Connection Support

England & Wales · Charity number 1049740

Details

Other names	CONNECTION OXFORD
Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	03072719
Registered	1995-10-10
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	The Old School First Turn Wolvercote Oxford OX2 8AH
Phone	01865711267
Email	enquiries@connectionsupport.org.uk
Website	www.connectionsupport.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 4.1 The Charity's objects are:4.1.1 to prevent people from becoming socially excluded; and4.1.2 to support the needs of those who are socially excluded and assist them in acquiring a settled way of life in their community, including through the provision of supported accommodation where appropriate.For the purposes of the objects, socially excluded means excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of one or more of the following factors: homelessness; trauma; unemployment; financial hardship; disability; physical or mental health; migration; experience of the public care or penal system.

Activities: Our team of staff members and volunteers work alongside people to overcome the challenges they face in life. We do this to work towards our ultimate goal of solving homelessness and helping people achieve independence.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Accommodation/housing
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- Buckinghamshire
- Milton Keynes
- Oxfordshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£10,083,224	£9,940,787	£3,066,616	219
2024-03-31	£8,640,997	£8,377,336	£2,924,179	198
2023-03-31	£8,584,964	£8,215,843	£2,650,462	208
2022-03-31	£7,506,648	£7,342,445	£2,281,341	189
2021-03-31	£5,856,780	£5,760,842	£2,122,582	163

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Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Charlotte Barbara Dawson		2024-07-11
Emma Duke		2022-05-12
Helen Catherine Amura		2023-07-12
Lauren Kemp		2026-01-08
Lorna Marie Moles		2025-09-11
Michaela Clark		2025-01-09
Mike Wortley		2019-03-14
Paul Aston		2022-05-12
Peter Gerald Collingwood		2024-05-09
Peter Jack Bayley		2024-05-09
Zarina Ward		2025-09-11

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Connection Support

England & Wales - Charity number 1049740

Accounts

Connection Support

Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Charity registration number 1049740 (England and Wales)
Company registration number 03072719

Connection Support

Legal and Administrative Information

Trustees	Mr P Aston	
	Ms E Duke	
	Mr M Wortley	
	Ms H Amura	
	Ms R L Takundwa	
	Mr P Bayley	(Appointed 9 May 2024)
	Mr P Collingwood	(Appointed 9 May 2024)
	Ms M Clark	(Appointed 9 January 2025)
	Ms C Dawson	(Appointed 11 July 2024)
Secretary	Mr C Keating	
Charity number (England and Wales)	1049740	
Company number	03072719	
Registered office	The Old School First Turn Wolvercote Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 8AH	
Auditor	Gravita Audit Oxford LLP First Floor, Park Central 40-41 Park End Street Oxford OX1 1JD	
Bankers	The Co-operative Bank 1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP	

Connection Support

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Trustees' Annual Report

The Trustees are pleased to present their annual report, which is also prepared to meet the requirements of the Companies Act for a Directors' report.

Chair of the Trustee Board's Statement

Connection Support has been providing housing support for nearly three decades. Even since I joined the Board of Trustees in 2022, I have witnessed the charity evolve in remarkable ways. None of this progress would be possible without the commitment and humanity of our staff and volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the belief of our partners, funders, and supporters.

Three decades of experience have taught us a great deal. As we've grown and deepened our impact, we've taken time to reflect on what we've learned and how we can build on it. By listening closely to the needs of our clients, we have expanded to deliver specialist support with mental health, family support, services for young people, and support for refugees and asylum seekers.

One clear lesson stands out: many of the crises our clients face can be prevented with earlier, more proactive support. This insight has shaped our new organisational strategy, *Prevention First*, which sets out our commitment to act sooner, listen more closely, and work collaboratively to stop crises before they happen.

I am proud that, even in a challenging financial climate and with growing complexity of need, Connection Support has continued not only to respond, but to grow. This year, we increased our charitable income by 16.5%, securing vital funding to be able to expand our supported accommodation provision at Bearbrook Place and in Oxford City, deliver a new refugee service through Homes for Ukraine, and invest more in families through our Thrive service.

The teams of people who are working to deliver this ambitious vision and improved outcomes for our clients are – quite simply – extraordinary, but we don't take this for granted; our teams go above and beyond, but they need support and development to be able to do so. As a Board, working closely with the Senior Leadership Team, we have prioritised investment in staff wellbeing, personal development, and fair pay. We were pleased to approve an uplift in salaries to demonstrate our commitment to offering the most competitive pay we can afford.

It's been inspiring to see wellbeing move from something we needed to improve to something we can now celebrate. This is reflected in our latest staff engagement survey, the growth of peer support groups that give staff safe spaces to connect and share, and the recognition we received in November 2024 as the 7th Best Charity to Work For in the UK. Personally, I have seen this reflected in the number of employees who have told me that Connection Support is the first workplace where they feel they can truly show up as themselves.

Of course, the year has not been without its challenges. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to affect the communities we serve, and funding pressures affect the sector we work in. But through it all, our people have shown extraordinary resilience and compassion.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Chief Executive Officer, Chris Keating, for his strong leadership and unwavering commitment, and to my fellow Trustees, our dedicated staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters for standing with us every step of the way.

As we move forward with *Prevention First*, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose and possibility. Together, we will keep working towards a future where everyone has the support they need to thrive. I look forward to what the year ahead will bring and to the difference we will continue to make - together.

Emma Duke,
Chair of the Trustee Board

Chief Executive's Statement

As we come to the end of another year, I'm proud to reflect on how far we've come - and even more excited about where we're heading as we implement our new *'Prevention First'* strategy.

Our new strategy signals an important shift for Connection Support. For many years, we've supported people through some of the most difficult moments in their lives, and that won't change – we'll always be there when crises happen. But we know that too often these crises could have been prevented. *Prevention First* puts this understanding at the centre of everything we do. It sets out our commitment to work earlier and more collaboratively, so that fewer people ever reach crisis point in the first place.

This year, the challenges facing the people we support have continued to grow. High inflation and pressures on housing have made life harder for many in our communities. Yet despite this, our staff and volunteers have shown extraordinary dedication and compassion, responding flexibly, evolving services, and finding new ways to help people stay safe, secure, and connected. We're strengthening partnerships, building new ways to listen and act on client feedback, and ensuring our teams have the support they need to do their vital work.

One of my proudest moments this year was seeing how *Prevention First* is already making a tangible difference. While shadowing one of our Embedded Housing Workers at the John Radcliffe Hospital, I saw firsthand how they collaborated with clinical staff to ensure that no one who was medically fit for discharge ended up back on the streets. Our team member arranged temporary accommodation for the client I met, placing them in one of our Step Down houses, and within just a few weeks, that individual had moved into independent accommodation. Beyond the practical support, what struck me most was the relationship of trust our colleague built at such a low point in someone's life, helping to restore hope and confidence in their future.

We know that putting prevention first can only succeed if we continue to look after our own people too. Over the past year, we've strengthened our focus on staff wellbeing, created new peer networks, and encouraged open conversations about inclusion and support. Initiatives like our menopause group and neurodiverse network have paved the way for even more staff-led spaces this year, including the Men's & Women's Survivors of Domestic Abuse Group and the Mindfulness & Wellbeing Group. Together, these groups are helping to build a culture where everyone feels included, listened to, supported, and valued.

We also recognise that prevention isn't just about how we deliver services, it's about tackling the wider systems and policies that push people to the edge. That's why we've continued to strengthen our advocacy work, meeting with local MPs alongside our partners, and working with Homeless Link to help shape the national conversation.

As I step into my fourth year as CEO, I feel privileged to lead an organisation that is ready to take bold steps to create real, lasting change. *Prevention First* sets a clear direction for the next three years - a commitment to act earlier, listen harder, and work together to build stronger, more resilient communities where everyone has the chance to thrive.

To our clients, volunteers, staff, supporters, and Trustees - thank you. Your dedication, trust, and belief in what we can achieve together are what make this possible. There will always be challenges ahead, but with this renewed focus and such an inspiring team behind us, I know we are ready to meet them.

Chris Keating,
Chief Executive Officer

About Us

Connection Support began in 1995, started by just five people who believed they could make a real difference by providing an outstanding homelessness prevention service in Oxfordshire. And they were right. Their dedication paved the way for the organisation to grow, securing contracts to deliver a wide range of vital services, from housing and homelessness support to mental health, family services, support for young people, and help for refugees and asylum seekers.

Today, our mission remains simple but powerful: we work alongside people to help them navigate life's challenges. Our goal is to support everyone in our communities to find safe, stable housing and live as independently as possible. We offer expert, compassionate support to help people tackle the issues they face day-to-day, and we're there to help them overcome the lasting impact of past trauma. Across Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, and Oxfordshire, our team of approximately 230 staff and 110 volunteers provides tailored support to thousands of people each year.

Working closely with other organisations, we make sure our services truly meet people's needs. Everything we do is built on a person-centred, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approach. We help individuals set their own goals, build confidence, and take the steps they need to move forward with their lives.

Despite all the progress we've made, homelessness remains a widespread issue, and we're seeing a growing number of people coming to us with complex challenges and poor mental health. Many of these situations could have been prevented with earlier support, which is why we're now focused on delivering our new three-year strategy to drive earlier intervention and create lasting impact.

An overview of our services can be found in the **Appendix** on **page 66**.

> "When I first came to Connection Support, I was vulnerable, withdrawn, and incredibly lonely. I didn't recognise myself anymore. But from day one, the support I received was honest, real, and consistent. My Support Worker helped me believe in myself again. She worked with me, not against me. She didn't give up on me. That's a big part of why I'm still here today."
>
> **- Flo, former client and Brighter Futures Group member***

*You can learn more about our Brighter Futures Group in the Client Involvement section on **page 11**.

Our Year in Numbers

Throughout the 2024 - 2025 financial year, we…

- Delivered **33** different services to support over **5,400 people**
- Answered **14,031** calls from people seeking support or guidance
- Empowered **1,373** people to develop the skills to no longer need our support
- Partnered with **30+** organisations to deliver wraparound support where it's needed most
- Had over **30,000** visits to our website from people seeking information about our services
- Increased our number of leased properties by **16%** and bed spaces by **47%**, giving more people access to safe, supportive accommodation
- Involved clients in **50%** of staff recruitment interviews – up from 20% the previous year
- Were named the **7th** best charity to work for in the UK by Best Companies
- Had an average of **110** volunteers supporting our services each month, earning a 95% volunteer recommendation rate

Collaborating for Impact: Our Partnerships

We're passionate about working in partnership with other organisations, services, and local authorities to provide innovative, wrap-around support for our clients across the three localities we work in. Over the course of the year, we continued to work collaboratively with many of our existing partners, but we also forged some new relationships. Working in partnership allows us to have a greater impact as we're able to draw on the expertise of multiple organisations, sharing skills, knowledge, and resources, ultimately achieving the best outcomes for the people we support.

Buckinghamshire

- **Buckinghamshire Homeless Partnership:** We're working with Aylesbury Homeless Action Group, Wycombe Homeless Connection, Youth Concern, and Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to build positive relationships with other like-minded organisations. Together, we're sharing learning, identifying and filling gaps, reducing duplication, and creating a more joined-up service for our clients. By speaking with one voice, we can also strengthen our collective impact.

- **Bucks Rough Sleeper Initiative**: Led by Buckinghamshire Council and funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), this collaboration of charities and services works together to provide localised support for rough sleepers.

- **Charities Together**: We work with Age UK Buckinghamshire, Carers Bucks, Citizens Advice Bucks, Community Impact Bucks, and Youth Concern to deliver Charities Together, a collaborative partnership that supports people in Buckinghamshire who have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

- **One Recovery Bucks (ORB Project)**: Commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council, this project supports individuals affected by drug and alcohol misuse, offering help with treatment and recovery. The service is delivered by Inclusion, and we work in partnership with them and Build on Belief.

- **SafeHaven+**: We continued to work alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, The Oasis Partnership, and Adult Mental Health Teams to deliver SafeHaven+ - a service that specialises in providing alternative support to help clients avoid crises and prevent hospital admission.

Milton Keynes

- **Restart Thames Valley**: We continued delivering this pilot project until October 2024, supporting ex-offenders in partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire and Thames Valley Partnership. The aim is to help people leaving prison build a more stable and positive future. We're playing a key role in the evaluation of RESTART's outcomes and remain hopeful that it will demonstrate the service's value, paving the way for future funding and further development of the project.

- **Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership (MKHP**): With homelessness on the rise in Milton Keynes, former MKHP Trustees have joined forces with local homelessness leaders to improve collaboration and develop joint solutions. Initiated by our CEO, Chris Keating, the new forum unites senior representatives from YMCA MK, Unity MK, and The Bus Shelter MK to tackle system pressures, the shortage of emergency accommodation, and the need for more coordinated, person-centred support. Recent meetings have reinforced their shared commitment to reducing homelessness and driving lasting change in the city.

Oxfordshire

- **Homes for Ukraine**: Delivered in collaboration with Refugee Resource, this service is dedicated to helping displaced Ukrainians who have come to the UK under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, helping them to gain the skills and confidence they need to live independently in the UK.

- **Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM)**: We continued our collaboration with OHM, alongside Asylum Welcome, Edge Housing, and SOHA, to deliver our 'No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)' service. This initiative was designed to help people who are experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing.

- **Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance (OHA)**: Alongside partners A2 Dominion, Aspire, Elmore Community Services, Homeless Oxfordshire, and St Mungo's, as well as Oxfordshire County, City, and District Councils, we continued to work collaboratively. This alliance embarks on a ground-breaking programme of work to prevent and resolve homelessness so that no one sleeps rough in Oxfordshire.

- **Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership**: We continued to work alongside the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Response, Restore, Oxfordshire Mind, and Elmore Community Services to provide intensive mental health support to those in need.

Spotlight: Prevention as a Priority

One powerful example of our collaborative strength from this past year was our joint work we did with Aspire Oxfordshire and Homeless Oxfordshire to raise shared concerns about the future of national homelessness funding. In September 2024, we met with local MPs, including The Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds and Sean Woodcock, to share insights from the frontline and highlight the potential risks of reduced national investment – particularly the impact on preventative services that support people before reaching crisis point.

Together, we shared local data and frontline evidence to support a shared call for long-term, ring-fenced funding – including the impact of prevention-focused services delivered by both ourselves and Aspire, which supported over 900 households in the previous financial year. Many of these individuals and families were supported without needing to present to statutory homelessness teams, helping to reduce pressure elsewhere in the system. One of the MPs we met committed to raising the issue at a national level – a reminder of the power of unified voices to prompt further conversation in the right spaces.

We recognise that funding decisions are complex and must balance a wide range of needs. Our aim in these conversations was not – and will never be – to criticise, but to contribute towards a wider understanding of what's working locally, where the pressure points lie, and how organisations like ours can work together to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

This collaboration reflects our shared commitment not just to service delivery, but to systems change – advocating for the funding, policy, and long-term solutions needed to end homelessness for good. Following our meeting, the government announced additional investment in homelessness and rough sleeping services through the Autumn Budget. We can't claim credit for the outcome, but our involvement highlighted how vital it is for local providers to come together and speak with a unified voice.

Our Champions

Our Champions networks have been active for nearly two years, driving positive change across the organisation in areas closely aligned with our vision, mission, and values. We have four dedicated groups, focusing on Client Involvement, Environment & Sustainability, Wellbeing, and Equality, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (EDEI). Colleagues are championing these key topics, helping to shape our culture whilst building their own skills in areas like public speaking, facilitation, monitoring and evaluation, and influencing change. Through their passion and commitment, our Champions are playing a vital role in creating a more inclusive, engaged, and values-led organisation.

Our **Client Involvement Champions** have made impressive progress in embedding the client voice throughout our work. They've encouraged managers to involve clients in recruitment, aiming to include a client on every interview panel wherever timing and availability allow. This focus has seen client participation in interviews rise significantly - from 20% of all recruitment to 50%. During this time, we have engaged and trained more clients keen to get involved, and we're continuing to build on this progress to make participation even more accessible in the future. To support this, the Champions have developed comprehensive guidance for hiring managers, and training sessions have been delivered to help prepare clients for taking part in interviews. Beyond recruitment, the Champions have also started organising monthly fishing trips in Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, helping to build trust and encourage further engagement. These trips have been a huge success so far, with 19 clients attending.

Our **Environment and Sustainability Champions** have been actively involved in a range of initiatives to help reduce our environmental impact. Their work includes engaging in discussions around new traffic controls in Oxford City, sourcing quotes for sustainable lighting and electric vehicle chargers at our offices, and reviewing our environmental and sustainability policy. They also supported the closure of our Witney office. The most complex and time-consuming task has been calculating Connection Support's carbon footprint - a detailed process that required extensive data collection and technical analysis. With this now complete, we can set meaningful targets for the years ahead and benchmark our progress against similar organisations. In addition to this, the Champions are currently organising an energy audit of our properties to help us understand our environmental impact and shape future sustainability plans. They're excited that we're recruiting a Board sustainability lead to help drive this work forward.

Our **EDEI Champions** have led and supported a wide range of activities to celebrate and raise awareness of diversity across the organisation. Highlights include marking Black History Month and Pride Month with office displays, running activities for International Women's Day, and joining Oxford Pride with a stall and parade. The group supported the Marketing Team's impactful Refugee Week campaign, raising awareness of the challenges faced by displaced people and promoting our support services for refugees and asylum seekers. They also helped organise *Razom Fest* to celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day. In March 2025, we were proud to be recognised as a Disability Confident Employer. To achieve this, we made our recruitment and interview process fully inclusive with reasonable adjustments, shared interview questions, widened our advertising reach, delivered disability awareness training, and built a supportive culture through engagement, support groups, wellbeing days, and an open-door approach. Next, we're aiming for Disability Confident Leader status, which means proving we're delivering, monitoring, and improving on our commitments - for example, by offering apprenticeships and traineeships for people with disabilities and ensuring our policies and culture stay fully inclusive. It may take time, but we're excited to keep building on the support we already offer our team.

Our **Wellbeing Champions** have introduced a range of initiatives to support staff wellbeing and create more positive working environments. In Milton Keynes, a traffic light system was rolled out to encourage a calm, respectful atmosphere, alongside a dedicated "Wellbeing Space" where staff can relax and recharge. The Aylesbury office received a refresh by providing additional computer screens and chairs to

create a dedicated wellbeing space. The Wellbeing Champions also launched new initiatives, including the provision of sanitary products in every office, weekly mindfulness sessions, monthly Menopause and Neurodiversity peer support groups, and intranet articles covering stress management, workplace wellbeing, and men's health. The team marked World Menopause Day in October with a dedicated online event that over 70 staff members attended. A standout moment of the year was our first-ever Wellbeing Festival, which saw fantastic staff engagement in activities like yoga, meditation, and art therapy. The event created a real sense of community and provided a much-needed opportunity for relaxation and connection. Several new Champions have joined the group as we move into the next financial year, and plans include organising another wellbeing festival, continuing the peer support groups, understanding how we can make our offices more psychologically informed, and continuing to shape our approach around staff wellbeing needs.

Our Culture and How It's Driving Impact

At Connection Support, we know that the impact we create in communities is only possible because of the passion, resilience, and commitment of our teams. In 2024, that commitment was formally recognised when we were named the 7th best charity to work for in the UK by Best Companies – a significant achievement based entirely on staff feedback.

Best Companies offers an annual engagement survey that measures how people feel about their work and workplace. Results from participating organisations are benchmarked nationally, and those with the highest scores are ranked in sector-specific and regional league tables. This year, we saw a significant improvement across the board – moving from 12th to 7th place in the charity sector, 37th to 24th regionally, and from 60th to 23rd nationally.

This recognition reflects the inclusive, values-led culture we've worked hard to build. In this year's staff survey:

- 98% said we provide a great service to clients
- 96% said they feel proud to work for Connection Support
- 95% believe they can make a valuable contribution
- 95% feel their team does everything possible to support one another
- 90% feel they can openly discuss challenges with their manager
- 94% agree that we take diversity and inclusion seriously

This year, we've continued to build on what makes Connection Support special – not just through policies, but by creating real spaces for staff to shape our culture and feel supported. In 2024 to 2025, that looked like:

- Expanding our peer-led support groups with the launch of dedicated men's and women's spaces for staff who have experienced domestic abuse – creating safe, supportive environments where lived experience can be shared and acknowledged.

- Introducing a new working group focused on improving family-friendly policies – including maternity, paternity, surrogacy, and fertility treatment – helping us better reflect the diverse needs of our staff and ensure appropriate support is in place.
- Continuing to empower our champion networks, giving staff a genuine voice in how we work, and the power to influence policy, practice, and organisational culture (more on page 7).

- Involving staff and clients in shaping our *Prevention First* strategy through dedicated listening sessions, collaborative workshops, and a formal consultation – ensuring real-world insight is embedded into our shared vision, strategic aims, and the way we'll work towards them through to 2027.

- Continuing to hold bi-annual meetings between staff and Trustees, providing a consistent space for staff to raise concerns, share learning, and contribute to leadership decisions.

- Bringing over 200 people together for our first organisation-wide Staff & Volunteer Conference and Awards Ceremony – recognising achievements, strengthening connections, and offering space to reflect on the impact we've made together.

The way we care for our people is the same way we show up for our clients – and it starts with a culture built on trust, safety, and shared purpose. By creating an environment where people feel heard, respected, and supported, we're strengthening our ability to respond to complex challenges with compassion and resilience. Whether it's shaping strategy, influencing practice, or supporting each other through tough times, our culture is the thread that runs through it all.

Being named the 7th best charity to work for in the UK didn't happen by accident – it's the result of deliberate, ongoing investment in our people. We know our impact is only made possible because of the committed team that goes beyond expectations to create real, lasting change. And so, we'll continue to strive to be an organisation where people feel proud, supported, and inspired – because the best outcomes start with people who believe in the difference they're making.

Volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of Connection Support and play a vital role in delivering many of our services. Working alongside our Support Workers, they help clients navigate some of the most challenging times in their lives, offering practical and emotional support that makes a lasting difference - not only to the people they help, but often to their own lives too. In our most recent survey, 95% of volunteers said they would recommend volunteering with Connection Support to a friend.

Volunteering provides people with a meaningful way to give back to their community, while also gaining new skills, valuable experience, and lasting friendships. Many volunteers tell us that their confidence grows through volunteering and that the sense of making a positive difference is deeply rewarding. Volunteer numbers varied during the year, and we were fortunate to have had as many as 123 people who generously gave their time to support our services.

In response to volunteer feedback from previous years, we have continued to expand opportunities for volunteers to feel connected and valued. This year, we introduced monthly local coffee mornings, encouraged greater attendance at our Staff & Volunteer Conference and Awards Ceremony, and offered more in-person training. We also launched a regular volunteer newsletter to share news and updates from across the organisation, and worked closely with colleagues to strengthen supervision arrangements to ensure volunteers feel well supported in their roles.

To recognise and celebrate the invaluable contribution of our volunteers, we held a special event during Volunteers' Week. Staff and volunteers gathered at our Oxford office to mark the occasion. The day included a workshop on neurodiversity delivered by our staff, an insightful session on substance misuse led by a team member with lived experience, and moving stories from volunteers who generously shared their own experiences with the group.

> "I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone at Connection Support for organising the Volunteer event. I thought the session on ADHD and Substance Misuse was amazing. The real life examples were a refreshing change from the standard training that we receive! Also, hearing the volunteers speak about their experiences within their roles was really moving and has given me renewed motivation to help clients. Thank you all again for your hard work, and your efforts are truly appreciated."
>
> - **Volunteer**

Spotlight: From Outreach Volunteer to Trustee

Volunteering has always been at the heart of Connection Support, and one of our Trustees knows that better than most. After retiring from a career spent in senior leadership roles around the world, Peter was looking for a meaningful way to give back. In 2021, he joined our Outreach Volunteer team in Oxford, heading out in the early hours to locate, verify, and support people sleeping rough. What started as a few hours a week quickly became a deep commitment.

In 2024 alone, Peter:

- Volunteered 250 hours across 97 shifts
- Attempted to locate 222 referrals
- Covered 4,718 miles across two Oxfordshire districts

Peter's Story:

> "When I retired, I knew I didn't want to just stop – I wanted to find something purposeful. I started looking into how I could support people experiencing homelessness locally, and what I found really opened my eyes. The more I learned, the more I realised that homelessness isn't just about housing – it's about mental health, addiction, prison release, family breakdown, and trauma. Things that can affect any of us. That understanding made me want to do more than donate or read about it – I wanted to actually do something. I came across Connection Support and, after a short induction and training, began volunteering as part of their Oxfordshire-based outreach team.
>
> I'd be out by 6:30 am and always accompanied by a qualified outreach support worker, helping to locate people sleeping rough, verify them, and start building a bridge to support. Some mornings were incredibly tough. One that's always stayed with me was finding a man in serious crisis, accompanied by his two dogs. We were really worried about him. But he was eventually rehoused in a managed property, and things gradually began to get better, even returning to work. That's the kind of outcome that reminds you why you do it.
>
> Through volunteering, I saw firsthand the kind of impact Connection Support has and the difference it makes in people's lives. I'm often one of the first people someone meets in their journey, and for me, it truly is a quiet privilege to be the person who reminds someone they matter – and that they don't have to face things alone.
>
> Over time, I wanted to do more. I felt drawn to the charity's bigger picture, and coming from a corporate background, I felt I could bring a useful perspective – one grounded in governance, leadership, and long-term planning. I spoke to the CEO, Chris, and before long, I joined the Board of Trustees.

> And being a Trustee here is something I genuinely enjoy. The board is made up of diverse and impressive people. The senior leadership team are some of the most humble, passionate people I've had the privilege to work with. And the staff are so incredibly committed, it's hard not to feel inspired. There's a real magnetism to this organisation – it makes you proud, and it makes you want to do more.
>
> If you're thinking about volunteering, my advice is simple: do it. You'll learn more than you expect – about others, and yourself."

Today, Peter still volunteers. As well as giving up his free time to sit on the Board of Trustees, he hits the road in the early hours. And he brings that same sense of purpose to his role as a Trustee, helping to guide the very organisation that changed how he saw homelessness – and how he could help. His story is just one, but it represents the heart of something much bigger.

With approximately 110 volunteers supporting our different services at any given time, there are many ways to help, just by giving one or two hours a week. The collective contribution of our volunteer team is extraordinary; whether it's early-morning outreach or strategic insight, they bring humanity, energy, and vital capacity to every corner of our work.

It's safe to say… we couldn't do it without them.

Client Involvement

By truly listening to our clients and giving them a platform to be heard, we can make better, more informed decisions about the future of our organisation. Amplifying our clients' voices is something we're deeply committed to, and because empowering people sits at the heart of our values, involving clients directly in decision-making is a natural next step. In 2024, we began training clients to sit on interview panels, and from 2025 onwards, efforts were made to involve clients in every recruitment process.

In the year to April 2025, client participation in interviews increased significantly, rising from 20% of all recruitment to 50%. During this time, we successfully engaged and trained more clients who were eager to get involved. Our clients shape our work in many other ways, too. They take part in consultations that help guide our organisational strategy and inform our marketing campaigns. We run a wide range of activities that give clients opportunities to build skills, connect with others, and improve their wellbeing - from arts and crafts groups and seasonal events to monthly fishing trips across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Milton Keynes. These activities help reduce isolation, boost confidence, and open up new opportunities for the future.

In Oxfordshire, we held monthly fishing trips between April and September 2024, involving 14 clients from Oxfordshire and Aylesbury with the support of staff and volunteers. A similar trip was launched in Milton Keynes in September 2024, with five clients taking part.

A key highlight this year has been the launch of our Client Advisory Board in January 2025. This group brings together ten participants from across our regions, supported by our client involvement champions, staff, and Trustees. The Board began by building connections, learning more about Connection Support and the principles of co-production, and setting out how they will work alongside our Senior Leadership Team to help shape the organisation's direction. Members have identified their individual and shared priorities, agreed on what they hope to achieve through their involvement, and chosen their name - *Brighter Futures*. The Board now meets every other month, with activities taking place between

meetings, and each member commits for a year to ensure new clients have opportunities to take part in the future.

We are also pleased to report continued progress with our Peer Mentoring programme. Originally launched as a pilot in Milton Keynes in 2022, the model expanded into Oxfordshire in 2023 and has continued to grow over the past year. By April 2025, we had recruited ten Peer Mentors in Milton Keynes and two in Oxfordshire.

Peer Mentoring provides an important way for clients to support one another, with people who have received help from Connection Support volunteering as mentors to share their own lived experience. Peer Mentors act as trusted role models, offering a listening ear, encouragement, and practical support to help others build confidence and move forward. Initiatives like this mean that our clients are not only heard - they play an active role in shaping our services and our future direction.

> "Looking back, I don't know how I would have coped without the support I received. Without it, the pressure would've fallen on my elderly father, and he simply wasn't in a position to provide the kind of help I needed or answer the questions I was facing. Having someone there who understood the system and could guide me through it made a world of difference.
>
> Fast forward to today, and after more than 30 years of living with serious mental health challenges, I'm now self-employed – something I never thought possible. I've also started giving back by helping to improve some of the services that once supported me, including hospitals and mental health initiatives. One of the most meaningful things I've been part of is the 'Brighter Futures' group at Connection Support – their client advisory board.
>
> I've been involved from the beginning, and the group's goal is to ensure that people with lived experience have a real voice in how the organisation is run. We work directly with the senior team to help shape the future of Connection Support, making sure that client perspectives are not only heard but at the heart of every decision. It feels empowering to know that our experiences are helping to build a more responsive, compassionate service for others."
>
> **- Lyndsay, former client and Brighter Futures Group member**

Personal Story: How Peer Mentoring is Changing Lives – Jess and AJ's Story

Jessica has been volunteering with Connection Support as a Peer Mentor for around a year, drawing on her own lived experience as a former client to support others on their journey. "In my role, I'm there as someone to talk to and share experiences with," she explains. "One person I supported wanted to get out more because they were feeling isolated, so we'd go for local walks together. I try to be flexible - everyone's needs are different."

Jess decided to become a mentor because she wanted to give back. *"I wanted to help others in the same way I was helped when I really needed it. The support I received made a huge difference during a difficult time in my life."*

The experience has been just as rewarding for Jess as it has for her mentees. "I really enjoy walking alongside someone on their journey and watching them grow. It's fulfilling, and I've gained so much confidence by sharing my story. I've also learned useful, transferable skills through training. If you're thinking about volunteering, I'd say give it a go - the team is so supportive and welcoming. You'll be guided every step of the way, and you really do make a difference."

One person Jess has supported is AJ*, who turned to Connection Support for help while experiencing homelessness and struggling with mental health challenges. *"I was homeless and then when I found a home I became agoraphobic – I was scared to leave . I needed help to start going out again,"* AJ shares.

AJ found the peer mentoring experience invaluable. *"The matching was excellent. Jess gave me the support I needed and created a safe space where I could talk about my worries. She helped me overcome my agoraphobia by taking me out for walks and listening without judging or giving advice. Before, I was spending most of my time indoors and had no confidence to go out. Now I go out more often and feel so much more confident."*

AJ added, *"Jess was a perfect match, and I want to thank her and my support worker Tamara for their continuous help."*

This is just one example of how peer mentoring helps people regain confidence, reduce isolation, and build brighter futures - all through the power of shared experience and support.

Client's name has been changed

Our Work

This year marked the launch of our 2024–2027 strategy, a bold step towards becoming a thought leader in preventing homelessness and mental ill-health. As we shift our focus further upstream, we've been laying the groundwork for services that intervene earlier, adapt to local needs, and amplify the voices of those we support.

Across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Milton Keynes, we've strengthened what works by growing key services, embedding earlier interventions, and involving clients more directly in shaping support, all whilst adapting to rising demand and increasing complexity. And through it all, we've continued to prove that with the right support at the right time, crises ***can*** be prevented.

Whilst our work spans five core specialisms – homelessness and housing, mental health, family support, young people, and refugee services – each area we operate in faces unique challenges. To better reflect the breadth of our local delivery and the distinct needs of the communities we support, we're showcasing our impact by location.

Oxfordshire

Across Oxfordshire, demand for our services grew, with clients presenting more complex challenges than ever before. Despite housing shortages, rising mental health needs, and increasing pressure on local systems, our teams consistently delivered strong outcomes – from preventing homelessness to reducing hospital stays. Partnership working was central, with close collaboration across councils, housing providers, health services, and community organisations. Together, these efforts didn't just address immediate crises – they created pathways to stability, independence, and recovery. The next section highlights a selection of our services across the county, showing how these themes have played out in different communities.

At the heart of our work in Oxfordshire are services that directly prevent and respond to homelessness. From supported accommodation to floating support and community hubs, these services provide stability, safety, and practical help for people who are either homeless or at risk of becoming so. Together they show how timely, person-centred support addresses crises, helps prevent homelessness, and creates the stability people need for lasting change.

Housing Support Service

Our Housing Support Service provides floating support to clients at risk of homelessness, helping them maintain their tenancies and build the skills they need to live independently. The team works in a person-centred way, equipping clients with the skills to manage money, navigate benefits, and build independence to prevent homelessness.

Over the year, we supported more than 900 households, successfully preventing homelessness in 95% of cases. Demand remains high, with an increase in clients reporting mental health difficulties. To meet evolving needs, we launched a new tenancy sustainment service and continued to involve clients through regular forums.

The Housing Support Service has worked with a significantly higher number of households this year, reflecting rising demand as more people face complex challenges that put them at risk of homelessness. This demonstrates that, while risks are growing, becoming homeless doesn't have to be inevitable – with timely, personalised support and brief interventions, many crises can be prevented.

Adult Homeless Pathway

Our Adult Homeless Pathway service provides supported accommodation across Oxford, Witney, and Banbury, helping people take steps towards independent living. This year, 100% of our clients – every single person we supported – sustained their tenancy for over six months. This is a huge achievement, as many clients have overcome hurdles such as understanding service charge payments, managing tight budgets, and learning to live alongside others in shared housing. It's a testament to the dedication of our team and the perseverance of the people we support.

Despite strong outcomes, the year brought significant challenges. The team welcomed 41 new people to the service, many of whom arrived with more complex needs than we've typically seen – particularly in cases where people were leaving prison or exiting support services following a period of poor mental health. In these cases, the team has had to balance compassion with caution, sometimes making the difficult decision to say no to protect the safety and stability of the other people living in shared housing.

We were deeply saddened by the deaths of several clients this year – a devastating reminder of the complexity and vulnerability of the client group we support. Still, the team continued to show up with care, professionalism, and strength, supporting not only their clients but also each other through these difficult moments.

The learning from this year has been significant, with growing client complexity resulting in higher workloads and increased pressures on the team. Despite these challenges, the dedication of staff have ensured continued quality support, offering valuable insight into how frontline services can best respond to evolving needs.

Housing First

Our Housing First service supports former rough sleepers across the Cherwell district by providing immediate, permanent housing first as the foundation, followed by tailored ongoing support to help clients improve their health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life.

This year, 100% of our Housing First clients experienced improvements in their health and wellbeing. This positive shift may reflect not only better health outcomes but also clients feeling more empowered to discuss their needs and incorporate health into their support plans. Supporting this, the proportion of clients registered with a GP increased significantly, reaching 87.5%.

An ongoing challenge for this service is a significant shortage of available properties. Whilst we continue to work closely with Aspire, Cherwell District Council, and housing associations, securing enough housing to meet demand remains difficult. Recent Housing First access panels – meetings where agencies review and prioritise referrals for available support – consistently see more clients referred than available places, particularly in districts outside of Oxford City. This highlights the urgent need to expand Housing First provision across the wider county.

Banbury Beacon

The Beacon Centre offers a safe, warm, and non-judgmental space for people facing homelessness or social isolation in Banbury and the surrounding area. Visitors can enjoy food and hot drinks, connect with others in similar circumstances, and speak with Support Workers for a listening ear, practical advice, and emotional support.

Over the year, we welcomed around 50 people each week, offering not just immediate comfort but also pathways to longer-term help. We hosted visits from partner agencies, including Cherwell District Council to discuss housing, the Department for Work and Pensions to give benefit advice, and Turning Point to support people with drug or alcohol issues. These partnerships enabled visitors to access vital services in a familiar and supportive environment, helping them take steps towards greater stability and wellbeing.

We know that homelessness and mental ill-health are inextricably linked, and our specialist services work at this intersection every day. Some focus on supporting people as they leave hospital, while others provide ongoing mental health support in the community. Across them all, the aim is the same – to reduce crisis, improve wellbeing, and give people the stability they need to recover and move forward.

Hospital Discharge Service

Our Hospital Discharge Support service works within mental health inpatient wards to assist patients in the discharge process, working alongside hospital staff to overcome challenges and support safe transitions. Around 20% of inpatients face homelessness or housing needs, which can significantly delay discharge and extend hospital stays – adding pressure to both patients and the wider healthcare system.

Over the initial nine-month pilot, the service supported 40 patients, more than half of whom experienced positive changes in their mental health and wellbeing. The project's early success led to additional funding and an expanded service model for the next financial year, with embedded workers recognised as playing a vital role in helping patients navigate discharge challenges. Feedback from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust praised our team's proactivity, problem-solving, and ability to build supportive relationships with patients and families.

This service exemplifies our commitment to collaborative, client-centred support by working closely with health partners within hospital settings to overcome discharge barriers, reduce hospital re-admissions, and support vulnerable individuals through critical transitions – all key to preventing crisis and promoting long-term wellbeing.

Oxfordshire Health & Homelessness Inclusion Service

As part of the Oxfordshire Health & Homelessness Inclusion Service (OHHI) – a multi-disciplinary team working to prevent homelessness and improve health outcomes – our Community Mental Health Support Workers help people move from hospital into safe, stable accommodation.

This year, the team supported 106 people, providing rapid, practical help at the point of discharge to ensure no one left hospital without a plan for safe, stable housing. Early outcome data from the service's commissioner shows the difference this makes: where our embedded mental health support is in place, mental health hospital readmissions have fallen by 51%, and for those who are readmitted, the average hospital stay is 62% shorter.

It's clear this service is having a significant impact – not only transforming lives but also easing pressure on NHS services. For one client, this meant turning six years of street homelessness into six months of successfully maintaining a tenancy, and with improved, stabilised mental health, no longer being subject to a Community Treatment Order.

A reduction in community team workers and a shortage of ward-based social workers increased demand on our team, whilst cuts to dedicated benefits services meant more people turned to us for help with PIP and Universal Credit claims. These pressures made timely intervention even more important, as without it, people leaving hospital risked losing their accommodation, experiencing rapid deterioration in their mental health, and returning to crisis situations that were far harder to resolve.

Personal Story: Support, Stability, and Small Steps Forward – Anna's Story

Growing up, things were alright. My dad was quite strict, but it wasn't a bad childhood. When he passed away when I was 18, it left a gap in my life, but I managed to carry on. I never imagined that, years later, everything could fall apart so quickly.

It all started when I was admitted to the hospital with a broken leg, just before a knee replacement operation. The day before my surgery, I was handed a Section 21 eviction notice. My benefits weren't enough to cover rent and living costs, so I fell into arrears. That's when I met Julia from Connection Support, who referred me to their Out of Hospital service (now the Oxfordshire Health & Homelessness Inclusion Service). It felt like someone was finally on my side.

Social services went to my flat, packed up my belongings, and asked for my keys while I was still in the hospital. They left me with just two t-shirts and the clothes I was wearing. I stopped paying rent because I was being evicted anyway. From there, things spiralled. I had follow-up appointments for my leg, and during surgery, I died three times on the operating table.

After being discharged, I was still in my flat with nowhere else to go. I was served another eviction notice, admitted to the hospital again, and couldn't leave because I had no home to go to. I was taken to court, and I lost my job in the meantime.

My Support Worker, Shannon, told me to start paying my rent after receiving my Universal Credit. I did, and the judge noticed. Instead of immediate eviction, I was granted a bailiff's warrant giving me eight more weeks. It bought me time, but it wasn't easy.

After this, I went between different temporary accommodations – Travelodge, Premier Inn, and some poor-quality places I had to clean myself. Every few weeks, I didn't know where I'd be. I had a breakdown. I couldn't cook, so I lived on pot noodles and crisps. A friend helped me out – I did my washing at her place twice a week. Eventually, I was offered a flat. At first, I thought it was in a bad area, but when I viewed it, I realised it was a great location – close to town and near the GP surgery. No more taxis, no more uncertainty.

When I think back to that time, I remember feeling completely broken. I even had a breakdown in hospital. Shannon supported me through all of it. She worked so hard and always tried to be there for me. There were moments I was desperate and needed her, and it was tough when she couldn't be there – like when I had to go to court about my Universal Credit.

Still, she never gave up on me. Shannon helped me transition into my new accommodation and even appealed my Universal Credit to get me more support. She had such a big impact on my life. I miss her. She's a bubbly, smiley, positive lady, and she helped me believe that things could get better.

Today, I'm settled. My rent is paid. My leg still gives me trouble, and I have ongoing health issues. I'm waiting on a weight-loss injection so I can have the surgery I need. I still feel like I need someone to turn to, but I'm in a better place now.

One of the things that's helped is being involved in the Client Advisory Board at Connection Support. We're called 'Brighter Futures' – I've met some really lovely people through them, and it gives me a sense of community again.

My journey isn't over. I still have hopes for the future – mostly, I just want to stay stable, healthy, and feel supported. But looking back, I'm proud of how far I've come. Proud that I kept going even when everything seemed to be against me. And incredibly grateful for the people, like Shannon and Julia, who walked with me through the darkest times.

Step Down Housing

Step Down Housing offers short-term accommodation for patients who are ready to leave hospital but have no safe, suitable place to recover. Many are facing homelessness, housing insecurity, health-related mobility challenges, or situations where returning home would put them at risk. By working directly inside hospitals, our team bridges the gap between medical discharge and stable housing, ensuring no one is left without a plan.

As part of the Oxford Health & Homelessness Inclusion Service – a multi-disciplinary partnership bringing together housing specialists and clinical professionals – we help to prevent rough sleeping and reduce delayed hospital discharges. Through this collaboration, 86 people were able to recover in the

safety of one of our Step Down houses. Its impact was recognised nationally, with the partnership named finalists in the 2024 Health Service Journal Awards for Place-Based Partnership and Integrated Care.

Demand for Step Down Beds remains high, driven by a shortage of affordable housing and long social housing waiting lists. While stronger partnership working has improved discharge planning, some patients are still discharged too soon, risking setbacks in their recovery.

Over the year, we saw a rise in people presenting with complex needs – from substance dependency and neurodivergence to poor physical health, terminal illness, and significant mental health challenges. There was also a growing need for accessible housing, whether for those recovering from injury or living with long-term mobility issues, including broken bones. These factors mean that people leaving hospital often require more than just a roof over their heads – they need an environment that can meet their physical, emotional, and practical needs. This service offers exactly that. Step Down Housing provides safety, stability, and tailored support so people can focus on healing and moving forward with confidence.

Mental Health Support Service

As part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, we provide focused support for people living with severe and enduring mental health needs, helping them to move forward and live more independently. Support is tailored and can last from 6 to 24 months, covering areas such as housing, benefits, and social inclusion.

Over the year, housing pressures intensified, with longer waiting lists and fewer affordable options. This affected clients in varied ways – from individuals experiencing homelessness following the breakdown of relationships or changes in family circumstances, to young people with dual diagnoses who were unable to access social housing due to a lack of previous tenancy history. Many of these clients were also unable to consider shared accommodation because of the nature of their conditions. We also supported more people with multiple diagnoses that did not fit neatly into existing categories, adding complexity to their housing and support needs. Despite these challenges, we supported an average of 70 clients, providing consistent, personalised support to help each person work towards a safe home, improved wellbeing, and greater independence.

Alongside our housing and mental health work, we also deliver specialist support for people whose circumstances bring additional challenges. For families rebuilding after conflict, this might mean navigating an entirely new culture; for people with no access to public funds, it means overcoming barriers to even the most basic support; and for young care leavers, it's about having a safe first home and the guidance to become independent. Together, these services show how flexible, person-centred support can adapt to different starting points and create stability where it's needed most.

Refugee Resettlement

For almost a decade, our Refugee Resettlement Service has helped families fleeing conflict to build safe, stable lives in Oxfordshire. Launched in 2015 during the Syrian crisis under the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) – later the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – the service adapted over the years to meet changing global needs, including providing support to Afghan families following the crisis in Afghanistan.

Over the years, we've supported 30 families in Oxford, 20 in Cherwell, and 6 in South and Vale. In response to the Afghan crisis, the team expanded to welcome 6 Afghan families in Cherwell, which grew to 42 families by May this year. Many of these households were large, with up to eight children, meaning our work reached hundreds of individuals.

Our role went far beyond case management. We welcomed families at the airport, set up their homes with everything they needed – from bedding to books and toys – and guided them through every step of life in the UK, from registering with a GP to opening a bank account. We supported people to learn English, find volunteering and work opportunities, and gain the confidence to live independently. Thanks to the team's efforts, many children we supported are now thriving in schools and universities, with bright futures ahead. Some clients even went on to become volunteers and later staff at Connection Support – a testament to the lasting connections built. The team itself was wonderfully diverse, bringing together colleagues from France, Kenya, Syria, Algeria, Azerbaijan, and beyond – using their skills, languages, and lived experiences to provide culturally sensitive, personal support.

Alongside the challenges of resettlement, including the high cost of living, we've celebrated countless milestones with the families at community events, watching them build friendships and flourish. In May this year, the service came to an end, but we are pleased that local authorities will continue providing support to Afghan families in Cherwell. Before closing, we came together for celebration events in Banbury and Ambrosden to reflect on all we had achieved and to say our goodbyes.

This has been a remarkable service – one that leaves behind a legacy of resilience, community, and hope, showing how the right support at the right time can change the trajectory of entire families for generations.

Homes for Ukraine

Our Homes for Ukraine service, delivered in partnership with Refugee Resource, supports displaced Ukrainians arriving under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme to build safe, stable lives in Oxfordshire.

This year, the team supported 884 guests, providing more than 1,500 instances of tailored advice, guidance, and practical help. Alongside one-to-one support with eVisa applications, learning English, finding work, and accessing mental health services, we brought people together through wellbeing activities such as yoga, art therapy, dance, and music. These sessions welcomed 10–30 guests each time, whilst larger community concerts and festivals drew 200–300 people, creating opportunities for connection, friendship, and celebration.

The service also delivered life-changing individual outcomes. In one case, we successfully appealed a Department for Work and Pensions decision to refuse a guest's PIP claim, securing a reversal that resulted in a significant backdated payment and the means to pay for additional support. In another, we helped a guest establish the Ukrainian choir OKSAMYT – now made up of both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians – which has gone on to perform at events across Oxfordshire.

The year wasn't without challenges, such as long waiting times for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and access to mental health services, but the team continued to find creative ways to bridge these gaps. Every connection made, whether through practical support or a shared cultural moment, helped strengthen the foundations for guests to rebuild their lives with confidence and independence.

No Recourse to Public Funds

Our No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) project supports homeless people in Oxfordshire without access to state benefits or housing. Funded by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement and working in partnership with Asylum Welcome, SOHA, and Edge Housing, the service provides tailored support to help clients rebuild their lives, including dignified accommodation, legal advice, and assistance in resolving their immigration status.

Over the year, 26 clients were supported, with six newly housed and seven successfully resolving their immigration status – a significant increase from the previous year. Engagement with health and social care services remained high, with 95% accessing these, and 70% engaging with mental health services.

Client engagement was a particular strength this year. Participants contributed to a council-commissioned focus group, took part in an external project evaluation, and were interviewed by The Big Issue during the financial year, although the article won't be published until next financial year.

An external evaluation published in April 2025 highlighted the project as a cost-effective, dignified, and lasting solution to support people with no recourse, filling a critical gap in housing and support provision.

The service also played a key role in contributing to Oxfordshire's designation as a 'Council of Sanctuary' and is working with local councils and partners to further develop NRPF support. Stronger connections with migration and statutory agencies have helped raise the profile of NRPF needs locally.

Challenges included a difficult legal aid environment, rising mental health needs often beyond the project's scope, and increasingly complex referrals – including individuals posing potential risks to others. Despite this, the team remained committed to balancing support with safety, ensuring that clients received the best possible support within these constraints.

Young People's Supported Accommodation (YPSA)

YPSA provides safe, supported housing for care leavers aged 16–25 across Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire. Each young person referred by Oxfordshire County Council receives their own furnished accommodation and regular visits from a Support Worker, helping them to gain confidence, develop life skills, and prepare for independent living. Support ranges from budgeting, cooking, and maintaining a tenancy, to registering with health services, accessing education or employment, and building healthy relationships.

Over the year, we supported 30 young people – 80% of whom sustained their accommodation – with five young people feeling empowered to move into their own home. Every single client was also supported with accessing health and dental services – a vital step in building stability and self-care. We introduced a Psychologically Informed Environments budget, giving every young person a £100 voucher to personalise their home, and delivered Christmas hampers and gift vouchers to all of the young people.

Whilst we successfully onboarded several new properties this year, sourcing enough one-bedroom homes of an appropriate standard remained difficult. At the same time, we experienced avoidable property damage linked to some young people presenting with more severe or escalating mental health needs, which significantly impacted their ability to maintain their living environments. This increase in the number of young people needing intensive support prompted us to implement a new strategy using creative ways to support with living skills, as well as regular property inspections. We have also seen more clients with undiagnosed neurodivergence and difficulties maintaining healthy relationships, which in some cases has further affected tenancy sustainment. We'll continue evolving our approach in response to these emerging needs, building on what works and finding new ways to give every young person the strongest possible start in their first home.

Milton Keynes

Although our services across Milton Keynes span different specialisms – housing, mental health, and independent living – they faced many of the same pressures. Rising complexity, financial hardship, and stretched local systems meant people often arrived with urgent and overlapping needs. Whether helping someone keep their home, manage their mental health, or take control of their own care, each service

worked in its own way towards the same goal: making stability and independence possible, whatever someone's starting point.

