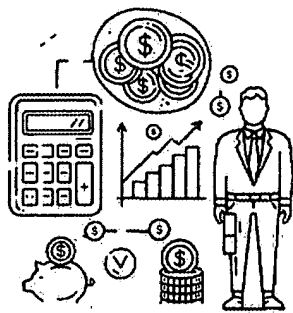


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One challenge that remains is the continuing lack of responsive via some local services as they experience employees leaving positions, long-term sickness and recruitment difficulties. This has caused delays in gaining positive outcomes for some people we support. We have been tenacious in our delivery and approach to ensure that no one slips through the net as they become frustrated over slow progress. We ensure people are updated and involved and continue to pursue outcomes. This has increased the advocates' time in closing situations.

Another challenge has been in supporting team members in a time of financial uncertainty, knowing that the funding could end. We talk openly about our position in weekly meetings and one to one coaching sessions and have developed a spreadsheet to record telephone calls, emails and letters that were not being responded to, for us to highlight this difficulty with the organisations involved. We made progress with the HSCP through direct contact with their Lead. We were invited into meetings in relation to SDS to highlight our work.



Story of Change Story of Change – David – SDS

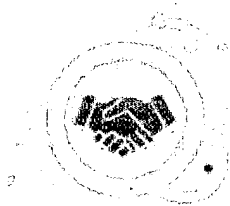
Option 1

David's Additional Support Needs (ASN) Children & Families Social Worker introduced him to Circles Advocacy. David was 17-years old when we first met him, he has complex disabilities and limited verbal communication. He attended an ASN education service outside Inverclyde until his 18th birthday in 2023. When he was introduced to an advocate, David lived with his father and step mum who both worked with NHS Scotland. David needed support to find a Personal Assistant (PA) under the Self-Directed Support (SDS) (Scotland) Act 2013.

An assessment of David's needs had already been conducted by a social worker, and a budget of 14 hours support agreed, including 10 hours of personal care and 4 hours of social support. This budget came to £9,000 per year to employ a PA. All that remained was for a suitable person to be identified and hired. Initial steps were to discuss an action plan for moving forward and obtain David's needs-based assessment from his ASN social worker. The family said that they had been trying to get support for a long time, adding that the Lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 had greatly increased the delays and difficulties. On receipt of the needs assessment David's advocate wrote a job advertisement for a PA to be employed for 14 hours per week. After gaining David and his family's approval, this was placed at the local jobcentre and employability services in Inverclyde for a period of two months. However, no-one enquired about the post during this period. There were various reasons for this: the small number of hours being offered, and high staff turnover in the social care sector. David's Social Worker was informed about the lack of interest in the 14

hours post. Communicating through Circles Advocacy, David's family asked whether senior staff at the ASN team would consider allowing David's paternal grandmother to be employed for these 14 hours a week. She was already providing David with a high level of care on his return from his educational placement, allowing his father and step mum to continue with their employment. ASN Resource Allocation Group (RAG) agreed that a distant family member could be employed as David's PA, and they also agreed to backdate the caring role.

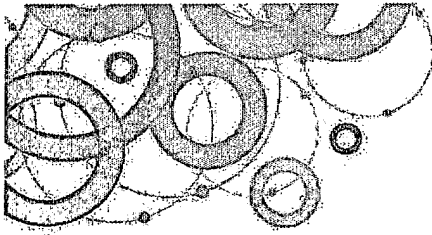
The next phase of the action plan was to apply to the Scottish Personal Assistants and Employers Network (SPAEN) for a managed service at Level 3. To support this application David's father signed off David's details and mandates of authority and his paternal grandmother provided mandates of authority and details for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). After submitting these to SPAEN further difficulties arose; SPAEN could not provide a level 3 service to new applicants as their banking provider was not allowing new bank accounts to be used in this way unless there was an agreement to pay £0.50 per transaction made on the account. This does not represent good use of public finances and SPAEN were only able to offer a level 2 package for this reason. As part of the level 2 package, SPAEN will: register David (or his father on David's behalf) as an employer with HMRC Register. They will also set up all his employees with HMRC, communicate with HMRC on his behalf, calculate and pay the PA's salary (4 weekly), calculate and pay HMRC income tax and National Insurance contributions deducted from the PA's earnings, provide remittance advice telling David/his father how much to pay to their employees and PAYE Scheme.



These tasks are part of the responsibility of hiring a PA with an SDS Option 1 budget. SPAEN was set up to enable individuals who choose this option to do so without being overwhelmed by the responsibility. Had they been eligible for the managed services, SPAEN would take on the additional responsibility of paying the PA's salary, paying the employers NI contributions to HMRC under the PAYE scheme, and drafting and submitting David's annual direct payment financial return to the local authority. David's family thanked the advocate for all the support they provided in making it all happen.

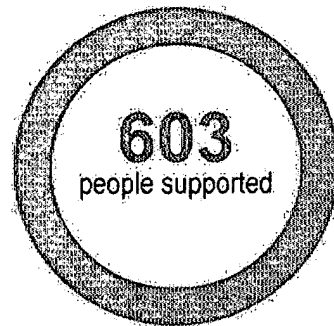
Story of Change – Jim

Jim is an elderly man who needs personal care at home. He receives Option 1 (Direct Payment) of Self-Directed Support, which allows him to employ two Personal Assistants, making his care more consistent and personal. Jim also used his SDS payments to subscribe to the Scottish Personal Assistants Employer's Network so that they would take care of the payroll, employer's insurance, and pension scheme requirements. Jim's daughter was helping him to communicate with them, but they ran into problems. Jim's Personal Assistants were not being paid on the correct dates, and they were having difficulty enrolling them in the



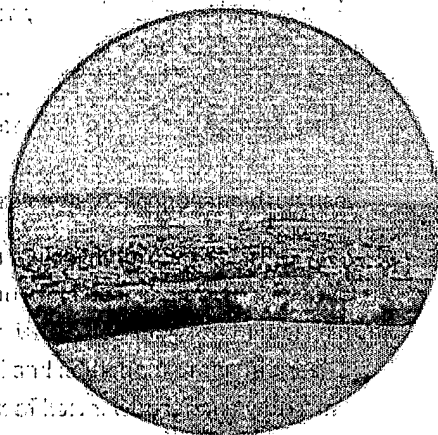
Circles Advocacy, South Ayrshire

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) Act 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 able to access our service independently. We are also funded to provide advocacy for individuals with issues relating to alcohol and drug use.



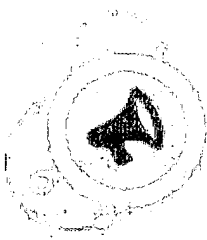
We provide information and support to assist people in making informed decisions, to express their own needs and have as much control as possible over their own lives. We advocate with and for people affected by mental health issues, learning disabilities, chronic illness, physical impairments, people 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.

In October 2022, we were approached by the Priory, one of the leading independent providers of mental health care and adult social care in the UK. The Priory manage a 36-bed low secure hospital, outside Ayr and a further two step-down facilities, one in Ayr and another in East Ayrshire, which have eight and twelve beds, respectively. They approached us to ask if we would provide advocacy to the patients under their care, as they were aware of who we were and of the work that we do. We are now providing advocacy for forensic patients in these three settings, working with them on a wide variety of issues. We have received positive feedback from patients who are experiencing the benefits of having advocacy within the hospital.



We regularly attend around eight local and national development groups to promote advocacy and recovery advocacy, and to be involved in the development of various local and national strategies in relation to recovery and mental health.

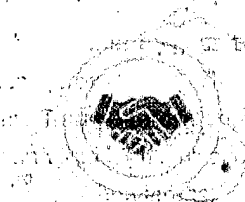
In addition, there are 23 local groups that we collaborate with on a regular basis in the form of forums or drop-ins. Some groups exist to develop how the delivery of health and social care at a local level. We attend these groups to express the voice of the people we advocate for, to help them have a say on what issues they deal with day-to-day and how things can be changed to help enhance real life experiences. Other groups are community groups for people in vulnerable situations, who are experiencing homelessness, poor mental health, drug, or alcohol misuse or who are living in poverty.



We were invited to join the South Ayrshire Community Justice Ayrshire (CJA) Partnership this year. It was created to promote equality and drive local community planning activity to improve outcomes for people wherever they are on the justice pathway. It also aims to improve outcomes for their families, victims, and the wider community. They work collaboratively across the Voluntary Sector and the Health & Social Care Partnership to identify gaps and deliver outcomes identified for people involved in the Criminal Justice system locally. This work supports and develops a knowledge and skills framework around Trauma Informed Justice for working with victims and witnesses. Our involvement allows us to highlight and raise issues that are experienced by the people that we work with who may be victims, witnesses or accused perpetrators.

In the early part of last year our lead recovery advocate left their post to pursue another path. We quickly instigated our recruitment process to find another advocate. It was a challenging time, losing a remarkable and inspiring member of our team and we wanted to find a person who also had lived experience of being in recovery and who shared our values, was passionate and positive. We eventually found a new recovery advocate who has both inspired and driven us and our work forward, supporting people in recovery to be heard and to challenge stigma and discrimination.

Another challenge involved a collaboration with the local authority to create a local advocacy strategy. We have had a few meetings together but unfortunately the work stalled several times. We continue to share feedback in this important matter in helping the wider community know where they can turn to ensure that their rights are being upheld and to clarify the importance of advocacy being widely known amongst the public.

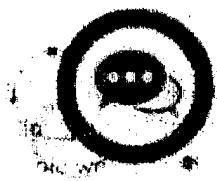


We are now working with people who are detained in hospital in a low secure forensic setting, both in a private hospital and in the community. This presents many challenges

along with opportunities to increase our knowledge in this area. We have been working and training on becoming more familiar with legislation used in this area to effectively support people we work with. It can be a complex and challenging setting to work within. Although this area of forensic engagement is familiar, the level and extent are new.

Some people we now work with have been in hospital for many years and have been moved from hospital to hospital. Some patients do not feel that they have a voice or that what they have to say does not matter anymore. We assist people to raise any concerns they have, to challenge the views that exist around who they are and what they have done and to ensure that their rights are upheld.

Since the pandemic we have noticed an increase in the complexity of the issues that people are facing post covid and in the middle of a health and social care crisis.



With local health and social care partnerships finding themselves with vastly decreased budgets and instructions to make cost cutting savings across all services, the fallout from this is affecting the communities that we work within. This is taking the form of support providers pulling out of contracts for home care or support work. Social work departments are only providing support to people in critical need and many other health care sectors are struggling to meet the needs of the community. The way that health and social care is provided has shifted so much that many people are struggling to understand or deal with the resulting situations.

