
Impact Report

April 2024 - March 2025

Building Inclusive
Communities in
the UK, one person
at a time.





Mission

To deliver specialised, person centred services that empower disabled and disadvantaged children and adults to lead fulfilling and inclusive lives.

Vision

To be a leading, social care, health and learning charity, renowned for high-quality, innovative social care, health and learning solutions that maximise impact and sustainability.

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Charity Information

Trustees

Chairperson
Treasurer
Vice Chair

James Inglis
James Hirons
Andy Cater
Emma Sharp
Angela Wendy Evans
Corinne Hanlon
Amiya Kagalwala

Chief Executive Officer

Mandy Neville

Charity Registration Number
Charity Registration Number
(Scotland)
Company Number

1043601
SC038068
2972700

Registered Office

The Penthouse
Coventry Road
Cawston
Rugby
Warwickshire CV23 9JP

Auditor

FWC Advisory Ltd
29 Wood Street
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire CV37 6JG

Bank

The Cooperative Bank
14 Broadmead
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Solicitor

Anthony Collins Solicitor LLP
134 Edmund Street
Birmingham B3 2ES



Celebrating 30 Years of Love Made Visible

A Year of Reflection, Resilience, and Renewal

Chief Executive Officers Report

This year has been a truly momentous one for Circles Network, marking three decades of unwavering commitment to supporting disabled and disadvantaged individuals across the UK. From the early days around a kitchen table in Bristol to a thriving, innovative organisation with national reach in England and Scotland, this 30th anniversary has been a time to reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and look boldly to the future.

Throughout the year, the spirit of celebration has been woven into every corner of the organisation.

Monthly events, a brand-new website, and the sharing of 30 powerful stories have brought to life the heart of the mission, stories of transformation, courage, and community. These celebrations have honoured our history and have deepened connections with people and communities served through our projects and services.



Highlights from a Year to Remember

Milestone Moments

30th Anniversary Events: From a party at Ferry Meadows, Peterborough and a vibrant Halloween celebration in Rugby, parties in each of our offices, to festive gatherings across the UK, the anniversary was marked with joy, creativity, and heartfelt connection. Workshops, equine demonstrations, storytelling, and even something as simple as a tombola brought people together in meaningful ways.

New Website and Storytelling Campaign:

The launch of a new website and the daily sharing of success stories throughout September highlighted the depth and breadth of our diverse impact over the years.



Innovative Education and Support

Flaunt and Flourish Salon: The Rugby-based salon celebrated its first anniversary with outstanding outcomes, surpassing financial targets and proving that young people's learning and confidence can flourish alongside flaunting their talents in creative, non-traditional settings.

Expansion Plans: Inspired by this success, plans are underway for a new salon in Peterborough, alongside alternative education hubs in Brackley, and Coventry.



Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL): The partnership with Hoofprints, our equine associates in Brackley, has blossomed, with new placements secured. In Warwickshire, a Clydesdale named Shelby joined the team to support learning and wellbeing for several months.



The concept of Equine Facilitated learning constantly evolves as we deliver to a wide demographic and we have been delighted to share innovations with other providers.

The techniques of EFL, still in their early development in the UK, bring momentous therapeutic advantages to people affected by anxiety, trauma, loss, and other unexpected curveballs that life throws at us. We consider ourselves fortunate to be at the forefront of this niche dynamic.

Training and Advocacy Excellence

Oliver McGowan Training: The training team's leadership in delivering this statutory roll out has been widely praised, with lived experience at the heart of delivery.

Autism Awareness for Educators: New training for headteachers in Peterborough has been met with enthusiasm, helping to build more inclusive learning environments. Plans to take this further are in place.

Family Matters and Keyworker Collaborative: Both programmes are rooted in the belief that every family is unique, resilient, and deserving of support tailored to their individual journey.



These programmes exemplify Circles Network's commitment to personalised, compassionate, and inclusive support for families navigating complex challenges. The Keyworker Collaborative is an established working partnership with The Edmund Trust (Eddie's) in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Community and Corporate Partnerships

BNI Membership: Now spanning six regions, continuing involvement with BNI has opened doors to new networks, resources, and authentic support from the business community.

Generous Donations: From Dunelm's Delivering Joy campaign to Pets at Home's Santa Paws initiative and BNI's festive gifts, the generosity of partners has brought genuine support to many people.

CSR Engagement: Businesses have stepped up with donations, professional services, and training, helping to strengthen the infrastructure and extending reach. Amongst many others, three organisations: Cummins, RPD Foundation and Mastercard have shown outstanding support this year.

Innovation and Growth

AI and Cybersecurity: Embracing technology has been a major focus for our investment in achieving Cyber Essential certification. Partnering with Champion Information Services has accelerated an organisation-wide learning curve.



Early adoption of AI, followed by more intensive learning through a collaboration with Dandelion AI, has meant that Circles Network is now exploring intelligent systems to streamline operations, enhance service delivery, and personalise support.

New Roles and Recruitment: A new Fundraising and Marketing role has been introduced to boost visibility and income generation. Partnerships with Rocket Recruitment and Fresh Talent are helping tackle staffing challenges and support future growth.

Systematic Innovation: Through personal achievement in earning a Diploma in Systematic Innovation, plans are evolving to co-train with Neil Almond, setting up localised courses.

This reflects a deep commitment to continuous learning and transformation.



Challenges Met with Courage and Compassion

While this year has been filled with celebration, it has also brought its share of challenges, each met with resilience, professionalism, and heart.

Loss of Advocacy Contracts: The loss of services in Inverclyde, Fife, and Moray was deeply felt. Despite delivering high-quality support for years, new procurement processes led to painful transitions. The organisation is grateful for the dignity shown by affected teams and the continued commitment to remaining projects.

Recruitment Difficulties: Staffing shortages in key areas prompted a strategic shift in recruitment, with new agency partnerships now in place to support future needs.

Funding Uncertainty: Pre-election pauses and policy shifts created delays in funding and tendering, requiring agility and careful planning to maintain momentum.

Farewells to Valued Colleagues: The sudden passing of Rachel Carolann and Eric Adams brought moments of deep sadness. Their legacies of passion, wisdom, and unwavering belief in the mission, will continue to inspire our work.



Looking Ahead: A Future Rooted in Innovation and Inclusion

Stepping into the next chapter, the focus is clear: innovation, inclusion, and impact. The strategic plans are already in motion to:

- Expand intensive support services such as Family Matters and 4D Community Support.
- Grow the Training Academy with new courses and co-facilitation models.
- Launch new income-generating projects that blend creativity with care.
- Deepen partnerships with businesses and community groups to build a more sustainable future.

Commitment to person-centred, inclusive support remains the superpower. In a time of national uncertainty and increasing need, the work of Circles Network is more vital than ever.

A Heartfelt Thank You

To trustees, team members, volunteers, funders, partners, and most importantly the individuals and families that we have the privilege to support: thank you. Your belief in the power of compassion, creativity, and community has made this 30th year one to remember.

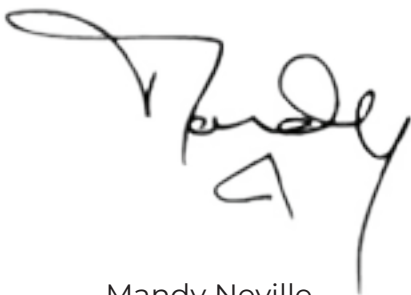
Together, we have demonstrated that

“Love is Work Made Visible”

Kahlil Gibran

is our embedded quote of action.

With love and thanks,



Mandy Neville
Chief Executive Officer





Chairperson's Report

As I reflect on the impactful projects and services delivered by the Circles Network team during this, our 30th year. The scale of work achieved, and the energy invested are truly remarkable.

While this year has brought challenges, particularly with reduced contracts in Scotland, the positivity and determination of our leadership team have maintained momentum. Our commitment to the organisation's values ensures that the quality of our service is never compromised and our passion for diversification and innovation, to meet the needs of the people we support, is still our main priority.



The availability of accessible education remains close to my heart, and I am delighted by the visible impact of our alternative education programme for children and young people in the Midlands. The sense of belonging and self-worth they gain during their time with Circles Network is invaluable in shaping their futures.

In Scotland, our work employing individuals with lived experience of addiction to provide advocacy for people navigating recovery services has been highly successful. Peer-led support is something we deeply value, and I am confident this approach will continue to grow. The positive outcomes, breaking down barriers and reducing stigma, are helping people move forward on their recovery journey.

None of this would be possible without the strong support of our team of staff and volunteers. Across England and Scotland, they work with passion and great skill to support and improve lives of people in our communities. I am incredibly grateful to them all for their continued contribution to supporting this organisation and for igniting dreams and changing lives.

On behalf of myself and my fellow Trustees.

Best Wishes,

Jim Inglis

Jim Inglis

Chair of the Board of Trustees





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.

The people we support, disabled and disadvantaged people are individuals, old and young, living with physical and/or sensory impairments, learning difficulties, autism, severe anxiety, 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 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, businesses, local authorities, and other relevant organisations.

Our impact

Our daily interaction in 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 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 courses, 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 30 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 life. 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 of 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

The 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 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 and 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, including 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 based on 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 continues to be a challenge . Our fund-raising strategy links to our business plan, and our Senior Leadership Team strives 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 services to individuals. We aim to achieve full cost recovery for all work undertaken.

Recruitment and retention of key personnel remains 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. Our HR team is supported by external consultants and works constructively to maintain governance and compliance.

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 seven 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 2025 was seven. 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 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 charity 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 charity 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 charity's auditors are unaware; and
- they 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 £1,845,484 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 £1,595,484 is held to manage overall risk, a major factor being a loss or material reduction in funding. The designated funds of £90,625 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 £211,850. The total reserves at the end of the year was £2,115,072 including restricted reserves of £178,963. Liquid assets were £1,735,431 being deposit accounts and investments. The balance of fixed assets, debtors less current liabilities was £379,641.

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 charity's policy to invest the unspent grant income in suitable investments whilst maintaining a prudent balance between security, profitability and liquidity.

Auditor

FWC Advisory Ltd 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 5/12/2025

and signed on its behalf by:



James Inglis
(Chairperson)



Partnerships & Networks

Circles Network works in partnership with many community-based groups, businesses and voluntary sector organisations. The charity the Lifecare Charitable Trust receives management support directly from Circles Network. Some of our key charitable partners include:





3D & 4D Community Support

Midlands - Rugby

3D Community Support

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

4D Community Support

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

Both services operate on a fee-for-service basis with funding allocated by the hour. Funding for community support is usually sourced from local authorities, local NHS Trusts and individuals themselves.

Team members collaborate with individuals in their homes and local communities, aiming to promote inclusion, interdependence and participation, while prioritising friendship and well-being.

Highlights

In July 2024 intensive support was successfully provided for a woman in the community who underwent eye surgery. This went well due to a fantastic team effort resulting in positive feedback from the mental health team. There was a subsequent increase in the number of hours of support required for this individual.

At Christmas, the celebrations included a meal out for the Friday Café regulars (our in-house cafe), was arranged, and other people who receive support from the organisation were also invited.

In February 2025, a young person who has been receiving support for eight years turned eighteen. This was celebrated with a party. Their family was also supported with the transitional assessments for social care. This has ensured continuation of provision and secured much needed further funding for the family to provide full waking hour care in the home as needed.

Challenges

There have been recruitment challenges throughout the course of the year. With new introductions to the service and team members moving on, a strain has been placed on service delivery, most notably when trying to cover illness and annual leave.



There has been engagement with the job centre's employment liaison person to place live vacancies and team members have been actively present at jobs fairs. This has been in addition to other recruitment avenues such as social media and websites.

There have been challenges managing deteriorating mental illnesses with two people who receive support. Appropriate support was provided and necessary engagement initiated with associated professionals. This resulted in a safe outcome for both people. Circles Network has subsequently recommenced additional support for one of the individuals.

Development

There are plans to boost recruitment and strengthen team availability through ongoing activities. This allows for each person supported to be allocated a group of team members with whom they can potentially work, providing greater flexibility of support.

Added out of hours availability of team members will mean that further short break commissions for children can be accommodated, especially with the addition of a new wheelchair accessible vehicle. This can also allow for development of after school and weekend groups for young people and daytime activity groups for adults. Further exposure on local directories will help to advertise these services.

Partnerships

G.R.Autos is regularly used for the maintenance of the small fleet of vehicles to support community work and other projects.

Relationships with the local community mental health team have been strengthened. This has resulted in more commissioned packages. A social worker has recently described Circles Network as a 'go-to' provider.

Continual engagement with the Job Centre ensures that vacancies are kept live within the DWP system. This also provides opportunities for job fairs and more selective recruitment presentations.



Stories of Change

Callum

Callum has been supported by Circles Network in the community, for the past six years. He is now twenty years old and has an Autism Spectrum Condition, alongside epilepsy, which presents with infrequent tonic-clonic seizures. Callum enjoys the sensory experiences of long walks in the countryside. Initially, he had a strong fear of animals, especially dogs. This made the walks he enjoyed difficult. Over time he has been de-sensitised to dogs by changing the locations of his weekly walks from dog free parks to parks where there are dog walkers. Whereas once he would feel the need to cross the road to avoid a dog, he now will often walk straight past dogs without any fear.

Additionally, Callum is supported during his education breaks. This provides an opportunity for facilitators to engage Callum in a wider range of activities. He has recently been to the Flaunt & Flourish salon during a session, where he interacted with team members, students and clients and engaged in various activities. His interpersonal skills have greatly improved, and he has become more proficient in communicating verbally and chooses to rely less on PECS cards.

Jimmy

Jimmy has been supported for a few years. He has diagnoses of Bipolar Affective Disorder, Schizophrenia, and experiences high levels of anxiety. Jimmy lives alone and has been unable to work due to his medication. His parents visit him periodically. Following a car crash, which caused anxiety, he has not wanted to drive. His life is very ordered and regimented to manage this.

Working with Jimmy revolves around finding solutions to some of the routines that prevent him achieving his goals. Jimmy's diet is poor; he often has a food of the moment and will eat this in isolation until he has found a new food to try. Jimmy is offered suggestions on how to balance his diet, and he has started to buy bags of mixed vegetables to accompany his food of choice. He plans to learn to cook stir-fries in the new year.



Jimmy's high anxiety is centred around people and the noise that he experiences outside his flat, he finds children particularly challenging. As a result of this, sessions are planned around school finish times so that he finds going out less distressing. He enjoys walking to the supermarket for the exercise. He has commented that being supported helps the *"Mental Health voices"* go away.

He struggles to interact with people so finds the company both reassuring and a boost to his confidence. Visits to the shop offer an opportunity to further broaden his dietary intake. He has also commented that he feels safer with company. He has reduced the frequency of his 6 am shopping trips as he looks forward to going shopping with support. Jimmy talks about his social and other anxieties a lot, he has recently commented that *"Circles Network helped me understand my anxieties"*.

Jimmy's hobby is centred around trains. He now visits the train station more frequently during daylight hours with support. He has had a boost to his self-esteem by having someone alongside him to watch train DVDs and share his hobby with. In the past he has been ridiculed and assaulted due to it. He now looks forward to his sessions and enthusiastically shares updates on trains he has seen and videos he has made.





3D & 4D Community Support

East of England - Peterborough

3D Community Support

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 a variety of disabilities. Participants enjoy support to access employment, leisure activities, develop and maintain friendships and to learn skills for life.

4D Community Support

4D support is direct support for a person going through a significant transition or circumstance. This can include moving out of the family home, settling back into home life after a long stay in hospital, or going through a mental health crisis.

Facilitators who deliver 4D are highly trained in areas that are most likely to impact the person, whilst they navigate challenges such as self-harm, drug and alcohol misuse, eating disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, exploitation and others. 4D community support is usually a time limited intervention when someone requires intensive and sensitive care, compassion and guidance. Over time 4D support is usually transitioned into 3D community support.

The team members vary in age, experience and personality, but they share a common commitment to the values of person-centred approaches and have enthusiasm for their work.

Both services operate 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 twenty-four hours per day. Funding comes from a variety of sources, including local authorities, health trusts and self-funding, ensuring a sustainable and diverse income stream.

Overall, the 3D Community Support service, alongside its 4D offshoot, is making a significant impact on the lives of individuals with diverse needs. Both services assist people to lead fulfilling and independent lives in their communities with less demand on other statutory services.

Highlights

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training for Learning Disability and Autism, commissioned by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB, has been actively delivered to health and social care staff and Circles Network teams in England. An important aspect to the delivery of this training is that it is co-delivered alongside experts with lived experience. This has provided the opportunity to train and employ participants in the services who become part of the training team. The outcomes for these individuals have been profoundly life changing.

A dynamic partnership has been established with a local gym, opening the door for the people supported to take part in weekly boxing sessions. This is something the team are proud of. Far more than just physical exercise these sessions have become a source of strength, confidence and empowerment.

Every Monday, individuals step into the gym and discover new skills, push their own boundaries and leave with a sense of pride and achievement. For many, boxing has quickly become the highlight of their week, a time where they feel energised, included and inspired to keep striving towards their personal goals.



The Head of Development and Operations for England has actively represented Circles Network, East of England at the weekly BNI networking group, which has become a powerful platform for partnerships with local businesses, driving innovation and opening doors to new opportunities.

Through this group, not only have community connections been strengthened but Circles Network has also received vital support for fundraising initiatives and resource sourcing, enabling the enhancement of the experiences and opportunities that can be provided for the individuals who are supported.

Challenges

Throughout the financial year, Circles Network continued to operate without a clear understanding of what level of financial uplift would be agreed with the Adult Social Care department at Peterborough City Council. This uncertainty placed significant strain on the ability to plan, operate efficiently and make forward-thinking decisions. An agreement on the uplift for 2024/2025 was finally reached at the close of the financial year, providing some short-term clarity.