Milton Keynes Integrated Floating Support

Our Integrated Floating Support Service helps single adults with a history of rough sleeping, or at risk of it, to find and maintain settled housing and improve their wellbeing. Combining elements of our Housing First and Next Steps models, we provide tailored, practical, and emotional support through strengths-based, trauma-informed plans. Over the last financial year, the service supported 208 clients. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with 94% rating their support as excellent or good. Around 80% of clients reported improvements in managing their tenancy and mental health, and 85% saw progress in managing their physical health. Additionally, 68% of clients are working towards reducing alcohol or drug use.

A key challenge this year has been delays with Universal Credit for some clients placed in private rented accommodation, leading to rent arrears. However, our team actively supported clients to manage these challenges, reducing the risk of eviction.

In addition, the service saw a rise in clients with complex backgrounds, including those with offending histories and sexual offences. The team met these challenges with skill and dedication, providing tailored support to address the diverse and complex needs presented.

Personal Story: "I Didn't See a Future – But Now I Do" – Jodey's Story

Looking back, I was very sporty as a child. I ran track and field for Milton Keynes Athletics club and represented my school teams. I also used to love playing for various football clubs in Wolverton, Stoney Stratford, and Newport Pagnell.

But everything changed in 2020. I became homeless, and that was just the beginning of a dark time. While I was living on the streets, I was the victim of a hit-and-run accident. I still live with multiple long-term injuries from that day. After the accident, I found myself being moved from one hotel to another by the council. It was overwhelming – I had just come out of the hospital, and instead of recovering, I was being shuffled from place to place. At one of those hotels, I was even jumped.

In the space of just two weeks, I lost my home, I was seriously injured in a hit-and-run, and I was attacked while trying to rest and recover. That's when Connection Support stepped in. They found me in 2022, still living in a hotel, and that was the turning point. Since then, they've made a huge difference in my life and have supported me every step of the way.

They helped me find a stable place to live, somewhere I could finally call home. After years of feeling like I was stuck in survival mode, I had a roof over my head and someone to help me get things in order. Because of my accident, my memory has been affected significantly. My caseworker has supported me

with keeping track of appointments, bills, rent payments – just everyday things that became really difficult to manage. Their support helped me rebuild my life, piece by piece.

My injuries are still a concern today, as I am still going through a lot of medical tests and treatments to this day. But mentally and emotionally, I'm in a completely different place. My mental health has improved a lot. I've cut down on alcohol and started making better choices for myself.

The encouragement I've had from my caseworkers has made a huge difference. They helped me rebuild my confidence. A few years ago, I couldn't see a future for myself. Now? I'm part of the Brighter Futures

group with Connection Support, their client advisory board. I'm even thinking about starting an accounting course soon. I try to get out every day, meet new people, and stay active in my community.

What I'm most proud of? Honestly, the fact that I'm still here. I went through so much in such a short amount of time, and I survived it. I've paid off my rent arrears, and I'm happy to have a little bit of extra money coming in. I can now prioritise my other arrears, and I'm so proud of the fact that I'm so close to getting permanent housing. I never thought I'd be in this position – feeling hopeful, proud, and looking forward to the future. But here I am.

Mental Health Floating Support

Our Mental Health Floating Support Service provides flexible, housing-related support to help clients with mental health needs avoid homelessness or maintain their tenancy and independence. Support is offered in clients' homes or communities, working closely with statutory and voluntary partners. The service also includes 'Windrush', independent supported accommodation for clients with Autism.

This year, we accepted 104 referrals. Several clients who initially faced eviction due to challenges understanding housing procedures were supported to successfully challenge decisions, resulting in permanent accommodation and no longer being at risk of homelessness.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges we faced this year was the time it took to build trust with clients who may have had negative experiences with services in the past. This is why our approach focuses on meeting clients where they are – whether in their home or out in the community – and adapting support to their individual circumstances. We work alongside other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide joined-up, practical help, from sustaining tenancies and resolving repairs to managing money, benefits, and debt, as well as supporting clients to explore education, training, and employment opportunities, and connect with their local community.

Dissatisfaction with temporary accommodation – particularly within the private landlord sector – and financial hardship worsened by low Universal Credit payments continued to compound these pressures. But even so, our flexible, consistent, person-centred presence was key to building the trust needed for clients to feel safe engaging with us, helping them make lasting changes.

Direct Payment Support Service

Our Direct Payment Support Service empowers adults with disabilities and families across Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes to take control of their own care. Rather than relying solely on traditional care options, we support people to design personalised arrangements that reflect their lifestyles – whether that's employing a trusted carer, attending social activities, or simply accessing the community on their own terms.

This year, demand for the service surged well beyond expectations. Over 3,000 enquiries to our Direct Payment Helpline were responded to within two working days. We supported 291 adults with disabilities and parents of disabled children to take ownership of their care arrangements by becoming employers, offering them the freedom to recruit and manage personal assistants in ways that best suit their lives. In parallel, our Payroll Service provided monthly support to 746 personal assistants and processed over 1,300 payslips on behalf of employers. Our Holding Account service also continued to grow, with 171 users supported and more than 6,500 payments made every month on their behalf.

Beyond day-to-day delivery, the service played a valuable role in system learning and collaboration. We delivered training for local social work teams, co-produced resources through the Milton Keynes Direct Payment Users Group, and hosted online workshops and networking sessions for adults with disabilities

and families. We were also proud to be finalists in the Milton Keynes Inspiration Awards – a moment of recognition for the team's continued dedication to supporting people with disabilities to live independently and on their own terms.

However, this year's rapid growth also brought significant pressure. A 25% increase in Payroll users and a 29% rise in Holding Account activity have placed strain on staff capacity, making it increasingly difficult to accommodate demand. We've also seen a notable increase in complex mental health needs, requiring more flexible and responsive support to prevent care arrangements from breaking down when needs fluctuate. This work is a clear example of how our strategy is coming to life – helping people prevent crisis, retain independence, and shape the support that works best for them.

Buckinghamshire

Across Buckinghamshire, our work spans all five of our specialisms – homelessness and housing, mental health, family support, young people, and refugee resettlement - with this section highlighting a number of those services. This year brought rising demand and growing complexity, but our teams continued to achieve strong outcomes: people sustained tenancies, families found stability, and young people took steps towards independence. The year also marked a period of growth, as we began delivering one of our largest services to date.

Across the county, our homelessness and housing services give people safety, stability, and the chance to move forward. Each service is shaped around timely, person-centred support – helping people to overcome crisis, rebuild confidence, and take steps towards long-term independence.

Bearbrook Place

At the start of the financial year, we began delivering one of our largest accommodation services, Bearbrook Place. Able to house 36 residents across two wings, Bearbrook Place offers supported accommodation for single people aged 16 to 55 who are homeless or at risk of becoming so. The service provides holistic, person-centred support, helping residents build skills and confidence to move towards independent living.

In its first year, Bearbrook supported 50 clients and received 151 referrals. Whilst we couldn't accept all referrals, we're proud that 89% of the people we supported saw an improvement in their relationships, 98% registered with a local GP, and 98% created personalised support plans within their first four weeks. Additionally, 86% successfully registered with social housing, and seven clients moved on to independent living.

Taking over the service from another provider presented challenges, but our team worked diligently to ensure a smooth handover that maintained stability for existing residents. The strong relationships between clients and staff were evident during our launch event, where clients actively contributed through crafts, performances, and sharing their lived experience of homelessness.

Building renovations reflected our commitment to creating a psychologically informed environment. Residents and staff collaborated closely on decisions about colours, artwork, and décor, helping transform the space into a welcoming home that residents feel proud of.

The service received commendations from statutory agencies and voluntary sector partners alike. High-profile visits from the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, and Laura Kyrke-Smith, MP for Aylesbury, highlighted the value and impact of the support offered at Bearbrook.

However, the year also presented significant challenges. Transitioning from a previous provider required quick adaptation to different practices, whilst working to fully understand residents' risk information, including any urgent mental health needs. Some residents also reported feeling stuck with limited move-on options. To support positive change, staff employed motivational interviewing and personalised goal-setting, helping to empower residents, resulting in seven successful move-ons.

Another challenge we encountered was the increase in the complexity of needs. Residents often presented with low mental health, substance misuse, and neurodiversity concerns such as suspected ADHD – issues compounded by long waits for assessments and limited support options. The team responded with determination and flexibility, tailoring support to individual needs and working closely with residents to overcome barriers. Their efforts have been crucial in helping residents make meaningful strides towards stability, despite the difficulties posed by these complex and intersecting challenges.

Perhaps one of the most powerful reflections of life at Bearbrook comes directly from a resident. This poem captures the resilience, diversity, and community spirit of those who call it home:

> "We live in a place called Bearbrook,
> It's a place that's heaven sent, but doesn't get a double look,
> For many of us it's taken us from the street,
> Out of the cold, rain, snow and sleet,
> It's not society's fault, we don't get a second look, as we all get judged before you read the book.
> We are all different to most,
> But get to know us if you are in need, as we are excellent hosts,
> Then you have the staff, our friends,
> Who dedicate their time to help us get on the mend,
> Not one of us in our community are the same,
> But the connection and love we share is real and not a game.
> People look at us as down and outs,
> But could you sleep on the pavements, beg for food and still not pout,
> We are all survivors of every kind of scenario,
> Tear us down and we just rebuild like Meccano,
> Or just need a bit of help to get you off the floor.
> Come see Bearbrook Community and staff,
> Make some friends, get the ball rolling and have a laugh,
> We are all unique with similar tales to tell,
> All of us will be there for you as you leave the gates of hell,
> So put on your biggest smile, because you have walked through the door and started your own personal mile."

Rough Sleeper Outreach Buckinghamshire

As part of the Rough Sleeper Initiative, our Outreach team aims to reduce rough sleeping across Buckinghamshire. Through intensive outreach to people who find themselves street homeless, and a limited number of short-term emergency accommodation places, we're able to support people in moving into more stable housing.

Over the year, the service received 814 referrals from various sources, including the public, partners, and agencies reporting possible rough sleepers. We were able to accept 98% of these referrals for an outreach visit. During these visits, some individuals could not be located, chose not to engage, or were found not to be sleeping rough, meaning the team successfully verified and engaged 252 people confirmed to be sleeping outside.

Of these, 90 were accommodated in emergency housing – a reflection of the small number of beds we have available – whilst others were supported in different ways, from applying for benefits and managing money to accessing healthcare, drug and alcohol services, and pathways into training or employment. Many were also helped to find and sustain longer-term accommodation, ensuring support extended well beyond immediate crisis intervention.

The service faced challenges throughout the year, such as reduced funding, staff losses, and an increase in clients with more complex needs. But despite this, the team's commitment ensured continued vital support for some of the county's most at-risk individuals.

One Recovery Bucks

ORB provides housing-related support for people over 18 who are doing well in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction, having abstained for at least three months. Pre-tenancy support is provided

alongside guidance on sustaining a tenancy, budgeting, accessing benefits, paying bills, and finding training or employment opportunities. Across the county, 20 dedicated ORB flats offer a safe and stable place to live while people focus on their recovery.

In addition to the residents in the flats, 26 people accessed housing advice through drop-ins with the substance misuse team. One client, a parent of two young children, successfully moved from an ORB flat into a social housing property – a major milestone in her recovery. Having completed tenancy sustainment training, remained abstinent, and fully engaged with support to manage risks and triggers, she shared that she now feels confident managing her tenancy and is excited to return to work.

The year wasn't without its challenges. In a small number of cases, property damage by residents caused delays for others waiting to move in, whilst legal backlogs slowed the eviction process. There was also a rise in clients presenting with significant mental health needs, adding to the complexity of support. Yet despite these additional pressures, the team stayed adaptable and solution-focused, keeping people's recovery journeys moving forward.

Personal Story: Facing Life Instead of Running from It – Flo's Story

Growing up, life was good. I had a happy childhood, but when I lost my stepdad at the age of 12, everything changed. That loss hit me hard – it affected my confidence, my education, and my perspective on the world. I didn't realise it then, but that grief planted a seed that would shape a lot of the struggles I'd face in years to come.

Later on in my life, I ended up in a very abusive and controlling relationship – I was getting beaten up regularly and felt completely trapped. There was no way out. I tried everything, including getting arrested, just to escape. I found myself in and out of prison, constantly on the run from a situation I didn't know how to change. Eventually, I ended up homeless, living on the streets of London.

At one point, I got so sick I ended up in the hospital with pneumonia. My local borough moved me temporarily to Wycombe, and I spent a month in the hospital recovering. It was during that time that I realised I was ready to address my substance misuse. I needed a fresh start, and Wycombe gave me that change of scenery I so desperately needed.

When I first came to Connection Support, I was vulnerable, withdrawn, and incredibly lonely. I didn't recognise myself anymore. But from day one, the support I received was honest, real, and consistent. My Support Worker helped me believe in myself again. She worked with me, not against me. She didn't give up on me. That's a big part of why I'm still here today.

She helped me maintain my tenancy, checked in on me regularly, and gave me the space to be open and rebuild my trust. Because of that support, my life is a lot better now. I'm more optimistic about the future and not so afraid to face each day and the challenges it brings. I'm proud to be part of the solution now, instead of feeling like the problem.

These days, I'm working hard on becoming a better version of myself – staying positive and not being so hard on myself. I know I still have a long way to go, but I also know I've come so far. I'm proud of the fact that I'm facing life now instead of running from it.

I want to thank Patricia and Rachel - they've had the biggest impact on me during my time with Connection Support. They're truly valuable and respected individuals. Because of them, I feel more able to deal with life.

RESET

RESET supports ex-offenders to secure safe housing and make positive life choices that reduce their risk of reoffending. This year, we supported 58 male ex-offenders into suitable housing and helped 100% of them maximise their income through benefits or employment. We also worked with 38 women, 42% of whom successfully moved into safe, secure accommodation. For some, this progress opened doors to new opportunities – including training and employment – which can be difficult for our clients to prioritise when they're facing complex challenges.

We work alongside clients not only to find accommodation and sustain tenancies, but also to address wider needs such as health, recovery, skills, and employment. This wrap-around support ensures people have the stability and resources to rebuild their lives. One man's journey took him through every stage of our service: from living in a tent and using drugs daily, to finding safety in an emergency bed, moving into recovery housing, re-entering work, and sustaining his tenancy with ongoing recovery support.

Finding appropriate and affordable housing in Buckinghamshire remains challenging, and clients are increasingly presenting with multiple, co-occurring needs such as addiction and mental ill-health. There is also a growing demand from people on bail seeking support, particularly women, who we can accommodate more easily than men. Despite these pressures, our presence on the Accommodation Board at HMP Bullingdon and the CAS3 Board for Thames Valley is improving our ability to intervene early, enhancing continuity of support, and strengthening our partnerships – giving clients the best possible chance of building a stable, independent future.

Our mental health services provide flexible, housing-related support that helps people avoid crisis and build the confidence to live independently. Whether through short-term, preventative work or more intensive wrap-around support, they are shaped around the principle that recovery is possible when people feel listened to, understood, and supported in their housing and wellbeing needs.

SafeHaven+

Delivered in partnership with Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, Oasis Partnership, and Adult Mental Health Teams, SafeHaven+ provides support to adults with mental health issues and complex needs, aiming to prevent crisis, avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, and improve overall wellbeing. Connection Support's role is to provide intensive housing-related support as part of this wraparound approach.

Over the course of the year, 50 clients were referred to the service, with 12 people in acute mental health crisis supported into long-term accommodation. For many, SafeHaven+ was a turning point – helping people navigate both the housing system and the challenges of managing their mental health. One client shared that the support they received not only secured them a home suited to their needs, but also gave

them the strength to keep going during an incredibly difficult time. In feedback provided to the team, the client mentioned how they felt listened to, supported beyond expectations, and felt as though they now had a future to look forward to.

The year brought its challenges, including difficulties in securing guarantors for clients entering the private rented sector and navigating gaps in statutory service provision. Some clients faced additional barriers due to the complexity of their needs, such as living with both a mental health condition and a personality disorder, or undiagnosed neurodiversity that made engagement with services more difficult. By offering a safe space to turn to in moments of crisis and the practical support to rebuild, SafeHaven+ helped people take back control of their housing and mental health – preventing the need for repeated crisis interventions and giving them the stability to plan for the future.

Prevention Matters

Prevention Matters supports people over 18 who are finding it hard to stay independent – whether that's due to illness, mobility issues, loneliness, anxiety, or a loss of confidence. Through short-term, tailored support, the service helps people reconnect with their community, take part in activities, and access the right services to maintain their independence long after support ends.

This year, we received 786 referrals to the service, and we were able to help 685 people who were eligible to receive one-to-one support from our team. The remaining referrals were signposted to other services better suited to their needs, ensuring everyone was supported to find the right help. Many clients were able to remain independent in their homes, re-engage with their communities, and access help with everyday needs – from organising transport to completing important forms. The team worked alongside clients facing significant mental health needs and difficulties accessing other support, ensuring no one had to navigate these challenges alone.

Demand for the service remains high, but the team continues to adapt – strengthening community links and providing consistent, person-centred support so people have the tools, confidence, and connections they need to live life on their own terms.

Over the years, we've seen how early intervention can transform outcomes not just for individuals, but for families too – stepping in at the right time can prevent crises from happening, giving children a more stable foundation to grow from. In Buckinghamshire, this takes place through Thrive, our dedicated family support service. Like all our work, Thrive is built on person-centred support, but what makes it so dynamic is how it is commissioned. Funded by The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Charitable Foundation, Thrive has the freedom and flexibility to adapt to each family's circumstances – ensuring no family is left without access to support and that help lasts as long as it's needed.

Thrive

Thrive supports families across Buckinghamshire, tailoring help to each household's needs – from substance dependency and domestic abuse to learning difficulties, social exclusion, and lack of parenting skills. When the service first began, it operated in select areas of Aylesbury and High Wycombe, but now it covers the entire county, so no family is left without access to support. By working alongside 199 families this year, Thrive reached 531 children, helping to build skills, confidence, and parental wellbeing so children can grow up in a more stable, positive environment.

Ten of the families we supported were struggling financially due to the cost of living crisis, and we were able to secure grants totalling £6,600 to help with urgent needs such as rent arrears and utility debts.

We're also grateful to have received a further £2,000 from Heart of Bucks, which enabled us to host parties during school holidays. Across four events, 81 families enjoyed the chance to come together, connect, and celebrate in a relaxed setting.

Strong partnerships with local schools have been integral to Thrive's success, with one school sharing: *"Thrive are fantastic – we have seen more of an impact with our families who are supported by Thrive than any other services!"* Alongside collaborations with services like Early Autism Support, which worked with 28 families during the year, Thrive has grown its network from just six to 22 partner agencies since it began.

This growth has come during a period of rising need – with more children referred who have diagnosed or undiagnosed special educational needs, and fewer local services available to meet those needs. These gaps in provision make Thrive's role even more vital, ensuring families have consistent, tailored support when it matters most. With our expanded reach and strong partnerships, Thrive is well-placed to continue intervening earlier to create lasting change for future generations.

Our Strategy

This year marks the launch of our new three-year organisational strategy focused on putting prevention first. Whether it's due to homelessness or poor mental health, the number of people experiencing a crisis is on the rise, and the origins of these crises often stem from childhood. We know that the human and financial cost of the revolving door is intolerable and unnecessary. That's why we're taking the battle against homelessness and poor mental health to its source. We consulted with clients, staff, and volunteers to ensure our focus stays on the people we support and that we remain committed to our mission of seeing everyone in our community safely and sustainably housed and ensuring they can live as independently as possible.

Our vision for 2027 is to be a thought-leader in the prevention of homelessness and mental ill-health, spearheading innovative services that prevent crises from happening, whilst being there to offer client-centred support if they do. We know that demand for support with homelessness and mental health is increasing all the time, and our client referrals are becoming even more complex, so over the next three years, our core work will still meet the current need that we see around us. However, as we move forward, we'll ensure that each of the crisis services we provide has a preventative approach woven in, enabling people to build resilience to avoid future emergencies so that they don't return through a revolving door.

Our passion to increase the positive impact we have on people's lives cannot be delivered without additional financial resources, so we'll be focusing more of our efforts on generating fundraised income. Whilst our core work will still be to deliver statutory services, we'll use this additional fundraised income to design innovative projects that meet the needs in society that existing services aren't currently able to meet. We'll strive to identify new opportunities so that we can avoid turning people away when their work is nearly finished. We'll be here to provide needs-based, not time-based support.

Our team are at the core of everything we do – without them, our support services would cease to exist. It's because of their expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment to helping people that we're able to support our clients achieve incredible milestones. That's why we're investing in our staff in terms of training, remuneration and wellbeing so that we can be an even better employer, building on our success as one of the best charities to work for.

We believe in a future where people are free from crisis, and effective prevention is the key. But for the times when crises do happen, we'll be there to help every step of the way. As part of our Prevention First strategy, we have set new objectives grouped into three key themes. The details of these, alongside the planned activities to achieve them, are presented below.

Achievements and performance against objectives

In the last year, we have taken considerable steps towards our three key themes:

1. Quality service delivery

We're dedicated to improving the lives of the people we support, and so to continue meeting the needs of our clients, we're developing new ways to ensure we're always providing the highest level of quality.

What we achieved this financial year:

- A huge effort has gone into implementing a new client management system to improve processes and collect meaningful management information to support future funding. This involved extensive data collection and review across all our services, strong collaboration between teams, and key insights from a dedicated workshop. The first pilot is now ready to launch, with a full rollout planned in 2025 - 2026.

- We've developed and successfully piloted our bespoke quality assurance system, built on a strong framework that drives high standards across all our services. At the heart of this approach are learning reviews, used to celebrate success and highlight areas for continuous improvement. Taking a 360-degree view, we go beyond reviewing case files by actively involving staff, partners, and clients in the feedback process.

- This year, we've grown the number of properties we manage by 16% and the units we manage by 47%. Managing these properties enables us to provide accommodation that's client-centred and psychologically informed - meaning it's designed with an understanding of residents' mental and emotional needs. This approach creates a supportive, safe environment that helps reduce stress and build stability, with trained staff and services focused on healing and wellbeing, not just housing.

2. Prevention is better than cure

With a renewed focus on prevention, we're seeking opportunities to innovate in the gaps in existing service provision and fundraise for new services so that we can help more clients pave the way to a crisis-free future.

What we achieved this financial year:

- **Focus on prevention**
    - We analysed data from our services and reviewed existing prevention approaches to start developing our Theory of Change. It's been fantastic to see such enthusiastic engagement from clients, staff, and volunteers during the consultation on the draft version. The Theory of Change is now in its final stages of development, and we're working on communication materials to help bring it to life for everyone.

- **Innovate in the gaps in provision**
  - We secured fundraising income to support people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.
  - We successfully repurposed our property in High Wycombe to provide accommodation for formerly rough sleeping NRPF clients in Buckinghamshire.
  - We secured grant funding to deliver our Tenancy Ready training courses for clients across both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.
  - Our Thrive service, which works to prevent the next generation of rough sleepers by supporting families in Buckinghamshire, has continued to grow this year. We have been exploring opportunities to replicate this model in other regions.

- **Compelling communication**
  - We've steadily built momentum throughout the year to strengthen our reputation as a thought leader in preventing homelessness and mental ill-health. This has included engaging with local MPs, attending high-profile events, increasing our presence in radio and press, securing TV coverage, and being approached by influential stakeholders.
  - We successfully secured a workshop slot at the Homeless Link Conference, where we had the opportunity to showcase our Thrive service in Buckinghamshire - a great platform to highlight the impactful preventative work we're doing.
  - We ran two campaigns in 2024: a Refugee Resettlement awareness campaign in June and a Christmas fundraising campaign in December.
  - We have developed a clear stakeholder map that helps us identify and visualise the key individuals and groups we want to engage with for different campaigns and projects. This tool enables us to plan our communications more strategically, ensuring we reach the right people with the right messages to build stronger relationships and maximise our impact.
  - To empower staff as active ambassadors of our work, we've delivered social media training to both staff and Board members, along with brand training during our bi-
  - monthly all-staff meetings. We've also introduced quarterly branding workshops to help staff understand the importance of consistently representing and upholding our brand.
  - We've developed a strong portfolio of client stories to more boldly highlight the issues faced by the people we support. By amplifying their voices, we're using real-life experiences as powerful evidence to demonstrate the ongoing need for services like ours.

3. People, partnership, and culture

Our people make us who we are, so we're doubling down on our efforts to be an ever-improving employer and partner.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We approved a 5% annual salary increase for all staff – maintaining our status as a Living Wage Employer, and reaffirming our commitment to pay as generously as we can afford to.
- We continued to work with Best Companies to deliver our third staff engagement survey. Our response rate rose to 81%, and the insights we gained have helped us develop an action plan to

- tackle our key focus areas. We were also thrilled to be named as the 7th best charity to work for in the UK in their league tables.
- We conducted a remuneration benchmarking review to establish how we compare to our peers.
- We reviewed our employee benefits provider and, based on staff feedback and market research, selected and implemented a new provider to enhance the range and quality of benefits available to all employees, ensuring better value and improved support for staff wellbeing.
- We strengthened our champions networks and monitored our EDEI data against our initial benchmark to track our progress. We also developed and launched a new EDEI strategy, which included organising events such as attending Oxford Pride and celebrating International Women's Day. In addition, we launched a new wellbeing strategy, delivered through a staff wellbeing festival, training and awareness sessions, and a calendar of events such as World Menopause Day and Neurodiversity Week.
- In January 2025, we launched our Client Advisory Board, 'Brighter Futures', made up of 10 participants supported by staff, Trustees, and client involvement champions. The Board connects with our Senior Leadership Team to help shape the organisation's direction through co-production. Members meet every other month, take part in activities between meetings, and commit for a year to allow new clients to get involved in the future.
- We created an internal development group which meets quarterly to strengthen links between our marketing, fundraising, and operations teams.
- To support the ongoing growth and positive development of our organisational culture, we engaged Actuate Global to conduct psychometric assessments for all staff, providing valuable insights into current team dynamics.

Plans for the future, future direction of the charity, and likely future developments

1. Quality service delivery

Key activities planned for the next financial year are:

- We are preparing to roll out our new client management system, starting with pilot programmes across several services. These pilots will help us refine our understanding of the system, and manage the transition effectively with minimal disruption to teams and service delivery. To support staff, we will offer training sessions, and as the rollout continues, we will work closely with managers in planning and leading the transition within their teams.

- We will be fine-tuning our quality assurance framework to align with our new client management system, ready for a full rollout across the organisation.

2. Prevention is better than cure

Key activities planned for the next financial year are:

- **Focus on prevention**
  - We will continue to deliver our core services with our How We Work principles embedded throughout. These will be formally outlined in a new internal framework launching later this year, designed to ensure a consistent, prevention-first approach across all teams.

- **Innovate in the gaps in provision**
    - We will expand our Fundraising team, which – along with our improved monitoring processes and data systems – will strengthen capacity to generate income for priorities which fall outside the remit of our statutory services.
    - We will investigate partnerships with organisations that have identified the need for us to complement their work, such as preventing homelessness among young people and ex-offenders.
- **Compelling communication**
    - We will continue to strengthen our reputation as a leader in preventing homelessness and mental ill-health by sharing our Theory of Change with key stakeholders.
    - We will strengthen our collaboration with the fundraising team to engage key stakeholders through tailored communications and focused campaigns, supporting more effective fundraising outcomes.
    - We will work closely with the fundraising team to raise our public profile by organising and promoting fundraising events that not only generate vital income but also increase awareness of our work and strengthen our connections with the wider community.
    - We will seek out national and local awards to enter to raise awareness of the quality and impact of our work.

3. People, partnership, and culture

Key activities planned for the next financial year are:

- We will carry out a comprehensive review of our pay scales, undertake a full consultation process, and implement a new remuneration approach.

- We will progress our training and development offer, including opportunities such as mentoring, secondments, job shadowing, and improved induction knowledge sharing. We will formalise these processes and establish best practice to ensure they are accessible and consistently delivered across the organisation.

- We will continue to invest in learning and development through the creation and implementation of a Performance Management and Development model. This will include reviewing personal development plans to identify training needs at both the organisational and individual levels. We will gather feedback throughout the process and adapt the training as needed. In addition, we will introduce organisation-wide competency training to replace the annual appraisal process and roll out our new competency model.

- We will implement projects to strengthen our clients' voices, volunteering, and peer mentoring by leading a series of activities, workshops, and forums to ensure clients are actively involved in shaping our services. We will also develop peer mentoring in Buckinghamshire and demonstrate its positive impact. Additionally, we will promote the value of volunteers internally through training and information sessions to encourage wider understanding and engagement.

- We will actively engage in both formal and informal partnership structures at local and national levels, exploring opportunities to tender for work collaboratively. We will attend partnership

meetings to coordinate activities in the best interests of our target client groups and take a proactive leadership role within the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance, the newly formed Buckinghamshire Homeless Partnership, and the revived Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership. Additionally, we will support the creation of new partnerships where connections do not yet exist, ensuring we continue to strengthen our reach and impact.

- We will prioritise staff wellbeing after serious incidents by implementing an emotional support system for individuals and teams, offering reflective sessions and face-to-face counselling.

- We will map out clear career progression pathways into management at Connection Support, outlining the core training required at each stage. This framework will be embedded into our business-as-usual practices to ensure consistent development and support for emerging leaders across the organisation.

- We will develop a comprehensive people strategy that builds on our employee experience, wellbeing, learning and development, and diversity and inclusion initiatives. This strategy will also incorporate innovative approaches to recruitment and retention.

- We will monitor EDEI data against our initial benchmark to track progress and continue advancing our diversity and inclusion efforts.

Structure, Governance and Management

Connection Support is a charitable company, limited by guarantee. It is governed by its Articles of Association, dated 26 May 1995.

The Trustee Board is responsible for the governance of the charity. The Trustee Board delegate the day-to-day management of the charity to Chris Keating, the Chief Executive Officer, who is supported by Amy Delisser, Deputy CEO, Paul Prosser, Operations Director, Dipen Parekh, Business Services Director, and Carol Steel, Finance Director.

Each director has taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as a director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information. So far as each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the company's auditors are unaware.

The Board of Trustees

Connection Support is governed by a Board of unpaid Trustees who meet with the staff leadership team every two months. The Board delegates monitoring of financial matters to a Finance Sub-committee, which meets once a quarter, and delivery of organisational development initiatives to a Development Sub-committee, which meets every two months. There is also a Remuneration Committee that meets annually, and a Board Appointments Committee that meets every 6 months. Other committees can be formed on a task-focused basis.

Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, one third of Board members, or if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one third, shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting each year. Any Trustee appointed between Annual General Meetings shall only retain office until the next Annual General Meeting and then shall be eligible for re-election. The Trustees who served the charity during the financial year, alongside Trustees who have recently been appointed, can be viewed on the previous page. During this financial year, Richard Allman continued as Chair but had announced his intention to retire. To support succession planning, Emma Duke was appointed as Co-Chair.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The Board aims to ensure that a broad range of experience is represented by Trustees, particularly in health, housing, social care, business and finance. A skills audit of Board members is conducted every two years to inform recruitment and succession planning. Detailed information is provided to prospective Trustees, including governing documents, financial accounts, Charity Commission guidance on the responsibilities of Trustees and information about the charity's services. Applicants are invited to an informal discussion with the CEO followed by a formal interview with two Board Members and the CEO. The interview covers the responsibilities of Trustees, in line with Charity Commission guidance and the Charity Code of Governance. References are taken prior to full Board approval of appointment.

Trustees' Induction and Training

New Trustees are provided with information about the charity including its strategy, plans, organisational structure, finances and risk register. New Trustees meet with the CEO for a full briefing on the charity's work and to agree areas of more specific input. Newly appointed Trustees are supported by a mentor from the Board during their induction period. Training opportunities are circulated to Board members as they arise.

Charitable Objectives

The Charitable Objectives of Connection Support are to relieve poverty, sickness and distress in people over the age of 16 and living, or about to live, in local authority, housing association or private accommodation (particularly but not exclusively those who have been in care or have been homeless, those who suffer from mental health problems and those with previous or current addiction to drugs or alcohol) through the provision of advice and advocacy services, counselling support and whatever charitable means the Trustees shall decide.

Statement of Public Benefit

The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of Connection Support, as set out in this report, cover the duty of showing public benefit in line with that guidance. Our principal public benefit is to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence. This includes people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, families, young people, refugees, people who have been homeless, older people, and people with an offending background. People who receive support must need this support to enable them to live independently. There is no charge for this support.

Fundraising

Connection Support is registered with the Fundraising Regulator, and our fundraising activities comply with the standards set out in the Code of Fundraising Practice. Our fundraising is open, honest, and respectful, and we consider the needs of any donor who may be in vulnerable circumstances or who may need extra support to make an informed decision. We did not receive any complaints related to fundraising during this period.

The charity is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the year. We are delighted to have raised over £863,000 in charitable income from local and national trusts and foundations, individual donors, and local organisations. Fundraised income is used to run projects and activities that would not otherwise exist, such as our No Recourse to Public Funds service, which supports people experiencing homelessness who are not entitled to state-funded benefits, and our Thrive service for families in Buckinghamshire.

Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As part of our ongoing commitment to being a truly inclusive organisation, we have implemented an EDEI Development Plan. This plan is reviewed quarterly and has resulted in the creation of ongoing commitments, such as identifying regular training, encouraging client involvement to shape our work, and setting up networks to support staff needs. We aim to ensure that all our staff, clients, and volunteers feel welcomed and supported, and feel free to be their authentic selves.

Environment

Connection Support recognises that our work has an impact on the local, regional, and global environment. We are committed to continuously improving our environmental performance by prioritising sustainability, energy efficiency, and making the most effective use of resources.

Connection Support's Environment and Sustainability Champions lead a range of initiatives designed to reduce the impact of our work upon the environment.

Risk Management

Connection Support operates a detailed risk register, which identifies risks and mitigations in the following categories: governance, external, regulatory and compliance, financial, and operational. The CEO and Senior Leadership Team review the register on a bi-monthly basis, assessing the risks that need to be mitigated most urgently, and defining measures to counter these. This is submitted to the Trustees at each Board meeting. Working this way, we are proactively building a culture of transparency around risk management.

The Trustees have identified the key organisational risks facing Connection Support, and strategies to manage these risks, as below:

Nature of risk	**Risk management strategy**
Reduced funding available for activities, due to economic environment	- Diversification of income streams through increased provision of Supported Accommodation and Fundraising activities. - Rolling schedule to assess potential new contracts and to evaluate prospective risks to existing services.
Societal need far outweighs service capacity	- Partnership with other charities and service providers to maximise cost efficiency around service-delivery. - Communication with local authorities and charitable funders to foster a collective response to community needs. - Focus on quality and on ensuring our work meets the highest standards of service.
Increasing complexity of client needs, including mental health needs in services which are not funded to support mental health specialists	- Specialist training package in place for all staff, with all employees given access to training. - Supportive line management to manage client caseload, including regular one-to-one supervisions and Reflective Practice sessions. - Employee wellbeing initiatives to support skills' retention. - Dialogue with funders around the increasing volume and complexity of Connection Support's client base.

Reserves Policy

It is the policy of Connection Support to maintain free unrestricted reserves (that is, unrestricted reserves not invested in fixed assets or designated for specific purposes) at a target level which can finance at least four months' full payroll and operational costs.

At 31 March 2025, the target operating reserve equated to £2,640k. This has been established as the level which provides Connection Support with the financial stability to deliver the organisation's core activities, without compromising the principle that the income received will be used to support the charitable objectives of the organisation wherever possible.

Whilst this reserves policy is designed primarily to satisfy our charitable objectives, the level of four months' reserves additionally provides a window for the Senior Leadership Team to manage cashflow issues, in the event of delays receiving contract or rental income due.

As an additional requirement, Connection Support ensures that unrestricted reserves are maintained at a level which can support the winding up of the organisation in a solvent manner, should this scenario occur. Winding up costs are currently calculated to be £2,100k. These are calculated on a standalone basis, and not in addition to the operating reserve.

Investment Policy

Connection Support aims to ensure that it maintains its free reserves in a way which ensures that (i) funds are accessible to support the liquidity of the organisation on a day-to-day basis, whilst also (ii) upholding the value of the organisational balance sheet against rising inflation in the longer term.

To achieve this, the Trustees have established a multipronged approach:

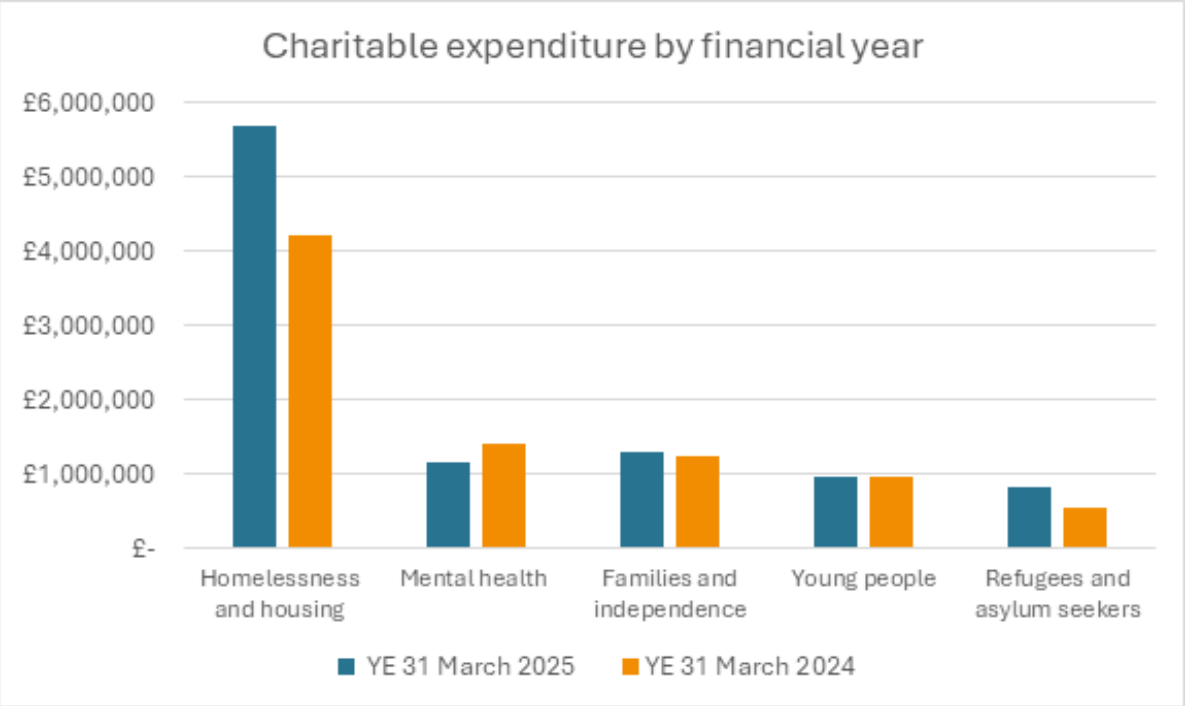
- The Trustees have planned investment of up to £250,000 per year into organisational development. This has proved successful, yielding a return in diversified income streams and strengthened organisational infrastructure.
- To the extent that reserves are required to support the routine cashflow demands associated with local authority contract funding, funds are held in instant access bank and building society accounts.
- Funds which the Board have set aside to achieve longer term growth, are maintained in interest-bearing bank and building society accounts.

In investing funds, the trustees evaluate the security of the funds, the likely return on investment, plus the social, environmental and ethical impacts of prospective investments. The Finance Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, have sufficient expertise to evaluate investments which fall within the scope of this policy, and review the performance of investments on a quarterly basis.

£239k reserves held in investment funds were sold and transferred to interest-bearing bank accounts during the financial year, in line with this policy.

Financial Review

Connection Support generated a 16.5% increase in charitable income during the year (2025: £10,066k, 2024: £8,624k). This reflects the significant growth of our supported accommodation services, alongside smaller-scale expansion of our services for families, homelessness prevention, and support for refugees and asylum seekers, as illustrated below:



Of total expenditure, 99.4% related to charitable activities, with the balancing 0.6% dedicated to the cost of raising funds.

We were delighted to see a 29% increase in fundraised grants and donations in the year (2025: £863k, 2024: £668k), with funds going to provide essential direct support for our clients, as well as supporting our innovative services working to house rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds, and providing crisis prevention support to families. We anticipate increasing our investment in fundraising activities in the next financial year, in order to fulfil our ambition of expanding this work.

Overall Connection Support is reporting a surplus of £142k for the year. This breaks down as a £48k increase in restricted funds, and a £94k increase in unrestricted and designated funds.

A challenge for Connection Support, as our work continues to grow, is ensuring that free reserves sustain the corresponding level of growth required to remain within the optimal range, ensuring financial stability.

During the year Connection Support transferred furniture, fittings and IT equipment held on the balance sheet from free reserves to designated funds, in order to optimise transparency and support the monitoring of free reserves. As a result, free reserves dropped to £2,267k at the financial year end, but remained within the target range needed to ensure financial stability of £2,100k - £2,640k.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Gravita LLP be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put forward at a General Meeting.

The Trustees report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Ms Emma Duke, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date: 1 December 2025

Connection Support

Statement of Trustee's Responsibilities

For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Connection Support for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and 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.

Connection Support

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of Connection Support

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Connection Support (the 'Charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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 Charity'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 other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. 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.

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 course of 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 our audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the Trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the Trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate 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 prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustees' responsibilities, the Trustees, who are also the directors of the Charity for the purpose of company law, 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 Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

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

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management, and from our knowledge and experience;
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence where applicable; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the Charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and
- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reviewing relevant correspondence.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

Independent Auditor's Report (continued)

To the Members of Connection Support

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the 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.



Katherine Wilkes BSc FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Gravita Audit Oxford LLP, Statutory Auditor
Chartered Accountants
First Floor, Park Central
40-41 Park End Street
Oxford
OX1 1JD
Date: ...8/12/25.....

Connection Support

Statement of Financial Activities
Including Income and Expenditure Account

For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	18,447	844,941	863,388	10,320	658,055	668,375
Charitable activities	4	9,141,358	60,781	9,202,139	7,894,779	61,341	7,956,120
Investments	5	15,492	-	15,492	16,502	-	16,502
Total income		9,175,297	905,722	10,081,019	7,921,601	719,396	8,640,997
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	6	57,997	-	57,997	51,208	-	51,208
Charitable activities	7	9,025,176	857,614	9,882,790	7,584,521	741,607	8,326,128
Total expenditure		9,083,173	857,614	9,940,787	7,635,729	741,607	8,377,336
Net gains/(losses) on investments	11	2,205	-	2,205	10,056	-	10,056
Net income and movement in funds		94,329	48,108	142,437	295,928	(22,211)	273,717
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 April 2024		2,755,072	169,107	2,924,179	2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462
Fund balances at 31 March 2025		2,849,401	217,215	3,066,616	2,755,072	169,107	2,924,179

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

Connection Support

Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**13**		793,456		706,399
Current assets					
Stock	**14**	-		3,000	
Debtors	**15**	1,269,960		960,778	
Investments	**16**	-		239,426	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,618,319		1,712,789	
		2,888,279		2,915,993	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**17**	(615,119)		(698,213)	
Net current assets			2,273,160		2,217,780
Total assets less current liabilities			3,066,616		2,924,179
The funds of the Charity					
Restricted income funds	**19**		217,215		169,107
Unrestricted funds - general	**20**		2,266,692		2,402,422
Unrestricted funds - Revaluation reserve			130,000		130,000
Unrestricted funds - Designated funds	**20**		452,709		222,650
			3,066,616		2,924,179

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 1 December 2025

Ms Emma Duke

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Company registration number 03072719 (England and Wales)

Connection Support

Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	26		(152,943)		328,962
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(202,335)		(229,098)	
Proceeds from disposal of tangible fixed assets		3,685		-	
Purchase of investments		-		(4,752)	
Proceeds from disposal of investments		241,631		-	
Investment income received		15,492		16,502	
Net cash generated from/(used in) investing activities			58,473		(217,348)
Net cash generated from financing activities			-		-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents			(94,470)		111,614
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			1,712,789		1,601,175
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			1,618,319		1,712,789

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Connection Support is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is The Old School, First Turn, Wolvercote, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 8AH.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity's constitution, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "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 (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The Charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the Charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

The Trustees have not identified any material uncertainties about the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Board of Trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the Charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Income received by the way of grants, donations and gifts is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the Charity, are recognised when the Charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure represents amounts invoiced, including value added tax which cannot be recovered.

Support costs are allocated per service according to the Full Time Equivalent number of staff working on each service.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful economic lives on the following bases:

Buildings	2% straight line
Leasehold improvements	Over the life of the lease
Accommodation furnishings & office equipment	25% reducing balance
Computer Equipment	25% reducing balance

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

When Connection Support furnishes a new unit of supported accommodation, set-up purchases are treated as a single asset and depreciated accordingly. This is intended to maintain consistency of practice with the depreciation on furniture and fittings claimed through Housing Benefit for supported accommodation.

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is credited or charged to income or expenditure.

1.7 Current asset investments

Investments are measured at fair value at the year-end date.

Investments are classified as current when they can be converted into cash within one year. The Charity has either decided to sell the investments within one year or is undecided about the long-term strategy regarding investments.

1.8 Stocks

Stocks represent donated goods. See Note 1.14.

1.9 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.10 Financial instruments

The Charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the Charity's balance sheet when the Charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs.

1 Accounting policies (Continued)

Basic financial liabilities
Basic financial liabilities, including creditors, are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.11 Taxation
The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Irrecoverable VAT
All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended in relation to which it was incurred.

1.12 Retirement benefits
The Charity operates a money purchase (defined contribution) pension scheme. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the income and expenditure account in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the Charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

1.13 Leases
Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to expenditure on a straight-line basis over the period of the lease.

1.14 Donated goods
Donated goods are measured at their fair value. Goods donated for distribution to our clients are valued at the equivalent of the fair market value at the time of receipt and recognised as stock, with the corresponding income recognised within donations. When the stocks are distributed, they are recognised as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Connection Support benefits from the contribution of unpaid general volunteers but has not recognised this in its accounts, owing to the absence of a reliable measurement basis.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the Charity's accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated 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 where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical judgements

The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Fixed Asset Depreciation

Depreciation was calculated based on management's estimate of the useful economic lives of tangible fixed assets. During the year ended 31 March 2025, depreciation totalled £114,380 (2024: £73,186).

Fixed Asset valuation

Residential properties are held at market value, and valuation assessed for impairment/against market movements each year to ensure valuation is appropriate.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Donations and grants						
Donations	18,447	77,817	96,264	10,320	15,078	25,398
Grants to support client living costs and welfare	-	96,487	96,487	-	33,180	33,180
Grants funding the provision of charitable services	-	630,583	630,583	-	560,222	560,222
Grants funding client accommodation	-	40,054	40,054	-	27,075	27,075
Donated goods	-	-	-	-	22,500	22,500
	18,447	844,941	863,388	10,320	658,055	668,375

Donated goods

Gifts in kind consists of donated SIM cards to be distributed to clients.

4 Charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Charitable income: service contracts		
Buckinghamshire County Council	1,514,736	1,621,416
Cherwell District Council	416,163	307,652
Milton Keynes Council	1,143,358	1,413,547
Oxford City Council	949,780	746,367
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	462,123	490,586
Oxfordshire County Council	2,211,655	1,853,090
South Oxfordshire District Council	-	15,129
South Staffs and Shrops Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	61,000	54,212
Thames Valley Police	59,751	165,181
Vale of White Horse District Council	-	13,110
Other contract income	1,626	5,031
Other charitable income:		
Housing income	2,340,413	1,219,116
Payment services for private clients	40,429	37,154
Recharge expenditure	1,105	14,529
	9,202,139	7,956,120
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds - general	9,141,358	7,894,779
Restricted funds	60,781	61,341
	9,202,139	7,956,120

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Income from listed investments	5,126	5,039
Interest receivable	10,366	11,463
	15,492	16,502

6 Expenditure on Raising Funds

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £
Raising funds		
Website & publicity	2,656	161
Staff costs	53,531	49,163
Travel	427	515
Investment management	1,383	1,369
	57,997	51,208

7 Charitable activities

	Homelessness and housing support 2025 £	Mental health support 2025 £	Families and independence 2025 £	Young people 2025 £	Refugees and asylum seekers 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Depreciation and impairment	36,356	-	-	11,611	-	47,967	36,790
Staff costs	3,442,361	996,206	1,148,170	431,968	536,001	6,554,706	5,659,904
Housing costs	1,512,723	-	-	429,304	32,069	1,974,096	1,355,223
Direct client support	188,495	1,331	9,039	12,914	156,763	368,542	390,824
	5,179,935	997,537	1,157,209	885,797	724,833	8,945,311	7,442,741
Share of support costs (see note 8)	486,038	156,850	120,535	65,940	92,216	921,579	870,487
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	8,323	2,709	2,364	997	1,507	15,900	12,900
	5,674,296	1,157,096	1,280,108	952,734	818,556	9,882,790	8,326,128
Analysis by fund							
Unrestricted funds - general	5,477,118	1,155,897	858,204	934,178	599,779	9,025,176	7,584,521
Restricted funds	197,178	1,199	421,904	18,556	218,777	857,614	741,607
	5,674,296	1,157,096	1,280,108	952,734	818,556	9,882,790	8,326,128

7 **Charitable activities** (Continued)

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Homelessness and housing support	Mental health support	Families and independence	Young people	Refugees and asylum seekers	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Depreciation and impairment	17,049	-	-	19,741	-	36,790
Staff costs	2,733,612	1,196,045	1,021,427	362,794	346,026	5,659,904
Housing costs	833,491	-	-	498,482	23,250	1,355,223
Direct client support	171,194	14,378	101,738	15,506	88,008	390,824
	3,755,346	1,210,423	1,123,165	896,523	457,284	7,442,741
Share of support costs (see note 8)	444,013	184,541	112,918	55,028	73,987	870,487
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	6,815	2,612	1,860	687	926	12,900
	4,206,174	1,397,576	1,237,943	952,238	532,197	8,326,128
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds - general	4,043,912	1,384,535	871,987	937,801	346,286	7,584,521
Restricted funds	162,262	13,041	365,956	14,437	185,911	741,607
	4,206,174	1,397,576	1,237,943	952,238	532,197	8,326,128

8 Support costs allocated to activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Depreciation	39,937	36,396
Travel and subsistence	188,238	162,416
Office costs	325,418	311,086
Insurance	43,796	32,986
Consultancy and legal fees	33,077	33,429
IT and communications	275,437	279,842
Bank charges	6,341	5,387
Other costs	12,123	8,945
(Profit)/Loss on sale of fixed assets	(2,788)	-
Governance costs	15,900	12,900
	937,479	883,387
Analysed between:		
Homelessness	494,361	450,828
Mental health support	159,559	187,153
Families & independence	122,899	114,778
Young people	66,937	55,715
Refugees and asylum seekers	93,723	74,913
	937,479	883,387

Governance costs includes payments to the auditors of £15,900 (2024- £12,900) for audit fees.

