

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 04135225 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1086151

Report of the Trustees and
Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024
for
Advocacy Focus

Mayes Business Partnership Ltd
22-28 Willow Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 1LP

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for the year ended 31 March 2024**

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Advocacy Focus

Reference and Administrative Details for the year ended 31 March 2024

TRUSTEES

Denise Bond Trustee
Dean Rodgers Treasurer
Christopher Bryan Lintern Trustee
Linda Stewart (resigned 26/9/23)
Mujahid Ibrahim Wahab Trustee (appointed 26/6/23)
Karen Christie Trustee (appointed 19/5/23)
Orooj Raheel Ayub Trustee (appointed 19/5/23) (resigned 21/5/24)
Paul Stephen Carroll Trustee (appointed 19/5/23)

REGISTERED OFFICE

Saturn House
6-7 Mercury Rise
Altham Business Park
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 5BY

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER

04135225 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER

1086151

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

Mayes Business Partnership Ltd
22-28 Willow Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 1LP

BANKERS

Lloyds Bank plc
25 Gresham Street
London
EC2V 7HN

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Justine Forster - CEO
Leanne Hignett - Services Director

Advocacy Focus

Chair of Trustee's Report for the year ended 31 March 2024

I would like to warmly welcome you to the Advocacy Focus Annual Report for 2023/24. This is the second time I get to write this as the Chair of Trustees, and I do so with a great deal of pride, as over the last year, the team have continued to make a real difference to so many people's lives across the North of England.

We have been supporting people via our advocacy hubs across Lancashire, Salford, St Helens and Trafford, and the details and numbers of people that have benefited from our services over the last twelve months are contained within the following pages of the report. We have also continued to provide excellent training on Mental Health First Aid to several organisations during the last year.

In February 2024, the team also opened a brand-new Community Focus Hub in Burnley which has received fantastic feedback. This is something that is really important to us as a charity, as it enhances the support we can provide for the residents of East Lancashire in areas such as housing, benefits and access to training and employment. We continue to provide a lifeline of support to those in our communities who may need to understand their rights, ensure their voices are heard, and be the focus of any decisions that are made about them.

Advocacy Focus has also relocated its Head Office this year, from the centre of Accrington to its new home in Altham, which is about four miles away. A great deal of work has gone into ensuring a smooth transition to our new address and base of operations.

In March 2024, the team worked incredibly hard to deliver our Breaking Barriers conference in Leyland, which was a day of collaboration and learning across different sectors and was attended by over 100 people. As with previous conferences we have received brilliant feedback from attendees.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the partner organisations who support us in so many ways, whether that's through fundraising, sponsorship, making sure that we have opportunities to attend key events, or any other ways of providing support. Collaborative partnerships are crucial to any organisation's success, and we are grateful to each and every partner that we work with and look forward to continuing those relationships over the coming years.

I am proud to say that we have a wonderful team at Advocacy Focus and each one of them makes me feel welcome when I meet them. We also have a talented group of Trustees who continue to provide their time and expertise for which I am truly grateful.

I hope that you will feel as inspired by the efforts of the team as I and my fellow Trustees do when you read what they have achieved over the last twelve months in this report.

Chris Lintern, Chair of Trustees

Advocacy Focus

A message from the CEO for the year ended 31 March 2024

Welcome to our recap of 2023-24. It's been another busy year for our charity and our people, but another successful one in terms of outcomes for those that used our services. As you will see in the body of our report, we have had some noteworthy successes to celebrate.

Retaining the Lancashire Advocacy Hub contract for another five years, and further embedding our 'Looking After Lancashire' missive. A new service for children and young people in Salford. An 'all age' Advocacy Hub for the people of St Helens. And the launch of our new Community Focus Hub, which opened its doors in Burnley - and helped us to take another step forward into prevention-based support, going beyond our health and social care remit.

We continued our specialist work with external partners to make the patient experience more positive for people with autism and held our third 'Breaking Barriers' Conference, with tremendous support from our partners in the sector. Looking back, it's not hard to see that we are a charity that genuinely cares about outcomes and the delivery of person-led services.

There is much to read about and digest in this report, however I want to talk more about our team. There are 75 paid team members and around 40 volunteers, yet it is still not enough to meet the demand for our services. Funding is in short supply and the sector continues to be incredibly competitive. So, we have to do more with less to help and support the people that need it most. Our operations team, the backbone of our services, devoted most of its energies into scaling back what we could, and made our funding work harder for us. This year they have relocated our head office and despite being a small team, they've made a huge impact during this period.

