

Annual report and accounts

For the year ended 31 March 2023

VoiceAbility Advocacy: Charity number in England 1076630,

Charity number in Scotland SC050036, Company number 3798884.



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Welcome from our Chair of Trustees



Looking back over the past year, I'm delighted that VoiceAbility continues to develop and grow as an organisation – one committed to making sure that the people we serve have their voices heard. This involves really listening, empathising and reflecting on the things that mean the person receiving support can break through the barriers they are facing.

Through our amazing teams, people tell us what a difference VoiceAbility makes to ultimately improve their lives. In other words, we do what it says on the tin! As Board Chair, and as a disabled person, this makes me very happy.

I'm also very aware of the importance of the quality of what is delivered. It's my responsibility to make sure we as trustees are assured that VoiceAbility, across all levels of the organisation, is delivering high-quality, effective, safe and person-centred services.

As a Board of Trustees, we care about positive outcomes for people using our services.

To this end, we've introduced a new board committee to scrutinise performance. We loved hearing good news stories about the impact advocacy has on people and their lives. And, as employers, we also enjoyed hearing about the people who work in VoiceAbility and their experience, their roles and what they bring to the organisation.

This year saw our Board supporting the executive leadership team to look at our strategy along with an improved management structure to deliver on this. As a learning organisation, we're keen to hear about how we can all continually strive for better ways of delivering our mission, vision and values. As trustees we have particularly enjoyed supporting the workforce strategy of connection and belonging, believing that this investment of time and personnel will positively impact on staff wellbeing.

I was delighted to see we remain financially secure and that we were able to invest in future developments and progress our strategy. We recently passed an ambitious budget to support the operational programmes for next year having been satisfied as a Board that this year, the one reflected in this report, has gone really well.

As you will read, VoiceAbility continues to excel so a huge thanks from me to all our staff and volunteers for their achievements. I hope everyone is looking forward with the ongoing passion required to ensure more people are supported to be heard when it matters most.

Susan Douglas-Scott CBE

Welcome from our Chief Executive



Throughout the year I've been inspired by my time spent with people who draw on VoiceAbility's support. They have demonstrated to me the life-changing difference which our services are making.

I've spent time with people whose colourful lives, loves and losses have been all but obscured by characterless care services, in which one bedroom is the same as the next, and needs are to be met, rather than people to be heard. And I've observed how the right person at the right time can start a process of understanding, valuing and properly supporting the person. Throughout this, I've held in awe the passion, empathy and skills shown by members of staff and volunteers at VoiceAbility and the spirit shown by people who draw on our services.

We've worked hard to continually improve the quality of our services and to increase our positive impact on people's lives.

We know so much more is needed before everyone has a voice when it matters most.

That's why we're determined not only to enable more people to benefit directly from our work, but also to work with others to address the systemic barriers which block so many of us from the life we want, and from the rights which we are entitled to enjoy.

Our priorities include ensuring that people have better access to independent support and representation. We will press the compelling case for advocacy to be offered on an 'opt-out' basis so that it's truly available to those who would benefit the most from it.

We're enraged by the enduring abuse of people with learning disabilities and autistic people in closed institutional settings. We'll lobby more vociferously for an effective specialist national advocacy service so that people's voices are heard, and to press for a shift to community-based support to stop so many people's unnecessary detention.

We'll not only continue to increase the quality and impact of our own services, but also work with others within and outside the advocacy sector to develop stronger mechanisms to ensure the consistent effectiveness of independent support and representation. And because we know that ultimately most of us rely for personal advice on people we already know and trust, we'll work with others to explore how we can more fully empower ourselves, our neighbourhoods, and our communities so that we can support each other's voices and rights.

We know that our achievements and fulfilling our potential relies upon our committed staff, volunteers, trustees, and upon the support for our work from those who share our objectives and who invest public resources in our abilities. I'd like to express my and our appreciation and gratitude to all of you.

Jonathan Senker

Our aims, vision and values

We support people to be heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to be heard in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years.

We're an independent voice and rights charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.

Our aims

We believe everyone has a right to:

- be heard and respected
- have the same choice, control, and freedom as any other person
- be safe from violence, discrimination, harm or abuse

Our vision

Everyone has a voice which is heard and responded to.

No-one has to face life-changing decisions alone.

This includes:

- delivering the best possible quality of support
- being the provider of choice for the services we offer
- being the source of authority for expert insight on voice and rights
- being the place to work or volunteer with, for anyone who shares our aims

Our values

1. Passionate

We're dedicated to strengthening voice, supporting rights and changing lives.

2. Empowering

We enable people to live life to the full.

3. Collaborative

We listen and shape decisions with others.

4. Honest

We work with integrity and we stick to our principles.

5. Resourceful

We think ahead and find effective ways to achieve our mission.

What do we do?

All our services have the shared goal of supporting people to be heard when it matters most. Our independent advocacy services support people to be heard in important decisions about their health, care and wellbeing. Our 'Connections services' are about making sure that all of us can live the lives we choose and have our voices heard in decisions which matter to us personally, locally, regionally, and nationally.

Advocacy type	Description
Benefits advocacy	Advocates who support disabled people to access benefits from Social Security Scotland, and those who are accessing benefits for a disabled child
Care Act advocacy	Care Act advocates support people to understand their rights under the Care Act and to be fully involved in a local authority assessment, care review, care and support planning or safeguarding process
Children and young people	Although it varies by area, advocacy can be available for children and young people who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● are looked after children ● live in a secure children's home ● are going through the child protection process ● have special educational needs ● are in transition to adult care and support services
General advocacy	General advocates provide advocacy to people who need support to be heard, but do not fall into the eligibility criteria for other types of advocacy
Independent mental capacity advocacy	Independent mental capacity advocates support people when they are assessed to lack capacity to make a best interest decision and do not have appropriate family or friends to consult
Independent mental health advocacy	Independent mental health advocates support people with issues relating to their mental health care and treatment. They also help people understand their rights under the Mental Health Act
NHS complaints advocacy	NHS complaints advocates support people to complain about the treatment or care that they or a friend or family member have received from an NHS service
Relevant person's representative	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards aim to protect people who might be restrained or restricted in a way that amounts to depriving them of their liberty. This law says the affected person must have a 'representative' – someone to help make sure their views, wishes and rights are respected
Rule 1.2 representative	A Rule 1.2 representative speaks up for a person who lacks capacity to consent to restrictions on their freedom, when they are or may be deprived of their liberty in a community or domestic setting

Connections services

Our Connections services bring together all our participation, involvement, co-production and peer support work into one team. These services are varied but are all about ensuring that the voices of people we work with are really heard so that their rights are upheld, and they can make a difference to the services that affect them.

By employing and working with people who have similar experiences, we empower them to advocate for themselves and support others to speak out about the things that are important to them.

- **Involvement and participation**

We work with providers, NHS bodies and local government to ensure that the voices of people who use services are heard. For example, our Speak Out projects employ people with learning disabilities and autistic people, to capture and convey the voices of their peers and facilitate user involvement networks

- **Group advocacy**

We support people to meet, identify common issues, share their experience, and act. Where possible, we support these groups to become self-facilitating, empowering people to take more control of their own lives

- **Peer mentoring**

We all trust and feel more comfortable speaking with people who have been through some of the same experiences as we have. Our peer support workers and mentors draw on their own experiences of mental health to provide emotional and practical support to others and help them develop their own solutions

“I’ve been with VoiceAbility for a little over a year now and I absolutely love what I do.

It’s a priceless gift and opportunity to be able to assist in bettering the lives of those whom we aim to support on their road to recovery.”