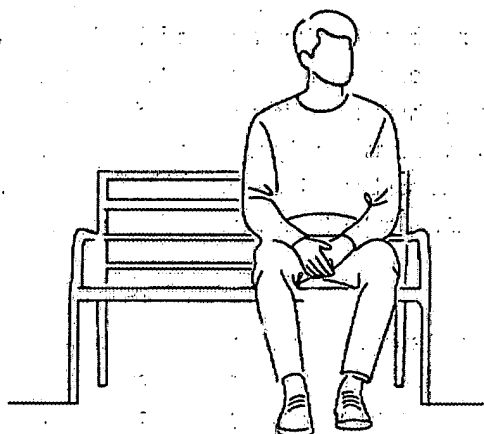
We work with people whose ability to maintain their employment, receive benefits and afford food, childcare and help with their mental and physical health has been grossly affected by both covid and the subsequent cost of living crisis. A lot of basic tasks such as; dealing with utility bills, banks and benefits are organised online now and many people we work with live chaotic lives caused by past and current trauma and do not feel able to manage these matters. This can lead to further debt, trauma, and physical, emotional, and social isolation. For many, we are the only people that they have contact with to support them with their issues as other traditional service no longer provide support or practical assistance due to staffing levels or cuts to funding or the changes to criteria for receiving support. As a result, we are seeing more people coming to us with multiple requests for assistance. Some come to us as no-one else can help and they have tried everywhere else. Other people are introduced to us by different services and organisations who cannot or are no longer able to provide the support to the person that they once did. We have adapted rapidly to meet this need and become knowledgeable about people's rights in relation to more complex issues. We are not the only local organisation experiencing such a dilemma. We work and collaborate closely with other organisations and the Health & Social Care Partnership to highlight where things need to change. Becoming part of the solution and

supporting people where we can, whilst helping to change systems and structures will take forward responses to the needs of people in the community.

We have developed connections with two new care homes in South Ayrshire, attending resident's meetings, listening to concerns that people raise about the care they receive. Valuable feedback from both residents and care home staff has shaped new outcomes. Supporting people to have a stronger voice in what they want to see happening in the care home has been the aim. Learning and sharing where people would like to go on trips, preferred menu choices, lifestyle and care decisions is fundamental to getting things right. A lot of care homes became isolating and fearful places during and after Covid restrictions and are keen for our help to ensure individuals in their care can enjoy more fulfilling lives.

Story of Change - Frank

Little was known about Frank when he was introduced to Circles Advocacy. He had been found on the street by a member of the public, unable to communicate and with no form of identification. Hospital staff suspected that he had suffered a stroke at home, become disorientated and then was found in the street.



Frank was admitted to hospital and placed on a short-term detention under the Mental Health Act. His Mental Health Officer contacted us towards the end of this period to advise that an application was being made for a Community Treatment Order (CTO). During our initial visit, we used various strategies to communicate with Frank however due to aphasia he could not communicate his thoughts or understand what we were saying. We suggested that a referral be made to speech and language for an assessment. A curator ad litem was

appointed for his Tribunal. We continued to visit Frank to explain the process and to keep him informed of the decisions being made.

Speech and Language therapists began to work with Frank within the hospital and we worked in conjunction with them. Over time, his written communication improved significantly as well as his cognition. An Adults with Incapacity meeting was arranged to discuss the requirement for Guardianship. We continued to visit Frank to gain his views on Guardianship & his future residency. As before, we tried various methods of communication

to establish what worked best for him. At this stage, it was apparent that Frank was able to read and understand written communication. This enabled us to write questions, and he was able to point to the answer of his choice. We were able to successfully establish his views on Guardianship, what area he wished to live and what level of support he felt he required.

We attended his AWI meeting to support him to share these views with his wider team. The legal representative from the council shared how valuable our input was, given that he did not have any known relatives or friends to advocate on his behalf. The decision was made to progress with Guardianship to support a move to 24hour care, Frank agreed with this. With his consent, we also provided a personal statement of his views to the court.

At time of closure, Frank remained in hospital awaiting a court date for the Guardianship hearing. For many, 'getting better' is about returning to the way they were before their stroke. Whilst we are sure this would have been Frank's ideal outcome; we are also aware that he felt empowered in his recovery journey through his ability to communicate in alternative forms. Spending time with Frank, exploring alternative means of communication and ensuring he had access to the appropriate therapies allowed him to have a say about decisions made about his life & helped him to understand his options and rights.

James

James approached us looking for some help to contact his housing association. He was extremely upset and worried about a letter he had received saying that they were going to force access to his home to conduct gas/boiler inspection of his property. The letter had been causing him a lot of distress. He said that he had been receiving letters for about a year, but he had been ignoring them. James said that he was embarrassed about the untidiness of his flat. James told us that he experienced poor mental health and found dealing with the housing association incredibly challenging. He told us that he had tried to phone them a few times, however, he could not navigate the automated response and options system that they operated on their phone line. James did not have access to the internet in his home and so could not go online to speak to them.

With James present, we contacted his housing association and explained his situation and the difficulties that he was experiencing. We supported him to arrange for a suitable appointment for them to come and inspect his boiler. The housing association were very sympathetic and understanding of his situation and they provided James with much

reassurance. His housing association were not aware of James' difficulties in communicating with them and he now has a direct line to his housing officer should he require anything in the future. This means he will have direct communication with a person and does not need to go through the automated answer and option system.



James is now more confident and able to talk to his landlord and they are now aware of the difficulties he was having.

James said that he did not know what he would have done if we hadn't spoken to them and sorted it out. He said that he now feels more comfortable talking to his housing officer about what help he needs

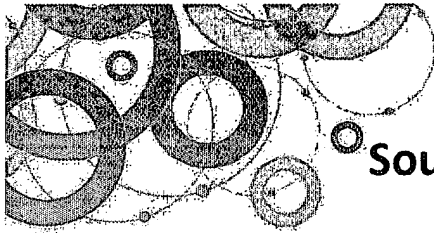
in his flat. They will be able now to access support for him.

Feedback

"Thanks so very much for believing in me and you have tried your best since I have spoken with you your communication has been amazing again thanks so much"

"I don't know where I would be without you."

"Children's panel went brilliant. They were thinking about stopping contact but didn't as advocacy statement said I had reached out for support."



South Ayrshire Recovery Advocacy

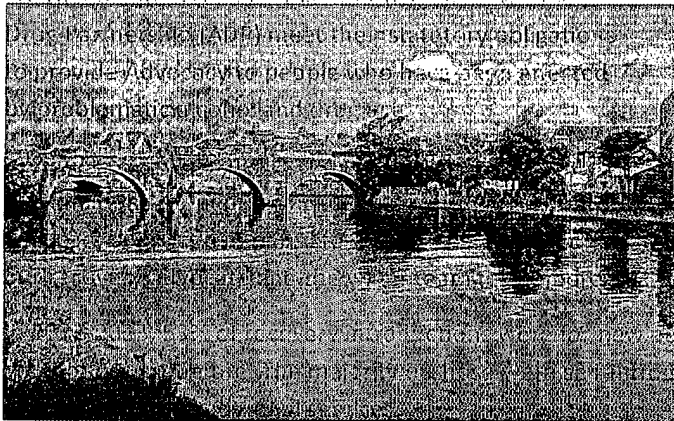
We provide an Independent Rights Based Advocacy Service to individuals and their families residing in South Ayrshire who have been affected by problematic alcohol and drug use. This Service operates in collaboration with the existing Advocacy provision in South Ayrshire to ensure that South Ayrshire Alcohol Drug Partnership (ADP) meet their statutory obligations to provide Advocacy to people who have been affected by problematic alcohol and drug use.



In 2022-2023, we experienced a 31% increase in introductions for people with substance use and/or alcohol dependence who are seeking advocacy support compared to 2021-2022. This is due to consistent and intensive efforts by our recovery advocate and the wider team to promote this aspect of our work.

In 2022-2023, 53% of recovery introductions were for new people accessing advocacy who had not used it before. The majority of those were self-introductions, not from other organisations or traditional services.

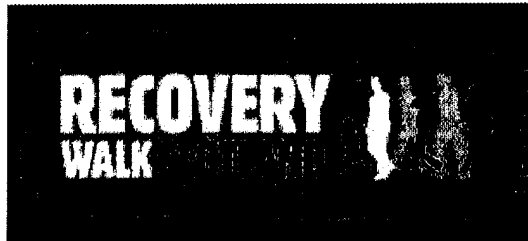
Most people we advocated for and with were not working with other organisations or did not have any other support in their life, either from family or friends, or other organisations. People who were extremely vulnerable and isolated, and people with whom other services



were finding it difficult to work with, engage with, or who the people themselves did not trust. When we are supporting adults who live with substance and/or alcohol use to attend child protection meetings and children's hearings, we are providing advocacy for people where no such other service exists in South

Ayrshire. We have received extremely positive feedback from parents, other third sector organisations, the local Health & Social Care Partnership, and members of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration for the work we do in this area.

Circles Network's recovery advocate arranged for various recovery groups including ROADS (Recovery Out of Alcohol and Drugs Support), Harbour Ayr and River Garden and invited them along to our team meetings. They have also attended networking meetings with Ayrshire Council on Alcohol and Harbour Ayr. They have also attended drop-ins at Harbour Ayr, the LADDER (Live A Different Day Embracing Recovery) group, the PING (Peer Involvement Network Group), HAPI Women's Recovery group, the We Are With You family group and Ayrshire Council on Alcohol. Also, the Wallacetown community drop-in sessions and Care and Share. The recovery advocate also attended the Overdose Awareness Day Flower Walk event in Ayr and the Paisley Recovery Walk.



We were approached by the South Ayrshire Justice Service team to ask if we could present a talk on advocacy and recovery advocacy to a group of social workers who were undergoing training in criminal justice social work. We explained what advocacy was and about the work that we do in South Ayrshire in relation to people who are involved in the criminal justice system. Feedback was incredibly positive from both attendees and organisers.

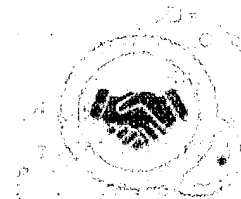
Sometimes our effectiveness with supporting people to resolve their issues is linked to the limitations that exist in the wider community; such as the availability of supports, criteria for accessing other services and wider issues. Individuals who seek our support with housing issues, for example, if they are looking for support to move tenancy from an unsuitable area to a preferred one or being able to live somewhere other than in the area that is being offered by the local authority. This is an area where the resolutions are difficult to find for people. The only thing we can do in these situations is listen to people and support them to have a stronger voice. Some advocacy partners can get frustrated if the resolution, or progress of their issues are not dealt with quickly. Often advocates must wait for replies to questions or decisions from other services to enable situations to progress or change. Several services, especially in health and social care, are short staffed, underfunded and extremely busy, and such factors exacerbate delays. Due to limited or reduced resources, some individuals' issues are unresolved or simply take longer to settle. People want to be heard and taken seriously. The nature of our role is to ensure this happens in an empathetic and supportive fashion. This alone can make a positive difference.

We are in discussion with the local Drug & Alcohol Partnership to link in with them to increase the provision of advocacy to rural areas within South Ayrshire. We have secured a place on a converted ambulance purchased by the partnership to travel about and connect other local organisations to ensure joined up working and awareness-raising of what is on offer. Many people in recovery or beginning their recovery journey who are finding it difficult to access suitable and safe accommodation have contacted us. Some people are

being released from prison with the hope of beginning their recovery journey, only to find themselves with little or no support, and having to be housed in temporary accommodation within the community that they previously lived in. They are being housed next to drug dealers and old associates that they want to get away from and find their recovery journey halted before it has begun. People are telling us that they cannot access support packages due to not meeting the high criteria set by the local authority. Third Sector organisations are relied on by the local authority to deliver solutions, however, are limited due to budget restraints. As a result, people can find it hard to move on and progress in their lives. On top of this, some organisations found themselves unable to continue during and after the Covid pandemic, which resulted in less organisations on the ground.