Our biggest spend is our team's salaries and training. That way we can develop and retain best in sector advocates and advocacy coordinators, highly skilled in getting the outcomes people want. Our people are our most valuable resource, and we never lose sight of that, or the fact that they can choose where they work. So, we make our workplace as supportive and positive as we can. We look after our team, so they can look after the people that are lost, unheard or invisible in systems and processes. Quality is our mantra when it comes to our people, and we won't compromise that.

So, I want to end by thanking them, our team, our volunteers, and the people in their lives that support them to do the difficult job they do. Working in health and social care feels harder than it's ever felt. There are a lot of people struggling with a full range of issues and the rising cost of everything. Our team aren't immune to the same pressures. So, all we have achieved in the last year is down to them. To their unwavering passion, commitment, and the way they conduct themselves every day of the week. Here's to you Team Advocacy Focus.

I hope you enjoy our report. But most of all, I hope you can see the true power of quality advocacy in action, and how it can help people to live the lives they want and choose to live.

Justine Forster, Chief Executive Officer, Advocacy Focus

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The objects of the charity as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association are:

The charity's objects are specifically restricted to the following:

For the public benefit, the relief and assistance of people who are disadvantaged by illness, disability, age, sexual orientation or social exclusion within England, via the provision, promotion and accessibility of high quality independent advocacy and its associated services. The charity will promote wider social inclusion for the public benefit, by supporting and enabling people to represent themselves in health and social care matters, obtain appropriate services and increase their life quality and choices.

Our mission:

To help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their lives, by providing high quality advocacy.

"You are the only person that has listened to me in the last 10 years, and you've changed my life."

Vision and Values:

VISION

Ensuring that advocacy is available to all who may need it in our community.

We are a team who care deeply about everything we do. We encourage our people to fully embrace and adopt our core values when working with others.

Our values were created with our team and reflect who we are as an established organisation.

We make all our decisions guided by these values, making sure that everything we do has a clear and meaningful purpose.

VALUES

Quality - We deliver high quality advocacy. We have over 25 years' experience of providing expert, person-led advocacy and are sector leaders with the awards to prove it!

People - We put people at the heart of everything we do. We care about people and want to enable them to make positive change in their life.

Respectful - We are a respectful team. We treat everyone equitably and make sure everyone feels valued, respected, and listened to.

Trust - You can trust us to keep your information private and safe.

Independent - We are independent of councils and health services, and we are on your side.

Learning - We never stop learning. We are always improving and developing our services. We learn from the people we support, our partners and each other.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Service Impact Summary

7,380 people supported

4,474 - people supported with complex advocacy needs

329 - 1-1 community advocacy and self-advocacy cases

2,447 - Information and guidance notes provided

130 - Community Focus cases, with 183 issues supported and resolved

4,349 - Hours of spot purchase advocacy delivered

92% of individuals we work with rated our service 8 or above.

98% of professionals we work with rated our service 8 or above.

54,479 - Annual website visits

2,165 - People who visited our website after searching 'what is advocacy'

24,818 - Annual website users

1st - The place we ranked in the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index Top Employer for small business and overall Top Employer in 2023.

Service Delivery Objectives

Specialist Advocacy

"Everyone entitled to specialist advocacy can access it, to a high standard and in a timely fashion."

Community Advocacy

"Strengthening people and communities via prevention focused services and activities."

Influencing

"Positive societal impact via information, education and upskilling of people, professionals and communities."

Partnership

"We will work with a diverse range of people, services and sectors to improve a whole community response and improved access to services."

People

"Our team will be well trained, diverse, resilient and ready to respond to changing community needs."

Sustainability

"A planned, sustainable and ethical approach to income generation."

Service Delivery

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

It has been another successful year for Advocacy Focus. As a pure advocacy, person-led service, our ever-growing team of 75 employees and 42 volunteers have been committed to supporting children, young people, and adults to be central to any decisions being made. The demand for our services has continued to rise as people struggled to understand and access the services they so desperately needed. In the 26 years Advocacy Focus has been delivering health and social care advocacy, the issues people face are only getting bigger and more complex.

We supported 4474 people with complex advocacy needs across all contracts and increased our outreach in our service areas. During this period, we expanded into Salford with a children and young people's advocacy service and launched our first All-Age Advocacy Hub in St Helens. Rolling out further support for children, young people, adults, and our elderly communities.