Peer Support Worker Felicity Allimadi, pictured with Chief Executive Jonathan Senker who spent an afternoon with Felicity and a colleague to find out more about their work in Camden

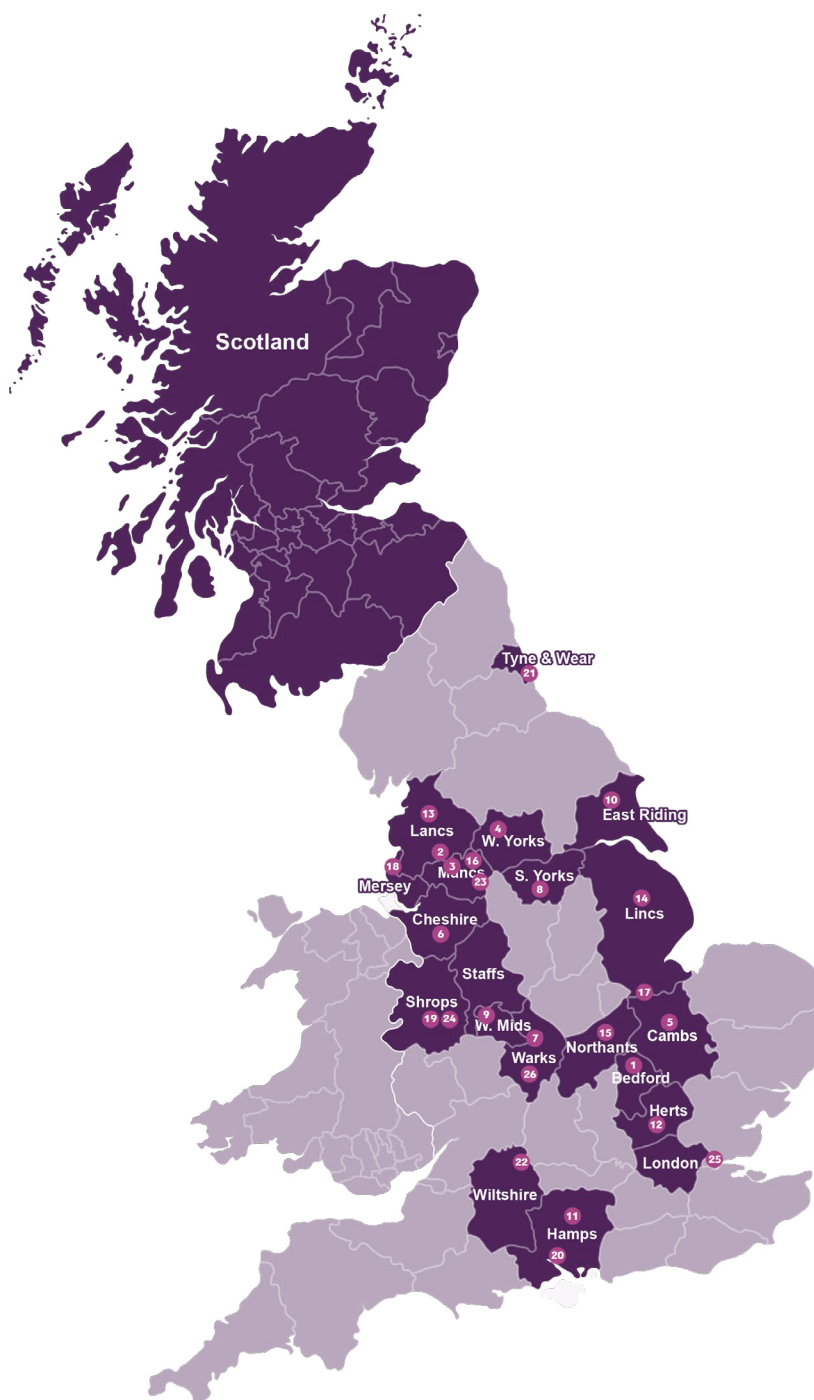


Where we worked 2022-2023

Across Scotland

England

- 1 Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire
- 2 Blackburn with Darwen
- 3 Bolton
- 4 Bradford
- 5 Cambridgeshire
- 6 Cheshire
- 7 Coventry
- 8 Doncaster
- 9 Dudley
- 10 East Riding
- 11 Hampshire
- 12 Hertfordshire
- 13 Lancashire
- 14 Lincolnshire
- 15 Northamptonshire
- 16 Oldham
- 17 Peterborough
- 18 Sefton
- 19 Shropshire
- 20 Southampton
- 21 Sunderland
- 22 Swindon
- 23 Tameside
- 24 Telford and Wrekin
- 25 Thurrock
- 26 Warwickshire



London boroughs

- 1 Barnet
- 2 Camden
- 3 Ealing
- 4 Enfield
- 5 Haringey
- 6 Merton
- 7 Newham
- 8 Redbridge
- 9 Southwark
- 10 Lewisham
- 11 Waltham Forest



Our year in numbers

37,149

people have been supported by VoiceAbility to ensure their voice is heard when it matters most

21,971

cases supported in person

1/4

of safeguarding reports related to neglect or acts of omission

2

average number of days statutory referrals are processed in

78

seconds is the average response time in our contact centre

409

people are contracted to work across our teams

955

people were supported across Scotland with independent benefits advocacy

2,811

clients signposted to other services

22,000

calls handled by our contact centre

50

people volunteer with VoiceAbility across the UK

37%

of our clients needed support due to mental illness

27%

of our work was related to relevant person's representative advocacy, our most used service

121

is the average number of safeguarding concerns we raised each month

15%

of local authority safeguarding alerts were for institutional abuse

986

children have benefited directly from our support

Strategic direction

We're here to build a society where everyone has a voice and where we can all be the authors of our own life. This is at the heart of developing a healthy society and will benefit us all at some point in our lives. We're working to ensure that no-one must be alone or without support when facing life-changing decisions.

To achieve this, we're striving to make sure that we all have ready access to the right support so that we can express ourselves and shape our present and future. We're determined to ensure that there's a comprehensive spectrum of support available to make this a reality.

Our strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision between 2019 and 2025, with two key areas of focus:

- continuing to diversify the services we offer
- improving our organisational capability

What did we do in 2022-2023?

New ways to deliver using advocacy skills

People need many kinds of support to be heard and have their rights upheld. By 2025 we will have significantly widened the range of advocacy services we offer.

We said we'd focus on:

- continued development of our national benefit advocacy contract for the Scottish Government over its first year of delivery
- continuing to invest in our structures to grow and develop our Connections services that focus on individual and collective advocacy
- expanding the breadth of our services to support more people

What we did:

- developed our benefit advocacy service to reach people across Scotland, with the number of referrals approaching 1,000 at the end of the year
- facilitated five groups for people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and autistic people this year as part of the development of our Connections services – working in Camden, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire and Lincolnshire
- funded a pilot in Cheshire to provide advocacy support for parents going through a child protection process
- launched new services in 19 local authority areas of England



Value our people

Create an even more positive working culture and clearer opportunities for staff development and progression.



We said we'd focus on:

- investing significant energy, time, and resources in our Belonging workstream to identity and embed culture change in an inclusive way
- reviewing our remuneration and benefits, including consulting staff where appropriate to make sure we pay fairly
- reviewing our approach to staff appraisals to make sure they are person-centred, support people to do their best work and be their authentic selves
- rolling out an improved self-service human resources (HR) system to make it easier for our staff to focus on the most important parts of their job
- establishing a national forum to support the work of our existing staff networks and resource groups

What we did:

- created our Belonging Manifesto and appointed a Belonging and Culture Lead to guide us on the development of internal and external change
- improved pay for the most vulnerable in our organisation during the cost-of-living crisis
- evaluated our review process, utilising our staff voice and expertise
- launched new HR and payroll systems
- launched a national forum and a disabilities forum for staff, to add to our existing forums focused on Armed Forces, equality, diversity and inclusion, health, safety and wellbeing, and the menopause
- developed a middle manager training programme to build on the success of our frontline management training
- provided coaching to the leadership team to support strategic growth

Build the basics

Increase clarity and consistency across all our standards, policies, systems and processes, while maintaining person-centred service delivery to individuals.