However, the delays highlight ongoing concerns around funding sustainability and negotiations in the coming year will be critical in ensuring the long-term stability of services. To overcome this, active discussions are taking place with two managers from the commissioning team to establish a clearer process and achieve earlier clarity in the future, ensuring that both the organisation and the people who are supported can plan with greater confidence.



Over the past year several key team members left, which inevitably created short-term challenges in maintaining continuity for the people who are supported. However, this also provided the opportunity to strengthen the organisation's resilience.

By drawing on the skills and commitment of existing staff and welcoming new colleagues into the team, gaps were bridged and the quality of support never wavered.

Development

This year, '*Hospital Passports*' have been introduced within the 3D and 4D teams. A simple, yet powerful tool that ensures everyone's needs, preferences and ways of communicating are clearly understood by healthcare professionals. Developed collaboratively with the individuals themselves and their families, where appropriate, these passports capture their own words, wishes and feelings, making sure their voices are heard.

The impact is significant: appointments are more person-centred, communication barriers are diminished and individuals feel more confident and supported in navigating health services. By providing health professionals with accurate, accessible information, not only are care outcomes being improved but dignity, respect and trust is being built in every interaction. This approach reinforces the commitment to putting the individual at the heart of everything and represents a meaningful step forward in enhancing the quality of support provided.



Partnerships

This year has seen the growth and strengthening of several key partnerships which have directly enhanced the opportunities and outcomes for the individuals and families supported.

Peterborough City Council – Strong working relationships continue to be built with multiple teams across the local authority, including Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, the Transitions Team, the Children with Disabilities Service and the Children's Commissioners.

In the past year, Circles Network has been invited to present the work it does to the local authority, illustrating the breadth of services available and the pathways into support. As a result, social workers have a clearer understanding of what Circles Network offers and how to connect families with the organisation. This has already led to more timely referrals, ensuring families in need are introduced to earlier and with greater confidence, strengthening the wraparound support available.

HPT CrossFit Peterborough – A new and exciting partnership has enabled a supported individual to begin volunteering at the gym. Through carrying out light duties and accessing the gym once a week, she has grown in both fitness and confidence. This partnership has created a safe and inclusive space and provided a pathway into personal growth and wellbeing, demonstrating the powerful impact of community connections.

Brent's Boxing, Peterborough – Another new partnership has brought significant opportunities. Brent generously provides free weekly boxing sessions at his gym, where team members and the people supported are coached in developing new skills, building resilience, and improving physical fitness. This has quickly become a highlight of the week, with one individual making considerable progress and being invited to participate in a fight night event — an incredible milestone in confidence, determination and achievement.

Stories of Change

Adam

Adam began his journey with Circles Network in 2018. At that time, life often felt overwhelming for him. Diagnosed with autism, Adam experienced the world in ways that were not always understood or accommodated by the environments around him. Everyday situations could quickly become distressing and his responses, running away, hitting out, or reaching crisis, were not signs of aggression but expressions of unmet needs and a reflection of a system that did not work for him. Adam struggled with sudden demands and found it difficult to manage situations when things did not happen instantly.

For example, he might ask for a new toy or want to print something from a computer and when this did not happen right away, the frustration would build rapidly. His ability to process instructions or reasons was limited, not because he lacked understanding but because the world and people were not always communicating in ways that made sense to him.

Adam's story is not one of limitation. It is one of transformation, made possible through consistent, thoughtful support grounded in empathy, understanding and a commitment to person-centred practice.

Over time, the Circles Network team built a relationship with Adam rooted in trust, patience, and genuine care. With a consistent routine, predictable support sessions and two dedicated team members who understand his unique needs, Adam has begun to thrive. What once were crisis responses have evolved into moments of reflection and self-regulation. Now, when he feels annoyed or disappointed, Adam can pause, process and often express himself by asking for space, a remarkable shift that speaks volumes about his emotional development and the impact of the support he receives.

Instructions are less confusing now and make sense because they are delivered in ways tailored to how Adam processes the world. He is better able to understand why some things cannot happen immediately and this understanding has opened the door to a greater sense of calm and confidence.

Adam's sessions are something he looks forward to. His support package has grown from fortnightly to weekly, offering valuable opportunities for him, and meaningful respite for his parent. He now regularly chooses to access the community, often opting for outdoor experiences where he can explore and learn about nature. These outings are meaningful engagements that once posed significant challenges.

What was once a high-risk activity is now a source of enjoyment and growth, with Adam confidently navigating spaces that would have previously caused distress or led to absconding.



Adam's journey is a powerful example of what can happen when support is truly person-centred, and the environment adapts to meet an individual's needs instead of expecting the individual to change to fit the environment. Through understanding, consistency and belief in his potential, Adam is flourishing!

Harvey

Harvey was introduced to Circles Network six years ago when he was ten years old. His parents were unsure if he would engage with facilitators and were worried that their son's behaviour was too challenging for them to manage. The unexpected happened and Harvey liked being with his facilitators who were chosen for their calm demeanour and good sense of humour. He developed respectful relationships with them and, over time, with his peers at Circles Network.

The same progress was not apparent for Harvey in his education setting and during the time he has been supported he has moved between settings, spending prolonged periods of time without any education whatsoever until last year.

Another constant for Harvey has been playing and helping his dad coach football matches. Harvey has worked so hard on controlling his impulsive behaviours that he has successfully played in adult teams and refereed adult matches recently.

Harvey wanted to do something to help Circles Network and arranged, with his coach, a charity football match that took place in May. Harvey raised £250. He and his coach presented Circles Network with a cheque in June.



"Circles have always provided excellent care, guidance, and support to my son. It has been pleasing seeing his confidence grow when interacting with his peers. Having practiced some of the skills at the hub, he is now able to successfully carry out several household tasks, some independently and others with supervision or prompts. His one-to-one sessions split over two days with two different members of staff enabled him to experience a wider variety of activities.

They acknowledge and provide for his structured needs and enrich them through giving him added responsibility such as being the head chef for Cafe Friday. Circles Network's staff are always very professional, communicate effectively, and seem to work well as a team. Peterborough is fortunate to have them cater for the needs of families with special educational needs."



3D & 4D

Community Support

South East England - Crawley

3D Community Support

The 3D Community Support project in the South East offers one to one and group support either in the community or in individual's homes. Many of the 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, connecting 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 Council.

4D Community Support

4D Community Support is a targeted service, usually facilitating intensive support with an individual who is going through a period of change to which they are adjusting.

Highlights

The Community Manager in the Southeast joined the networking core group in Crawley named BNI A380. Members volunteered their time to renovate and clear an individual's overgrown garden and donated plants and flowers. The garden is a place that makes the person supported feel calm and less anxious and so became too overwhelming for them and unmanageable. The results were amazing and the individual was supported by facilitators to maintain the garden.

Networking with the Manor Royal BID has been beneficial. Circles Network South East attended a Christmas event held at one of the Manor Royal businesses where it received the proceeds from that evening's raffle. Lots of networking and making connections with local businesses helped in highlighting the vital work Circles Network provides in the local area.



Through networking, connections were made with the RPD Foundation. The RPD Foundation has launched a CSR Brokerage pilot initiative (Corporate Social Responsibility) with Manor Royal BID and Crawley Community Action to create meaningful CSR and collaborations between local businesses and local charities in Crawley and Manor Royal.

Circles Network South East has been added to their list of 12 Crawley charities and 12 businesses to deliver 'opportunities' including skills-based volunteering, resources and space for organisations. This will hopefully lead to local businesses supporting Circles Network not just financially but with resources to enable continuation of the work already provided in the community.

Challenges

Finances have been the biggest challenge faced over the past year. Whilst the new premises offer a fantastic space to provide the vital support for people there has been a significant impact on over-heads.

Discussions with landlords took place and although a reduction in rent was negotiated it is not enough for the Southeast to stay in the premises. Actions implemented included:

- Reduction on rent
- Early release on lease
- Venue Hire explored for the evenings and weekends
- Local businesses contacted for ongoing financial support
- Manor Royal BID Support
- RPD Foundation Support
- BNI support
- Focus on recruitment

Retention and recruitment continue to be an issue. Advertising on a recruitment platform was not attracting suitable candidates. The team created a recruitment video, with people they support, explaining what they would like in a new Facilitator.

Although the video was viewed many times on social media platforms it was not enough to recruit the number of Facilitators needed to improve the hours on 3D and 4D support.

Whilst it was imperative to still recruit Facilitators, funding and grants for new projects for the South East, Family Matters, Support for Men who have become isolated and the Oliver McGowan Training is still being sought.

Development

The most notable change in approach has been the investment of time by the Manager to networking locally. This has changed the direction and profile of the organisation in the area.

Benefits will be seen in the coming months with a move to a more cost-effective premises and further raising the profile – ensuring that stakeholders know about Circles Network, what it does and what its ambitions are and recruit through reputation.



Partnerships

Over the past year, the Circles Network team in the Southeast of England has developed and strengthened a wide range of partnerships to enhance the service and raise the organisation's profile in the region. Positive relationships have been built with staff and managers at Marten House, Prescott House and Lingfield Lodge, where individuals living in extra care settings are supported.

There has been a collaboration with Springboard, a charity supporting children with learning disabilities and community engagement through the K2 Café, which hosts inclusive social sessions, has been welcomed. Partnerships also include Whitehall Motors, who service the charity's pool cars, and the Cherry Tree Centre, which runs cookery classes for people with learning disabilities. Opportunities for social inclusion have been expanded through Burgess Hill Social Club and volunteering placements at St Peters and St James Distribution Centre, Crawley Community Shop, the Free Shop and the Easter Team.

The network has grown through support from BNI A380, Manor Royal BID and Crawley Community Action, who have contributed volunteers and resources for community projects. Work has also taken place with Queens Lodge to provide respite care and partnering with the RPD Foundation has provided access to corporate support, volunteers and equipment. These partnerships have been vital in helping the charity deliver meaningful, person-centred support and build stronger community connections.

Stories of Change

Darren

Darren, who lives independently, has faced significant challenges due to his diagnoses of ADHD, mental health issues and anxiety, often resulting in self-harm. Since June 2024, when support facilitators first began working with him, there has been a noticeable change in his openness and willingness to discuss his struggles. He now feels more comfortable sharing his feelings, especially during low moments when the urge to self-harm arises.

One of Darren's passions is spending time outdoors, especially in his garden. However, his declining mental health made it difficult for him to maintain the space. As the garden became overgrown, the task of restoring it to a manageable state felt overwhelmingly daunting for Darren, adding to his anxiety.

Recognising the potential positive impact of the garden, facilitators worked closely with Darren to explore how a garden revival could benefit his mental well-being. To bring this vision to life, members of the local BNI (Business Network International) were asked to volunteer their time for a community project. Thanks to their hard work, along with the efforts of the team and another individual receiving support, Darren's garden was completely transformed. Although Darren gets anxious in large groups or around unfamiliar people, he was determined to participate in the garden project as much as possible. He recognised when he needed to step away and take a break, which everyone fully respected and supported. Through this experience, Darren not only helped restore his garden but also made new friends, forming meaningful connections.

The transformation left Darren feeling grateful and touched by the kindness and support he received. With a renewed sense of ownership, he has been able to maintain the garden's upkeep, keeping it tidy and manageable. He even planted donated flowers and now spends much of his time in the garden, weather permitting. Having access to his garden again has given Darren a valuable coping mechanism. When feeling anxious or overwhelmed, he can now step outside, immerse himself in gardening activities and find solace in nature. The garden has become a therapeutic space where Darren can focus on the present moment, nurturing his plants and nurturing himself.

Callum

Callum is a 43yr old man who lives at home with his Mother. Callum is Autistic and is very anxious about any events happening in the world or bad news.

Just over two years ago, Callum's father passed away suddenly and, since then, he has struggled to come to terms with the loss. His anxiety has increased significantly and he often feels very worried about his mum, particularly when he has to leave her alone at home. Since becoming involved with Circles Network, Callum has found comfort and a sense of belonging through participating in various community activities. These include a cookery course and volunteering at a charity distribution centre where he helps repair and repaint furniture to be sold in charity shops. These are all supported with the facilitator.

Recently, Callum was invited by facilitators to attend a Crawley Town Football Club match which included a pre-match lunch in the club's function room. Although he was excited about the opportunity the event also caused him considerable anxiety. On the day of the match his mum phoned to let facilitators know he was feeling very nervous.

To help ease his worries a facilitator spoke to Callum on the way to the game explaining exactly how the day would unfold, from the lunch to the seating arrangements during the match. He was reassured that they would be sitting in a quieter area and that he could return to the function room at any time if he felt over-whelmed.



Upon arrival, Callum expressed enthusiasm about visiting the merchandise shop where he happily purchased a CTFC beanie hat.

However, in the function room, he became visibly nervous. Facilitators gently supported him to his table, helped him with his meal and remained by his side throughout lunch to provide ongoing reassurance.

When it was time to go outside for the match, Callum was assisted in entering the stands after everyone else was seated, allowing him easy access to his seat. Facilitators explained what to expect during the game and reassured him that the away supporters would be seated at the opposite end of the stadium, separate from Crawley fans. As the match progressed, Callum gradually relaxed and began to join in, singing team songs and cheering along. Although he became upset when a player was fouled and expressed discomfort with the incident, facilitators calmly explained it was part of the game, which helped him understand and feel more at ease.

During the second half, Callum beamed with joy, commenting that it was *"the best thing ever"* and said he would remember it for the rest of his life. He expressed a strong desire to attend another match in the future. What began as a highly anxious experience for Callum transformed into a memorable and positive day, thanks to the ongoing support and encouragement from facilitators.

With their help, he was able to safely navigate an unfamiliar environment, embrace his love for football and fulfill a long-held dream, one he now hopes to experience again.



The Keyworker Collaborative

East of England - Peterborough & Cambridgeshire

Summary

The Collaborative is part of the Autism and Learning Disability Programme in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is hosted by two organisations: The Edmunds Trust in Cambridge, led by Mark Briggs, and Circles Network in Peterborough, led by Caroline Hunte.

The Keyworker Collaborative provides support for children and young people up to the age of 25, with a Learning Disability and or Autism. Support is available for those people registered on the Dynamic Support Register who are inpatients or at risk of admission to a mental health hospital.

When a child or young person is at risk of admission to a mental health setting, Keyworkers work closely with families and other services and professionals to help prevent admission where possible. If admission does take place, Keyworkers remain involved to facilitate a shorter hospital stay and a smooth discharge.

Keyworkers recognise that children, young people and their families are the experts in their own care. Their role is to support and empower by acting as a pivotal point of contact, listening and working in partnership, and helping to coordinate professional practitioners across different agencies.

Support includes providing information and advice, building confidence, and making sure the young person's voice is heard. Keyworkers work closely with young people to develop person centred plans, such as discharge planning, transitions between schools or placements, and other important life changes. They also explore whether a Care, Education and Treatment Review (CETR) is needed, while continuing to offer support.

Highlights

Over the past year, the Keyworker Collaborative has played a crucial role in supporting young people who faced significant challenges. Through dedicated, person-centred support, remarkable progress has been apparent in achieving goals toward independence, confidence, and stability.

The often harrowing stories of the 37 people who have been stepped down from, and no longer required the service, illuminate deeply meaningful breakthroughs for the young people involved. These are young people who, through their own hard work and dedication, and their acceptance of support from their Keyworker, have taken crucial steps toward independence and stability.

Between April 2024 and April 2025, there were 41 introductions, each representing a young person (or someone on their behalf) reaching out during a time of need. This demonstrates that our service is increasingly known and trusted by those who need it most. Notably, out of these 41 introductions, only five were re-introductions over the year, highlighting the consistency of the service in reaching new young people.

Challenges

One major challenge was the Integrated Care Board (ICB) moving out of their direct working relationship with Circles Network and The Edmund Trust. This affected the collaborative's structure and communication. The loss of NHS email accounts required a rethink on how to share information securely and maintain contact with young people. To address this, the team set up new email accounts and a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel, ensuring ongoing collaboration. Consent was gained from young people to transfer their data safely and move key documentation to maintain continuity of support.

This change also prompted a team restructure. Roles and responsibilities were redesigned, along with the adjustment of supervision or coaching processes. Reporting lines were clarified to ensure smooth service delivery. Through these steps, high-quality support for the young people in our care was maintained, while strengthening the team's efficiency and accountability.



Rebranding was both an exciting new chapter and a challenge, as our previous logo was no longer recognised and our new email addresses and inbox needed to be shared widely. To overcome this, two dedicated “Moving Forward” team days were held, which gave the space to come together, reflect, and create a clear rebranding plan. A newsletter containing our new contact details and scheduled future events was launched, and wider collaborative meetings were planned to strengthen our presence and ensure that young people, families, and partnering services could stay connected.

Development

This year, the focus on strengthening support for young people by developing a more integrated and data-informed approach within the Keyworker Collaborative was achieved. Expanding the Data Analyst role to Coordinator, gave our Practitioners and Keyworkers real-time insights to guide their work, ensuring that every young person received tailored, timely support. The intent is to continue enhancing our services by streamlining workflows, improving communication, and introducing new tools that empower both team members and young people.

Rebranding The Keyworker Collaborative, including a new logo and easily remembered email addresses, also marks an exciting step in developing our service further. This refreshed identity will help raise awareness of our role among young people, families, and partnering services, making it easier for them to connect with us. It also strengthens our professional presence and supports clearer communication. By increasing visibility and recognition, the rebrand will enable us to reach more young people and build stronger partnerships.

Partnerships

During this period, we have strengthened our partnerships with our host charities, local services, and wider collaborative networks. By working more collaboratively, we now have a clearer understanding of what other services provide, and they better understand our role when supporting a young person.

Attending external events, hosting our own collaborative meetings, and inviting professionals to our team's day has further strengthened these relationships, leading to more introductions and services signposting young people to us who may not fit their criteria.

This has improved communication, data sharing, and coordination, ensuring young people receive consistent, joined-up support and creating a stronger, more connected network that benefits both team members and the young people we work with.