Over the last two years, we have focused on preventative advocacy services and early intervention, to reduce the need for crisis support and statutory advocacy, wherever possible. This work will continue into next year as we aim to enable people to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to face any health and social care challenges and achieve their personal outcomes.

As a result of our prevention work, we launched our Community Focus project and expanded beyond health and social care support. This project supports people with housing, benefits, employment, education, and training issues. This is because we know that people often have a range of challenges they are dealing with, and it is hard to focus on one issue in isolation. The project has been a huge success in the East of Lancashire, and we have supported over 130 people since 1st January 2023. It has had such an impact that we plan to expand this offer across our service areas and reach even more people.

Our experienced Community Engagement team continued to work in the heart of our communities to help people understand the difference that high quality advocacy can make in a person's life. We supported 329 people with community and self-advocacy support to help them to advocate for themselves. This created a ripple effect across the communities we work with and gave people the skills they needed to advocate for their family and friends. We pride ourselves on developing new services and projects to bridge gaps and break down barriers for the often-overlooked people in our service areas.

As well as launching three new services, we held two sector leading conferences, Autism Focus and our third national Breaking Barriers conference. The conferences saw us welcome over 100 people and offered further learning and the sharing of best practice. Once again, we had packed agendas full of sector experts with one goal at heart, to improve life outcomes and services for the people we support.

Our charity will continue to listen to the people we support so we can grow and learn and be the best possible advocacy provider. A provider that is fit for purpose and one which our communities need and deserve. We have big plans for 2024 and beyond but read on to find out what impact our team made during 2023-2024.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Public benefit

Advocacy Services

We offer a free, independent and confidential service that provides advocacy for all.

We aim to make a positive difference to the lives of the people in our community. We want to make sure that their voices are being heard and that they are at the centre of decision making.

Our team of multiskilled advocates can support people across the different strands of advocacy. We have supported 4474 people with their health and social care advocacy needs, compared to 3179 in the previous year. Our team has worked hard to engage with the public and statutory sectors to ensure all adults who had the right to advocacy were able to have the support they need.

Services Delivered

- " Independent Care Act Advocacy
- " Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
- " Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- " Independent Health and Social Care Complaints
- " Advocacy Support under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Relevant Person's Representative
- " Community Advocacy
- " Peer Advocacy Group

Throughout the year, and for future years, we will continue to raise and promote the importance of advocacy and the impact advocacy can have on a person's life.

Excitingly, we launched our new All Age Advocacy Hub in St Helens which offers a cradle to grave approach to delivering advocacy. We continue to deliver our range of community and specialist statutory services across Lancashire, Trafford, St Helens and across the North of England.

Lancashire, Trafford & St Helens

Lancashire

We were thrilled to re-secure our Lancashire Advocacy Hub and continue to support our local communities. This led to the opening of our Community Advocacy Hub in Burnley, where people can get help to access services and have a friendly face to speak to about issues they are struggling with. In the past year, our Paid Relevant Persons Representative service under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards has remained the busiest strand of advocacy. The past year has seen the opening of two new Mental Health Units, one in Royal Preston Hospital (Skylark) and the other in Whalley (Woodview). We have worked together with the teams at Skylark and Woodview to ensure that detained patients have access to our Independent Mental Health Advocacy Service.

Trafford

It's been another excellent year in Trafford. Our busiest strand of advocacy in Trafford has been Paid Relevant Persons Representative under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. We have supported people to have their voices heard and improve their quality of life in the homes they are living in. In the last year, we have seen the funding of our community advocacy service come to an end. Our advocates worked hard to ensure that people using our service were able to get the outcome desired and signposted them to other services for continued support. The Mission Impossible Self Advocacy Group continues to make a great difference to people who are autistic and/or have a learning disability by making sure that issues that are important to them are heard and actioned for change.

St Helens

Once again, it's been another great year for the St Helens Advocacy Hub. We first launched the hub on 1st April 2023, and it grew considerably within its first year. The key to success was that the team worked hard to engage with the public and statutory sector in St Helens. This ensured that all adults who had the right to advocacy were able to access the support they needed. We carried out a variety of advocacy training and awareness sessions, all of which has continued to see a significant growth in referrals. When we first took over from the previous services there were 130 people receiving advocacy support, by the end of year one we have supported 610 people.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Children & Young People Advocacy

"You're like my arm bands when I am swimming in the deep end." - Young Person

Our advocacy offer to children and young people has widened geographically over the last twelve months with the addition of the Salford commissioned service. The support offered has again strengthened with the continued positive partnerships and collaborative working with external agencies. Our advocates make sure that the voices of young people are heard and listened to. We also aim to support young people to speak up for themselves and improve their self-advocacy skills.