We said we'd focus on:

- investing in the creation of an operating model that would provide the basis for continuous improvement across everything we deliver

What we did:

- completed a full review of our policies, procedures and ways of working
- successfully created and launched our operating model to support our systemic change programme, which is being rolled out across our teams
- rolled out new systems, dashboards and training to better support decision-making at advocate and frontline manager level
- significant in-year review and repositioning of our practice function



Drive quality

Improve our ability to evidence our impact and outcomes.



We said we'd focus on:

- gaining reaccreditation for the Quality Performance Mark (QPM)
- building a more empathetic and experience-based picture of how people we support feel and what they think about decisions being made
- rolling out a new high-level practitioner role for advocates to support our peer-led quality processes for advocacy practice, so that quality advocacy is further embedded across our services
- developing our safeguarding work further, including making sure we're well connected into the relevant bodies, can escalate concerns, and can influence safeguarding practice more widely

What we did:

- gained reaccreditation for the QPM, which highlighted our strength around safeguarding and our highly-developed advocacy skills in meeting the Advocacy Charter
- improved how we capture and use data, including internal case auditing by the practice team
- grew our Communities of Practice where on-the-ground expertise and best practice from across our teams can be shared
- carried out a large research project looking at the experiences of our advocates in relation to safeguarding enquiries under Section 42 of the Care Act
- reviewed and improved our Outcomes Framework to better enable advocates to focus on delivering person-centred advocacy, while capturing the impact of our work in an accessible way
- rolled out the new high-level practitioner role, with five practitioners now in place
- reviewed our Advocacy Standards, which help to ensure consistency in the services we provide to our clients
- developed new safeguarding refresher learning courses, including e-learning in the basics of safeguarding and a choice of trainer-led workshops. This is to ensure our safeguarding training meets the learning needs of all staff
- held additional online training and trainer-led workshops on non-instructed advocacy and professional curiosity, as well as additional safeguarding drop-in sessions for our staff working in high-risk settings

Lead the market and grow authority

Reflect the high quality of our services in how we look and speak as an organisation and in the digital tools we offer.

Continue to ensure that people's voices are heard, and their rights respected in local and national policy decisions.



We said we'd focus on:

- making sure that changes to statutory advocacy under the Care Act, Mental Capacity Act, and Mental Health Act are person-centred and deliver change for our clients
- pushing for effective reform of the Mental Health Act so that more of us get the support of an advocate when it matters most
- contributing to the code of practice and regulations for the Mental Capacity Act, ahead of the launch of Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) in England and Wales
- pushing for a people-centred vision for social care so that social care reform prioritises our rights to have choice and control over how we live our lives and fosters a system where we're all empowered to thrive as well as survive

What we did:

- secured government agreement on our major requirements for the introduction of reform of the Mental Health Act (MHA). We were delighted that it included an opt-out for anyone detained under the MHA and would also extend the right to an independent advocate for voluntary patients – two issues we've been campaigning on for several years
- made the case for a specialist advocacy service for people with a learning disability and autistic people in mental health inpatient services which should be commissioned nationally. This was a key point in our evidence to the parliamentary committee scrutinising the draft Mental Health Bill and formed one of their recommendations on advocacy
- led a coalition of advocacy providers on a joint letter to Mental Health Minister Maria Caulfield MP urging the government to 'swiftly' implement the Mental Health Act reforms
- tirelessly campaigned for LPS and shaped its code of practice with colleagues from the Department of Health and Social Care. We were deeply disappointed to learn of government's decision in April 2023 to delay the implementation of LPS beyond the life of this Parliament
- worked with the Westminster government on children and young people's advocacy policy through the Department for Education's (DfE) Advocacy Expert Group
- worked on a response to DfE's consultation on Children's Social Care reform – Stable Homes Built on Love
- led and facilitated a sector-wide Advocacy Leadership Network, made up of over 50 organisations. Work this year included a joint response to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence advocacy guidelines, and a substantial discussion on how to use these guidelines to strengthen advocacy provision across the sector

What will we do in 2023-2024?

New ways to deliver using advocacy skills

We will focus on:

- extending our independent advocacy reach and improving outcomes with a greater focus on driving high-quality delivery through new and innovative ways of working
- providing the technology and channels to enable people to give and receive support about rights, voices, social care, and personal public services
- researching, planning and seed funding better ways to empower individuals, families and supporting communities throughout and beyond the UK – harnessing our expertise

Value our people

We will focus on:

- continuing to roll out our cultural transformation plan and manifesto with the establishment of a new leadership and behaviour framework
- developing our research into actionable plans in how we can achieve equal outcomes for our external work with people from groups who are traditionally poorly served
- researching and articulating how we can eliminate race, gender and disability equality pay gaps in the organisation within the next two years
- continuing to improve our people and rewards strategy

Build the basics

We will focus on:

- developing our internal and external data analysis capabilities to continually drive quality and look for opportunities to improve across our existing and new services in the UK
- ensuring our internal operating model is being fully carried out across our teams as part of our new approach to quality assurance and continuous improvement
- continually improving our new HR and payroll systems to better enable a reduction in administrative processes to give more time to improve outcomes for clients



Drive quality

We will focus on:

- launching a new quality assurance framework and embedding this across our teams
- increasing our involvement and co-production opportunities, better using our advocacy skills
- building a more empathetic and experience-based picture of how people we support feel and what they think about decisions being made
- continuing to develop our unique research and implementation of new ways in improving safeguarding capabilities, while seeking ways to be able to better share learnings across our sector
- finalising the development of a 'best-in-class' volunteer programme, ready to be rolled out across our teams

Lead the market and grow authority

We will focus on:

- establishing a national opt-out of advocacy wherever people have an entitlement, so we can strengthen the individual right to be heard when it matters most
- ending the unnecessary long-term detention of people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people in inpatient settings and providing stronger protection for individual legal rights, with the objective to create a specialised national advocacy service
- fully understanding, developing, and rolling out citizen and community advocacy to empower groups which automatically and naturally care for and look out for those around them, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and rights respected
- raising independent standards of advocacy by planning and influencing the establishment of formalised national independent bodies to better oversee, audit and support the professional development and regulation of our work



Our impact

VoiceAbility supported **more than 37,000 people** across England and Scotland this year.

We employ **more than 400 members of staff** and have **over 50 volunteers**.

In this section we shine a spotlight on examples of the work our staff have been doing this year and how this has supported our clients to be heard.



Advocacy

On 31 January 2022, we launched a **new type of advocacy service which supports disabled people in accessing benefits** from Social Security Scotland.

Kirsten is among those to have used the free service, after getting stuck while trying to complete an Adult Disability Payment form.

Kirsten contacted VoiceAbility via email, with advocate Alex assigned to her case.

“I don’t think I’ve met anybody who knows as much as Alex does. The way she can just draw things out of you is fantastic – it’s exactly what you need.

She was a huge help, and I don’t think I would’ve got it submitted if it hadn’t been for having that support.”

Kirsten, who was supported by advocate Alex to complete an Adult Disability Payment form



Support to access Social Security Scotland benefits.

Do you find it difficult to complete every-day tasks?

Do you have a long-term physical or mental health condition?

Do you need support to understand and say what you need?

to help. or get in touch

site: voiceability

We continue to develop the service to reach people across the country, with the number of referrals approaching 1,000 at the end of 2022-2023.

“We know how tough the experience of accessing benefits can be, so we’re pleased to have supported hundreds of people to do this. With the cost of living rising alarmingly, this has never been more important. This is just the start, as we know there are thousands more people who could benefit from independent support.”