Stories of Change

One young person's journey with their Keyworker has been nothing short of powerful. Once unsure if their voice mattered, they have now found the courage to speak up and be heard.

On their own initiative, they created a heartfelt report shining a light on the real experiences and struggles that young Autistic people face in hospital settings.

Their words did not just tell a story; they sparked a conversation. What started as a quiet idea became a bold statement for change, and the strength that can grow when someone feels truly seen, supported, and believed in.

Starting over a new chapter at an early age is not easy, especially when it means leaving behind everything familiar. For one child, entering care was filled with fear and uncertainty.



Fortunately, from day one, their Keyworker became a steady hand through the storm, quietly coordinating support, building trust, and making sure they never felt alone in the process. Through that definite presence and deep care, something began to shift.

The young person, once so unsure, found comfort in the connection and in a moment of honesty, they shared that they finally feel safe. Not just physically, but emotionally.

That feeling of safety marks a turning point, a foundation on which they can now begin to build stability, confidence, and the kind of future every child deserves.





Family Matters

East of England - Peterborough

Summary

Circles Network has been providing comprehensive family support interventionstofamiliesacrossPeterborough,fundedbyPeterborough City Council, through their Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System. The goal is to collaborate with families and services to prevent harm to children and reduce the number of children entering the care system

Family Matters is grounded in the belief that every family is unique, resilient and deserving of support tailored to their individual journeys.

The programme prioritises the well-being, choices and aspirations of each family member while fostering a collaborative and empowering environment.

Family Matters is built on five key principles:

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

The work with each family is time and outcome specific and usually lasts for a period of eight to twelve weeks, although in some situations this has been much longer.

Highlights

Inclusion on the Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS)

Being formally accepted onto Peterborough City Council's Pseudo-Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS) marked a significant milestone for Family Matters. This recognition established the organisation as a trusted provider of high-level family support, strengthening its position within the local support network. It has also facilitated a more consistent flow of referrals and created new opportunities for sustainable funding and long-term service delivery.

Increased Number of Families Supported

The Family Matters project has expanded significantly over the past year, with the number of families supported rising from seven to thirteen. This growth reflects both the increasing demand for the service and the enhanced capacity to provide meaningful, high-level support to families across Peterborough.

Positive feedback

Another highlight this quarter has been the positive recognition from social workers and the Alternative Resource Team at Peterborough City Council, who commended the quality and clarity of the end-of-intervention reports that had been submitted. These detailed reports are produced at the conclusion of each intervention and include a comprehensive overview of the work completed, the specific interventions used, how they were delivered, feedback from parents or carers and the outcomes achieved.

The reports also offer informed recommendations for ongoing support, ensuring a smooth transition and continuity of care. This feedback reflects the value and impact of Circles Network's work, as well as the effectiveness of its collaborative approach with families and professionals.

Challenges

During the reporting period, a staffing challenge arose when one of the two key team members working on the Family Matters programme resigned. This created a significant gap in capacity and required careful internal planning. Finding the right candidate took longer than anticipated as it was essential to ensure the new staff member aligned with the values and specialist nature of the programme. In response, a series of internal meetings took place within Circles Network to refine the job description, clarify roles and responsibilities and improve the recruitment approach.

Although the new team member has been appointed, they are in the process of being trained and supported to develop confidence and consistency in delivering the Family Matters approach. In the interim, workloads are being carefully managed, critical support prioritised and open communication with families maintained to minimise disruption.

A key challenge during this period has been the increasing complexity of the situations being experienced by families. This has required more in-depth planning and a flexible, tailored approach to determine how best to support each family's unique needs.

Many families are experiencing multiple, overlapping issues such as mental health concerns, housing instability and difficulties accessing essential services. For example, a family where children were unable to access urgent dental care due to lengthy wait times has been supported.

The situation posed a serious risk to the children's health and well-being and required persistent advocacy and multi-agency coordination to escalate the problems they faced. Situations like this highlight the need for intensive support and a collaborative approach to overcome systemic barriers and ensure children's safety.



Development

Development and Implementation of Evaluation Tools

A structured approach to measuring the impact of the work undertaken with families was introduced through the creation of two key tools: a baseline questionnaire and an exit questionnaire. These tools are designed to capture the family's experience at the beginning and end of the intervention, providing valuable insights into the changes and outcomes achieved over the eight-to-twelve-week support period.

The baseline questionnaire explores areas such as family communication, dynamics, understanding of children's needs, confidence in responding to behaviours and the overall sense of joy and connection within the family. Families are also encouraged to share their hopes and key areas they would like to improve during the intervention. The exit questionnaire revisits these themes, enabling families to reflect on their progress, share their experiences and provide feedback on the support received.

One parent shared the following reflection after completing their twelve-week intervention:

"Honestly, I was unsure at the start that this would benefit any of us, especially me. But I was wrong. I was given tips and ideas that were out of my comfort zone, but I tried them anyway and I now wish I had done some of these long ago. I was helped in understanding my child's needs better, especially the sensory sides of his personality for which I will forever be grateful."

Their feedback highlighted improvements in family dynamics, including reduced swearing and bedtime incidents, more positive interactions and increased participation in joyful family activities. They rated their confidence in responding to challenging behaviours, setting boundaries and understanding their child's needs highly and described the support as "excellent" with no areas for improvement noted.



This evaluation process not only strengthens the ability to deliver a personalised, responsive support service, it also allows evidencing of outcomes and shaping future service development based on lived experiences.

Partnerships

During this reporting period, Circles Network has continued to strengthen and expand key partnerships that directly contribute to the success and reach of the Family Matters project. The relationship with the 0–25 Disability Team within Peterborough has continued to grow in both depth and effectiveness. This partnership has resulted in an increase in targeted and coordinated support to families with children and young people who have additional needs, ensuring interventions are better aligned with the services already in place.

Regular communication and joint planning have resulted in improved outcomes for families, including more streamlined access to resources and a more consistent approach to holistic care.

In addition, strong working relationships with a range of education settings across Peterborough continue to be built. These collaborations have enabled deeper insights into the lived experiences of the children and families who are supported, particularly in relation to school engagement, attendance and learning needs.

These partnerships reflect the Family Matters commitment to a collaborative, culturally sensitive and comprehensive approach. By working alongside professionals in health, education and social care the empowerment of families, prevention of harm and reduction in the number of children entering the care system can be better supported.



Stories of Change

Armaan & Asif

Armaan and Asif, two young brothers, arrived in the UK from Iraq with their mother in April 2024. The family faced overwhelming challenges: undiagnosed autism traits, disrupted education, poor housing, health concerns, financial hardship and language barriers. Both children displayed extreme dysregulation, including self-injury, aggression, and difficulties with routine changes. Their parents, though committed, felt isolated and unsure of how to support their children.

Following involvement, a tailored intervention plan was introduced placing the family's culture, language needs and individual strengths at the centre of support.

Proprioceptive and sensory activities were demonstrated to manage regulation. Visual aids such as "now and next" boards and bedtime icons structured the children's day, easing transitions and reducing anxiety. Parents received ongoing modelling and coaching on play, communication and behaviour strategies. To bridge the language gap, a total communication approach including sign language, visual symbols and audio recordings in the family's language was used to build trust and ensure understanding.

The impact has been significant. Armaan is now using communication icons at home, and his sleep routine has improved. Their mother has grown in confidence singing nursery rhymes in English and signing with both children, reducing reliance on screens. The parents now implement routines more consistently and engage more meaningfully with their children.

This progress was achieved through consistent, culturally sensitive support, built on strong relationships and collaborative working with schools and services. While some challenges remain, particularly around housing, the family is on a more hopeful path.

Anna

(a mother of a family who have received support).

"Courtney and Venetia worked with my family over a period of eight months. During this time, both Courtney and Venetia provided support to me, a single mum, and my children and I cannot express how needed and valued this support was.

My seven-year-old son is a school refuser who displays violent and challenging behaviour, and I did not have a clue what was happening within my own family. I could not get him to leave the house, I had no support from the school, and I was pretty much stuck in the house with him 24/7. It was tough.



Courtney and Venetia supported my son on a weekly basis and built a particularly good relationship with him. They took time to listen to his wants and needs and eventually gained his trust. When my son was six, and his anxiety was at its strongest, he refused to even leave his bedroom, wanting to eat his meals in his safe space. Venetia would come round and hide laminated pictures in our garden to get him outside. We gave him a torch, magnifying glass and made it a detective game, something fun.

Courtney and Venetia had weekly plans to get my son engaged in the community, would support with trips to the park and we could even access the Circles hub. This was a massive achievement for my son and gave him a safe place to visit out of the home.

In addition to the invaluable support, they gave to my son across the eight months, they also became the backbone of my support. Courtney and Venetia took the time to listen to me offload when everything had become too much with the violence from my son. They wrote a safety plan for me and held a zoom meeting with my close circle of friends so that they too knew the plan and could support when needed.

Together, we tried new strategies to help de-escalate my son when he was heightened or triggered. If the strategies did not work, they went back to the drawing board to think of something else.

Courtney and Venetia were available at the other end of the phone constantly, meaning that during the unsettling and scary time of my son having a meltdown, they could, and did, stay on calls with me. I had my AirPods in so they could talk me through strategies to help calm my son - whether this be placing a blanket nearby for him to hide under or keep quiet so as not to heighten him further, or to rhythmically tap his body to provide the sensory input he needed.

We need more Courtney's and Venetia's in this world. I cannot thank you both enough for being my strength when I was merely surviving. You helped me become stronger and more confident in advocating for my son and understanding him better. Thank you."



"H shared..... a lady from Circles Network called Courtney came to see me at school and she talked to me about how to calm my anger, and this has been helpful.

H says he now meditates when he feels angry and what you told him is working! Just thought I would pass on his lovely comments."

Social Worker Peterborough City Council.



Youth Groups

East of England - Peterborough

Summary

Circles Network runs six Youth Groups, funded by Peterborough City Council as part of their Community Short Breaks portfolio. These groups provide spaces where young people can connect, explore their interests and build friendships in a supportive and inclusive environment.

The main large group, Fun United, welcomes young people aged 11–19. It runs for two hours on Wednesday evenings during term time and for two five-hour sessions each week during school holidays.

The second large group, Circles Stars, is dance-based and open to young people aged 7–19. Sessions take place for two hours on Saturday mornings both term time and during school holidays, offering opportunities for creativity, self-expression, and skill-building through movement.

The small groups are designed to bring together young people aged 7–19 in settings that match their interests and abilities and where it is felt they will thrive within that peer group. These run on Tuesday evenings, term time, for three hours, and on Saturdays throughout the year, with one three-hour group in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Holiday-only small group Sessions are also offered. These provide five hours of activities and support for one day each week during school holidays. Depending on what works best for each young person, this can be increased to two days per week or combined with small groups during term time or at weekends.

Highlights

Over the past year, parents and carers have continued to provide direct feedback about the positive difference the groups are making in the lives of young people. Families have shared how the skills developed through the groups are being applied at home and in everyday life, such as growing independence in daily routines, increased confidence when making choices, stronger communication and developing meaningful relationships with others. Many families have also advised that this has had a positive ripple effect on home life, giving everyone more opportunities to enjoy time together and celebrate achievements.

The groups have been at full capacity throughout the year, which demonstrates both the strong demand for this type of provision and how it is valued by families. By running a range of sessions, it is possible to ensure that every individual is included in a way that reflects their needs and preferences. The consistency in attendance and the enthusiasm from young people highlight how much they look forward to being part of the groups and the sense of belonging they gain from them.



The summer programme was another standout success, with six full weeks of creative and engaging opportunities. From themed activity days at the hub to exciting trips in the community, young people had the chance to explore new environments, take part in new experiences, and build on their skills in fun filled and meaningful ways.

The sessions also highlighted the strength and commitment of the team, who worked together to create opportunities that young people not only enjoyed in the moment but that will have a lasting impact on their confidence, friendships and wellbeing.

Challenges

There has been a high demand for group sessions. While it is a positive reflection of the project's value that all sessions are at capacity, it does mean that new introductions can face a long wait before a space becomes available. This is because most young people who join remain with the project until they reach 19, which provides them with stability and continuity but naturally limits turnover. To address this, waiting lists are being proactively managed to ensure fairness and contact is being maintained with families while they wait, ensuring they feel informed and supported. Ways to expand capacity in the future are continually being explored.

Another challenge came during the transition to the new Community Short Breaks contract in April 2024. The previous five-year contract with the local authority had ended and the new application proposed several changes designed to strengthen the groups. This included combining two smaller age-specific Monday Small Groups into a single Small Group of eight members, extending the session length from two hours to three, and moving the provision to Tuesdays so sessions would no longer be affected by bank holiday closures.

Overall, this has been a positive change, giving young people more time together and making attendance more consistent. Some members needed time to adapt to the larger, more mixed group, and for one individual the environment was too over-whelming. In that situation, Facilitators worked closely with their parent and social worker and a 1:1 option has been agreed and is due to begin shortly. By approaching the change thoughtfully and remaining flexible, the transition has been a success for the majority while still providing tailored alternatives for those who need them.

Development

An exciting area of development this year has been the introduction of PROACT-SCIP training. The Project Manager began the instructor training in October 2024, with qualification in April 2026. Exploring how the principles of PROACT-SCIP can be embedded across the team to enhance the approach to supporting young people is already beginning to see results. Once fully qualified, the Project Manager will be able to deliver the training in-house, ensuring that all team members can access it and build a shared, consistent understanding of how to respond proactively and positively to behaviour that challenges.

The impact of this approach is far-reaching. PROACT-SCIP encourages viewing behaviour as a form of communication and working collaboratively to identify strategies that meet each young person's individual needs. This proactive, person-centred approach helps reduce incidents, create calmer and more supportive group environments and ensures young people can have the best possible experience. It also enables the team to feel confident and consistent in their responses, strengthening teamwork and shared problem-solving across the project.

A key feature of PROACT-SCIP is its detailed Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP) template. Creating a PBSP is an in-depth process that requires getting to know the individual thoroughly, including observing them in different settings, speaking with team members who work closely with them, consulting parents and carers, and liaising with other professionals involved in their support.



These plans are living documents that outline what a young person's best day looks like, their likes and dislikes, early warning signs, triggers and strategies for green, amber, and red levels of support.

They are regularly updated to reflect changing needs and experiences. By rolling these out for all group members it will be possible to meet individual needs more effectively, prevent behaviours from escalating and support young people in expressing themselves without relying on behaviours that challenge. Over time, this development will directly enhance the experience, confidence and wellbeing of the young people we support, ensuring their needs are understood, respected and consistently met.

Partnerships

During this period, several key partnerships have been developed and strengthened, creating positive outcomes for the young people supported and for the effectiveness of the project.

A significant partnership has been forged through PROACT-SCIP. The Project Manager has built strong working relationships with the Principal Instructor and another instructor from a nearby service. This allows the Project Manager and other instructor to co-deliver training across both services, reducing costs and sharing expertise. It also provides a valuable support network, as both services support some of the same children (for example the nearby service provides overnight respite for children who attend youth groups). Regular communication with the Principal Instructor ensures ambitious standards are maintained, while collaboration with the other instructor supports consistent practice and shared problem-solving.

The partnership with the local authority continues to get stronger. Quarterly meetings allow for the review of project outcomes, discussion of emerging needs, and sharing of insights from parents and young people. These conversations help ensure that the provision responds to gaps in local services and aligns with broader community priorities.

Finally, ongoing collaboration with social workers and other professionals in multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) has been essential, particularly as staff change roles or new team members join. These relationships support continuity of care, enable information sharing and allow for working together to meet each young person's needs effectively. Regular communication with social workers ensures that plans are coordinated and that young people receive consistent support across different settings.

Stories of Change

Charlie

Charlie first visited one of the Circles Stars dance sessions, where the understanding of what kind of environment would suit him best began. It quickly became clear that Charlie would benefit more from the Small Group dynamics, where relationships could be built gradually and the pace of the session could flex around his needs. Following a social care needs assessment and panel decision, Charlie joined the Saturday morning Small Group in May 2023.

The early weeks were not easy for Charlie. Like many children navigating change, he tested boundaries and carried barriers with him into the space. He struggled with turn-taking, often snatching toys and resources from others, and found it difficult to compromise. There were moments of shouting, upset, and insistence on having things go his way, obvious signs that Charlie was still working out if the space was truly safe for him.

What made the difference was consistency. The same trusted team members welcomed Charlie each week, gently but firmly holding expectations and boundaries while showing warmth, patience and genuine belief in his potential. A detailed Positive Behaviour Support Plan was created, rooted in what was being learned about Charlie's communication style, sensory needs and motivators. The team introduced a visual reward system and tailored their support to catch and celebrate the positive moments, no matter how small.

Over time, change happened.

Charlie began to relax. The shouting decreased. Incidents of snatching reduced. With encouragement and clear praise, Charlie started to share and take turns, and while he still benefits from close support, he responds positively and wants to get it right. He now arrives at sessions confident and chatty, often telling the team about his week, full of ideas and imaginative games. A wonderfully creative child with strong opinions, a vivid imagination and a growing ability to express himself safely has been discovered.

In September 2024, Charlie made a significant transition to a new school. The group remained a steady presence throughout, providing familiarity and reassurance in a time of substantial change. This consistency paid off- he continued to attend group without disruption and the trusting relationships that had been built helped anchor him during a potentially destabilising period.

Charlie is preparing to attend the Holiday-Only Small Groups for two full days each week in the upcoming year, something his parent felt strongly about, having seen the positive impact of the approach which had been taken. Though Charlie still needs supervision and prompting, he can access trips into the community safely, enjoying new experiences with his peers. He is open to meeting new staff and is particularly drawn to younger team members, engaging well when he feels seen and respected.

Charlie's journey is still unfolding, but his progress over the last two years speaks volumes. From uncertainty and challenge to growing confidence, connection, and enjoyment, Charlie is showing every week what's possible when young people are met with patience, consistency and a space designed around them.