There is hope for people who experience substance use and poor mental health however, with the introduction of the new MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) Standards for Scotland. This will allow people more choice, support, and access to treatment for their substance use, such as having the right to access treatment or support on the day that they ask for it, or that their treatment is not conditional on them being abstinent from substances. The Standards recognise that people who use substances need to be treated with dignity and respect and receive trauma informed care.

We attend various Third Sector and Partnership forums, which enable us to collaborate closely to highlight where things need to change. We are a valued part of that process and support people where we can, assisting in systems change, creating structures to suit what people in the community need. We have attended various learning and development events over the last year to push forward and highlight issues important to the people we work with.



Story of Change - Jim

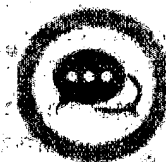
Jim initially contacted Circles Advocacy for support to attend a Looked After Child (LAC) meeting. He had been attending Children's Hearings with his solicitor but did not have anyone to support him at the LAC meetings. He found the Hearings extremely difficult to attend but he felt better knowing his solicitor would attend these with him. He had not attended many LAC meetings however, as he felt very much on his own at these and that he was not being listened to or taken seriously instead, it seemed to him he was constantly being judged for his past substance use. He felt that all efforts that he had made to address his substance use were being ignored and was overwhelmed at having to attend a meeting comprising 15 or more people, all talking about the mistakes that he had made. Jim also stated that no-one was helping him to read paperwork in relation to the LAC meetings. He was receiving 50- or 60-page reports through the post and was worried about his mental health and his recovery due to the stress. Jim also stated that he had other issues in his life that needed dealing with, but he did not know where to start with them. He said that he was

worried about other family members, he also had debt issues and smaller concerns that caused anxiety that would grow over time.

We supported Jim to read the paperwork and address any issues or questions that he had about them. We supported him to prepare for and attend LAC meetings, liaise with children and family social workers and the children's reporter. We supported further by attending appointments with him at his solicitors. We liaised with the children and family social worker to ensure that his full views were being included in any paperwork and went on to support him to contact other local organisations, that he was not previously aware of, to support him with some other issues. As a result of us discussing and explaining the paperwork to him, he felt that he had more of an understanding about what was happening at the LAC meetings and hearings and in turn, what his rights now were. He felt that he was being listened to more at meetings and appointments. Through talking to him and breaking down each step, he said that he had a clearer view about what he needed to do to address some of what was happening in his life, which in turn, supported his recovery journey

John

John was introduced to us by a mental health liaison nurse at the local college. John was 17 and experienced poor mental health, used substances and had a history of past trauma. He was struggling and had been threatened with removal from the college due to fighting and abusive behaviour towards staff and students. He had a difficult relationship with his family and was homeless as he was spending his nights staying at various friends' houses. He was a very vulnerable young man, at risk of being exploited. When we met with John and spoke to him, he said that he was always being blamed for trouble and never got any praise for doing anything good. He admitted that he did cause trouble, but he was afforded no respect from anyone and was being treated like a child both at home and at college.



We supported John to attend appointments with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health team, meetings regarding his housing situation, liaised with the local housing team, support workers, the college, social workers, the Department of Work & Pensions, his GP and attended Team Around The Young Person meetings, to help him share his views and feelings about his situation. As a result of this support, John was able to communicate his feelings and his dreams. He wanted to stay in college, get a job, find somewhere to stay, and not be defined by his behaviour.

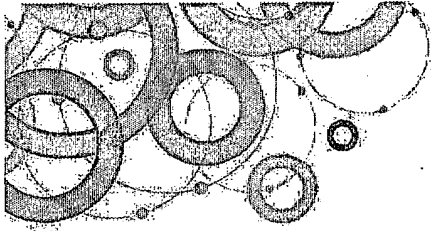
John said that, without advocacy help, he would have struggled to share what he felt and wanted and would not have attended any necessary appointments. He was able to remain in college with more support. He now felt confident and able to cope and has attended appointments and meetings on his own.

Feed back

"Thank you very much, you've been able to do something about this when no one else has."

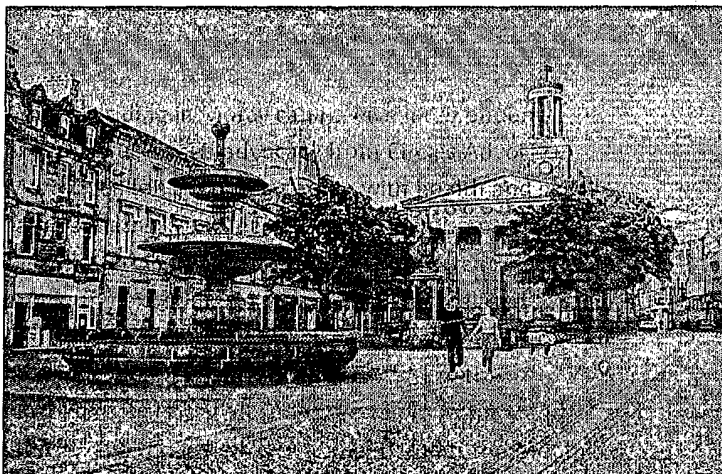
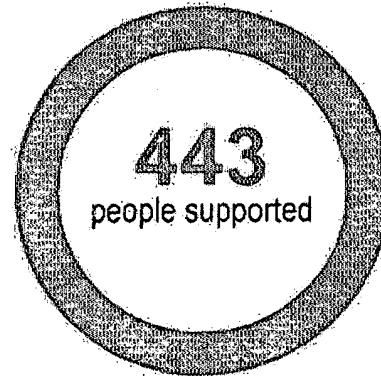
"It is great news, thanks in no small part to your help, it has been a positive outcome! We cannot thank you and Circles Advocacy enough for your support with this. It has without a doubt made a massive difference to the outcome... helped make a stressful situation feel much less overwhelming."

"Thanks so much for being my support it's appreciated beyond belief."



Circles Advocacy, Moray

Adults residing in Moray can receive independent, expert, issue-based advocacy from Circles Advocacy, Moray. While supporting people with health and social care concerns is our main purpose, we also play a significant role in helping people who currently have or previously experienced drug and alcohol related difficulties that have impeded their need to start or continue their recovery journey. Adults with incapacity issues, adult support and protection, and individuals who have been detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act are given priority over other introductions.



Our primary goals are to uphold people's rights, support their right to have their opinions heard, and disseminate information to help people make educated decisions on matters affecting their lives.

The first highlight of our year would have to be our team day in June.

We completed our team plan for the coming year and reviewed our training needs. We considered the issues and viable solutions around suicide prevention, as part of our work in the Suicide Prevention Group in Moray, contributing the voices of people with lived experience to this area of work. We also continued work we began two years ago looking at the distinct roles team members hold; what individuals can offer the team and the service we provide and what support is needed from colleagues. This resulted with the team feeling the benefit of the Team Day and a full staff team in place so. Although the demand on the service had increased again, we felt in a strong place to manage this.

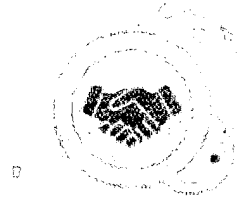
The tender for provision of advocacy in Moray was imminent and the CEO, along with the previous manager, gave a presentation to The Moray Council in support of the tender. There had been a delay in notification of the outcome from early December and this led to a delay

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in appointing a new service manager This rolled over into the next quarter and the tendering process was still "live." A service manager was finally appointed to begin in post at the end of February.

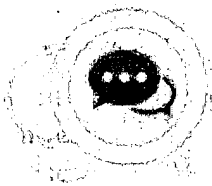
We had previously tendered to deliver advocacy for Self-Directed Support, directly funded through the Scottish Government, and were advised of our success in being awarded this contract at the end of March. This funding supports the excellent work already achieved by Circles Advocacy, Moray in other areas. We look forward to developing this service and providing advocacy to anyone who wishes to review their SDS package funding options.



Unfortunately, one particular challenge would appear to effectively run through, influence and affect all that we do –

This is the level of support being required by our partners in the community. We have seen an increase in the complexity of work particularly around adult protection (AP) and adults with incapacity (AWI). Our caseload is also directly affected by the inability of statutory services to provide the support being identified by our partners as essential, due to the pressure statutory services are under and the lack of care in the community. The lack of available care staff, lower levels of HSCP funding, a high turnover of staff within the Local Authority are all combining to create the perfect storm when it comes to care provision in the community.

There has been an increase in the number of introductions specifically to support partners' views to be heard for Adult Support and Protection (44%), Adults with Incapacity (150%) and Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (92%) legislative matters.



We have since faced the daunting challenge of some staffing issues which have unsettled the team. The previous service manager, and Scottish manager, had been working through these issues, with the support of the wider Circles Network Team, and hoped to see resolution early in the new year. There has been some resolution to this with the appointment of an experienced manager to the role.

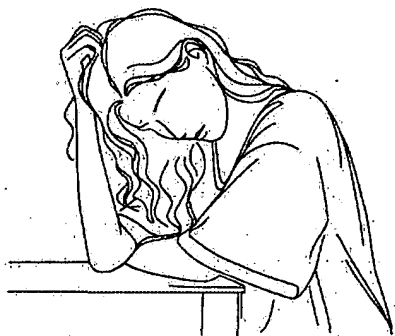
Thus far, this appears to be having a settling effect on the staff team while they face the new reality of having direct line manager in post. Collective Advocacy which had begun tentatively in one supported accommodation setting continued into other settings. We were able to therefore further our reach and provide advocacy to a greater share of the local community that we had done in previous years. Within these care settings, we found that many residents were raising the same or very similar concerns and so it became much more effective to provide "Collective Advocacy". This allowed the advocates to provide the same high level of advocacy support in a much more time efficient manner

meaning that many more individuals, and individual issues, could be resolved than if attempted consecutively.

We have continued to embed advocacy within the Adults Support and Protection (ASP) procedures in Moray Council Adult protection team. Regular meetings, minimum quarterly, take place with supplementary pre-meetings occurring to support and prepare. It has unfortunately become a recurring theme that advocacy is not informed, and therefore not involved, at the earliest most opportune moment when we could have made more of an impact to prevent further issues arising and impacting the partners we support. However, with the ASP lead we have also developed a working partnership to develop effective referral procedures and create and review Statement documentations.

Story of Change - Pat

Pat is a young woman suffering from eating disorders, body dysmorphia, anxiety, and emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD). She finds it challenging to have in-depth discussions about her needs and desires with her psychiatrist and other professionals due to her high level of anxiety. When she contacted Circles Advocacy, her primary worries were that she had asked for and never received a face-to-face meeting with her psychiatrist to go over her prescription regimen. She was also dissatisfied with the assistance she was currently receiving from her support worker and community psychiatric nurse (CPN).