Jonathan Senker, Chief Executive of VoiceAbility

Ben McPherson, then Minister for Social Security and Local Government, invited VoiceAbility to hold a reception for Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) sponsored by Kaukab Stewart, MSP for Glasgow Kelvin. This was an excellent opportunity for VoiceAbility to promote the service and to meet MSPs and parliamentary staff.



Our NHS complaints advocates support people like Chas, who wanted to complain about his GP practice. He knew what he wanted to say, but not how to say it.

Chas lives with mental health issues and dyslexia which affect his everyday communication. He finds himself constantly having to apologise to others for his perceived ‘aggressive’ conversation, and is frustrated that he’s labelled as a troublemaker.

Chas said he could read OK, but felt that he was unable to write a complaint letter in words that professionals would understand, and which perfectly illustrated how he felt.

He contacted VoiceAbility and his advocate, Aggie, arranged a series of telephone appointments so that he could talk through what he wanted to say. She then posted the draft letters for him to read.

By the end of the sessions, Chas grew in confidence and began to type out emails himself about what he wanted to say, as he knew that Aggie understood his language and needs. She used his own words as much as possible to include in the NHS Complaints Toolkit letter template.

Chas received his paper copies of the letter to sign and post. He said he was very pleased with how he had been supported by Aggie:

“Thank you very much for your patient and professional handling of my complaint. At the start of your support I was still in an exasperated state of mind. I deviated at times and got hyper at times, but by the end of our conversations I felt calm and reassured and better for having spoken with you, so once again thank you.”

Chas, who was supported by advocate Aggie

“Thank you so much for your support. I really appreciate your hard work and all you are doing for me. You made me believe again in justice and kindness of people.”

A VoiceAbility client in Cambridgeshire to their NHS complaints advocate

Culturally-appropriate advocacy

We recognise the broad diversity of people we support beyond their health and care needs.

Our team leaders consider the life experience, knowledge and language skills of our advocates, allocating staff with relevant experience whenever possible to offer a person-centred approach.

Advocate Salma is one example of this, communicating to her client Shafiq in her mother tongue of Punjabi and building a trusting relationship which was sensitive to her cultural and religious needs.

“We know Salma worked very hard to get my mother-in-law’s voice heard, and made sure her cultural needs weren’t ignored or minimised.

I say this with no exaggeration: you and this cultural advocacy service are literally saving lives.”

Shafiq’s daughter-in-law

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Advocacy and mental health

Almost one third of our clients this year needed support due to mental illness.

Alex felt he’d been unsafely discharged from mental health services, and said he was at a “very low point” in his life when he was put in touch with our advocate Klara. Now, things are different.

“My advocate made me feel human and reminded me that I have inherent value despite my disabilities, sexuality, gender identity and economic status.

I am now working full time, helping others with disabilities move into work, and have the best weekends exploring in the camper van or going to gigs with my Direct Payment-funded personal assistant.

I feel the future is bright now and that, when challenges occur, I am better equipped and can ask for help from an advocate if needed.”

Alex, who used our services in Hertfordshire

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Connections services

This year we've been providing Connections services in eight areas across England.

Quality checkers

Our quality checkers in Northamptonshire are people with lived experience of a learning disability who visit, in person or virtually, residential settings and day services to rate and report on the quality of that service.

Speak Out leaders and self-advocates

In Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire we have Speak Out leaders, and in Hampshire and Southampton we have self-advocates.

These are colleagues with a learning disability and/or autistic people who speak with their peers about all aspects of their lives and share feedback with the local authority and a wide range of services and organisations.

Recent successes include Speak Out Cambridgeshire's co-production with their local integrated care board to make GP appointments and health information more accessible, and Speak Out Lincolnshire working with their local hospital on videos to make visits less scary for people with learning disabilities.

“We spoke about the struggles that people in care homes have in getting the right support. They have a right to go socialising, out and about, but they often can't because of a lack of staff. That upsets me because people with learning disabilities in care homes have rights too. They should be able to do whatever they want to do – like I can.”

Richard, a self-advocate in Hampshire, reflects on a conversation with Mark Harper MP during an All Party Parliamentary Group for Learning Disabilities at Westminster

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“The Speak Out leaders – they are an awesome group of people. They participate in meetings, going through the papers and preparing for the meeting, but don't hold back giving their opinions and saying it how it is. The Speak Out leaders also chair the meetings on a rota basis. They ensure that everyone has a fair say.”

Graham Lewis, Partnership Development Manager, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Peer mentoring and peer support

Our peer support workers in Camden work with people as they are discharged from mental health crisis teams, and support them to explore ways to improve and maintain their wellbeing.

Our peer mentors are trained volunteers with lived experience of mental health challenges, who draw on this to support others to stay well and achieve health and wellbeing goals.

“What I saw was connection, solidarity, and humanity. People using their experience, insight, and compassion, to enable and support others in their journey. And I saw the courage with which people were moving forward.”

Chief Executive Jonathan Senker reflecting on time spent with some of our peer support workers in Camden

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Experts by experience

Our experts by experience in Coventry and Warwickshire are people who have experience of, or caring for someone with, a learning disability or autism and of spending time in hospital because of being mentally unwell.



Reference and administrative information

Trustees

Susan Douglas-Scott – Chair / Investment Committee Member
 Susan Brown – Safeguarding Governance Committee Chair
 Andrew Weston – Safeguarding Governance Committee Member
 Matthew Smith – Audit and Risk Committee Member / Performance and Quality Committee Member
 James Alistair Schofield – Audit and Risk Committee Chair / Investment Committee Chair
 Viral Shah – Audit and Risk Committee Member / Investment Committee Member
 Gavin Sumner – Safeguarding Governance Committee Member / Performance and Quality Committee Member
 Izaro Arbelaiz-Teresa – Performance and Quality Committee Member
 Anthony Osijo – Audit and Risk Committee Member / Investment Committee Member
 Mahua Nandi – Performance and Quality Committee Chair

Secretary

Richard Jones

Chief Executive Officer

Jonathan Senker

Registered office

c/o Sayer Vincent
 Invicta House
 108-114 Golden Lane
 London, EC1Y 0TL

Incorporated in United Kingdom, Company Number 03798884
 Registered in England and Wales, Charity Number 1076630
 Registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC050036

Auditors

Sayer Vincent LLP
 Invicta House, 108-114 Golden Lane
 London, EC1Y 0TL

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc
 23 Market Street, Cambridge, CB2 3PA

Solicitors

Radar Limited, 6 Beacon Way, Hull, HU3 4AE
 Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP, 134 Edmund Street, Birmingham, B3 2ES

Governance structure and management

Governing document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 30th June 1999 and registered as a charity on 19th July 1999. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company. It is governed by its Articles of Association which, following changes introduced by the Companies Act 2006, now also contain its objects and powers. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102. This trustees' annual report includes a directors' report as required by company law.

Appointment of trustees

As set out in the Articles of Association, members of the Board of Trustees must be appointed by an ordinary resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the trustees and must be appointed for a term of three years. On ceasing to be a trustee a person may be reappointed provided that no-one may serve as a trustee for more than a maximum of three consecutive terms, after which they must cease to be a trustee for at least 12 months before they're eligible to be reappointed.

The Board members bring insight from their own lived experience of disability, understanding of the charity's social mission, and business and commercial skills. The range of experience is kept under review and, in the event of any shortfalls, new trustees are sought to fill the gaps.

Trustee induction and training

New trustees undergo a period of induction to brief them on the values, direction and work of VoiceAbility, their legal obligations under charity and company law and good practice duties, the contents of the Articles of Association, the Board and decision-making processes, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. During the induction they view our services and meet with key employees and other trustees. Trustees are encouraged to participate in external and internally-run training and development where this will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Organisational structure

The Board of Trustees administers the charity. The Board meets once per quarter with additional meetings when required to deal with issues of strategy in more depth.