Alex

When Alex joined the Tuesday term-time Small Group in February 2024, he was full of energy but struggled to direct it in ways that supported positive interactions. While verbal, he found it difficult to communicate effectively with peers and his attempts to connect often involved roughly grabbing at others, leaving some unsettled. Although eager to make friends, he lacked the skills to initiate and sustain friendships and preferred to spend time on screen-based activities rather than engaging in group sessions.

With consistent support, patience, and a carefully tailored approach, Alex began to make considerable progress. The team introduced strategies such as using screen time as a reward for positive behaviours and participation in group activities. Gentle reminders and prompts helped him to communicate verbally with peers, and he is gradually learning to respect personal boundaries. These efforts helped him grow calmer, more engaged, and more open to exploring new ways of interacting.

After the summer, Alex experienced a period of difficulty due to the transition from primary school to a new educational setting - a change that was understandably challenging for him. However, the structured, supportive environment of the sessions helped him regain his footing. He grew increasingly comfortable with the staff, becoming chatty, polite and more willing to express his feelings.

Now, Alex has shown remarkable growth. He greets peers by name, welcomes them and their families warmly and responds well to gentle reminders when needed. His ability to engage with others was particularly evident when a new member joined the group at the end of this quarter. Alex made a noticeable effort to ensure the newcomer felt included, demonstrating the progress he had made in building positive relationships.



The Christmas holiday period was another success for Alex as he attended two HAF sessions, which provided his family with much-needed respite and gave him additional opportunities to practice his communication and social skills in a structured environment. His family shared that previous holiday programmes had been unable to meet his needs due to the required 1:1 supervision, making this opportunity especially meaningful for them.

Now a vibrant and valued member of the group, Alex actively participates in sessions. He has discovered new interests, such as singing on the microphone and colouring as well as imaginative play alongside peers and these activities are used as positive reinforcements alongside small rewards like the surprise selection box he received during the Christmas holidays. These incentives have proven highly effective in motivating him and celebrating his achievements.

In less than a year, Alex has undergone a tremendous transformation. From struggling to communicate and connect to actively participating, welcoming others and forming meaningful friendships with peers, his progress is inspiring. The work will continue to refine his social skills and reduce the need for intervention by team members.

Emotion cards and a social story about making friends will be introduced in the New Year to help him continue to understand the importance of personal space and give him tools to navigate social interactions.



“We really do not know as a family what we would do if we did not have Circles. As a parent who has no outside family or friends to help support me with my son, and also being a parent to four other children who all have additional needs, his time at Circles gives me much needed one on one time with my other children, and enables us to do things we wouldn't be able to do with Charlie. As a parent, I find it difficult to leave Charlie as it would give me anxiety, but the team members at Circles are amazing with him and I have 100% trust in them taking care of him and meeting all his needs. Their communication with me is fantastic, they always give me time and advice if there is something I am struggling with.

Charlie is always incredibly happy going to Circles, and he comes home and tells me all the things he has done with a big smile.

I really cannot say in words how amazing the Circles team are, or how valuable they are to myself, my family and Charlie.’

Gemma Douglas (C's mum)





England Advocacy & Empowerment Project

South East England - Berkshire & Frimley

Summary

The project employs one Independent Advocate, working to ensure the voice of people involved in the social care and other services in Berkshire and Frimley areas are heard.

The advocate can represent people and ensure they are listened to, represented and involved in decisions about their lives, specifically about their care and treatment.

Highlights

It was a highlight to see a young person being discharged from hospital into the community, this was so positive and heartwarming and the continuing advocacy after the discharge led to a good start in the community setting in which they are now thriving.



Another highlight experienced during the year has been ensuring someone continues to remain in the community with their chosen service provider. The advocate's involvement created an exceptional collaboration between the individual, their family and professionals leading to a resolution of differences and the outcome that the individual had expressed.

One person was discharged from hospital after many years as an inpatient that was inappropriate to her needs, against her wishes and many miles away from her family. The advocacy work took three years before a suitable residential setting was found and funding agreed. The advocate supported the communication between the individual's family and professionals, sensitively navigating safeguarding issues and always placing the individual's wishes and voice at the centre of discussions about her. The person is now settled and happy and enjoys visits from her extended family on a regular basis now that she is much nearer to them.

Challenges

After hoping for a discharge from hospital for some time and work being completed to ensure a successful transition into the community it has been disappointing to see an individual remain in hospital. The wait and length of stay and consistent let downs from some services have been very hard for the person involved and their family.

The advocate has sometimes found it challenging when there are very slow responses and individuals are waiting for some time for the required support or resolution to an issue.

Development

The service remains similar; however, the absence of staff or staff changes have led to slower outcomes for some people.

There have been positive involvements with other services and some incredible staff who work with the advocate to ensure excellent outcomes. The supporting provisions have communicated effectively in the community and have assisted the family where this has been voiced and requested by the advocate.

These care provisions have been grateful for the communication provided with advocacy support and the advocate has often received thanks from family and people using the advocacy service.

Partnerships

The most effective partnerships have been with hospital staff at a particular unit and excellent collaborative practice - which has led to definitive and helpful outcomes for the individual involved.

The advocate has seen development and changes which have meant social care has sometimes become very stretched and this has led to issues regarding housing and inconsistency in the care provisions.

Stories of Change

There had been a call from a person's mother requesting help and support with a demanding situation for her daughter. The person involved has severe Learning Disabilities and is Autistic, needing help with several aspects of their daily life.

The advocate had been to see them at their home and had been able to interact and work with them, listening to their voice and finding out their interests, discovering their thoughts and feelings and ensuring that they fully understood about things they liked and enjoyed and things they found hard and challenging.

The advocate was able to establish a good rapport and understood some of the daily requirements that made this person's life better, including how the care provider had been able to ensure this person was supported and their needs were met. The care providers involved had built effective communication with the person and could provide effective and helpful care to them.



A best interest meeting had been called and in this meeting the advocate had been able to voice the wishes and feelings of the individual. This helped and supported a decision to continue with the care provider, who whilst more expensive than the alternatives that local authority had suggested changing to, were best able to meet the individual's needs.

The outcome was well received by the individual's family and the care teams who also felt this was the best decision for the person. The help and influence an advocate can make in bringing the discussions back to the most important perspective, the person, has been instrumental in ensuring excellent quality care can continue for this person.



'Thank you so much Moira - I do not think I could do this without you, I do not feel I could continue supporting my brother without you. I hope you can continue supporting me and my family.'





Forensic Advocacy

Scotland - Glasgow

Summary

Circles Advocacy, Glasgow 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.

Based in Glasgow, the service operates at Rowanbank Clinic, which is a medium secure setting, and the low secure wards based at Leverndale Hospital, the service also offers three months of community provision for those people who are discharged. Predominately, Circles Advocacy in Glasgow provides support to people who have offended and are detained due to their mental health, which as a result means they are involved with Forensic services.

The core funding of the service is received from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde as well as the West of Scotland Forensic Directorate. The areas of service covered includes male and female admissions, male and female rehabilitation, the national learning disability unit, pre-discharge, and community outreach.

Highlights

The advocacy team has benefitted from training in a wide range of subject areas:

- LivingWorks Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- LivingWorks safeTALK training
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) training
- Autism and ADHD training led by the Psychology Department at Rowanbank hospital
- Breakaway training has been kept up to date
- Talking Mats

This continued learning and development has equipped advocates to provide the best possible advocacy service. Completing training such as Talking Mats has helped to increase knowledge on separate ways in which to communicate with individuals, to increase capacity to think creatively and communicate about things that matter.

Furthermore, the advocacy team has stayed committed to understanding how each patient is an individual and how different learning disabilities, backgrounds or mental illness can impact everyone in a separate way. Nurturing professional relationships has increased the access to training within Rowanbank and Leverndale hospital.



Advocates continue to support individuals facing financial issues. One successfully helped a new patient with a claim to reconsider their receipt of benefits which had been incorrectly stopped following their admittance to hospital. This resulted in a backdated payment of over £2,000. The advocates have a great understanding about financial eligibility and what individuals, who are detained due to their mental health, are entitled to.

This continues to have a positive impact as advocates help in securing the maximum amount of funding available. Nick Tarlton from GEMAP Scotland continues to provide immeasurable support and advice with benefit related issues. In addition, Advocates continue to work with multiple debt advice companies to support individuals with debt management.

Finally, the Glasgow Advocacy service has continued to see individuals progress into lower security conditions or be discharged into the community. There are examples of the advocacy team informing 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 tribunal hearings and some had these granted, which meant that they were held in conditions of excessive security for two months less than they otherwise might have been.

In multiple cases of this, patients had not been informed of this excessive security order as their lawyer was also not aware. Advocates continue to uphold patients' rights to access of information which continues to have a positive impact on professional working relationships with patients and legal representatives.

Challenges

The food served at mealtimes has been an ongoing challenge within both Rowanbank and Leverndale hospitals. Circles Advocacy has been approached by both individuals and ward representatives seeking support to effect a change.

Most of the complaints have highlighted the need for more choice on the menu and more personalisation to meet individual needs. Circles Advocacy has worked to voice these complaints, which led to Rowanbank hospital allowing individuals to choose between a small number of meals each week.

However, this remains an ongoing challenge. Circles Advocacy continues to receive complaints and the team persevere at working with NHS staff to find a resolution.

Development

The Glasgow Service was approached by a researcher working across the Forensic Directorate in Glasgow to offer advocacy support during a project that included patients with learning disabilities. The survey was to understand language preferences professionals use within a hospital setting when discussing individuals detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 or the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995. The survey involved patients being presented with a word then indicating how they felt about that word, or how they would feel if it were used about them in conversation or in CPA meetings.



Individuals could answer with *“I like this,” “I don’t know”* and *“I don’t like this.”* It was made clear that there were no right or wrong answers. The patients went through all the words with the psychologist and rated them based on their opinion.

They were informed that once all the data was collected, a report would be written and a copy provided to the ward so that they could read it if they wished to. Patients were informed of their right to withdraw from the study which one patient chose to do.

Circles Advocacy provided each patient with support during the research, either by explaining things in a bit more detail to them or helping them understand a word they were asked to rate. Emotional support was given to one of the patients as they had expressed feeling that they had wrongly answered the questions. They were reminded that it was their opinion so there could not be any wrong answers. This research allowed individuals to contribute to discussions about how professionals speak about them. This continues to have a positive impact on Advocates as patients have expressed how they would like to be spoken about in a professional setting.

Partnerships

The Advocacy team has developed a strong partnership with lead nurses within Rowanbank and Leverndale hospitals, facilitating meetings between nurses and patients in each ward. The meetings were organised to review previous complaints and to create a means of collective communication between hospital staff and patients.

Meetings are held regularly and are attended by Advocates to help communicate things that matter to individuals. These meetings have become invaluable and have strengthened the professional working relationship with nurses at both hospitals.

Stories of Change

Alex

Alex is a man for whom English is a second language. He had only recently been admitted to hospital and was still in the initial stages of his rehabilitation. Alex did not have capacity, meaning that Circles Advocacy adopted a safeguarding role within his care and treatment. Alex's mental health could fluctuate from day to day which often impacted on his ability to instruct an advocate. An application was made to extend his order to keep him in hospital for treatment, something which Alex did not want, and his wishes were known about.

Over the course of a few weeks, the Advocate discussed the tribunal with him and explained their role at the hearing as well as what any outcome might mean for him. Alex's view on whether he wished to also attend the tribunal was not consistent, with him often saying he would attend and then changing his mind within a few hours. On the morning of the hearing, nursing staff advised that Alex's mental health had dipped that day and they would not feel comfortable with an advocate supporting Alex from the ward to dial in to the tribunal. A discussion, including an explanation that he could be represented at the meeting and have his views heard, took place with Alex. He then said that he wanted to exercise his right to attend with an interpreter present, something that he had previously mentioned. An Advocate attended the hearing that day and put forward Alex's request to have the hearing held on another day where he could attend and have an interpreter translate for him. The tribunal accepted this and granted that an interim order be put in place until a new date could be scheduled. In this way, Alex's rights to inclusion and self-determination were safeguarded.

Chelsea

Chelsea was recently a victim of an offence and with support from nursing staff had reported this to the police. The nature of the offence meant that her family were also victimised, and Chelsea had concerns for their safety. After reporting the incident to the police, Chelsea had not heard from them about when they would be able to take a statement from her. Circles Advocacy assisted Chelsea to call the police and request that they send officers to complete an initial interview and to lodge the crime report.

When police turned up at the hospital to take the statement they arrived without an appropriate adult, something to which Chelsea is entitled. Chelsea was informed of this right and supported to request that the police officers came back and see her, as soon as possible, with an appropriate adult present.

When the police officers next attended the hospital to take her statement, they did not have an appropriate adult present. Chelsea was frustrated with this as her concern for her families' safety was growing and further threats had been made by the perpetrator. Chelsea said that she wanted an advocate to assist her in making a telephone call to complain to the local police force about the length of time it had taken to arrange an interview and that they had arrived unprepared on two occasions. Chelsea was assisted in making this phone call where she asked the police to have two officers sent up to the hospital to see her by the end of that day at the latest and to have an appropriate adult present otherwise, she would file an official complaint. Chelsea thanked the advocate for informing her of her right to an appropriate adult whilst supporting her to raise her own views and concerns to the police. In response to her telephone call, a police interview took place later that day with an appropriate adult, an Advocate and Chelsea all present.



The advocacy team received some great feedback from a lawyer involved in an individual's situation:

"When he mentioned wanting to bring along an advocate I jumped at the chance; the whole court process and communication is easier when an advocate is involved. I cannot sing your praises enough you have been so helpful, and he really seems to trust and value you."



Recovery Advocacy Project

Scotland - Fife

Summary

Circles Network Advocacy in Fife provides independent, professional, issue-based advocacy to individuals living in Fife who are over the age of 16. Independent advocacy support is provided to people who are accessing, or have accessed, drug and alcohol services.

This is a peer advocacy service provided by people with lived experience of drug and alcohol recovery.

Highlights

The service is fully operational with a team of full time Recovery Advocates with lived experience in post.

The recruitment of volunteers has commenced.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people using the service and other professionals introducing people to the project as more people are aware of it and how it supports people.

Challenges

The project has been facing challenges regarding the number of advocacy introductions and the complexity of situations which are being presented. At least one more full-time advocate needs to be recruited to be able to keep up with demand. Unfortunately, the ADP has been unable to provide further funding for this despite recognising the benefits of doing so. The team is looking at other organisations to which people can be signposted while also applying to other funding streams to support the growth of this valuable service.

Development

Funding is being sought to bolster the delivery of the recovery advocacy service. Initial thoughts are to seek funding to support a volunteer programme, with the aim of recruiting someone to support volunteer advocates with lived experience, providing them with training and coaching.

Partnerships

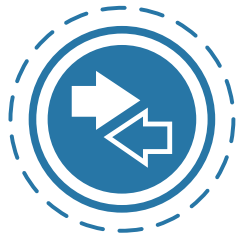
Partnerships with other recovery services have developed and this will continue. Working in partnership with other services is constantly promoted.

Building good working relationships with other professionals greatly supports the people who are being advocated for.

Stories of Change

Claire

A call was received from staff at the KY groups to introduce Claire who was waiting to be seen at Accident and Emergency, due to a fall while under the influence of alcohol.



Claire had been living with alcohol addiction for a long time and wanted help to begin her recovery journey. Claire and the staff from the KY group were worried that once the doctor had checked Claire over she would just be discharged.

A place had been secured in a rehabilitation unit for a week and the concern was if Claire was discharged, she would continue to use alcohol and the place would be lost. Claire was also supported by her social worker from the Compass team at Accident and Emergency. KY staff, a social worker and Circles Advocacy were able to explain Claire's situation, the risks of being discharged and the place available in a rehabilitation unit.

The doctor agreed to admit Claire and discharge her to the rehabilitation unit which had been secured for her. While in hospital, Claire received the news her place in rehabilitation had been extended to six months which she was very happy with. Claire is currently in rehabilitation and doing well.

Brian

Brian introduced himself to Circles Advocacy, seeking help and support to gain a place on a detox programme run by Addiction Services.

Brian had struggled for years using benzodiazepine obtained through buying prescriptions or by using drugs bought on the street.

An advocate met with Brian for a chat, where they arranged an appointment with an Addiction Services doctor.

Brian and the advocate attended his appointment, where he was asked to provide a urine sample free from any illicit drugs other than benzodiazepine and return one week later.

The advocate attended the arranged appointment the following week where Brian was given a prescription for benzodiazepine that would gradually reduce over the coming months.

The advocate met with Brian again a week after he started his medication. On this occasion the Advocate met someone (Brian) who had their life back and felt ready to move on with his recovery and begin to enjoy life again.



“Thank you so much for today mate, seriously it’s so much appreciated it really is, when you have people who believe in you it makes a big difference. So, thanks once again.”





Unpaid Carers Project

Scotland - Fife

Summary

Circles Network Advocacy provides independent professional advocacy to unpaid carers across Fife. The project supports carers to understand the importance of Power of Attorney and to support carers through the process.

It also supports carers who have found themselves in a situation where the person they care for has reduced capacity and a guardianship order has been put in place. Information is provided about both processes as well as legal representation.

Highlights

Access to funds to support people with the payment of Power of Attorney and Guardianship has been enormously beneficial for people. There has been an increase in the number of introductions.

Other services are more aware of the project and the benefits of the support that can be provided.

Challenges

Ensuring people know about the potential funding available to support with legal fees, which has previously been a barrier to people accessing support. This has started to change and people are becoming aware of the full extent of the service available. Removing this financial barrier has had a positive impact on the service.



Development

An application for the Carer Positive Award has been commenced. This would provide recognition of the internal processes in ensuring that team members are well supported in their caring role.

Partnerships

Working relationship with a lot of services have improved, in particular, the Carers Centre which supports all carers in Fife, this has helped towards the increase in numbers of introductions.