9 Net movement in funds

	2025 £	2024 £
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the audit of the Charity's financial statements	15,900	12,900
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	114,380	73,186
(Profit)/loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	(2,788)	4,287
Operating lease charges	1,423,529	1,090,265

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
	219	198

10 Employees (Continued)

Employment costs

	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and salaries	5,665,133	4,926,130
Social security costs	509,306	401,186
Other pension costs	244,433	173,958
Training	66,568	46,727
Recruitment	42,392	36,951
Agency fees	14,106	87,025
Other staff costs	66,452	42,578
	6,608,390	5,714,555

Redundancy and termination payments totalling £30,927 (2024: £48,941) were made in the reporting period. This consists of £14,346 redundancy payments, plus termination payments and payments in lieu of notice totalling £16,581.

Other than 1.2 full time equivalent staff members dedicated to fundraising activities during the year ended 31 March 2025, all employees were involved in the delivery of the Charity's objects. (2024 - all employees involved in charitable activities, other than 1.2 full time equivalent fundraisers.)

The number of employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000 is as follows:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
£60,001 to £70,000	2	1
£70,001 to £80,000	1	-
£80,001 to £90,000	-	1
£90,001 to £100,000	1	-

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Aggregate compensation	337,024	340,313

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise the Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the Business Services Director and the Finance Director. The Trustees receive no remuneration.

11 Gains and losses on investments

	Unrestricted funds 2025	Unrestricted funds 2024
Gains/(losses) arising on:	£	£
Revaluation of investments	2,205	10,056

12 Taxation

The Charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

13 Tangible fixed assets

	Buildings	Leasehold improvements	Assets under construction	Accommodation furnishings & office equipment	Computer Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Cost or valuation						
At 1 April 2024	524,690	38,050	27,756	206,555	189,077	986,128
Additions	-	14,578	-	119,102	68,655	202,335
Disposals	-	-	-	(74,566)	(38,469)	(113,035)
Transfers on completion	-	27,756	(27,756)	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	524,690	80,384	-	251,091	219,263	1,075,428
Depreciation and impairment						
At 1 April 2024	40,861	7,610	-	122,095	109,164	279,730
Depreciation charged in the year	10,494	16,077	-	50,667	37,142	114,380
Eliminated in respect of disposals	-	-	-	(73,669)	(38,469)	(112,138)
At 31 March 2025	51,355	23,687	-	99,093	107,837	281,972
Carrying amount						
At 31 March 2025	473,335	56,697	-	151,998	111,426	793,456
At 31 March 2024	483,828	30,440	27,756	84,460	79,915	706,399

Land and buildings with a carrying amount of £466,174 were revalued at 14th March 2023 on the basis of market value.

At 31 March 2025, had the revalued assets been carried at historic cost less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses, their carrying amount would have been approximately £322,500 (2024 - £337,500).

The revaluation surplus is disclosed in Note 20.

14 Stock

	2025 £	2024 £
Donated goods	-	3,000

15 Debtors

Amounts falling due within one year:	2025 £	2024 £
Grants due	790,023	641,478
Housing income due	211,605	153,763
Prepayments and other debtors	268,332	165,537
	1,269,960	960,778

16 Current asset investments

	2025 £	2024 £
Listed investments	-	239,426

17 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Other taxation and social security		125,129	87,570
Deferred income: grants	18	80,400	110,221
Trade creditors		173,338	265,405
Other creditors		41,498	36,669
Accruals and deferred income		194,754	198,348
		615,119	698,213

Other creditors includes £35,271 (2024: £33,243) in respect of pension commitments.

18 Government grants

Grants have been deferred when they have been received before the year end but are for a specific purpose and time period after the year end.

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	80,400	110,221
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 April 2024	110,221	347,396
Released from previous periods	(110,221)	(318,978)
Resources deferred in the year	80,400	81,803
Deferred income at 31 March 2025	80,400	110,221

19 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the Charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2025 £
Rough Sleeper Accommodation	12,331	-	(5,120)	7,211
Ex-Offender Accommodation	26,583	60,000	(40,443)	46,140
Buckinghamshire NRPF service	12,737	19,902	(21,538)	11,101
OHM NRPF Project 2024-2025 Support	-	119,252	(117,428)	1,824
OHM NRPF Project 2024-2025 Subsistence	-	38,081	(41,891)	(3,810)
OHM NRPF Project 2024-2025 Housing Management	-	40,054	(36,761)	3,293
Thrive family support service	1,397	356,244	(353,980)	3,661
Charities together service	-	62,800	(55,955)	6,845
Homelessness prevention services	12,000	7,280	(12,685)	6,595
Grants supporting client living costs and welfare	33,897	90,874	(112,016)	12,755
Client training support	4,065	-	(2,030)	2,035
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund	30,000	-	(199)	29,801
Volunteering activities to support services	6,970	47,728	(50,281)	4,417
Donations to support client living costs and welfare	26,127	253	(2,629)	23,751
Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients	3,000	-	(3,000)	-
Banbury Beacon drop in service	-	63,254	(1,658)	61,596
	169,107	905,722	(857,614)	217,215

19 **Restricted funds** **(Continued)**

Previous year:	At 1 April 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2024 £
Rough Sleeper Accommodation	28,686	11,240	(27,595)	12,331
Ex-Offender Accommodation	57,340	50,100	(80,857)	26,583
Buckinghamshire NRPF service	14,331	10,000	(11,594)	12,737
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Support	-	103,893	(103,893)	-
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Subsistence	-	38,651	(38,651)	-
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Housing Management	-	27,075	(27,075)	-
Thrive family support service	-	223,269	(221,872)	1,397
Charities together service	-	130,922	(130,922)	-
Refugee Support service, Oxfordshire	-	3,700	(3,700)	-
Homelessness prevention services	-	12,000	-	12,000
Grants supporting client living costs and welfare	35,855	32,180	(34,138)	33,897
Client training support	7,459	-	(3,394)	4,065
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund	30,000	-	-	30,000
Volunteering activities to support services	-	39,787	(32,817)	6,970
Donations to support client living costs and welfare	17,647	14,079	(5,599)	26,127
Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients	-	22,500	(19,500)	3,000
	191,318	719,396	(741,607)	169,107

19 **Restricted funds** **(Continued)**

Rough Sleeper Accommodation
Funds to cover deposits and rent in advance, enabling rough sleepers to move into a rented home

Ex-Offender Accommodation
Funds to cover deposits and rent in advance, enabling ex-offenders to move into a rented home

Buckinghamshire NRPF service
Supporting people who do not have access to state-funded benefits or housing in Buckinghamshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Support
Supporting people who do not have access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Subsistence
Direct subsistence and local travel support for people with no access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Housing Management
Housing management support for people with no access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

Oxford Community Foundation
Funds to support the Oxfordshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

Thrive family support service
Initiative working alongside families in Buckinghamshire to support parenting and family wellbeing

Charities Together service
Joint initiative in Buckinghamshire, working with community groups to support people affected by financial insecurity

Refugee Support service, Oxfordshire
Providing household items and activities for refugee families

Homelessness prevention services
Providing life tools and support to rough sleepers, so they can live independently in their own rented home

Grants supporting living costs and welfare
Funding to support individuals with essential household costs

19 Restricted funds (Continued)

Client training support
Funding for training courses and counselling for people recovering from addiction

Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund
Fund held on behalf of the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance to support training for group members

Volunteering activities to support services
Supporting volunteering activities and client involvement with the development of Connection Support's services

Donations to support client living costs and welfare
Donations to support individuals with essential household costs

Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients
Mobile phone SIM cards held for distribution to clients

Banbury Beacon drop in service
Funds to support the running of the Beacon Centre in Banbury, which serves as a drop in centre for homeless and isolated people

20 Designated funds

The unrestricted funds of the Charity comprises the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the Trustees for specific purposes.

	Balance at 1 April 2023	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2024	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Support for systems development in 2024-25	138,250	-	138,250	(27,848)	-	110,402
Planned service expenditure	-	26,400	26,400	(26,400)	22,185	22,185
Laptop and mobile phone replacement	-	48,000	48,000	(48,000)	-	-
Office building works	-	10,000	10,000	(10,000)	-	-
Revaluation reserves	130,000	-	130,000	-	-	130,000
Fixed assets	-	-	-	-	320,122	320,122
	268,250	84,400	352,650	(112,248)	342,307	582,709

21 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £
At 31 March 2025:			
Tangible assets	793,456	-	793,456
Current assets/(liabilities)	2,055,945	217,215	2,273,160
	2,849,401	217,215	3,066,616

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
At 31 March 2024:			
Tangible assets	706,399	-	706,399
Current assets/(liabilities)	2,048,673	169,107	2,217,780
	2,755,072	169,107	2,924,179

22 Operating lease commitments

At the reporting end date the Charity had outstanding commitments for future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases, which fall due as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Within one year	874,926	478,538
Between two and five years	512,498	315,335
	1,387,424	793,873

Amounts recognised as an expense during the period in respect of operating lease arrangements are £1,423,529

23 Funding received as agent for clients

Connection Support received charitable grant funding as agent on behalf of clients to support welfare purchases. Funds are held on behalf of clients as below.

	2025 £	2024 £
Balance at 1 April	3,426	10,942
Historical balances repaid or transferred to welfare in year	(4,532)	(5,506)
Receipt of client funds	42,837	37,088
Payment of client funds	(35,371)	(39,098)
Balance at 31 March	6,360	3,426

24 Trustee Remuneration, Key Management Personnel & Related Party Transactions

No member of the Board of Trustees received any remuneration during the year.
The Trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the Charity in the year (2024: Nil).
One Trustee was reimbursed for travel expenses during the year £1,992.10 (2024: Nil).
No Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the Charity (2024: Nil).
One trustee made total donations of £348.27 to the Charity in the year (2024: One trustee made a £350 donation).

No Trustee or other person related to the Charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the Charity during the year.

25 Analysis of changes in net funds

The Charity had no material debt during the year.

26	Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	2025 £	2024 £
	Surplus for the year	142,437	273,717
	Adjustments for:		
	Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(15,492)	(16,502)
	(Gain)/loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	(2,788)	4,287
	Fair value gains and losses on investments	(2,205)	(10,056)
	Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	114,381	73,186
	Movements in working capital:		
	Decrease/(increase) in stocks	3,000	(3,000)
	(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(309,182)	83,777
	(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(53,273)	160,728
	(Decrease) in deferred income	(29,821)	(237,175)
	Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	(152,943)	328,962

Appendix

Overview of Our Services

Homelessness and Housing

Adult Homeless Pathway (Oxfordshire) - Providing accommodation and support to single homeless people over 18 across Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, and Oxford City. We have 80 rooms in a mixture of shared houses in Oxford, Witney, and Banbury, in which we can support clients to help them build skills and move on to long-term independent living. When moving on from the pathway, 12 weeks of resettlement support is also offered to support people with the transition and settle them into their new homes.

Banbury Beacon (Oxfordshire) - The Beacon Centre in Banbury is a safe, warm, and non-judgmental space for homeless and isolated people in Banbury and the surrounding area. We provide food and hot drinks, as well as the chance to meet other people who are experiencing similar circumstances. Our Support Workers are on hand to provide a listening ear, as well as practical advice and support. There are regular visits from other support agencies to discuss housing, drug, and alcohol issues.

Bearbrook Place (Buckinghamshire) - Bearbrook Place offers supported accommodation to people who are either homeless, or at risk of becoming so. The service supports young people aged between 16 – 25 and adults aged between 18 – 55. We deliver holistic support so that residents can gain the skills and confidence they need to move on to independent living. Residents collaboratively identify goals with their Support Worker to create a personalised support plan. By setting SMART goals, each client is empowered to develop their skills, broaden their support network and achieve their full potential.

Benefits Specialist Service (Oxfordshire) - This service is for people who live in the city of Oxford – single people and couples without children who have previously slept rough. We provide support with claiming benefits and maximising income.

Embedded Housing Workers (Oxfordshire) - EHWs are located at Oxfordshire University and Oxfordshire Foundation Trust Hospitals to reduce the number of patients who have extended stays in hospital because, although they are medically well enough to be discharged, they either have no housing provision, or there are barriers to them returning to their own accommodation. They work with medical teams to identify and understand patients' housing issues, ensure presentations to local housing authorities are done in a managed way and monitor and report on outcomes. They also work with multiple teams and agencies to prevent repeated admission of rough sleepers.

Housing First (Oxfordshire) - Housing First provides a home and intensive support to former rough sleepers in the Cherwell District during their journey from rough sleeping to a more settled lifestyle within their own home and to improve their health and wellbeing.

Housing Support Service (Oxfordshire) - The service is delivered by floating support workers, using a person-centred approach, to enable clients who are at risk of homelessness maintain their tenancies and access services to avoid encountering homelessness. The team supports and equips clients with the tools to manage their money, navigate benefits, be independent and avoid homelessness.

Integrated Floating Support Service (Milton Keynes) - The Integrated Floating Support Service is designed to help single adults aged 18 and over who have a history of rough sleeping, or who are at risk of it, to move towards settled accommodation and a better quality of life. Combining our previous Housing First Model and Next Steps Accommodation Programme, the service supports people with a wide range of needs, from high to low. We offer tailored practical and emotional support to help people secure and maintain a tenancy, develop daily living and budgeting skills, resolve housing and benefit issues, attend appointments, and build social connections. Working in partnership with each person, we create a strengths-based action plan that focuses on building resilience, confidence, and independent living skills in a trauma-informed way.

One Recovery Bucks (Buckinghamshire) - ORB provides support with rented accommodation for people over the age of 18 who are doing well in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction (they must have abstained for at least 3 months). Pre-tenancy support is provided, alongside guidance on sustaining a tenancy and help with budgeting, accessing benefits, paying bills, training opportunities and employment. We have 20 flats across the county.

Reset (Buckinghamshire) - Support for ex-offenders to access accommodation and make positive life choices to reduce the risk of them reoffending and returning to prison. The team provides support with finding accommodation, tenancy sustainment, accessing benefits, training, education, and employment opportunities, help with physical or mental health issues or substance abuse.

RESTART (Thames Valley) - Supporting ex-offenders to build a more stable and positive future in partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire and Thames Valley Partnership. This pilot project ended in October 2024.

Rough Sleeper Outreach and Rough Sleeper Initiative (Buckinghamshire) - Our Rough Sleeper Outreach Service helps people sleeping rough in Buckinghamshire build a better future beyond life on the streets. We support individuals to find settled accommodation and access the benefits they're entitled to. We also help them connect with health services, addiction support, and other services tailored to their needs. The service includes tenancy sustainment support, providing practical tools and guidance to help people live independently in their own rented homes. We assist clients with managing their finances — from rent payments and bills to budgeting and accessing benefits — as well as training, pathways into employment, and support for mental and physical health. A small amount of emergency accommodation is also available.

Rough Sleeper Outreach (Oxfordshire) - The Oxfordshire Outreach Team covers the North, South & Vale and West districts of the county by verifying rough sleepers at their bedded down site and motivating and engaging with people to support them in finding suitable accommodation. The team offers support with improving their safety, and provides information to access benefits, housing options, tenancy rights, mental health services, medical, and substance misuse services. They also help them to develop practical life skills, to work towards living independently.

Somewhere Safe to Stay (Oxfordshire) – In partnership with St Mungo's, we provide emergency accommodation and housing management for people sleeping rough in Oxford City.

Step Down Housing (Oxfordshire) - Short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from the Oxfordshire University or Oxfordshire Foundation Trust Hospitals but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. This includes people who are homeless, have a history of drug/alcohol misuse, people who have no recourse to public funds or issues with their immigration status, those fleeing domestic violence, or people with mobility issues. We appoint Embedded Housing Workers (see service above) into the hospitals to upskill medical staff and social workers about the complexities of housing these patients.

Tenancy Ready (Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) - This project is to help tenants in Oxfordshire understand what the expectations are around managing and sustaining a tenancy either through social housing or the private sector. Renting a home of your own can be both exciting and a bit scary, but it can work really well. The key is to prepare for it properly. This means learning how to find somewhere you can afford, what your rights and responsibilities are and how to manage your money. This course helps you find out everything you need to know.

Tenancy Sustainment Service (Buckinghamshire) - Our Tenancy Sustainment Service provides life tools and support to rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire, so they can live independently in their own rented home. We will help clients manage their money – rental payments, pay bills, budgeting, access to benefits, training, routes to employment, and access to support for mental and physical health issues.

Mental Health

Mental Health Support Service (Oxfordshire) - As part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership we provide focussed support for between 6 to 24 months to help people with severe and enduring mental health issues move forward. Offering support around housing, benefits and social inclusion, this supports recovery and enables the clients to live more independently. Some of the team are embedded in the Adult Mental Health Teams to identify and support those patients who present with housing needs straight away.

Mental Health Support Service (Milton Keynes) - We offer housing-related support to help clients with mental health needs to avoid homelessness or to sustain a tenancy and maintain their independence. It's a flexible service, which will meet with clients in the local community or in their home. Support moves with them wherever they go and the service complements and works in partnership with any statutory or voluntary agency where our support cannot wholly meet the needs of the individual. 'Windrush' is also part of this service – independent supported accommodation for clients with Autism.

Out of Hospital (Oxfordshire) - Our specialist support workers partner with a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, social workers, and housing officers to support people with complex mental health who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness). They work to help people to move on from hospital to settled accommodation and prevent them returning to hospital in the future by solving housing and other linked issues to give them increased stability.

Prevention Matters (Buckinghamshire) - Prevention Matters supports people over the age of 18 who are struggling to remain independent in their own home, having difficulty getting out and about, recovering from an illness or feeling lonely, isolated or anxious. The Support Workers help them to regain their confidence and maintain their independence.

SafeHaven+ (Buckinghamshire) - Working alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, Oasis Partnership and Adult Mental Health Teams, this service provides support to adults with mental health issues and potentially complex needs. The project aims to avoid crisis and admission to hospital and improve overall mental health and wellbeing. Connection Support's role is to provide intensive support specifically related to housing.

Family Support

Direct Payment Support Services (Milton Keynes) - In some circumstances, social or health care users can be given money in the form of a Direct Payment from their local authority to commission their own services which enables disabled people to tailor their own care arrangements that suit their unique circumstances and lifestyle. Where local authorities may tend to offer, for example access to a day centre, individuals might prefer to meet friends for lunch, to go fishing, or attend a local gym, but need support to do so. This service supports the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice and offering a Payroll Service to process payslips and administrate HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

Direct Payment Support Services (Oxfordshire) - Our Direct Payment and Employment Support Service in Oxfordshire works alongside people receiving a Direct Payment to provide information, advice and support in all aspects of using a Direct Payment and becoming an employer of personal assistants (PAs).

Thrive (Buckinghamshire) - Thrive provides support to families across Buckinghamshire. Delivered by a team of Family Liaison Workers, and supported by volunteer parenting mentors, peer mentors and family advocates, we work alongside families, supporting, encouraging and empowering them to build their skills, confidence, and parental wellbeing to create a stable positive environment for their children. We offer a tailored programme of support to each family, based on listening to their social, emotional, educational and health needs which include, but are not limited to, substance dependency, domestic violence, learning difficulties, social exclusion, and lack of parenting skills.

Young People

HITPad (Buckinghamshire) – Bringing together two long-standing projects - the Housing Interaction Trust (HIT) and Padstones – we support young people (aged 16–25) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to find safe accommodation, learn to live independently, and rebuild family relationships. We provide dedicated accommodation for those with nowhere else to go, offering a safe and stable environment where they can begin to move forward. Alongside housing, each young person is paired with a key worker for one-to-one support. Our team helps them develop essential life skills, from budgeting and running a home to maintaining their wellbeing and preparing for independent living. We also offer support with personal challenges, including repairing family relationships and managing emotional health. This service ended in September 2024.

Young People's Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) - YPSA provides supported accommodation in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire for young people (aged 16-25 years) leaving care. Young people referred to us by Oxfordshire County Council are provided with their own accommodation and regular visits from a Support Worker to help them gain confidence in living independently.

Refugee Resettlement

Homes for Ukraine (Oxfordshire) – Delivered in collaboration with Refugee Resource, this service is dedicated to helping displaced Ukrainians who have come to the UK under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, helping them to gain the skills and confidence they need to live independently in the UK.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Buckinghamshire) - Providing support to people experiencing homelessness in Buckinghamshire who do not have access to state-funded benefits and housing. People in this situation are often not allowed to work, neither are they eligible for benefits, nor allowed to use public services except for basic health care. This leaves them at high risk of abuse and exploitation. The aim is to help people get their lives back on track. We help them access the support & advice they need to resolve their immigration status. This is often a very difficult process which can take several years.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Oxfordshire) - Helping people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing. This project is funded by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, and the aim is to provide tailored support to allow these people to become self-sufficient and take practical steps to rebuild their lives. We work in partnership with Asylum Welcome to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness. Working with local housing association SOHA and Edge Housing, we can offer these clients dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters including their immigration status and help them to get their lives back on track.

Refugee Resettlement (Oxfordshire) - This service is for refugees resettling in the UK as part of Government's sponsored resettlement schemes. The families supported live in the Cherwell District area of Oxfordshire, and we provide a range of emotional and practical support to help the families settle into everyday life. The team supports families mostly coming from the Middle East and Africa to manage the transition from living in camps and unsettled accommodation to making a home in Oxfordshire and helps them to adapt to different social norms and legal frameworks. We work with them through the whole process from airport pick up (or accompanied arrival to the property) to the point they can live independently and manage their tenancy without the need for support. The team connects the families to health services and mental health support, schools, English language classes, employment and volunteering opportunities and local community groups. Working alongside volunteers, they also provide information about culture and life in Britain to enable them to make those steps towards living a settled life in the UK.

Connection Support

England & Wales - Charity number 1049740

Accounts

Charity registration number 1049740

Company registration number 03072719 (England and Wales)

CONNECTION SUPPORT

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

CONNECTION SUPPORT

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr R Allman	(Chair)
	Mrs E Duke	(Vice Chair)
	Mr P Aston	
	Mr M Wortley	
	Mrs H Amura	(Appointed 12 July 2023)
	Ms R L Takundwa	(Appointed 14 August 2023)
	Mr P Bayley	(Appointed 9 May 2024)
	Mrs C Dawson	(Appointed 11 July 2024)
	Mrs A Cooney	(Resigned 1 May 2023)
	Mrs E Dobell	(Resigned 30 September 2023)
	Mr L Winterbourne	(Resigned 26 October 2023)
	Mr J Arnold	(Resigned 11 January 2024)
	Mr I Moore	(Resigned 22 March 2024)
Secretary	Mr C Keating	
Charity number	1049740	
Company number	03072719	
Registered office	The Old School First Turn Wolvercote Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 8AH	
Auditor	Critchleys Audit LLP Beaver House 23-38 Hythe Bridge Street Oxford OX1 2EP	
Bankers	The Co-operative Bank 1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP	

CONNECTION SUPPORT

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Trustees' Annual Report

The Trustees are pleased to present their annual report, which is also prepared to meet the Companies Act requirements for a Directors' report.

Chair of the Trustee Board's Statement

Connection Support has been providing housing support for close to 30 years, and since joining the Board of Trustees in 2018, I have seen the charity undergo quite the evolution. By observing the ever-changing needs of our clients, we have grown to provide expert support across five key areas: homelessness and housing, mental health, family support, support for young people and refugee & asylum seeker support. It is thanks to our brilliant supporters, our generous donors, and our dedicated staff and volunteer teams that we have been able to undergo such a transformation, enabling us to continue to meet the needs of societal demand.

For the last three years, we have been executing our 2021-2024 strategy, focusing on delivering high-quality services that address the needs of our communities. As we approach the end of this strategy, we took the opportunity to revisit our strategic priorities to ensure we're on track to meet our goals. As a result, we increased investment in our infrastructure, enhanced client involvement in our decision-making processes, and refined our housing strategy. Perhaps one of our most fundamental goals was to grow to impact more people positively, and it's safe to say, that is something we have achieved. In addition to introducing new services, we experienced a 140% increase in charitable donations and grants compared to the previous financial year, enabling us to sustain vital services like our No Recourse to Public Funds project, which would have otherwise ceased to exist.

Over the year we have seen the needs of our clients become more complex, and this has no doubt had an impact on our teams. To promote positive mental wellbeing in the workplace, we invested into our people development by placing more emphasis on adapting and implementing new policies and procedures to help foster a positive working environment. With the cost-of-living crisis still prevalent, the Board was happy to approve a higher pension contribution and annual salary increase to help improve staff wellbeing, the latter now matching others across the sector. With that in mind, it brings me great joy to see that staff wellbeing has gone from an area of focus to an area of celebration this year, highlighted by our staff engagement survey.

Similarly to many others in the sector, the last financial year has not been without its difficulties. The increase in complexity and societal demand has undoubtedly applied pressure, particularly in the wake of reduced funding, but we have continued to grow. The team at Connection Support have persevered, and I would like to thank Chris Keating, Chief Executive Officer, for his commitment to leading Connection Support through this challenging time, and to all our staff, volunteers and my fellow trustees for their continued dedication to supporting our clients.

Finally, I want to thank our brilliant supporters and generous donors. Their support has enabled us to continue to grow to meet the needs in our communities, and we remain steadfast in our mission to see everyone in our society become safely and sustainably housed. As this year draws to a close, I look forward to what is yet to come.

Richard Allman
Chair of the Trustee Board

Chief Executive's Statement

As another year passes by, I've been reflecting on all that we've accomplished here at Connection Support; partly due to our three-year organisational strategy coming to an end, but also because of the relentless compassion and determination exhibited by our staff and volunteers to ensure the best outcomes for all our clients. This year hasn't been without its hardships, so I'm incredibly proud of the perseverance each team member has shown in helping us meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

This year, we've continued to see some of our clients' needs, as well as those across society, grow increasingly more complex. Financial challenges, such as reductions to funding, the cost-of-living crisis, and the rising cost of inflation, have certainly added pressure, but we've been successful at stepping up to meet this increased demand. By listening to our clients' challenges, experiences and hopes for the future, we've been able to implement enhanced training for our staff, evolve existing services to continue providing meaningful support, and grow the number of services we deliver - all to ensure we're having the greatest impact possible.

Whilst working in the third sector can be incredibly rewarding, we recognise that the challenging nature of the work can take both a physical and emotional toll on our teams. The complexity of our clients' needs has had a direct impact on our staff, and this was only further compounded by the cost-of-living crisis. As someone who is passionate about positive mental health, I'm pleased to say that we have further developed our wellbeing offer, practices, and standards, and reviewed our remuneration package too. With this renewed focus on wellbeing, I'm inspired by the staff who felt empowered to develop support networks for personal causes. We saw the creation of our menopause group and our neurodiverse network; both offering spaces for staff to talk about their experiences, speak with like-minded peers, and identify ways in which we, as an organisation, can be more inclusive.

This is my third year as Chief Executive Officer, and perhaps one of the reasons I feel quite so astonished by all we've achieved comes from this year marking the end of our 2021-2024 organisational strategy - my first here as CEO. As we've been planning what's next for Connection Support, we've spent much of the last year assessing where our expertise lies and how we can use our knowledge to have an even more profound impact. We noticed that a lot of the people coming to us were experiencing crises that could have been prevented with earlier intervention, such as family breakdowns, mental health emergencies, and homelessness. The desire for us to take a more preventative approach was amplified during our strategy-building sessions with clients, staff, and volunteers, and it was after consultations with each of these audiences that we decided to take a shift in direction. This move isn't new ground for us though; our affinity for prevention work was recognised earlier this year when The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Charitable Foundation selected us to deliver 'Thrive', a prevention-based model designed to avert family breakdowns. The process we went through to develop our new strategy resulted in some of the most significant moments for me this year, specifically the client-led consultations. I was in awe of peoples' willingness to share their feedback - to be so open, honest, and positive - and how sensitive and supportive they were to one another. And after spending so much of this year listening, planning, and preparing for the future, I'm truly excited about the shift in direction we're taking.

We have, and always will, advocate for the people we support, and so another of my personal highlights this year comes from our engagement with MPs. The impending general election has made it clear that our central government needs to refresh their thinking if we're to see change in the future, and so I'm thrilled that we've been able to meet with local MPs, alongside our partners Homeless Oxfordshire and Aspire, and with support from Homeless Link, to help shape party manifestos. Through this work, we're not only strengthening relationships with our partners to make an impact locally, but we're also indirectly having a national impact too.

As we move into a new financial year, supported by a refreshed organisational strategy, I can't help but think that this is just the beginning. I'm excited to see what this journey brings for Connection Support and I feel truly privileged to be leading the organisation into another year. I'd like to thank all our clients, volunteers and staff, as well as our Board of Trustees, for their ongoing support. There's some change coming and I'm under no illusion that it'll be easy, but with such a dedicated team behind us, I know we'll succeed.

Chris Keating
Chief Executive Officer

About Us

Connection Support began in 1995 with five people who believed they could make a difference by delivering an excellent homelessness prevention service in Oxfordshire. They were proved right. They went on to secure additional service contracts spanning homelessness and housing, mental health, family support, support for young people, and refugee & asylum seeker support, all with the aim of empowering people so that they can effectively manage a crisis and build resilience for the future.

Our mission is to work alongside people to help them overcome life's challenges, supporting everyone in our society to become safely and sustainably housed and live as independently as possible. We offer expert guidance to help people address the issues affecting their everyday lives, and we provide support so that they're able to overcome the impacts and symptoms caused by past traumas. To do this, we provide services across Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire, through approximately 200 staff and 150 volunteers, and we work collaboratively with other organisations to ensure that our interventions make a meaningful difference in people's lives. We use a person-centered, trauma-informed, strengths-based approach to empower our clients to define their goals, take positive steps forward, and achieve greater independence.

Despite everything we've done so far, homelessness continues to be an epidemic and the number of people coming to us with poor mental health is increasing. The issues affecting our clients are progressively more complex, but this past year has made it clear that many of these situations could have been avoided had earlier intervention taken place. As such, we've spent much of the last year refining a new, prevention-based approach that will shape the way we work as we look towards the future.

An overview of our services can be found in the Appendix on pages 52 – 54.

Client Testimonial

"You have given me the confidence and focus to achieve the things I could never have imagined when we first met. I was in a very dark place; life was full of shame, fear, pain, panic and hopelessness. However, you stood by my side, guiding me and supporting me, to get me where I am today. When we first met, I was at my lowest and consumed by a gambling addiction. I had no idea that with the right support, I could turn my life around. I wanted to, but I had no idea where to turn… It was you who gave me hope. I had a mountain to climb, and you gave me the hiking boots and all the equipment I needed so that I could do what I once thought was impossible."

- **Client, Housing Support Service, Oxfordshire**

Our Year in Numbers

Throughout the 2023 - 2024 financial year, we…

- Supported close to **5,000 people** across our services
- Answered **11,774** calls from people seeking support or guidance
- Empowered **1,160** people to develop the skills to no longer need our support
- Worked with **20+** partners to deliver holistic support for our clients

Collaborating for Impact: Our Partnerships

We're passionate about working in partnership with other organisations, services, and local authorities to provide innovative, wrap-around support for our clients across the three localities we work in. Over the course of the year, we continued to work collaboratively with many of our existing partners, but we also forged some new relationships. Working in partnership allows us to have a greater impact as we're able to draw on the expertise of multiple organisations, sharing skills, knowledge, and resources, ultimately achieving the best outcomes for the people we support.

Buckinghamshire

- **Bucks Rough Sleeper Initiative**: Led by Buckinghamshire Council and funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), this collaboration of charities and services work together to provide localised support for rough sleepers.

- **Charities Together**: This year, we joined with Age UK Buckinghamshire, Carers Bucks, Citizens Advice Bucks, Community Impact Bucks, and Youth Concern to deliver Charities Together, a collaborative partnership that supports people in Buckinghamshire who have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

- **One Recovery Bucks (ORB Project)**: We continued to work alongside The Oasis Partnership and Inclusion, an NHS organisation, to deliver the ORB Project. This service, commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council, is designed to support individuals impacted by drug and alcohol misuse, including assistance with treatment and recovery.

- **SafeHaven+**: Throughout the year, we continued to work alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, The Oasis Partnership, and Adult Mental Health Teams to deliver SafeHaven+ - a service that specialises in providing alternative support to help clients avoid crises and prevent hospital admission.

Milton Keynes

- **Hospital Admissions Avoidance**: We continued to lower hospital admissions through our ongoing work with Adult Mental Health Teams and the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Through this partnership, we have been able to identify clients at risk of a mental health crisis and provide them with support to prevent admission to an acute mental health ward.

- **Restart Thames Valley**: Throughout the year, we continued our work with ex-offenders in partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire and Thames Valley Partnership. The service aims to increase the likelihood of those leaving prison to lead a successful life with the proper support.

Oxfordshire

- **Homes for Ukraine**: Our Homes for Ukraine service is our most recent Oxfordshire-based partnership, and is delivered in collaboration with Refugee Resource. The service is dedicated to helping displaced Ukrainians who have come to the UK under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, helping them to gain the skills and confidence they need to live independently in the UK.

- **Older Adults Mental Health Service**: A new initiative we were part of this year saw us working in partnership with Age UK Oxfordshire and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust to launch a new pilot service dedicated to supporting older adults with their mental health.

- **Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM)**: This year, we continued our collaboration with OHM, alongside Asylum Welcome, Edge Housing and SOHA, to deliver our 'No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)' service. This initiative was designed to help people who are experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to, state-funded benefits and housing.

- **Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance (OHA)**: Alongside partners A2 Dominion, Aspire, Elmore Community Services, Homeless Oxfordshire, and St Mungo's, as well as Oxfordshire County, City and District Councils, we continued to work collaboratively. This alliance embarks on a ground-breaking programme of work to prevent and resolve homelessness so that no one sleeps rough in Oxfordshire. Over the last year, we've worked with partners from the alliance, namely Homeless Oxfordshire and Aspire, to engage with local MPs to influence government policy and effect change on both a local and national scale.

- **Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership**: We continued to work alongside the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Response, Restore, Oxfordshire Mind, and Elmore Community Services to provide intensive mental health support to those in need.

Our Champions

We're committed to continually driving positive change across the organisation, particularly around issues that align with our vision, mission and values. This financial year, we introduced Champion roles to help us evolve across four key areas:

- Client Involvement
- Environment and Sustainability
- Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDEI)
- Wellbeing

Colleagues from across the organisation were invited to apply for a Champion role. Together, the Champions form a network working to influence organisational culture in the areas they are passionate about, whilst developing their own skills. With opportunities to learn about public speaking, leading and facilitating, monitoring and evaluation, and influencing others, our Champions are proactively making a difference across the organisation.

Our Client Involvement Champions started to encourage managers to involve clients in recruitment panels with the aim of including a client in all recruitment processes by 2025. So far, 10 clients have taken part in 14 interview panels, and the feedback has been exceptionally positive: clients have enjoyed being involved and have felt empowered by the experience, and managers have found the clients' perspective helpful in making good recruitment decisions. To help achieve this goal, the Champions have written thorough guidance for all hiring managers covering how they're able to involve clients in interviews. The Champions have been building up trust and engagement with clients by organising monthly fishing trips, delivering a client focus group and a client event in Milton Keynes.

Our Environment and Sustainability Champions made a start on calculating our carbon footprint to be able to benchmark and set targets, whilst also implementing small changes across the organisation to minimise our environmental impact. This includes changing the way staff print documents, from encouraging them to share papers electronically to limiting coloured printing, ultimately reducing the amount of paper used and the number of ink cartridges ending up in landfill. There have been discussions around new traffic controls in Oxford City and we've been encouraging staff to ride their bike to work by installing bike racks in our Wolvercote office and promoting our Cycle to Work scheme as part of our employee benefits package. Car sharing has been encouraged where possible, and we have continued to host many of our meetings online to further reduce travel. The Champions have also obtained quotes for sustainable lighting and electric car chargers at our offices.

Our EDEI Champions focused on raising awareness of different communities and causes across the organisation, celebrating annual observances in recognition of being a diverse and inclusive charity. With their support, we celebrated Black History Month in October by placing display boards and posters across our offices to highlight the crucial role that Black women have played in shaping history. The Champions partnered with Multaka Oxford to deliver an event to celebrate International Women's Day as part of Oxford's International Women's Festival.

Our Wellbeing Champions advocate for positive wellbeing across the organisation, and this year, they began planning for our first ever Wellbeing Festival. Set to take place in the next financial year, the festival will be an opportunity for staff to come together, connect with one another and explore ways in which they're able to better their overall health and happiness. Sessions that promote physical health and positive mental wellbeing will be offered, including art therapy, yoga and meditation. Other changes implemented over the financial year included the introduction of a traffic light system enabling colleagues to display how open they were to interruption from the tasks they were working on in shared office spaces, helping to contribute to a more pleasant working environment, as well as weekly mindfulness sessions and walks to encourage staff to take a break and focus on self-care.

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Back in 2021, our Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees made an explicit commitment to prioritise Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDEI) at Connection Support, resulting in the implementation of an ambitious and thorough action plan. This saw us develop our first-ever EDEI statement.

In 2022, we continued to progress our commitment to EDEI by working collaboratively with The Diversity Trust CIC to review our working practices, policies, and organisational culture and identify priorities going forward. They facilitated an organisation-wide, anonymous survey and conducted focus groups and interviews to produce a detailed report which outlined key learnings, reflections, and recommendations. One such recommendation was to develop EDEI Champion roles that would provide staff with the opportunity to help influence organisational culture.

We're proud to say that we implemented these roles during the last financial year. Now, our EDEI Champions meet regularly to discuss ways in which we can promote positive practice and hold the organisation accountable to meet the actions specified on our EDEI development plan. To date, we've made changes across the entire organisation, including across our marketing and our recruitment practices, and now we're set to start developing a new EDEI development plan in 2024/2025.

Our vision is to be a proactively inclusive organisation that's free from discrimination, and we want everyone who interacts with us to feel welcome, safe, treated with respect, and valued. As a charity that seeks to provide support to individuals who are facing challenges, we're passionate about having a presence at local events to ensure we're inclusive and reflective of all the communities we serve. This year, we were proud 20th Anniversary Sponsors of Oxford Pride, and we were given the opportunity to show our support by marching in the parade. Sponsoring events like Oxford Pride provides us with the opportunity to connect with individuals who might benefit from our services, whilst networking with other organisations, and raising awareness of our work amongst the public, ultimately helping us to reach more people. We're proud that our sponsorship also has a social benefit: Oxford Pride is a community event that has always been free to attend, and it's through sponsorship that help to keep it that way.

In the next financial year, we'll look at how we can be involved with more events across the areas we serve.

Client Involvement and Volunteering

Client involvement and volunteering are essential to Connection Support. Through listening to our clients and giving them a platform, we're able to make informed decisions about the direction of the organisation, and the integral support of our volunteers helps us to achieve all that we do. Last year, we began to embed our client involvement and volunteering strategy across the organisation.

We're passionate about giving our clients a voice, and as one of our organisational values is to empower our clients by focusing on their individual skills and knowledge, involving them in organisational decisions is a natural extension of this. In February and March 2024, we successfully trained nine clients to take part in interview panels, and our aim is to include clients in all our recruitment processes by 2025. Clients have also played a role in helping us to develop our new organisational strategy, and throughout the financial year, they were invited to attend strategy consultation sessions where they were able to share their feedback and suggestions. As well as contributing to our strategy, clients accessing services in Milton Keynes were invited to attend focus groups so we could better understand what is working well and what could be improved.

CASE STUDY: Invited to an interview – Saira's Experience

This year, our Direct Payment and Employment Support Service manager, Christine, led a round of recruitment for a new team member. She invited client Saira to be part of the panel so that she could contribute her lived experience to the decision process.

What Saira said: *"Before the interviews took place, Christine arranged a Teams meeting. She explained the whole process to me and answered any questions I had. We went over the interview questions as well as what points I should look out for and what type of person they were looking for.*

I found hearing what employers look for when interviewing a candidate and how to reply to the difficult questions they ask really beneficial - it will be helpful for any interviews I have in the future. I was unsure about how to fill out the feedback forms at the end of the interviews, but Christine and her team explained how to complete them.

CASE STUDY: Invited to an interview – Saira's Experience – cont.d

I would definitely recommend taking part in interviews to other clients as I think it's important that we get a chance to help select the right person for the role. This would be a person that we might have to call or ask for advice from, so it's beneficial that the candidates get to see who the clients they would be supporting are.

By Christine asking me to join the panel, it showed me that Connection Support really value and care for their clients and that their opinion matters to them. Overall, I had an amazing experience being on the interview panel and would definitely do it again."

What Christine said: *"It was fantastic having Saira as part of the interview panel. She brought a really helpful perspective and made me feel confident that we are working according to the Connection Support values in this important decision about our service."*

As well as involving clients in organisational decisions, we're passionate about providing them with alternative opportunities for skills development. Earlier this financial year, we set up an arts and crafts group for clients to explore various creative outlets and meet new people. We're proud that the clients involved in this group felt empowered to plan and lead a Christmas market stall, selling handmade gifts, to raise money for Connection Support.

In response to client feedback, another highlight of the financial year was the increase in activities for clients to engage with, including a fishing trip that was led by a volunteer. This was well received by all that attended and there are plans to run these trips on a more regular basis going forward.

Volunteers are integral to our work, and so to recognise their achievements and mark all they do, we held a celebration event during Volunteers Week. The event took place over an afternoon, with opportunities to take part in various activities, and it was enjoyed by all. One way in which we monitor what we are doing well and what could be done differently is through our volunteering survey. This financial year, 100% of volunteers who answered our survey said they would recommend volunteering with Connection Support to a friend – a 10% increase from the year before.

Our Work: Homelessness and Housing

Our origins are in homelessness and housing, and we've continued to help tackle the issue since we began providing floating support in Oxfordshire in 1995. Today, our work in this area extends across Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire, with half of our services focused on solving the issue.

We're proud to still deliver our original Oxfordshire-based service, now known as our Housing Support Service. By developing tailored support plans that are unique to our clients' needs, our team provide help and guidance that enable our clients to maintain their tenancies. Despite a reduction in funding, we were able to successfully support 761 households to avoid homelessness this year - nearly double the number of people we supported the previous year, highlighting how stark the housing crisis across Oxfordshire is. Perhaps one of the most common challenges this service saw was the toll of the cost-of-living crisis and the shortage of affordable housing.

These challenges were also apparent for our Step Down Housing service which prevents homelessness in Oxfordshire by providing short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from hospital but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. Despite having to increase the length of clients' stays due to a lack of suitable move-on accommodation, the service was able to support 68 clients throughout the year. Another challenge reported by our Step Down team was the increase in the number of clients coming to us with complex needs, including neurodiverse conditions and/or a history of trauma, but had not been in receipt of any support, further highlighting the need for earlier intervention with appropriate services.

There has been a significant increase in rough sleeper figures in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, with our Outreach service teams both reporting a dramatic rise in clients with severe mental health needs. The teams have faced many challenges this year with a large reduction in funding in Bucks and the loss of emergency beds having a detrimental effect on people who are sleeping rough. Most clients are presenting with complex needs, not only with their health, but also their circumstances, such as the rise in the number of people who have been evicted from their accommodation due to falling behind with their rent payments, highlighting the increasing need for earlier intervention in the form of tenancy sustainment support. As always, our teams have adapted their approach to meet the needs of our local communities, and in Oxfordshire we supported 325 clients into suitable accommodation.

We supported people who were experiencing homelessness through our Adult Homeless Pathway service, providing 80 units of accommodation throughout Oxford, Witney, and Banbury. The service supported 100 clients throughout the year and saw nine individuals move on to long-term accommodation. When speaking to the clients who received support between January – March 2024, 55% saw an improvement in their health and wellbeing, and 28% felt confident enough to start working towards their employment or training journey. We received positive feedback from clients on our Housing First service in Cherwell (Oxfordshire), with 100% of them reporting an improvement in their health and wellbeing. Despite double the number of clients with substance misuse issues, the team have remained committed, adapting their approach to each individual to build up trust and engage well with them.

Our work with ex-offenders in Buckinghamshire has continued to go from strength to strength. We successfully secured additional funding to continue delivering our RESET service and supported 159 individuals to find sustainable accommodation and make positive life choices. The teams are delighted to report a reduction in reoffending amongst the individuals supported. By providing intensive tenancy sustainment support and helping clients to access health services, find employment, education or training opportunities, and link in with the community, they are making a great impact on breaking the cycle of reoffending by helping these individuals to build up positive networks. We have continued our partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire and Thames Valley Partnership to deliver the pilot project 'Restart Thames Valley' helping those leaving prison build successful lives. We supported 40 additional clients this year for up to six months before and up to six months after release to help prevent reoffending. 90% of clients were supported through the gate with intensive support on the day of release to help increase the chance of them successfully reintegrating into society.

CASE STUDY: From Rough Sleeping to Stability - James' Story

James' story is one of moving from experiencing homelessness to hope, where, with help from his Support Worker, he was able to make a fresh start and begin to rebuild his life.

James became homeless due to a relationship breakdown and was found in High Wycombe by our Buckinghamshire Rough Sleeper Outreach Service. This service is aimed at those who are experiencing street homelessness; they verify that people are sleeping rough and then support them on their journey to long-term accommodation.

The Rough Sleeper Outreach Team were able to start helping James straight away. They provided him with a food package and arranged an emergency bedroom within two days of finding him sleeping outside. Whilst in the emergency bedroom, his Support Worker registered him with a GP and attended his initial appointments with him. To help James become more financially independent, the team offered to assist him with his Universal Credit claim as he was not receiving any income at the time, and helped him complete referral applications for supported housing accommodation. Soon after, he found a room in a private rented house share in High Wycombe and was encouraged to apply for the Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, which was successful. This scheme guarantees the deposits required by private landlords to secure a tenancy and is particularly important for our clients as it addresses the challenge where, without a permanent address, it is very difficult to get a job and set up a bank account. This was an important stepping stone for James, helping him to gain more independence and stability in his life.

On the day James moved into the property, our Rough Sleeper Outreach Team were on hand to ensure that everything was in place for him. They helped him move all his belongings and assisted with completing the paperwork required for the move. This included updating his Universal Credit Online Account, ensuring rent was paid directly to the landlord, supporting him with the tenancy agreement, and advising James on further steps to ensure his tenancy was stable and manageable. James was given a 'New Home Starter Pack' to ease his transition, and he was referred to the High Wycombe Central Aid Furniture Project and Helping Hand so he could choose second-hand furniture and white goods for his new accommodation. This gave him a sense of feeling at home – something he had not felt in a long time. To ensure he was not feeling overwhelmed and was comfortable with all the new changes in his life, his Support Worker met with him twice a week to address any concerns or worries he had, as well as helping him with his weekly budgeting.

At this point in James' journey, he was struggling to find work. This really took a toll on his mental health as he enjoys keeping busy and using his time positively. His Support Worker suggested that he start volunteering to find more fulfilment in his life. He applied to volunteer at his local Food Hub, starting off with a couple of shifts a week and progressing to volunteering full-time.

James' confidence has grown tremendously. Through volunteering, he has made new friends and now has two interviews lined up for Performing Arts teaching jobs - a field he worked in for many years before becoming homeless. James is extremely grateful for all the help he has received from Connection Support, and for the skills he has developed. Now, James is looking forward to making the most out of this new beginning.

* Client's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Our Work: Mental Health

Financial challenges, such as the cost-of-living crisis and the rising cost of inflation, are continuing to add pressure to people's daily lives. This heightened stress is leading to poor mental health and contributing to the creation/exacerbation of issues like relationship breakdowns and problems with sustaining tenancies. In turn, this can often lead to homelessness for many individuals. By listening to our clients' individual challenges, we've adapted to ensure that appropriate mental health support is embedded into each of our services.

Our Embedded Housing Workers continued to provide outstanding support at several Oxford Health Foundation Trust hospital sites, reducing the number of patients discharged with no housing provision in place and preventing repeat admission of rough sleepers. To enable successful discharge, the team work closely with medical staff to identify and understand patients' specific housing issues. Our clients' needs continue to become ever more complex, and many have a history of multiple evictions which can create difficulty finding them suitable accommodation. We've seen that the limited availability of accommodation options and delayed responses from local authorities to house individuals are directly impacting hospital discharge. Despite these challenges, we saw a significant reduction of street discharges this year, with 96% of our clients supported into accommodation. We also saw a reduction in the number of previous clients readmitted to hospital.

We supported nearly 300 clients through our Mental Health Support services in Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire this year, with issues around housing, benefits and social inclusion to help them live more independently and avoid homelessness. The teams continued to face external challenges with Local Housing Allowance being too low to cover the rising cost of private rent, landlords selling properties or increasing the rent significantly, and clients relying on Personal Independence Payments to make up their rent shortfalls. There was also a significant increase in male referrals with housing needs following the breakdown of a relationship, and an increase in clients whose elderly parents were not able to support them anymore due to their mental health diagnoses.