VoiceAbility also has within its constitution an Audit and Risk Committee, known as ARC. The ARC members meet once per quarter in advance of the Board meetings to review and discuss matters such as management and statutory accounts, risk and governance. In addition to the Audit and Risk Committee, there's an Investment Committee. The Investment Committee meets twice a year. The purpose of the committee is to ensure that the charity is investing funds in line with the investment policy.

There's also a Safeguarding Committee, the purpose of which is to ensure quality safeguarding practices and approaches are developed and implemented, and to support the charity in discharging its statutory and good practice duties and responsibilities – both as an employer and a provider – in relation to safeguarding.

In 2022, a Performance and Quality Committee was formed. The core purpose of the newly-formed committee is to:

- ensure performance and quality practice informs our cycle of continuous improvement through the application of good governance principles
- assure VoiceAbility's performance in discharging its duties and responsibilities as both an employer and a provider
- report to the Board of Trustees on key opportunities and threats, and support trustees in discharging statutory duties

The trustees have delegated the day-to-day responsibility for the provision of services to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for recommending strategy to the Board, for the management of its external profile and influencing work, ensuring that the charity delivers the services in line with its mission and requirements and ensuring that key performance indicators are met across the range of social and business objectives. The Chief Executive Officer leads an executive leadership team whose members are the executive managers of the charity.

Risk management

The principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation are centred around five key areas:

- **Impact** – the desired impact of activities is not delivered or cannot be adequately evidenced
- **Financial sustainability** – our ability to continue to make an impact in the medium to long term is threatened
- **Compliance** – the organisation fails to meet regulatory, legal or contract compliance requirements or expectations
- **Reputation** – we do not respond effectively to any incident that could result in damage to VoiceAbility's reputation
- **Safeguarding** – we fail to adequately protect staff, volunteers or the people we support from harm or abuse

The steps to manage these risks are set out below.

The trustees are responsible for setting the tone and influencing the culture of risk management within VoiceAbility.

The executive leadership team have established a risk register, identifying the types of risks faced and prioritising them in terms of potential impact and likelihood of occurrence. Having due regard to the strength of the current internal controls and procedures already in place, a series of mitigating actions have been identified to appropriately address these risks.

The executive leadership team, the Audit and Risk Committee, and the Board of Trustees periodically review the risks and the risk management strategies to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the organisation.

Public benefit

We've referred to the guidance in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

Directors' liabilities

There are no specific provisions relating specifically to directors' liabilities to report.

There are no qualifying third-party indemnity provisions which are the direct responsibility of the charity.

There are no qualifying pension scheme indemnity provisions, due to the charity operating a Defined Contribution scheme.

Fundraising

We're not a fundraising charity, with our income deriving primarily from local government, NHS and central government contracts. We do not solicit donations, but do receive them from time to time and do approach grant-giving bodies. We're therefore registered with the fundraising regulator and follow their guidance. There were no issues of compliance with the guidance of the fundraising regulator. We received no complaints about fundraising activities carried out by the charity (2022: none). VoiceAbility does not use any professional fundraisers and no fundraising is undertaken on our behalf by third parties.

Disabled employees

We recognise the importance and benefits of having disabled people involved in and leading the organisation's work at every level including in governance roles, as employees and as volunteers. In relation to employment, the expertise in various aspects of our work which disabled people bring is valued strongly. Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential criteria for posts are guaranteed interviews and we encourage applicants to identify any adjustments which are needed to ensure that they can participate equally in selection processes.

Training has been provided to managers on equality and employment, including specifically on disability equality.

The organisation has a full policy on diversity and employment, which underlines our approach to exceed legal requirements in relation to diversity as we recognise the importance and value to the organisation and to people using our services of a workforce which is diverse in relation to all protected characteristics, including disability.

We're continuing to work to improve the experience of and contribution by all employees, including disabled employees and are recognised as a Disability Confident employer.

We have paid posts which specifically require personal insights that come from having a learning disability, particularly expert by experience posts and our Speak Out leaders. Additionally, we have roles of peer mentors and peer supporters which have provided work skills and therefore routes into employment for people who have used long-term mental health and substance use services.

Employee involvement

VoiceAbility's trustees and directors recognise employee engagement to be one of the most powerful drivers of organisational performance and of our success in enabling people who use our services to achieve their outcomes. It's central to our strategy.

The following are among the measures which we take to promote effective employee involvement and engagement, as well as to ensure that colleagues throughout the organisation are well-informed:

- cross sectional employee groups, who help to develop critical organisational policies and practices – ranging from our pay policy and salary benchmarking to our approach to learning and development
- regular attendance of the Chief Executive and other members of the executive leadership team at team meetings throughout the organisation, to discuss the organisation's direction and development and to seek, receive and act on feedback
- weekly 'open phone' times publicised to all members of staff, at which the Chief Executive seeks and receives feedback and responds to issues of concern. An alternative of email contact at any time is also made available to all colleagues
- regular internal communication updates and bulletins, including VoiceAbility News (a monthly e-update written by staff and distributed to all teams)
- a well-maintained intranet site and online collaboration tools, including webinars and extensive use of Microsoft Teams
- regular team and supervision meetings held throughout the organisation
- a health, safety and wellbeing forum. The purpose of the forum is to represent, discuss and review how we keep everyone physically safe and mentally healthy at work. The forum meets every six weeks. A number of initiatives have been rolled out including a Wellbeing Activity Day where staff were given the time to get together with their colleagues to focus on wellbeing and discuss how best to support one another, as well as an additional half day's discretionary leave entitlement for all staff
- an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) forum. The EDI forum brings together colleagues across the organisation with interest and experience in a wide variety of EDI issues such as ethnicity, cultural awareness, LGBTQ+ equality, domestic violence, veteran's issues, neurodiversity and more
- a national forum, which has been recently launched with the purpose of encouraging staff participation, and nurturing accountability to develop and implement strategies that ensure a culture of belonging is embedded throughout VoiceAbility

Pay policy

VoiceAbility operates an objective outcome pay policy. Staff are placed within bandings dependent on skillset and experience and, upon successful completion of agreed annual objectives, have the opportunity to progress in the banding by way of incremental 'spine points'. Regular supervisions and appraisals ensure that pay-related is measurable within a band, ensuring greater transparency and understanding of pay-related decisions.

Although the executive leadership team are covered by the banding pay, ultimately decisions regarding the remuneration of these roles, and that of the Chief Executive, are made by the Board.

Financial review

Overview

Although the charity delivered a deficit of £1,059,759, this is after designated strategic investment, and budgeted capacity building support function expenditure funded by general reserves to ensure a fit-for-purpose infrastructure in the future.

The underlying operating position for the year is breakeven, demonstrating our inherent financial security.

The net loss of £49,294 on investments held as fixed assets, brought the overall closing deficit to £1,109,053.

We generated a total income of £11,349,386 – 3.2% higher than last year (2021-2022 – £10,993,036).

Due to the investment mentioned above, total expenditure of £12,409,145 is 20.4% higher than last year (2021-2022 – £10,307,595).

In 2022-2023 we continued to invest in our organisational capability and expansion and diversification of the services we offer, ultimately to positively impact the lives of many more people in the future.

Over the last 12 months we've continued to focus on staff development and the working culture of the organisation by way of our Belonging workstream. Investment from general and designated reserves included the expansion of our HR and learning and development teams, and the implementation of a new HR and payroll system. We reviewed our remuneration and benefits, increasing the majority of our incremental 'spine points'. This is in addition to performance and objective-driven pay increases.