Since the advocate was able to prove that a face-to-face meeting with the psychiatrist would not be feasible for two months, a different arrangement was made whereby the advocate would assist Pat during her subsequent phone consultation. Before the phone consultation, Pat gave the psychiatrist a written statement outlining her opinions regarding her medication. This encouraged a thorough discussion of every drug, potential modifications, and the best times and methods for implementing those changes. As a participant in the meeting, the advocate took note of all Pat's changes.

She says she takes the medication "randomly" because she finds it difficult to recall specifics of conversations because of her anxiety. For the following appointment, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled to go over the modifications.

Pat was worried that her CPN and support worker would "hate her" if she voiced her concerns, this is a common emotional response among those who have EUPD. Pat stated the problems after receiving assurances from the advocate. After speaking with the CPN and support worker, the advocate recommended that the support be reviewed. Pat was pleased with this. Pat discussed her desired outcomes with the advocate prior to the meeting, and the advocate wrote them down and sent them out beforehand. As a result, Pat didn't have to voice all of her concerns at the beginning of the review because everyone had a clear picture at that point. It was decided on a new support plan. Throughout the process, Pat stated that she felt well supported by her advocate, and she subsequently said that she could not have done it without their help, guidance, and support.

Claire's Mental Health Officer referred her to Circles Advocacy because she was unsure about accepting a short-term detention certificate from the nearby hospital. The following day, Claire was visited by an advocate. She informed the advocate that she had been hospitalized for ten days and had previously turned down the offer of advocacy because she felt "hopeless" and that there was "no point as no-one really cared," including herself.

The Advocate gave Claire a chance to tell "her story," reassured her that they could assist, and introduced themselves. Claire received assistance in comprehending the Mental Health Tribunal procedure and the validity of contesting her Short-Term Detention Certificate. Claire soon felt that she had a better understanding of the procedure and declared that she now wanted to contest the Section 44. Claire then allowed the Advocate to contact the Mental Health solicitor she had chosen from Circles' list. Claire's case was briefly discussed with the solicitor, and plans were made to enable the completion of an application for the revocation of the Certificate to be submitted to the Tribunal. The Advocate concluded by leaving her a Circles pamphlet, their contact information, and an assurance that they would come back to pick up her Statement of Views prior to the Tribunal date. Claire expressed her gratitude to the Advocate for the clarification, stating that she felt hopeful and empowered now and that she was happy she had decided to accept the Advocate's help.

Written by the partner herself:

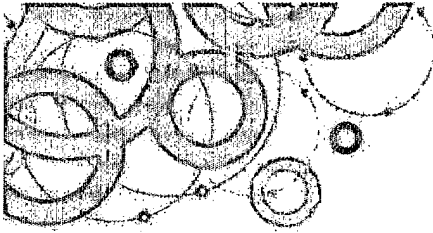
'A traumatic experience at the dentist left me unable to continue with my usual dental health routine. One experience changed me from being a regular attendant of routine dental and dental hygienist appointments, able to discuss treatments and confidently represent myself, to the exact opposite. Panic attacks and anxiety took over not just attending the dentist but even talking about it to anyone. Not being able to express yourself, your opinions or make informed decisions is an overwhelming feeling which impacts on your self-confidence and leaves you feeling very vulnerable. This was a feeling I had never experienced before. My GP suggested a referral to a psychologist, and I worked with her to learn strategies to help me manage my anxiety.

Regular exposure visits were arranged and each one resulted in complete panic. I was struggling and asked a friend to come with me. It meant I could hand over communication to my friend, but it was difficult for her. She is a long-time friend, too close to be impartial. In my work I have often referred clients to advocacy never imagining that I would need it, but I recognised that I now needed help. I made an appointment with Circles. I cried throughout that first meeting as I endeavoured to tell my story. The advocate was patient, listened, and provided tissues.



Since that first meeting, she has been on the journey with me. She has attended appointments with me, helped with communication and continued to provide tissues. Having someone with me meant I could focus on applying the strategies my psychologist taught me. I trust her and am able to be open with her in a way I can't with family and friends as I don't like them to see me distressed. My advocate ensures my questions are asked and my concerns expressed when I can't do it for myself: she is my voice. When my anxiety and emotions get in the way, she helps keep things on track.

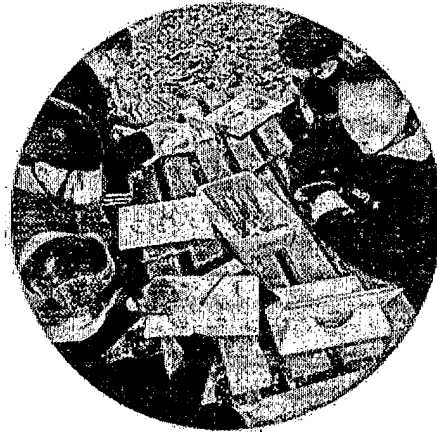
As a result of support, I am progressing on my journey back to regular dental treatment, but it is slow going. I am confident and independent in all other areas of life but after more than a year, this still knocks me off my feet. Without my advocate, I doubt I would have been able to change clinics, access the treatment required or have a say in what happens to me. She has made a huge difference and greatly helped. I am forever thankful.'



Circles Rural Academy

The Rural Academy is a hands-on alternative education centre situated in Warwickshire. With a trauma-informed and therapeutic approach, we offer a range of vocational courses.

Currently, we provide the "Horses 4 Courses" programme, created by Circles Network, which emphasises rural and equine education. This nurturing curriculum covers topics such as rural living, independence skills, employability, and animal care, while also integrating English and Math learning through practical activities both onsite and offsite. Additionally, we offer a variety of ASDAN courses tailored to the interests and goals of each participant.



Our outdoor learning spaces, located in log cabins and specially designed gazebos, allow for year-round programming. We have a team of horses and ponies that are carefully selected and trained to work alongside our educators, fostering confidence, trust, and communication in children and young adults. Our primary participants are often those who face challenges in traditional classroom environments. All our courses are flexible and achievable, providing individuals the opportunity to re-engage and transition back to mainstream education when appropriate.

The academy continues to serve a diverse group of children and young adults, including those who experience high levels of anxiety that hinder their ability to attend traditional mainstream education. This includes:

Children and Young adults diagnosed with Autism and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Young people coping with difficult home situations and/or acting as young carers.

Individuals who have faced bereavement and various forms of trauma, both past and present. Children and Young adults who have experienced adverse childhood trauma, including attachment trauma. Learners who are awaiting specialist provisions and Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) to support their educational advancement. Post-16 learners with diagnoses of learning disabilities, learning difficulties, and physical impairments.

Children and Young Adults who have been temporarily excluded from mainstream secondary school and are actively working toward transitioning to a new school.



HAF projects continued to be a positive experience for all. Children had the chance to engage in equine-assisted activities, including grooming, leading, and therapeutic bonding sessions. These experiences not only deepened their connection with the horses but also imparted important lessons in responsibility and empathy.

Additionally, arts and crafts offered a space for children to express themselves creatively and explore various artistic techniques and mediums. With support from facilitators, they were encouraged to unleash their imagination and

produce unique pieces that showcased their personal interests, experiences, and emotions.

Mentoring and Coaching

The Mentoring and Coaching programme has been launched, allowing us to offer support to schools during our collaborations. This initiative will enable us to reach various educational environments, providing mentoring sessions for students to discuss strategies for managing issues such as anxiety, anger, and bereavement, ultimately increasing their learning in a less conventional setting.

One of the challenges we have faced over the year is recruitment due to the prevalence of zero-hour contracts and the uncertainty of secured working hours, which has made it difficult to attract and retain candidates

Another challenge we face each year is the uncertainty around staffing needs at the start of the academic year. Since schools are often unsure of student numbers and required hours, it becomes difficult for us to recruit effectively, as we don't have a clear picture of staffing requirements

Our focus for development will be in gardening, providing individuals who access our network with the opportunity to learn and develop valuable skills. Through this initiative, they will gain a deeper understanding of horticulture, including how to care for, grow, and maintain gardens. We plan to build a polytunnel that will be accessible to all, allowing year-round cultivation. The produce grown can then be sold in our shop, giving children and

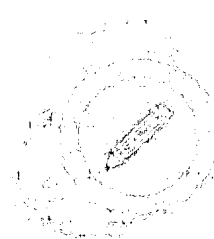


young adults the chance to see the entire process from start to finish, while also contributing to the local community.

In our post-COVID society, we have noticed a rising number of children and young people who struggle to access mainstream education or become school refusers. This has highlighted the need for alternative provision to address the noticeable increase in behaviours within school that are potentially difficult to manage.

Acknowledging this shift, we have proactively initiated new projects to support our community. These projects are crafted to cater to the diverse educational requirements of individuals who encounter difficulties thriving in traditional educational settings. We are committed to creating inclusive, nurturing environments to enable academic, social and emotional growth.

Our dedication extends beyond academic goals; we aim to cultivate resilience and a sense of belonging among our learners. By addressing the underlying reasons for their behaviour and providing effective alternatives, we are working towards a more engaging and inclusive educational landscape.



Our partnerships go from strength to strength, working with more schools from the local area and working with students who are both on short-term and long-term placements. Alongside this we have continued to build relationships with companies in the local area such as Shine a Light, Pets at Home, BNI member and Hoof Prints.

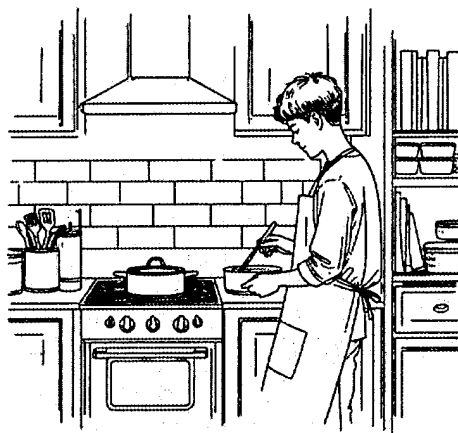
Story of change - Leo

Leo was 11 years old, and he had already been through more than most children his age. There had been days when the weight of everything he felt was so heavy that he didn't know where to put it, so it ended up on his skin, leaving marks that faded but never truly went away. The world often felt too loud, too much, and too fast for Leo, and in those moments, he was either fighting his way through it or desperately wanting to run from it.

Recently, things had started to change. Leo was no longer in the noisy, crowded school where he'd once felt invisible and out of place. Now, he is accessing our academy, with facilitators who understand him. They created safe spaces where he can go when he needs a break, a place where he can breathe, collect his thoughts, and feel safe.

Leo also attended our summer activity days for six hours each day, he spent time learning in a way that finally made sense to him. His facilitators talked to him about things that he loved—like sharks and dinosaurs. His fascination with them had always been his escape; he could tell anyone who would listen about the mighty T. rex or how sharks had survived for millions of years, adapting and evolving to their surroundings. He loved that they were survivors, and he began to wonder if he was one too.

The changes didn't end there. Leo and his family had recently moved to a new house. The old place held too many memories of hard times and nights that felt too long. This new home was brighter and bigger, with spaces where he could be himself. He was spending more time with his family now, learning things together, like cooking dinner with his mum or spending time with his brothers and sister. Every day, he felt a little closer to them, and he realised that they were all figuring things out together.