Children and young people remain at the centre of all changes and decisions made about the support on offer. We regularly ask for feedback and direct input to provide the service they want and need. This is then fed back to commissioners to ensure that it remains young person focused.

Awareness of the advocacy service is continually being promoted to ensure more children and young people have access to the support of an advocate at important meetings that are about them. This empowers children and young people to be involved and to play an active role in decisions being made about their care.

As part of this, we have made a new self-help toolkit for young people - a guide to support in meetings. This toolkit will support young people to understand meetings that are taking place, to prepare for meetings, and to develop their skills and confidence to attend meetings about their care and wellbeing. We are planning to create more resources and are asking young people to tell us what they want us to develop.

This year, the government suggested making changes to the national advocacy standards for children and young people's advocates. Our advocates talked about the new standards with the young people that they are supporting. They focused on standards 1 - 3, which say that young people are the most important part of advocacy. We included feedback from the young people in our response to the government. The young people felt that the changes to the standards made sure that they would be listened to and supported. Our response also had some suggestions of how the standards could be improved, such as advocacy services holding the Quality Performance Mark to show that they are a high-quality service and advocates having an Independent Advocacy Qualification. We also raised that where possible, advocates should support and encourage young people to be empowered to raise any concerns about their safety. We also said that if the government wants more people to access advocacy, they need to consider increasing funding to local councils so they can pay for these services.

"It is a game changer having an advocate in these meetings, thank you." - Child Protection Coordinator

The services we have provided to children and young people in Salford, St Helens and Trafford include:

- " Children's Rights Helpline
- " Advocacy service for Children in Need
- " Advocacy service for Child Protection
- " Advocacy for Children in Care
- " Advocacy for Care Leavers
- " Independent Visitor Service
- " Independent Person in Secure Accommodation Panels
- " Advocacy Drop-in Children's Residential Homes

Spot Purchase Advocacy

Spot purchase advocacy has supported people in times of great need, and where people have fallen through the gaps in services. This could be due to a variety of reasons, where people are not legally entitled to advocacy or because of a unique set of circumstances. Advocacy Focus believes everyone who needs help should get it, which is why we offer a bespoke spot purchase advocacy service.

In the last year there has been a significant rise in the number of people requiring support for Child Protection processes. Our Child Protection service is a complex area of advocacy, where often the people we support are unable to understand the legal process and the nature of meetings and assessments. Our role varies in these cases due to some people being authorised to have court intermediaries, and some people who are not. These cases are very much person-centred.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Our Rule 1.2 Representative service has also been in high demand, with more court deprivations being authorised in people's own homes.

We provide the following Advocacy Services across the North of England:

- " Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)
- " Paid Relevant Person's Representative (RPR)
- " Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)
- " Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)
- " Care Act Advocacy
- " Community Advocacy
- " Health and Social Care Complaints Advocacy
- " Children's Advocacy Support for parents through Child Protection proceedings
- " Missing from Home - Return to Care Interviews
- " Rule 1.2 Representative
- " Litigation Friend

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Social investments

Community Focus

On the 2nd of February 2023 we officially launched our Community Focus project. The project covers East Lancashire. It aims to provide much needed advocacy support within the local community. It exists to enable and empower people to achieve a better life for themselves and their families. This ensures they have a say in the decisions that affect their own lives. The Community Focus team help people with a variety of health and social care issues. They include work, complaints, family issues, benefits and where to get more help. The team has grown over the past year and demand from people needing the service continues to grow too.

Outreach

Over the past year the team have started to attend regular community sessions. This helps us to work closely with people directly in the community. We call these sessions outreach.

An example of one is Burnley Together - Calico Homes. This is a food bank and drop-in community facility. Our attendance there has been so successful we now visit every month. Our team has helped people with a wide variety of issues whilst there. They include Education Health Care Plans, benefits, kinship caring and access to healthcare records.

The Community Focus Hub

The Community Focus Hub celebrated its opening on the 2nd of February, at our dedicated space in Burnley town centre. Lots of different people attended like business owners, local people and partners. Our team made new connections telling them about the Community Focus project. Local newspaper, Burnley Express, wrote an article about The Hub, spreading the word about Advocacy Focus.