Our Out of Hospital Service in Oxfordshire continued to help clients with complex needs avoid repeat admissions to mental health wards. The service has gone from strength to strength and has effectively sustained engagement with clients whose needs have often meant they were unwilling to engage with other mental health services. After seeing a reduction in costs incurred due to fewer hospital admissions, Oxford City Council (the managing partner of the service) successfully secured extension funding, affirming the need for such a service.

In Buckinghamshire, we continued to deliver the SafeHaven+ service providing alternative support to 49 clients, by improving their overall mental health and wellbeing to help them avoid future crises, prevent admission to hospital, and enable them to build a better life. We also continued with our Prevention Matters service to support clients over 18 who are at risk of social isolation due to difficulty leaving the house, feelings of anxiety, loneliness, or recovery from an illness. Over the financial year, our staff and volunteers supported nearly 800 clients by connecting them with social groups, encouraging them to engage with their communities, and linking them with other services for advice and support.

CASE STUDY: Turning the Tide After Two Decades of Struggle – Frankie's Story

Frankie* has struggled with her mental health for over 20 years and had not always received the consistent support she needed, both mentally and physically. She'd had a difficult past, experiencing abusive relationships, drug use, homelessness, and moving frequently. As a result of her difficult experiences, she was feeling depressed, suicidal, lonely, and distrustful.

Everything changed for Frankie when she was referred to our Mental Health Floating Support Service in Milton Keynes and met her Support Worker, Marie. At first, Frankie's support needs were difficult to identify as she was very withdrawn and struggled to maintain contact and conversation. However, it soon became clear that Frankie required urgent mental health support, as she regularly shared incorrect impressions of the world, often shouting these at her Support Worker.

Through Marie's conversations with Frankie's social worker and probation officer, they agreed she would benefit most from support with her mental health, budgeting, and daily living. Marie helped Frankie set some goals, which included helping her get regular medication, and setting up a budget and payment plans, to pay her bills on time. To build trust, Marie made daily contact with Frankie, and they met at least once a week to make her more comfortable with the process.

Once Frankie started taking regular medication, her mental health symptoms swiftly reduced, allowing her and Marie to have meaningful conversations and work together on achieving her goals. Marie submitted a housing application on Frankie's behalf which was accepted by Milton Keynes Council, and helped Frankie complete the necessary paperwork for all the benefits she was entitled to.

CASE STUDY: Turning the Tide After Two Decades of Struggle – Frankie's Story – cont'd

Together, they contacted the companies Frankie owed money to and set up affordable payment plans. They arranged direct debits for companies which Frankie received regular monthly bills from and created a personal budgeting plan for her. This helped Frankie better understand the benefits she received, when they arrived, and which bills needed to be paid each month.

Frankie had not been to a dentist in years, resulting in missing teeth. Marie helped her register with an NHS dentist and supported her through the appointments to get a denture fitted. Frankie was so pleased and said she felt amazing after getting dentures. Marie noticed an immediate and significant boost in Frankie's confidence.

Frankie was known by two surnames and was unsure which one was on her birth certificate. She was encouraged to contact her local council to obtain a copy of her birth certificate and apply for ID under her correct surname.

Through her work with Marie, Frankie has completely turned her life around. Her mental health is stable, and she no longer feels depressed or suicidal. She now manages her finances independently and handles every aspect of her life much better. Frankie no longer requires intensive support due to the progress she's made and has transitioned to bi-weekly support visits. Frankie has said how grateful she is to Connection Support and Marie, as she finally received the help she so desperately needed.

* Client's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Our Work: Family Support

The number of people experiencing a crisis is on the rise, and the origins of these crises often stem from childhood. Parental mentoring can serve as an early intervention method, helping us work in a preventative way with families to create a positive and stable environment for their children.

We've been delivering family support services for several years, most recently we started delivering 'Thrive' in Buckinghamshire. Delivered by Family Liaison Workers, with support from volunteers, we work alongside families, supporting, encouraging and empowering them to build their skills, confidence and parental wellbeing. So far, we've supported 265 children. Initially we were relying on referrals from school, however these dropped off once the summer holidays began. The team adapted their approach and opened referrals up to other professionals, further expanding the service. Throughout the year we have seen an increase in referrals with children who have additional needs, with parents struggling to understand and manage their behavior. More children seem to be hiding their true personalities at school in attempt to fit in ('masking'), instead releasing their frustrations at home. This has given us the opportunity to build relationships with schools, share the challenges the children are having at home, and support with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

We provide Self-Directed Support services in Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, which enables people who need support from social or health care to make their own care arrangements in a way which best suits their personal preferences and unique circumstances. This year we helped 174 people to use their Direct Payment to recruit and employ their own care staff by either identifying an appropriate family member or friend, or by advertising the role on our PA Register. Throughout the year we managed over £1.7m of funds on behalf of clients with disabilities, a quarter of whom are children.

Our Work: Young People

As the complexity of young people's needs grows, so does the need for our services. Poor mental health, learning difficulties, and the breakdown of family relationships leading to the risk of homelessness, all play a role in the increase in demand for support.

Our newly amalgamated service 'HITPad' brought about positive change for both staff and clients. By removing the 24-hour staffing element (that had previously been part of our Padstones project) this encouraged higher levels of independence amongst our young residents. Restructuring the team to suit the new model also allowed staff to work more flexibly, enabling them to further support young people in the community. By the end of the year, the service had accepted 70 new referrals, and 10 residents had moved on after successfully completing their support with us.

Across Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire, we continued to deliver our Young People's Supported Accommodation service (YPSA), helping young people aged 16 – 25 who face homelessness. The team supported 25 young people to move into suitable accommodation, and to transition into mainstream adult life, finding independence through education, training, and employment. Like many of our clients, we saw several people struggling with their mental health. However, by providing one-to-one tailored support, we were able to help them develop life skills, such as cooking, budgeting, looking after their tenancy and paying their bills. Our Support Workers also assisted them with claiming benefits, registering with a local GP, finding employment or training opportunities, and providing much-needed emotional support; helping them to build resilience for future challenges they may face.

Our Work: Refugee Resettlement

Since 2015, we've been providing support for refugees resettling in the UK as part of the Government's resettlement schemes. The families supported are resettled in areas across Oxfordshire and provided with a range of emotional and practical support to help them adapt to different social norms, culture and life in Britain.

Working with families through the whole process, our team greet them at the airport, settle them into their accommodation, and get to work on connecting them with health services and mental health support, schools, English language classes, employment and volunteering opportunities, and local community groups. In the last year we've supported 32 families to resettle and sustain their tenancy. Nine individuals are now in full time employment, and two women were supported in starting their own sewing business to sell clothes at the local market. Half of the male adults were supported to apply for provisional driving licenses and to access funding for driving lessons. Many of whom have gone to pass their theory/practical driving tests, providing them with more job prospects.

Our 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) service in Oxfordshire, delivered in partnership with Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, Asylum Welcome, Edge Housing and SOHA supports individuals who don't currently have access to benefits and housing. The service provides accommodation for clients, offers them mental health support and helps them resolve their immigration status. This year, we've worked with 34 people, with 85% of those taking up either volunteering, education or training opportunities to help them work towards a brighter future.

Following on from the success of our Oxfordshire service, we also set up an NRPF service in Buckinghamshire, after a clear need was identified in this area as well. Partially funded by The Rothschild Foundation, we are currently seeking further funding to continue providing this vital service. The team have faced several challenges this year, finding it extremely difficult to find suitable accommodation for our clients meaning they have had to provide support to clients who were still sleeping rough. They've also noticed an increase in referrals from clients who have previously relied on a spousal visa, but the relationship has since broken down. Our teams have had to adapt their support based on the individual's situation and to be able to continue providing meaningful support.

Drawing on our extensive experience of working with refugees and asylum seekers, we started delivering a service in March 2024 providing family centred support to engage with displaced Ukrainians (under the Homes for Ukraine scheme) – helping them gain the skills and confidence they need to live independently in the UK. We're working in partnership with Refugee Resource to offer practical, social, and mental health support to help them connect with their local area and integrate into their new neighbourhoods. So far, over 400 Ukrainians have accessed this service, and we hope to provide support to many more in the coming months.

CASE STUDY: "I didn't know what would happen to me and my daughters" – Nesrin's Story

I wasn't in my country before coming to the UK. My daughters and I were in a different country going through harsh conditions and pressure. Our lives were all misery and sadness, there was nothing joyful in it, we suffered a lot. I didn't know what would happen to us.

When I heard that my application had been accepted to the UK, I was very happy, and the Connection Support team were the first people I met and began to benefit from their services. When we arrived, a team of five people welcomed me and my daughters. They welcomed us warmly as if they had known us for a long time, and they were smiling and helping us carry our bags. They helped me manage my daily life making contracts with electricity, water and internet, as well as registering with the NHS and booking appointments. Even when I had an accident on the bus, the Team Manager Debbie took great care of me, and her care made me feel like I had a family.

My life is stable now, and I have become more confident, especially after I got a job, and my daughters go to school. I've started to feel a lot safer and more comfortable. I hope to complete the English language levels and be able to study at university. I want to help people just as Connection Support helped me, and I would like to see my eldest daughter achieving her dream of becoming a lawyer.

My daughters and I are so grateful for the Connection Support services, and we are thankful for Debbie and all the Support Workers who helped us.

Our Strategy

This year marks the end of our 2021 – 2024 organisational strategy, focused on providing quality services that meet the needs observed in our communities. This document identified areas where we required more robust infrastructure to support our rapidly growing charity, ensuring we were able to continue delivering high quality services. It also laid out our goals, mission, and values - all of which were developed collaboratively through a series of facilitated conversations with staff members, Board members, leadership, and senior managers, as well as input from clients and volunteers.

Achievements and performance against objectives

In the last year, we have taken considerable steps to ensure all our strategic goals for 2021–2024 were completed in time for the launch of our new 2024-2027 organisational strategy. To do this, we reviewed and refined our strategic goals in January 2023, enabling us to place extra emphasis where needed to successfully deliver the strategy in its entirety.

Our refined goals, including the details of each objective, are listed below, alongside our achievements from the last financial year.

1. Grow to positively impact more lives.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we set out to continue delivering on our track-record of successful retendering and extending contracts, further hone and target our tendering skills and improve our processes. We promised to deliver our marketing and fundraising strategies to further expand our reach, supporting our plans to build our reputation amongst our various target audiences.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We doubled the capacity of the Marketing Team – giving us more resources to raise our profile to further support growth. This decision was also made ahead of the launch of our 2024-2027 organisational strategy, as a huge part of this is focused on enhancing our reputation and external profile with several different audiences.
- Our Fundraising team raised over £668,000 in charitable income (140% increase from the previous financial year) from local and national trusts and foundations, individual donors, and local organisations. With this income, we were able to run projects that would not otherwise exist, such as our No Recourse to Public Funds service, which supports people experiencing homelessness who are not entitled to state-funded benefits and our Thrive service for families in Buckinghamshire.
- We continued our track-record of successful tendering. We retendered for several existing contracts including Integrated Floating Support in Milton Keynes, ARAP and UKRS Migration schemes in Cherwell, Oxfordshire Out of Hospital Care Model – Step Down Service (in collaboration with Homeless Oxfordshire), and Embedded Mental Health Workers.
- We were also successful in funding several new services to add to our growing portfolio – Bearbrook Place, Banbury Beacon, Benefits Specialist Service and Homes for Ukraine.
- We further honed and targeted our tendering skills and improved our processes including developing a pipeline of upcoming contracts, involving those in new areas, and a process to prepare for upcoming tenders further in advance. We have also been analysing and learning from feedback from unsuccessful tenders to improve our responses in the future.
- Identified further specific groups of clients for whom there is no existing provision and developed proposals to meet these.

2. Invest in our infrastructure.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we promised to develop more tools and information to enable frontline workers to deliver for clients. We also promised to continue to assess management/business service capacity alongside organisational growth and proactively manage risk through improved controls and procedures.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We achieved our Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to cyber security and protecting ourselves against online threats.
- We rolled out Office365 and moved to SharePoint, allowing us to collaborate more effectively across our teams, particularly with many staff working remotely.
- We developed department procedures and regular device replacement strategies to build strong systems foundations.
- We began the process of reviewing and defining our requirements for a new database, with the hope that we'll procure this in the next financial year.

3. Ensure clients are directly involved in shaping our work

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we promised to implement client involvement and volunteering strategies to further embed client involvement into our decision making. To help us achieve this, we promised to internally recruit staff members to become Client Involvement Champions –who would actively promote and facilitate client involvement across our teams and services.

What we achieved this financial year:

- After a successful roll out of our Peer Mentoring programme in Milton Keynes, we replicated this programme in Oxfordshire this year to allow previous clients to use their lived experience to act as role models for current clients.
- We recruited several staff to become 'Client Involvement Champions' to help shape the way in which clients are involved in our work.
- We trained more clients to be able to take part in interviews, with the aim of having a client involved in all interviews by 2025.

4. Invest in people development

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we promised to review and follow up on the focus areas coming from our staff engagement survey, such as wellbeing and collaboration, with a view to repeating the survey in 2023. We also committed to enhancing our training and employee benefits, develop a competency system and make salary awards as generous as possible within budget parameters.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We approved a 5% annual salary increase for all staff, as well as increasing employer pension contributions to 5% of earnings.
- We continued to work with Best Companies to deliver our second staff engagement survey. Our response rate increased to 74% and the results helped us identify core areas of focus for us to develop. We were thrilled to be named as the 13th best charity to work for in the UK by their league tables.
- We invested more in the wellbeing of our staff, providing access to online sessions on mindfulness and trauma release. We hosted our first ever Wellbeing Festival giving staff the opportunity to switch off from work and enjoy an afternoon of yoga, meditation, and art therapy.
- Aligned with our values of empowerment and compassion, we continued to share our vacancies with Oxford Health who focus on getting people back into work after having time off due to physical or mental ill-heath, helping us to recruit skilled individuals with lived experience.

5. Develop our housing strategy

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we promised to invest in our housing management capability, develop an estates strategy, review our offices, improve our compliance systems, and maintain a focus on environmental considerations.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We increased capacity in the Estates Team to meet the growing demand of our property portfolio and oversee our supported accommodation provision.
- We began reviewing our offices and transitioning to new psychologically informed spaces – starting with the move of our Head Office to Wolvercote in August 2023. We will be looking at how we can do the same in other areas in the next financial year.
- By the end of FY 24 our property portfolio had increased by 50% and the number of rooms had increased by 49%.

6. Strengthen relationships for improved collaboration

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustees' Report, we promised to purposefully build robust relationships with partners and other stakeholders throughout our geographical areas.

What we achieved this financial year:

- We strengthened our relationship with Homeless Oxfordshire and Aspire by joining together to comment on current affairs – writing a joint open letter to Suella Braverman regarding her comments on homelessness and engaging with local MPs together to influence manifesto pledges ahead of the general election.
- We led the successful application process for Charities Together, an innovative approach to address financial poverty and insecurity in Buckinghamshire which brings together six charities and seven grassroots organisations.

Plans for the future direction of the charity and likely future developments

Launched in April 2024, our new three-year organisational strategy is focused on putting prevention first. Whether it's due to homelessness or poor mental health, the number of people experiencing a crisis is on the rise, and the origins of these crises often stem from childhood. We know that the human and financial cost of the revolving door is intolerable and unnecessary. That's why we're taking the battle against homelessness and poor mental health to its source. We've consulted with clients, staff, and volunteers to ensure our focus stays on the people we support and that we remain committed to our mission of seeing everyone in our community safely and sustainably housed and ensure they can live as independently as possible. These consultations and inputs were integral to the development of our new strategy.

Our vision for 2027 is to be a thought-leader in the prevention of homelessness and mental ill-health, spearheading innovative services that prevent crises from happening, whilst being there to offer client-centred support if they do. We know that demand for support with homelessness and mental health is increasing all the time, and our client referrals are becoming even more complex, so over the next three years, our core work will still meet the current need that we see around us. However, as we move forward, we'll ensure that each of the crisis services we provide have a preventative approach woven in, enabling people to build resilience to avoid future emergencies so that they don't return through a revolving door.

Our passion to increase the positive impact we have on people's lives cannot be delivered without additional financial resource, so we'll be focusing more of our efforts into generating fundraised income. Whilst our core work will still be to deliver statutory services, we'll use this additional fundraised income to design innovative projects that meet the needs in society which existing services aren't currently able to meet. We'll strive to identify new opportunities so that we can avoid turning people away when their work is nearly finished. We'll be here to provide needs-based, not time-based support.

Our team are at the core of everything we do – without them, our support services would cease to exist. It's because of their expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment to helping people that we're able to support our clients achieve incredible milestones. That's why we're investing in our staff in terms of training, remuneration and wellbeing so that we can be an even-better employer, building on our success as one of the best charities to work for.

We believe in a future where people are free from crisis, and effective prevention is the key. But for the times when crises do happen, we'll be there to help every step of the way.

As part of our Prevention First strategy, we have set new objectives grouped into three key themes. The details of these, alongside the planned activities to achieve them, are presented below.

Quality service delivery
We're dedicated to improving the lives of the people we support, and so to continue meeting the needs of our clients, we're developing new ways to ensure we're always providing the highest level of quality.

Some of the planned activities to achieve this are:

- Implement a bespoke quality assurance system to identify where we excel and what could be developed.
- Design a monitoring system to effectively measure the impact of our services to more effectually demonstrate how we support our clients to change their lives.
- Implement a new database to improve processes and gather management information to inspire potential funders.
- Increase the number of high-quality properties that we own and manage so we can offer our clients accommodation that is client-centred and psychologically informed.

Prevention is better than cure
With a renewed focus on prevention, we're seeking opportunities to innovate in the gaps in existing service provision and fundraise for new services so that we can help more clients pave the way to a crises-free future.

Some of the planned activities to achieve this are:

- Focus on prevention
  - Analyse data from our services and explore existing prevention approaches to create our own theory of change.
  - Continue to deliver our core services with our theory of change woven throughout our way of working.

- Innovate in the gaps in provision
  - Identify gaps in existing service provision and fundraise for services to fill them.
  - Find opportunities to replicate our existing successful services in new locations.

- Compelling communication
  - Build our reputation as a thought-leader in the prevention of homelessness and mental ill-health.
  - Mobilise staff, volunteers and clients as proactive ambassadors of our work.
  - Speak out more boldly on issues affecting the people we support.

People, partnership and culture

We're recognised as one of the best charities to work for, and as our people make us who we are, we're doubling down on our efforts to be an ever-improving employer and partner.

Some of the planned activities to achieve this are:

- Reaffirm our commitment to pay our team as generously as we can afford to.
- Build on the progress we have made in our recruitment practices to find and retain great talent.
- Continue to invest in learning and development with emphasis on vocational opportunities.
- Engage with formal partnerships and identify new opportunities to build long-lasting relationships.
- Evolve our values so that they accurately reflect everything we stand for.

Thank You

All that we have achieved this year would have been impossible without our partners, donors, volunteers, and staff – thank you. We are immensely grateful for every donation we receive and would like to say thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy, and financial support to Connection Support over the past year.

We'd also like to thank all our funders:

Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust
Bicester Village
Blenheim Palace
Blockley Lodge
Buckinghamshire Council
Burnham Rotary Club
Carrington Charitable Trust
Cherwell District Council
Christopher Laing Foundation
City of Oxford
Co-op
David Family Foundation
Dorothy Holmes Charitable Trust
Heart of Bucks Community Foundation
John Lewis
L&Q Foundation
NHS
OCVA
One Stop
Oxford Playhouse
Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)
Oxford University
Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Homeless Movement
Oxfordshire Freemasons
Rectory Foundation
Red Kite Community Housing
Rothschild Foundation
Shanly Foundation
Skipton Building Society
St Joseph's Furniture Market
Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust
Tesco Bletchley
The Clare Foundation
The Hobson Charity
The Syder Foundation
The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Charitable Foundation
Thomas Hickman Charity
Vodafone
Wadham College, University of Oxford
Waitrose Aylesbury

Reference and Administrative Details

Connection Support (The Old School, First Turn, Oxford, England, OX2 8AH) is a limited company registered in England and Wales (03072719) and a registered charity in England and Wales (1049740).

Trustees

Richard Allman (Chair)
Emma Duke (Vice Chair)
Mike Wortley
Paul Aston
Helen Amura (appointed 12 July 2023)
Rumbidzai Takundwa (appointed 14 August 2023)
Peter Collingwood (appointed 09 May 2024)
Peter Bayley (appointed 09 May 2024)
Charlotte Dawson (appointed 11 July 2024)
Anne Cooney (resigned 1 May 2023)
Emily Dobell (resigned 30 September 2023)
Luka Winterborne (resigned 26 October 2023)
James Arnold (resigned 11 January 2024)
Liam Moore (resigned 22 March 2024 to become a member of our Management Team)

Secretary

Christopher Keating

Auditors

Critchleys Audit LLP
Beaver House
23 – 38 Hythe Bridge Street
Oxford
OX1 2EP

Structure, Governance and Management

Connection Support is a charitable company, limited by guarantee. It is governed by its Articles of Association, dated 26 May 1995.

The Trustee Board is responsible for the governance of the charity. The Trustee Board delegate the day-to-day management of the charity to Chris Keating, the Chief Executive Officer, who is supported by Amy Delisser, Deputy CEO, Paul Prosser, Operations Director, Dipen Parekh, Business Services Director and Carol Steel, Finance Director.

Each director has taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as a director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information. So far as each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the company's auditors are unaware.

The Board of Trustees

Connection Support is governed by a Board of unpaid Trustees who meet with the staff leadership team every two months. The Board delegates monitoring of financial matters to a Finance Sub-committee, which meets once a quarter and delivery of organisational development initiatives to a Development Sub-committee, which meets every two months. Other committees can be formed on a task-focused basis.

Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, one third of Board members, or if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one third, shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting each year. Any Trustee appointed between Annual General Meetings shall only retain office until the next Annual General Meeting and then shall be eligible for re-election. The Trustees who served the charity during the financial year, alongside Trustees who have recently been appointed, can be viewed on the previous page. In September 2023, James Arnold retired from his position as Chair of the Trustee Board. Richard Allman was elected as Chair, with Emma Duke elected as Vice-Chair.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The Board aims to ensure that a broad range of experience is represented by Trustees, particularly in health, housing, social care, business and finance. A skills audit of Board members is conducted every two years to inform recruitment and succession planning. Detailed information is provided to prospective Trustees, including governing documents, financial accounts, Charity Commission guidance on the responsibilities of Trustees and information about the charity's services. Applicants are invited to an informal discussion with the CEO followed by a formal interview with two Board Members and the CEO. The interview covers the responsibilities of Trustees, in line with Charity Commission guidance and the Charity Code of Governance. References are taken prior to full Board approval of appointment.

Trustees' Induction and Training

New Trustees are provided with information about the charity including its strategy, plans, organisational structure, finances and risk register. New Trustees meet with the CEO for a full briefing on the charity's work and to agree areas of more specific input. Newly appointed Trustees are supported by a mentor from the Board during their induction period. Training opportunities are circulated to Board members as they arise.

Charitable Objectives

To relieve poverty, sickness and distress in people over the age of 16 and living, or about to live, in local authority, housing association or private accommodation (particularly but not exclusively those who have been in care or have been homeless, those who suffer from mental health problems and those with previous or current addiction to drugs or alcohol) through the provision of advice and advocacy services, counselling support and whatever charitable means the Trustees shall decide.

Statement of Public Benefit

The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of Connection Support as set out in this report cover the duty of showing public benefit in line with that guidance. Our principal public benefit is to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence, this includes people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, families, young people, refugees, people who have been homeless, older people and people with an offending background. People who receive support must need this support to enable them to live independently. There is no charge for this support.

Fundraising

Connection Support is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and our fundraising activities comply with the standards set out in the Code of Fundraising Practice. Our fundraising is open, honest, and respectful, and we consider the needs of any donor who may be in vulnerable circumstances or who may need extra support to make an informed decision. We did not receive any complaints related to fundraising during this period.

The charity is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the year. We are delighted to have raised over £668,000 in charitable income from local and national trusts and foundations, individual donors, and local organisations. Fundraised income is used to support projects that would not otherwise exist, such as our No Recourse to Public Funds service, which supports people experiencing homelessness who are not entitled to state-funded benefits and our Thrive service for families in Buckinghamshire.

Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As part of our ongoing commitment to being a truly inclusive organisation, we have implemented an EDEI Development Plan with the support of The Diversity Trust. This plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis and has resulted in the creation of ongoing commitments, such as identifying regular training, encouraging client involvement to shape our work, and setting up networks to support staff needs. Our aim is to ensure that all our staff, clients and volunteers feel welcomed and supported, and feel free to be their authentic selves.

Environment

Connection Support recognises that our work has an impact on the local, regional, and global environment. We are committed to continuously improving our environmental performance by prioritising sustainability, energy efficiency and making the most effective use of resources.

Risk Management

Connection Support has introduced improved risk management processes this year, including a more detailed risk register, which identifies risks and mitigations in the following categories: governance, external, regulatory and compliance, financial and operational. It highlights the 'hottest' risks which need to most urgently be mitigated and the CEO reviews this monthly with the senior management team to proactively build a culture of risk management as well as bringing it to the board on a two-monthly basis.

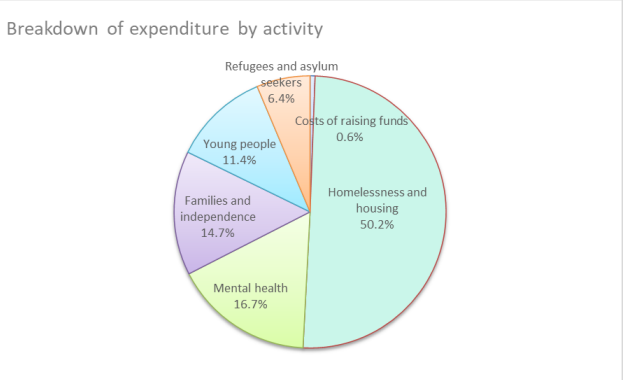
Financial Review

The trustees of Connection Support were pleased to consolidate the financial position of the charity during the year, seeing some local authority contracts frozen or diminishing in value, whilst others were enhanced or extended. Overall, income including gains on investments increased by 2.5% from the prior year to £8,651,053.

We have worked to ensure that our services continue to meet the needs of the people we work with, irrespective of the constraints of statutory funding. As a result, activities supported by fundraising activities continued to grow, with charitable donations and grants growing by 140% this year to £668,375.

Expenditure for the financial year was £8,377,336, including the expenditure of £22,211 brought forward restricted grant income from the prior year. This resulted in a surplus of £273,737, which supports the level of growth necessary to move towards our reserves targets.

We continue to ensure that funds are committed wherever possible to support our charitable work, with 99.4% of organisational expenditure supporting charitable activities (see below).



We are continuing to see huge demand for our services, driven by financial insecurity. We are immensely grateful to the individuals and charitable organisations who donated during the year to help cover rental costs and provide basic household items for those with emergency needs. With their support, we were delighted to have been able to provide direct support for families and individuals worth a total of £190,218.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of Connection Support to maintain free unrestricted reserves (that is, unrestricted reserves not invested in fixed assets or designated for specific purposes) at a target level which can finance at least four months' full payroll and operational costs.

This has been established as the level which provides Connection Support with the financial stability to deliver the organisation's core activities, without compromising the principle that the income received will be used to support the charitable objectives of the organisation wherever possible.

Whilst this reserves policy is designed primarily to satisfy our charitable objectives, the level of four months' reserves additionally provides a window for the Senior Leadership Team to manage cashflow issues, in the event of delays receiving contract or rental income due.
As an additional requirement, Connection Support ensures that unrestricted reserves are maintained at a level which can support the winding up of the organisation in a solvent manner, should this scenario occur. Winding up costs are currently calculated to be £2,323k.

At 31 March 2024 Connection Support held free reserves of £2,402k, sitting between the minimum level of £2,323k and the target level of £2,743k. In addition to this, £223k reserves were designated at the year end to support the installation of a new client database, planned IT investment and planned service expenditure.

Investment policy

Connection Support aims to ensure that it maintains its free reserves in a way which ensures that (i) funds are accessible to support the liquidity of the organisation on a day-to-day basis, whilst also (ii) upholding the value of the organisational balance sheet against rising inflation in the longer term.

To achieve this, the trustees have established a multipronged approach:

- The trustees have planned investment of up to £250,000 per year into organisational development. This has proved successful, yielding a return in diversified income streams and strengthened organisational infrastructure.
- To the extent that reserves are required to support the routine cashflow demands associated with local authority contract funding, funds are held in bank and building society accounts.
- Funds which the Board have set aside to achieve longer term growth, are maintained in an investment fund, designed to return a rate of the Consumer Price Index + 2% over a ten-year period.

In investing funds, the trustees evaluate the security of the funds, the likely return on investment, plus the social, environmental and ethical impacts of prospective investments. The Finance Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees review the performance of investments on a quarterly basis.

Risk management

The Trustees of Connection Support review the organisational risk register every two months, as part of the Board Meeting agenda. They have identified the key organisational risks facing Connection Support, and strategies to manage these risks, as below:

Nature of risk	Risk management strategy
Reduced funding available from local authorities due to post-COVID recession	• Diversification of income streams through Fundraising activities and increased provision of Supported Accommodation. • Stakeholder mapping and engagement to assess potential new contracts and to evaluate prospective risks to existing services.

Nature of risk	Risk management strategy
Societal need far outweighs service capacity	• Proactive communication with local authorities and charitable funders to collaboratively plan a collective response to the current cost of living crisis. • Focus on our own quality and on ensuring our work meets the highest standards of service and efficiency. A full quality review is in progress. • Partnership with other charities and service providers to maximise cost efficiency around service-delivery.
Increasing complexity of client needs, including mental health needs in services which are not funded to support mental health specialists.	• Enhanced training package in place for all staff, with all employees given access to all training, including Mental Health training. • Strong line management of staff to manage client caseload, supported by regular one-to-one supervisions and Reflective Practice sessions. • Employee wellbeing and benefits programme in place to support staff retention. • Dialogue with funders around the increasing volume and complexity of Connection Support's client base.

The financial performance of Connection Support during the reporting period was affected by £37k sunk costs required to repair supported accommodation after damage was incurred in three of the properties we manage. The trustees have set aside a financial provision in the budget for the year ending 31 March 2025 to mitigate against the impact of similar incidents in the future.

There are no additional factors likely to affect the financial performance of Connection Support going forward.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Critchleys Audit LLP be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

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Trustee

Date: 10.10.2024

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Connection Support for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and 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.

CONNECTION SUPPORT

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTION SUPPORT

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Connection Support (the 'Charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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 Charity'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 other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. 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. 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 course of 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 our audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the Trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the Trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate 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 prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustees' responsibilities, the Trustees, who are also the directors of the Charity for the purpose of company law, 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 Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

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

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management, and from our knowledge and experience;
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence where applicable; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the Charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and
- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reviewing relevant correspondence.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council’s website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the 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.



Katherine Wilkes (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Critchleys Audit LLP

10/10/24
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Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Beaver House
23-38 Hythe Bridge Street
Oxford
OX1 2EP

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	**3**	10,320	658,055	668,375	7,404	270,712	278,116
Charitable activities	**4**	7,894,779	61,341	7,956,120	8,061,604	113,590	8,175,194
Investments	**5**	16,502	-	16,502	1,654	-	1,654
Total income		7,921,601	719,396	8,640,997	8,070,662	384,302	8,454,964
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	**6**	51,208	-	51,208	45,258	-	45,258
Charitable activities	**7**	7,584,521	741,607	8,326,128	7,895,033	258,595	8,153,628
Total expenditure		7,635,729	741,607	8,377,336	7,940,291	258,595	8,198,886
Net gains/(losses) on investments	**11**	10,056	-	10,056	(16,957)	-	(16,957)
Net income/(expenditure)		295,928	(22,211)	273,717	113,414	125,707	239,121
Other recognised gains and losses:							
Revaluation of tangible fixed assets		-	-	-	130,000	-	130,000
Net movement in funds	**9**	295,928	(22,211)	273,717	243,414	125,707	369,121
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at beginning of year		2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462	2,215,730	65,611	2,281,341
Fund balances at end of year		2,755,072	169,107	2,924,179	2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

CONNECTION SUPPORT

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	£	2024 £	£	2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**13**		706,399		554,773
Current assets					
Stocks	**14**	3,000		-	
Debtors	**15**	960,778		1,044,555	
Investments	**16**	239,426		224,619	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,712,789		1,601,175	
		2,915,993		2,870,349	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**17**	(698,213)		(774,660)	
Net current assets			2,217,780		2,095,689
Total assets less current liabilities			2,924,179		2,650,462
Net assets excluding pension liability			2,924,179		2,650,462
The funds of the Charity					
Restricted income funds	**19**		169,107		191,318
Unrestricted funds - general			2,402,422		2,190,894
Unrestricted funds - Revaluation reserve			130,000		130,000
Unrestricted funds - Designated funds	**20**		222,650		138,250
			2,924,179		2,650,462

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 10.10.2024



Mr R Allman
Trustee

Company registration number 03072719 (England and Wales)

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	£	2024 £	£	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash generated from operations	**26**		328,962		696,376
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(229,098)		(60,859)	
Purchase of investments		(4,752)		1	
Investment income received		16,502		1,654	
Net cash used in investing activities			(217,348)		(59,204)
Net cash used in financing activities			-		-
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents			111,614		637,172
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			1,601,175		964,003
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			1,712,789		1,601,175

CONNECTION SUPPORT

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Connection Support is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is The Old School, First Turn, Wolvercote, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 8AH.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity's constitution, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "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 (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The Charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the Charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

The Trustees have not identified any material uncertainties about the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Board of Trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the Charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Income received by the way of grants, donations and gifts is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the Charity, are recognised when the Charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure represents amounts invoiced, including value added tax which cannot be recovered.

Support costs are allocated per service according to the Full Time Equivalent number of staff working on each service.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful economic lives on the following bases:

Buildings	2% straight line
Leasehold improvements	Over the life of the lease
Acommodation furnishings & office equipment	25% reducing balance
Computer Equipment	25% reducing balance

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

When Connection Support furnishes a new unit of supported accommodation, set-up purchases are treated as a single asset and depreciated accordingly. This is intended to maintain consistency of practice with the depreciation on furniture and fittings claimed through Housing Benefit for supported accommodation.

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is credited or charged to income or expenditure.

1.7 Current asset investments

Investments are measured at fair value at the year end date.

Investments are classified as current when they can be converted into cash within one year. The Charity has either decided to sell the investments within one year or is undecided about the long-term strategy regarding investments.

1.8 Stocks

Stocks represent donated goods. See Note 1.14,

1.9 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.10 Financial instruments

The Charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 ‘Basic Financial Instruments’ and Section 12 ‘Other Financial Instruments Issues’ of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the Charity's balance sheet when the Charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors, are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.11 Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Irrecoverable VAT

All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended in relation to which it was incurred.

1.12 Retirement benefits

The Charity operates a money purchase (defined contribution) pension scheme. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the income and expenditure account in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the Charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

1.13 Leases

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

1.14 Donated goods

Donated goods are measured at their fair value. Goods donated for distribution to our clients are valued at the equivalent of the fair market value at the time of receipt and recognised as stock, with the corresponding income recognised within donations. When the stocks are distributed, they are recognised as an expense in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Connection Support benefits from the contribution of unpaid general volunteers but has not recognised this in its accounts, owing to the absence of a reliable measurement basis.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the Charity's accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated 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 where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical judgements

The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Fixed Asset Depreciation

Depreciation was calculated based on management's estimate of the useful economic lives of tangible fixed assets. During the year ended 31 March 2024, depreciation totaled £73,186 (2023: £22,796).

Fixed Asset valuation

Properties are originally valued at cost. Residential properties are then revalued every five years, to ensure a reasonably accurate reflection of market value.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Donations and grants						
Donations	10,320	15,078	25,398	7,404	235,712	243,116
Grants to support client living costs and welfare	-	33,180	33,180	-	-	-
Grants funding the provision of charitable services	-	560,222	560,222	-	8,000	8,000
Grants funding client accommodation	-	27,075	27,075	-	-	-
Gifts in kind	-	22,500	22,500	-	27,000	27,000
	10,320	658,055	668,375	7,404	270,712	278,116

Donated goods

Gifts in kind consists of donated SIM cards to be distributed to clients.

4 Charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Charitable income: service contracts		
Buckinghamshire County Council	1,621,416	1,983,670
Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust	-	45,000
Cherwell District Council	307,652	262,484
Milton Keynes Council	1,413,547	1,313,943
Oxford City Council	746,367	484,871
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	490,586	439,890
Oxfordshire County Council	1,853,090	1,884,430
Oxfordshire Mind	-	148,262
South Oxfordshire District Council	15,129	61,069
South Staffs and Shrops Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	54,212	54,210
Thames Valley Police	165,181	162,714
Vale of White Horse District Council	13,110	47,409
Other contract income	5,031	53,444
Other charitable income:		
Housing income	1,219,116	1,206,399
Payment services for private clients	37,154	27,399
Recharge expenditure	14,529	-
	7,956,120	8,175,194
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds - general	7,894,779	8,061,604
Restricted funds	61,341	113,590
	7,956,120	8,175,194

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Income from listed investments	5,039	-
Interest receivable	11,463	1,654
	16,502	1,654

6 Expenditure on Raising Funds

	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds general 2023 £
Raising funds		
Website & publicity	161	199
Staff costs	49,163	44,994
Travel	515	65
Investment management	1,369	-
	51,208	45,258

7 Charitable activities

	Homelessness and housing support	Mental health support	Families and independence	Young people	Refugees and asylum seekers	Total 2024	Total 2023
	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024		
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Depreciation and impairment	17,049	-	-	19,741	-	36,790	16,315
Staff costs	2,733,612	1,196,045	1,021,427	362,794	346,026	5,659,904	5,977,504
Housing costs	833,491	-	-	498,482	23,250	1,355,223	1,070,200
Direct client support	171,194	14,378	101,738	15,506	88,008	390,824	270,312
	3,755,346	1,210,423	1,123,165	896,523	457,284	7,442,741	7,334,331
Share of support costs (see note 8)	444,013	184,541	112,918	55,028	73,987	870,487	806,397
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	6,815	2,612	1,860	687	926	12,900	12,900
	4,206,174	1,397,576	1,237,943	952,238	532,197	8,326,128	8,153,628
Analysis by fund							
Unrestricted funds - general	4,043,912	1,384,535	871,987	937,801	346,286	7,584,521	7,895,033
Restricted funds	162,262	13,041	365,956	14,437	185,911	741,607	258,595
	4,206,174	1,397,576	1,237,943	952,238	532,197	8,326,128	8,153,628

7 Charitable activities **(Continued)**

For the year ended 31 March 2023

	Homelessness and housing support	Mental health support	Families and independence	Young people	Refugees and asylum seekers	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Depreciation and impairment	10,749	-	-	5,566	-	16,315
Staff costs	2,918,016	1,073,409	995,222	643,686	347,171	5,977,504
Housing costs	700,166	45,053	-	324,981	-	1,070,200
Direct client support	179,023	576	74	9,271	81,368	270,312
	3,807,954	1,119,038	995,296	983,504	428,539	7,334,331
Share of support costs (see note 8)	388,702	169,193	128,520	47,584	72,398	806,397
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	6,120	2,889	2,369	537	985	12,900
	4,202,776	1,291,120	1,126,185	1,031,625	501,922	8,153,628

7 Charitable activities **(Continued)**

Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds - general	4,122,142	1,290,579	1,115,557	1,022,589	344,166	7,895,033
Restricted funds	80,634	541	10,628	9,036	157,756	258,595
	4,202,776	1,291,120	1,126,185	1,031,625	501,922	8,153,628

8 Support costs allocated to activities

	2024	2023
	£	£
Depreciation	36,396	6,481
Travel and subsistence	162,416	158,954
Office costs	311,086	274,468
Insurance	32,986	27,707
Consultancy and legal fees	33,429	23,912
IT and communications	279,842	299,689
Bank charges	5,387	3,962
Other costs	8,945	11,224
Governance costs	12,900	12,900
	883,387	819,297
Analysed between:		
Homelessness	450,828	394,822
Mental health support	187,153	172,082
Families & independence	114,778	130,889
Young people	55,715	48,121
Refugees and asylum seekers	74,913	73,383
	883,387	819,297

Governance costs includes payments to the auditors of £12,900 (2023- £12,900) for audit fees.

9 Net movement in funds

	2024	2023
	£	£
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the audit of the Charity's financial statements	12,900	12,900
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	73,186	22,796
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	4,287	5,535
Operating lease charges	1,090,265	905,718

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2024	2023
	Number	Number
	198	208

10 Employees **(Continued)**

Employment costs	**2024**	**2023**
	£	**£**
Wages and salaries	4,926,130	5,330,433
Social security costs	401,186	453,732
Other pension costs	173,958	138,000
Training	46,727	45,115
Recruitment	36,951	23,359
Agency fees	87,025	-
Other staff costs	42,578	-
	5,714,555	5,990,639

Redundancy and termination payments totalling £48,941 (2023: £30,374) were made in the reporting period. This consists of £21,120 redundancy payments, plus termination payments and payments in lieu of notice totalling £27,821.

Other than 1.2 full time equivalent staff members dedicated to fundraising activities during the year ended 31 March 2024, all employees were involved in the delivery of the Charity's objects. (2023 - all employees involved in charitable activities, other than 1.0 full time equivalent fundraisers.)

The number of employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000 is as follows:

	2024	**2023**
	Number	**Number**
£60,001 to £70,000	1	1
£70,001 to £80,000	-	1
£80,001 to £90,000	1	-

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

	2024	**2023**
	£	**£**
Aggregate compensation	340,313	315,443

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise the Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the Business Services Director and the Finance Director. The Trustees receive no remuneration.

11 Gains and losses on investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024	Unrestricted funds 2023
Gains/(losses) arising on:	£	£
Revaluation of investments	10,056	(16,957)

12 Taxation

The Charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

13 Tangible fixed assets

	Buildings	Leasehold improvements	Assets under construction	Accommodation furnishings & office equipment	Computer Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Cost or valuation						
At 1 April 2023	523,390	-	-	165,523	102,434	791,347
Additions	1,300	38,050	27,756	75,349	86,643	229,098
Disposals	-	-	-	(34,317)	-	(34,317)
At 31 March 2024	524,690	38,050	27,756	206,555	189,077	986,128
Depreciation and impairment						
At 1 April 2023	30,368	-	-	122,543	83,662	236,573
Depreciation charged in the year	10,494	7,610	-	29,582	25,500	73,186
Eliminated in respect of disposals	-	-	-	(30,030)	-	(30,030)
At 31 March 2024	40,862	7,610	-	122,095	109,162	279,729
Carrying amount						
At 31 March 2024	483,828	30,440	27,756	84,460	79,915	706,399
At 31 March 2023	493,022	-	-	42,980	18,771	554,773

Land and buildings with a carrying amount of £466,174 were revalued at 14th March 2023 on the basis of market value.

At 31 March 2024, had the revalued assets been carried at historic cost less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses, their carrying amount would have been approximately £330,000 (2023 - £337,500).

The revaluation surplus is disclosed in Note 20.

14 Stocks

	2024	2023
	£	£
Donated goods	3,000	-

15 Debtors

	2024	2023
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Grants due	641,478	836,300
Housing income due	153,763	82,365
Prepayments and other debtors	165,537	125,890
	960,778	1,044,555

16 Current asset investments

	2024	2023
	£	£
Listed investments	239,426	224,619

17 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2024	2023
		£	£
Other taxation and social security		87,570	113,977
Deferred income: grants	**18**	110,221	347,396
Trade creditors		265,405	113,724
Other creditors		36,669	38,154
Accruals and deferred income		198,348	161,409
		698,213	774,660

Other creditors includes £33,243 (2023: £27,212) in respect of pension commitments.

18 Government grants

Grants have been deferred when they have been received before the year end but are for a specific purpose and time period after the year end.

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	110,221	347,396
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 April 2023	347,396	119,741
Released from previous periods	(318,978)	(119,741)
Resources deferred in the year	81,803	347,396
Deferred income at 31 March 2024	110,221	347,396

19 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the Charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 April 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2024 £
Rough Sleeper Accommodation	28,686	11,240	(27,595)	12,331
Ex-Offender Accommodation	57,340	50,100	(80,857)	26,583
Buckinghamshire NRPF service	14,331	10,000	(11,594)	12,737
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Support	-	103,893	(103,893)	-
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Subsistence	-	38,651	(38,651)	-
OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Housing Management	-	27,075	(27,075)	-
Thrive family support service	-	223,269	(221,872)	1,397
Charities together service	-	130,922	(130,922)	-
Refugee Support service, Oxfordshire	-	3,700	(3,700)	-
Homelessness prevention services	-	12,000	-	12,000
Grants supporting client living costs and welfare	35,855	32,180	(34,138)	33,897
Client training support	7,459	-	(3,394)	4,065
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund	30,000	-	-	30,000
Volunteering activities to support services	-	39,787	(32,817)	6,970
Donations to support client living costs and welfare	17,647	14,079	(5,599)	26,127
Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients	-	22,500	(19,500)	3,000
	191,318	719,396	(741,607)	169,107

19 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

Previous year:	At 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
	-	-	2	2
Rough Sleeper Accommodation	-	33,590	(4,904)	28,686
Ex-Offender Accommodation	3,805	54,999	(1,464)	57,340
Buckinghamshire NRPF service	3,210	24,704	(13,584)	14,330
OCF Supporting NRPF clients in Oxfordshire	4,207	134,428	(138,635)	-
Thrive family support service	-	10,025	(10,025)	-
Homelessness prevention services	-	1,205	(1,205)	-
Grants supporting client living costs and welfare	41,479	38,517	(44,141)	35,855
Client training support	-	8,000	(541)	7,459
Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund	-	30,000	-	30,000
Donations to support client living costs and welfare	12,910	21,834	(17,098)	17,646
Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients	-	27,000	(27,000)	-
	65,611	384,302	(258,595)	191,318

19 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

Rough Sleeper Accommodation
Funds to cover deposits and rent in advance, enabling rough sleepers to move into a rented home

Ex-Offender Accommodation
Funds to cover deposits and rent in advance, enabling ex-offenders to move into a rented home

Buckinghamshire NRPF service
Supporting people who do not have access to state-funded benefits or housing in Buckinghamshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Support
Supporting people who do not have access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Subsistence
Direct subsistence and local travel support for people with no access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

OHM NRPF Project 2023-2024 Housing Management
Housing management support for people with no access to state-funded benefits or housing in Oxfordshire

Oxford Community Foundation
Funds to support the Oxfordshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

Thrive family support service
Initiative working alongside families in Buckinghamshire to support parenting and family wellbeing

Charities Together service
Joint initiative in Buckinghamshire, working with community groups to support people affected by financial insecurity

Refugee Support service, Oxfordshire
Providing household items and activities for refugee families

Homelessness prevention services
Providing life tools and support to rough sleepers, so they can live independently in their own rented home

Grants supporting living costs and welfare
Funding to support individuals with essential household costs

Client training support
Funding for training courses and counselling for people recovering from addiction

Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance training fund
Fund held on behalf of the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance to support training for group members

Volunteering activities to support services
Supporting volunteering activities and client involvement with the development of Connection Support's services

Donations to support client living costs and welfare
Donations to support individuals with essential household costs

Gifts in Kind - SIM cards for clients
Mobile phone SIM cards held for distribution to clients

20 Designated funds

The unrestricted funds of the Charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the Trustees for specific purposes.

	Balance at 1 April 2022	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2023	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Support for systems development in 2022-4	106,600	31,650	138,250	-	138,250
Planned service expenditure	-	-	-	26,400	26,400
Laptop and mobile phone replacement	-	-	-	48,000	48,000
Office building works	-	-	-	10,000	10,000
Revaluation reserves	-	-	130,000	-	130,000
	106,600	31,650	268,250	84,400	352,650

21 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024	Restricted funds 2024	Total 2024
	£	£	£
At 31 March 2024:			
Tangible assets	706,399	-	706,399
Current assets/(liabilities)	2,048,673	169,107	2,217,780
	2,755,072	169,107	2,924,179

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023
	£	£	£
At 31 March 2023:			
Tangible assets	554,773	-	554,773
Current assets/(liabilities)	1,904,371	191,318	2,095,689
	2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462

22 Operating lease commitments

At the reporting end date the Charity had outstanding commitments for future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases, which fall due as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Within one year	478,538	386,220
Between two and five years	315,335	40,702
	793,873	426,922

Amounts recognised as an expense during the period in respect of operating lease arrangements are £1,090,265 (2023: £905,718)

23 Funding received as agent for clients

Connection Support received charitable grant funding as agent on behalf of clients to support welfare purchases. Funds are held on behalf of clients as below.

	2024	2023
	£	£
Balance at 1 April	10,942	14,987
Historical balances repaid or transferred to welfare in year	(5,506)	(14,234)
Receipt of client funds	37,088	50,823
Payment of client funds	(39,098)	(40,634)
Balance at 31 March	3,426	10,942

24 Trustee Remuneration, Key Management Personnel & Related Party Transactions

No member of the Board of Trustees received any remuneration during the year.
The Trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the Charity in the year (2023: Nil).
No Trustees were reimbursed for travel expenses during the year (2023: Nil).
No Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the Charity (2023: Nil).
One trustee made a £350 donation to the Charity in the year (2023: 1 trustee made a £400 donation)

No Trustee or other person related to the Charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the Charity during the year.

25 Analysis of changes in net funds

The Charity had no material debt during the year.