Leo is learning new things every day. He was discovering that he was good at maths and that he could now even begin to write his very own short story.

The scars on his skin haven't disappeared, but they are now reminders of how far he has come.

Ollie

At our Easter HAF programme, Ollie found himself amongst a variety of activities and lively children. Initially overwhelmed, he observed from the sidelines, hesitant to join in. However, gentle positive words from our facilitators and the friendly comradeship of the other children encouraged him to enjoy and participate in activities. Day by day, Ollie tentatively explored new activities whilst hesitant to fully engage, he gradually became less anxious around others. Whether it was painting Easter eggs or playing outdoor games, each experience brought him a sense of belonging. As he interacted with his peers, he discovered common interests and shared laughter, slowly forging bonds that he did not think possible.

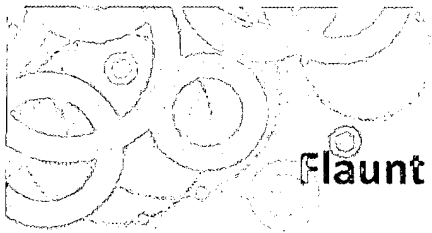
It was Ollie's encounters with the miniature Shetland ponies that truly enhanced his time at Circles Network. At first, the sight of the ponies made Ollie anxious and scared. Yet, with gentle encouragement from the older children and the patient guidance of the team members, Ollie found the courage to approach them with care. As he tentatively reached out to stroke their soft coats, he felt calm in their presence. He smiled and laughed at their gentle demeanour and playful antics, finding comfort in their



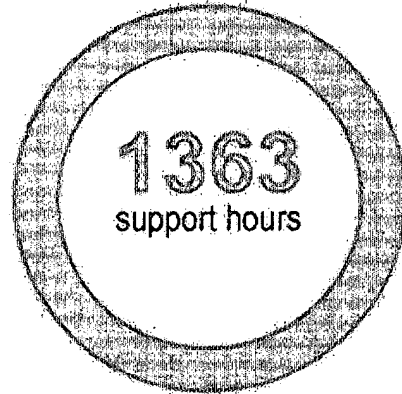
company. With each visit to the yard, Ollie's confidence soared, his fear gradually replaced by a newfound sense of empowerment.

Through his interactions with the ponies, Ollie learned valuable lessons about trust, patience, and self-assurance. He discovered that courage was not about being fearless but rather about facing his fears head-on, one small step at a time. And as he nurtured his bond with the ponies and the other children, he found himself growing more confident in his own abilities. By the end of the Easter programme, Ollie had undergone a remarkable transformation. No longer the timid young boy who had joined us for the first time, he emerged with his head held high, a sparkle of confidence in his eyes.

With his newfound love of horses and the great experiences of his time at the Easter programme, Ollie made a plea that would further expand his resilience. Inspired by his growth and the supportive community he had found; Ollie's Mum eagerly obliged and enrolled him in the Saturday club at Circles Network where he has made quite an impact and a lovely new set of friends.



Circles Network have created a new well-being training school, in the heart of Rugby for people to come along and socialise, receive treatments in hair and beauty from trained practitioners alongside our attentive students. At Flaunt & Flourish the educational provision is accessed by students from the Circles Academy aged 13 and above who may encounter everyday life challenges. At our salon we encourage our students to participate in practical vocational training activities, including hair and nail care, photography, and customer service together with an emphasis on life skills that encourage self-esteem and independence such as cleaning and tidying, effective communication, goal setting and problem solving.



Our students are introduced to the team via local schools who recognise that their students would benefit from a community environment in which to learn and develop. Funding arrangements are agreed through our inclusion on the Alternative Education Framework with Warwickshire County Council.

The Flaunt & Flourish Salon is not just about hair and beauty; it is about empowerment, independence, and personal growth. We provide a supportive community in which individuals can practice job preparation skills, allowing participants to find their unique path to success. Four highlights this year include:

Circles Network successfully opened Flaunt & Flourish in collaboration with Milkshake and Belle Peau

Welcoming our first students to Flaunt & Flourish

Collaborating with local businesses and charities who have offered their practical support and donations.

Partnering with a local charity supporting children with cancer to provide them and their families with pamper sessions.

There were a few challenging moments during the year, and we faced a problem with the utilities at the salon; meaning that the salon could not be opened for three days for health and safety reasons. This is now resolved.

A new boiler was later required, which we had not expected, this led to the closure of the salon for a few days. During this closure we relocated the students to our rural hub in Rugby, so that their provision was continued.



As students engaged in new learning through their attendance at the salon, it became apparent that some young people had slipped behind in several subjects through long absences from school. As their confidence grew in happier surroundings, we encouraged a newfound aptitude for learning and in collaboration with local schools, have hired a tutor, specialising in English and maths to work individually with any learner who expresses an interest.

Flaunt & Flourish opened in July 2023, after the covid pandemic. Due to school closure during the pandemic, Circles Network are aware of the challenges some students had to face once schools had re-opened. This is still affecting many young people, impacting on their current education placements and the need, for some, for a vocational alternative.

Since opening Flaunt & Flourish in July 2023 we have been working with local schools and have developed great partnerships with them. Our person-centred approach allows us to work with this schools to nurture the wellbeing of the students. Staff from the schools have been pleased to see the impact of the support provided to their students and they have taken the time to visit on a regular basis, further strengthening the bonds.

We plan on increasing student placements in the coming year and look to open further urban vocational opportunities for vocational options.

Story of Change - Ella

Ella is 14 years old. She is a young person with daily struggles, these range from anxiety, anger, and a dislike of traditional educational environments. She has settled into the salon environment and has rapidly changed her outlook on learning. Through our person-centred approach she has found her voice and is working through her insecurities. Since attending the salon, she has become more resilient, which is helping to build her confidence. She is engaging with other students, overcoming her struggles with trust. She now participates in

both practical and academic learning. Although Ella has not been with us long, we have noticed the progress she is making and are delighted to note the friendships she is building. We, along with her parents and her school team are looking forward to watching her flourish.

Joanne

Joanne is a 24-year-old young woman, who is diagnosed with global developmental delay, autism, speech, and language difficulties. When we met with Joanne, we learned that she struggles with relationships with people outside of her family, and experiences anxiety at the onset of loud noises or unexpected change. She sought comfort in behaviour and choices appropriate to a much younger person.

Joanne attends Circles Network to encourage her inclusion in community, to access further learning and employment opportunities and to learn first-hand experiences through practical and vocational opportunities. Her first challenges involved building relationships with facilitators so that Joanne could feel safe and build trust in her new, unfamiliar environment. Working closely with Joanne, using a person-centred approach, and encouraging positive behaviour has given her a sense of security.

We embarked on a learning programme to develop communication skills, build her understanding of adult life, and gradually implement new activities.

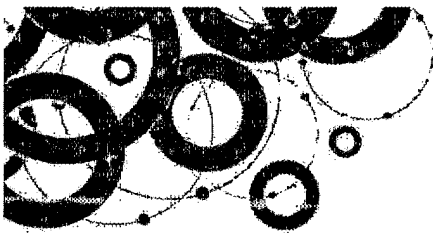
The connections she has made with other students are growing and she enjoys contributing to group tasks, working together. She is artistic and loves being involved in drawing, jewellery making, hairstyling and has recently begun to make drinks and snacks by herself.



Although Joanne still requires reassurance, she is delighted when she has accomplished new skills. Initially terrified when hearing the vacuum cleaner in operation, she now uses it herself. She enjoys welcoming clients to the salon and helps them get settled, she will assist with stock taking and with cleaning shelves and basins. Her enthusiasm in chatting to people she has got to know is wonderful to see. Her parents are thrilled that she has changed in so many aspects, showing greater confidence and having much to talk about. Joanne has more to look forward to now that she is overcoming her fears and concerns. Her new interests involve fashion and shopping for clothes and jewellery, replacing toys and dolls for shoes and craft items. She also attends the rural hub and loves the horses and joining in cookery classes

with the Cafe Friday crew. We believe that she is beginning to flaunt her previously hidden bright and lively personality.

It's a relief to see her so happy and confident. We hope to see her continue to shine and lead the way for others.



Taking the Lead - Rugby

At Circles Network, we believe in the power of Equine-Facilitated Learning to bring about profound and positive change in the lives of young people. Our project offers a distinctive and comprehensive approach to personal development, catering to individuals facing diverse challenges, such as autism, anxiety, disability, behavioural challenges, or a desire for personal growth.

The programme begins with a warm introduction to our equine partners, where participants learn about horse behaviour, care, and communication. This foundational knowledge sets the stage for a journey of self-discovery and empowerment.



Expansion of programme reach: One of the significant achievements of the Taking the Lead programme over the past fiscal year has been the successful expansion of its reach. We have managed to extend our services to more children and families in need. This growth was facilitated by strategic partnerships with local schools and community centres, which helped us identify and support more children facing developmental challenges. The increased visibility and accessibility of the programme have allowed us to make a greater impact in our community, providing essential support to a wider audience.

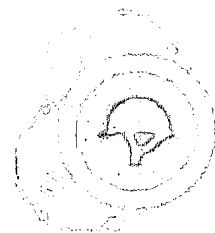


Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns: Increasing awareness about the benefits of equine facilitated learning has been a priority. Over the past fiscal year, we launched several community engagement and awareness campaigns. These included open house events, workshops, and informational sessions aimed at educating the public about our programme and its impact. These efforts have not only helped us reach potential new participants but also built a strong network of supporters and advocates in the community. The campaigns have enhanced our visibility and credibility, leading to increased interest and support from volunteers and local businesses.

Positive Participant Outcomes: The past year brought about remarkable success stories from our Equine-Facilitated Learning programme. Many young people who participated in our programme experienced transformative personal growth. We documented numerous instances of increased self-esteem, reduced anxiety, and improved interpersonal skills shown by participants. Parents and caregivers reported significant positive changes in the lives of their children, affirming the programme's impact on their overall well-being. These heartwarming success stories served as powerful motivators for our dedicated team of facilitators, reinforcing our commitment to making a difference in the lives of young people.

Adapting to Diverse Participant Needs: As the programme expanded, so did the diversity of the participants' needs. Each child comes with unique developmental challenges, requiring personalised approaches and interventions. While our team is highly skilled, the varying degrees of speech delays, emotional issues, and social difficulties necessitated a more tailored approach than initially anticipated. Ensuring that each child received the appropriate level of attention and support, we adapted our programme to cater to such a broad spectrum of needs and completing ongoing adjustments and continuous professional development.

Maintaining Consistent Programme Quality: Ensuring consistent quality across all aspects of the programme proved challenging as the number of participants and activities increased. With the expansion, it became essential to maintain ambitious standards in every session, from the interaction with the horses to the delivery of therapeutic activities. Variability in session quality was sometimes noted due to differences in facilitators' experience levels, fluctuations in volunteer support, and varying participant needs. Addressing this challenge involved developing more robust training programmes for facilitators, implementing standardised procedures, and conducting regular evaluations to monitor and ensure the quality of the programme remained consistently high.