After the open day, the Community Focus Hub has continued to open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 am to 2 pm. People can just drop by for some one-on-one help with an advocate. The team help with things like work, complaints, family issues, benefits and where to get more help. People come alone, with family, friends, or with someone like a social worker. There are also laptops available too. These are good for tasks like filling out forms, finding information and checking out local resources.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement raises awareness of advocacy services, whilst giving people the information, tools, and confidence to feel equipped to self-advocate. Community engagement has taken place across our Lancashire, Trafford, and St Helens service areas. Community Engagement is carried out in a variety of ways, in the heart of our communities with people, but also in partnership with other organisations and services.

We have attended lots of different engagement sessions and events in Lancashire and continue to attend and provide support to groups or one-to-one support. This person-centred information sharing is completed online and in person. The community team has also assisted in providing advocacy to people in need of health and social care support. Examples have included assisting with complaints, housing issues and support for their family and friends.

Peer Advocacy

The Mission Impossible Self-Advocacy Group helped people who are autistic and/or with learning disabilities in Trafford during the 2023/2024 year. They met 12 times at Stretford Public Hall on the second Thursday of each month.

The group worked with others to make services better in Trafford and Greater Manchester. They worked with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (ICB) to talk about what can be improved in urgent care services and to give their thoughts on changes. People in the group told Trafford Council what they thought of the services Trafford Council offer to people with disabilities as part of Trafford Council's co-production review.

The group held a very busy session with Ring and Ride, who provide transport for people with a disability across the Trafford area. At this meeting the group, parents, and carers of disabled people came together to tell Ring and Ride about problems with their service. The group asked Ring and Ride to make it easier for disabled people to use the service.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

As well as monthly meetings, members of the group went to 'Confirm and Challenge' meetings with people that provide and fund services. These meetings talked about things like transport, health care, housing, social care, and activities. The group told the funders what would make these services better.

The group attended self-advocacy events, joining in with the national movement for self-advocacy. At these events, group members had the chance to work with other groups from around the country. They shared their knowledge and skills with other self-advocacy groups.

Members of the group continue to grow in confidence and develop their skills, feeling more able to speak up for themselves. The group are looking forward to doing even more in 2024-2025.

Volunteer Services

Our volunteer team has continued to grow, playing an important role in the delivery of our services. Coming from various backgrounds and having lots of different skills, they give up their time so we can reach more people.

During 2023-24 we recruited 42 Volunteers who gave 872 hours of their time helping Advocacy Focus across three projects. They did a great job, especially with supporting our Independent Mental Health Advocacy service. This service helps people who are detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act to understand their rights, express their views and opinions, and get the help they need in important meetings. Our volunteers support our Independent Mental Health Advocates in their day-to-day advocacy practice and are a valuable resource to them.

We have also brought in new volunteers to help at our Community Hub. They will be helping people with matters including benefits, housing, supporting people with appointments and accessing healthcare.

Our volunteers are also a big part of the Independent Visitor service. They spend time with young people who live in care, taking them to places that match their interests once a month and are there for them when they need a listening ear.

We make sure all our volunteers get excellent training so they can do their jobs well and provide the best service possible. The training is conducted via a range of methods to ensure we cover all learning styles and are flexible with in-person training, as well as online and e-learning opportunities.

We want to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers for everything they do. They make a big difference to the lives of the people we help, and we couldn't do it without them.

Liberty Protection Safeguards

The government has confirmed that the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) will not be implemented before the next general election. Since they announced this in April 2023, there has been no further update.

This is incredibly disheartening news, but we are optimistic for the future. Advocacy Focus has put in an incredible amount of work, which had also identified many issues within the draft Code of Practice and Regulations. The Government has been made aware of those issues during the consultation process. Whilst we are disheartened that the delay appears to be indefinite, we are relieved that the current draft guidance will not be implemented.

This means that the future of LPS depends on whoever wins the next election and whether they still want to continue with the changes.

We are also still waiting to hear when the updated Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice will be published.

What is next for us?

We are working hard with people who use our services and our partners to make the best use of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. Our LPS Lead continues to chair a national LPS sub-group of advocacy providers. Once the general election has happened, the group will think about campaign work to bring the reform of the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to the new government's attention.

Mental Health Reform

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

We are disappointed about the decision not to keep working on the important changes to the Mental Health Act. This law is important because it decides how we treat people who are really struggling with mental illness, especially when they need to be in a hospital or get treatment, even if they don't want it.