26	Cash generated from operations	2024	2023
		£	£
	Surplus for the year	273,717	239,121
	Adjustments for:		
	Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(16,502)	(1,654)
	Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	4,287	5,535
	Fair value gains and losses on investments	(10,056)	16,957
	Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	73,186	22,796
	Movements in working capital:		
	(Increase) in stocks	(3,000)	-
	Decrease in debtors	83,777	161,628
	Increase in creditors	160,728	24,338
	(Decrease)/increase in deferred income	(237,175)	227,655
	Cash generated from operations	328,962	696,376

27 Prior period adjustment

The fixed asset revaluation gain in the prior year was reclassified to comply with the Charities SORP.

Changes to the balance sheet

	At 31 March 2023		
	As previously reported	Adjustment	As restated
	£	£	£
Capital funds			
Income funds			
Restricted funds	191,318	-	191,318
Unrestricted funds	2,459,144	-	2,459,144
Total equity	2,650,462	-	2,650,462

Changes to the income and expenditure account

	Period ended 31 March 2023		
	As previously reported	Adjustment	As restated
	£	£	£
Other income	130,000	(130,000)	-
Revaluation of fixed assets	-	130,000	130,000
Net movement in funds	369,121	-	369,121

Appendix: Overview of our services

Homelessness and Housing

Adult Homeless Pathway (Oxfordshire) - Providing accommodation and support to single homeless people over 18 across North Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and Oxford City. We have 80 rooms in a mixture of shared houses in Oxford, Witney, and Banbury in which we can support clients to help them build skills and move onto long-term independent living. When moving on from the pathway, 12 weeks resettlement support is also offered to support people with the transition and settle them into their new homes.

Banbury Beacon (Oxfordshire) - The Beacon Centre in Banbury is a safe, warm, and non-judgmental space for homeless and isolated people in Banbury and the surrounding area. We provide food and hot drinks, as well as the chance to meet other people who are experiencing similar circumstances. Our Support Workers are on hand to provide a listening ear, as well as practical advice and support. There are also occasional visits from other support agencies to discuss housing, and drug and alcohol issues.

Benefits Specialist Service (Oxfordshire) - This service is for people who live in the city of Oxford – single people and couples without children who have previously slept rough. We provide support with claiming benefits and maximising income.

Embedded Housing Workers (Oxfordshire) - EHWs are located at several Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust hospital sites to reduce the number of patients who have extended stays in hospital because, although they are medically well enough to be discharged, they either have no housing provision, or there are barriers to them returning to their own accommodation. They work with medical teams to identify and understand patients' housing issues, ensure presentations to local housing authorities are done in a managed way and monitor and report on outcomes. They also work with multiple teams and agencies to prevent repeated admission of rough sleepers.

Housing First (Oxfordshire) - Housing First provides a home and intensive support to former rough sleepers in the Cherwell District during their journey from rough sleeping to a more settled lifestyle within their own home and to improve their health and wellbeing.

Housing Support Service (Oxfordshire) - The service is delivered by floating support workers, using a person-centred approach, to enable clients who are at risk of homelessness maintain their tenancies and access services to avoid encountering homelessness. The team supports and equips clients with the tools to manage their money, navigate benefits, be independent and avoid homelessness.

One Recovery Bucks (Buckinghamshire) - ORB provides support with rented accommodation for people over the age of 18 who are doing well in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction (they must have abstained for at least 3 months). Pre-tenancy support is provided, alongside guidance on sustaining a tenancy and help with budgeting, accessing benefits, paying bills, training opportunities and employment. We have 20 flats across the county.

Reset (Thames Valley) - Support for ex-offenders to access accommodation and make positive life choices to reduce the risk of them reoffending and returning to prison. The team provides support with finding accommodation, tenancy sustainment, accessing benefits, training, education, and employment opportunities, help with physical or mental health issues or substance abuse.

Rough Sleeper Outreach and Rough Sleeper Initiative (Buckinghamshire) - Our Rough Sleeper Outreach Service enables rough sleepers to build a better future beyond street life. We support people sleeping rough in Buckinghamshire to find more settled accommodation and receive the benefits they are entitled to. We enable them to access health, addiction, and other support services relevant to their individual needs. This service also has a tenancy sustainment element, which provides life tools and support to rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire, so they can live independently in their own rented home. We help clients manage their money – rental payments, bills, budgeting, access to benefits, training, routes to employment, and access support for mental and physical health issues.

Rough Sleeper Outreach (Oxfordshire) - The Oxfordshire Outreach Team covers the North, South & Vale and West districts of the county by verifying rough sleepers at their bedded down site and motivating and engaging with people to support them in finding suitable accommodation. The team offers support with improving their safety, and provides information to access benefits, housing options, tenancy rights, mental health services, medical, and substance misuse services. They also help them to develop practical life skills, to work towards living independently.

Step Down Housing (Oxfordshire) - Short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from the Oxfordshire University or Oxfordshire Foundation Trust Hospitals but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. This includes people who are homeless, have a history of drug/alcohol misuse, people who have no recourse to public funds or issues with their immigration status, those fleeing domestic violence, or people with mobility issues. We appoint Embedded Housing Workers (see service above) into the hospitals to upskill medical staff and social workers about the complexities of housing these patients.

Tenancy Ready (Oxfordshire) - This project is to help tenants in Oxfordshire understand what the expectations are around managing and sustaining a tenancy either through social housing or the private sector. Renting a home of your own can be both exciting and a bit scary, but it can work really well. The key is to prepare for it properly. This means learning how to find somewhere you can afford, what your rights and responsibilities are and how to manage your money. This course helps you find out everything you need to know.

Tenancy Sustainment Service (Oxfordshire) - Our Tenancy Sustainment Service provides life tools and support to rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire, so they can live independently in their own rented home. We will help clients manage their money – rental payments, pay bills, budgeting, access to benefits, training, routes to employment, and access to support for mental and physical health issues.

Mental Health

Mental Health Intensive Support Service (Oxfordshire) - Support for up to five people with the highest and most complex mental health needs and who have not succeeded at independent living in the past. This client group have a history of street homelessness and require intensive support to gain the most basic life skills to enable them to adapt to living indoors, set up home and maintain a tenancy.

Mental Health Support Service (Oxfordshire) - As part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership we provide focused support for between 6 to 24 months to help people with severe and enduring mental health issues move forward. Offering support around housing, benefits and social inclusion, this supports recovery and enables the clients to live more independently. Some of the team are embedded in the Adult Mental Health Teams to identify and support those patients who present with housing needs straight away.

Mental Health Support Service (Milton Keynes) - We offer housing related-support to help clients with mental health needs to avoid homelessness or to sustain a tenancy and maintain their independence. It's a flexible service, which will meet with clients in the local community or in their home. Support moves with them wherever they go and the service complements and works in partnership with any statutory or voluntary agency where our support cannot wholly meet the needs of the individual. 'Windrush' is also part of this service – independent supported accommodation for clients with Autism.

Out of Hospital (Oxfordshire) - Our specialist support workers partner with a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, social workers, and housing officers to support people with complex mental health who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness). They work to help people to move on from hospital to settled accommodation and prevent them returning to hospital in the future by solving housing and other linked issues to give them increased stability.

Prevention Matters (Buckinghamshire) - Prevention Matters supports people over the age of 18 who are struggling to remain independent in their own home, having difficulty getting out and about, recovering from an illness or feeling lonely, isolated or anxious. The Support Workers help them to regain their confidence and maintain their independence.

SafeHaven+ (Buckinghamshire) - Working alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, Oasis Partnership and Adult Mental Health Teams, this service provides support to adults with mental health issues and potentially complex needs. The project aims to avoid crisis and admission to hospital and improve overall mental health and wellbeing. Connection Support's role is to provide intensive support specifically related to housing.

Family Support

Direct Payment Support Services (Milton Keynes) - In some circumstances, social or health care users can be given money in the form of a Direct Payment from their local authority to commission their own services which enables disabled people to tailor their own care arrangements that suit their unique circumstances and lifestyle. Where local authorities may tend to offer, for example access to a day centre, individuals might prefer to meet friends for lunch, to go fishing, or attend a local gym, but need support to do so. This service supports the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice and offering a Payroll Service to process payslips and administrate HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

Direct Payment Support Services (Oxfordshire) - Our Direct Payment and Employment Support Service in Oxfordshire works alongside people receiving a Direct Payment to provide information, advice and support in all aspects of using a Direct Payment and becoming an employer of personal assistants (PAs).

Thrive (Buckinghamshire) - Thrive provides support to families in specific areas in Aylesbury and High Wycombe. Delivered by a team of Family Liaison Workers, and supported by volunteer parenting mentors, peer mentors and family advocates, we work alongside families, supporting, encouraging and empowering them to build their skills, confidence, and parental wellbeing to create a stable positive environment for their children. We offer a tailored programme of support to each family, based on listening to their social, emotional, educational and health needs which include, but are not limited to, substance dependency, domestic violence, learning difficulties, social exclusion, and lack of parenting skills.

Young People

Housing Interaction Trust (Buckinghamshire) - Our HIT service provides support and accommodation to young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We have twelve units of accommodation specifically to support those who have nowhere else to go. We also offer support to repair family relationships, help with general household skills, budget and managing finances, maintaining personal health, preparing for independent accommodation, and managing personal and emotional matters. At the beginning of the financial year, this service was amalgamated with our Padstones Supported Accommodation service to form 'HITPad'.

Padstones Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire) - Padstones prevents young people (aged 16-25) becoming homeless by providing accommodation along with visiting support. The team empower young people and develop their resilience, skills and knowledge to prevent the risk of homelessness arising again. It provides a safe and secure environment for residents to develop their potential and move towards more independent living. Accommodation is in two small residential projects in Burnham and High Wycombe, and young people have a key worker for one-to-one support. For young people ready to move on from the higher support units, Padstones offers other accommodation with lower-level support. At the beginning of the financial year, this service was amalgamated with our Housing Interaction Trust (HIT) service to form 'HITPad'.

Young People's Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) - YPSA provides supported accommodation in Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire for young people (aged 16-25 years) leaving care. Young people referred to us by Oxfordshire County Council are provided with their own accommodation and regular visits from a Support Worker to help them gain confidence in living independently.

Refugee Resettlement

Homes for Ukraine (Oxfordshire) – Our Homes for Ukraine service is our most recent Oxfordshire-based partnership, and it's delivered in collaboration with Refugee Resource. The service is dedicated to helping displaced Ukrainians who have come to the UK under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, helping them to gain the skills and confidence they need to live independently in the UK.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Buckinghamshire) - Providing support to people experiencing homelessness in Buckinghamshire who do not have access to state-funded benefits and housing. People in this situation are often not allowed to work, neither are they eligible for benefits, nor allowed to use public services except for basic health care. This leaves them at high risk of abuse and exploitation. The aim is to help people get their lives back on track. We help them access the support & advice they need to resolve their immigration status. This is often a very difficult process which can take several years.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Oxfordshire) - Helping people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing. This project is funded by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, and the aim is to provide tailored support to allow this group to become self-sufficient and take practical steps to rebuild their lives. We work in partnership with Asylum Welcome to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness. Working with local housing association SOHA and Edge Housing, we can offer these clients dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters including their immigration status and help them to get their lives back on track.

Refugee Resettlement (Oxfordshire) - This service is for refugees resettling in the UK as part of Government's sponsored resettlement schemes. The families supported live in the Cherwell District area of Oxfordshire, and we provide a range of emotional and practical support to help the families settle into everyday life. The team supports families mostly coming from the Middle East and Africa to manage the transition from living in camps and unsettled accommodation to making a home in Oxfordshire and help them to adapt to different social norms and legal frameworks. We work with them through the whole process from airport pick up (or accompanied arrival to the property) to the point they can live independently and manage their tenancy without the need for support. The team connects the families to health services and mental health support, schools, English language classes, employment and volunteering opportunities and local community groups. Working alongside volunteers they also provide information about culture and life in Britain to enable them to make those steps towards living a settled life in the UK.

Connection Support

England & Wales - Charity number 1049740

Accounts

Charity registration number 1049740

Company registration number 03072719 (England and Wales)

CONNECTION SUPPORT

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

CONNECTION SUPPORT

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr R Allman Mr J Arnold Mr P Aston (Appointed 22 May 2022) Mrs E Dobell Mrs E Duke (Appointed 14 July 2022) Mr L Moore (Appointed 29 September 2022) Mr L Winterborne (Appointed 14 May 2022) Mr M Wortley Mrs H Amura (Appointed 12 July 2023) Ms R L Takundwa (Appointed 14 August 2023)
Secretary	Mr C Keating
Charity number	1049740
Company number	03072719
Principal address	The Old School First Turn Oxford OX2 8AH
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CONNECTION SUPPORT

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FY 2022 – 2023 Annual Trustee Report

Connection Support

Chief Executive's Statement

Towards the end of this year, I sat in a team meeting listening to Support Workers seek advice from one another on how to best provide support to clients with increasingly complex needs. I couldn't help but feel bowled over by the intensity and complexity of each case and how well-equipped each team member was to meet their clients' significant needs. Reflecting on what I'd heard, it struck me that every day, we stand by our mission to work alongside people to overcome life's challenges. Our interventions truly are changing each of our clients' lives for the better. For that, I have nothing but gratitude for our staff and volunteers - and our clients too - for putting their trust in us as we help them pave the way to a brighter future.

At one point, however, this brighter future felt like a distant hope. With the country stifled by austerity and the third sector severely impacted, it would have been easy to believe that growth was impossible. But instead, we sought to be a voice of hope and change. With many of our clients at a crisis point with their mental health, we recognised that people needed our support now more than ever - so we pushed forward. We began to deliver more services, we secured additional bed spaces, and we continued to expand our reach. This growth helped us to receive recognition for our vital work, with our Step Down Housing Service nominated for a Homeless Link Excellence Award. I'm also incredibly grateful that we, alongside our partners Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM), Aspire, Edge Housing and Asylum Welcome, received enough philanthropic support to continue our service that helps those with no recourse to public funds – resulting in far higher numbers having their asylum claims granted.

This year, our ongoing pursuit of safely and sustainably housing those in our community saw us provide crucial support for over 5,000 people, and it's this perseverance that will help us to continue to evolve in the coming years. I'm incredibly passionate about giving our clients a voice by directly involving them in shaping our work, and one way we were able to do that was by launching our Peer Mentoring Initiative - where former clients use their lived experience to support people going through issues they've recently overcome. It's a fantastic initiative, and I'm looking forward to seeing how we can develop it further by broadening it out across the other communities we work in.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, we recognised that the increasing complexity of our clients' needs placed additional strain on our teams, so we made an overt commitment to developing a staff well-being policy. We created additional opportunities to listen to their needs, including collaborating with Best Companies to deliver our first staff engagement survey. The results from this have been instrumental in identifying core areas of focus for us to develop. Based on the responses, Best Companies also named Connection Support as one of the top 25 charities to work for in the UK – a fantastic achievement that I'm thrilled to share.

I'm grateful to the Board for their ongoing commitment and support, and I feel truly privileged to lead this organisation into next year. I have no doubt that there will be challenges, but if this year is anything to go by, we'll emerge stronger than before.

Chris Keating
Chief Executive Officer

Chair of the Trustee Board's Statement

As a charity, we are committed to working diligently to alleviate the crises our clients face. Throughout the year, we continued our work across homelessness and housing support, mental health, family support, young people, and refugee resettlement.

Since joining the Board of Trustees in 2018, I have seen how austerity measures and times of economic uncertainty can exacerbate the inequalities our clients face, and this past financial year has been no different. The impact of both the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis had a profound effect on our clients, but the time spent last financial year revisiting our strategic priorities and developing new service models meant we were well-equipped to handle the increase in complexities. This year, we significantly invested in our infrastructure and people development, which enabled us to persevere through the economic difficulties and continue to provide quality support to those in need. We recruited an Estates team to manage our supported accommodation, invested in our IT systems to help reduce inefficiencies, and developed our fundraising to enable us to generate greater levels of welfare funding. We also provided a one-off payment to all staff members to assist them during the cost-of-living crisis.

Despite the challenging economic landscape, we continued to deliver our 32 primary services across the three localities we serve, and we saw our income grow by 14%. We continued to foster effective partnerships by collaborating with government agencies, local authorities, trusts, and other charities, and we continued to diversify our income sources allowing us to meet the growing needs of our communities.

Over the past 12 months, we have seen demand for our services increase and I am humbled by the perseverance of those involved in ensuring support was available when people needed it. I want to take this opportunity to thank James Arnold for his time as Chair of the Trustee Board, and to my colleagues on the Board for entrusting me to take over the mantle since James' retirement as Chair in September 2023. I would also like to thank Chris Keating, Chief Executive Officer, for his continued commitment to leading Connection Support through this challenging time, as well as all the staff and volunteers for their dedication to supporting our clients.

Finally, I want to thank our supporters and donors. Their generosity is nothing short of incredible and it has allowed us to continue changing the lives of the people we support.

Richard Allman
Chair of the Board of Trustees

About Us

We're experts in homelessness and housing support – it is where we began in 1995. But as the challenges our clients face evolve, so do we. Now, we're specialists at providing support across homelessness and housing, mental health, family support, young peoples' support, and refugee resettlement.

Our mission is to work alongside people to help them overcome life's challenges, supporting everyone in our society to become safely and sustainably housed and live as independently as possible. To do this, we provide services across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes through approximately 200 staff and 150 volunteers. We use a person-centred, trauma-informed, strengths-based approach to empower our clients to define their goals, take positive steps forward and achieve greater independence.

Poor mental health has become a significant theme across our client base in the wake of the pandemic and, as the cost-of-living crisis continues, we have seen their needs become increasingly more complex. As such, addressing mental health needs now underpins all our work and is embedded throughout all our services.

To continue to provide quality support that meets the ever-growing needs of our society, we work collaboratively with other organisations to ensure that our interventions make a meaningful and sustainable difference in peoples' lives.

An overview of our main services can be found in the Appendix on page 24.

Client Testimonial

Oxfordshire Mental Health Floating Support

"If it were not for my Support Worker, I would not be alive today...
The mental pain and torture I endured, and my inability to function, think and organise my life, meant I truly wanted to die. I planned it; I attempted it.

But thanks to my Support Worker, I am here today. While I still have some way to go to get my life back and live independently, I am so much closer to that dream.

I've been supported with so much: dealing with correspondence, resolving problems, and coming up with solutions when I couldn't see a way out. The impact my Support Worker has had on my life is frankly immeasurable. There really are no words to express my gratitude for her support."

Our Year in Numbers

Over the 2022 – 2023 financial year, we…

- Supported **5,394** clients across our services.
- Answered **13,325** calls from people looking for support and guidance.
- Empowered **1,319** people to develop the skills to no longer need our support.
- Worked with **20+** partners to deliver holistic support to our clients.

Collaborating for Impact: Our Partnerships

Over the course of the year, we continued to work in partnership with other organisations, services, and local authorities to provide innovative, wrap-around support for our clients across the three localities we work in.

Across Oxfordshire, we continued to work in collaboration with A2 Dominion, Aspire, Elmore Community Services, Homeless Oxfordshire and St Mungo's, as well as the Lived Experience Advisory Forum (LEAF) and Oxfordshire County, City and District Councils to form the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance (OHA). OHA was born from a feasibility study to better understand how a housing-led approach could be applied to tackle homelessness in Oxfordshire. As part of OHA, we work collaboratively with other partner organisations to pave new ways to prevent and resolve homelessness across the county. We also form part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, alongside the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Response, Restore, Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore Community Services to provide intensive mental health support to those in need. Across the county, we continued our collaboration with Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM), Aspire, Edge Housing and Asylum Welcome to deliver our service which offers support and guidance to those with no recourse to public funds.

In Buckinghamshire, we worked alongside The Oasis Partnership and Inclusion, an NHS organisation, to deliver the ORB project. This service, commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council, was designed to support individuals impacted by drug and alcohol misuse, including assistance with treatment and recovery. Throughout the year, we continued to work alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, The Oasis Partnership and Adult Mental Health Teams to deliver SafeHaven+ - a service which specialises in providing alternative support to help clients avoid crises and prevent admission to hospital. We also formed part of the Bucks Rough Sleeper Initiative. Led by Buckinghamshire Council and funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, this collaboration of charities and services work together to provide localised support for rough sleepers.

Across Milton Keynes, we continued to lower hospital admissions through our ongoing work with Adult Mental Health Teams and the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust. Through this partnership, we have been able to identify clients at risk of a mental health crisis and provide them with support to prevent admission to an acute mental health ward.

We also have strong links with the Thames Valley Alliance for our work with ex-offenders and this year, following the results of a recent independent review of the criminal justice system in Thames Valley, we began delivering 'Restart Thames Valley', alongside Aspire Oxfordshire, Browns Community Services, Parents And Children Together (PACT) and Thames Valley Partnership. The service aims to increase the chances of those leaving prison to lead a successful life with the proper support.

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We are a charity that promotes social justice. We seek to ensure that the people we work alongside and our team of staff and volunteers have a voice, are included, valued, have equitable access to our roles and services, and have equal opportunities to achieve. We strive to do this through our values of empowerment, collaboration, compassion and by taking a personalised approach in all aspects of our work.

Last year, the Board of Trustees and leadership team made an explicit commitment to progress equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) at Connection Support, resulting in the implementation of a thorough action plan which included the rollout of Everyday Inclusion and Unconscious Bias training to all staff. This year, we continued to progress our commitment to EDEI by working collaboratively with The Diversity Trust CIC. The Diversity Trust helped us to review our working practices, policies, and organisational culture and identify priorities going forward. They facilitated an organisation-wide, anonymous survey and conducted focus groups and interviews to produce a detailed report which outlined key learnings, reflections, and recommendations.

One such recommendation was to develop EDEI champion roles. These roles will help to steer our work, promote positive practices, and hold the organisation accountable for actions on our newly created EDEI development plan. We look forward to implementing these roles in the next financial year.

> *"The results of the review have clearly shown that Connection Support places EDI at its core and is looking both internally and externally at ways in which it can improve and build upon its already inclusive culture."*
>
> - **Berkeley Wilde,** Founder and Chief Executive Officer, The Diversity Trust CIC

Client Involvement and Volunteering

Last year, the Board of Trustees and leadership team underlined its commitment to give our clients a voice by involving them directly in the shaping of our work. One of our organisational values is to empower our clients by focusing on their individual skills and knowledge; involving clients in decisions about how we work is a natural extension of this.

This year, we began to embed our client involvement and volunteering strategy across the organisation. We successfully implemented the first phase by progressing our client involvement champion roles. The purpose of these roles is to embed client involvement effectively within the organisation and to empower colleagues to contribute to the initiative. We also successfully launched our Peer Mentoring Initiative in Milton Keynes. Four former clients participated in training sessions to become Peer Mentors, using their lived experience to support current clients. Looking ahead, learnings from launching this initiative, paired with both our clients' and peer mentors' experience, will inform the expansion of this initiative across the other geographical areas we work in.

The Volunteer Coordinator team worked to strengthen our processes around volunteering. This was done so we could ensure that the people volunteering with us have a positive experience of doing so. We surveyed our volunteers to better understand what we were doing well and what we could do differently. The results showed that 90% of respondents would recommend volunteering with us to a friend, and 90% said they felt valued by Connection Support. Overall, these results are incredibly positive, but they highlight an opportunity for us to develop our strategy further to ensure those engaging with us have an increasingly positive experience.

Our Work: Homelessness and Housing

Our origins are in homelessness and housing, and we've continued to help tackle the issue since we began providing floating support in Oxfordshire in 1995. Today, our work in this area extends across Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire, with half of our services focussed on solving the issue.

We are proud to still deliver this original service, now known as our Housing Support Service. By developing tailored support plans that are unique to our clients' needs, our Support Workers provide help and guidance that enable our clients to maintain their tenancies. Our dedicated staff team have over 90 years of experience between them, and this combined expertise helped them successfully navigate their way through a reduction in funding this financial year, without seeing a dip in the quality of service that we are known for. Despite the additional pressures felt from this reduction, we successfully supported close to 400 households in avoiding homelessness in over 97% of cases. We continued to identify rough sleepers across the different Oxfordshire districts through our Outreach service and we successfully supported 118 clients. At the start of the financial year, these services became part of the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance (OHA).

Other housing-led approaches include the Housing First model, an evidence-based approach that provides a home first, followed by personalised support to enable individuals with a history of entrenched or repeat homelessness to begin their recovery. It supports those with the highest and most complex needs, and over the course of the year, our Milton Keynes service, which is the fourth largest Housing First service in the country and the largest outside of Government pilots, was able to support 30 new clients. By working collaboratively with Milton Keynes City Council's rent team to establish better methods of communication, we have been able to help most of our Housing First clients get out of debt or put payment plans in place to reduce their debt.

We ran our Next Steps Accommodation service across Milton Keynes too, providing placements for people with lower-level support needs who were previously homeless. This year, the service put provisions in place to work with 32 new clients.

Our Adult Homeless Pathway service supported clients across Oxfordshire by providing 83 rooms in shared accommodation throughout Oxford, Witney, and Banbury. As part of our commitment to delivering person-centred support, we identified several clients who had come to us in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 influx, and, as a result of their increasing complex needs, we adapted our service to support them for longer than usual. By the end of the financial year, we successfully helped 29 people move on from the pathway, complete with 12 weeks of resettlement support to help their transition to independence.

Our Step Down Housing service prevents homelessness by providing short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from hospitals in Oxfordshire, but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. Without this service, patients would remain in hospital beds unnecessarily or potentially be forced into rough sleeping. We place Embedded Housing Workers (EHWs) in all Oxfordshire hospitals not only to upskill medical staff and social workers on the complexities of housing these patients, but to provide direct support to patients in this situation. After the pandemic, the need for this service grew - so much so that we successfully secured funding to increase our provision by four additional beds. Through hard work and dedication, the staff team were able to source, secure and furnish a new house within a matter of weeks, enabling them to welcome two guests straight away - guests who otherwise would have been homeless upon their discharge from hospital. The additional beds were filled within days of opening the new house, highlighting the evident need for the extra capacity. The importance of this service was also recognised when we were successfully shortlisted for the Homeless Link Excellence Awards 2022 in the 'Prevention into Action' category. This particular award celebrated services committed to preventing homelessness (or repeated periods of rough sleeping) from happening.

> *"Step Down Housing is performing well against national benchmarks for reducing A&E attendances and emergency admissions."*
>
> **- Kings College London**

As part of the Rough Sleeper Initiative in Buckinghamshire, we support former rough sleepers, providing them with life skills so they can live independently in their own rented home. Through wrap-around tenancy sustainment support, alongside help with mental health, budgeting, and general daily living, we empowered 110 clients to move on from this service, and we had a 100% tenancy sustainment rate. Our Rough Sleeper Outreach team continued to locate and verify rough sleepers across the county; 97 of whom found permanent housing after being accommodated in our emergency beds whilst accessing our intensive support.

Following the results of a recent independent review of the criminal justice system in Thames Valley, several learnings and recommendations were made by the Police & Crime Commissioner to reduce reoffending. One of which was the introduction of a pilot project, 'Restart Thames Valley' – initially a year-long programme aiming to work with more than 350 offenders leaving Bullingdon Prison in Oxfordshire and Bronzefield Prison in Surrey.

This year, in partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire, Browns Community Services, Parents And Children Together (PACT) and Thames Valley Partnership, we began delivering the service to help those leaving prison build successful lives. The service supports clients for up to six months before and up to six months after release to help prevent reoffending and increase the chance of successfully reintegrating into society. By engaging with clients early on and before their release, we were able to help them achieve a better outcome upon their release, and we successfully supported 60 clients over the year.

> *"The Support Worker's emotional intelligence in the situation was absolutely brilliant, and she really made a difference... I [the researcher] walked away from the legal visit incredibly impressed with the sincerity and tactfulness of today's conversation -- the balance between professionalism and empathy was carefully employed and likely helped the client more than she even realises."*
>
> **- Researcher, University of Oxford**

Our work with ex-offenders in Buckinghamshire has gone from strength to strength this year, and we successfully secured additional funding, enabling us to continue delivering our RESET service. Since April 2022, the project has successfully assisted 54 people into sustainable accommodation, supporting them to make positive choices to enable a fresh start.

Case Study:

David - 250 toy tractors but just one bag of food

David came to us for support when he found himself in arrears and was facing eviction.
Paul, one of our Support Workers, visited David at his home to undertake an initial assessment. David looked visibly underweight, which raised the alarm about his wellbeing. He confided that he'd spent all his money on his 250-strong collection of toy tractor tractors, leaving only enough for one bag of pasta in the cupboard. Thankfully, Paul was able to source food vouchers so that David could stock up on necessities.

The next step was for them to look at David's finances together. Then, alarm bells rang: David's pension payments were entering his account and being withdrawn almost immediately. Paul began to suspect that David had fallen victim to financial abuse, and so, with David's permission, they went to the bank to understand what was happening. Paul's suspicions were confirmed when David shared that two people had been taking his money, leaving him with nothing. With David's consent, Paul worked with the bank to implement some safeguarding measures to try and stop this from happening in the future.

One such measure was for the bank to call Paul should David visit the bank without him, giving Paul a chance to check that David wasn't being coerced into withdrawing money.
It wasn't long before Paul received a call from the bank. David was there with another individual, wanting to withdraw money.

The bank passed the phone to David, who asked Paul to meet him at the bank. Staff confirmed that the person with David was the same individual who had been with him many other times, encouraging him to withdraw large amounts. Paul discreetly asked David whether this person was a friend, to which David just looked away. Paul told the individual that David would no longer require her assistance and requested that she have no further contact with him.

After this encounter, David opened up about the financial abuse and how he felt threatened by this woman. He consented to Paul raising a safeguarding concern and was happy for the police to be involved. Paul identified additional safeguarding measures, like asking the landlord to ask the other tenants to refrain from letting anyone in the house, to further protect David in his home and limit any additional abuse.

Since meeting Paul and having the various measures put in place, there have been no new incidents of financial abuse, and David is now feeling safer in his own home.

Our Work: Mental Health

This year, we saw the impact of the pandemic continue to exacerbate the issues our clients face. Between the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, we found that many of our clients were living in a heightened state of distress and their needs were growing increasingly complex. The lack of capacity in clinical systems also meant early intervention was not taking place. As a result, we adapted to ensure that appropriate mental health support was woven through each of our services.

Our Oxfordshire-based Mental Health Floating Support Service is delivered as part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, and we focus on providing support around housing, benefits and social inclusion to enable clients to live more independently. This year, we put provisions in place to work with 92 new clients with severe and enduring mental health issues, and we successfully empowered 62 people to feel confident enough to move on from the service.

Across Oxfordshire, we also continued to deliver our Mental Health Housing Intensive Support Service, which launched as a pilot last year. This service worked with a small number of entrenched rough sleepers with acute mental health needs who had no other option, as every other service was unequipped to support them. All the clients we helped had, at some point in their lives, been hospitalised due to their mental health, with some deemed at risk of death if they spent another winter outdoors.

These clients had a history of finding it difficult to trust people or engage with services. We provided them with a furnished flat and were able to support them with paying their bills through their housing benefit and a service charge, thus avoiding going into arrears. Entrenched addiction or physical health issues left these clients ill-equipped for life indoors, and so our Support Workers provided additional time and support to help them adapt to their new life and navigate these issues. This enabled our clients to maintain their tenancies, which would have been unlikely without our intervention.

Last financial year, we launched our Out of Hospital Service in Oxfordshire. The service aims to help clients with complex needs avoid repeat admissions to mental health wards. This year, this service has gone from strength to strength and has effectively sustained engagement with clients whose needs have often meant they were unwilling to engage with other mental health services across Oxfordshire. After seeing a reduction in costs incurred due to fewer hospital admissions, Oxford City Council (the managing partner of the service) successfully secured extension funding, affirming the need for such a service.

In Milton Keynes, our partnership work with acute mental health wards continued, and we supported close to 100 people throughout the year. By providing clients who had been discharged from hospital with support that empowered them to reintegrate into their community and sustain their tenancy, our Acute Hospital Discharge Service prevented hospital readmissions in over 98% of cases. Our Acute Admissions Avoidance Service supports clients with enduring mental health issues to prevent them from being admitted to a mental health ward.

In Buckinghamshire, our SafeHaven+ service provides alternative support to help clients avoid crises and prevent admission to hospital by improving their overall mental health and wellbeing. Our Mental Health Housing Support Workers provide intensive housing support to people in crisis, often with complex mental health needs, to enable them to build a better life and live independently in the community. This year, we successfully supported 60 clients - none of whom needed to access A&E for emergency support which is a direct aim of the service. We had some clients referred to the service whilst awaiting discharge from a local mental health facility to ensure ongoing support was provided in the community. This not only helped clients avoid readmission, but it also improved bed flow within the facility.

Through our Buckinghamshire-based Prevention Matters service, we continued to support clients over 18 who are at risk of social isolation due to difficulty leaving the house, feelings of anxiety, isolation or loneliness, or recovery from an illness. Over the year, we helped 431 clients develop the confidence to leave the service by connecting them with social groups, encouraging them to engage with their communities and linking them with other services for advice and support.

Case Study:

Naomi* (pseudonym) – On the inside, life isn't that simple

On the outside, Naomi is a young, capable single mum to a four-year-old boy. She lives in a quiet, well-maintained flat and will often go about her day as usual; she'll take her son to nursery and then go to work. But on the inside, life is not that simple.

Diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, complex post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, and now undergoing an assessment for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Naomi is determined to lead a 'normal' life with her son. But cries for help are not uncommon, and they often come accompanied by self-harm.

Naomi accessed our Oxfordshire Mental Health Support Service, where she met Kevin - one of our Case Workers. Together, they identified what personalised support was needed to improve her situation, settling on financial support as an excellent place to start. With Kevin's encouragement and guidance, Naomi completed most of the PIP form herself despite finding one of the questions quite triggering, making it challenging to finish. Kevin was able to help Naomi overcome these feelings by incorporating distraction techniques, enabling her to complete the form over three sessions.

Unfortunately, Naomi was not awarded PIP, so Kevin supported her to begin the appeal process. The next few months were difficult, and Naomi decided that moving out of Oxford was the best choice for her. The area reminded her of her most recent trauma, making it difficult for her to recover. As well as receiving help from Connection Support, Naomi worked with a Mental Health Support Worker through her GP. This individual was later promoted, making Naomi feel like she was losing "a great positive help" in her life. If that wasn't enough, Naomi discovered that she would no longer be eligible for the rent top-up she was receiving if she moved.

Knowing how vital moving was for Naomi, Kevin devised a plan. He advised her to apply for the local housing register and contact her Housing Coach – two weeks later, Naomi was bidding and was in the top 20 on three properties! Kevin wrote Naomi a supporting letter and provided her with a report (which outlined their time together) so that both could be used as evidence to support her case. Almost immediately, Naomi was told that she'd been referred to the Health and Housing team, and after a visit with them, she was moved from Band D to Band B – the highest band we could expect. Although Naomi was still waiting for a suitable house to bid on at the time of writing, Kevin's continued support empowered her to make changes that would drastically improve her life. Through Kevin's continued support, Naomi developed the independence to address her challenges head on.

Our Work: Family Support

There is a strong connection between children growing up in an unstable environment and facing difficulties later in life due to early trauma. In our experience, early intervention in the form of parental mentoring is an effective prevention strategy, and so, we have been delivering family support services for several years now.

In Buckinghamshire, we delivered our Boost Parenting Advice & Support Service, which matched volunteers with families who needed a helping hand in creating a positive environment for their children. Over the year, our Boost service supported 116 families in creating a more stable home. This financial year marked the end of this service; however, we were successfully awarded funding to deliver Thrive - a new family support service which got underway in March 2023.

We provide Self-Directed Support Services across Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, enabling clients to develop greater independence by taking control of their budget for support and tailoring their care arrangements to suit their unique circumstances and lifestyles. Across the services, we manage more than £1.4m of funds on behalf of clients with disabilities, half of whom are children. Our services support the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably

qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice, and offering a Payroll Service to process wages and administer HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

Case Study:

Nicola, a volunteer for Boost

Having had children herself, Nicola knew parents' struggles – particularly if they have little to no support elsewhere. Nicola had previously worked in a preschool, and with her knowledge from various courses, she could offer some valuable support to parents in need. With her children grown up and more time on her hands, Nicola has been volunteering with Connection Support for three years, providing valuable support to families on the Boost Service. With this service coming to an end, Nicola will soon be assisting families on our Thrive service.

Nicola is hands-on when it comes to offering support, often helping parents who are struggling with boundaries and behaviours of their children. In her role, she offers advice and guidance, and may signpost parents to websites and/or courses if she thinks they could be of benefit.

With her preschool background, Nicola brings a wealth of skills to her volunteer role and can confidently pass on information or strategies to families in need. When she sees the positive impact her advice has, and how effective her recommendations are, she gets a great deal of satisfaction. She knows that her input is helping to make family life just that little bit calmer for the families she supports. Not to mention that she enjoys getting to meet new people and develop good relationships with both the parents and children too.

Not only does Nicola provide invaluable support to families in need, she has also benefitted from volunteering. She said:

> *"I have gained new information which also helps me in my day job. I feel lucky that I have had a positive impact in my families lives, and I have been able to provide them with support for the time I have been with them."*

Our Work: Young People

This year, we saw a significant increase in the number of young people coming to us for support with poor mental health, whilst also facing homelessness. These young people often had an undiagnosed mental health condition or learning difficulty, which drastically increased the complexity of their needs.

Our work supporting young people across Buckinghamshire evolved this year, with two of our services (Housing Interaction Trust [HIT] and Padstones Supported Accommodation) amalgamating to form one project: HITPAD.

HITPAD is a young people's supported accommodation service that not only places young people (aged 16 – 24) in either shared or self-contained accommodation, but also empowers young people to develop their skills so that they can live more independently.

We have 27 beds across Buckinghamshire, allowing us to provide safe accommodation for young people who are either homeless or at risk of imminent homelessness. The merging of both services brought about change for both the staff and young people accessing the service, particularly because it removed the 24-hour staffing element that had previously been part of our Padstones project. This much anticipated change encouraged higher levels of independence amongst the cohort. We also found that restructuring the staff team to suit this new model allowed staff to work more flexibly, enabling them to support young people in the community far more. By the end of the year, the service had accepted 24 new referrals and successfully closed 13 cases.

Across Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire, we continued to deliver our Young People's Supported Accommodation service (YPSA), which supports young people aged 16 – 25 who face homelessness. The young people moved into suitable accommodation, either in self-contained units or HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) and were supported to transition into mainstream adult life, finding independence through education, training, and employment. Many of the young people we helped were suffering from greater needs due to the pandemic, and we saw an increase in the number of clients coming to us with undiagnosed learning difficulties and mental health conditions.

However, by providing one-to-one tailored support, the service was able to support vulnerable young people in developing daily living skills, such as cooking, budgeting, looking after their tenancy and paying their bills. Our Support Workers also assisted them with claiming benefits, registering with a local GP, finding employment or training opportunities, and providing much-needed emotional support.

Our Work: Refugee Resettlement

Our Refugee Resettlement team provides support to refugees through Government-sponsored schemes. The families supported are resettled in the Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse Districts of Oxfordshire and are provided with a range of emotional and practical support to help them settle into everyday life.

Eight individuals who resettled in Oxfordshire under our service between spring 2021 and spring 2023 have, with our support, secured paid work this financial year. This has taken them off the Universal Credit benefit cap, significantly improving their financial circumstances during the cost-of-living crisis. We also had several other individuals start to volunteer with a view to entering paid work. Two women from Afghan families were supported to finance sewing machines – enabling them to work towards selling clothes at a local market. The children have also taken significant steps to integrate by embracing their schools and showing dedication to their studies. One young person will begin studying for their GCSEs in September, while another has been accepted into university.

Our No Recourse to Public Funds service, delivered in partnership with Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, Aspire, Edge Housing and Asylum Welcome, supports individuals without access to benefits and housing. The service provides accommodation for clients and helps them to recover from trauma whilst resolving their immigration status, enabling them to move into secure long-term housing. This year, our first client achieved monumental success: they now live independently in their own flat after successfully resolving their immigration status.

Case Study:

Reda – Starting a new life

Seeking refuge from Syria, Reda arrived in England with his wife and three-year-old daughter and immediately began receiving support from our Refugee Resettlement team.

Reda was looking for help that could support his adjustment to living in the UK and wanted to find ways to learn English. After Reda enrolled on a course at a local college to learn the language, he spoke with his Support Worker, Isabelle, about becoming a barber. Isabelle introduced Reda to Nigel, a volunteer, and they discussed how to help Reda on his chosen career path.
When the two men met, they spoke about Reda's long-term goals, and Nigel supported Reda in approaching barbers across Oxford to find work experience; this encouraged Reda to develop both his language and interpersonal skills. The two men worked together to upskill Reda and build his confidence, and he completed six months of work experience at a local barber. Here, he developed his English by speaking to customers while observing and learning the trade.

This was just the start for Reda. He went on to secure a trainee role in an Oxford-based barber shop. Working four days a week and doing two to three haircuts a day, it's a busy time for him, but he's enjoying every day. Looking ahead, Reda wants to continue learning English and further develop his barbering skills so he can become a professional barber. His long-term ambition is to own a successful barber shop, ideally within the next four to five years.

After working with Reda, here's what Nigel had to say:

> *"It's very rewarding to me to see how far Reda has come, and it has been a pleasure working with him. He is intelligent, hardworking and has all the qualities he needs to succeed."*

Client Testimonial

Adult Homeless Pathway

"Before Connection Support, I was using, committing crime, and had nowhere to live. I was a 'junkie'. I was a nice person that had just done bad things to make myself feel better. I knew my family loved me, but my lifestyle hampered our relationships. My family used to hide everything because I'd sell it otherwise, and I wasn't allowed to see my kids.

I really appreciated that staff would visit me regularly and do things like go to the dentist with me. I liked their honesty too: when I thought I was looking okay, they would explain how my using was affecting me. But having support with housing was the biggest thing, I think. I've got my own flat, I've built good relationships with my family and I'm seeing my kids – I'm trying to make them proud. Now, my life is completely different. It's good, clean and healthy. My Support Worker's persistence and determination gave me hope for the future; knowing someone believed in me made all the difference."

Our Strategy

Last year, to allow us to continue our vital work to the best of our ability, we launched our three-year strategic plan. This strategy identified areas where we require more robust infrastructure to continue delivering the quality services that our clients deserve. It also laid out our goals, mission, and values - all of which were developed collaboratively through a series of facilitated conversations between staff members, Board members, leadership, and senior managers, with additional input provided by clients and volunteers. Over the year, we have taken considerable steps to help us realise each of the goals defined in the strategy.

Goal 1: Grow to positively impact more lives.
In our 2022 – 2023 Trustee's Report, we promised to continue fundraising for potential projects which Connection Support is most passionate about and conduct a quality review across our programme delivery.

What we did:

- Our Fundraising team generated £278,118 in charitable grants and donations in this financial year. With this income, not only have we been able to strengthen existing services and improve client support, but we have also developed new, fundraised projects, like our No Recourse to Public Funds service, which helps people experiencing homelessness who have lost, or don't have access to, benefits and housing.

- As a charity that believes in social justice; equality, diversity, equity and inclusion (EDEI) is incredibly important to us. Last year, we made an explicit commitment to EDEI, and vowed to be proactive in our approach. This year, we have continued to develop our EDEI strategy and continue to take forward our EDEI development plan – a living document that is worked on, added to, and reviewed quarterly. The Diversity Trust, who have been supporting us through this journey, undertook a review of our efforts and found that we actively place EDEI at our core. We developed EDEI champion roles to help steer our work, promote positive practices, and hold the organisation accountable for actions on the development plan. These will be recruited for in 2023 - 2024.
- We employed a full-time Marketing and Communications Manager last year to lead on the development and implementation of a marketing strategy. This year, we've seen the benefits of investing in this post. It has allowed us to undertake a variety of activities to further our reach, including redesigning our website for a better user experience and proactively promoting our services to reach a wider audience.

Goal 2: Invest in our infrastructure.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustee's Report, we promised to introduce further Office 365 features and work towards achieving Cyber Essentials Certification. We said we would consult internally to design a new client database, introduce a new contract management system and continue to monitor resourcing, filling gaps as necessary. We promised to develop a marketing and communications strategy, conduct a complete review of our website and launch a new intranet. We also said we would develop and begin to implement an Equality Diversity Equity and Inclusion strategy and employ a recruitment specialist to enable our managers to focus more on frontline work.

What we did:

- We identified the need for an Estates team to manage our supported accommodation provision. At the end of the financial year, we recruited our Head of Estates. This development will enable Team Managers to fully focus their energy on support, leaving tenancy and property issues to this specialist team.
- We recruited our new Head of Fundraising, as well as a Community Fundraiser, which enabled us to generate greater levels of welfare funding, fund three projects that would otherwise not exist, and enhance many services.
- We invested in an IT team, as well as our IT systems, to help us reduce inefficiencies by working smarter. By upgrading our IT infrastructure, we've been able to adapt to new, integrated services which make collaborating much easier, particularly as many of our staff work remotely.
- We completed our Cyber Essentials accreditation and began working toward Cyber Essentials Plus.
- We began consultation on our new database system, which is an ongoing project.
- We established a communications and marketing strategy which we have begun to implement and will be reviewing progress within the next financial year.

- We have made amendments to our website to improve the user experience and have launched an intranet which all staff members and volunteers have access to.

Goal 3: Ensure clients are directly involved in shaping our work.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustee's Report, we promised to deliver the client involvement strategy and in particular, recruit a Board member with lived experience, develop training and support materials for clients, involve them further in recruitment, ensure staff buy-in to principles of client involvement and establish a system to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts towards meaningful involvement.

What we did:

- We launched our Peer Mentor Service pilot in Milton Keynes. We trained a group of individuals, all of whom were previous clients of ours, so that they could use their own lived experience to support others and directly influence our work. This was a success and we've continued to actively recruit more Peer Mentors.
- We invited clients from our Oxfordshire Adult Homeless Pathway to join us at a client involvement workshop to discuss how, from their perspective, we could best establish peer mentoring in Oxfordshire. Their feedback was exceptionally insightful, and considered the types of support and training that may be needed, alongside the language used to describe the initiative.
- We worked with two Oxford University Interns, who conducted research into 'EDI among our volunteer workforce' and 'How client feedback is collected in an effective and meaningful way'. The learnings from these reports will feed directly into our work.
- After recruiting a dedicated Client Involvement and Volunteering Manager last year, we evaluated how clients directly contribute to the shaping of our work. The learnings from this have been embedded into our client involvement and volunteering strategy.
- We started to involve clients in senior level interviews.
- We recruited a Board member with lived experience.
- We have also identified the need for Client Involvement Champions – staff who will actively promote and facilitate client involvement within teams and services across Connection Support. These will be recruited in the next financial year.

Goal 4: Invest in people development.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustee's Report, we promised to implement an enhanced employee benefits package and continue to do all we can to ease the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our employees. We said we would introduce new employee communication processes, such as online Town Hall and Team Manager meetings, to help employees to share experiences and engage with the wider organisation. We also promised to conduct our first ever comprehensive staff survey, whilst investing in employee wellbeing and establishing a competency framework.

What we did:

- Assessed our staffing model to better understand the success of our recruitment practice. Senior Managers discuss a quarterly report which monitors the success of our recruitment efforts, the costs associated with recruitment as well as staff turnover. It provides an opportunity to reflect on our recruitment practice and compare data to discern any patterns or trends.
- With Board approval, we were able to announce both an annual wage and employers' pension contribution increase, taking our pension contribution above the statutory minimum amount for the first time in our history. This comes from our commitment to always pay as generously as we can afford to.
- We provided a one-off payment to all staff members, to assist them in coping during the worst of the cost-of-living crisis and to help them manage their utility bills throughout the winter.
- We completed a staff questionnaire to identify which benefits our staff would value most highly, helping us launch a diverse benefits package. Through the likes of a Health Cash Plan and discounted nursery costs, staff can save money through tax benefits and discounts.
- We worked with an external organisation to conduct an unbiased staff engagement survey. Through Best Companies, we invited staff to complete the survey to better understand how, as an organisation, we perform on topics such as wellbeing, personal growth, salary and benefits, as well as management and leadership. Based on the results, we were recognised by Best Companies us as one of the top 25 charities to work for in the UK. More crucially, the survey results will allow us to implement positive changes based on insights that have come directly from our staff.
- We established a wellbeing working group to develop our commitment to our team's welfare. The group reviewed the ideas that came from the staff survey, looked at current best practice to promote wellbeing and implemented changes to promote a culture of positive wellbeing. Looking ahead, this work will be taken forward by our Wellbeing Champions.

Goal 5: Develop our housing management capacity.

In our 2022 – 2023 Trustee's Report, we promised to develop a housing management strategy, with the aim of providing a greater quantity of appropriate high-quality accommodation for clients and review our office estate.

What we did:

- We successfully secured several independent lease arrangements, increasing our capacity to house more clients, whilst reducing our reliance on our partners.
- We invested in our Estates team to oversee our supported accommodation provision, allowing Team Managers to focus their energy on supporting clients.

Plans for the future, future direction of the charity and likely future developments

In January 2023, we reviewed and refreshed our strategy. We refined our goals to place extra emphasis where needed to be able to deliver the strategy by the end of FY 2023 - 2024. Our goals for next year are therefore:

1. Growth: we will continue our track-record of successful retendering and extending contracts, further hone and target our tendering skills and improve our processes. We will deliver our marketing and fundraising strategies and identify further specific groups of clients for whom there is no existing provision and develop proposals to meet these.
2. Infrastructure: we will develop more tools and information to enable frontline workers to deliver for clients e.g. complete Office 365 roll-out and training and achieve Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation. We will continue to assess management/business service capacity alongside organisational growth and proactively manage risk through improved controls and procedures.
3. People development, client involvement and volunteering: we will implement client involvement and volunteering strategies, follow up focus areas from this year's staff survey, such as wellbeing collaboration, and plan to repeat survey in summer 2023 to track progress. We will continue to enhance our training and employee benefits, develop a competency system and make salary awards as generous as possible within budget parameters.
4. Housing: we will invest in our housing management capability, develop an estates strategy, review our office estate, improve our compliance systems, and maintain a focus on environmental considerations.
5. Client work: we will continue to develop our work in our current geographies and specialisms and proactively network and engage with partners to develop further opportunities to meet gaps in service provision.
6. Collaboration: we will purposefully build robust relationships with partners and other stakeholders throughout our geographical areas.
7. Quality and impact: we will establish a robust quality assurance process to ensure the best outcomes for clients and a means of quantifying and demonstrating the impact we have on their lives.
8. Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDEI): we will implement our EDEI strategy, including establishing a network of champions and training at all levels to create an inclusive environment.