Significant time and resources were invested in the creation of an operating model; getting the right people doing the right things at the right time, primarily to ensure high-quality service delivery as well as continuous improvement of organisational processes, keeping the experience of the clients we support at the forefront of decision-making. The newly created high-level practitioner role, which was rolled out this year, further embedded our peer-led quality advocacy delivery. We gained reaccreditation of the Quality Performance Mark.

To further improve the capturing and use of data, we increased our IT team capacity.

To ensure that we remain accountable for the delivery of the various programmes outlined in this report, and that progress is tracked and transparent, we introduced a project management office.

Reserves

The unrestricted reserves are those funds that are available to be used on the charitable objects, to be spent as the trustees see fit.

The trustees hold unrestricted reserves as either general reserves or designated reserves. General reserves are there to support the day-to-day operations of the organisation and to ensure that VoiceAbility can meet its future financial obligations. Designated reserves are held as unrestricted funds that have been earmarked for a particular purpose by the trustees.

Funds designated to fulfil our **investment in development** now stand at £950,000. This is to fund a programme of changes, improvements and developments over the period 2023 to 2025. Programmes include belonging, business development, and policy and influencing.

The **fixed assets replacement** designated fund, which is in place to ensure that VoiceAbility has fit-for-purpose equipment and systems on a long-term basis, has been reassessed and now stands at £120,000. Laptop and mobile phone purchases are recorded against the designated fund and, upon review of the charity's equipment requirements, transfers are then made from general funds to ensure the correct level of funds have been designated.

The remainder of £484,942 is the balance of the **tangible fixed assets** which are not liquid and therefore removed from the undesignated, unrestricted reserves in the interest of prudence when calculating our reserve cover requirements.

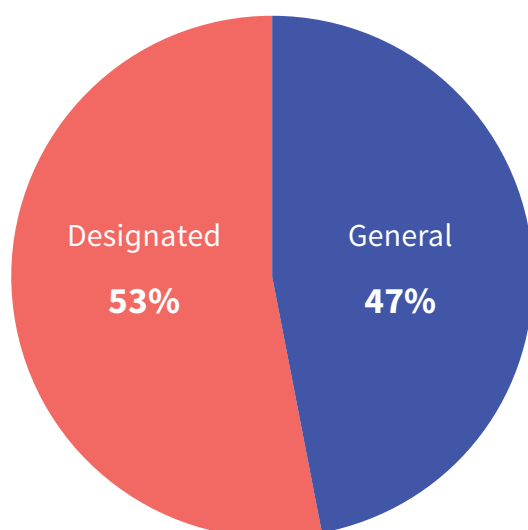
VoiceAbility adopts a risk-based approach to determine the value of general reserves necessary to meet its future financial obligations, taking into account the reliability of income streams and the extent to which expenditure is committed, as well as the major risks to which the charity is exposed.

To inform decision-making over the value of general reserves required in any one year, VoiceAbility places a financial value on facing the key unmitigated risks identified in the risk register. These are aggregated assuming that these risks occur either concurrently or sequentially over a timeframe that does not allow recovery between events. The quantification of those risks is assessed by the senior management team and the executive leadership team and validated by the Audit and Risk Committee alongside the annual review of the risk register.

Based on the outcome, the Audit and Risk Committee will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on the required value of the general reserves for each financial year as part of the approval of the annual budget. The level of general reserves required at 31 March 2023 is £1,525,000.

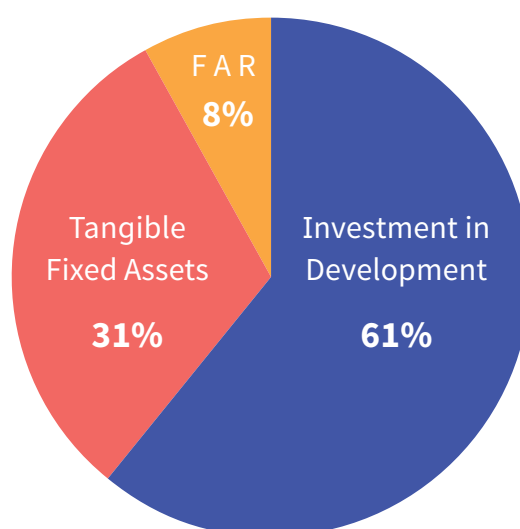
The total reserves carried forward as at 31 March 2023 stand at £2,952,137, of which £1,397,195 is held as general reserves. The shortfall in required general reserves is due to the conscious decision to designate a further £950,000 to strategic investment in 2023-2024. General reserves are forecast to be replenished in early 2024-2025.

Total reserves



General	£1,397,195
Designated	£1,554,942
Restricted	nil
Total	£2,952,137

Designated reserves



Investment in Development	£950,000
Fixed Assets Replacement	£120,000
Tangible Fixed Assets	£484,942
Total	£1,554,942

Investments and bank accounts

VoiceAbility's Investment Committee manages its investment portfolio with the support of management company CCLA. As at 31 March 2023, £849,500 had been invested. Due to the volatility of the investment markets, the performance of the portfolio in 2022-23 has generated an unrealised loss of £49,294 (2022: gain £103,490).

Events since the balance sheet date

There are no significant post-balance sheet events to note.

Going concern

The trustees have assessed whether the use of the going concern basis is appropriate and have considered possible events or conditions that might cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. The trustees have made this assessment for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. The trustees and the executive leadership team have reviewed all budgets and expected income and expenditure projections and have concluded that, together with the reserves established to help in such circumstances, there is a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The charity, therefore, continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

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

In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

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

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

They are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Disclosure of information to the auditors

So far as each person who was a director at the date of approving this report is aware, there is no relevant audit information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing its report, of which the auditor is unaware. Having made enquiries of fellow directors and the charity's auditor, each director has taken all the steps that they are obliged to take as a director in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

This report, along with the financial statements, was approved by trustees on:

26 July 2023

_____ and signed on their behalf by:

James Alistair Schofield – Audit and Risk Committee Chair

Independent auditor's report to the members of VoiceAbility

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of VoiceAbility (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, 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 FRS 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, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended)

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 charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on VoiceAbility'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 trustees' annual report, including the strategic 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 the audit:

- The information given in the trustees' annual report, including the strategic report, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- The trustees' annual report, including the strategic 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 charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' annual report, including the strategic report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) require 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.

Responsibilities of trustees

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

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

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 are set out below.

Capability of the audit in detecting irregularities

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- We enquired of management and trustees, which included obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation, concerning the charity's policies and procedures relating to:
 - Identifying, evaluating, and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
 - Detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
 - The internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- We inspected the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.
- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a material effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the charity from our professional and sector experience.
- We communicated applicable laws and regulations throughout the audit team and remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit.
- We reviewed any reports made to regulators.
- We reviewed the financial statement disclosures and tested these to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- We performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

- In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, we tested the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments, assessed whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias and tested significant transactions that are unusual or those outside the normal course of business.

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: 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 and section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. 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.