Changes to the Mental Health Act have been needed for a long time and the reform gave us a chance to make a difference to how we help people with their mental health. It was a welcomed opportunity to make sure people's views and wishes were listened to when they were in a mental health hospital. The changes would have helped the present unfair ways in which it is used, especially for people from different ethnic backgrounds who are four times more likely to be held under the Mental Health Act.

This chance has now been taken away, and the decision made by the Government has let down thousands of people and their families by not keeping its promise to change the Mental Health Act.

What is next for us?

We are determined to keep listening to people's views and wishes and make sure their rights are listened to. We have taken part in lots of workshops, helped people with questionnaires and shared our own views on standing up for people in hospitals.

We will keep helping people who need our support and speak out about the changes that are needed to the Mental Health Act so that people can have more control over their own decisions and mental health journey.

We are hopeful that the campaigns that are happening at this time will change the decision and help create a more focused law which will give people more independence over their life.

Breaking Barriers

On the 21st of March 2024, we welcomed over 100 health and social care professionals to our third Breaking Barriers Conference which was sponsored by Stephenson Solicitors. Our bi-annual conference aims to raise awareness of advocacy and brings professionals together to share ideas and best practices that can make people's lives better. As well as NHS, Local Authority and legal professionals, our full-day conference also welcomed expert speakers who delivered a range of topical sessions.

Neil Allen has become a Breaking Barriers staple and this year attended to share the latest updates on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and making the best use of this legislation. We also welcomed for the first time Laura Ingham from Armed Forces HQ, who spoke passionately about the importance of advocacy within the armed forces community and how we can make our services more accessible to veterans and their families.

We saw Kate Mercer from Blackbelt Advocacy and Philippa Curran from O'Donnell's solicitors make a return too, this time around speaking about the power of advocacy and section 16 welfare applications, respectively. Other sessions discussed topics such as 'Advocacy for Autistic People in Mental Health Inpatient Settings', 'Capacity to Engage in Sexual Relations' and 'Internet, Social Media, and Mental Capacity' to name a few.

We received excellent feedback from delegates who rated the speakers as Excellent (85.7%) and Good (14.3%). The overall event also received an exceptionally high rating, with respondents rating it Excellent (84.5%) or Good (14.3%).

During this event we were also able to fundraise £150 towards our Community Cuppa campaign through the sale of our reusable Advocacy Focus water bottles. This money will help us provide a warm and safe space to community members in Burnley, together with a good cuppa and some nice biscuits too!

Awards

" Winner of overall Top Employer in Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index and Top Small Employer Award. Retaining our Gold status for four years.

" Winner of Outstanding Advocate at the National Advocacy Awards.

" Winner of Mental Health Safety Improvement Award at the HSJ Patient Safety Awards

" Winner of Heart of Salford Award for Volunteering Team of the Year

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Operations

Over the last year we have seen some change with regards to the staffing of the Operations Team, with us appointing a new Operations Co-ordinator and Marketing Executive. The team has also expanded, with the introduction of additional resource in training, through the appointment of an Advocacy Training Co-ordinator to further develop our advocacy training provision. We have also enlisted additional resource in the Finance Team, recruiting for a role which focused on the credit control of our block contracts and spot purchase work.

With regards to our people, our People Manager has developed an overarching People Strategy, which sets out our vision in relation to our people and how we will work to achieve this in 2024. We have also revised our organisation's maternity offer, to provide our team with an enhanced maternity package to support our people's financial wellbeing as they embark on motherhood.

IT has been a particular focus over the last 12 months, with the installation of Azure AD and InTune to provide more robust security across our IT systems. Windows Autopilot has also been configured to reduce the time taken to set up new equipment, thus increasing productivity and time efficiency. We have also implemented a new telecoms system, with the introduction of 3CX, a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which enables telephone calls to be made using the internet via an application that is installed on laptops and mobile phone handsets. At the same time, we have introduced a Bring Your Own Device policy, with 95% of the team opting into both. The revision of our telecoms provision has enabled us to make cost and environmental efficiencies by reducing the organisation's purchase of hardware.

We have launched several fundraising campaigns over the last year. Most notably our Christmas Fundraiser, to support our Independent Visitor services in St Helens and Trafford, which raised £1105. We continue to fundraise for our ongoing Community Cuppa campaign, which raises money to provide a hot drink to those in need who visit our Community Hub.