In response to the diverse needs of our participants and the goal of enhancing therapeutic outcomes, we have recently introduced sensory integration activities into the Taking the Lead programme. This innovative approach aims to provide additional support for children with sensory processing challenges, which are often present alongside developmental delays such as speech and social interaction difficulties.

Sensory Trails and Stations:

We have developed sensory trails and stations around the site, incorporating various textures, sounds, and visual stimuli. These stations allow children to explore whilst leading the ponies to interact with different sensory elements in a safe environment.

Incorporating Sensory Elements into Existing Activities:

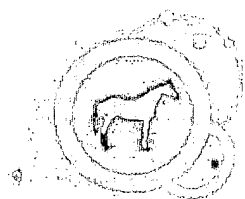
Existing activities, such as brushing and ground exercises, have been modified to include sensory components. For example, different brushes and textures are used during brushing, and obstacle courses now feature sensory elements like varied surfaces and tactile materials.

We plan to continue refining and expanding our sensory integration offerings based on feedback and observed outcomes. Regular assessments and updates to the sensory plans will ensure that each child receives the most effective support. Additionally, we aim to create resources and workshops for parents, helping them understand sensory processing issues and how to support their children at home.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt in various facets of society, including Equine Facilitated Learning programmes like ours. Here is how we noticed a change in the specific issues we addressed among our participants considering the pandemic:

The pandemic brought increased awareness of mental health issues, and many individuals sought out our programme as a means of coping with heightened stress, anxiety, and isolation during the pandemic.

Specific Challenges Among Participants



Anxiety and Stress: One of the most common issues we encountered among our participants after the pandemic was the heightened anxiety and stress. The uncertainty and disruption caused by COVID-19 have taken a toll on mental well-being. Taking the Lead has proven effective in providing a sense of calm and stability.

Social Isolation: The restrictions on social gatherings and activities led to increased social isolation for many individuals. Taking the Lead not only offered opportunities for outdoor interactions but also connections with the horses, and other children promoting a sense of companionship and belonging.

Developing partnerships with our volunteers, Hoofprints Riding School, Pets at Home, and the Co-op brought many additional assets to our Taking the Lead programme's commitment to community engagement and sustainability.

Partnerships with Volunteers

The Taking the Lead programme has successfully recruited dedicated volunteers who share a passion for Equine Therapeutic Learning and the well-being of our participants. These volunteers offer their time and expertise to support the programme's activities.

Partnership with Hoofprints Riding School

To expand the reach and effectiveness of the Taking the Lead programme, we have established a partnership with Hoofprints Riding School. This collaboration aims to enrich the experiences of our participants through shared resources, riding, expertise, and complementary programmes.

Partnership with the Co-op and Pets at Home

Both the Co-op and Pets at Home, through their generous involvement extended beyond financial support. They offered fundraising opportunities, such as community fundraising initiatives, to help generate resources for our Taking the Lead programme.

Story of Change - Freya

Freya, a 13-year-old girl, has been attending our Taking the Lead sessions for one hour each week. Her progress in these sessions has given her the confidence to join our Saturday Club, where she now participates for six hours every Saturday.

Freya began attending Taking the Lead sessions with a degree of apprehension. Initially shy and reserved, she gradually became more engaged and confident through consistent participation and encouragement. Over time, Freya has developed essential leadership skills and improved her ability to communicate and collaborate with peers. These sessions have provided her with a safe space to express herself and build her self-esteem.

Building on her success in Taking the Lead, Freya is loving her participation at Saturday Club, a significant step that highlights her growing confidence and enthusiasm. The extended duration of the Saturday Club sessions allows Freya to immerse herself more deeply in our equine facilitated learning activities. She has adapted well to the longer sessions, showing increased stamina and a positive attitude towards the various tasks and challenges presented to her.



Freya has formed a special bond with our horse, Ebony, during her time at Saturday Club. Initially tentative, Freya quickly grew fond of Ebony's gentle and calm demeanour. Through regular brushing, activities, and spending time together, their connection has deepened. Ebony's patient nature has provided Freya with a sense of comfort and confidence, helping her to open up and trust more easily. This bond has been instrumental in Freya's emotional growth, and she has extended her skill set.

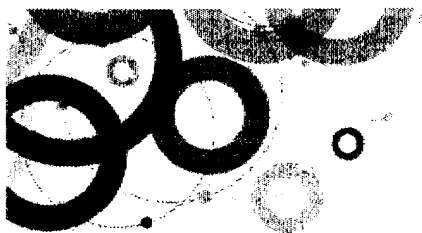
Freya recently participated in a horse-riding trip organised by our facilitators. Despite the presence of many students she did not know, Freya approached the experience with openness and excitement. Her willingness to engage with new peers and try new activities showed her growing social confidence and adaptability. Freya had a fantastic time during the trip, forming new friendships and demonstrating her ability to thrive in unfamiliar social settings.

Freya has been experiencing difficulties at school, which have impacted her academic performance and overall well-being. Despite these challenges, she has shown resilience and determination in her efforts to overcome them. Her participation in our programme has provided her with a supportive environment where she can escape the pressures of school and focus on her personal growth.

Freya's grandmother has expressed interest in having her attend our alternative provision programme starting in September. This programme would offer Freya a tailored educational

experience, combining academic learning with the therapeutic benefits of equine facilitated activities.

experience, combining academic learning with the therapeutic benefits of equine facilitated activities.



Ready, Steady, Go! - Midlands

Ready Steady Go is a project funded through BBC Children in Need. The aim is to provide support for disabled or disadvantaged children, from birth to 5 years old, through sessions which link with the early years' foundation stage. Parents and carers are in attendance and get the

opportunity to socialise and make new friends during the six-week programme. Children learn, alongside ponies and each other; development skills in relationship building, language and communication, early maths, and literacy, play and relaxation. We have promoted the programme widely to include children in this age group who have been adversely affected by the pandemic, knowing that those years have prevented most little ones from socialising with anyone outside of their closest family members.



BBC

**Children
in Need**

Increased Parent and Caregiver Involvement: The programme emphasised the importance of involving parents and caregivers in the learning process. Ready Steady Go introduced workshops where adults could learn how to support their children's development through equine-facilitated activities. These sessions strengthened the bond between children and their caregivers, offering tools to enhance communication and emotional connection in everyday life. Feedback highlighted how these workshops empowered parents to continue supporting their children's growth beyond the sessions.

Positive Impact on Early Socialisation: The programme made significant strides in enhancing early socialisation skills among children under five years of age. Through carefully designed group activities, young participants learned to cooperate, share, and communicate effectively while engaging with the horses. The structured yet playful environment provided a safe space for children to practice social skills, leading to increased confidence and smoother transitions into nursery or preschool settings. This aspect of the programme was particularly praised by parents and caregivers, who noticed improved social interactions in the children's daily lives.

Successful Community Outreach: Ready Steady Go launched a series of community outreach, and awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public about the benefits of



equine-facilitated learning for young children. Through local events, social media, and partnerships with early childhood centres, the programme successfully raised awareness and attracted new families. This initiative not only increased programme enrolment but also a greater understanding within the community of how interactions with horses and time in nature can support early childhood development in unique and meaningful ways.



Seasonal Limitations and Weather Conditions:

Weather-dependent activities with animals brings challenges due to seasonal variations or adverse weather conditions. Low temperatures, heavy rains and other weather-related constraints sometimes impacted us as we used the cabin or the stables to ensure we could keep children sheltered.

Adapting to Diverse Developmental Stages: Ready Steady Go faced the challenge of effectively tailoring its activities to the wide range of developmental stages among the children. Since this age group covers significant developmental differences, from toddlers to those approaching school age, creating sessions that met the varied needs and abilities of all participants required careful planning and flexibility. However, the team ensured that each activity was engaging and beneficial for children at distinct stages of development, while maintaining group dynamics and safety.

Expanding the programme by adding an extra course each week reflects a commitment to accommodating the needs of the participants and their families.

By offering an additional set of sessions, the programme became more accessible to families with varying schedules. This flexibility allowed more children to participate, accommodating those who could not attend the previous schedule due to conflicts or logistical reasons. This also enabled us to increase the numbers of children supported.

Changes in Participant Behaviour and Needs: The pandemic may have influenced children's behaviour and emotional needs, with some experiencing increased anxiety or social challenges due to the extended periods of isolation and changes in routine. As a result, Ready Steady Go has supported these altered needs, focusing more on emotional well-being, social re-integration, and gradual adjustments to group activities.

Challenges with Consistency of Attendance: Post-COVID, Ready Steady Go has experienced fluctuations in attendance due to ongoing uncertainties and changes in family circumstances. With varying levels of comfort and shifting priorities, some families have struggled to maintain consistent participation. This inconsistency has impacted the children's

learning experience. We aim to invite them back for further sessions once disruptions are settled.

Increased Credibility and Visibility: Collaborating with a well-respected organisation like BBC Children in Need enhanced the programme's credibility and visibility. Being associated with such a reputable partner has elevated Circles Network's profile, attracted more participants, and strengthened relationships with other stakeholders, such as local authorities, nurseries, and potential donors. This heightened visibility might have encouraged more families to enrol their children in the programme, recognising it as a trusted and worthwhile initiative.

Story of Change - Pheobe

Phoebe, a bright and curious 4-year-old girl, comes from a supportive family environment. Phoebe has faced challenges typical of her age, including difficulty in expressing emotions, adjusting to new environments, and developing social skills. Her family recognises the importance of early childhood intervention and enrolled Phoebe in Ready Steady Go to support her holistic development.

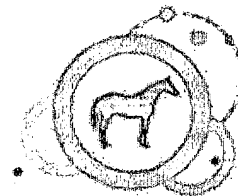
Before joining Ready Steady Go, Phoebe struggled with separation anxiety, shyness, and limited communication skills. These challenges inhibited her ability to engage with peers, express herself confidently, and navigate new experiences independently. Phoebe's parents expressed concerns about her readiness for preschool and hoped that our programme would provide her with the necessary skills and confidence to succeed.



During Phoebe's participation in Ready Steady Go, several positive changes have been observed in her development. Phoebe has blossomed into a more confident and outgoing young girl. Through engaging activities and interactions with peers, facilitators, and horses, she has gained the self-assurance to explore her surroundings, express her thoughts and emotions, and interact confidently with others.

Ready Steady Go has provided Phoebe with many opportunities to develop essential social skills. Engaging with both peers and horses in our equine therapeutic learning environment, she has learned to share, take turns, and collaborate, laying a solid foundation for positive social interactions. Phoebe's language and communication skills have thrived during her time in the programme. Through storytelling, singing, and interactive games, she has expanded her vocabulary, improved articulation, and gained confidence in expressing herself verbally.

Phoebe has shown remarkable progress in building independence and resilience. With the encouragement of our facilitators and the gentle support of our equine partners, she has learned to tackle new challenges with enthusiasm, problem-solve independently, and embrace new experiences with confidence and curiosity. Engaging in a variety of sensory and physical activities, including interactions with horses, has enhanced Phoebe's fine and gross motor skills. From painting and drawing to outdoor play and equine-assisted exercises, she has developed coordination, balance, and strength, all good for her physical development.