Judith Miller (Senior statutory auditor)

Date 11 September 2023

for and on behalf of Sayer Vincent LLP, Statutory Auditor

Invicta House, 108-114 Golden Lane, LONDON, EC1Y 0TL

Sayer Vincent LLP is eligible to act as auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006

Financial statements

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2023

	Note	General £	Designated £	Restricted £	2023 Total £	General £	Designated £	Restricted £	2022 Total £
Income from:									
Donations and legacies	2	1,948	–	–	1,948	4,834	–	–	4,834
Charitable activities	3	11,245,587	–	57,655	11,303,242	10,857,302	–	94,275	10,951,577
Investments		44,196	–	–	44,196	36,625	–	–	36,625
Total income		11,291,731	–	57,655	11,349,386	10,898,761	–	94,275	10,993,036
Expenditure on:									
Charitable activities	4a	12,018,236	333,254	57,655	12,409,145	10,016,189	197,131	94,275	10,307,595
Total expenditure	4	12,018,236	333,254	57,655	12,409,145	10,016,189	197,131	94,275	10,307,595
Net income / (expenditure) before net gains / (losses) on investments		(726,505)	(333,254)	–	(1,059,759)	882,572	(197,131)	–	685,441
Net gains / (losses) on investments		(49,294)	–	–	(49,294)	103,491	–	–	103,491
Net income / (expenditure) for the year	5	(775,799)	(333,254)	–	(1,109,053)	986,063	(197,131)	–	788,932
Transfers between funds		99,007	(99,007)	–	–	(1,361,187)	1,361,187	–	–
Net movement in funds		(676,792)	(432,261)	–	(1,109,053)	(375,124)	1,164,056	–	788,932
Reconciliation of funds:									
Total funds brought forward		2,073,987	1,987,203	–	4,061,190	2,449,111	823,147	–	3,272,258
Total funds carried forward		1,397,195	1,554,942	–	2,952,137	2,073,987	1,987,203	–	4,061,190

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 17a to the financial statements.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Balance sheet

Company no. 03798884

As at 31 March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets:			
Tangible assets	10	484,942	247,203
Investments	11	1,253,352	1,302,646
		1,738,295	1,549,849
Current assets:			
Debtors	12	1,482,323	1,643,887
Cash at bank and in hand		455,259	1,581,214
		1,937,582	3,225,101
Liabilities:			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(706,708)	(634,917)
Net current assets		1,230,874	2,590,184
Total assets less current liabilities		2,969,169	4,140,033
Provision for liabilities	15	(17,032)	(78,843)
Net assets		2,952,137	4,061,190
Funds:	16a		
Restricted income funds		-	-
Unrestricted income funds:			
Designated funds		1,554,942	1,987,203
General funds		1,397,195	2,073,987
Total unrestricted funds		2,952,137	4,061,190
Total funds		2,952,137	4,061,190

Approved by the trustees on 26 July 2023 and signed on their behalf by

James Alistair Schofield
Trustee

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2023

	2023 £	£	2022 £	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net income / (expenditure) for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	(1,109,053)		685,441	
Depreciation charges	138,096		109,505	
(Gains)/losses on investments	49,294		-	
Dividends and interest from investments	(44,195)		(36,625)	
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(61,811)		(107,380)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	161,565		(630,718)	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	71,791		263,434	
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		(794,314)		283,657
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Dividends and interest from investments	44,195		36,625	
Purchase of fixed assets	(375,836)		(73,561)	
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities		(331,641)		(36,936)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(1,125,955)		246,721
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		1,581,214		1,334,492
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		455,259		1,581,214

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

VoiceAbility Advocacy is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England & Wales. The registered office address is The Old Granary, Westwick, Oakington, Cambridge, CB24 3AR.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (September 2015) and the Companies Act 2006/Charities Act 2011.

The Charity has a subsidiary, Advocacy Experience Limited. The subsidiary is currently dormant and therefore consolidated financial statements have not been prepared.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

f) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

g) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

h) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charity in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

Support and governance costs are re-allocated to charitable activities in full.

i) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT (continued)

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the charity's activities.

j) Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the term of the lease.

k) Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £500 for an individual purchase. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| ● Leasehold improvements | over the life of the lease |
| ● Furniture, Computer, Telephones and Software | 10% – 33% |

l) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

Investments in subsidiaries

Investments in subsidiaries are at cost.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

m) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

n) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

o) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

p) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

q) Pensions

After three months of employment, employees are auto enrolled in the group stakeholder pension scheme (Aviva), via a salary exchange method. Employees are required to opt out should they not wish to be enrolled. The charity contributes 5% of gross salary and employees make a minimum contribution of 3% of gross salary. Employees joining the stakeholder pension contract directly with the insurance company. In addition to its own contribution the charity acts as agent in collecting and paying over employee pension contributions.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Donations (unrestricted)	1,948	4,834

3 Income from charitable activities

	Grants £	2023 Earned income contracts £	Total £	Grants £	2022 Earned income contracts £	Total £
Advocacy Services:						
Connections	30,000	564,333	594,333	30,000	699,089	729,089
London	-	1,615,861	1,615,861	-	1,345,554	1,345,554
Midlands & South East	4,880	2,493,889	2,498,769	2,000	3,250,314	3,252,314
North East	-	2,830,844	2,830,844	-	2,429,588	2,429,588
North West	-	1,050,604	1,050,604	19,500	1,255,309	1,274,809
Scotland	-	1,381,880	1,381,880	-	572,200	572,200
South West	-	1,307,101	1,307,101	20,000	1,302,129	1,322,129
	34,880	11,244,513	11,279,393	71,500	10,854,183	10,925,683
Support Services	22,775	1,074	23,849	22,775	3,119	25,894
Total income from charitable activities	57,655	11,245,587	11,303,242	94,275	10,857,302	10,951,577

All earned income is unrestricted and all grant income is restricted.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

4a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Advocacy Services £	Strategic Investment costs	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Direct staff costs	7,818,226	-	-	-	7,818,226	6,307,390
Indirect staff costs	-	245,852	-	1,929,897	2,175,749	1,455,525
Total staff costs (note 6)	7,818,226	245,852	-	1,929,897	9,993,974	7,762,915
Sub contractor Costs	250,102	-	-	-	250,102	803,563
Recruitment, Training and Welfare	151,526	14,323	-	-	165,848	152,005
Travel & Subsistence	336,911	1,976	-	-	338,886	247,684
Rent & Rates	50,295	-	-	-	50,295	103,650
Professional	1,970	41,157	-	-	43,127	86,171
Other direct costs	1,063,617	29,946	-	-	1,093,564	816,726
Business Development	-	-	-	234,017	234,017	184,528
CEO and related expenses	-	-	-	26,063	26,063	18,667
Finance	-	-	-	38,201	38,201	58,475
Human resources	-	-	-	117,274	117,274	35,587
IT and Office Admin	-	-	-	38,307	38,307	23,638
Trustee and AGM costs	-	-	2,745	-	2,745	185
Audit and accountancy costs	-	-	16,740	-	16,740	13,800
	9,672,646	333,254	19,485	2,383,759	12,409,145	10,307,595
Support costs	2,383,759		-	(2,383,759)	-	-
Governance costs	19,485		(19,485)	-	-	-
Investment costs	333,254	(333,254)				-
Total expenditure 2023	12,409,145	-	-	-	12,409,145	-
Total expenditure 2022	10,307,595		-	-	-	10,307,595

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

4b Analysis of expenditure (prior year)

	Advocacy Services £	Strategic Investment costs £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2022 Total £
Direct staff costs	6,307,390	-	-	-	6,307,390
Indirect staff costs	-	91,158	-	1,364,367	1,455,525
Total staff costs (note 7)	6,307,390	91,158	-	1,364,367	7,762,915
Sub contractor Costs	803,563	-	-	-	803,563
Recruitment, Training and Welfare	143,777	8,228	-	-	152,005
Travel & Subsistence	247,684	-	-	-	247,684
Rent & Rates	103,650	-	-	-	103,650
Professional	295	85,876	-	-	86,171
Other direct costs	804,857	11,869	-	-	816,726
Business Development	-	-	-	184,528	184,528
CEO and related expenses	-	-	-	18,667	18,667
Finance	-	-	-	58,475	58,475
Human resources	-	-	-	35,587	35,587
IT and Office Admin	-	-	-	23,638	23,638
Trustee and AGM costs	-	-	185	-	185
Audit and accountancy costs	-	-	13,800	-	13,800
	8,411,217	197,131	13,985	1,685,262	10,307,595
Support costs	1,685,262		-	(1,685,262)	-
Governance costs	13,985		(13,985)	-	-
Investment costs	197,131	(197,131)			
Total expenditure 2021	10,307,595		-	-	10,307,595

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

5 Net income / (expenditure) for the year

This is stated after crediting / (charging):

	2023 £	2022 £
Depreciation	138,096	109,505
Operating lease rentals:		
Property	79,474	79,474
Auditor's remuneration (excluding VAT):		
Audit	12,650	11,000

6 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and wages	8,525,501	6,643,636
Redundancy and termination costs	30,768	10,833
Social security costs	755,129	530,677
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	605,342	469,414
Other staff costs	77,233	108,354
	9,993,974	7,762,914

The redundancy and termination costs were accrued at the balance sheet date.