Training and development, marketing, and health and wellbeing have all continued to be key priorities within the Operations Team over the last 12 months, with further details outlined within this report.

In conclusion, the past year has marked significant developments and achievements within the Operations Team. Over the next year, we remain committed to driving innovation, fostering a supportive work environment for our people, and making meaningful contributions to our communities.

Training and Development

This year our team logged a total of 217 external training sessions, alongside our internal training schedule. These sessions ranged from completing the accredited Adult or Youth Mental Health First Aid courses, to upskilling on leadership and management skills, and furthering our knowledge of technical advocacy skills.

We have also worked with various solicitor firms and professionals to deliver topical training to our team, covering topics such as Social Media & the Internet and Mental Capacity; Litigation Friend Training; Communication Skills; and more.

Internally, we have also expanded our mandatory training schedule to include the Oliver McGowen training and Basic Sign Language Awareness training. In addition, our team has completed annual refreshers on Human Rights, Children and Adult Safeguarding, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, GDPR, and more.

We have delivered over 50 hours of Advocacy Awareness training to Local Authority professionals and local community groups, as well as delivering a host of technical advocacy skills training to advocacy providers and care homes across the country.

This year we have continued offering bespoke Workplace Wellbeing and Advocacy Skills training to businesses and not-for-profits across the country. We trained 65 Mental Health First Aiders to provide life-saving support to young people and adults. We have also delivered a host of training to veteran organisations as part of The Forces Wellbeing Collective, promoting the understanding of statutory advocacy services and creating safer pathways for veterans and their families. We have continued to work with organisations such as Citizens Advice, The Poppy Factory and supported companies in the law, logistics, housing, and insurance industries to deliver positive mental health and menopause initiatives within their workplaces.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Health and Wellbeing

Looking back on the past year, it is clear that the challenges faced by our communities are far from over. The long-term effects of the pandemic continue to cast a shadow over people's mental and physical health, as well as the constant strains of economic instability. At Advocacy Focus, we know that our ability to support others goes hand in hand with the wellness of our own team. Just like we help people who need our support, we also make sure to support each other. This past year has shown us how important it is to look after ourselves and each other so we can keep giving our best to those who need it.

To support our commitment to our team's health and wellbeing, and as part of our wellbeing strategy, we now have a Wellbeing Lead who is dedicated to delivering support and resources to our whole team. The Wellbeing Lead has also gathered a group of trained Wellbeing Champions, who are spread across the organisation and help offer low-level support to our people.

Our wellbeing model is built around prevention, support and aftercare, and the team offers support when people are going through tough times and help people by simply having a chat, providing signposting suggestions or ensuring that wellness action plans are followed.

The Wellbeing Team also meet monthly to talk about plans, organise activities and check in on each other around their own wellbeing. Striving to empower our team with skills and knowledge to help them manage their own wellbeing, the team deliver and arrange training and information sessions at each of our all-staff team meetings. These offer helpful coping techniques and self-help resources for the team to take away.

We have introduced a wellbeing induction for all new team members who join Advocacy Focus. This takes place within their first few days at work to make sure they know about all the support we offer. We have introduced 'Wellness Wednesdays', where the Wellbeing Team post internally about relevant weekly wellbeing topics. They also regularly remind people of their Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and its benefits to their physical and mental health.

At the beginning of 2024, as we have for the past four years, our team took part in the national charity Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index, which we eagerly await the outcome of since achieving the Gold Award and Top Employer award last year. We will continue to invest in this for our team each year.

Our team continue to work flexibly, allowing people to work their hours between 7:30 am and 8:30 pm each day. This makes a four-day working week possible, and we have guidelines to make sure our people don't burnout. Our wellbeing room gives our team a quiet space that is well-used for reading, relaxing, praying, breastfeeding, or catching up with their teammates. Our wellbeing hour is popular and is a permanent fixture, reducing full-time hours down to 36 per week. We have recently moved to our new head office in Altham. This area now offers lots of greener, calmer, outdoor space where our team can go for walks, or relax on the grass in the warmer months.