Stories of Change

Marta

Marta contacted the project looking for more information about Power of Attorney (POA) for her son Josh, who has autism. The advocate met with Marta who explained how hard it is for her as a single parent to care for her children, especially for Josh, who is 19 and struggles to make phone calls or attend to his own banking.

The advocate talked Marta through the process of POA and provided her with a solicitors' list. Marta chose a solicitor and requested the advocate go along to the appointment with her.

She also expressed how it can be financially difficult and Marta expressed that she was not fully prepared to meet the cost of the POA. The advocate reassured her that she may be able to get some financial help towards the cost of POA or even payment in full. The advocate made an appointment on her behalf and attended the appointment with Marta and Josh. The POA is now in place and Marta is feeling much better, knowing she received the support she needed and some financial help. She expressed her gratitude and thanks to the advocate.

Elle

Elle was looking for information from the project on how to add herself and her brother to their sister's guardianship order.



Elle's sister had complex health needs and lacked capacity. Their parents had an old-style guardianship order in place but were unaware of any solicitors who could help them with this as they had never dealt with it before. The advocate went to meet with the family and provided a solicitors' list and information about guardianship. The advocate collected sufficient information about their situation and contacted different solicitors.

At Elle's request, they chose one with the ability to deal with old style guardianships. The advocate put Elle in contact with the solicitor. Elle was very happy to have found someone able to help and clarify things for her and her family. Elle explained she has more peace of mind knowing that if something was to happen to her parents, her sister will be safe in their family home and she can make the right decisions for her wellbeing.



"The support you have given me was amazing and I feel so much more relaxed now that we have a POA in place, thank you so much."



Independent Advocacy

Scotland - Inverclyde

Summary

Inverclyde is a local authority in the west of Scotland. It includes the towns of Greenock, Gourock, Port Glasgow, Kilmacolm, Inverkip, Wemyss Bay and Quarriers Village. The area has a population of approximately 77,000 residents.

Delivering independent advocacy in Inverclyde involves offering free, confidential and impartial support to people who require help understanding and navigating services, particularly in areas such as social care, health, housing and legal rights. The aim is to provide advocacy that is person-centred and tailored to an individual's needs. The service is rooted in the local community and accessible to all, including disabled people, and individuals with, communication difficulties, neurodiversity, acquired brain injury, alcohol or drug dependency. People from ethnic minorities, women in refuge, people who have been diagnosed with dementia, individuals who have been detained under the mental health act or have elderly status are also included.

It is vitally important that advocacy remains independent from service providers, statutory bodies and other influences. Advocacy empowers individuals to understand their rights and make informed decisions. This service supports equality, dignity and inclusion by ensuring Inverclyde residents can effectively engage with the systems and services that affect their lives.

The support provided can be short or long term, depending on need, and at a pace the individual is comfortable with. The project receives funding from the Scottish Government and from the joint health and social care partnership, HSCP.

Highlights

One to one advocacy was delivered to six hundred and thirty two new individuals from the core office based in the heart of the community. Home visits were provided where needed and many others were met in community hubs. Five hundred and ninety one positive outcomes were secured, of which two hundred and nineteen individuals were supported to challenge their detention under the Mental Health Care and Treatment Act.

Two staff members gained a Level 7 qualification in Human Rights Based Advocacy (HRbA Accredited).

Challenges

A major challenge was the news that the project had not been awarded the tender for a new contract. Team members were challenged by the pressure of having to deliver advocacy right up to the deadline knowing that the new provider would not advocate for people until the 1st of April.



At the same time MHO's inductions were still being received. Existing advocacy partners were concerned that they would not receive advocacy support during the transition or be cut-off. Team members suffered stress and morale was low due to concerns about potential redundancies or redeployment.

To overcome these issues, face to face meetings took place with advocacy partners, recipients of the service were written to or telephoned to provide assurance that the service would continue and all concerned received information about the new provider. Weekly meetings were held with team members to discuss and talk openly about their fears and to address issues relating to TUPE.

Development

Facebook was used as a way of highlighting the service. This innovative approach brought several benefits: enabling a wider audience to be reached, not only of potential people needing advocacy, but families, carers, local groups, professionals and community partners. It provided direct engagement with the community who came back with questions and comments, creating conversations and awareness about the service.

Partnerships

Increasing knowledge about the benefits of independent advocacy was achieved by working with many organisations, examples include; Inverclyde Council Refugee Integration Team, Carers Gateway, West College Scotland and HSCP. Meetings also took place with the Mental Welfare Commission when visiting Langhill Clinic.

Awareness events and talks were provided to many third sector organisations, including Moving On, Carers Centre, Your Voice and information was provided at doctors' surgeries, in hospital wards, at dental practices and at local community hubs.



Stories of Change

Tom

Tom was introduced to the Advocacy Service by the local authority's homelessness team. He was not actually homeless, but he was housebound. Tom had enjoyed an active working life until his mid-fifties when his health deteriorated. His mobility was extremely poor due to surgery on his leg and his mental health had been affected by several bereavements. Tom lived in a property known as an upper cottage flat and to reach street level he had to negotiate fifty-seven steps, inside and outside his home.

Two advocates met Tom at home to explain their role and discuss his needs. Tom believed he had an active housing application with River Clyde Homes Housing Association, but he could not use their online property search and bidding system. He was hoping to find a new home in the area he was living in, which would have no more than three steps to reach street level. Tom said he received a visit from an Occupational Therapist (OT) a few weeks earlier.

In Tom's circumstances, submission of an OT housing report to a Housing Association would improve his chances of being shortlisted for a new home, as it would confirm that he was housebound for medical reasons. The advocate called River Clyde Homes and discovered that the OT report had not been submitted.

On this first visit, the advocate agreed to obtain Tom's login details for the online housing application he already had and chase up the OT housing report. It was explained that he could be supported to apply to the Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR), which gives access to five Housing Associations' properties within the area.

The following week, Tom's ICHR application was completed over the phone. Tom's advocate soon had details of his original housing application and learned that Tom was in group 3: *"Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions"*. This did not accurately reflect the urgency of his situation.



The next step was to contact the Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living and the administrators of OT housing reports. It took several calls and emails, but eventually Tom's advocate received an email from the OT who had seen him, with the housing report attached.

The advocate sent this report to the Housing Associations. One month after the first visit, Tom's River Clyde Homes application was moved from Group 3 to Group 1: Sheltered and Mobility (urgent). ICHR has a points system for allocating properties: Tom's application increased from 30 to 150 points.

A week later, a property was listed by ICHR which looked ideal for Tom. It was a ground floor flat with level access, in the same area as his current home. Tom's advocate visited him to show him the property online. After seeing the photos, Tom decided to place a bid which went to the top of the list. Tom and his advocate discussed the financial implications, as Tom would need to pay a month's rent in advance if his bid were successful, as well as cover the costs of moving house. Tom's bid was short-listed, and he was offered the property. His advocate supported him applying for a crisis grant as he used his food money to pay the advance rent and for a community care grant to help with furnishing and carpeting the new flat. A food bank parcel was also ordered for Tom and research on local removal firms who would both pack and transport his belongings was carried out. Just over two months after the first meeting Tom moved into his new home.

This story of change highlights the vital role that advocates play in supporting individuals through challenging and complex situations. Through empathy, expertise and unwavering commitment, the advocate makes a profound difference in the lives of the people they support.

Fay

Fay's life has been a tumultuous journey, marked by the chaos of drugs and alcohol. Abandoned by her parents due to her lifestyle she found herself living alone. Fay had attended church and had seen the leaflet about advocacy. Fay came to the office asking for assistance.

With the support of an advocate Fay began to find her voice. Fay's advocate had experience of supporting individuals living chaotic lifestyles and recognised how vulnerable and shy Fay was. She took the time to sit and listen. Fay's advocate explained how the advocacy partnership worked and that if Fay could engage and turn up for appointments that would be the first step. An advocate can only support an individual if they engage.

Fay said the issue that she was struggling with was that she wanted her methadone dosage reduced. Fay and her advocate arranged an appointment with the drugs team so that they could discuss this. Fay's advocate provided moral support and helped Fay articulate her desire to reduce her methadone intake. Fay's doctor was also incredibly supportive of Fay and was impressed by her determination. The drug team, over months of attending appointments, saw this as the first significant step towards reducing Fay's intake.

Fay's journey did not stop there. With this new confidence Fay expressed her interest in attending AA (Alcohol Anonymous) meetings. Fay's advocate contacted an individual who had come into the advocacy office to talk about their service. With Fay's approval, a meeting was arranged for her to meet the person in the advocacy office, which Fay felt comfortable with.

After this meeting Fay arranged to meet the person before the AA meeting so that she had someone to go to the meeting with as she was extremely shy and this had contributed to her not being able to make the first move on her own.

As Fay continued attending AA meetings, she discovered a supportive community that understood her struggles. The stories of recovery and resilience shared by others in the group gave her hope and motivation to stay on the path of sobriety.



Self-Directed Support Advocacy

Scotland - Inverclyde

Summary

Self-directed Support (SDS) was introduced in Scotland on 1st April 2014 following the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. Its introduction means that people receiving social care services in Scotland have the right to choose, control and have the flexibility to meet their personal outcomes, and Local Authorities are required to ensure individuals are offered a range of options on how they receive their social care services and support.

Circles SDS Project raises awareness and understanding of the SDS process across Inverclyde amongst people accessing services, their families and carers by sharing information, supporting them to put across their views and by facilitating peer groups. This project works on a one-to-one basis with individuals to support them with the issues they come across in relation to their own Self-directed Support package.

The aim is to encourage individuals to participate in managing their own care and to provide group support through SDS peer groups. These groups are led by individuals who have personal experience of Self-directed Support and are happy to share their journey with others, to help them think outside of the box and understand the processes more clearly. The project is funded through the Scottish Government.

Highlights

Two team members successfully gained a Level 7 qualification in Community Brokerage.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that the Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) project will continue to 2027. The Scottish Government stating that they are committed to independent advocacy and support.

Working in partnership with the HSCP, service managers talks were delivered to front line staff and the SDS pathway has been developed further.

Challenges

The uncertainty of further funding has an ongoing impact on team morale and continuous development of the service. A positive attitude has been maintained by holding weekly meetings with team members to keep them informed and up to date with procedures.



A challenge that continues is HSCP's engagement in working together to develop a clear pathway for individuals who wish to access self-directed support. As a result of a commitment to working on communications, invitations have been forthcoming to attend team meetings to provide information and discuss SDS.

Development

A recent change has been around the increase in introductions from schools for neurodiverse children and their families that have reached a crisis and require support.

Intervention has been prompt in providing information and support, engaging with social work teams, arranging meetings, supporting families to employ Personal Assistants and helping each family through the complete process of SDS and discussing the options available to them.

Partnerships

As stated, work has been undertaken in partnership with the HSCP service managers to deliver talks to front line staff and to develop the SDS pathway. The impact of this would be to enhance an individual's journey through the SDS process, for it to be more time efficient for social work staff, as the person has been informed by their advocate of all the options available.

There is a need for there to be some form of (informal) pre-assessment before the formal assessment takes place.



Stories of Change

Mr & Mrs Fisher

Mr & Mrs Fisher have been together for 60 years. Mrs Fisher has advanced dementia and Parkinson's which is getting worse daily, Mr Fisher wishes for his wife to be cared for at home.

As they are both elderly it is proving more difficult for Mr Fisher and the family to provide the care and support required for Mrs Fisher to remain at home. Mrs Fisher's daughter Mary approached the local authority to assist with Mrs Fisher's care needs. Social Workers assessed her and provided the reablement team for six weeks, however during this time Mrs Fisher was becoming frail and needed a lot more care than she was being provided.

The local authority also suggested using a local company, but it soon became clear that their support was not compatible with Mrs Fisher's needs. Mary eventually found a company that could provide 24-hour care with minimal input from Mr Fisher and the immediate family, which is what Mrs Fisher required.

This support worked for the family, and it commenced after the Local Authority removed the initial six weeks of support from the reablement team. In the weeks and months following, Mary communicated with the social worker involved through numerous calls and emails, to inform them that Mrs Fisher needed to be reassessed and that they particularly needed financial support for her care.

Mary was aware that the Local Authority would not fund all of Mrs Fisher's care, however they were happy to pay for part of this. From the outset the family had been funding Mrs Fisher's care themselves because none of the support providers within their local area, which were approved by the local authority, could provide suitable support for Mrs Fisher's needs.

Mrs Fisher was eventually reassessed, and Mary received a call to say that an indicative budget had been agreed, this was a huge relief to the family as it would enable Mrs Fisher to remain at home with the care she so desperately needed.

Unfortunately, although they had been verbally assured of an agreed budget, they received no funds. Mary and her family contacted the Social Worker on numerous occasions and eventually the social worker recommended that the family contact the advocacy service.

By the time Mary made contact she felt they were being ignored. This caused the family a lot of stress on top of the financial pressure they were under through funding Mrs Fisher's care. The level of care Mrs Fisher needed to still be at home was increasing.

The advocate contacted the local authority to express the family's concern and dissatisfaction with the total lack of progress in Mrs Fisher's situation. The family were continually contacting the Local Authority, but all to no avail.



The local authority replied to say that the funding would not be forthcoming because the company providing Mrs Fisher's care is not registered within Scotland. It took the council nine months to send this reply by letter. The message was inconsistent with their assurance at the outset that a budget had been agreed when they were aware of the company's background and that they were already providing suitable support.

Mary and her family were disappointed and felt let down by how the Local Authority dealt with them and could not understand why Mrs Fisher's care was not eligible for funding. When the council advised they were not going to fund Mrs Fisher's care package, the reason given seemed to make no sense and no alternatives were suggested.

Mary's advocate supported her to complain to the Local Authority, but they failed to adhere to their complaint's procedure. When this process was exhausted the family decided to take the case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Circles Advocacy assisted them to submit the complaint which the family are continuing to pursue. At this time, the case is on-going although Mrs Fisher is now, deceased having passed away a few days after moving into residential care.

Circles self-directed support advocates provide end-to-end independent support to individuals and carers, to ensure that their voice is heard throughout their journey. Everyone has a right to participate in decisions which affect their human rights.

Nasha

Nasha is Ukrainian, she came to live in Scotland a few years ago and her parents moved from Ukraine to live with her not long after her move. Nasha's dad became unwell and was eventually admitted to a nursing home.

Meanwhile, Nasha had become the main carer for her mother, Silvia, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Nasha was feeling overwhelmed and contacted a Social Worker to request a care package for her mum. The Social Worker had not explained the Self-Directed Support (SDS) Options to Nasha but did signpost her to Circles Advocacy. Nasha was allocated an SDS advocate, but before they met, she had done some research into the Options herself.

Nasha and her advocate discussed the 4 Options. Nasha was leaning towards employing a Personal Assistant using Option 1 but explained that any PA would have to be a Ukrainian speaker as Silvia does not speak English.

The advocate put Nasha in touch with a payroll company who could manage the direct payment account and support employment details such as contract, payroll, insurance and pension, if applicable.

Meanwhile, the advocate followed up with the Social Worker to find out whether Silvia's needs had been assessed, and a care plan drawn up. The Social Worker confirmed that the need for five hours' support had been assessed and was awaiting approval. Nasha and the advocate found a Ukrainian speaking PA who was happy to take on the role as soon as funding was approved and in place. The selected payroll company set up a managed bank account for Silvia's direct payment. Nasha's advocate stayed involved until the care package was fully in place, and the PA started work.

Nasha was grateful for the extra support she received to navigate the SDS system and to fill in the gaps in information she received from other organisations.





Circles Advocacy

Scotland - South Ayrshire

Summary

The team at Circles Advocacy stand alongside individuals across South Ayrshire who are affected by mental ill health, disability, drug and/or alcohol use, and other complex needs, providing robust, independent advocacy for those subject to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

The advocacy provided extends across a wide range of formal and informal settings, including Mental Health Tribunals, Care Programme Approach meetings, Social Work reviews, Children's Hearings, child protection meetings, and DWP health assessments, among many others. Delivering both issue-based one-to-one advocacy and collective advocacy, ensuring that every voice is heard—especially those who cannot speak for themselves. Through non-instructed advocacy, individuals who are unable to access the service independently are also supported, ensuring their rights and wishes are still represented.

The role of the advocate is to equip people with the information, confidence and support they need to make informed decisions, express their views and retain as much control as possible over their own lives.

The organisation works with individuals affected by:

- Mental health conditions.
- Learning disabilities.
- Chronic illness and physical disabilities.
- Alcohol and substance use.
- Brain injuries and dementia.
- Autism spectrum disorders.
- Situations involving risk of harm.

Working in close partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, the service is always guided by the principles of social inclusion, equality and justice. Advocacy is not just what Circles Network does, it is the identity of the organisation.

Highlights

Circles Advocacy continued to play a pivotal role in shaping the South Ayrshire Advocacy Strategy. Contributions to strategic planning groups and the Adult Protection Committee ensured advocacy remains central to local service development.

The service maintains a strong presence in the community through regular drop-ins at the Compass Recovery Centre. These engagements provide accessible advocacy for individuals affected by mental health, addiction and social care challenges.

New technologies have been embraced, including NearMe video calls in collaboration with Social Work Scotland and HMP Stirling. The team has also identified and participated in valuable training opportunities such as motivational interviewing, mental health first aid and human trafficking awareness.

The team has shared impactful stories of change at strategic forums, contributed to a large-scale care investigation and linked in with various other Third Sector organisations and with the Health and Social Care Partnership to support vulnerable individuals—demonstrating the real-world impact of advocacy.

The team has also worked with the Health and Social Care Partnership to engage with individual's resident in a care home which was part of a large-scale investigation. Residents were subject to Adult Support and Protection procedures and their views were gathered, by the team, as part of the investigation.

Challenges

Challenge regularly arises when using human rights-based language in advocacy. While intended to promote dignity and fairness, it is sometimes met with resistance or misinterpretation by professionals, making collaborative working difficult.