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	1	–
£70,000 – £79,999	2	2
£80,000 – £89,999	1	1

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £288,320 (2022: £333,301).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2022: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2022: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £nil (2022: £185) incurred by 0 (2022: 11) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

7 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 362 (2022: 298) and based on full-time equivalent was 315 (2022: 254).

8 Related party transactions

There are no related party transactions to disclose for 2023 (2022: none).

There are no donations from related parties which are outside the normal course of business and no restricted donations from related parties.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

9 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures & Fittings £	Computer Equipment £	Telephones £	Software & Systems £	Total £
Cost					
At the start of the year	17,598	333,519	76,589	102,842	530,548
Additions in year	–	211,038	126,655	38,143	375,836
Disposals in year	(17,598)	–	–	(29,281)	(46,879)
At the end of the year	–	544,557	203,244	111,704	859,505
Depreciation					
At the start of the year	17,598	168,598	74,376	22,774	283,346
Charge for the year	–	85,153	9,240	43,703	138,096
Eliminated on disposal	(17,598)	–	–	(29,281)	(46,879)
At the end of the year	–	253,751	83,616	37,196	374,563
Net book value					
At the end of the year	–	290,806	119,628	74,508	484,942
At the start of the year	–	164,921	2,213	80,068	247,201

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

11 Investments held as fixed assets

	2023 £	2022 £
Fair value at the start of the year	1,302,646	1,199,156
Net gain / (loss) on change in fair value	(49,294)	103,490
	1,253,352	1,302,646
Cash held by investment broker pending reinvestment	–	–
Fair value at the end of the year	1,253,352	1,302,646
	2023 £	2022 £
Investments comprise:		
COIF Charities Investment Fund	1,253,352	1,302,646

12 Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	837,451	1,121,154
Other debtors	76,301	65,973
Prepayments	363,081	312,498
Accrued income	205,490	144,262
	1,482,323	1,643,887

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Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	137,695	122,784
Taxation and social security	189,933	145,831
Other creditors	203,679	235,066
Accruals	116,306	61,592
Deferred income (note 14)	59,095	69,645
	706,708	634,917

14 Deferred income

Deferred income comprises income invoiced in advance of work not undertaken by year end

	2023 £	2022 £
Balance at the beginning of the year	69,645	1,506
Amount released to income in the year	(69,645)	(1,506)
Amount deferred in the year	59,095	69,645
Balance at the end of the year	59,095	69,645

15 Provisions for liabilities

Provisions for liabilities comprises

	2023 £	2022 £
Balance at the beginning of the year	78,843	186,223
Amount released in the year	-	-
Increase/(decrease) in provision in the year	(61,811)	(107,380)
Balance at the end of the year	17,032	78,843
Dilapidations provision	1,750	14,500
Customer refund provision	7,282	7,282
Staffing provision	8,000	57,061
	17,032	78,843

Dilapidations Provision

To provide for the refurbishment of our Cambridge office at the end of our tenancy as required by our lease agreement. The likely cost of this is calculated and charged to projects as an additional accommodation cost on an annual basis.

Customer Refund Provision

To provide for a potential refund to a customer.

Staffing Provision

To provide for HR issues identified pre 31st March 2023.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

16a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	–	484,942	–	484,942
Investments	1,253,352	–	–	1,253,352
Net current assets	160,874	1,070,000	–	1,230,874
Provisions	(17,032)	–	–	(17,032)
Net assets at 31 March 2023	1,397,195	1,554,942	–	2,952,137

16b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
* Tangible fixed assets	–	247,203	–	247,203
Investments	1,302,646	–	–	1,302,646
Net current assets	850,184	1,740,000	–	2,590,184
Provisions	(78,843)	–	–	(78,843)
Net assets at 31 March 2023	2,073,987	1,987,203	–	4,061,190

* Prior year tangible fixed assets of £170,905 have been reclassified as designated funds.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

17a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2022 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2023 £
Restricted funds:					
* Department of Health (via National Autistic Society)	-	22,775	(22,775)	-	-
** NHS Nene and Corby CCG	-	30,000	(30,000)	-	-
*** North Northampton Council	-	4,880	(4,880)	-	-
Total restricted funds	-	57,655	(57,655)	-	-
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Investment in Development	1,500,000	-	(333,254)	(216,746)	950,000
Fixed Assets Replacement	240,000	-	-	(120,000)	120,000
Tangible Fixed Assets	247,203	-	-	237,739	484,942
Total designated funds	1,987,203	-	(333,254)	(99,007)	1,554,942
General funds	2,073,987	11,291,731	(12,067,531)	99,007	1,397,195
Total unrestricted funds	4,061,190	11,291,731	(12,400,785)	-	2,952,137
Total funds	4,061,190	11,349,386	(12,458,439)	-	2,952,137

* Complex Needs Consortium Grant.

** Quality Checker service that sees people with a learning disability employed to inspect local services and to provide advice on how they can better meet the needs of individuals with a learning disability.

*** Covid-19 infection control receipt.

Investment in Development has been reviewed and now stands at £950,000. This will fund a programme of changes, improvements and developments throughout 2023/24.

The **Fixed Assets Replacement** designated fund is to ensure that VoiceAbility has fit for purpose equipment and systems on a long term basis.

The **Tangible Fixed Assets** designated fund removes the non-cash element and represents the net book value of fixed assets held.

VoiceAbility Advocacy

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

17b Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 31 March 2021	Income & gains	Expenditure & losses	Transfers	At 31 March 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted funds:					
* Department of Health (via National Autistic Society)	-	22,775	(22,775)	-	-
** Cambridgeshire County Council	-	30,000	(30,000)	-	-
*** NHS Nene and Corby CCG	-	41,500	(41,500)	-	-
Total restricted funds	-	94,275	(94,275)	-	-
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Investment in Development	400,000	-	(197,131)	1,297,131	1,500,000
Fixed Assets Replacement	140,000	-	-	100,000	240,000
Tangible Fixed Assets	283,147	-	-	(35,944)	247,203
Total designated funds	823,147	-	(197,131)	1,361,187	1,987,203
General funds	2,449,111	11,096,527	(10,110,464)	(1,361,187)	2,073,987
Total unrestricted funds	3,272,258	11,096,527	(10,307,595)	-	4,061,190
Total funds	3,272,258	11,190,802	(10,401,870)	-	4,061,190

* Complex Needs Consortium Grant.

** Furtherance of existing Quality Checker service that sees people with a learning disability employed to inspect local services and to provide advice on how they can better meet the needs of individuals with a learning disability.

*** Covid-19 infection control receipts.

Investment in Development has been reviewed and now stands at £1,500,000. This will fund a programme of changes, improvements and developments over the period 2022 to 2025.

The **Fixed Assets Replacement** designated fund is to ensure that VoiceAbility has fit for purpose equipment and systems on a long term basis.

The **Tangible Fixed Assets** designated fund removes the non-cash element and represents the net book value of fixed assets held.

18 Operating lease commitments payable as a lessee

The group and charity's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods:

	Land and Buildings 2023	2022
	£	£
Less than one year	-	24,070
One to five years	-	12,675
Over five years	-	-
	-	36,745

VoiceAbility

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About VoiceAbility

We make sure you're heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.