The Ready Steady Go programme has had a profound impact on Phoebe's overall development and readiness for preschool. Her parents are thrilled at how far she has come in a brief time. By combining early childhood education with the therapeutic benefits of equine interaction, our programme has empowered Phoebe to thrive and succeed.

Phoebe's journey with the Ready Steady Go programme has been a transformative one. From her initial hesitation to her current confidence, she has shown remarkable growth in both her physical and emotional abilities. The programme's focus on sensory and physical activities, combined with the gentle support of our equine partners, has provided her with a safe and nurturing environment to explore and learn. Her parents' enthusiasm and support have been instrumental in her progress, and we are proud to have been a part of this journey. The programme's emphasis on independence and resilience has truly empowered Phoebe to tackle new challenges with enthusiasm and confidence.

As Phoebe continues to grow and thrive, we are confident that the skills and experiences she has gained from the Ready Steady Go programme will serve her well in all aspects of her life. Her parents' joy and pride in her achievements are a testament to the power of early childhood education and the therapeutic benefits of equine interaction. We look forward to seeing Phoebe continue to flourish and succeed in all her endeavors.

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF
CIRCLES NETWORK**

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Circles Network (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of 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'.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'; and
- 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 Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company 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

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

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 Report of the Independent Auditors 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 this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. 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 in the Report of the Trustees for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Report of the Trustees has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF
CIRCLES NETWORK**

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

- adequate and proper accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to take advantage of the small companies exemption from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report or in preparing the Report of the Trustees.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they 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 charitable company'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 charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF CIRCLES NETWORK

Our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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 a Report of the Independent Auditors 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.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The objectives of our audit are to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, to perform audit procedures to help identify instances of non-compliance with other laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements, and to respond appropriately to identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified during the audit.

In relation to fraud, the objectives of our audit are to identify and assess the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud, to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud through designing and implementing appropriate responses and to respond appropriately to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, it is the primary responsibility of trustees, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and for the prevention and detection of fraud.

Based on our understanding of the charity, we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to the Charities Act 2011, and we considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to the posting of inappropriate journal entries and management bias in key accounting judgements and estimates. In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud, the audit engagement team:

- obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in and how the charity is complying with the legal and regulatory framework;
- inquired management and trustees, about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, including any known actual, suspected or alleged instances of fraud;
- discussed matters about non-compliance with laws and regulations and how fraud might occur including assessment of how and where the financial statements may be susceptible to fraud;
- reviewed minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees to identify significant or unusual transactions and known or suspected instances of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations
- reviewed accounting estimates for bias and evaluating whether circumstances producing any bias, represent a risk of material misstatement due to fraud; and

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF
CIRCLES NETWORK**

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Report of the Independent Auditors.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006, and to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members and the trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' 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 charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Michelle Vincent (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Fruition Advisory LLP
Eligible to act as an auditor in terms of Section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006
29 Wood Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6JG

Date: 23/12/2024

CIRCLES NETWORK

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	3	77,733	247	77,980	111,428
Charitable activities	5				
Income from Charitable Activities		1,419,944	477,111	1,897,055	1,724,115
Investment income	4	13,114	-	13,114	2,293
Other income	6	<u>1,160,911</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,160,911</u>	<u>882,123</u>
Total		<u>2,671,702</u>	<u>477,358</u>	<u>3,149,060</u>	<u>2,719,959</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	7				
Expenditure from Charitable Activities		<u>2,443,686</u>	<u>352,884</u>	<u>2,796,570</u>	<u>2,375,553</u>
Net gains/(losses) on investments		<u>18,129</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>18,129</u>	<u>(12,271)</u>
NET INCOME		<u>246,145</u>	<u>124,474</u>	<u>370,619</u>	<u>332,135</u>
Transfers between funds	19	<u>29,883</u>	<u>(29,883)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net movement in funds		276,028	94,591	370,619	332,135
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>1,428,112</u>	<u>104,491</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>	<u>1,200,468</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>1,704,140</u>	<u>199,082</u>	<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	12	107,705	52,307
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	13	396,271	300,540
Investments	14	265,976	247,847
Cash at bank and in hand	15	<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>1,087,740</u>
		1,944,434	1,636,127
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	16	<u>(148,917)</u>	<u>(155,831)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>1,795,517</u>	<u>1,480,296</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>
FUNDS	19		
Unrestricted funds:			
General fund		1,613,515	1,298,748
Designated fund		<u>90,625</u>	<u>129,364</u>
		1,704,140	1,428,112
Restricted funds:			
Restricted fund		<u>199,082</u>	<u>104,491</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 23/12/2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

J.R. Inghs
 Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>264,801</u>	<u>340,365</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>264,801</u>	<u>340,365</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(85,968)	(23,616)
Sale of tangible fixed assets		2,500	8,996
Interest received		<u>13,114</u>	<u>2,293</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(70,354)</u>	<u>(12,327)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>194,447</u>	<u>328,038</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>1,087,740</u>	<u>759,702</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>1,087,740</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK

**NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	370,619	332,135
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	27,010	28,754
(Gain)/losses on investments	(18,129)	12,271
Loss/(profit) on disposal of fixed assets	1,060	(6,392)
Interest received	(13,114)	(2,293)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(95,731)	101,722
Decrease in creditors	(6,914)	(123,832)
Net cash provided by operations	<u>264,801</u>	<u>340,365</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/4/23	Cash flow	At 31/3/24
	£	£	£
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>1,087,740</u>	<u>194,447</u>	<u>1,282,187</u>
	<u>1,087,740</u>	<u>194,447</u>	<u>1,282,187</u>
Liquid resources			
Deposits included in cash			
Current asset investments	<u>247,847</u>	<u>18,129</u>	<u>265,976</u>
	<u>247,847</u>	<u>18,129</u>	<u>265,976</u>
Total	<u>1,335,587</u>	<u>212,576</u>	<u>1,548,163</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

Circles Network is a Private limited Company by guarantee in England / Wales. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is given in the charity information on page 1 of these financial statements. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are supporting individuals who experience social exclusion or are at risk of being isolated through disability, long term illness or other disadvantages.

Circles Network constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity rounded to the nearest pound.

Income

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when the charity is legally entitled to the income after any performance conditions have been met, the amount can be measured reliably and it is probable that the income will be received.

For donations to be recognised the charity will have been notified of the amounts and the settlement date in writing. If there are conditions attached to the donation and this requires a level of performance before entitlement can be obtained then income is deferred until those conditions are fully met or the fulfilment of those conditions is within the control of the charity and it is probable that they will be fulfilled.

No amount is included in the financial statements for volunteer time in line with the SORP. Further detail is given in the Trustees' Annual Report.

Income from trading activities includes income earned from fundraising events and trading activities to raise funds for the charity. Income is received in exchange for supplying goods and services in order to raise funds and is recognised when entitlement has occurred.

The charity receives government grants. Income from government and other grant providers are recognised at fair value when the charity has entitlement after any performance conditions have been met, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably. If entitlement is not met, then these amounts are deferred.

Investment income is earned through holding assets for investment purposes. It includes dividends and interest. Where it is not practicable to identify investment management costs incurred within a scheme with reasonable accuracy the investment income is reported net of these costs. It is included when the amount can be measured reliably. Interest income is recognised using the effective interest method and dividend and rent income is recognised as the charity's right to receive payment is established.

Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure is recognised where there is a legal or constructive obligation to make payments to third parties, it is probable that the settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. It is categorised under the Expenditure on charitable activities which includes salary costs, auditor's remuneration, depreciation of fixed assets and other costs.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost (or deemed cost) or valuation less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. Cost includes costs directly attributable to making the asset capable of operating as intended. 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 is provided on all tangible fixed assets, at rates calculated to write off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset on a straight line basis over its expected useful life as follows:

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

The useful economic lives of the assets are reviewed annually.

Taxation

The charity is an exempt charity within the meaning of schedule 3 of the Charities Act 2011 and is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

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. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

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.

Investment

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

Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the charity has an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount can be reliably estimated.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

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.

2. 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 ongoing 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.

3. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Donations	76,952	110,736
Subscriptions	423	692
Fundraising	600	-
	<u>77,980</u>	<u>111,428</u>

Income from Donations and Legacies was £77,980 (2023 - £111,428) of which £247 (2023 - £1,030) was attributable to restricted funds.

4. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2024	2023
	£	£
Bank Interest and Dividends	<u>13,114</u>	<u>2,293</u>

Income from Investment Income was £13,114 (2023 - £2,293) of which £nil (2023 - £nil) was attributable to restricted funds.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

5. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2024	2023
	Activity	£	£
Grants	Income from Charitable Activities	<u>1,897,055</u>	<u>1,724,115</u>

Income from Charitable Activities was £1,897,055 (2023 - 1,724,115) of which £477,111 (2023 - £336,136) was attributable to restricted funds.

6. OTHER INCOME

	2024	2023
Sale of Goods and Services	<u>1,160,911</u>	<u>882,123</u>
	<u>1,160,911</u>	<u>882,123</u>

Income from Charitable Activities was £1,160,911 (2023 - £882,123) of which £nil (2023 - £nil) was attributable to restricted funds.

ANALYSIS OF TOTAL INCOME

	Unrestricted 2024	Restricted 2024	Total 2024	Total 2023
Advocacy	1,270,363	230,733	1,501,096	1,336,486
Circles of Support	295,217	19,627	314,844	156,464
Community Support	753,199	-	753,199	694,817
Support for children and families	233,859	226,998	460,857	458,967
Central services	<u>119,064</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>119,064</u>	<u>73,225</u>
	<u>2,671,702</u>	<u>477,358</u>	<u>3,149,060</u>	<u>2,719,959</u>

Income relating to Advocacy in 2023 was £1,336,486 of which £107,632 was attributable to restricted funds.

Income relating to Support for children and families in 2023 was £458,967 of which £229,534 was attributable to restricted funds.

7. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Salary Costs 2024 £	Depreciation 2024 £	Other 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Charitable Expenditure	2,076,666	27,010	692,894	2,796,570	2,375,553

£352,884 (2023 - £304,710) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds. £2,443,686 (2023 - £2,070,843) of the above costs were attributable to unrestricted funds.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2024	2023
	£	£
Depreciation - owned assets	27,010	26,754
(Deficit)/surplus on disposal of fixed assets	<u>1,060</u>	<u>(6,392)</u>

9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

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:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and National Insurance	371,804	299,444
Pension	<u>20,428</u>	<u>19,383</u>
	<u>392,232</u>	<u>318,827</u>

Trustees received no remuneration during the year (2023: £Nil). There were no Trustee expenses paid during the year for travel to meetings (2023: £Nil).