This issue is not unique to South Ayrshire and reflects a broader national concern. Communication from social services, particularly within Children and Families teams is often described by individuals as poor, inaccurate and lacking a collaborative approach.

Many feel the process is pre-determined, with fixed agendas aimed at child removal rather than family support. This leads to feelings of frustration, powerlessness and being judged, especially when therapeutic relationships are absent and requests to change social workers are denied.

Circles Advocacy continues to work alongside professionals and challenge restrictive, non-person-centred practices using legislation, but trauma-informed approaches are often overlooked and blanket policies persist.

Strengthening partnerships and maintaining strong relationships within the local authority and the health board, whilst demonstrating a professional, person centred and trauma informed approach will help in working towards the stated outcomes of advocacy partners.

Development

Methods of recording and compiling data have been streamlined to improve responsiveness in being able to show the impact that advocacy intervention is having. This will facilitate the identification of patterns of advocacy that are needed and themes in respect of types of issues that are occurring in certain localities.



It will also help in identifying gaps in advocacy provision in the community. Through connections with Third Sector Forums, the Adult Protection Committee, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership and various other groups, areas can be highlighted so work can be done to address the problems that people are experiencing in the community.

Partnerships

The South Ayrshire Communication Friendly Environments (SACFE) project is led by the SACFE Communities Team which consists of a Speech and Language Therapist and Speech and Language Therapy Assistant.

The team work collaboratively with community settings within South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership to successfully support the communication skills of the entire South Ayrshire population and ensure that services are accessible for all through establishing effective Communication Friendly Environments.

A Communication Friendly Environment is a space that is designed to promote and support communication for everyone who uses it.

Circles Advocacy has signed up to the SACFE Total Communication training who will be creating bespoke communication boards for the charity. As the information offered can sometimes be complex and difficult to understand, having these tools will be an excellent support to advocates and beneficial to the people supported.

Stories of Change

Andrew

Andrew was introduced to Circles Advocacy by his granddaughter, who was concerned about the level of control he had over his own life. Living in a care home, Andrew felt his privacy was compromised and believed he had signed a legal document while unwell, something he did not fully understand and felt pressured into by his second wife. He was unsure whether she held Power of Attorney (PoA) and asked the advocate to help clarify the situation.

Andrew also expressed that the care home environment was not right for him. He felt overly restricted and believed he could not leave unless he “*was good*.” This misunderstanding was affecting his mental wellbeing and sense of autonomy.

The advocate contacted the Office of the Public Guardian and, after several attempts, confirmed that Andrew’s wife did not hold PoA. This was further verified by a local solicitor. With this clarity, Andrew felt empowered to speak to a lawyer and begin divorce proceedings, with advocacy support every step of the way.

Throughout the process, Andrew described the advocate as a vital link to the outside world, helping him communicate with legal professionals, social workers and his family. Support was provided gradually, respecting Andrew’s need to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

With advocacy support, Andrew amended his will to reflect his own wishes and regained confidence in making decisions about his life. He was also appointed a dedicated social worker who is helping him plan a move back into the community.

Andrew’s journey is a powerful example of how advocacy can restore independence, dignity, and hope.

Kevin

Kevin knew that life's biggest battles were not always fought with strength alone sometimes, they required persistence, patience and the right people in your corner. For years, he had unsuccessfully navigated a complicated system of support services, determined to regain control over his life.

Living with ME and mental health challenges, Kevin understood his own needs better than anyone. He had seen progress before, years ago, he had enough structured support to work toward independence.

But as services changed, funding shifted and pandemic disruptions altered his routine, he found himself stuck in a system that was not helping him move forward.

He reached out for help. Social work, occupational therapy, Enable, the Ayrshire Independent Living Network, each played a role, but none provided the coordinated plan he needed.

Instead of guiding him toward recovery, the system felt like an endless loop of miscommunication and misplaced assumptions. Reports painted an inaccurate picture of his abilities, underestimating the daily challenges he faced.

But Kevin refused to let the system define him. With the support of advocacy services, he began challenging decisions that did not reflect his reality.



He pushed for accurate assessments, questioned misleading reports and fought for a structured, goal-oriented support plan. He was not asking for lifelong care, he wanted a pathway to greater independence.

With the help of Circles Advocacy, his persistence paid off. His concerns about one organisation's management reached the right people. Social work evaluations were reconsidered.

He took the courageous step of leaving a system that was not working for him and moving toward a more tailored support model. The transition was not easy, but it was necessary.

Kevin's journey is still ongoing, but he has taken back control. No longer just a recipient of services, he is an active voice in shaping his future. Through determination and the right support, he continues to fight for a system that works not just for him, but for others who deserve the same chance at progress.



"The 30 minutes I've just spent with you has been more help than the last few years of speaking to my GP."

"I'd like to thank the advocate for the amazing support she has given me and coming to the job centre with me.

She was amazing. I could not have done it without her. She was wonderful and such a nice person."





Recovery Advocacy Project

Scotland - South Ayrshire

Summary

Standing alongside individuals across South Ayrshire who are affected by mental ill health, disability, drug and/or alcohol use and other complex needs, Circles Advocacy provides robust, independent assistance for people subject to the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

The service extends across a wide range of formal and informal settings, including Mental Health Tribunals, Care Programme Approach meetings, Social Work reviews, Children's Hearings, Child Protection meetings and DWP health assessments, among many others.

The service delivers both issue-based one-to-one advocacy and collective advocacy, ensuring that every voice is heard, especially those who cannot speak for themselves.

Through non-instructed advocacy individuals who are unable to access the service independently are supported, ensuring their rights and wishes are still represented.

Funding has also been made available to 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. Team members have lived experience of these matters and are trauma informed.

The focus is on empowering individuals by recognising their strengths and assets through alignment with the principles of **Rights, Respect and Recovery** and the **Recovery is Reality** strategy.

Circles Network's role is to empower people with the information, confidence, and support they need to make informed decisions, express their views and retain as much control as possible over their own lives.

This involves working with individuals affected by:

- Mental health conditions.
- Learning disabilities.
- Chronic illness and physical disabilities.
- Alcohol and substance use.
- Brain injuries and dementia.
- Autism spectrum disorders.
- Situations involving risk of harm.

Working in close partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, always guided by the principles of social inclusion, equality and justice Advocacy is not just what is provided, it is the organisation's identity.

Highlights

Circles Advocacy continued to play a pivotal role in shaping the South Ayrshire Advocacy Strategy. The contributions made to strategic planning groups and the Adult Protection Committee ensured advocacy remains central to local service development. Recovery advocacy was also discussed within the planning groups.



The team has been strengthened with the successful recruitment of volunteers from the Scottish Drugs and Alcohol Forum and Alcohol and Drug Partnership. These additional team members will enhance the capacity to support individuals with complex needs.

The service maintains a strong presence in the community through regular drop-ins at the Compass Recovery Centre and local Third Sector Forums. These engagements provide accessible advocacy for individuals affected by mental health, addiction and social care challenges.

Challenges

Amid the ongoing health and social care crisis, individuals are facing more complex challenges, including poverty, mental health issues and digital exclusion. Budget cuts have led to reduced services, with many providers withdrawing and support limited to those in critical need. As a result, advocacy services have become a vital point of contact for people who feel isolated and unsupported. Alongside third sector partners, the organisation is adapting rapidly, advocating for change, and working to reshape systems to better meet the evolving needs of local communities.

Advocacy partners often face delays due to under-resourced services, strict access criteria and poor communication. Many individuals struggle to access housing, benefits and care, and for those living with trauma, advocates are often their only support. Listening and amplifying their voices provides relief and validation, even when issues remain unresolved. Concerns continue to be raised and collaboration with the Health and Social Care Partnership to improve communication and promote the value of advocacy across departments is essential.

Development

Circles Advocacy linked in with the Scottish Drugs Forum and the local Alcohol and Drug Partnership to take on two volunteers who have lived experience and are in recovery, to work on placement as advocates in the team. Circles Advocacy provides them with in-house advocacy training, sources relevant external training and facilitates the shadowing of advocates for a period before working with people directly on their own.

Volunteers have advocated for people in recovery on many and varied issues and attended the Compass Recovery Centre drop-ins to support people within this setting. The lived experience advocates are given continuous support from existing recovery advocates and the wider team. The work that the volunteers do contributes to the completion of their SVQ3 in Adult Health and Social Care.

Partnerships

Circles Advocacy signed up to become partners in South Ayrshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership's one-stop-shop, along with fifteen other local organisations.

The one-stop shop called Compass was created in response to priority areas identified during the Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) Learning Review and reflected in the refreshed Alcohol and Drug Strategy: Recovery is Reality 2023–2026.



South Ayrshire ADP has developed an ambitious proposal for a One Stop Shop (OSS) Hub and Spoke Model. Grounded in a comprehensive Research and Scoping Study, the OSS model is shaped by the voices of people with lived experience, frontline practitioners and evidence-based insights.

Compass, based in Ayr, aims to improve health and wellbeing for individuals with multiple and complex needs by offering coordinated, multi-agency support. It provides low-threshold, harm reduction services including Naloxone distribution, injection equipment and relapse prevention, available during evenings and weekends to reduce risk and respond to crises.

Compass will also support access to treatment and recovery pathways, including residential rehabilitation, through effective signposting and person-centred care.

Beyond clinical support, Compass will address wider social challenges such as housing and benefits, offering peer-led support and strong links to recovery communities. It will also serve as a coordination point for individuals transitioning from prison, hospital, or rehabilitation, ensuring continuity of care and support. In June 2024, when Compass officially opened, Circles Advocacy team members started attending Compass two afternoons a week, where they shared space with other organisations to provide independent advocacy to people using the space as part of their recovery.

Stories of Change

Mary

Some advocacy partners have endured a lifetime of falling through the cracks of the social welfare and health systems. Mary was one such individual until the intervention of a Recovery Advocate.

Mary is a woman in her late 30's living with a chronic pain diagnosis. She reached out for advocacy support after experiencing repeated hospital discharges, often from A&E, without meaningful resolution to her physical or mental health concerns. She felt unfairly stigmatised and labelled as an "opioid user," despite being prescribed pain relief medication by her GP.

Mary had never heard of advocacy until a family member mentioned Circles Advocacy. She made contact by phone, initially seeking support to lodge a complaint about the lack of care and treatment she had received from the NHS.

An Advocate began by helping Mary initiate the complaint process, drawing on human rights-based legislation. She was also supported in accessing her medical records to better understand why analgesic medication had not been prescribed to manage her multiple conditions.

Since that first referral, Mary has made seven additional self-referrals. These have included support to attend mental health appointments, assistance in liaising with the South Ayrshire Treatment and Recovery Team to reduce her cannabis use (which she had been using for pain relief) and help in applying for a Blue Badge for her car.

Roy

Roy, who is in recovery, faced ongoing physical and emotional challenges. Despite repeated attempts to raise concerns with his GP, he felt dismissed due to his history of substance use. With advocacy support, Roy was able to communicate his health needs more effectively. Working alongside his Treatment and Recovery Support Worker, the advocate helped ensure his concerns including numbness in his legs, mobility issues and unexplained lumps were taken seriously.

Following advocacy intervention, Roy was referred to NHS professionals. The lumps were diagnosed as lipomas, one of which required further investigation. He was also prescribed medication for nerve pain, caused by sciatica and referred for physiotherapy.

As his confidence grew, Roy began to self-advocate arranging appointments, managing his medication and addressing circulation concerns independently. Advocacy support remained available to ensure continuity and that no issues were overlooked.

Roy's experience highlights the importance of advocacy in overcoming stigma, improving access to healthcare and empowering individuals to take control of their wellbeing.



"Thank you so much for proactively offering support with the refuge meeting yesterday and for all your support yesterday and Monday."

"I really, really appreciate you looking out for me, and you made a difficult day significantly easier with your support. I would have found the meeting with the refuge more difficult without you."

"Thanks so much for helping. No idea what mess I'd be in without your help. I can go for a sleep now and relax a bit more than I was. You've helped so much today."



Self-Directed Support Advocacy

Scotland - Moray

Summary

Circles Network, Moray delivers Self-Directed Support Advocacy to adults who are either applying for, or currently receiving, a Self-Directed Support (SDS) funded care package. The service plays a vital role in ensuring individuals are fully informed about all available funding options and are empowered to make decisions that best reflect their personal circumstances and aspirations.

Operating under the Scottish Government's Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) initiative, the Advocacy Service is dedicated to enhancing awareness and understanding of Self-Directed Support across the borough. Our mission is to enable individuals and their support networks to exercise genuine choice and control over their care arrangements. Through the provision of clear, impartial information and robust advocacy, people are assisted to explore all four Self-Directed Support options and assess how each can be best tailored to meet their unique needs.

This work is underpinned by a strong commitment to human rights, promoting independent living and enabling full participation in Moray's social, political and community life. Barriers to inclusion are actively challenged in a quest to advance equality of opportunity through the person's chosen support style.

Highlights

Launching Circles Network Moray Self-Directed Support Advocacy Service

Circles Network promoted the new service widely across Moray proactively engaging with a wide network of providers to introduce this new focus, clarify the remit and extol the benefits of Self-Directed Support Advocacy. This outreach has helped the re-establishment of Circles Network's presence and affirmed the commitment to supporting individuals to understand their options and voice their opinions and choices through independent advocacy.



Strengthening Partnerships across Moray and beyond

Partnerships with a variety of organisations have been developed and strengthened, these include Cornerstone, Moray Pathways, Citizens Advice, Quarriers, the National Recovery Advocacy Service, Business Network International, the Personal Assistants Network and Peace of Mind, amongst others. These collaborations have expanded the reach, improved visibility and created new opportunities for joint working. These relationships continue to enhance the impact and sustainability of the service.

Influencing Cultural Change within Health and Social Care Services

Initiating opportunities with Social Service teams to address their initial reluctance around promoting independent advocacy concerning Self-Directed Support has led to changes in attitudes. This was achieved by building trust and relationships and demonstrating, by supporting the needs, voices and choices of individuals, how advocacy complements the work of local health and social care teams. Clarifying how advocacy can assist with assessments, support individuals in recruiting personal assistants and help write effective support plans has led to a growing recognition of the advocacy role and an increase in meaningful introductions to people who require support.

Challenges

Re-establishing the Service's Presence and Clarifying Our Remit.

Raising the profile of the Self-Directed Support advocacy service required a proactive and strategic approach. We reached out directly to a wide range of services across the region to reintroduce ourselves, clearly explain our remit; a dedicated focus on Self-Directed Support and distribute promotional materials, including leaflets and information that could be shared with community members. This consistent communication helped re-establish our presence and reaffirm our role as a trusted provider of independent Self-Directed Support advocacy.

Addressing Reluctance to Promote Independent Advocacy in SDS.

By working as a collaborative partner that strengthens outcomes for both professionals and people accessing the advocacy service, we began to shift perceptions and develop stronger working relationships resulting in increased engagement and introduction and therefore improving the outcomes for many in the borough.

Development

Since April, Circles Network Moray has expanded the original remit to provide independent advocacy to adults only, to include children and young people in relation to Self-Directed Support. This expansion was undertaken after agreement with our funders, the Scottish Government's Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) initiative.



This development reflects our commitment to ensuring that all individuals with additional support needs - regardless of age - have access to clear, impartial information and a strong voice in decisions about their care and support.

In addition, we have begun exploring the development of a new service focused on alternative education provision for children and young people who are struggling in mainstream education, are at risk of exclusion, or have already been excluded. This initiative aims to create a supportive, inclusive environment where young people can build emotional resilience, improve wellbeing, and gain practical skills that support their future aspirations.

The proposed programme would offer hands-on learning in areas such as painting and decorating, woodworking, and other practical trades, helping young people reconnect with learning in a meaningful way. By focusing on strengths, creativity, and real-world skills, we hope to support re-engagement with education or progression into further training, employment, or supported pathways.



Partnerships

During this reporting period, Circles Network Moray has actively developed and strengthened partnerships with a diverse range of service providers and community organisations. These relationships have increased awareness of our Self-Directed Support advocacy service and expanded our reach to individuals and families who may benefit from independent support.

We have established meaningful connections with organisations including Cornerstone, Moray Pathways, Citizens Advice, Quarriers, the National Recovery Advocacy Network, Business Network International, the Personal Assistants Network, and Peace of Mind, amongst others.

Through these partnerships, we have been able to:

- Share information and resources to promote informed choice and control in self-directed support.
- Distribute leaflets and materials to frontline staff working with individuals requiring support.
- Facilitate introductions to individuals who may benefit from advocacy.
- Collaborate on community events and awareness campaigns.
- Promote at Third Sector events, having a stall.

Looking ahead, these collaborations will continue to play a vital role in promoting the principles of SDS and ensure that individuals across Moray have access to the advocacy they need to make empowered decisions about their care and support.

Stories of Change

Elaine

Elaine reached out to Circles Network Moray after learning about our Self-Directed Support advocacy service. For over 20 years, she had been living with Functional Neurological Disorder, managing her symptoms independently through hypnotherapy. Despite her resilience, past negative experiences with mental health services had left her feeling anxious and unsure about seeking formal support. Elaine struggled to engage with any representative of The Moray Council after earlier experiences had left her with Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

At first, Elaine found the process of applying for care overwhelming. With the support of her advocate, she gradually built the confidence to express her needs and take control of her application. By the time of her final assessment, she was able to speak for herself with minimal support - a major personal achievement.

Elaine then took the lead in researching hypnotherapy costs and worked with her advocate to share this information with her social worker. She now feels more optimistic about the future and empowered to make informed decisions about her care.

Alex

Alex approached Circles Network Moray during a time of personal transition. Living with cerebral palsy and recently separated after a long marriage, he was determined to regain control of his life and reconnect with his children. He had a clear goal: to study business and eventually start his own care company, one that truly values people.

With support from his advocate, Alex explored Option 1 of Self-Directed Support, which allows individuals to manage their own budget and directly employ personal assistants. Together, they discussed the responsibilities of becoming an employer, including recruitment, safer hiring practices, and managing payroll. Alex took an active role in drafting job adverts, reviewing interview questions, and researching how to register a limited company.