During 2023-24, we will develop a new strategy and plan for 2024–27. The consultation process will meaningfully involve staff, volunteers, clients, management, and the Board of Trustees.

Thank you

All that we have achieved this year would have been impossible without our partners, donors, volunteers, and staff – thank you.
We are immensely grateful for every donation we receive and would like to say thank you to everyone who has given their time, energy, and financial support to Connection Support over the past year.

Reference and Administrative Details

Connection Support (The Old School, First Turn, Oxford, England, OX2 8AH) is a limited company registered in England and Wales (03072719) and a registered charity in England and Wales (1049740).

Trustees

Richard Allman (Chair)
Emma Duke (Vice Chair) (appointed 14.07.22)
James Arnold
Paul Aston
Mike Wortley
Anne Cooney (resigned 01.05.23)
Luka Winterborne (resigned 27.10.23)
David Bayes (resigned 14.05.22)
Jennifer Berrill (resigned 15.05.22)
Emily Dobell (resigned 30.09.23)
Dipen Parekh (resigned 10.06.22)
Liam Moore (appointed 29.09.22)
Helen Amura (appointed 12.07.23)
Rumbidzai Takundwa (appointed 14.08.23)

Secretary

Christopher Keating

Auditors

Critchleys Audit LLP,
Beaver House,
23-38 Hythe Bridge Street,
Oxford,
OX1 2EP

Structure, Governance and Management

Connection Support is a charitable company, limited by guarantee. It is governed by its Articles of Association, dated 26 May 1995.

The Trustee Board is responsible for the governance of the charity. The day-to-day running of the charity is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is supported by two Deputy CEOs, the Business Services Director, and the Finance Director.

The Board of Trustees

Connection Support is governed by a Board of unpaid Trustees who meet with the staff leadership team every two months. The Board delegates monitoring of financial matters to a Finance Sub-committee, which meets once a quarter and delivery of organisational development initiatives to a Development Sub-committee, which meets every two months. Other committees can be formed on a task-focused basis.

Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, one third of Board members, or if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one third, shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting each year. Any Trustee appointed between Annual General Meetings shall only retain office until the next Annual General Meeting and then shall be eligible for re-election. The Trustees who served the charity during the financial year, alongside Trustees who have recently been appointed, can be viewed on the previous page. In September 2023, James Arnold retired from his position as Chair of the Trustee Board. Richard Allman was elected as Chair, with Emma Duke elected as Vice-Chair.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The Board aims to ensure that a broad range of experience is represented by Trustees, particularly in health, housing, social care, business and finance. A skills audit of Board members is conducted every two years to inform recruitment and succession planning. Detailed information is provided to prospective Trustees, including governing documents, financial accounts, Charity Commission guidance on the responsibilities of Trustees and information about the charity's services. Applicants are invited to an informal discussion with the CEO followed by a formal interview with two Board Members and the CEO. The interview covers the responsibilities of Trustees, in line with Charity Commission guidance and the Charity Code of Governance. References are taken prior to full Board approval of appointment.

Trustees' Induction and Training

New Trustees are provided with information about the charity including its strategy, plans, organisational structure, finances and risk register. New Trustees meet with the CEO for a full briefing on the charity's work and to agree areas of more specific input. Newly appointed Trustees are supported by a mentor from the Board during their induction period. Training opportunities are circulated to Board members as they arise.

Charitable Objectives

To relieve poverty, sickness and distress in people over the age of 16 and living, or about to live, in local authority, housing association or private accommodation (particularly but not exclusively those who have been in care or have been homeless, those who suffer from mental health problems and those with previous or current addiction to drugs or alcohol) through the provision of advice and advocacy services, counselling support and whatever charitable means the Trustees shall decide.

Statement of Public Benefit

The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of Connection Support as set out in this report cover the duty of showing public benefit in line with that guidance. Our principal public benefit is to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence, this includes people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, families, young people, refugees, people who have been homeless, older people and people with an offending background. People who receive support must need this support to enable them to live independently. There is no charge for this support.

Fundraising

Connection Support is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and our fundraising activities adhere to the Fundraising Code of Conduct. Our fundraising practice is open, honest, and respectful, and we ensure that the needs of donors who may be in vulnerable circumstances are considered. We did not receive any complaints related to fundraising during this period.

The charity is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the year from trusts and foundations, local organisations, town, district and county councils and members of the public. This year, we saw a growing need amongst the people we work with for basic household furniture and provisions. We are grateful to the charitable organisations who responded with their support.

We are delighted to have raised over £278,000 in charitable income from local and national trusts and foundations, individual donors, and local organisations. Fundraised income is used to support projects that would not otherwise exist, such as our No Recourse to Public Funds service, which supports people experiencing homelessness who are not entitled to state-funded benefits.

Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As part of our ongoing commitment to being a truly inclusive organisation, we have implemented an EDEI Development Plan with the support of The Diversity Trust. This plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis and has resulted in the creation of ongoing commitments, such as identifying regular training, encouraging client involvement to shape our work, and setting up networks to support staff needs. Our aim is to ensure that all our staff, clients and volunteers feel welcomed and supported, and feel free to be their authentic selves.

Environment

Connection Support recognises that our work has an impact on the local, regional, and global environment. We are committed to continuously improving our environmental performance by prioritising sustainability, energy efficiency and making the most effective use of resources.

Risk Management

Connection Support has introduced improved risk management processes this year, including a more detailed risk register, which identifies risks and mitigations in the following categories: governance, external, regulatory and compliance, financial and operational. It highlights the 'hottest' risks which need to most urgently be mitigated and the CEO reviews this monthly with the senior management team to proactively build a culture of risk management as well as bringing it to the board on a two-monthly basis.

Financial Review

Connection Support continued its trajectory of growth this financial year, with income increasing by 14% to £8.6m. This has been driven by our ambition to meet the support needs of each individual we work with and achieved by ongoing investment in supported accommodation and fundraising activities.

We are developing a growing number of activities supported by non-statutory income in order to ensure that our services can best meet the needs of the communities we work in. These include, for example, our family support service in Buckinghamshire, and our work with individuals who, due to their immigration or asylum seeker status, have no recourse to public funds.

Our provision of supported accommodation has increased from 133 to 154 units over the course of the financial year, including growing housing provisions for both young people and people in need of temporary accommodation after leaving hospital, through our Step Down houses.

Expenditure for the financial year was £8.2m[1], increasing by 12% from the prior year. The net effect was a £0.1m balance of restricted charitable funds, plus £0.25m increase in unrestricted funds for the year, which enabled us to ensure that free reserves are maintained within our target range. We have continued to ensure that funds are committed wherever possible to support our charitable work, with 99.4% of organisational expenditure supporting charitable activities (see below).

The cost-of-living crisis continues to jeopardise the security of many of the people we work with. We are immensely grateful to the individuals and charitable organisations who continued to support accommodation costs and the provision of basic household items for those with emergency needs. With their support, were delighted to have been able to provide direct support for families and individuals worth a total of £182,176.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of Connection Support to maintain free unrestricted reserves (that is, unrestricted reserves not invested in fixed assets or designated for specific purposes) at a target level which can finance at least four months' full payroll and operational costs.

This has been established as the level which provides Connection Support with the financial stability to deliver the organisation's core activities, without compromising the principle that the income received will be used to support the charitable objectives of the organisation wherever possible. Whilst this reserves policy is designed primarily to satisfy Connection Support's charitable objectives, the level of four months' reserves additionally provides a window for the Senior Leadership Team to manage cashflow issues, in the event of delays receiving contract income due.

As an additional requirement, Connection Support ensures that unrestricted reserves are maintained at a level which can support the winding up of the organisation in a solvent manner, should this scenario occur. Winding up costs are currently calculated to be at a level which is lower than the 4 months' running costs.

On 31 March 2023, Connection Support held free reserves of £2,320,894, compared to a target level of £2,265,300. In addition to this, £138,250 reserves were designated at the year end to complete the implementation of the SharePoint document management system and to support the planned installation of a new client database.

Investment policy

Connection Support aims to maintain its free reserves in a way which ensures that (i) funds are accessible to support the liquidity of the organisation on a day-to-day basis, whilst also (ii) upholding the value of the organisational balance sheet against rising inflation in the longer term.
To achieve this, the trustees have established a multipronged approach:

- For the current 3-year strategic period, the trustees have planned investment of approximately £250,000 per year into organisational development. In the last three years, this has proved successful, yielding a return in diversified income streams and more robust risk management processes.
- To the extent that reserves are required to support the routine cashflow demands associated with local authority contract funding, funds are held in instant access bank and building society accounts.
- Funds which the Board have set aside to achieve longer term growth, are maintained in an investment fund, designed to return a rate of the Consumer Price Index + 2% over a ten-year period.

The Finance Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees review the performance of investments on a quarterly basis.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Critchleys Audit LLP be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Trustee

Date: 9 November 2023

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Connection Support for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees Report Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF CONNECTION SUPPORT

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Connection Support (the 'Charity') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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 Charity'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 other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. 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 course of 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.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustees' responsibilities, the Trustees, who are also the directors of the Charity for the purpose of company law, 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 Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

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

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

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Katherine Wilkes (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Critchleys Audit LLP

20/11/23

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Beaver House
23-38 Hythe Bridge Street
Oxford
OX1 2EP

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	**3**	7,404	270,712	278,116	4,429	203,468	207,897
Charitable activities	**4**	8,061,604	113,590	8,175,194	7,298,751	-	7,298,751
Investments	**5**	1,654	-	1,654	446	-	446
Other income	**6**	130,000	-	130,000	-	-	-
Total income		8,200,662	384,302	8,584,964	7,303,626	203,468	7,507,094
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	**7**	45,258	-	45,258	53,088	-	53,088
Charitable activities	**8**	7,895,033	258,595	8,153,628	7,032,302	257,055	7,289,357
Total expenditure		7,940,291	258,595	8,198,886	7,085,390	257,055	7,342,445
Net gains/(losses) on investments	**11**	(16,957)	-	(16,957)	(5,890)	-	(5,890)
Net income for the year/ Net movement in funds		243,414	125,707	369,121	212,346	(53,587)	158,759
Fund balances at 1 April 2022		2,215,730	65,611	2,281,341	2,003,384	119,198	2,122,582
Fund balances at 31 March 2023		2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462	2,215,730	65,611	2,281,341

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

CONNECTION SUPPORT

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	2023 £	£	2022 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**13**		554,773		392,245
Current assets					
Debtors	**14**	1,044,555		1,206,183	
Investments		224,619		241,577	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,601,175		964,003	
		2,870,349		2,411,763	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**15**	(774,660)		(522,667)	
Net current assets			2,095,689		1,889,096
Total assets less current liabilities			2,650,462		2,281,341
Income funds					
Restricted funds	**18**		191,318		65,611
Unrestricted funds					
Designated funds	**19**	138,250		106,600	
General unrestricted funds		2,320,894		2,109,130	
			2,459,144		2,215,730
			2,650,462		2,281,341

The director acknowledges his responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

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

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 9 November 2023

Mr R Allman
Trustee

Company registration number 03072719

CONNECTION SUPPORT

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash generated from/(absorbed by) operations	**25**		696,376		(77,523)
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(60,859)		(9,922)	
Purchase of current asset investments		1		(247,466)	
Investment income received		1,654		446	
Net cash used in investing activities			(59,204)		(256,942)
Net cash used in financing activities			-		-
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents			637,172		(334,465)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			964,003		1,298,468
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			1,601,175		964,003

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Connection Support is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is .

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity's constitution, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "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 (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The Charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the Charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Board of Trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Income received by the way of grants, donations and gifts is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the Charity, are recognised when the Charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure represents amounts invoiced, including value added tax which cannot be recovered.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Buildings	2% straight line
Equipment & Furnishings	25% reducing balance
Computer Equipment	25% reducing balance

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

When Connection Support furnishes a new unit of supported accommodation, set-up purchases are treated as a single asset and depreciated accordingly. This is intended to maintain consistency of practice with the depreciation on furniture and fittings claimed through Housing Benefit for supported accommodation.

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is credited or charged to profit or loss.

1.7 Current asset investments

Investments are measured at fair value at the year end date.

Investments are classified as current when ithey can be converted into cash within one year and the Charity has either decided to sell the investments within one year or is undecided about the long-term strategy regarding investments.

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The Charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 ‘Basic Financial Instruments’ and Section 12 ‘Other Financial Instruments Issues’ of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the Charity's balance sheet when the Charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs.

1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.10 Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Irrecoverable VAT

All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended in relation to which it was incurred.

1.11 Retirement benefits

The Charity operates a money purchase (defined contribution) pension scheme. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the profit and loss account in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the Charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

1.12 Leases

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

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the Charity’s accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated 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 where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical judgements

The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Fixed Asset Depreciation

Depreciation was calculated based on management's estimate of the useful economic lives of tangible fixed assets. During the year ended 31 March 2023, depreciation totaled £22,796 (2022: £23,211).

3 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £	2022 £
Donations and gifts	7,404	270,712	278,116	4,429	203,468	207,897
Donations and gifts						
Donations (Welfare for Bucks rough sleepers, Ox Homeless Pathway clients and Padstones young people)	2,404	21,435	23,839	4,429	20,102	24,531
The Albert Hunt Trust	-	-	-	-	5,000	5,000
Heart of Bucks Community Foundation	-	9,002	9,002	-	800	800
The UK Ministry of Justice	-	4,999	4,999	-	5,000	5,000
Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP)	-	-	-	-	6,395	6,395
Oxfordshire Community Foundation	-	134,429	134,429	-	78,240	78,240
The Percy Bilton Charity	-	-	-	-	500	500
Red Kite Foundation	-	-	-	-	7,001	7,001
The Rothschild Foundation	5,000	15,000	20,000	-	50,000	50,000
Shanley Foundation	-	-	-	-	2,500	2,500
South Oxfordshire District Council - Covid transportation grant	-	-	-	-	12,180	12,180
Vale of White Horse District Council - Covid transporation grant	-	-	-	-	13,750	13,750
The Syder Foundation	-	-	-	-	2,000	2,000
Anson Charitable Trust	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
The Arnold Clark Community Fund	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
Asda Foundation	-	500	500	-	-	-
B&Q Foundation	-	5,000	5,000	-	-	-
Buckinghamshire Council - Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant	-	8,000	8,000	-	-	-

3 Donations and legacies **(Continued)**

Christ's Hospital of Abingdon	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
The Clare Foundation	-	1,205	1,205	-	-	-
Co-op Local Community Fund	-	3,204	3,204	-	-	-
Doris Field Charitable Trust	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
Dorothy Holmes Charitable Trust	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
The Hobson Charity	-	5,000	5,000	-	-	-
Kidlington Baptist Church	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
Kier Foundation	-	2,448	2,448	-	-	-
Landaid Charitable Trust	-	2,600	2,600	-	-	-
L&Q Foundation	-	3,465	3,465	-	-	-
Newbury Building Society	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)	-	5,900	5,900	-	-	-
Oxfordshire Homeless Movement	-	1,000	1,000	-	-	-
Mr and Mrs J A Pye's Charitable Settlement	-	3,000	3,000	-	-	-
Tesco Community Grants	-	500	500	-	-	-
The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Charitable Foundation	-	10,025	10,025	-	-	-
Vodafone Charities Connected - Gift-in-Kind	-	27,000	27,000	-	-	-
	7,404	270,712	278,116	4,429	203,468	207,897

4 Charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Charitable income: service contracts		
Buckinghamshire County Council	1,983,670	1,838,911
Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust	45,000	160,894
Cherwell District Council	262,484	295,074
Milton Keynes Council	1,313,943	1,137,250
Oxford City Council	484,871	404,622
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	439,890	491,025
Oxfordshire County Council	1,884,430	1,580,603
Oxfordshire Mind	148,262	132,596
South Oxfordshire District Council	61,069	70,319
South Staffs and Shrops Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	54,210	54,748
Thames Valley Police	162,714	21,286
Vale of White Horse District Council	47,409	70,577
West Oxfordshire District Council	-	28,022
Income from other charitable activities	53,444	67,251
Other charitable income		
Housing income	1,206,399	945,573
Payment services for private clients	27,399	-
	8,175,194	7,298,751
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	8,061,604	7,298,751
Restricted funds	113,590	-
	8,175,194	7,298,751

5 Investments

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Interest receivable	1,654	446

6 Other income

	Unrestricted funds	Total
	2023	2022
	£	£
Net gain on revaluation of tangible fixed assets	130,000	-

7 Expenditure on Raising Funds

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2023	2022
	£	£
Raising funds:		
Website & publicity	199	25,014
Staff costs	44,994	28,074
Travel	65	-
	45,258	53,088

8 Charitable activities

	Staff costs 2023 £	Housing costs 2023 £	Direct client support 2023 £	Support costs 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Homelessness and housing	2,918,016	710,915	179,023	-	3,807,954	3,470,316
Mental health	1,073,409	45,053	576	-	1,119,038	907,250
Families and independence	995,222	-	74	-	995,296	888,212
Young people	643,686	330,547	9,271	-	983,504	867,323
Refugee and asylum seekers	347,171	-	81,368	-	428,539	299,568
	5,977,504	1,086,515	270,312	-	7,334,331	6,432,669
Share of support costs (see note 9)	-	-	-	806,397	806,397	846,920
Share of governance costs (see note 9)	-	-	-	12,900	12,900	9,768
	5,977,504	1,086,515	270,312	819,297	8,153,628	7,289,357
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds	5,872,810	1,086,515	133,720	801,988	7,895,033	7,032,302
Restricted funds	104,694	-	136,592	17,309	258,595	257,055
	5,977,504	1,086,515	270,312	819,297	8,153,628	7,289,357

For the year ended 31 March 2022

	Staff costs £	Housing costs £	Direct client support £	Support costs £	Total 2022 £
Homelessness and housing	2,678,518	671,378	120,420	-	3,470,316
Mental health	863,125	40,496	3,629	-	907,250
Families and independence	888,144	-	68	-	888,212
Young people	546,909	313,661	6,753	-	867,323
Refugee and asylum seekers	264,619	-	34,949	-	299,568
	5,241,315	1,025,535	165,819	-	6,432,669
Share of support costs (see note 9)	-	-	-	846,920	846,920
Share of governance costs (see note 9)	-	-	-	9,768	9,768
	5,241,315	1,025,535	165,819	856,688	7,289,357

8 Charitable activities **(Continued)**

Analysis by fund					
Unrestricted funds	5,150,525	975,850	79,187	826,740	7,032,302
Restricted funds	90,790	49,685	86,632	29,948	257,055
	5,241,315	1,025,535	165,819	856,688	7,289,357

9 Support costs

	Support costs	Governance costs	2023	Support costs	Governance costs	2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Travel and subsistence	158,954	-	158,954	122,220	-	122,220
Office costs	274,468	-	274,468	308,431	-	308,431
Insurance	27,707	-	27,707	26,983	-	26,983
Consultancy and legal fees	23,912	-	23,912	53,071	-	53,071
IT and communications	299,689	-	299,689	328,088	-	328,088
Bank charges	3,962	-	3,962	1,860	-	1,860
Other costs	17,705	-	17,705	6,267	-	6,267
Audit fees	-	12,900	12,900	-	9,768	9,768
	806,397	12,900	819,297	846,920	9,768	856,688
Analysed between						
Charitable activities	806,397	12,900	819,297	846,920	9,768	856,688

10 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

2023 Number	2022 Number
208	189

10 Employees **(Continued)**

Employment costs	2023 £	2022 £
Wages and salaries	5,330,433	4,731,222
Social security costs	453,732	330,325
Employers Pension Contributions	138,000	114,303
Training	45,115	61,889
Recruitment	23,359	31,650
	5,990,639	5,269,389

The number of employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000 is as follows:

	2023 Number	2022 Number
£60,001 to £70,000	1	1
£70,001 to £80,000	1	-

11 Net gains/(losses) on investments

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £
Gain/(loss) on sale of investments	(16,957)	(5,890)

12 Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

13 Tangible fixed assets

	Buildings	Equipment & Furnishings	Computer Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost				
At 1 April 2022	375,000	134,580	103,630	613,210
Additions	18,390	42,469	-	60,859
Disposals	-	(11,526)	(1,196)	(12,722)
Revaluation	130,000	-	-	130,000
At 31 March 2023	523,390	165,523	102,434	791,347
Depreciation and impairment				
At 1 April 2022	30,000	113,260	77,705	220,965
Depreciation charged in the year	368	15,947	6,481	22,796
Eliminated in respect of disposals	-	(6,664)	(523)	(7,187)
At 31 March 2023	30,368	122,543	83,663	236,574
Carrying amount				
At 31 March 2023	493,022	42,980	18,771	554,773
At 31 March 2022	345,000	21,320	25,925	392,245

14 Debtors

	2023	2022
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Grants due	836,300	797,641
Housing income due	82,365	283,214
Prepayments and other debtors	125,890	125,328
	1,044,555	1,206,183

15 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2023	2022
		£	£
Other taxation and social security		113,977	94,688
Deferred income: grants	**16**	347,396	119,741
Trade creditors		113,724	129,358
Other creditors		38,154	36,053
Accruals and deferred income		161,409	142,827
		774,660	522,667

16 Government grants

Grants have been deferred when they have been received before the year end but are for a specific purpose and time period after the year end.

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	347,396	119,741
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 April 2022	119,741	126,054
Released from previous periods	(119,741)	(126,054)
Resources deferred in the year	347,396	119,741
Deferred income at 31 March 2023	347,396	119,741

17 Retirement benefit schemes

The Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the Charity in an independently administered fund.

18 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

	Movement in funds				Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2021	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barclays Charities Trust	71,404	-	(71,404)	-	-	-	-	-
Groundworks	1,850	-	(390)	(1,460)	-	-	-	-
Heart of Bucks - direct client support	965	800	(1,556)	(209)	-	9,002	(3,738)	5,264
Minsitry of Justice - ex-offender project	-	5,000	(1,195)	-	3,805	4,999	(1,464)	7,340
Oxford Friends Action on Poverty	1,500	-	(294)	-	1,206	-	(885)	321
Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)	1,610	6,395	(3,887)	-	4,118	5,900	(7,806)	2,212
Oxfordshire Homeless Movement & Oxfordshire Community Foundation - Supporting clients with no recourse to public funds in Oxfordshire	-	78,240	(74,033)	-	4,207	134,428	(138,635)	-
The Albert Hunt Trust: supporting clients in Buckinghamshire	-	5,000	(5,000)	-	-	-	-	-
The Percy Bilton Charity: young people's supported accommodation	-	500	(500)	-	-	-	-	-
The Red Kite Foundation - ex-offenders' project	-	7,001	-	-	7,001	-	(7,001)	-
Rothschild Foundation: projects to support clients in Buckinghamshire	4,129	50,000	(50,919)	-	3,210	15,000	(9,700)	8,510
Shanley Foundation: supporting clients with no recourse to public funds	80	2,500	(2,580)	-	-	-	-	-
South Oxfordshire District Council - Covid transportation	-	12,180	(12,180)	-	-	-	-	-
Syder Foundation - project for client rehabilitation	-	2,000	(434)	-	1,566	-	(1,566)	-
Thomas Hickman Charity - support for clients in Aylesbury	3,341	-	(2,115)	-	1,226	-	(583)	643
Vale of White Horse District Council - Covid transportation	-	13,750	(13,750)	-	-	-	-	-
Donations for client welfare	13,951	9,485	(10,826)	-	12,610	21,834	(16,798)	17,646
Donations for Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway clients	51	1,423	(232)	-	1,242	2,027	(454)	2,815
Donations for refugees in Banbury	-	300	-	-	300	-	(300)	-

18 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Oxfordshire	5,983	400	-	-	6,383	-	(2,454)	3,929
Donations for client welfare in Buckinghamshire	123	521	(644)	1,669	1,669	1,000	(2,669)	-
Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Buckinghamshire	90	-	(90)	-	-	4,977	(2,781)	2,196
Donations for the welfare of young people in Padstones supported accommodation, Buckinghamshire	14,121	7,973	(5,025)	-	17,069	11,315	(9,037)	19,347
Buckinghamshire Council - fund for Rough Sleeper Accommodation	-	-	-	-	-	33,590	(4,903)	28,687
Buckinghamshire Council - Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery	-	-	-	-	-	8,000	(541)	7,459
Oxfordshire County Council - fund for Oxfordshire Alliance training	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	-	30,000
Thames Valley Police - accommodation fund	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
The Clare Foundation - volunteer event	-	-	-	-	-	1,205	(1,205)	-
The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Foundation - supporting families in Buckinghamshire	-	-	-	-	-	10,025	(10,025)	-
Oxford Homelessness Movement - Supporting clients with no recourse to public funds in Oxfordshire	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	(392)	608
Anson Charitable Trust - support for clients with no recourse to public funds in Buckinghamshire	-	-	-	-	-	1,000	(146)	854
Pye Foundation - move-on costs for Oxfordshire clients	-	-	-	-	-	3,000	(642)	2,358
Vodafone gifts in kind - prepaid SIM cards for client use	-	-	-	-	-	27,000	(27,000)	-
Tesco Groundworks - supporting clients in Witney	-	-	-	-	-	500	(271)	229
Donations for refugees in Oxfordshire	-	-	-	-	-	8,500	(7,600)	900
	119,198	203,468	(257,054)	-	65,612	384,302	(258,596)	191,318

18 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

Buckinghamshire Council
Accommodation deposits and rent in advance for clients sleeping rough in Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire Council
Fund to support clients involved with substance misuse and recovery in Buckinghamshire

Oxfordshire County Council
Fund provided for training courses for use by members of Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance

Thames Valley Police
Accommodation deposits and rent in advance for ex-offender clients in Buckinghamshire

The Clare Foundation
Funds to support a training event for Connection Support's volunteers

The Tony and Sheelagh Williams Foundation
Funds to support the Thrive project, supporting families in Buckinghamshire through a team of volunteers

Ministry of Justice
Funds to support accommodation, including furnishings for, ex-offender clients in Buckinghamshire

Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP)
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients in Oxfordshire

Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients in Oxfordshire

Oxford Community Foundation
Funds to support the Oxfordshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

Oxford Homelessness Movement
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients participating in the Oxfordshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

18 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

The Red Kite Foundation
Funds to provide household equipment for ex-offenders in Buckinghamshire

Rothschild Foundation
Funds to support the Buckinghamshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

Heart of Bucks/Wyke Fund
Funds to support the Buckinghamshire project to support clients with No Recourse to Public Funds

Anson Charitable Trust
Funds to support the welfare needs of clients in Buckinghamshire with No Recourse to Public Funds

Syder Foundation
Funds to support the welfare needs of clients in Buckinghamshire recovering from substance misuse

Thomas Hickman Charity
Direct welfare support for Connection Support clients based in Aylesbury

Pye Foundation
Direct welfare support for clients moving on from services in Oxfordshire

Doris Field Charitable Trust
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients in Buckinghamshire

Vodafone gifts in kind
Donated SIM cards for use by Connection Support clients

Tesco Groundworks
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients in Witney.

Donations for general client welfare
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients across Connection Support.

Donations for Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway clients
Funds to support direct welfare needs of clients leaving the Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway (project 'Oxon HP') service

18 Restricted funds **(Continued)**

Donations for refugees in Banbury
Donations to support the welfare needs of refugee clients in Banbury

Donations for refugees in Oxfordshire
Donations to support the welfare needs of refugee clients across Oxfordshire

Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Oxfordshire
Donations to support the welfare needs of clients sleeping rough across Oxfordshire

Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Buckinghamshire
Donations to support the welfare needs of clients sleeping rough across Buckinghamshire

Donations for the welfare of young people in Padstones supported accommodation, Buckinghamshire
Donations to support the welfare needs of clients participating in the Padstones young persons supported accommodation service in Buckinghamshire

19 Designated funds

The income funds of the charity include the following designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes:

	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2022	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
Support for systems development in 2022-4	106,600	106,600	31,650	138,250
	106,600	106,600	31,650	138,250

20 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023	Unrestricted funds 2022	Restricted funds 2022	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 March 2023 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	554,773	-	554,773	392,245	-	392,245
Current assets/(liabilities)	1,904,371	191,318	2,095,689	1,823,485	65,611	1,889,096
	2,459,144	191,318	2,650,462	2,215,730	65,611	2,281,341

21 Operating lease commitments

At the reporting end date the Charity had outstanding commitments for future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases, which fall due as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Within one year	386,220	337,896
Between two and five years	40,702	95,385
	426,922	433,281

22 Capital commitments

	2023	2022
	£	£
At 31 March 2023 the Charity had capital commitments as follows:		
Contracted for but not provided in the financial statements:		
Acquisition of property, plant and equipment	432,644	433,281

23 Funding received as agent for clients

Connection Support received charitable grant funding as agent on behalf of clients to support welfare purchases. Funds are held on behalf of clients as below.

	2023 £	2022 £
Balance at 1 April	14,987	21,171
Adjustment to prior year balance - grant repayments made	-	(2,350)
Historical balances repaid or transferred to welfare in year	(14,234)	(9,485)
Receipt of client funds	50,823	43,731
Payment of client funds	(40,634)	(38,080)
Balance at 31 March	10,942	14,987

24 Trustee Remuneration, Key Management Personnel & Related Party Transactions

No member of the Board of Trustees received any remuneration during the year. The Trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the Charity in the year (2022: Nil). No Trustees were reimbursed for travel expenses during the year (2022: Nil). No Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the Charity (2022: Nil).

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise the Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer and the two Deputy Chief Executive Officers. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £283,040 (2022: £181,715).

No Trustee or other person related to the Charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the Charity during the year.

25 Cash generated from operations	**2023 £**	**2022 £**
Surplus for the year	369,121	158,759
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(1,654)	(446)
Loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	5,535	802
Gain on revaluation of tangible fixed assets	(130,000)	-
Loss on disposal of investments	16,957	5,890
Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	22,796	23,210
Movements in working capital:		
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	161,628	(273,795)
Increase in creditors	24,338	14,370
Increase/(decrease) in deferred income	227,655	(6,313)
Cash generated from/(absorbed by) operations	696,376	(77,523)

26 Analysis of changes in net funds

The Charity had no debt during the year.

Appendix: Overview of our services

Homelessness and Housing

Adult Homeless Pathway (Oxfordshire) - Providing accommodation and support to single homeless people over the age of 18 across North Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and Oxford City. We have 83 rooms in a mixture of shared houses in Oxford, Witney, and Banbury in which we can support clients to help them build skills and move onto long-term independent living. When moving on from the pathway 12 weeks resettlement support is also offered to support people with the transition and to also settle them into their new homes.

Supported Lettings (Oxford City) - We work with clients when they move into social housing for the duration of their 12-month probationary period of their tenancies. This is specifically for clients who would, without our interventions, be considered unsuitable for social housing. We help them with all aspects of tenancy sustainment, for example, utilities set-up, social inclusion, change of benefits, change of GP, mental/physical health and substance misuse.

Embedded Housing Workers (Oxfordshire) - EHWs are located at hospitals across Oxfordshire to reduce the number of patients who have extended stays in hospital because, although they are medically well enough to be discharged, they either have no housing provision at all, or there are barriers to them returning to their own accommodation. They work with medical teams to reduce the number of patients discharged with no housing provision in place and prevent repeat admission of rough sleepers. They ensure presentations to local housing authorities are done in a managed way, identify and understand patients' housing issues to enable a successful discharge, and monitor and report on outcomes.

Housing First (Milton Keynes) - An evidence-based approach that puts the provision of an independent home first, followed by personalised support, to enable individuals with a history of entrenched or repeat homelessness to begin recovery. Research shows that through this approach residents are 70-90% more likely to remain housed.
Working with Milton Keynes Council, who provide the accommodation, our 'Housing First' service supports adults over the age of 18 who have been rough sleeping in Milton Keynes and have a local connection to the area.

Housing First (Oxfordshire) - Housing First Oxfordshire provides a home and intensive support to former rough sleepers during their journey from rough sleeping to a more settled lifestyle within their own home and to improve their health and wellbeing.

Housing Support Service (Oxfordshire) - Connection Support has been running the Housing Support Service in Oxfordshire since its foundation in 1995. The service is delivered by floating support workers, using a person-centred approach, to enable clients who are at risk of homelessness to maintain their tenancies and access services to avoid entering the homeless pathway. The team support and equip clients with the tools to manage their money, navigate benefits, be independent and avoid homelessness.
Next Steps Accommodation (Milton Keynes) - Next Steps Accommodation placements are for people identified with lower-level support needs who have previously been homeless and require support and interventions to sustain a tenancy. Clients can live in the accommodation for a fixed-term period of three years. After the fixed period clients are supported to access alternative properties and we secure long-term accommodation for people who are identified as ready to move on.

One Recovery Bucks (Buckinghamshire) - ORB provides support into rented accommodation for people over the age of 18 who are doing well in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction (they must have abstained for at least 3 months). Pre-tenancy support is provided, alongside guidance on sustaining a tenancy and help with budgeting, accessing benefits, paying bills, training opportunities and employment. We have a total of 20 flats across the county.

Orchard House (Milton Keynes) - Supported accommodation for vulnerable homeless single people with medium to high mental health needs. There is 24/7 support on site and they also have one-to-one key workers to help them prepare to move on to a more independent lifestyle and an improved quality of life.

Reset (Buckinghamshire) - Support for ex-offenders to access accommodation and make positive life choices to reduce the risk of them reoffending and returning to prison. The team provides support with finding accommodation, tenancy sustainment, accessing benefits, training, education, and employment opportunities, help with physical or mental health issues or substance abuse.

Rough Sleeper Outreach and Rough Sleeper Initiative (Buckinghamshire) - Our Rough Sleeper Outreach Service enables rough sleepers to build a better future beyond street life. We support people living on the streets of Buckinghamshire to find more settled accommodation and receive the benefits they are entitled to. We enable them to access health, addiction, and other support services relevant to their individual needs. The Rough Sleeper Initiative has twenty-one emergency beds available for rough sleepers and support to enable them to move on successfully. This service also has a tenancy sustainment element, which provides life tools and support to rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire, so they can live independently in their own rented home.
We help clients manage their money – rental payments, bills, budgeting, access to benefits, training, routes to employment, and access support for mental and physical health issues.

Rough Sleeper Outreach (Oxfordshire) - Our Outreach service in Oxfordshire helps people who are sleeping rough to find settled accommodation. Support workers also help them access health and mental health services, drug, and alcohol support services, and receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Step Down Housing (Oxfordshire) - Short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from the Oxfordshire University or Oxfordshire Foundation Trust Hospitals but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. This includes people who are homeless, have a history of drug/alcohol misuse, people who have no recourse to public funds or issues with their immigration status, those fleeing domestic violence, or people with mobility issues. We appoint Embedded Housing Workers (EHWs) into the hospitals to upskill medical staff and social workers about the complexities of housing these patients.

South and Vale Floating Support and Winter Night Shelter - Our support workers are embedded alongside housing officers to support clients placed within temp accommodation to move on to more settled accommodation and provide resettlement for the initial weeks of their new tenancies. (This service also covers a Winter Night Shelter provision for rough sleepers within South and Vale, although this has only been held once due to COVID.

Mental Health

Acute Hospital Discharge, Acute Admissions Avoidance Service and Blessings (Milton Keynes) - Supporting clients who have been admitted into the acute mental health wards and supporting them back into the community and to sustain their tenancy.

Mental Health Intensive Support Service (Oxfordshire) - Support for up to five people with the highest and most complex mental health needs and who have not succeeded at independent living in the past. This client group have a history of street homelessness and require intensive support to gain the most basic life skills to enable them to adapt to living indoors, set up home and maintain a tenancy.

Mental Health Support Service (Oxfordshire) - As part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership we provide focused support for between 6 months to 2 years to help people with severe and enduring mental health issues move forward. Offering support around housing, benefits and social inclusion, this supports recovery and enables the clients to live more independently. Some of the team are embedded in the Adult Mental Health Teams to identify and support those patients who present with housing needs straight away.

Mental Health Support Service (Milton Keynes) - We offer housing related-support to help clients with mental health needs to avoid homelessness or to sustain a tenancy and maintain their independence. It's a flexible service, which will meet with clients in the local community or in their home.
Support moves with them wherever they go and the service complements and works in partnership with any statutory or voluntary agency where our support cannot wholly meet the needs of the individual. 'Windrush' is also part of this service – independent supported accommodation for clients with Autism.

Out of Hospital (Oxfordshire) - Our specialist support workers partner with a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, social workers, and housing officers to support people with complex mental health who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness). They work to help people to move on from hospital to settled accommodation and prevent them returning to hospital in the future by solving housing and other linked issues to give them increased stability.

Rise and Shine (Oxfordshire) - The Rise & Shine service operates in partnership with Elmore Community Services. It provides targeted support for up to six months to help people to recover from mental health problems many of which were made worse as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. We work alongside clients to provide short-term interventions to help improve mental well-being and enable recovery, build up their confidence and improve self-esteem.

SafeHaven+ (Buckinghamshire) - Working alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice Bucks, Oasis Partnership and Adult Mental Health Teams this service provides support to adults with mental health issues and potentially complex needs. The project as a whole aims to avoid crisis and admission to hospital and improve overall mental health and wellbeing and Connection Support's role is to provide intensive support specifically relating to housing.

Prevention Matters (Buckinghamshire) - Prevention Matters supports people over the age of 18 who are struggling to remain independent in their own home, having difficulty getting out and about, recovering from an illness or feeling lonely, isolated or anxious. The support workers help them to regain their confidence and maintain their independence.

Family Support

Boost Parenting Advice & Support (Buckinghamshire) - Boost provides support, motivation, encouragement, and advice to parents living in Buckinghamshire to take steps towards creating a more stable and positive environment in which their children can thrive.

Direct Payment Support Services (Milton Keynes) - In some circumstances, social or health care users can be given money in the form of a Direct Payment from their local authority to commission their own services which enables disabled people to tailor their own care arrangements that suit their unique circumstances and lifestyle. Where local authorities may tend to offer, for example access to a day centre, individuals might prefer to meet friends for lunch, to go fishing, or attend a local gym, but need support to do so. This service supports the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice and offering a Payroll Service to process payslips and administrate HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

Family Solutions Plus (Oxfordshire) - Support for parents and carers who experience mental health issues that then impact the home environment for their children to the extent that they are under a plan with social services. In partnership with Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore Community Services, clients are offered up to six individual sessions with adult facing practitioners embedded in social care teams. These mental health workers provide tools to help parents learn how to manage their mental health better in order to stabilise their environment and ultimately prevent the need for their children to be placed into the care system.

Thrive (Buckinghamshire) - Thrive provides support to families in specific areas, delivered by a team of Family Liaison Workers, supported by volunteer parenting mentors, peer mentors and family advocates, to work alongside families, supporting, encouraging and empowering the family to build their skills, confidence and parental wellbeing to create a stable positive environment for their children. We offer a tailored programme of support to each family, based on listening to their social, emotional, educational and health needs which include, but are not limited to, substance dependency, domestic violence, learning difficulties, social exclusion, and lack of parenting skills.

Young People

Housing Interaction Trust (Buckinghamshire) - We have twelve units of accommodation specifically for young people to support those who have nowhere else to go. We support the young people to develop general household skills, budget and manage their finances, maintain personal health, prepare for independent accommodation and manage individual personal and emotional matters.

Padstones Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire) - Padstones prevents young people (aged 16-25 years) becoming homeless by providing accommodation along with visiting support. The team empower young people and develop their resilience, skills and knowledge to prevent the risk of homelessness arising again. It provides a safe and secure environment for residents to develop their potential and move towards more independent living. Accommodation is in two small residential projects in Burnham and High Wycombe, young people have a key worker for one-to-one support. For young people ready to move on from the higher support units, Padstones offers other accommodation with lower-level support.

Young People's Supported Accommodation (Oxfordshire) - YPSA provides supported accommodation in Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire for young people (aged 16-25 years) leaving care. Young people referred to us by Oxfordshire County Council are provided with their own accommodation and regular visits from a Support Worker to help them gain confidence in living independently.

Refugee Resettlement

Refugee Resettlement (Oxfordshire) - This service is for refugees resettling in the UK as part of Government's sponsored resettlement schemes. The families supported live in the South and Vale and the Cherwell District areas of Oxfordshire and we provide a range of emotional and practical support to help the families settle into everyday life. The team supports families mostly coming from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Sudan to manage the transition from living in camps and unsettled accommodation to making a home in Oxfordshire, and helps them to adapt to different social norms and legal frameworks. We work with them through the whole process from airport pick up to the point they can live independently and manage their tenancy without the need for support. The team connects the families to health services and mental health support, schools, English language classes, employment opportunities and local community groups. Working alongside volunteers they also provide information about culture and life in Britain to enable them to make those steps towards living a settled life in the UK.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Buckinghamshire) - Providing support to people experiencing homelessness in Buckinghamshire who do not have access to state-funded benefits and housing. People in this situation are often not allowed to work, neither are they eligible for benefits, nor allowed to use public services except for basic health care. This leaves them at high risk of abuse and exploitation. The aim is to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness, by offering them dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters including their immigration status, and help them to get their lives back on track.

No Recourse to Public Funds (Oxfordshire) - Helping people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing. This project is funded by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, and the aim is to provide tailored support to allow these people to become self-sufficient and take practical steps to rebuild their lives. We work in partnership with Aspire and Asylum Welcome to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness. Working with local housing association SOHA and Edge Housing, we can offer these clients dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters including their immigration status, and help them to get their lives back on track.

Connection Support

England & Wales - Charity number 1049740

Accounts

Connection Support

Solving Homelessness & Achieving Independence

Connection Support

(Formerly registered as Connection Oxford)

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Charity No: 1049740

Company Registration No: 03072719

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Introduction by the Chair of the Board



For many years we have provided support for people who experience problems related to housing or homelessness, those with mental health issues, and refugees and asylum seekers

In times of economic uncertainty and following the coronavirus pandemic, we saw a widening of the inequalities faced by many of our clients and we were able to respond speedily by revisiting our strategic priorities, diversifying income sources and developing new service models. This has therefore necessitated a period of consolidation and stabilisation in terms of governance and leadership, and consequently, we developed a strategic framework which meets the needs of our changing environment. We have enhanced training for our teams, re-established reflective practice post-lockdown, increased the resource in our infrastructure, and appointed new managers to transform our approach to volunteering and client involvement, and increased our marketing and fundraising capacity.

Our growth in recent years has increased our influence in the sector and provided new opportunities to effectively support people and communities. Income grew by 28% during the financial year and we now deliver 32 main services across our three geographic areas, and during 2021-22 we began to leverage our strong reputation and demonstrate our professionalism even more clearly through our communication with stakeholders, including commissioners and other funders.

The last 12 months have shown that the services and resources provided by Connection Support are needed by those communities we support more than ever. We have made some important decisions to focus our resources strategically. By doing so we are now well-placed to meet the challenges for the coming years, and I would like to acknowledge Chris Keating's pivotal role in all that we have achieved since he became Chief Executive. In particular, I would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers at Connection Support for their determination, resilience, and commitment to our goals. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made by David Waters, Jenny Berrill, David Bayes, and Kelly Bark who retired as Trustees during this period. David Waters served as Chair of Connection Support for over 10 years and Jenny for two years.

Finally, huge thanks to our supporters and donors whose generosity and compassion at this difficult time is truly inspirational.



James Arnold
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Introduction from the CEO



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mark Thompson, and all my colleagues on the Board, staff and management teams for the help, friendship and wisdom that I have been offered in my first year as Chief Executive. It has certainly been a challenging year!

At the time of writing, it's difficult to believe that, at the beginning of this reporting period, the Ukraine war was ten months in the future, our offices were mostly closed due to the pandemic and the rule of six was in place - outdoors only. I'm proud to say that our team rose equally brilliantly to the challenges of society reopening, as they did to it closing down the previous year. One of my passions is seeking out marginalised groups of people who slip through the cracks of public services; the end of the Everyone In campaign provided the opportunity to do exactly that. As people left temporary accommodation, we identified those who had no recourse to public funds, then worked with the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM) and partner agencies Aspire and Asylum Welcome to create and fund a programme so they could access support as they sought to gain status. I'm really excited to do more self-generated work to meet needs in our communities as we identify them, alongside our core commissioned services.

As well as OHM, we have worked with a broad range of partners across our three areas and this year, I've particularly enjoyed collaborating with the other members of the new Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance. I'm looking forward to working even more closely together in future and coordinating our efforts to deliver the best possible results for clients. I have also become the Chair of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, at a pivotal time as we begin to look forward together at the potential future of our partnership services beyond this contractual period. I'm particularly proud of our Step Down Houses and Milton Keynes Housing First services, which were nominated for Homeless Link Awards this year. Our Step Down House was also recognised by King's College London as being the best in its field, nationally. As we grow, we must continue to deliver this level of excellence in all our work. So this year, we have revitalised our organisation so our infrastructure fits our scale and the level of our ambition for clients. Our investments in finance, IT, HR, communication, fundraising and of course, our people, have given us a strong foundation for the future. I feel extremely fortunate to have inherited a team with such astonishing depth and breadth of experience and talent, including lived experience which is so crucial to our work.

I'm grateful that the Board has supported the investments in our people this year, in terms of remuneration, the delivery of more, higher quality training and particularly in allocating resources to ensuring that we have an organisational culture which is truly diverse and inclusive for all. I'm thrilled to be taking this superb team forward into 2023.

Chris Keating

Christopher Keating
Chief Executive Officer

What We Do

Solving Homelessness & Achieving Independence

At Connection Support, we work alongside people to overcome life's challenges. We provide services across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes through approximately 200 staff and 150 volunteers. We have expertise in supporting people who have problems related to housing or homelessness, those with mental health issues, and refugees and asylum seekers. We also have specialist services working with families and young people. We use a trauma-informed, strength-based approach that is person-centred and tailored to each individual's needs. We work alongside each person to empower them to live as independently as they possibly can. Underpinning our client work is our ongoing commitment to making our organisation even stronger, ensuring it is fit to deliver the highest quality services to meet the growing and evolving needs in society. The principles of partnership and volunteering flow through everything we do. An overview of our 32 main services can be found in the Appendix on page 47.



Values

Our values are not just how we work alongside our clients, but how we work with one another, our partners, and our stakeholders.

- **Empowering - we enable people to find their strengths and develop resilience**
- **Collaborative – we involve, challenge and advocate**
- **Compassionate – we connect with people and don't give up**
- **Personalised – we believe in finding creative, individual solutions with everybody**

Collaborating for Impact

Partnerships

Partnerships are essential to our work at all levels. This year, we laid the foundations for the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance with A2 Dominion, Aspire, Elmore Community Services, Homeless Oxfordshire and St Mungo's, LEAF and the City, District and County Councils. This new commissioning environment launched on 1 April 2022, and together, we will share knowledge, collaborate at a strategic level, and manage a joint budget to use our resources efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients. Our CEO is the current Chair of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, whose members include the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Response, Restore, Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore Community Services. We are also part of the Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway with Response, Cottsway Housing and Cherwell District Council, and are also on the steering group of the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement.

We enjoy ongoing positive partnerships across all our geographical areas, including working with Aspire, Asylum Welcome and the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement on our project for those with no recourse to public funds in Oxfordshire. We have strong links with the Thames Valley Alliance for our work with offenders and with Thames Valley Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner and local Community Safety Boards. We work with partners including Response, Paradigm, SOHA, A2 Dominion, Cottsway and private landlords to provide high-quality housing for clients whom we support. We also work on a range of specialist projects by collaborating with key partners such as Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Elmore Community Services, Buckinghamshire Mind, Oxfordshire Mind, Citizens Advice, the Oasis Partnership and Central and North West London NHS Trust.

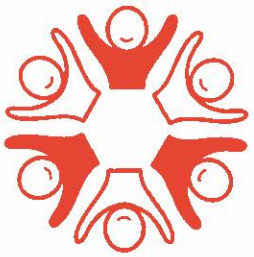
Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EDEI)



We are a charity that promotes social justice. We seek to ensure that the people we work alongside and our team of staff and volunteers have a voice, are included, valued, have equitable access, and have equal opportunities to achieve. We strive to do this through our values and to ensure we are doing everything we can to action our words within our charity, with our partners, the people we work alongside, and the communities we work in.

The Board and leadership made an explicit commitment to Equality, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion this year. We worked with the Diversity Trust CIC to review our current working practices, policies and culture, and identify priorities going forward. We consulted broadly within the organisation as part of the process. Everyday Inclusion and Unconscious Bias training was rolled out to all staff and the Leadership Team has committed to ACEVO Eight principles to address the diversity deficit in charity leadership. We also updated our e-mail signatures to include gender pronouns so members of our team can choose how they are referred to.

Client Involvement and Volunteering



The Board invested in a full-time manager to lead our thinking regarding client involvement and volunteering. The manager was appointed in October 2021 and a Volunteer and Peer-mentoring Coordinator joined the team in Milton Keynes shortly afterwards to establish volunteering there, where it had not existed for many years.

Through these appointments and the development of the strategy, the Board has underlined its commitment to including clients meaningfully and as equals in shaping the services we run. Within our services, we already have an empowering approach to working with clients that values a person's skills and knowledge. Involving clients in decisions about the way we work as an organisation is a natural extension of this principle and will ensure our services truly reflect clients' views and priorities.