10. STAFF COSTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,906,401	1,663,194
Social security costs	134,585	114,526
Other pension costs	<u>35,679</u>	<u>37,050</u>
	<u>2,076,665</u>	<u>1,814,770</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
	<u>123</u>	<u>116</u>

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	2024	2023
£30,001 - £90,000	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

In respect of the employee with emoluments in the above range, contributions of £13,471 (2023: £13,471) were made to the defined contribution pension scheme.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

11. AUDITOR'S REMUNERATION

	2024 £	2023 £
Fees payable to the charity's auditor for the audit of the charity's annual accounts	<u>11,800</u>	<u>11,040</u>
	<u>11,800</u>	<u>11,040</u>
Fees payable to the charity's auditor for other services:		
Accounts Preparation Fees	<u>2,300</u>	<u>2,400</u>
	<u>2,300</u>	<u>2,400</u>

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Office Equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Motor vehicles £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2023	118,566	43,982	101,090	263,638
Additions	4,588	50,260	31,120	85,968
Disposals	<u>(93,160)</u>	<u>(10,579)</u>	<u>(12,727)</u>	<u>(116,466)</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>29,994</u>	<u>83,663</u>	<u>119,483</u>	<u>233,140</u>
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2023	100,108	30,812	80,411	211,331
Charge for year	5,783	6,832	14,395	27,010
Eliminated on disposal	<u>(93,160)</u>	<u>(10,579)</u>	<u>(9,167)</u>	<u>(112,906)</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>12,731</u>	<u>27,065</u>	<u>85,639</u>	<u>125,435</u>
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2024	<u>17,263</u>	<u>56,598</u>	<u>33,844</u>	<u>107,705</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u>18,458</u>	<u>13,170</u>	<u>20,679</u>	<u>52,307</u>

13. DEBTORS

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade debtors	366,563	286,714
Other debtors	-	1,000
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>23,871</u>	<u>12,826</u>
	<u>390,434</u>	<u>300,540</u>

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

13. DEBTORS - continued

	2024	2023
	£	£
Amounts falling due after more than one year:		
Other debtors	<u>5,837</u>	<u>-</u>
 Aggregate amounts	 <u>398,271</u>	 <u>300,540</u>

14. CURRENT ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Listed investments	<u>265,976</u>	<u>247,847</u>

15. CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND

	General fund £	Restricted fund £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
Cash in hand	1,523	-	1,523	1,277
Current and deposit accounts	<u>1,084,535</u>	<u>196,129</u>	<u>1,280,664</u>	<u>1,086,463</u>
Total	<u>1,086,058</u>	<u>196,129</u>	<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>1,087,740</u>

16. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trade creditors	24,716	7,674
Social security and other taxes	34,591	22,738
Other creditors	14,368	8,816
Accruals and deferred income	<u>75,242</u>	<u>116,603</u>
	<u>148,917</u>	<u>155,831</u>

17. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Within one year	74,346	76,015
Between one and five years	<u>43,340</u>	<u>43,333</u>
	<u>117,686</u>	<u>119,348</u>

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

18. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund	2024 Total funds	2023 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets	104,751	2,954	107,705	52,307
Current assets	1,748,305	196,129	1,944,434	1,636,127
Current liabilities	(148,916)	(1)	(148,917)	(155,831)
	<u>1,704,140</u>	<u>199,082</u>	<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

19. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	01 April 2023	Income	Expenditure	Revaluation gain/(loss)	Transfers	31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds						
Designated funds:						
Tangible Assets	20,825	-	-	-	-	20,825
Capital equipment renewal	10,000	-	-	-	-	10,000
Buildings fund	60,000	-	-	-	-	60,000
Cash fund	38,739	-	-	-	(38,739)	-
	129,364	-	-	-	(38,739)	90,625
General Funds	1,283,748	2,871,702	(2,443,688)	18,129	88,622	1,613,515
Total Unrestricted Funds	1,423,112	2,871,702	(2,443,688)	18,129	29,883	1,704,140
	01 April 2023	Income	Expenditure	Revaluation gain/(loss)	Transfers	31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds						
Advocacy:						
Self-Directed Support	(1,108)	117,653	(121,844)	-	5,297	-
Advocacy For Carers	-	100,000	-	-	-	100,000
Advocacy For D&A	-	13,030	-	-	-	13,030
Supporting Children & Families:						
BSC Children in Need - Taking the Reins	(7,740)	8,310	(28,493)	-	25,023	-
Cummins Capital Donation (Academy)	-	18,827	-	-	-	18,827
Pets at Home	3,215	12,731	(12,450)	-	774	4,270
NHS Project	61,022	205,953	(182,097)	-	(81,857)	13,005
WCC Mental Health	49,100	-	-	-	-	49,100
Total Restricted Funds	104,491	477,353	(352,864)	-	(29,892)	189,082
Total Funds	1,532,603	3,149,060	(2,796,570)	18,129	-	1,893,222

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

19. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Fund Descriptions	
Designated Funds:	
Tangible Assets	Funds set aside to replace the horse box and other vehicles.
Capital Equipment	Funds set aside for setting up a new office at speed, if required, and replacement of items such as printers/ photocopiers/ phone system.
Renewal	Funds set aside as a deposit for a future purchase of a building/ office if needed.
Buildings Fund	
Restricted Funds:	
Self-Directed Support	This project raised awareness and understanding of "SDS" and the process across Inverclyde amongst people accessing services, their families, and carers by sharing information, supporting them to put across their views and facilitating peer groups.
Advocacy Five Carers	Independent Professional Advocacy Support provided to unpaid carers in the community.
Advocacy Five D&A	Independent Professional Advocacy Support provided to people that have accessed or are accessing Drug and Alcohol Services.
BBO Children in Need	The project will deliver play sessions to children and young people experiencing physical, learning and sensory impairments in Rugby. The activities aim to improve communication, positive relationships and emotional wellbeing.
Cummins Capital Donation (Academy)	Funds to be used for the refurbishment of the outdoor education space.
Pets at Home	The project delivers equine therapeutic sessions for disabled and disadvantaged children and young people.
NHS Project	This project provides keyworkers to support autistic children and young people and those with learning disabilities to leave mental health hospitals and access suitable support in communities.
WCC Mental Health	Delivering an outdoor project, working within the natural environment to increase mental wellbeing and mindfulness to counteract the negative impact of the pandemic for children, young people and adults.

20. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

During the year the charity occupied premises belonging to the Chief Executive and paid rental expenses of £18,000 (2023:£18,000). At the year ended £Nil (2023:£Nil) remained outstanding. This rental is significantly below market rental, estimated at £80,000, and has been agreed with the Board of Trustees. The additional amount, totalling £62,000, has been included as donated income in the accounts and a related additional rent charge.

During the year, transactions amounting to £Nil (2023: £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 creditor of £94 (2023:£94), which is included within other creditors.

continued...

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

21. DEFERRED INCOME

	Under 1 Year £	Over 1 Year £	Total £
At 1 April 2023	61,053	-	61,053
Additions during the year	-	-	-
Amounts Released to Income	(61,053)	-	(61,053)
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Income has been deferred where a level of performance is required by the charity which is yet to be achieved by the year ended.

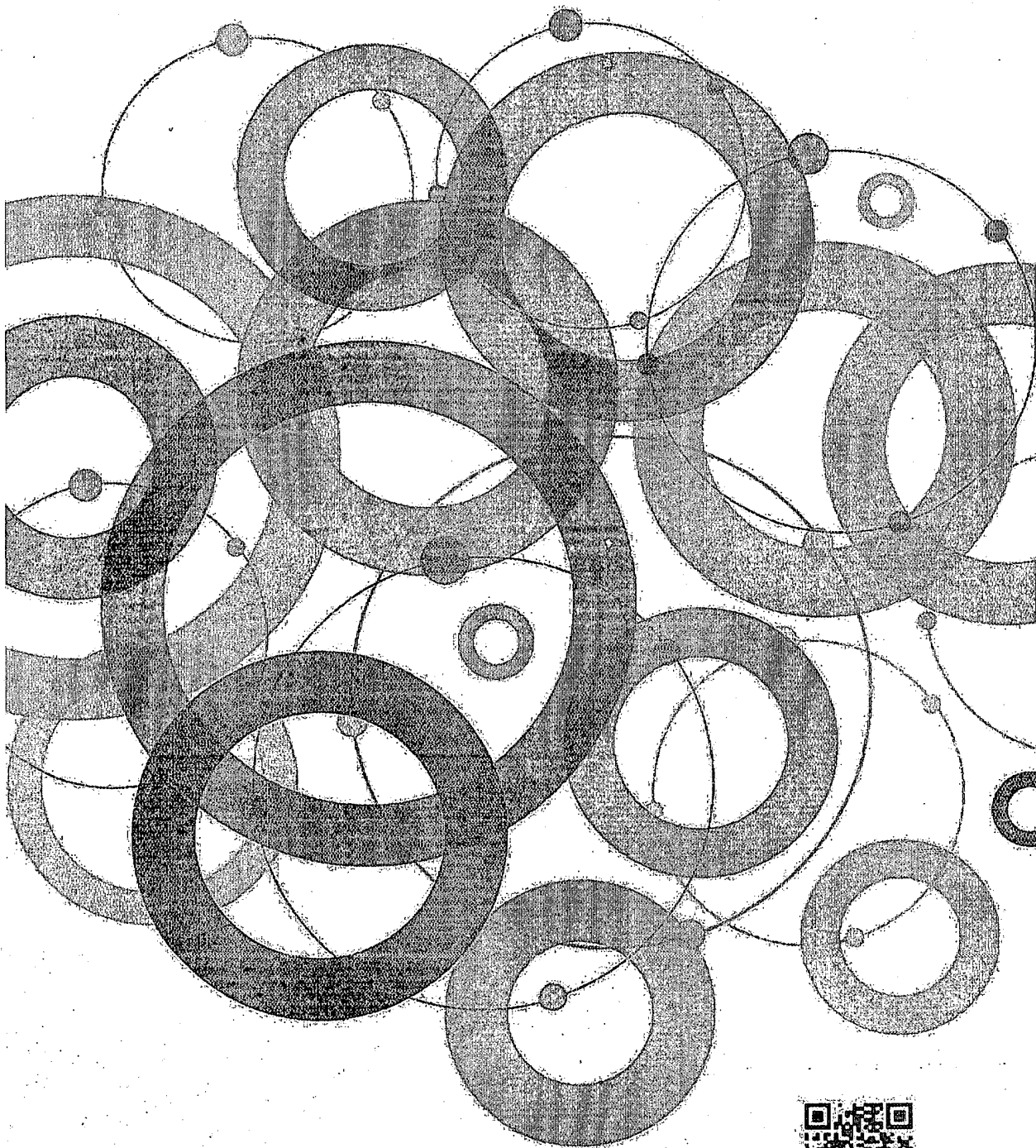
22. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There are no capital commitments or contingent liabilities as at 31 March 2024 (2023: £Nil)

23. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The grants and donations for the year ended 31st March 2024 included funding from the following sources:

BBC Children in Need - Midlands	Peterborough County Council
Fife County Council	South Ayrshire Council
Greater Glasgow Health Board	The Moray Council
Inverclyde Council	The Scottish Government
NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Warwick County Council
The Pels at Home Foundation	NHS Frimley
Cummins Foundation	



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Registered company in England and Wales (2872700). Registered Office: The Penthouse, Coventry Road, Cawston, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9JP.