Through this process, Alex gained confidence, secured funding, and began shaping a future that reflects his values. Advocacy helped him move from uncertainty to action, building a life with purpose, independence, and renewed connection.



"I wanted to use Option 1 of Self-Directed Support so I could employ my own Personal Assistant. This was really important to me because I have a dream of going to college to get a business degree and then starting my own care business. Having the right support is the first step toward making that happen.

My social worker referred me to Circles Network for advocacy, and the support I received changed my life. I use a communication device, and my advocate made sure I was included in everything. I felt respected and listened to throughout the whole process.

We worked together to write a job advert, and it was posted on Facebook and Indeed. I helped shape the interview questions, and during the interviews, I read out half of the questions myself using my communication device. My advocate recorded the answers for me so that later I could score the interviews myself. This meant I was fully involved in choosing the right person for me.

My advocate also supported me to set up payroll for my new Personal Assistant. Having this support meant I could make my own choices and exercise my rights. It gave me confidence and independence, and it showed me that my goals are possible. I never thought I would be able to do something like this, but now I feel proud and excited about my future.

I felt that my advocate got who I am and who I am not without being overpowering, because some people take over without thinking. My advocate didn't do this. He took the time to get to know me – not as the job, but as the person I am.

I am really grateful for the help I received from Circles Network. It has made a huge difference in my life."



Rural Academy

Midlands - Rugby

Summary

The Rural Academy is an alternative education provision situated in Warwickshire.

With a trauma-informed and therapeutic approach, Circles Network offers a range of vocational courses, including the *"Horses 4 Courses"* programme, written by the organisation.

This nurturing curriculum covers topics such as rural living, independence skills, employability and animal care, while also integrating English and Maths learning through practical activities both on and off site. In addition, a variety of ASDAN courses are offered, tailored to the interests and goals of each participant.

Outdoor learning spaces, located in log cabins and under specially designed gazebos, allow for year-round programming. There is a herd of horses and ponies which has been carefully selected and trained by the team to work alongside children and young people helping to build their confidence, trust and communication.

The primary participants are often those who face challenges in traditional classroom environments. All courses offered are flexible and achievable, giving 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 people, including those who experience elevated levels of anxiety that prevents them feeling able attend regular, mainstream education settings.

This includes:

- Children and Young adults diagnosed with Autism and/or 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 or 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.

Highlights

The team has developed effective working partnerships with local schools, increasing the volume of introductions into the Academy.



All students have been able to access the local and wider community through trips and visits to local companies. An example of this is a visit to the local Cemex Plant in Rugby and the Cemex Team were also welcomed to the Circles Network site for lunch and a tour.

The Academy has received enquiries for intensive support around specific children and the team has been able to respond quickly and effectively meaning that children have spent less time out of education.

Challenges

Recruitment has proven challenging during the first part of the year, exacerbated by lengthy waits for enhanced DBS checks. In the short term, team members from other services and projects have been utilised while the recruitment strategy has been reviewed. Recruitment has been more successful in the latter part of the year by varying methods of advertising and by building on the organisation's reputation locally. DBS checks are beyond the control of the organisation but, with the odd exception, seem to be clearing more quickly.

Some students have experienced challenging home environments which have affected their social, emotional and mental health needs and their academic progress. Team members have worked closely to support all students and families in partnership with other organisations to provide the safest and kindest assistance possible.

Development

A huge area of development this year has been changes to the outside space, with the addition of a second outside classroom and two large undercover areas. Unused grassed areas have been cleared by volunteers which has provided the opportunity for children and young people to grow their own vegetables and flowers. The next phase of improvement includes new footpaths linking the outside areas and the stables allowing easier access to the facilities for people with limited mobility.

Partnerships

The Academy has developed stronger links with more schools and colleges which facilitates good transitions and better information sharing for children and young people.

The connection with local businesspeople has grown immensely due to team members using effective networking platforms.



This has brought the Academy a wealth of resources and opportunities and this, alongside fundraising initiatives, has been instrumental in making improvements to the facilities. Severn Trent and Cummins have been particularly supportive in volunteering through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.



Stories of Change

Jessie

One of the most significant areas of progress for Jessie has been in building relationships with the team, her peers and the horses and ponies here at Circles Network. Initially reserved, she has gradually become more comfortable and open, showing trust and comfort with others. This progress is evident in her willingness to interact and communicate more freely, participate in group activities, seek help when needed, express her likes and dislikes and voice her feelings.

A notable achievement for Jessie has been her ability to leave her mother for short periods of time. This marks a significant step towards independence, as she has shown increasing comfort and confidence in being at Circles Network without parental support. This development is crucial to her successfully transitioning to a specialist school in September.

To support this transition, she will receive support from Circles Network on a reduced timetable. This continuity will help maintain the progress made and provide a stable foundation as Jessie adjusts to an unfamiliar environment.

A key component of Jessie's development has been her participation in equine-assisted learning. Collaborating with horses has helped her to develop emotional regulation, empathy, and confidence. The experience with horses has been particularly beneficial in enhancing her social and emotional skills.

Mia

Mia had always been bright, curious and full of potential, but her journey through education has not been easy. Mia has struggled with school rules, conflicts with peers and mounting pressures from academic expectations which made attending mainstream school overwhelming.

Her parents were hopeful when the local authority sought an alternative provision for Mia at Circles Network. Her first days in the unfamiliar environment were apprehensive. She worried about being judged by others, or labelled, but she quickly settled.

The team was patient and kind and took the time to understand her unique challenges. Mia preferred the environment and the individualised approach. She rediscovered things she had once enjoyed and gained confidence in her abilities. Alongside academic support, she received guidance on emotional well-being and social skills. Slowly but surely, Mia began to thrive.

One of the turning points for Mia came when she started tutoring sessions. Her tutor noticed Mia's knack for creative writing and encouraged her to explore it further. They worked together to develop her skills, and soon, Mia was drafting short stories and poems that reflected her vivid imagination.

Mia also started making friends. These were peers who understood her journey and shared similar experiences. They became her support system, laughing together during breaks and cheering each other on during lessons and learning opportunities. For the first time, Mia felt a sense of belonging.



After two years, Mia transformed. The girl who once struggled to attend school now eagerly participated in group projects and presented her work with pride. Recognising her progress, she began discussing the next step in her journey - reintegration into a specialist school. It was a daunting prospect, but Mia felt ready. She attended an open day, met with a teacher and sat in on classes to ease the transition.

Her story is an inspiration to others, a tribute to Mia and her determination and the transformative impact of a supportive environment.



Urban Academy

Midlands - Rugby

Flaunt and Flourish Salon

The Flaunt and Flourish Salon is the premises for a dynamic vocational and life skills programme and a working hair and beauty salon which opened in Rugby in July 2023.

The educational provision is designed to be accessed by individuals age 13 and above who may encounter everyday life challenges. The welcoming salon environment encourages participants to engage in practical vocational training activities, including hair care, nail services, photography and customer service. Beyond acquiring vocational skills, there is an emphasis on life skills to build self-esteem and independence such as cleaning and tidying, effective communication, goal setting and problem solving.

Young people 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 inclusion on the Alternative Education Framework with Warwickshire County Council.

The Flaunt and Flourish salon is not just about hair and makeup; it is about empowerment, independence and personal growth. It provides a supportive community in which individuals can practice job preparation skills, allowing participants to find their unique path to success.

Highlights

The students engaged in the urban academy have had several opportunities to participate in trips and activities with students from the rural academy and with young people from other projects and services connected with the charity in other geographical areas.

These opportunities have enriched the overall experience of the provision for young people. There has been the chance to travel, explore teamwork, meet new people and develop effective communication with a wider range of people from different backgrounds and abilities.

The project has received support from a range of professionals and business owners in the local area including those in the field of hair and beauty and others with varying business backgrounds. This support sparks interest in opportunities beyond the provision itself allowing young people to consider their future in employment.

The growth and progression of each individual student are the key highlights of the project. This progress has been validated by their success within and beyond the provision and from the positive feedback from school staff, parents and carers.



Challenges

During this year Circles Network has not managed to secure a stylist to replace one stylist who had resigned. The service has managed by involving industry professionals to support the students on a consultancy basis and this has worked well.

There are times when the dynamics within the group of young people accessing the urban academy can be difficult to manage due to individual past traumas and circumstances. Whilst students are settling in, the facilitating team members are required to work closely with them to establish boundaries and ensure effective working relationships.

Development

In addition to the working salon environment and the academy provision the team has trialled new initiatives, such as pamper days and activity days during the school holidays and at weekends to boost local interest in the salon and to develop a growth in income streams.

Partnerships

Flaunt and Flourish has built strong partnerships with local businesses and organisations to enrich the learning experience for young people aged 13–16 in the alternative education setting.



Through collaborations with respected hair and beauty businesses and brands such as Belle Peau and Milkshake, industry insight and practical skills that inspire future careers are provided. Warwickshire County Council supports the work, alongside a neighbouring charity, Shine a Light, and local schools, ensuring the provision is inclusive and community focused. Dunelm has been generous in donating goods which help create a welcoming and professional environment for learners.

Stories of Change

Ria

Ria joined the group in September as a quiet and anxious young person, having experienced significant upheaval after being placed into care and relocated far from home. She had struggled to engage with a traditional school setting, attending for just one hour a day and finding the structure overwhelming.

When Ria entered the salon environment, a gentle, person-centred approach was adopted to help her feel safe and supported. Initially, she was hesitant to engage, largely due to sensory differences that made practical tasks difficult. The team worked closely with her, building trust and focusing on developing her confidence and self-worth, particularly around accepting praise and recognising her own progress.

With consistent, compassionate support, Ria began to explore new textures and participate in salon activities such as hair washing, plaiting and eventually hair sectioning and straightening, tasks she once found unmanageable. These milestones became genuine sources of pride.

Beyond her salon skills, Ria has made great strides in her personal development. With continued support, she has built routines, improved self-care and developed strategies for emotional regulation. Her confidence has also enabled her to form meaningful friendships, becoming part of a supportive peer group where she both gives and receives encouragement.

Ria's progress is a powerful reminder of the impact a nurturing, personalised environment can have. The team is incredibly proud of her journey so far and look forward to seeing what the future holds.

Ola

When Ola first came to the salon, she was quiet and reserved, dealing with anxiety and the effects of trauma. She faced significant challenges in adjusting to the school environment, particularly struggling with attending a traditional classroom setting. As a result of detailed conversations with her school and a visit to the salon with her mum, the primary aim was to make her experience safe, warm and welcoming, a space where her confidence could grow.



From the beginning, Ola found comfort in connecting with other students during her sessions. Many of whom faced similar challenges, which helped ease her anxiety and allowed her to feel more at ease.

Recognising her great potential, a person-centred approach that combined a life skills programme with hair and beauty training was taken. This approach enabled her to progress remarkably in a short period. Ola demonstrated enthusiasm for learning new skills, both practical and theoretical and actively participated in both group work and individual tasks.

The transformation she has undergone in just a few months has been incredible to witness. She has built meaningful relationships with her peers and developed trust in the facilitators supporting her. Her mum has also shared wonderful feedback about Ola's growth.



Taking the Lead

Midlands - Rugby

Summary

Taking the Lead is an equine facilitated learning project that supports young people and adults, with or without additional needs, through therapeutic groundwork with horses.

By engaging in activities that focus on trust, connection and communication, participants can develop confidence, improve self-esteem, strengthen teamwork and communication skills and influence their overall wellbeing.

The project creates a safe and supportive environment where individuals can reflect, improve communication, build resilience and recognise their own strengths, helping them to take positive steps forward in their personal lives and relationships.

Highlights

A major highlight of the year was taking a group of young people to the National Equine Show. This exciting trip gave participants the chance to experience a large-scale equestrian event, observe a variety of horses and classes and gain inspiration for their own equine learning journey. The visit provided an engaging and educational experience, helping to build confidence, broaden horizons and deepen participants' understanding and appreciation of the equestrian world.

This year we have seen impressive progress, with participants who arrived feeling anxious or disengaged gradually developing trust and confidence through their work with the horses. Several young people who struggled in traditional learning environments reported feeling more focused and motivated after sessions and adults expressed greater independence and a sense of purpose.

Outreach has been a focus for Taking the Lead over the past year, allowing the benefits of equine facilitated learning to be shared with a wider audience. Connections with local schools, community groups and



support services have been developed, ensuring that young people and adults who might not otherwise have access to therapeutic activities can take part in sessions. This approach has meant that individuals facing a variety of challenges, from social isolation and low confidence to additional educational or emotional needs have been reached. By taking the

time to talk with families, carers and professionals, support has been tailored to each participant's circumstances, helping them feel safe, valued and understood.

Challenges

Many participants are facing challenges in their daily lives, from the impact of cost-of-living pressures on families to the rising demand for mental health support. These factors can affect attendance and engagement and place greater responsibility on the project to provide a consistent, safe and supportive environment for people who attend.

A challenge for the programme is the condition of the arena surface. Grass has grown through the footing, which can make it difficult to work effectively with participants, as horses can be distracted, wanting to graze during sessions.

Upgrading the arena surface would help create a better, more focused environment, when funding allows, allowing participants to fully engage in equine facilitated learning activities and ensuring that sessions run smoothly and productively.

Development

The equine team is currently working on creating an Equine Information Guide and a new Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) course, with a strong focus on co-production. Young people who participate in Taking the Lead are involved in shaping these materials, providing their insights, ideas and feedback to ensure the content is engaging, relevant and accessible.

This approach encourages participants by giving them a voice in the design process and ensures that the added resources reflect the real experiences and needs of those who benefit from the project.

Once completed, the guide and course will provide advanced learning, a greater reference for participants and the team and support the ongoing development of the programme.

Partnerships

Over the Christmas period, Pets at Home generously fundraised for Circles Network as part of their Santa Paws campaign, providing invaluable support for the project.



Team members were able to attend the local store to host a stall, engage with the local community and raise awareness of the provision at Circles Network.

Another key partnership is with the local veterinary team, Onley Equine Vets, who consistently stay in touch and provide amazing veterinary care for the herd of horses.

They also allow attendance at events at their onsite yard and practice, creating further opportunities for community engagement and strengthening the links between the project, local services and the wider equestrian community.

Stories of Change

Bella

Bella has been attending the programme for the past four years. Over this time, she has grown in her ability to engage with her environment and participate in activities. Bella is a bright and energetic girl who faces daily challenges associated with ADHD, Autism and PDA, each contributing uniquely to her behaviour and engagement style.

Bella's growth over the past four years has been remarkable. Early on, she struggled to stay engaged in any activity for more than a few minutes. Now, she can independently brush a horse for up to thirty minutes and will often follow this with exercising the horse, which demonstrates her increased enjoyment and a significant improvement in attention span and task completion.

In addition to her work with the horses, Bella regularly engages in a variety of nature-based activities such as butterfly catching, nature hunts and simply spending extended periods outdoors interacting with her environment. She now remains engaged in these tasks for longer periods than previously possible, showing her growing resilience.

Despite her progress, Bella faces ongoing challenges with transitions and activity completion. Once she has completed the task, it can be difficult to re-engage her or transition her calmly to the next step. She may become frustrated, stomping her feet or expressing herself verbally. Our learning, having worked with her for so long, helps us to recognise the exponential changes in her communication.



For a long time, Bella formed a strong and consistent bond with the Welsh pony, Layla, who became her favourite companion during sessions. Layla provided Bella with a sense of comfort, predictability and emotional safety, something particularly valuable given Bella's needs around control and routine. Their bond was a factor in helping Bella initially settle into the programme and begin engaging more meaningfully with activities.

In the past six months, Bella has broadened her connections, showing curiosity and willingness to work with other horses, particularly Dexter and Sol. This is a positive sign of her increasing confidence and adaptability. While she enjoys exploring these new relationships and has begun to work well with them in sessions, Layla still holds a special place in Bella's heart. Bella never forgets Layla, and at the start of each session, she insists on bringing her in for some love and attention before moving on to other tasks or horses. This ritual seems to help her feel grounded and emotionally settled, providing a familiar and affectionate start to her day.

Lily

Lily has been a dedicated participant at Circles Network for over seven years, beginning her journey with the Taking the Lead programme. Lily started over three years ago when she was part of a small group. During this time, she found it challenging to interact with other group members and often sought attention when the team member she was working with was engaged with others. Realising she needed additional support, it was decided that Lily would benefit more from 1:1 sessions in the evening, allowing her to develop confidence in herself and her interactions with the horses at her own pace.

Lily initially struggled with forming a connection with a particular horse, Sol. His enormous size made her nervous and she gravitated towards the miniature Shetland ponies instead. To help her overcome this fear, Sol was gradually introduced into her sessions, and over time, Lily built a strong bond with him.

Today, he is one of her favourite horses, evidencing her growth in confidence and trust, along with her skills at handling powerful horses. Following her success in the 1:1 sessions, Lily transitioned to the Alternative Education Academy programme.

While she continued with individual sessions under the guidance of a team member with whom she had established a connection, she also had the opportunity to meet other children and facilitators. This inclusion significantly enhanced her communication skills and confidence. Her knowledge of horses expanded, and it became evident that her passion for equestrianism was blossoming.

Lily then progressed to joining the Saturday Club, where she formed friendships and developed into an independent and self-assured young girl. Her commitment extended beyond Circles Network as she also began attending horse riding lessons elsewhere. She remained fully engaged with sessions at Circles Network and continued to show great enthusiasm for learning and growing within the programme.

Reflecting on the past three years, Lily's transformation has been extraordinary. Her confidence with facilitators has flourished and her abilities with horses have reached an impressive level. She has faced challenges such as adjusting to changes in team members and interacting with other participants, yet she has managed these situations well. The nurturing environment provided by Circles Network, with its focus on horses, outdoor experiences and nature, has suited her needs, enabling her feelings of trust and safety to develop. Her communication skills are excellent, she is supportive of younger and less confident children and can take the lead on daily equine wellbeing requirements such as feeding, exercising and paddock management.