The strategy lays out our plans to strengthen volunteering throughout the organisation. By involving a wider group of volunteers from our local communities, we aim to enhance and complement the support we offer to clients, benefit from a more diverse range of skills, views and perspectives and deliver cost-effective services. We also anticipate that the volunteers will raise awareness of our work in their personal and professional networks.

Clients have already been involved in recruiting senior team members this year, most notably the Director of Business Services and the Client Involvement and Volunteering Manager. The Board are also delighted to have recruited a Trustee with lived experience, who will join in 2022/23.

Our Work

Homelessness and Housing Support

Connection Support has its origins in homelessness and housing support, since it began providing floating support in Oxfordshire in 1995. 15 of our 32 main projects still have this as their primary focus. We are proud to still be delivering that original service, now known as the Housing Support Service, and as of 1 April 2022 this becomes part of the new Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance commissioning structure. In July 2021, we published an internal review of the service, which found that 99% of the 1793 cases referred to this service during the preceding three years had successfully avoided eviction. The report also showed that KPI targets were consistently exceeded, for example for speed of processing of referrals. Just as importantly, the review reinforced Connection Support's reputation for going above and beyond our formal remit when clients needed us; there were numerous examples of our support workers showing tenacity and creativity to help their clients achieve a positive outcome, and being there for them when there was nowhere else for that person to turn.

In our Buckinghamshire Tenancy Sustainment service, which is part of the Rough Sleeper Initiative, 92% of people we worked with were living indoors in the last quarter of the year. 68% successfully maintained settled accommodation and 24% were in temporary accommodation. This year, we provided 83 rooms in shared houses across Oxfordshire for people in the Adult Homeless Pathway; we helped these clients to build skills during their 6-9 months in the accommodation, so they could move on to long-term independent living.

IAN'S STORY



In 2018 Ian was sleeping rough on the streets of Oxford, committing crime to fund his addiction. His relationship with his family had broken down and he was unable to see his children. Four years on he is living in his own flat, a place he can finally call home, and he reflects on how far he's come since receiving help from our Adult Homeless Pathway service:

"Now I've got my own flat. I've built good relationships with my family and I'm seeing my kids – trying to make them proud. I'm very house proud now as well, so I'm always making sure my flat is clean and tidy and paying my bills which I feel is a big achievement. I love waking up in the morning fresh! ...My Support Worker's persistence and determination gave me hope for the future. Knowing someone believed in me made all the difference!"

Research has shown that residents in accommodation based on Housing First principles are 70-90% more likely to remain housed than those using other approaches. We are proud to deliver our Housing First Service in Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, (see page 9) which is the largest Housing First service in the UK outside the government pilots. In Milton Keynes, we also work with people who have previously been homeless but have low-level support needs in our Next Steps Accommodation Service. In this service, clients stay in our accommodation for up to three years, after which we support them to move on to a new home and at year-end, 94% of clients are up-to-date with their rent or are making progress in dealing with benefits issues to pay rent.

Our rough sleeper work was unusually quiet in the first half of the year, due to the government's Everyone In campaign and we had to adapt creatively to manage the process of moving people on safely when that provision ended. We found that, due to having had a period of living indoors due to the pandemic, many rough sleepers who would not otherwise have engaged with support services built trusting relationships with our staff and became more open to support. This enabled us to help them access the benefits they are entitled to and engage with physical and mental health services, and support with drug or alcohol needs. We also ran the One Recovery Buckinghamshire service for adults, through which we provide 20 flats and guidance to help people who are doing well in recovery from drug or alcohol misuse.

In Milton Keynes, we continued to run Orchard House, which is supported accommodation for homeless single people, most of whom have mental health needs. This year, 79% of clients had an improved score on their outcomes star, which we measured at three monthly intervals, and 100% of leavers considered their wellbeing was better overall than when they moved into Orchard House.

Our work with ex-offenders in Buckinghamshire has gone from strength to strength this year. Since April 2021, our project has assisted 54 people into accommodation and supported them to make positive choices to enable a fresh start.

> I referred (client) to you... if it wasn't for the work you did with her, and the support and assistance, she would be spiralling out of control
> - Thames Valley Police Officer

OUR WORK IN ACTION...

Step Down Housing & Embedded Housing Workers - Oxfordshire

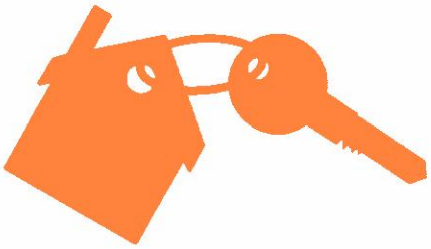
Our 'Step Down Housing' service prevents homelessness by providing short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from hospitals in Oxford but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. This includes people who are homeless, have a history of drug or alcohol misuse, or have no recourse to public funds, people with issues with their immigration status, those fleeing domestic violence, or those with mobility issues. We appoint Embedded Housing Workers (EHWs) into the hospitals to upskill medical staff and social workers about the complexities of housing these patients. Discharged patients (whom we call guests) spend up to eight weeks at a local 'Step Down' house with a Support Worker and community medical staff. While they recover, guests are linked to the Homeless Pathway options, local housing team, and outreach services. They are supported with registering with a GP and alcohol and drug support services where necessary and are offered help with benefit claims and budgeting. They are also encouraged to take part in activities such as cooking/reading groups, coffee mornings, and gardening. Partnership is key to the success of this service. To ensure the best outcome for every guest, it is paramount that we work closely with our partner, Response, who provide the accommodation and maintain the houses, and with hospital staff, junior doctors, councils, occupational therapists, mental health teams, addiction support, social workers, care coordinators, and families and friends.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the EHWs' role became more dynamic. Previously they would upskill staff through shadowing, talking to patients and passing on their knowledge of the Homeless Reduction Act. However, the impact of the pandemic on medical teams meant this was no longer feasible and the high changeover of staff didn't allow for training. Therefore, the EHWs had to have direct contact with patients, taking control of housing them. As a result, EHWs were integral in streamlining the discharge process, helping to reduce bed occupancy and the risk of patients contracting COVID-19. They also had to adapt to very short notice periods, sometimes only given hours before a patient was discharged. They went above and beyond their role, taking on the responsibilities of other staff who were unable to be at the hospitals, including completing paperwork with patients, obtaining signed housing forms, and collecting medication. Subsequently, they have become more involved in delivering discharge plans, which has been essential to relieving pressure on NHS resources. The renewal of funding from Oxford Health, Oxfordshire CCG, Oxford City Council and DLUHC for the next five (plus three) years, along with the request for more support in the hospital is a testament to the success of this service.

> "Step Down Housing is performing well against national benchmarks for reducing A&E attendances and emergency admissions."
> - Kings College London

OUR WORK IN ACTION...

Housing First - Milton Keynes



Our 'Housing First' service first began as a pilot scheme in 2018 with the aim to house and support people sleeping rough in Milton Keynes. The pilot was based on Housing First principles: the key premise is that many people who are entrenched in a rough sleeping lifestyle, often with complex needs, require settled accommodation first before they can make lifestyle changes. This contrasts with traditional approaches of support where people are not offered accommodation until they prove they are 'housing ready'. The Housing First approach is fundamentally a person-centred approach, which fully respects the choices of each person and supports their self-determination. The individuals we're supporting are at the centre of what we do, and we understand that helping someone out of homelessness is about more than just putting a roof over their head. This is why our Support Workers offer an intensive, flexible, and personalised approach for a cohort of people who have not been successfully engaged or been supported by other housing services due to the level and complexity of their needs.

The first stage of support is to settle clients into accommodation that is affordable and sustainable. Our Support Workers then work with the client to help them to maintain that accommodation, but also to understand their circumstances, challenges, and abilities to be able to tailor their ongoing support. This includes help with accessing welfare benefits to which they are entitled and registering with services appropriate to their needs such as GP, dentist, social care, mental health services and support for substance misuse. They also help clients to access training or educational opportunities and to seek employment.

Cross-sector collaboration is key to the success of this service and a multi-agency panel meets every two weeks, to discuss new referrals and provide updates on current clients to ensure the best outcome is achieved for every individual. Client feedback is a testament to our Housing First service, with 99% of clients saying they were satisfied with the service and 95% saying their quality of life has improved.

John* has spent the longest period out of prison in 25 years since being supported through Housing First. He had been a persistent offender since his late teens (he's now in his late thirties) but with the service, he has been able to secure a tenancy, pay his bills and engage with the Probation Service. (*not his real name)

Families and Independence

It is not unusual for parents to struggle with the challenges of bringing up young children, but for those without a support network or with other financial, health or social issues, this can quickly escalate to a situation where the family is in crisis and needs intensive support, which is expensive in both human and financial terms. The Boost Parenting Advice & Support Service in Buckinghamshire matches volunteers to families who need a helping hand dealing with issues such as establishing healthy routines with their children, encouraging school attendance or who need emotional support to help them to cope. Boost began during the pandemic on digital platforms, and this year it has been transformed into a face-to-face service. We recruited 61 volunteers between January 2021 and January 2022, and helped 141 clients. A client survey showed that 95% of clients felt that support from the service had improved their skills and/or knowledge of parenting.

The Family Solutions Plus project in Oxfordshire was mobilised in 2020 in partnership with Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore Community Services and was fully up and running this year. Support Workers from all three partners are embedded in social work teams alongside similar workers from other voluntary sector services supporting families with domestic abuse and substance misuse issues according to each organisation's specialism. Our service works alongside parents to give them tools to manage their mental health better so they are equipped to provide a stable environment for their children and therefore avoid them being taken into care. Our aim is also to enable parents to be better role models to their children, so they in turn are better parents to the next generation and the cycle of trauma and poor parenting is broken. This unique collaboration with social services is the first time outside agencies have been brought into the process in Oxfordshire and early anecdotal evidence suggests that many children who would have been taken into care have successfully been kept with their families.

For clients in our Self-Directed Support Services, we enable greater independence by helping them tailor their own care arrangements to suit their unique circumstances and lifestyle. In some circumstances, social or healthcare users can be given money in the form of a Direct Payment from their local authority to commission their own services, rather than accept a standard provision. For example, where local authorities may offer access to a day centre, individuals might prefer to meet friends for lunch, go fishing, or attend a local gym, but need support to do so. This service supports the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice and offering a Payroll Service to process wages and administrate HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

> We have had some awful cases, but have worked with Connection Support and families have been saved from the precipice. Connection Support are good at this difficult, complex work.
> - Lead Manager, Oxfordshire County Council

OUR WORK IN ACTION...

Prevention Matters - Buckinghamshire

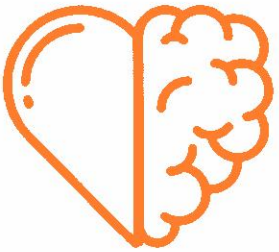
Loneliness and isolation is a growing issue in society, either due to old age, illness or lack of self-confidence. Our Prevention Matters service in Buckinghamshire matches clients with a community practice worker who helps them get out and about and connect with their communities.

The majority of clients in this service are over 65 and were therefore at greater risk from COVID; they were acutely affected by isolation during the pandemic and many have found it difficult to get out again once restrictions lifted. They are also often uncomfortable with technology and this put them at a digital disadvantage as we emerged from lockdown during 2021, as many services which were traditionally face-to-face had moved online. Something as simple as making an appointment with a GP had become very difficult.

The Prevention Matters team responded by using funds we raised from a corporate partner to purchase tablets and data for these clients. We provided them with training on how to use their devices to access services and reduce their feelings of loneliness.

> One of our clients was an older lady, who was living alone and was prone to hoarding, which we are seeing more and more often. It was having an impact on her mental and physical health and she was really isolated. Once she got her tablet, she found the motivation to start clearing her house out. She took it from room to room around the house as she tidied up, either listening to podcasts or watching tv as she went. She was also able to speak to her grandchildren online for the first time in a long time. It made a massive difference to her quality of life.'
>
> - Helen Pizans, Operations Manager

Mental Health



This year, we saw more evidence of the impact that COVID restrictions have had on people with mental health needs. Clinical mental health services became stretched and therefore the complexity of mental health cases coming into our services has increased as well as the volume of referrals.

As restrictions relaxed and people began to access services again, the number of clients in all our Mental Health Support Services in Oxfordshire (whether related to COVID or not) increased by 50% from 88 to 132 clients. 93% of these were successfully closed within two years and more than 80% required no further support two years after we closed their cases.

Our Mental Health Intensive Support Service launched as a targeted pilot in Oxfordshire this year, working with a small number of entrenched rough sleepers with acute mental health needs. These clients had no other options, as every other service felt unequipped to support them; all the clients had been sectioned at some point in their lives, some of them multiple times and some were deemed at risk of death if they spent another winter outdoors. These clients had a history of finding it very difficult to trust people in the mainstream or to engage with services. We provided them with a furnished flat to move into and paid all bills through housing benefits and a service charge so that they did not get into arrears. With the added complexity of entrenched substance misuse or other physical health issues, we provided additional time from a Support Worker to enable the clients to maintain their tenancy which would have been too big a step for them without support. They had lived outside social norms, often for decades, so some of them had to learn basic living skills such as cooking and changing their clothes. The goal of the service was to discover whether it was possible for this client group to adapt to maintain a tenancy and, since the pilot began, all four clients have kept a roof over their heads.

In October 2021, we launched our Out of Hospital Service in Oxfordshire with the aim of avoiding repeated admissions to mental health wards for clients whose complex needs put them outside the remit of the council's tenancy sustainment teams. Oxford City Council (OCC) recognised that their Housing Workers lacked sufficient expertise and experience in engaging with tenants to address their challenging behaviour and non-compliance with tenancy agreements. Connection Support was identified as a partnership organisation due to the successful placement of one of our workers in the OCC Tenancy Sustainment Teams.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, our embedded Mental Health workers supported 25 clients. Clients were referred to the team by OCC and Cherwell District Council Temporary Accommodation Teams, hospital-based embedded housing workers, ward-based social workers and AMHT care coordinators. Our Support Workers have provided support with housing applications, debt, bills and benefits, and applied for funding from grant-giving organisations for the provision of essential household items. The workers identified the importance of developing rapport with clients who had experienced many negative outcomes dealing with professionals and agencies and provided advice regarding mental and physical health problems and motivational support and advocacy.

A key element of the role has been to liaise with a range of professionals to maintain a multi-agency approach. Regular team meetings including with Step Down workers have enabled exchange of information and updates. The total number of emergency hospital admissions during the period for these 25 cases was reduced to 4 (2 clients).

In Milton Keynes, we have continued to work in partnership with the acute mental health wards to support people like Alan (see case study below) to be successfully discharged and re-establish themselves in the community to avoid readmission. This work, funded by the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust is proving successful; 77.2% of clients in our Acute Hospital Discharge Service, and 100% in the Acute Admissions Avoidance Service reported an improvement in their emotional and mental health and no one we have worked with since the service began in February 2021 has been readmitted to hospital.

ALAN'S STORY



When Alan was first introduced to Connection Support, he was being discharged from hospital after the latest in a series of mental health breakdowns. He had always been a hardworking, sociable person but, due to his schizophrenia, a number of bereavements, including his mother passing away and the breakdown of his marriage, he needed support to re-establish his independence.

"Prior to my on-going breakdowns, I was outgoing, confident, sociable, giving, caring and loved being around people."

His support worker was able to help him secure a PIP assessment, book onto a driver awareness course, and withdraw his pensions.

"My support worker took 'ALL' the pressure and 'STRESS' away from dealing with paperwork and looking at emails I did not understand. Tina replied to companies on time and supported me with my PIP assessment and a lot more…. It may not seem like much when I talk about it but to me, it felt like I was drowning. Tina has been my life jacket."

As his confidence and self-esteem grew, she supported him look for work, helping with the paperwork, scanning the documents and managing emails with his employer.

"Tina even ordered my uniform and my boots for me; without this level of kindness and support, I would have really struggled organising everything."

Alan is now enjoying spending time with his family and is looking forward to starting a new job..."I have had so much help both mentally and practically which has made my life and outlook easier and have started regaining an 'I can do' attitude and 'it is possible' to move forward"

Young People



Our Young People's Accommodation Service launched in 2019 and evolved from the historical provision of group accommodation for young people in care in Oxfordshire. The young people move into their own accommodation, either in self-contained units or HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation), and are supported to transition into mainstream adult life and full independence in education, training or employment.

Through this service, Connection Support added to its portfolio of properties and established successful partnerships with private landlords and A2 Dominion. As the properties were dispersed and mainly self-contained, we introduced an even more robust on-call system to ensure that clients and landlords had an emergency contact at all times.

Most of the young people in this service lived alone during the pandemic and had pre-existing mental health issues, which made them vulnerable to feelings of isolation during lockdowns. Support Workers continued to hold face-to-face sessions with them outdoors, which enabled them to monitor the young people's mental health and general wellbeing. They continued to help them to develop the skills needed to manage their own home and to look after their health and money responsibly and it was also valuable to get outside their home and go for a walk in the fresh air – something many of them would not have felt comfortable doing alone. Many of the young people had high levels of anxiety so we supported them to manage this as they reconnected with the outside world - all of the young people who were ready to move on from this service this year were supported to settle into new accommodation.

In Buckinghamshire, we had twelve units of accommodation within the Housing Interaction Trust project, which provides accommodation for young people who were at risk of homelessness. They came to us via schools, colleges, GPs or councils for a broad range of reasons – it could be due to conflict with their parents, but also due to family breakdown or because their parent went into residential care themselves and was unable to support their child. Due to the complexity of their needs, including some who had substance misuse issues, they had routinely been rejected from single issue services and many qualified for neither CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) nor adult mental health services. Since the pandemic, the proportion of young people in this service with mental health problems has increased significantly and 95% of clients had have some sort of mental health issue this year, ranging from often severe depression to psychosis. 92% of referrals this year were supported to settle into new accommodation

Our Padstones project operated in two small group properties in Burnham and High Wycombe, as well as move-on accommodation for those who are ready to have less support. It exists to prevent young people from becoming homeless by offering a safe environment with 24-hour support and regular one-to-one key work sessions to help young people to develop their potential and move towards more independent living.

ADRIAN'S STORY



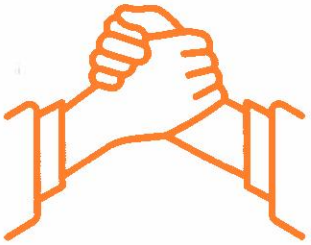
"Adrian came to us in November 2019 and he left in September 2021. He has worked hard over that two years to manage his anxieties to accept the support he needs. While with us, he came to key work on a regular basis and received online support through the Mental Health Team. He had always wanted to attend university but he didn't think this would happen when he first arrived at Padstones. However, with the support of Havenfield Team and an extremely lot of hard work from Adrian, he finally felt he was able to move on and attend University to learn Criminal Psychology. He is doing well and now he is supported from Havenfield as a move-on client. I am extremely proud of how far Adrian has come." - Caroline Sherman-Thomas (Adrian's key worker)

"Within my nearly two years of being at Connection Support, I changed a lot, I achieved this myself but with the helping hand of Connection Support. I needed to become independent and so I was assisted in reaching this goal, this was done by giving a hand when I needed it, nothing was done for me which was what I needed. If there was something I needed to do I was given the help or the direction to do it, this was done throughout my entire time there and contributed massively to me growing as a person making me comfortable enough to move out. Even when I moved out I was given the assistance I needed, i.e. payment for the deposit, help to talk to the agency, moving all my stuff over to the new place etc. All this support was monumental to my current state, from helping me understand and get over some of my mental health issues, to giving me confidence in going to university" Adrian Picasso – Dvorani

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Our Refugee Resettlement team provided emotional and practical support to 13 refugee families who arrived in the Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts under Central Government's UK Resettlement Scheme. When they first arrived, COVID restrictions required them to quarantine in their accommodation and our Support Workers had to shop for them and physically assist them with their day 2 and day 8 PCR tests; they built trust very quickly with the families to help them to understand why the tests and isolation were necessary, why they were not able to take their children outside and to reassure them that they were not imprisoned. The team worked closely with statutory and voluntary agencies across the county to ensure that the families received the necessary support to begin to recover from their trauma and integrate into the community. We established a women's group to provide a forum where they could meet and support each other through the process and helped them manage their finances and tenancies, register with health services and access to education, training and employment opportunities. English and Arabic-speaking volunteers played a vital role in helping families get to know the local area and in providing English conversation to back up the more formal work of the support workers to meet the requirements of the scheme.

OUR WORK IN ACTION...



No Recourse to Public Funds - Oxfordshire

Connection Support, alongside Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, took the initiative to set up a service in partnership with Aspire, Asylum Welcome, Edge and SOHA to help people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who had lost or do not have access to state-funded benefits and housing. Most of those supported were from outside the EEA and had a pending or unresolved asylum claim and, as a result, were not able to work, apply for benefits or access public services apart from basic health care. With no means to support themselves, this group is at risk of homelessness and vulnerable to crime and exploitation. The project, funded fully by fundraising and grants coordinated by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, provides medium-term accommodation for participants and supports them to recover from trauma and to resolve their immigration status, enabling them to eventually move into secure long-term housing.

In Buckinghamshire, we continued to provide emergency support to people with no recourse to public funds, a project originally funded by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and supported this year by charitable donations from the Albert Hunt Trust and Rothschild and Shanly Foundations. We worked closely with Wycombe Homeless Connection and are particularly grateful for access to their invaluable Polish translation service. A dedicated worker supported this group to help them access food, shelter and medical care and connected them with statutory services, such as the NHS, and other charitable organisations who provided advice on employment and the immigration process. Where we have been successful in helping clients to achieve settled status, we supported their applications for benefits which enabled them to move in to either supported, social or privately rented accommodation. Where this was not possible, we supported them to find employment. We have also accessed direct financial support for our participants, to support their day to day living costs, through the British Red Cross Hardship Payment Scheme. In this way, our project provided the connections and support which ensured that individuals became integrated into their communities, with a home and access to all the resources they needed for independent living.

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023

As social needs increase and evolve, so does our ambition to identify those who fall between the cracks in existing services and to develop innovative ways of helping them to avoid homelessness and achieve independence. We also remain committed to delivering excellence in all our services which we deliver in partnership with local government. To enable this, we have grown our organisation and, as we have done so, consulted with staff, volunteers and clients to identify areas in which we require more robust infrastructure to continue to deliver the quality services that our clients deserve. Our three-year strategic plan, therefore, reflects the required investment of time and resources in organisational development. The strategic goals, mission and values were developed collaboratively through a series of facilitated conversations between all staff members, Board members, leadership and senior managers, then translated into a delivery plan by the leadership team. The strategy was communicated to all staff in a more digestible form and the Chief Executive and senior leadership have personally engaged with all staff in small groups in values workshops throughout the year. The strategy will be refreshed during the midpoint of its lifecycle in 2022-23.

GOAL 1: GROW TO POSITIVELY IMPACT MORE LIVES

Income grew by 28% during the financial year, through a combination of winning new tenders, extension of existing contracts and fundraising for pieces of work where the organisation can make most impact for groups of people who are otherwise falling between the cracks in service provision. Examples of the latter include achieving funding from a range of sources for: the Out of Hospital mental health service in Oxfordshire; our Step Down Houses; the Rough Sleeper Initiative; work with prison-leavers in Buckinghamshire and the hospital discharge project in Milton Keynes. The organisation grew from 160 to 197 employees during this financial year.

- Next year: we will continue to fundraise for potential projects which we are most passionate about and conduct a quality review across our programme delivery.

GOAL 2: INVEST IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

We invested in new managerial and operational posts in volunteering/client involvement, communications/marketing, and income generation and rescoped the Head of Finance role and finance team to increase our capacity in that area. We added additional administrative capacity, invested in new HR, IT and rent management systems and developed strategies for IT and volunteering/client involvement.

- Next year: We will introduce further Office 365 features and work towards achieving Cyber Essentials Certification. We will consult internally to design a new client database, introduce a new contract management system and continue to monitor resourcing, plugging gaps as necessary. We will develop a marketing and communications strategy, conduct a complete review of our website and launch a new intranet. We will develop and begin to implement an Equality Diversity Equity and Inclusion strategy and employ a recruitment specialist to enable our managers to focus more on frontline work.

GOAL 3: INVOLVE CLIENTS DIRECTLY IN SHAPING OUR WORK

We invested in a Client Involvement and Volunteering Manager, developed a strategy and are in the early stages of delivering it. See page 7 for more detail

- Next year: we will deliver the client involvement strategy and in particular recruit a Board member with lived experience, develop training and support materials for clients, involve them further in recruitment, ensure staff buy-in to principles of client involvement and establish a system to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts towards meaningful involvement.

GOAL 4: INVEST IN PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

This year, we created a comprehensive new training plan, introduced new mandatory training for all staff, much of which is delivered in a modular format, and began to transition back to face to face training sessions where appropriate, including reintroducing reflective practice at the earliest opportunity. Areas in which we have improved or introduced new training include safeguarding, EDEI (equality, diversity, equity and inclusion), unconscious bias, finance for managers, client note-taking, methods of work including Psychologically Informed Environments, trauma-informed care, and motivational interviewing, HR training including line management skills and values-based interviewing. We also reviewed and improved our staff induction procedures. The Board was able to approve a cost-of-living salary increase for staff and Connection Support achieved the Living Wage Employer accreditation.

- Next year: We will implement an enhanced employee benefits package and continue to do all we can to ease the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our employees. New employee communication processes will be introduced, such as online Town Hall and Team Manager meetings to help employees to share experiences and engage with the organisation and the leadership and we will conduct our first-ever comprehensive staff survey. We will invest in employee wellbeing and establish a competency framework.

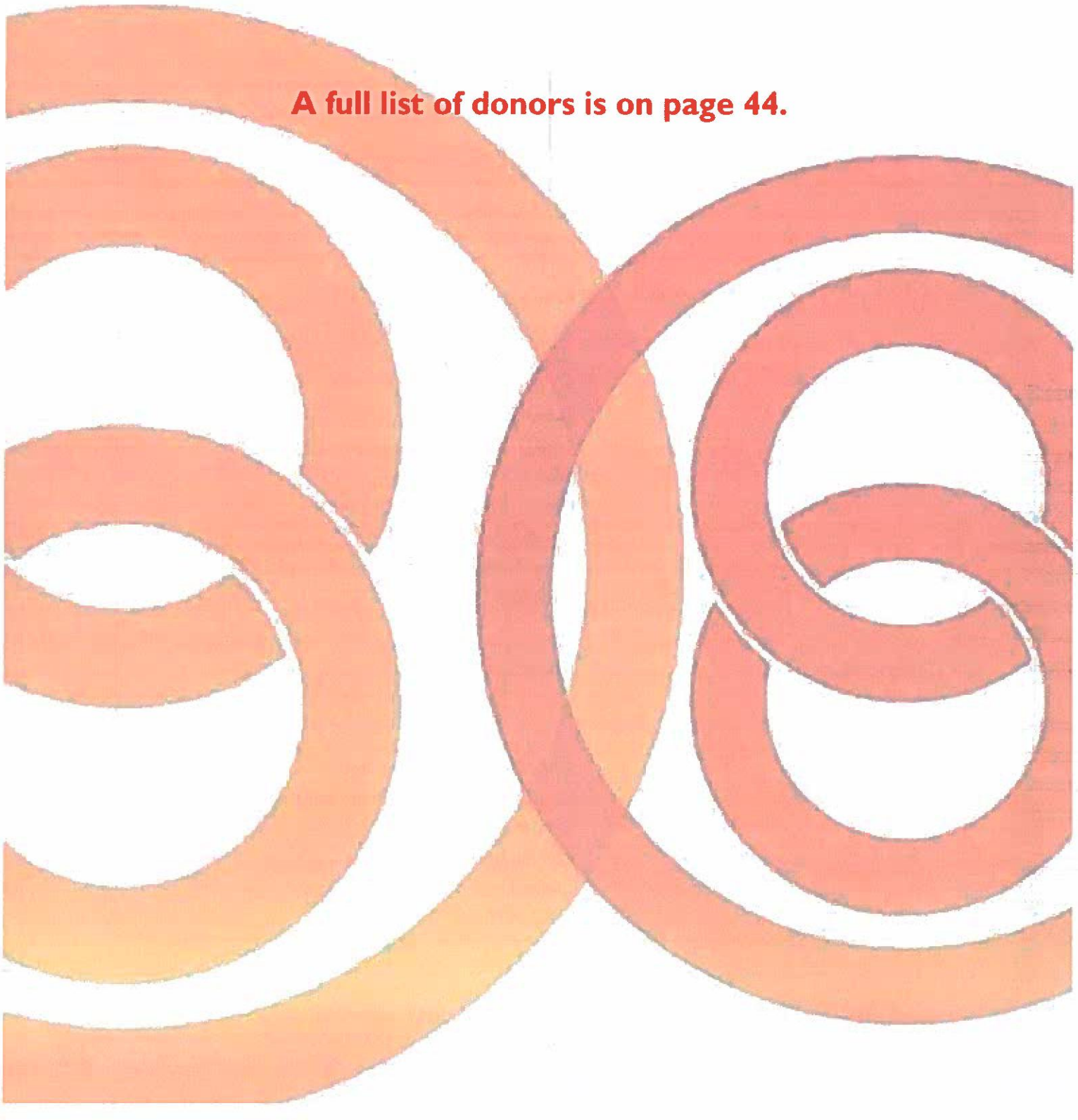
GOAL 5: DEVELOP OUR HOUSING MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

We have increased the number of properties we manage directly, alongside the provision of support to clients, and continue to work with partner organisations that provide properties. To enable us to ensure we provide quality, well-managed accommodation where that is our responsibility, we recruited a Housing and Facilities Development Manager and established a maintenance post.

- Next year: We will develop a housing management strategy, with the aim of providing a greater quantity of appropriate high-quality accommodation for clients and will review our office estate.

ALL THAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR PARTNERS, DONORS, VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF - THANK YOU!

A full list of donors is on page 44.



REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Registered charity name	Connection Support
Charity number	1049740
Company registration number	03072719
Principal & registered office address	213 Barns Road (1st floor) Oxford OX4 3UT
Trustees	Richard Allman James Arnold (Chair) Paul Aston (appointed 22.05.22) Kelly Bark (retired 01.07.21) David Bayes (retired 14.05.22) Jennifer Berrill (retired 15.05.22) Anne Cooney Emily Dobell Emma Duke (appointed 14.07.22) Liam Moore (appointed 29.09.22) Dipen Parekh (retired 10.06.22) David Waters (retired 07.05.21) Luka Winterborne (appointed 14.05.22) Mike Wortley
Company Secretary	Christopher Keating
Auditors	Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited Chartered Certified Accountants and Statutory Auditors 264 Banbury Road Oxford OX2 7DY

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

Connection Support is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. It is governed by its Articles of Association dated 26 May 1995.

Organisational Structure

The Board is responsible for the governance of the charity. The day-to-day running of the charity is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is supported by two Deputy CEOs, the Director of Business Services, and the Head of Finance.

The Trustee Board

Connection Support is governed by a Board of unpaid Trustees who meet with the staff leadership team every two months. The Board delegates monitoring of financial matters to a Finance Sub-committee, which meets once a quarter and delivery of organisational development initiatives to a Development Sub-committee, which meets every two months. Other committees can be formed on a task-focused basis. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, one third of Board members, or if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one third, shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting each year. Any Trustee appointed between Annual General Meetings shall only retain office until the next Annual General Meeting and then shall be eligible for re-election. The Trustees who served the charity during the year are shown on page 19. Jennifer Berrill was re-elected as the Chair of the Board up to her retirement in September 2021. Jim Arnold was elected as Chair from September 2022.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The Board aims to ensure that a broad range of experience is represented by Trustees, particularly in health, housing, social care, business and finance. A skills audit of Board members is conducted every two years to inform recruitment and succession planning. Detailed information is provided to prospective Trustees, including governing documents, financial accounts, Charity Commission guidance on the responsibilities of Trustees and information about the charity's services. Applicants are invited to an informal discussion with the CEO followed by a formal interview with two Board Members and the CEO. The interview covers the responsibilities of Trustees, in line with Charity Commission guidance and the Charity Code of Governance. References are taken prior to full Board approval of appointment.

Trustees' Induction and Training

New Trustees are provided with information about the charity including its strategy, plans, organisational structure, finances and risk register. New Trustees meet with the CEO for a full briefing on the charity's work and to agree areas of more specific input. Newly appointed Trustees are supported by a mentor from the Board during their induction period. Training opportunities are circulated to Board members as they arise.

Charitable Objectives

To relieve poverty, sickness and distress in people over the age of 16 and living, or about to live, in local authority, housing association or private accommodation (particularly but not exclusively those who have been in care or have been homeless, those who suffer from mental health problems and those with previous or current addiction to drugs or alcohol) through the provision of advice and advocacy services, counselling support and whatever charitable means the Trustees shall decide.

Statement of Public Benefit

The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of Connection Support as set out in this report cover the duty of showing public benefit in line with that guidance. Our principal public benefit is to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence, this includes people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, families, young people, refugees, people who have been homeless, older people and people with an offending background. People who receive support must need this support to enable them to live independently. There is no charge for this support.

Fundraising

Connection Support appointed an Income Generation Manager in 2021 to lead on fundraising activities to support the charity's strategic aims and long-term sustainability. The charity is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and our fundraising activities adhere to the Fundraising Code of Conduct. Our fundraising practice is open, honest, and respectful, and we ensure that the needs of donors who may be in vulnerable circumstances are considered. We did not receive any complaints related to fundraising during this period. The charity is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the year from trusts and foundations, local organisations, town, district and county councils and members of the public. This year, we saw a growing need amongst the people we work with for basic household furniture and provisions. We are grateful to the charitable organisations who responded with their support. Together, we are proud to have been able to provide direct support for families and individuals totalling £43,697, plus £89,298 to respond to the growing demand for emergency support from our welfare funds.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Connection Support recognises that our work has an impact on the local, regional, and global environment. We are committed to continuously improving our environmental performance by prioritising sustainability, energy efficiency and making the most effective use of resources.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Connection Support has introduced improved risk management processes this year, including a more detailed risk register, which identifies risks and mitigations in the following categories: governance, external, regulatory and compliance, financial and operational. It highlights the 'hottest' risk which need to most urgently be mitigated and the CEO reviews this monthly with the senior management team to proactively build a culture of risk management as well as bringing it to the board on a two-monthly basis.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

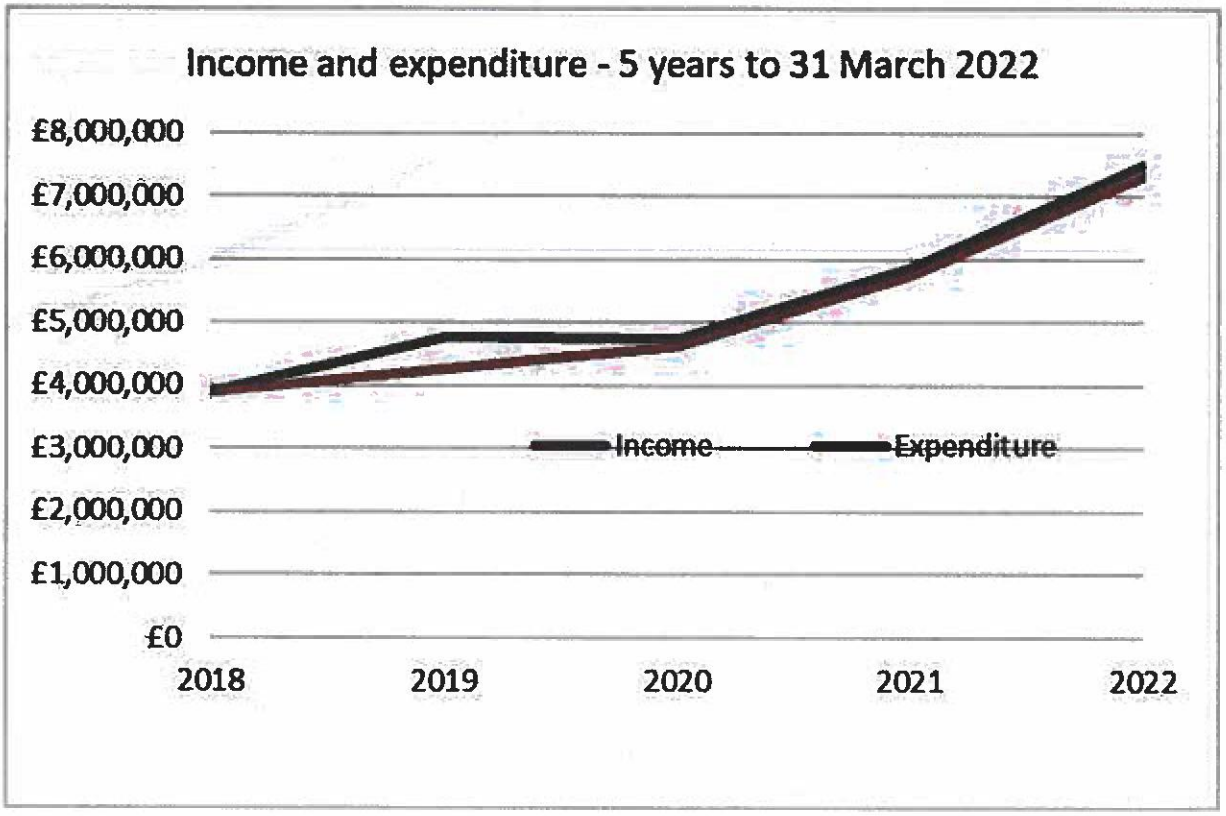
Income this financial year increased by 28% to £7,501,204, reflecting our efforts to raise funds to deliver more services to meet the emerging social needs we identify.

Whilst the majority of our funding has continued to come from contracts with local statutory agencies, this year we have worked to develop new income streams which will allow us to focus our efforts on those areas we have identified as of strategic importance.

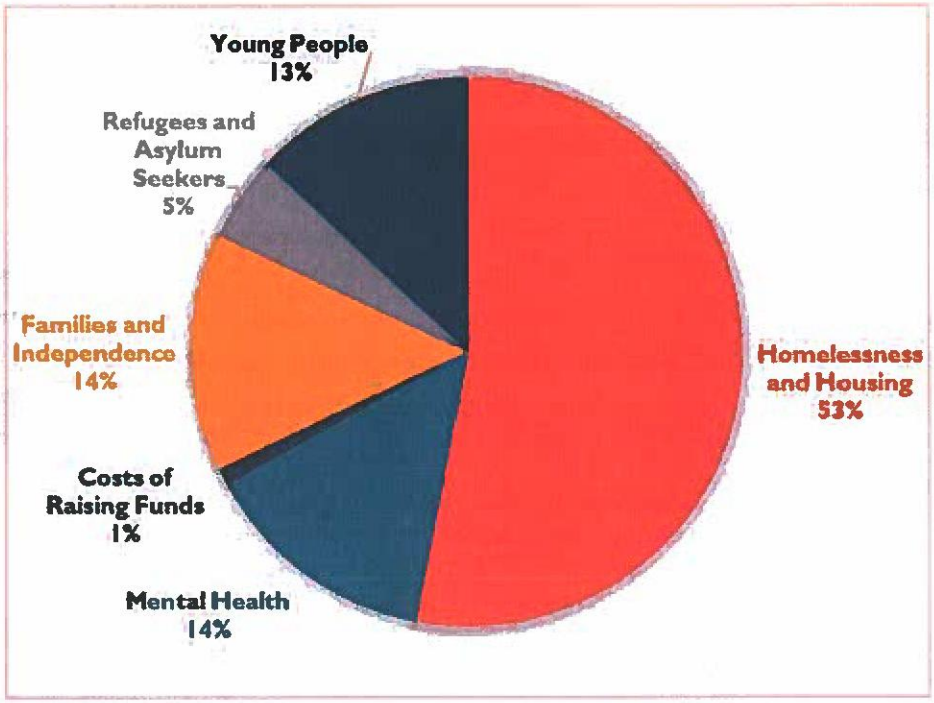
We have appointed an Income Generation Manager to develop our charitable funding income, and are delighted this financial year to have raised £207,897 charitable income. These funds have enabled us to strengthen the support we offer to our existing clients and to develop two projects to support people with no recourse to public funds, who would have otherwise been ineligible to work with us (see page 16). At the same time we have developed our supported accommodation provision, generating £945,373 accommodation income, which we are using to improve our housing services.

Expenditure for the financial year was £7,342,445, increasing by 27.9%. This resulted in a net surplus for the financial year of £158,759.

We have continued to ensure that funds are committed wherever possible to support our charitable work, with expenditure levels closely tracking our income as in prior years (see below)



We have always worked hard to ensure that as much of our funding as possible goes directly to support the people we work with. In line with this, 97% of our income for the financial year supported our charitable activities. Of the remaining balance, 1% supported our initiative to generate charitable funds, and 2% strengthened reserves to keep funds within our target range for organisational stability (see below).



Reserves Policy

It is the policy of Connection Support to maintain free unrestricted reserves (that is, unrestricted reserves not invested in fixed assets or designated for specific purposes) at a target level which can finance at least four months' full payroll and operational costs. This has been established as the level which provides Connection Support with the financial stability to deliver the organisation's core activities, without compromising the principle that the income received will be used to support the charitable objectives of the organisation wherever possible. Whilst this reserves policy is designed primarily to satisfy Connection Support's charitable objectives, the level of four months' reserves additionally provides a window for the Senior Leadership Team to manage cashflow issues, in the event of delays receiving income due from Local Authority debtors.

As an additional requirement, Connection Support ensures that unrestricted reserves are maintained at a level which can support the winding up of the organisation in a solvent manner, should this scenario occur. Winding up costs are currently calculated to be at a level which is lower than the 4 months running costs.

At 31 March 2022 Connection Support held free reserves of £2,109,130, compared to a minimum target level of £1,850,000. In addition to this, £106,600 reserves were designated at the year-end to support the planned implementation of a new client database.

Investment Policy

Connection Support aims to maintain its free reserves in a way which ensures that (i) funds are accessible to support the liquidity of the organisation on a day-to-day basis, whilst also (ii) upholding the value of the organisational balance sheet against rising inflation in the longer term.

To achieve this, the trustees have established a multipronged approach:

- For the current 3-year strategic period, the trustees have planned investment of approximately £250,000 per year into organisational development. In the last two years, this has proved successful, yielding a return in diversified income streams and more robust risk management processes.
- To the extent that reserves are required to support the routine cashflow demands associated with local authority contract funding, funds are held in instant access bank and building society accounts.
- Funds which the Board have set aside to achieve longer term growth, are maintained in an investment fund, designed to return a rate of the Consumer Price Index + 2% over a ten-year period.

The Finance Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees review the performance of investments on a quarterly basis.

ACCOUNTS

Trustees responsibilities in relation to the Financial Statements

The directors of the charitable company, who are Trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 19. Members of the charitable company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of a winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2022 was seven. The Trustees (who are also the directors of Connection Support for the purposes of Company Law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). Company Law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act and Companies Act 2006. They are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the Trustees are aware:

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

Appointment of auditors: Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited are recommended for re-appointment at the AGM under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:

James Arnold
Chair of the Board of Trustees

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTION SUPPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Connection Support (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee directors' 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 charity'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 trustee directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustee directors are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. 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 course of 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.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustee directors' report; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustee Directors

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustee Directors' responsibilities, the Trustee Directors, who are also the directors of the Charity for the purpose of company law, 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 Trustee Directors 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 Trustee Directors are responsible for assessing the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustee Directors either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

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

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

1. At the planning stage of the audit we gain an understanding of the laws and regulations which apply to the company and how the management seek to comply with those laws regulations. This helps us to plan appropriate risk assessments.
2. During the audit we focused on relevant risk areas and review the compliance with the laws and regulations by making relevant enquiries and undertaking corroboration, for example by reviewing Board Minutes and other documentation.
3. We assessed the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements including as a result of fraud and undertook procedures including:

    a. Reviewing the controls set in place by management

    a. Making enquiries of management as to whether they consider fraud or other irregularity may have taken place, or where such opportunity might exist

    b. Challenging management assumptions with regard to accounting estimates

    c. Identifying and testing journal entries, particularly those which appear to be unusual by size or nature

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.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.



Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's trustees as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report or for the opinions we have formed.

Stephen Howard Neal (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited

Chartered Certified Accountants
Statutory Auditor

264 Banbury Road
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX2 7DY

20 December 2022

Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2022	Total Funds 2022	Unrestricted funds 2021	Restricted Funds 2021	Total funds 2021
Income from:		£	£	£	£	£	£
Voluntary income	3	4,429	203,468	**207,897**	3,607	165,049	168,656
Income from charitable activities:							
Service contract income	4	6,353,178	-	**6,353,178**	5,353,805	-	5,353,805
Accommodation income	4	945,573	-	**945,573**			
Bank interest & gain/(loss) on investments	5	(5,444)	-	**(5,444)**	1,250	-	1,250
Other income	6	-	-	-	326,619	6,450	333,069
Total income		7,297,736	203,468	**7,501,204**	5,685,281	171,499	5,856,780
Expenditure on:							
Costs of raising funds	7	53,088	-	**53,088**	18,094	-	18,094
Costs of charitable activities:					5,661,456	81,292	5,742,748
Homelessness and housing	8	3,763,306	144,646	**3,907,952**			
Mental health	8	1,060,291	-	**1,060,291**			
Families & independence	8	1,032,538	-	**1,032,538**			
Young people	8	904,800	30,074	**934,874**			
Refugee and asylum seekers	8	271,367	82,335	**353,702**			
Total expenditure	9	7,085,390	257,055	**7,342,445**	5,679,550	81,292	5,760,842
Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year		**212,346**	**(53,587)**	**158,759**	5,731	90,207	95,938
Total funds brought forward		2,003,384	119,198	**2,122,582**	1,997,653	28,991	2,026,644
Total funds carried forward		**2,215,730**	**65,611**	**2,281,341**	2,003,384	119,198	2,122,582

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 33 to 46 form part of these financial statements.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Notes	2022 £	2022 £	2021 Restated £	2021 Restated £
Fixed assets					
Tangible Assets	13		392,245		406,336
Current assets					
Debtors	14	1,206,183		932,388	
Cash at bank		964,003		1,298,468	
Global investments		241,577		-	
		2,411,763		2,230,856	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	15	(522,667)		(514,610)	
Total net current assets less current liabilities:			1,889,096		1,716,246
Total net assets			**2,281,341**		**2,122,582**
The funds of the charity:					
Restricted funds	16		65,611		119,198
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds	16	106,600		300,000	
Unrestricted Income funds	16	2,109,130		1,703,384	
			2,215,730		2,003,384
Total charity funds			**2,281,341**		**2,122,582**

These financial statements were approved by the Board at their AGM on 3 November 2022 and are signed on its behalf by:

James Arnold
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The notes on pages 33 to 46 form part of these financial statements.

Company number: 03072719
Charity Number: 1049740

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
Cash used in operating activities	17	(77,523)	54,077
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest income/(loss on investment activities)	5	(5,444)	1,250
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	13	(9,922)	(58,247)
Purchase of current asset investments		(241,576)	
Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(256,942)	(56,997)
Cash flows from financing activities		-	-
Cash used in financing activities		-	-
Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(334,465)	(2,920)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,298,468	1,301,388
Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		964,003	1,298,468

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

1. COMPANY STATUS

Connection Support is a company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales.
The registered office is 213 Barns Road, Oxford, OX4 3UT.
The liability of each member is limited to £1 on a winding up of the company. The total number of such guarantees as at 31 March 2022 was seven.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting
The accounts 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 (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

Connection Support meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £1.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Board of Trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or through the terms of a fundraising appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.
Income received by way of grants, donations and gifts is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure represents amounts invoiced, including value added tax which cannot be recovered.

Tangible Fixed assets

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Computer Equipment	25% reducing balance
Equipment & Furnishings	25% reducing balance
Buildings	2% straight line

When Connection Support furnishes a new unit of supported accommodation, set-up purchases are treated as a single asset and depreciated accordingly. This is intended to maintain consistency of practice with the depreciation on furniture and fittings claimed through Housing Benefit for supported accommodation.

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is credited or charged to profit or loss.

Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Pension costs

The charity operates a money purchase (defined contribution) pension scheme. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the profit and loss account in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

Operating lease agreements

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

Finance leases agreements

Finance leases are recorded as an asset on the balance sheet and as an obligation to pay future rentals. Rental payments are apportioned between the finance charge and a reduction of the outstanding obligation for future amounts payable. Assets capitalised under a finance lease are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and its useful life.

Irrecoverable VAT
All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended in relation to which it was incurred.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

Financial instruments
The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets are offset, with the net amounts presented in the charity, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Prior year restatement
The funds held on behalf of clients which was offset against cash at bank in the prior year has been restated and shown separately as funds held on behalf of clients within creditors and the cash at bank balance increased as a result of this.