She knows and understands health and safety guidelines and loves to be involved in visits to places of interest for equestrians. Lily's attendance at Circles Network has been a credit to her perseverance, passion, and the positive impact of equine-facilitated learning.





Holiday, Activity & Food Programme ^{HAF}

Midlands - Rugby

Summary

Circles Network proudly hosts the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme during Easter, Summer and Christmas end of term breaks, offering children and young people an inclusive, engaging and nurturing space to learn, play and thrive.

Funded by the Department for Education, the sessions are designed to provide enriching activities alongside healthy, balanced meals, ensuring that every child has access to positive experiences and nutritious food during the school holidays.

The programme includes a wide range of activities such as equine learning, creative arts, sports, outdoor adventures, cooking sessions and team challenges, all delivered by an experienced and compassionate team which specialises in inclusive practice.

Children and young people of all abilities are welcomed, tailoring support so that everyone can participate fully and confidently.

Highlights

Feedback from families and participants showed that the children felt more confident, active and socially connected after attending the HAF sessions. Every child received nutritious meals and snacks, supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing holiday hunger.

Children and young people were involved in improving the programme, sharing their ideas for future themes and activities.

This approach not only increased engagement but also participants took pride in their creativity.



The programme promoted sustainable choices through eco-friendly crafts, recycling projects and outdoor growing activities. Participants learned practical skills for healthy sustainable living, connecting environmental awareness with wellbeing.

Challenges

Midway through the year, changes in programme guidance meant a reduction in the number of children that could be accommodated each day, from twenty five to eleven. This unfortunately led to the difficult outcome of letting go several valued team members who had been specifically trained to deliver HAF sessions.

This was a significant challenge for both the organisation and the individuals affected, as time and resources had been invested in developing their skills to provide high-quality, inclusive care.

This situation was approached with transparency and compassion, ensuring that affected team members were supported through the transition and offered guidance on future opportunities within Circles Network where possible.

To maintain programme quality with a smaller team, activity plans were streamlined, there was an increased focus on core, high-impact sessions and remaining staff received enhanced support and supervision.



As awareness of the HAF sessions grew, demand for places increased rapidly. With limited capacity, it was important to ensure that spaces were allocated fairly so that as many eligible children as possible could benefit from the programme.

To promote fairness and transparency, a clear booking policy that promoted fairness and giving opportunities for new participants to join each holiday was introduced. Regular communication with families helped clarify eligibility, booking timelines and attendance expectations, reducing confusion and frustration.

Development

This year, the programme was enhanced by introducing more sports and physical activities, helping children stay active, build confidence and develop teamwork skills. Breakfast was offered to every child on arrival, ensuring everyone started the day nourished and ready to learn and play. These changes boosted energy, focus and enjoyment, reflecting the charity's commitment to continual improvement and the overall wellbeing of every child supported.

Partnerships

Circles Network has strengthened the partnership with Warwickshire County Council, working closely to deliver a high-quality and inclusive HAF programme. Through regular communication and joint planning the partnership has enhanced programme delivery, outreach and support for families.

This collaboration has resulted in reaching more children and young people across the region, particularly those most in need, ensuring they have access to enriching holiday activities and nutritious meals.

Stories of Change

Bradley

Bradley, aged 11, joined the programme for the first time during the summer holidays. On his first morning, he arrived feeling anxious and overwhelmed, finding it difficult to separate from his mum. He was visibly distressed and reluctant to take part, clinging to her side and expressing that he didn't want to stay.

With patience, reassurance, and a gentle approach from the experienced team, Bradley was gradually encouraged to join in at his own pace. By the end of that first day, the transformation was remarkable, he had begun to make friends, engage with team members and was laughing and chatting as he joined group activities. When it was time to go home, he told his mum he didn't want to leave, a clear sign of how quickly he had begun to feel comfortable and safe in the environment.

Throughout the week, Bradley formed a particularly special bond with Peiskeo, a miniature Shetland pony. He loved spending time with Peiskeo, learning how to brush and care for him and showing great gentleness and patience. Bradley often asked if he could *"put Peiskeo in the boot of his car to take him home,"* which the team found both sweet and heartwarming, the genuine connection he had formed with the pony in such a short time was lovely to witness.

By the end of the summer programme, Bradley had become a confident and happy member of the group. He participated enthusiastically in activities, built positive friendships and showed a noticeable boost in confidence and communication.



Leo

Leo first joined the programme when he was a young boy and now, at 16, he continues to attend each holiday. Over the years, Leo has grown into a confident, kind and active young person who plays a big part in the HAF community.

Leo particularly enjoys spending time outdoors, whether that's looking after the horses, playing football with his friends or helping with gardening tasks around the site. He also takes great pride in joining cooking sessions, where his favourite dish to prepare is spaghetti bolognese, something he makes with both enthusiasm and skill.

One of the things that makes Leo such a great member of the group is how comfortable and confident he is with the team. He enjoys joking and chatting with staff, his friendly personality bringing a sense of fun and warmth. The team love seeing how much he has grown over the years, both in confidence and in his willingness to help others.

Leo often shares that if he didn't attend HAF with Circles Network he would be *"bored during the holidays"*, adding that Circles Network is the only provider he is willing to attend.



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 2025 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 2025 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 noncompliance 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 FWC Advisory Ltd
Eligible to act as an auditor in terms of Section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006
29 Wood Street
Stratford-Upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6JG

Date: 31/2/2025

CIRCLES NETWORK

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	3	77,207	-	77,207	77,980
Charitable activities	5				
Income from Charitable Activities		1,225,219	369,320	1,594,539	1,897,055
Investment income	4	27,851	-	27,851	13,114
Other income	6	<u>1,344,037</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,344,037</u>	<u>1,160,911</u>
Total		<u>2,674,314</u>	<u>369,320</u>	<u>3,043,634</u>	<u>3,149,060</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	7				
Expenditure from Charitable Activities		<u>2,467,708</u>	<u>373,848</u>	<u>2,841,556</u>	<u>2,796,570</u>
Net gains on investments		<u>9,772</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,772</u>	<u>18,129</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		216,378	(4,528)	211,850	370,619
Transfers between funds	19	<u>15,591</u>	<u>(15,591)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net movement in funds		231,969	(20,119)	211,850	370,619
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>1,704,140</u>	<u>199,082</u>	<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>1,532,603</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>1,936,109</u>	<u>178,963</u>	<u>2,115,072</u>	<u>1,903,222</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 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	12	95,190	107,705
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	13	586,488	396,271
Investments	14	1,097,066	265,976
Cash at bank and in hand	15	<u>638,365</u>	<u>1,282,187</u>
		2,321,919	1,944,434
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	16	<u>(302,037)</u>	<u>(148,917)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>2,019,882</u>	<u>1,795,517</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>2,115,072</u>	<u>1,903,222</u>
NET ASSETS		<u><u>2,115,072</u></u>	<u><u>1,903,222</u></u>
FUNDS	19		
Unrestricted funds:			
General fund		1,845,484	1,613,515
Designated fund		<u>90,625</u>	<u>90,625</u>
		<u>1,936,109</u>	<u>1,704,140</u>
Restricted funds:			
Restricted fund		<u>178,963</u>	<u>199,082</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u><u>2,115,072</u></u>	<u><u>1,903,222</u></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 5.12.2025 and were signed on its behalf by:

JR Ingham

 Trustee
JAMES INGLIS

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**

Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities		
Cash generated from operations 1	<u>181,085</u>	<u>264,801</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>181,085</u>	<u>264,801</u>
 Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(37,682)	(85,968)
Purchase of fixed asset investments	(821,316)	-
Sale of tangible fixed assets	7,250	2,500
Interest received	<u>26,841</u>	<u>13,114</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(824,907)</u>	<u>(70,354)</u>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period	(643,822)	194,447
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>1,087,740</u>
 Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	<u><u>638,365</u></u>	<u><u>1,282,187</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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

	2025 £	2024 £
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	211,850	370,619
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	49,112	27,010
Gain on investments	(9,772)	(18,129)
(Profit)/loss on disposal of fixed assets	(6,167)	1,060
Interest received	(26,841)	(13,114)
Increase in debtors	(190,217)	(95,731)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	<u>153,120</u>	<u>(6,914)</u>
Net cash provided by operations	<u>181,085</u>	<u>264,801</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/4/24 £	Cash flow £	At 31/3/25 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>(643,822)</u>	<u>638,365</u>
	<u>1,282,187</u>	<u>(643,822)</u>	<u>638,365</u>
Liquid resources			
Deposits included in cash	-	-	-
Current asset investments	<u>265,976</u>	<u>831,090</u>	<u>1,097,066</u>
	<u>265,976</u>	<u>831,090</u>	<u>1,097,066</u>
Total	<u>1,548,163</u>	<u>187,268</u>	<u>1,735,431</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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.

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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.

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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 useful life of the asset and associated residual values of all tangible fixed asset classes and have concluded that the useful life and residual values are appropriate.

3. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2025	2024
	£	£
Donations	77,207	76,952
Subscriptions	-	428
Fundraising	-	600
	<u>77,207</u>	<u>77,980</u>

Income from Donations and Legacies was £75,208 (2024 - £77,980) of which £nil (2024 - £247) was attributable to restricted funds.

4. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2025	2024
	£	£
Rents received	1,010	-
Bank Interest and Dividends	<u>26,841</u>	<u>13,114</u>
	<u>27,851</u>	<u>13,114</u>

Income from Investment Income was £27,851 (2024 - £13,114) of which £nil (2024 - £nil) was attributable to restricted funds.

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

5. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2025 £	2024 £
Grants	Activity Income from Charitable Activities	<u>1,594,539</u>	<u>1,897,055</u>

Income from Charitable Activities was £1,594,539 (2024 - 1,897,055) of which £369,320 (2024 - £477,111) was attributable to restricted funds.

6. OTHER INCOME

	2025	2024
Sale of Goods and Services	<u>1,344,037</u>	<u>1,160,911</u>
	<u>1,344,037</u>	<u>1,160,911</u>

Income from Charitable Activities was £1,344,037 (2024 - £1,160,911) of which £nil (2024 - £nil) was attributable to restricted funds.

ANALYSIS OF TOTAL INCOME

	Unrestricted 2025	Restricted 2025	Total 2025	Total 2024
Advocacy	1,033,564	167,752	1,201,316	1,501,096
Circles of Support	56,345	191,596	247,941	314,844
Community Support	869,318	-	869,318	753,199
Support for children and families	600,955	9,972	610,927	460,857
Central services	<u>114,132</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>114,132</u>	<u>119,064</u>
	<u>2,674,314</u>	<u>369,320</u>	<u>3,043,634</u>	<u>3,149,060</u>

Income relating to Advocacy in 2024 was £1,501,096 of which £230,733 was attributable to restricted funds.

Income relating to Circles of Support in 2024 was £314,844 of which £19,627 was attributable to restricted funds.

Income relating to Support for children and families in 2024 was £460,857 of which £226,998 was attributable to restricted funds.

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

7. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Salary Costs 2025 £	Depreciation 2025 £	Other 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Charitable Expenditure	2,101,002	49,115	691,439	2,841,556	2,796,570

£373,848 (2024 - £352,884) of the above costs were attributable to restricted funds. £2,467,708 (2024 - £2,443,686) of the above costs were attributable to unrestricted funds.

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

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

	2025 £	2024 £
Depreciation - owned assets	49,114	27,010
Surplus/(deficit) on disposal of fixed assets	<u>(6,167)</u>	<u>1,060</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 follow:

	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and National Insurance	423,115	371,804
Pension	<u>22,761</u>	<u>20,428</u>
	<u>445,876</u>	<u>392,232</u>

Trustees received no remuneration during the year (2024: £Nil). There were no Trustee expenses paid during the year for travel to meetings (2024: £Nil).

10. STAFF COSTS

	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and salaries	1,914,384	1,906,401
Social security costs	149,694	134,585
Other pension costs	<u>36,924</u>	<u>35,679</u>
	<u>2,101,002</u>	<u>2,076,665</u>

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

	2025	2024
Staff	<u>111</u>	<u>123</u>

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

10. STAFF COSTS - continued

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

	2025	2024
£80,001 - £90,000	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

In respect of the employee with emoluments in the above range, contributions of £13,471 (2024: £13,471) were made to the defined contribution pension scheme.

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 2024	29,994	83,663	119,483	233,140
Additions	-	27,282	10,400	37,682
Disposals	<u>-</u>	<u>(14,271)</u>	<u>(19,200)</u>	<u>(33,471)</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>29,994</u>	<u>96,674</u>	<u>110,683</u>	<u>237,351</u>
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2024	12,731	27,065	85,639	125,435
Charge for year	5,912	29,176	14,026	49,114
Eliminated on disposal	<u>-</u>	<u>(14,271)</u>	<u>(18,117)</u>	<u>(32,388)</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>18,643</u>	<u>41,970</u>	<u>81,548</u>	<u>142,161</u>
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2025	<u>11,351</u>	<u>54,704</u>	<u>29,135</u>	<u>95,190</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>17,263</u>	<u>56,598</u>	<u>33,844</u>	<u>107,705</u>

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13. DEBTORS

	2025 £	2024 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade debtors	565,933	366,563
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>14,718</u>	<u>23,871</u>
	<u>580,651</u>	<u>390,434</u>
Amounts falling due after more than one year:		
Other debtors	<u>5,837</u>	<u>5,837</u>
Aggregate amounts	<u>586,488</u>	<u>396,271</u>

14. CURRENT ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2025 £	2024 £
Listed investments	275,750	265,976
Cash held in general investment account	<u>821,316</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>1,097,066</u>	<u>265,976</u>

15. CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND

	General fund £	Restricted fund £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
Cash in hand	1,636	-	1,636	1,523
Current and deposit accounts	<u>457,766</u>	<u>178,963</u>	<u>636,729</u>	<u>1,280,664</u>
Total	<u>459,402</u>	<u>178,963</u>	<u>638,365</u>	<u>1,282,187</u>

16. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade creditors	19,984	24,716
Social security and other taxes	40,475	34,591
Other creditors	12,020	14,368
Accruals and deferred income	<u>229,558</u>	<u>75,242</u>
	<u>302,037</u>	<u>148,917</u>

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

17. LEASING AGREEMENTS

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

	2025	2024
	£	£
Within one year	11,750	74,346
Between one and five years	<u>105,067</u>	<u>43,340</u>
	<u>116,817</u>	<u>117,686</u>

18. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
Fixed assets	95,190	-	95,190	107,705
Current assets	2,142,956	178,963	2,321,919	1,944,434
Current liabilities	<u>(302,037)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(302,037)</u>	<u>(148,917)</u>
	<u>1,936,109</u>	<u>178,963</u>	<u>2,115,072</u>	<u>1,903,222</u>

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

19. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	01 April 2024	Income	Expenditure	Revaluation gain/(loss)	Transfers	31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds						
Designated funds:						
Tangible Assets	20,625	-	-	-	-	20,625
Capital equipment renewal	10,000	-	-	-	-	10,000
Buildings fund	60,000	-	-	-	-	60,000
	90,625	-	-	-	-	90,625
General Funds	1,613,515	2,674,314	(2,467,708)	9,772	15,591	1,845,484
Total Unrestricted Funds	1,704,140	2,674,314	(2,467,708)	9,772	15,591	1,936,109
	01 April 2024	Income	Expenditure	Revaluation gain/ (loss)	Transfers	31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds						
Advocacy:						
Self Directed Support (Inverclyde)	-	100,000	(103,687)	-	3,687	-
Self Directed Support (Moray)	-	64,367	(56,052)	-	-	8,315
Advocacy Fife Carers	100,000	3,385	(12,525)	-	-	90,860
Advocacy Fife D&A	13,080	-	-	-	-	13,080
Supporting Children & Families:						
BBC Children in Need - Taking the Reins	-	9,972	(10,321)	-	349	-
Cummins Capital Donation (Academy)	19,627	-	-	-	(19,627) ¹	-
Pets at Home	4,270	-	-	-	-	4,270
NHS Project	13,005	191,596	(191,263)	-	-	13,338
WCC Mental Health	49,100	-	-	-	-	49,100
Total Restricted Funds	199,082	369,320	(373,848)	-	-	178,963
Total Funds	<u>1,903,222</u>	<u>3,043,634</u>	<u>(2,841,556)</u>	<u>9,772</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,115,072</u>

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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	
Buildings Fund	Funds set aside as a deposit for a future purchase of a building/ office if needed.

Restricted Funds:

Self-Directed Support	This project raised awareness and understanding of "SDS" and the process across Inverclyde and Moray amongst people accessing services, their families, and carers by sharing information, supporting them to put across their views and facilitating peer groups.
Advocacy Fife Carers	Independent Professional Advocacy Support provided to unpaid carers in the community.
Advocacy Fife D&A	Independent Professional Advocacy Support provided to people that have accessed or are accessing Drug and Alcohol Services.
BBC 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.

¹ A transfer of £19,627 from restricted funds represents the application of the Cummins Capital Donation towards the acquisition of fixed assets, in line with the original purpose of the donation.

20. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

During the year the charity occupied premises belonging to the Chief Executive and paid rental expenses of £18,000 (2024:£18,000). At the year ended £Nil (2024:£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 (2024: £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 (2024:£94), which is included within other creditors.

CIRCLES NETWORK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

21. DEFERRED INCOME

	Under 1 Year £	Over 1 Year £	Total £
At 1 April 2024	-	-	-
Additions during the year	78,392	-	78,392
Amounts Released to Income	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>78,392</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>78,392</u>

Income has been deferred where there is a contractual requirement for the activity to be performed subsequent to the year end.

22. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There are no capital commitments or contingent liabilities as at 31 March 2025 (2024:£Nil)

23. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The grants and donations for the year ended 31st March 2025 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
Cummins Foundation	NHS Frimley