Going concern
At the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

3. VOLUNTARY INCOME

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £
Donations	4,429	20,102	24,531
The Albert Hunt Trust	-	5,000	5,000
Heart of Bucks Community Foundation	-	800	800
The UK Ministry of Justice	-	5,000	5,000
Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP)	-	6,395	6,395
Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)	-	-	-
Oxfordshire Community Foundation	-	78,240	78,240
The Percy Bilton Charity	-	500	500
Red Kite Foundation	-	7,001	7,001
The Rothschild Foundation	-	50,000	50,000
Shanley Foundation	-	2,500	2,500
South Oxfordshire District Council- Covid transportation grant	-	12,180	12,180
Vale of White Horse District Council - Covid transportation grant	-	13,750	13,750
The Syder Foundation	-	2,000	2,000
Total	**4,429**	**203,468**	**207,897**

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds	Total Funds All Unrestricted
	2022	2022	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£
Charitable income: service contracts				
Buckinghamshire County Council	1,838,911	-	1,838,911	1,583,829
Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust	160,891	-	160,894	
Cherwell District Council	295,074	-	295,074	274,643
Milton Keynes Council	1,137,250	-	1,137,250	854,095
Oxford City Council	404,622	-	404,622	220,738
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	491,025	-	491,025	761,974
Oxfordshire County Council	1,580,603	-	1,580,603	1,102,404
Oxfordshire Mind	132,596	-	132,596	-
South Oxfordshire District Council	70,319	-	70,319	57,814
South Staffs and Shropp Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	54,748	-	54,748	54,210
Thames Valley Police.	21,286	-	21,286	-
Vale of White Horse District Council	70,577	-	70,577	57,729
West Oxfordshire District Council	28,022	-	28,022	8,022
Income from other charitable activities	67,254	-	67,254	378,347
	6,353,178	-	6,353,178	5,353,805
Charitable income: housing				
Housing income	945,573	-	945,573	326,619
Total charitable income	7,298,751	-	7,298,751	5,680,424

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds (All Unrestricted) 2021 £
Bank interest	446	-	446	1,250
Gain/(loss) on investments	(5,890)	-	(5,890)	-
Total	(5,444)	-	(5,444)	1,250

6. OTHER INCOME

	Total 2022 £	Unrestricted 2021 £	Restricted 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £
Other income	-	326,619	6,450	333,069

7. EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS

	Unrestricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds (All Unrestricted) 2021 £
Staff costs (see note 11)	28,074	-	28,074	-
Website & publicity	25,014	-	25,014	18,094
Total	**53,088**	**-**	**53,088**	18,094

8. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Unrestricted costs	Staff costs	Support costs	Housing costs	Direct client support	Total
	Unrestricted 2022 £	Unrestricted 2022 £	Unrestricted 2022 £	Unrestricted 2022 £	Unrestricted 2022 £
Homelessness and housing	2,638,353	416,420	647,396	61,137	3,763,306
Mental health	863,125	153,041	40,496	3,629	1,060,291
Families and independence	888,144	144,327	-	67	1,032,538
Young people	546,909	67,551	287,958	2,382	904,800
Refugee and asylum seekers	213,994	45,402	-	11,971	271,367
Total	**5,150,525**	**826,741**	**975,850**	**79,186**	**7,032,302**

Restricted costs	Staff costs	Support costs	Housing costs	Direct client support	Total
	Restricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £
Homelessness and housing	40,165	21,216	23,982	59,283	144,646
Mental health	-	-	-	-	-
Families and independence	-	-	-	-	-
Young people	-	-	25,703	4,371	30,074
Refugee and asylum seekers	50,625	8,732	-	22,978	82,335
Total	**90,790**	**29,948**	**49,685**	**86,632**	**257,055**

8. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED

Total charitable activities	Staff costs Total 2022 £	Support costs Total 2022 £	Housing costs Total 2022 £	Direct client support Total 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Homelessness and housing	2,678,518	437,636	671,378	120,420	3,907,952
Mental health	863,125	153,041	40,496	3,629	1,060,291
Families and independence	888,144	144,327	-	67	1,032,538
Young people	546,909	67,551	313,661	6,753	934,874
Refugee and asylum seekers	264,619	54,134	-	34,949	353,702
Total	**5,241,315**	**856,689**	**1,025,535**	**165,818**	**7,289,357**
Reference	Note 11	Note 9			

Prior year charitable activities:	Unrestricted 2021 £	Restricted 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £
Staff costs (see note 11)	4,226,892	-	4,226,892
Support costs (see note 9)	840,120	-	840,120
Direct client support	68,956	81,292	150,248
Housing costs	525,488	-	525,488
Total charitable activities	**5,661,456**	**81,292**	**5,742,748**

9. SUPPORT COSTS

	Unrestricted 2022 £	Restricted 2022 £	Total 2022 £	Total All Unrestricted 2021 £
Travel and subsistence	114,779	7,441	122,220	69,025
Governance - audit fees (see note 10)	9,708	60	9,768	6,016
Office costs	289,391	19,040	308,431	463,787
Insurance	26,598	385	26,983	23,327
Consultancy and legal fees	52,891	180	53,071	18,609
IT and communications	325,611	2,476	328,088	213,833
Bank charges	1,719	141	1,860	2,542
Other costs	6,042	225	6,267	42,981
Total allocated to charitable expenditure	**826,739**	**29,948**	**856,687**	**840,120**

10. NET OUTGOING/INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

This is stated after charging:

	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds All Unrestricted 2021
Depreciation on buildings	7,500	-	7,500	7,500
Depreciation on property fixtures & fittings	7,374	-	7,374	7,313
Depreciation on office equipment	8,337	-	8,337	15,980
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	802	-	802	-
Auditor's remuneration	9,708	60	9,768	6,016

11. STAFF COSTS

	Charitable activities 2022 £	Expenditure on Raising Funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Wages	4,705,867	25,355	4,731,222	3,815,212
Social security costs	328,242	2,083	330,325	277,039
Employers Pension Contributions	113,666	636	114,303	96,910
Training	61,889	-	61,889	29,924
Recruitment	31,650	-	31,650	7,807
Total	**5,241,315**	**28,074**	**5,269,389**	**4,226,892**

One employee of the company earned between £60,000 and £70,000 during the year ended 31 March 2022. All other employees earned less than £60,000. No employees earned over £60,000 during the year ended 31 March 2021.

The average number of employees during the period was 189 (2021 – 163). All employees are involved in the provision of the Company's objects.

12. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

	Property 2022 £	Office equipment 2022 £	Total 2022 £	Property 2021 £	Office equipment 2021 £	Total 2021 £
Within 1 year	314,891	23,005	337,896	277,313	-	277,313
Within 2 to 5 years	72,380	23,005	95,385	263,236	-	263,236
Total	387,271	46,010	433,281	540,549	-	540,549

13. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Computer Equipment £	Office Equipment £	Buildings £	Total £
COST				
At 1 April 2021	101,266	128,447	375,000	604,713
Additions	2,364	7,558	-	9,922
Disposals	-	(1,425)	-	(1,425)
At 31 March 2022	103,650	134,580	375,000	613,210
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2021	69,368	106,509	22,500	198,377
Charge for the year	8,337	7,374	7,500	23,211
Depreciation on disposals	-	(623)	-	(623)
At 31 March 2022	77,705	113,260	30,000	220,965
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2022	**25,925**	**21,320**	**345,000**	**392,245**
At 31 March 2021	31,898	21,938	352,500	406,336

14. DEBTORS

	2022 £	2021 £
Grants due	797,641	835,311
Prepayments and other debtors	125,328	61,394
Housing income due	283,214	35,683
Total	**1,206,183**	**932,388**

15. CREDITORS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Taxation and social security	94,688	82,380
Employers pension contributions (note 19)	21,066	17,990
Deferred income: grants	119,741	126,054
Funds held on behalf of clients (note 18)	14,987	21,171
Accruals	142,827	95,349
Accounts payable and other creditors	129,358	171,666
Total	**522,667**	**514,610**

16. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Balance at 1 April 2021	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources	Transfers	Balance as at 31 March 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds	1,703,384	7,297,736	(7,085,390)	193,400	2,109,130
Contingency funds	300,000	-	-	(300,000)	-
Designated funds	-	-	-	106,600	106,600
Total	2,003,384	7,297,736	(7,085,390)	-	2,215,730

The payroll contingency fund has been transferred to unrestricted reserves. Connection Support's Free Reserves Policy supports payroll contingencies by providing that unrestricted reserves will be maintained at a level equivalent to meet a minimum of three months' payroll and operational costs.

£106,600 funds have been designated to support planned development to IT systems, including the client support database, in the two financial years ahead.

Unrestricted funds at 31 March 2022 were represented as follows:

	£
Cash at bank and in hand	903,947
Debtors	1,206,183
Total	**2,109,130**

16. STATEMENT OF FUNDS CONTINUED

Restricted funds	Brought forward	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Carried forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Barclays Charities Trust	71,404	-	(71,404)		-
Groundworks	1,850	-	(390)	(1,460)	-
Heart of Bucks - direct client support	965	800	(1,556)	(209)	-
Ministry of Justice - ex-offender project	-	5,000	(1,195)		3,805
Oxford Friends Action on Poverty	1,500	-	(294)		1,206
Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OxPAT)	1,610	6,395	(3,887)		4,118
Oxfordshire Homeless Movement & Oxfordshire Community Foundation - Supporting clients with no recourse to public funds in Oxfordshire	-	78,240	(74,033)		4,207
The Albert Hunt Trust: supporting clients in Buckinghamshire	-	5,000	(5,000)		-
The Percy Bilton Charity: young people's supported accommodation	-	500	(500)		-
The Red Kite Foundation - ex-offenders' project	-	7,001	-		7,001
Rothschild Foundation: projects to support clients in Buckinghamshire	4,129	50,000	(50,919)		3,210
Shanley Foundation: supporting clients with no recourse to public funds	80	2,500	(2,580)		-
South Oxfordshire District Council - Covid transportation	-	12,180	(12,1810)		-
Syder Foundation - project for client rehabilitation	-	2,000	(434)		1,566
Thomas Hickman Charity - support for clients in Aylesbury	3,341	-	(2,115)		1,226
Vale of White Horse District Council - Covid transportation	-	13,750	(13,750)		-
Donations for client welfare	13,951	9,485	(10,826)		12,610
Donations for Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway clients	51	1,423	(232)		1,242
Donations for refugees in Banbury	-	300	-		300
Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Oxfordshire	5,983	400	-		6,383
Donations for client welfare in Buckinghamshire	123	521	(644)	1,669	1,669
Donations for rough sleeper outreach in Buckinghamshire	90	-	(90)		-
Donations for the welfare of young people in Padstones supported accommodation, Buckinghamshire	14,121	7,973	(5,025)		17,069
Total	**119,198**	**203,468**	**(257,054)**	**-**	**65,612**

17. CASH GENERATED FROM OPERATIONS

	2022	2021
	£	£
Net movement in funds	158,759	95,938
Add back: loss on disposal of fixed assets	802	-
Add back: depreciation charge	23,210	30,793
Add back net investments costs/(deduct) interest income shown in investing activities	5,444	(1,250)
Decrease (increase) in debtors	(273,795)	(183,156)
Increase (decrease) in creditors	8,057	111,752
Net cash used in operating activities	**(77,523)**	**54,077**

18. FUNDS RECEIVED AS AGENT FOR CLIENTS

Connection receives grant monies as agent on behalf of clients who do not have their own bank accounts.

	2022	2021
	£	£
At 1 April 2021/2020	21,171	26,678
Adjustment to prior year balance – grant repayments made to donors	(2,350)	-
Historical balances repaid or transferred to support client welfare in the year	(9,485)	-
Receipt of client funds	43,731	40,735
Payment of client funds	(38,080)	(46,242)
At 31 March 2022 / 2021	**14,987**	**21,171**

19. PENSIONS

	2022	2021
	£	£
Charge to the statement of financial activities in respect of defined contribution schemes	£114,303	96,910

Connection Support operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying members. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the profit and loss accounts in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

At the year-end 31 March 2022 the amounts payable to pension schemes totalled £21,066.

20. TRUSTEE REMUNERATION, KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL & RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

No member of the Board of Trustees received any remuneration during the year.
The charity Trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2021: nil). No Trustees were reimbursed for travel expenses during the year (2021: nil). No Trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2021: nil).

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer and the two Deputy Chief Executive Officers. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel were £181,715 (2021: Chief Executive Officer and one Deputy Chief Executive Officer, £101,416).

No Trustee or other person related to the charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year.

APPENDIX - Overview of Services

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

1. Adult Homeless Pathway (Oxfordshire) - Providing accommodation and support to single homeless people over the age of 18 across North Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and Oxford City. We have 83 rooms in a mixture of shared houses in Oxford, Witney, and Banbury in which we can support clients for 6-9 months to help them build skills and move onto long-term independent living and a further six properties which provide additional transitionary accommodation for a year, for those moving on from the Pathway.

2. Supported Lettings (Oxford City) - We work with clients when they move into social housing for the duration of their 12-month probationary period of their tenancies. This is specifically for clients who would, without our interventions, be considered unsuitable for social housing. We help them with all aspects of tenancy sustainment, for example, utilities set-up, social inclusion, change of benefits, change of GP, mental/physical health or substance misuse.

3. Embedded Housing Workers (Oxfordshire) - EHWs are located at hospitals across Oxfordshire to reduce the number of patients who have extended stays in hospital because, although they are medically well enough to go home, they either have no housing provision at all, or there are barriers to them returning to their own accommodation. The work with medical teams to reduce the number of patients discharged with no housing provision in place and prevent repeat admission of rough sleepers. They ensure presentations to local housing authorities are done in a managed way, identify and understand patients' housing issues to enable a successful discharge, and monitor and report on outcomes.

4. Housing First (Milton Keynes) - An evidence-based approach that puts the provision of an independent home first, followed by personalised support, to enable individuals with a history of entrenched or repeat homelessness to begin recovery. Research shows that through this approach residents are 70-90% more likely to remain housed. Working with Milton Keynes Council, who provide the accommodation, our 'Housing First' service supports adults over the age of 18 who have been rough sleeping in Milton Keynes and have a local connection to the area.

5. Housing First (Oxfordshire) - Housing First Oxfordshire provides a home and intensive support to former rough sleepers during their journey from rough sleeping to a more settled lifestyle within their own home and to improve their health and wellbeing.

6. Housing Support Service (Oxfordshire) - Connection Support has been running the Housing Support Service in Oxfordshire since its foundation in 1995. The service is delivered by floating support workers, using a person-centred approach, to enable clients who are at risk of homelessness to maintain their tenancies and access services to avoid entering the homeless pathway. The team support and equip clients with the tools to manage their money, navigate benefits, be independent and avoid homelessness.

7. Next Steps Accommodation (Milton Keynes) - Next Steps Accommodation placements are for people identified with low-level support needs who have previously been homeless and require support and interventions to sustain a tenancy. Clients can live in the accommodation for a fixed-term period of three years. After the fixed period clients are supported to access alternative properties and we secure long-term accommodation for people who are identified as ready to move on.

8. One Recovery Bucks (Buckinghamshire) - ORB provides support into rented accommodation for people over the age of 18 who are doing well in their recovery from drug or alcohol addiction (they must have abstained for at least 3 months). Pre-tenancy support is provided, alongside guidance on sustaining a tenancy and help with budgeting, accessing benefits, paying bills, training opportunities and employment. We have a total of 20 flats across the county.

9. Orchard House (Milton Keynes) - Supported accommodation for vulnerable homeless single people with medium to high mental health needs. There is 24/7 support on site and they also have one-to-one key workers to help them prepare to move on to a more independent lifestyle and an improved quality of life.

10. Reset (Buckinghamshire) - Support for ex-offenders to access accommodation and make positive life choices to reduce the risk of them reoffending and returning to prison. The team provides support with finding accommodation, tenancy sustainment, accessing benefits, training, education, and employment opportunities, help with physical or mental health issues or substance abuse.

11. Rough Sleeper Outreach and Rough Sleeper Initiative (Buckinghamshire) - Our Rough Sleeper Outreach Service enables rough sleepers to build a better future beyond street life. We support people living on the streets of Buckinghamshire to find more settled accommodation and receive the benefits they are entitled to. We enable them to access health, addiction, and other support services relevant to their individual needs. The Rough Sleeper Initiative has twenty-one emergency beds available for rough sleepers and support to enable them to move on successfully. This service also has a tenancy sustainment element, which provides life tools and support to rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire, so they can live independently in their own rented home. We help clients manage their money – rental payments, bills, budgeting, access to benefits, training, routes to employment, and access support for mental and physical health issues.

12. Rough Sleeper Outreach (Oxfordshire) - Our Outreach service in Oxfordshire helps people who are sleeping rough to find settled accommodation. Support workers also help them access health and mental health services, drug, and alcohol support services, and receive the benefits they are entitled to.

13. Step Down Housing (Oxfordshire) - Short-term housing for vulnerable patients who are medically ready to be discharged from the Oxfordshire University or Oxfordshire Foundation Trust Hospitals but lack suitable accommodation to continue their recovery. This includes people who are homeless, have a history of drug/alcohol misuse, people who have no recourse to public funds or issues with their immigration status, those fleeing domestic violence, or people with mobility issues. We appoint Embedded Housing Workers (EHWs) into the hospitals to upskill medical staff and social workers about the complexities of housing these patients.

14. South and Vale Floating Support and Winter Night Shelter - Our support workers are embedded alongside housing officers to support clients placed within temp accommodation to move on to more settled accommodation and provide resettlement for the initial weeks of their new tenancies. (This service also covers a Winter Night Shelter provision for rough sleepers within South and Vale, although this has only been held once due to COVID.

15. Tenancy Ready (Oxfordshire) - Run in connection with Oxford City Council, this project helps new tenants to understand what the expectations are around managing and sustaining a tenancy either through social housing or the private sector.

FAMILIES AND INDEPENDENCE

16. Boost Parenting Advice & Support (Buckinghamshire) - Boost provides support, motivation, encouragement, and advice to parents living in Buckinghamshire to take steps towards creating a more stable and positive environment in which their children can thrive.

17. Direct Payment Support Services (Milton Keynes) - In some circumstances, social or health care users can be given money in the form of a Direct Payment from their local authority to commission their own services which enables disabled people to tailor their own care arrangements their suit their unique circumstances and lifestyle. Where local authorities may tend to offer, for example access to a day centre, individuals might prefer to meet friends for lunch, to go fishing, or attend a local gym, but need support to do so. This service supports the person to employ a carer or personal assistant directly by helping to find suitably qualified employees, providing comprehensive employment advice and offering a Payroll Service to process payslips and administrate HMRC responsibilities on the employer's behalf.

18. Family Solutions Plus (Oxfordshire) - Support for parents and carers who experience mental health issues that then impact the home environment for their children to the extent that they are under a plan with social services. In partnership with Oxfordshire Mind and Elmore Community Services, clients are offered up to six individual sessions with adult facing practitioners embedded in social care teams. These mental health workers provide tools to help parents learn how to manage their mental health better in order to stabilise their environment and ultimately prevent the need for their children to be placed into the care system.

19. Prevention Matters (Buckinghamshire) - Prevention Matters supports people over the age of 18 who are struggling to remain independent in their own house, having difficulty getting out and about, recovering from an illness or feeling lonely, isolated or anxious. The support workers help them to regain their confidence and maintain their independence.

MENTAL HEALTH

20. Acute Hospital Discharge, Acute Admissions Avoidance Service and Blessings (Milton Keynes) - Supporting clients who have been admitted into the acute mental health wards and supporting them back into the community and to sustain their tenancy.

21. Mental Health Intensive Support Service (Oxfordshire) - Support for up to five people with the highest and most complex mental health needs and who have not succeeded at independent living in the past. This client group have a history of street homelessness and require intensive support to gain the most basic life skills to enable them to adapt to living indoors, set up home and maintain a tenancy.

22. Mental Health Support Service (Oxfordshire) - As part of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership we provide focused support for between 6 months to 2 years to help people with severe and enduring mental health issues move forward. Offering support around housing, benefits and social inclusion, this supports recovery and enables the clients to live more independently. Some of the team are embedded in the Adult Mental Health Teams to identify and support those patients who present with housing needs straight away.

23. Mental Health Support Service (Milton Keynes) - We offer housing related-support to help clients with mental health needs to avoid homelessness or to sustain a tenancy and maintain their independence. It's a flexible service, which will meet with clients in the local community or in their home. Support moves with them wherever they go and the service complements and works in partnership with any statutory or voluntary agency where our support cannot wholly meet the needs of the individual. 'Windrush' is also part of this service – independent supported accommodation for clients with Autism.

24. Out of Hospital (Oxfordshire) - Our specialist support workers partner with a multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, social workers, and housing officers to support people with complex mental health who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness). They work to help people to move on from hospital to settled accommodation and prevent them returning to hospital in the future by solving housing and other linked issues to give them increased stability.

25. Rise and Shine (Oxfordshire) - The Rise & Shine service operates in partnership with Elmore Community Services. It provides targeted support for up to six months to help people to recover from mental health problems many of which were made worse as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. We work alongside clients to provide short-term interventions to help improve mental well-being and enable recovery, build up their confidence and improve self-esteem.

26. SafeHaven+ (Buckinghamshire) - Working alongside Buckinghamshire Mind, Citizens Advice, Oasis Partnership and Adult Mental Health Teams this service provides support to adults with mental health issues and potentially complex needs. The project as a whole aims to avoid crisis and admission to hospital and improve overall mental health and wellbeing and Connection Support's role is to provide intensive support specifically relating to housing.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

27. Refugee Resettlement Support (Oxfordshire) - This service is for refugees resettling in the UK as part of Central Government's UK Resettlement Scheme. The families supported live in the South and Vale and the Cherwell District areas of Oxfordshire and we provide a range of emotional and practical support to help the families settle into everyday life. The team supports families from Syria, Iraq and Sudan to manage the transition from living in camps and unsettled accommodation to making a home in Oxfordshire, and helps them to adapt to different social norms legal frameworks. We work with them through the whole process from airport pick up to the point they can live independently and manage their tenancy without the need for support. The team connects the families to health services and mental health support, schools, English language classes, employment opportunities and local community groups. Working alongside volunteers they also provide information about culture and life in Britain to enable them to make those steps towards living a settled life in the UK.

28. No Recourse to Public Funds (Buckinghamshire) - Providing support to people experiencing homelessness in Buckinghamshire who do not have access to state-funded benefits and housing. People in this situation are often not allowed to work, neither are they eligible for benefits, nor allowed to use public services except for basic health care. This leaves them at high risk of abuse and exploitation. The aim is to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness, by offering them dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters and help them to get their lives back on track.

29. No Recourse to Public Funds (Oxfordshire) - Helping people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing. This project is funded by the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, and the aim is to provide tailored support to allow these people to become self-sufficient and take practical steps to rebuild their lives. We work in partnership with Aspire and Asylum Welcome to help this group of people move on from the trauma of homelessness. Working with local housing association SOHA and Edge Housing, we can offer these clients dignified accommodation, whilst they receive help and advice to resolve any legal matters and help them to get their lives back on track.

YOUNG PEOPLE

30. Housing Interaction Trust (Buckinghamshire) - We have twelve units of accommodation specifically for young people to support those who have nowhere else to go. We support the young people to develop general household skills, budget and manage their finances, maintain personal health, prepare for independent accommodation and manage individual personal and emotional matters.

31. Padstones Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire) - Padstones prevents young people (aged 16-25 years) becoming homeless by providing accommodation along with 24/7 support. The team empower young people and develop their resilience, skills and knowledge to prevent the risk of homelessness arising again. It provides a safe and secure environment for residents to develop their potential and move towards more independent living. Accommodation is in two small residential projects in Burnham and High Wycombe, which are staffed 24 hours a day and young people also have a key worker for one-to-one support. For young people ready to move on from the higher support units, Padstones offers other accommodation with lower-level support. This stage is to prepare the young person further towards being completely independent. A Floating Support Worker is available to assist when the time comes to move on.

32. Young People's Supported Accommodation (Buckinghamshire) - YPSA provides supported accommodation in Buckinghamshire and South Oxfordshire for young people (aged 16-25 years) leaving care. Young people referred to us by Oxfordshire County Council are provided with their own accommodation and regular visits from a Support Worker to help them gain confidence in living independently.

Connection Support

England & Wales - Charity number 1049740

Accounts

CONNECTION SUPPORT
(Formerly registered as Connection Oxford)
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Charity No: 1049740
Company Registration No: 03072719

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

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YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

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CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

GENERAL INFORMATION
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Registered charity name	Connection Support
Charity number	1049740
Company registration number	03072719
Principal & registered office address	213 Barns Road (1st floor) Oxford OX4 3UT
Trustees	Jennifer Berrill David Waters (resigned 07.05.2021) David Bayes Richard Allman Mike Wortley Kelly Bark (resigned 01.07.2021) Anne Cooney Diane Hampson (resigned 07.09.2020) Jim Arnold Emily Dobell Dipen Parekh (appointed 16.07.2020)
Secretary	Chris Keating (appointed 11.02.2021) Mark Thompson (resigned 11.02.2021)
Auditors	Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited Chartered Certified Accountants and Statutory Auditors 264 Banbury Road Oxford OX2 7DY

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law (referred to as trustees throughout); present their report and the audited financial statements of the company (referred to as the Charity throughout) for the year ended 31 March 2021.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Reference and administrative details are shown in the schedule of general information on page 2 of the financial statements.

THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the charity during the year are shown on page 2.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF THE BOARD

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the Company's Articles are known as members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association one third of the members of the Management Committee, or if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one-third, shall retire from office at the Annual General Meeting each year. David Bayes, Jim Arnold and Jenny Berrill offered themselves for re-election. Any trustee appointed between Annual General Meetings shall only retain his or her office until the next Annual General Meeting and then shall be eligible for re-election, Emily Dobell and Dipen Parekh were duly elected.

David Waters was re-elected as the Chair of the board, however, due to personal circumstances he stepped down from this role in November 2020 with Jenny Berrill taking on the Chair role. Jim Arnold and Richard Allman both became Vice Chair for 5 months each.

A broad range of management and development experience within the Social Care, Health, Housing, Business and Finance fields is represented on the Board. Every 2 years the Board reviews the functioning of, and the skill mix on, the Board and this informs recruitment.

Detailed information is provided for prospective trustees including access to our website:

- Application Form
- Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association
- Audited Accounts including Annual Report
- Responsibilities of Trustees from the Charity Commission website
- Leaflets about the services provided

This is followed up by informal contact with the Chief Executive and then a formal interview with a Board Member and the Chief Executive. References are taken prior to full Board approval of appointment. The interview involves detailed discussion of the Responsibilities of Trustees in line with Charity Commission guidance.

TRUSTEE INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Induction includes further contact with the Chief Executive to shape up the areas of more specific input. Direct contact with a Front-Line Worker can help to fill out the understanding of the work. A mentor from the Board is identified to support the process of joining the Board. Training opportunities are circulated to Board members

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Chief Executive's reports to the Board identify the major risks to the Charity.

The risks to service users and employees associated with delivering the support are managed via the Risk Assessment policy which is part of the detailed working practices. These working practices incorporate quality standards and link to the Quality Frameworks used by Commissioners. Connection Support has been awarded the highest rating in Support Planning and Risk Assessment by Oxfordshire County Council.

The Board has an ongoing process of considering the position of the organisation to inform planning for the future. This includes an annual facilitated Strategic Thinking process, including the Senior Team, integrated with regular Board meetings.

The coronavirus pandemic has presented significant risk and changes to our working practices over the past year; however, we have proudly continued to operate all of our services. Some services have been delivered remotely where possible, whilst others, have continued to operate in-person as required to safeguard our client base. Our offices have remained open only for use of those staff members who cannot work from home, in line with government guidance. Despite the pandemic we have remained financially resilient and overall, the organisation has continued to grow.

Milton Keynes

The Milton Keynes Housing First service continues to operate successfully and is mid-contract.

The floating support service in Milton Keynes went out to tender in late 2020 and the current service has been extended until commencement of the new contract in August 2021.

Connection Support continues to deliver the Employment Support aspects of Self-Directed Support in Milton Keynes.

A 28-unit supported accommodation scheme named Orchard House was mobilised in July 2020 to support transitioning former rough sleepers from hotel accommodation provided during the first lockdown.

We have been commissioned by Central and North-West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) to pilot the provision of Mental Health Floating Support for clients being discharged from mental health wards, this pilot is planned to operate until August 2021.

Milton Keynes Council were awarded Next Steps Accommodation funding to purchase 30 self-contained units, Connection Support have received a grant agreement to provide support to clients moving into this accommodation, funding is expected to be extended until the end of financial year 2021-22.

Buckinghamshire

Our Prevention Matters service in Buckinghamshire has been significantly reshaped due to Covid and has been locally recognised as a service that has supported the community

through supporting many isolated individuals and managing the Keep in Touch service on behalf of the council.

The Reset Project for people with an offending background continues to be funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Padstones and Housing Interaction Trust (HIT) for young people in Bucks continues to be funded by Bucks Council, funding has been extended until August 2022.

Our partnership work with One Recovery Bucks continues and supports clients with substance misuse and housing difficulties.

The Buckinghamshire Rough Sleeper Coordinator, Rough Sleeper Outreach, Mental Health Outreach and Tenancy Sustainment work is currently funded by the Ministry of Housing, Community & Local Government (MHCLG) on an annual basis. This is continuing for 2021/22 with some teams being expanded.

Connection received MHCLG funding for a pilot project to support clients housed in the government's 'everyone in' accommodation with No Resource to Public Funds (NRPF) which has currently only received short-term funding.

We have successfully transferred in the Volunteer Delivered Family Support Service (now known as BOOST) which was challenging to transfer and mobilise throughout lockdown, though has now reached a stable position and is delivering on its objectives.

Oxfordshire

The Connection Outreach Service (COS) operates across the four Oxfordshire District Councils, and we are pleased that the County Council continues to prioritise funding this work, with some temporary expansions funded by MHCLG. Much of this work was adapted during lockdown to support clients staying in hotels through the government's 'everyone in' campaign.

The Employment Support service in Oxfordshire as part of Self-Directed Support has been transferred back into the council.

Connection Support has been delivering as the single provider of Community Floating Support contract in Oxfordshire since April 2018 and this contract has been extended to March 2022. This contract includes a significant payment by results element which continues to be secured. Systems to monitor performance against the targets are working well. Our "Digital Engagement" element has been expanded with Covid.

Connection Support has been delivering part of the Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway, and the partnerships with Response, Cottsway Housing Association and Cherwell District Council continue. This delivers 47 beds across Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford City. A contract extension has been secured until March 2022. Connection Support have transferred Mayday Trust's City Council contract under this provision and have mobilised 10 units across 3 properties which are leased by the organisation, rather than through a housing management organisation, this is funded until March 2022 and then will be recommissioned. We have also been subcontracted by Mayday Trust to operate the whole of their County Council contract for 20 clients, the lease on 4 properties has been

transferred to us for this contract. The contract is until March 2022 and will then be recommissioned.

We have continued to successfully deliver work with resettling refugee families in Oxford City and Cherwell District, including securing a new contract for new families in Cherwell District albeit that new arrivals have been delayed by Covid. Our contract with Oxford City is being wound down at present.

The specialist Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership project has secured a 2-year contract extension and an uplift has been successfully negotiated. This includes Connection Support workers embedded in Adult Mental Health Teams. Our mental health work in Oxfordshire includes the development of a Housing First project and a worker embedded at Oxford City Council.

Connection Support workers embedded in Hospitals continue. Funding has been secured for 2 posts to March 2022 at which point they will be funded longer term under the Oxfordshire Homelessness recommissioning.

The Step-Down house project for homeless people being discharged from hospital was extended to a second house in January by Oxford City Council. The first house is funded until March 2022 and will then be part of the Oxfordshire Homelessness recommissioning, the second house is funded until June 2022.

The Housing First project in Cherwell District and the Supported Lettings in Oxford City are both successfully impacting on homelessness.

We won 2 lots of Oxfordshire County Council's Young People's Supported Accommodation (YPSA) contract. We are now managing properties in South Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire for clients requiring self-contained and out of county accommodation and support. There is a risk over potential voids for the service which is currently mitigated by the council agreeing to pay any voids until the end of our fifth quarter of delivery.

We are working in partnership with Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, Aspire and Asylum Welcome to mobilise a charitably funded NRPF project to support clients being decanted from the 'everyone in' hotel accommodation. We are the lead support provider and project manager for the service.

Internal financial risks are managed in line with the detailed Financial Procedures covering authorisation of all transactions.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Connection has Board meetings every 2 months. The CEO, 2 Directors and Deputy CEOs and an administrator, who takes minutes, attend but do not have voting rights.

There is a Finance Sub-committee and a Development Sub-committee which meet quarterly. Other committees can be formed on a task focused basis.

There is a Board comprised of people with backgrounds in housing, commissioning, social care, health care and business. The Chief Executive reports to the Board, and manages the 2 Directors and Deputy CEOs, the Finance Manager, the HR Manager and the Business Systems Manager. The Directors & Deputy CEOs line manage the Operations Managers and any other senior roles. The Operations Managers manage the Team Managers. Support Workers and Senior Support Workers are managed by Team Managers. We have successfully recruited to the post of Income Generation Manager to support the long-term financial resilience of the organisation.

After 23 years as CEO, Mark Thompson left the organisation in February 2021, following a competitive process Chris Keating was appointed as the new CEO, having previously held the role of Operations Director & Deputy CEO since December 2019. Alice Copping and Amy Delisser have both been appointed through a competitive process to 2 identical posts as Directors and Deputy CEOs.

RELATED PARTIES

Connection remains very active at many levels of inter-agency work. This includes active involvement in inter-agency forums, multi-agency referral meetings, project development with other agencies and playing an active part in multi-agency drop-in services.

Connection continues to play an active role as a provider with the main Commissioning agencies in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

ACTIVITIES

The company is a charity and exists to provide advice and support which enables independence and good housing outcomes for vulnerable persons.

Our work is organised in teams across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. People using the service have a range of challenges they need support with, and our approach is to meet them and work with them in the context of their lives and the aspirations they have, supporting any changes they wish to make, and ensuring the resources are in place to enable successful independent living. Our approach includes a strong aspirational / strength-based focus.

Contact with the front-line workers is often on an appointment basis, however telephone and online contact is increasingly important and this links with a duty system in some areas.

We continue to have good throughput of clients and relatively high caseloads and are keen to continue to ensure that available resource is used for maximum benefit as well as keeping a focus on longer term sustainability of independent living for people living with significant vulnerability. The organisation reports Key Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis, or as required by commissioners. These are periodically reviewed for trends and comparisons. The organisation operates within the Quality Frameworks of the Local Authorities and received the top Green rating for all aspects of the service in Oxfordshire.

The Board continues to invest in the development of the Volunteers Project, which is active across Connection Support, is attracting some funding and being worked into future delivery across a range of contracts.

The Trustees take into account the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and believe that the activities of Connection Support as set out in this section of this report covers the duty of showing public benefit in line with that guidance. Our principle public benefit is to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence, this includes people with mental health problems, drug and alcohol problems, families, young people, refugees, people who have been homeless, older people and people with an offending background. People who receive support must need this support to enable them to live independently. There is no charge for this support.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The main funding comes from contracts with local statutory agencies, out of Local Authority Grant or Central Government, to provide preventative support. We are pleased that the authorities where we operate continue to fund these vital services, however, there is continued threat to funding with a range of other calls on Local Authority finances, the risk of reduced funding post the COVID-19 pandemic is currently unknown, however mitigations are being made in our new strategy. Connection Support has successfully continued to provide a wide range of services to a wide range of people with our core values of independence and housing informing all of our work. We continue to believe that highly skilled support contributes to a range of social issues and sustains independent living for people in a range of needs groups. Our work complements and can be part of a range of specialisms e.g., housing management, mental health, physical health, reducing offending, substance misuse and the Care Act.

Significant other funding continues to come from the Clinical Commissioning Group in Oxfordshire via Oxford Heath NHS Trust, funding our mental health work.

A developing source of funding is through housing benefit and rental income achieved through properties leased by Connection Support through private landlords and registered providers to house clients in receipt of support through the organisation.

We have employed an Income Generation Manager to deliver a fundraising strategy to further diversify our income to support the ongoing sustainability of the organisation.

The Risk Management Section above advises on the risks to current funding and contracts.

A cost-of-living increase was paid to staff from April 2020.

Investment policy
Funding is acquired to be spent on delivering services and to manage the risks set out above, so there are few funds for long term investment. Connection Support continues to invest in a range of secure options, which is being reviewed in 2021/22 with investment organisations being pursued by the board's Finance Sub Committee.

Summary of end of year
The total surplus for the year amounted to £95,938. There was a surplus of £90,207 relating to restricted funds and a surplus of £5,730 relating to unrestricted funds. Total unrestricted funds at the end of the year now stand at £2,003,384. This puts Connection Support in a reasonably strong position for dealing with the potentially difficult times ahead.

Reserves policy
The policy on reserves is to aim for three months' running costs to be maintained. The Board will undertake careful consideration of risk and forward planning in assessing the use of reserves and is investing in capacity to manage the tendering and development opportunities. The threat to funding of Connection's work over the next two years suggests that there may be a call on reserves in this period.

Plans for the future
We believe strongly in the type of work we do, and the skills, knowledge and experience required, and the costs associated with delivering this. We continue to have a significant presence delivering a range of support services in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes. We will continue to review and clarify what we do, how we do it, what it costs and how it fits with the rest of the social care, housing and health arenas, in order to deliver support as effectively as possible.

We remain open to considering other ways of adding value to our work, e.g., via partnerships or mergers, further developing the models we currently use, exploring options for other funding. Opportunities for new projects to provide support are considered carefully in terms of financial viability and impact on infrastructure.

Impact of Covid-19
The Covid pandemic has had significant impact on the operations of Connection Support, this has included significant change in working practices and the start-up of a new project in Milton Keynes to enable resettlement of rough sleepers housed temporarily in hotels during the pandemic. None of our existing contracts have been changed as part of the pandemic, if anything the need for our work is clearer than ever. The impact of potential further austerity in years to come is actively in the minds of Trustees.

Trustees
The directors of the company, who are trustees for the purposes of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 2.

Members of the charitable company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of a winding up. The total number of such guarantees as at 31 March 2021 was eight.

The trustees (who are also the directors of Connection Support for the purposes of Company Law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act and Companies Act 2006. They are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

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

Appointment of auditors

Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited are recommended for re-appointment at the AGM under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by:



Jim Arnold
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date: 23 September 2021

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTION OXFORD
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Connection Support for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and the 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, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and Charities SORP.

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 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted
  Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

- the Trustee Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or

- the Trustee Directors have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Charity's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

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

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

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities Act 2011 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustee Directors' report; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustee Directors

As explained more fully in the statement of Trustee Directors' responsibilities, the Trustee Directors, who are also the directors of the Charity for the purpose of company law, 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 Trustee Directors 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 Trustee Directors are responsible for assessing the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustee Directors either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTION OXFORD (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

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

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 specific procedures for this engagement and the extent to which these are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- At the planning stage of the audit, we gained an understanding of the laws and regulations which apply to the charity and how the leadership team seek to comply with those laws and regulations. This helped us to plan appropriate risk assessments.
- During the audit, we focused on relevant risk areas and reviewed the compliance with the laws and regulations by making relevant enquiries from the leadership team and undertaking corroboration, for example by reviewing Board Minutes, furlough claims and other documentation.
- We assessed the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements as a result of fraud and undertook the following procedures but were not limited to:
    - Reviewing the controls set in place by the leadership team, including the review of the charity's risk register;
    - Making enquiries of the leadership team as to whether they consider fraud or other irregularity may have taken place, or where such opportunity might exist, particularly in terms of cash held physically by the charity;
    - Challenging the leadership team's assumptions with regard to accounting estimates such as legacy recognition and functional allocation of expenses; and
    - Identifying and testing journal entries, particularly those which appear to be unusual by size or nature.

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.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

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

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF CONNECTION OXFORD (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of the Charities Act 2011. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an 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 charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

.....
Stephen Howard Neal (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Shaw Gibbs (Audit) Limited

Chartered Certified Accountants
& Statutory Auditor
264 Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 7DY

Date .....

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	3,607	165,049	168,656	7,761	21,582	29,343
Charitable activities	4	5,353,805	-	5,353,805	4,451,597	-	4,451,597
Investments	5	1,250	-	1,250	1,526	-	1,526
Other income	6	326,619	6,450	333,069	261,205	5,762	266,967
Total income		5,685,281	171,499	5,856,780	4,722,089	27,344	4,749,433
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	7	18,094	-	18,094	12,542	-	12,542
Charitable activities	8	5,661,456	81,292	5,742,748	4,610,662	18,244	4,628,906
Total expenditure		5,679,550	81,292	5,760,842	4,623,204	18,244	4,641,448
Net income / -expenditure		5,731	90,207	95,938	98,885	9,101	107,985
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	- 132	132	-
Net movement in funds		5,731	90,207	95,938	98,753	9,232	107,985
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forwards		1,997,653	28,991	2,026,644	1,898,900	19,759	1,918,659
Total funds carried forward		2,003,384	119,198	2,122,582	1,997,653	28,991	2,026,644

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.
All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 16 to 26 form part of these financial statements.

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2021 £	2020 £	2020 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	13		406,336		378,882
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	14	932,388		749,233	
Cash at bank		1,277,298		1,301,388	
		2,209,686		2,050,621	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	15	-493,439		-402,859	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			1,716,246		1,647,762
NET ASSETS			2,122,582		2,026,644
FUNDS					
INCOME FUNDS					
Unrestricted Income funds	16		1,703,384		1,697,653
Contingency funds	16		300,000		300,000
Restricted Income funds	17		119,198		28,991
TOTAL INCOME FUNDS			2,122,582		2,026,644

These financial statements were approved by the Board at their AGM on 23 September 2021 and are signed on its behalf by:

Jim Arnold
Chair of the Board of Trustees

The accompanying accounting policies and notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2020 £
Cash used in operating activities	18	32,906	267,999
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest income	5	1,250	1,526
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	13	- 58,246	- 16,350
Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		- 56,996	- 14,824
Cash flows from financing activities			
Payment of finance leases		-	-
Cash used in financing activities		-	-
Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		- 24,090	253,175
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,301,388	1,048,213
Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		1,277,298	1,301,388

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

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1. COMPANY STATUS

Connection Support is a company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office is 213 Barns Road, Oxford, OX4 3UT.

The liability of each member is limited to £1 on a winding up of the company. The total number of such guarantees as at 31 March 2021 was eight.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts 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 (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

Connection Support meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Board for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Income received by way of grants, donations and gifts is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a specific performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Expenditure represents amounts invoiced, including value added tax which cannot be recovered.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Tangible Fixed assets

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Computer Equipment	20% straight line
Office Equipment	20% straight line
Buildings	2% straight line

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is credited or charged to profit or loss.

Taxation

The Charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Pension costs

The charity operates a money purchase (defined contribution) pension scheme. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the profit and loss account in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

Operating lease agreements

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

Finance leases agreements

Finance leases are recorded as an asset on the balance sheet and as an obligation to pay future rentals. Rental payments are apportioned between the finance charge and a reduction of the outstanding obligation for future amounts payable.
Assets capitalised under a finance lease are depreciated over the shorter of the lease term and its useful life.

Irrecoverable VAT

All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to the category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended in relation to which it was incurred.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 ‘Basic Financial Instruments’ and Section 12 ‘Other Financial Instruments Issues’ of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets are offset, with the net amounts presented in the charity, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus, the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

3. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Donations	3,607	165,049	168,656	29,343

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Grants:				
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	761,974	-	761,974	553,258
South Staffs and Shrops Healthcare NHSFT	54,210	-	54,210	51,588
Cherwell District Council	274,643	-	274,643	261,749
Wycombe District Council	-	-	-	352,278
Oxford City Council	220,738	-	220,738	341,287
Buckinghamshire County Council	1,583,829	-	1,583,829	764,153
West Oxfordshire District Council	8,022	-	8,022	8,022
South Oxfordshire District Council	57,814	-	57,814	20,000
Vale of White Horse District Council	57,729	-	57,729	20,000
Oxfordshire County Council	1,102,404	-	1,102,404	956,565
Milton Keynes Council	854,095	-	854,095	657,923
Chiltern District Council	-	-	-	42,000
Aylesbury Vale District Council	-	-	-	99,700
Income from other charitable activities	378,347	-	378,347	323,074
	5,353,805	-	5,353,805	4,451,597

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Bank interest	1,250	-	1,250	1,526

6. OTHER INCOME

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Other income	326,619	6,450	333,069	266,967

7. EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Publicity	18,094	-	18,094	12,542

8. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£
Charitable activities:				
Salaries	3,815,212	-	3,815,212	3,172,849
Employer's NI	277,039	-	277,039	227,340
Pension contributions	96,910	-	96,910	84,607
Travel and subsistence	69,025	-	69,025	148,122
Training	29,924	-	29,924	47,720
Telephone, fax and mobiles	118,523	-	118,523	63,029
Subscriptions	2,319	-	2,319	1,924
Client support	68,956	81,292	150,248	75,450
Printing, postage, stationery and equipment	251,582	-	251,582	98,363
Computer services	95,310	-	95,310	38,339
Payroll administration	985	-	985	12,108
Depreciation	30,793	-	30,793	16,231
Consultancy and legal	12,198	-	12,198	7,963
Translation services	3,026	-	3,026	2,696
Office costs	179,093	-	179,093	263,598
Insurance	23,327	-	23,327	11,158
Vetting and data protection fees	4,763	-	4,763	5,226
Recruitment	7,807	-	7,807	6,166
Bank charges	2,542	-	2,542	1,882
Finance charge	-	-	-	-
Bad debt write off	1,234	-	1,234	18,933
Accommodation costs	525,488	-	525,488	264,725
Website development	2,400	-	2,400	-
Other costs	36,984	-	36,984	54,569
Governance	6,016	-	6,016	5,916
Total charitable activities	5,661,456	81,292	5,742,748	4,628,906

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

9. NET OUTGOING/INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

	2021 £	2020 £
Depreciation on buildings	7,500	7,500
Depreciation - on property fixtures & fittings	7,313	-
Depreciation - on other office equipment	15,980	8,731

10. AUDTOR'S REMUNERATION

	2021 £	2020 £
Audit Fees	6,016	5,916

11. ANALYSIS OF STAFF COSTS

	2021 £	2020 £
Wages	3,815,212	3,172,849
Social security costs	277,039	227,340
Pension contributions	96,910	84,607
	4,189,161	3,484,796

None of the employees of the company earned £60,000 or more during the periods ended 31 March 2021 or 31 March 2020.

The average number of employees during the period was 163 (2020 – 142). All employees are involved in the provision of the Company's objects.

12. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

	2021 £	2020 £
Within 1 year	277,313	169,454
Within 2 to 5 years	263,236	315,804
	540,549	485,258

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

13. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Computer Equipment	Office Equipment	Buildings	Total
	£	£	£	£
COST				
At 1 April 2020	72,270	99,196	375,000	556,466
Additions	28,996	29,251	-	58,246
At 31 March 2021	101,266	128,447	375,000	604,713
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2020	53,669	98,915	15,000	167,584
Charge for the year	15,699	7,594	7,500	30,793
At 31 March 2021	69,368	106,509	22,500	198,377
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2021	31,898	21,938	352,500	406,336
At 31 March 2020	18,601	281	360,000	378,882

14. DEBTORS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Grants due	835,311	648,957
Prepayments and other debtors	97,077	100,276
	932,388	749,233

15. CREDITORS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2021	2020
	£	£
Taxation and social security	82,380	59,655
Deferred income: grants	126,054	138,954
Accruals	95,349	50,391
Accounts payable and other creditors	189,656	153,858
	493,439	402,859

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

16. UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Balance as at 31 March 2021 £
Contingency funds	300,000	-	-	-	300,000
Total funds	1,697,653	5,685,281	-5,679,550	-	1,703,384
	1,997,653	5,685,281	-5,679,550	-	2,003,384

Contingency fund
The contingency fund is an allocation of reserves to ensure the company has funds available to meet the payroll in the event of a shortfall in funding. This fund is represented by cash at bank.

17. RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	Balance at 1 April 2020	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources	Transfers	Balance as at 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Barclays Charities Trust	-	100,000	-28,596	-	71,404
Bucks Client Welfare	3,151	230	-3,308	-	73
Bucks Rothschild	-	10,000	-6,797	-	3,203
Bucks Outreach RSI	90	-	-	-	90
Groundworks	-	3,166	-1,316	-	1,850
Hickman	-	5,426	-2,084	-	3,342
HIT SIG	2,067	-	-2,017		3,500
Heart of Bucks	3,500	6,500	-9,035	-	965
Oxfordshire Homeless Pathways Welfare Fund	51	-	-	-	51
Oxon Community Foundation	5,266	-	-	-5,266	-
Oxon Rough Sleeper	-	5,893	-	-	5,893
Padstones Welfare	10,457	8,606	-4,942	-	14,122
Shanley Foundation	312	4,000	-4,232		80
Vol Bu Roth	926	-	-	-	926
OXPAT	-	6,450	-4,840	-	1,610
OXFAP	-	1,500	-	-	1,500
Welfare	3,171	19,638	-14,123	5,266	13,952
Total funds	28,991	171,499	-81,292	-	119,198

18. CASH GENERATED FROM OPERATIONS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Net movement in funds	95,938	107,985
Add back depreciation charge	30,793	16,231
Deduct interest income shown in investing activities	- 1,250	- 1,526
Decrease (increase) in debtors	-183,156	152,145
Increase (decrease) in creditors	90,581	-6,836
Net cash used in operating activities	32,906	267,999

19. FUNDS RECEIVED AS AGENT FOR CLIENTS

Connection receives grant monies as agent on behalf of clients who do not have their own bank accounts.

	2021 £	2020 £
At 1 April 2020 / 2019	26,678	24,382
Receipts	40,735	33,805
Payments	- 46,242	- 31,509
At 31 March 2021 / 2020	21,171	26,678

20. PENSIONS

	2021 £	2020 £
Charge to the statement of financial activities in respect of defined contribution schemes	96,910	84,607

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying members. Contributions payable to this scheme, or appropriate scheme of the employee's choice, are charged to the profit and loss accounts in the period to which they relate. These contributions are invested separately from the charity's assets. Pension arrangements are in line with auto-enrolment requirements.

At the year-end 31 March 2021 the amounts payable to pension schemes totalled £18,123

21. TRUSTEE REMUNERATION, KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL & RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

No member of the board of trustees received any remuneration during the year.

The charity trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2020: nil). No trustees were reimbursed for travel expenses during the year (2020: nil). No trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2020: nil).

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the trustees, the Chief Executive Officer and the two Deputy Chief Executive Officers. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel were £127,253 (2020: £54,085).

No trustee or other person related to the charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year.

22. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING DATE

In November 2021, the Charity changed its name from Connection Oxford to Connection Support.

CONNECTION SUPPORT (FORMERLY REGISTERED AS CONNECTION OXFORD)