Advocacy Focus continues to make a substantial investment in widening what we offer our team to promote their health and wellbeing. Throughout the year, we have continued to hold monthly 'wellbeing walk and talk' sessions, which we tailor to suit all abilities. We again hosted a staff away day at Whitehough Outdoor Education Centre and continued to have a rolling schedule of massage sessions for the team via YOLO Wellness and Tropics treatments. We have also recently introduced low-cost group acupuncture treatments, which the team can claim back the full expense of via their EAP provision. Advocacy Focus is committed to enhancing our team's wellbeing. This commitment is ongoing, and we will continue to improve and invest in this as we move forward.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Website

This year, we worked hard to make our website easier for everyone to use. We made the language simpler, so it is easier to understand. We also wrote blog posts and articles and shared them on social media.

Our social media followers have grown a great deal, reaching more people than ever before. We want to keep growing and reaching even more people.

We are big on helping people stand up for themselves. We have provided lots of resources, including booklets and toolkits on our website. We have also shared helpful information on social media. More people are visiting our site and using these resources.

Next year, we want to make our website even easier to use. We will check all the content to make sure it is easy to read and organise related topics better so they can be found in two clicks or less. We also want to find new ways for people to support our charity through fundraising campaigns.

We are also updating how we use social media. We will start using Instagram and TikTok to connect with younger people and share information to help them understand advocacy and how they can become their own advocate.

Our main goal is to spread the word across all ages and make sure everyone knows how advocacy can help them now or in the future.

Marketing Statistics

54,479 Annual website visits

2,165 people visited our website after searching 'what is advocacy'

24,818 annual website users

Top five countries who visit our website:

1. United Kingdom - 13,341
2. Philippines - 4,141
3. United States - 2,451
4. India - 741
5. Nigeria - 472

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

The increase in activity by the charity requires a sensible approach to setting its reserves policy. At 31 March 2024, the estimated redundancy/closure costs for the organisation amounted to £340,000 (2023: £280,000), and this is set aside as a designated fund to provide cash flow so that service delivery could be continued or redundancy/closure costs met whilst further funds were sought or the organisation wound up.

At 31 March 2024, this leaves £530,508 available to increase advocacy provision, ensure readiness for the external legislative changes in advocacy and the implementation of measures to increase advocacy accessibility within other minority and rural communities.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

Advocacy Focus

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

Recruitment of Trustees is an open process with applications welcomed at all times from any sector of the community. An annual review of the Board is completed and targeted recruitment is undertaken if the Board identifies gaps in skills or representation. Appointments are made by the Board and are subject to confirmation at the Annual General Meeting. There is a rolling programme of election periods to ensure continuity.

Induction and training of new trustees

Trustees are inducted by the Chair and Chief Executive. All Trustees are encouraged to undertake advocacy training and are offered access to other relevant training to support them in their role as well as peer support through fellow Trustees. A job description detailing levels of responsibility is provided during induction. All Trustees are subject to DBS clearance.

AUDITORS

The auditors, Mayes Business Partnership Ltd, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 29 July 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Dean Rodgers - Trustee

Advocacy Focus

Trustees' Responsibility Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees (who are also the directors of Advocacy Focus for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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

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

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

In so far as the trustees are aware:

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

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Advocacy Focus

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Advocacy Focus (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 19 to the financial statements, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our Report of the Independent Auditors thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Advocacy Focus

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' Responsibilities Statement, 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.

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Advocacy Focus

Our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

- i) Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- (ii) Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control.
- (iii) Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- (iv) Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- (v) Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

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

Due to the sector in which the client operates we have identified that compliance with Employment Legislation and The Companies Act 2006 as areas most likely to have a material impact on the financial statements.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

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

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Advocacy Focus

Use of our report

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

Craig Peter Fishwick FCCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Mayes Business Partnership Ltd
22-28 Willow Street
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 1LP

29 July 2024

Advocacy Focus

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31/3/24 Total funds £	31/3/23 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies		-	-	-	-
Charitable activities	4				
Provision of advocacy services		2,442,077	1,494	2,443,571	2,100,694
Investment income	3	19,229	-	19,229	8,045
Total		<u>2,461,306</u>	<u>1,494</u>	<u>2,462,800</u>	<u>2,108,739</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds	5	2,540	-	2,540	1,381
Charitable activities	6				
Provision of advocacy services		<u>2,387,166</u>	<u>1,494</u>	<u>2,388,660</u>	<u>2,069,876</u>
Total		<u>2,389,706</u>	<u>1,494</u>	<u>2,391,200</u>	<u>2,071,257</u>
Net gains/(losses) on investments		<u>(14,727)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(14,727)</u>	<u>(31,878)</u>
NET INCOME		56,873	-	56,873	5,604
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		813,635	-	813,635	808,031
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u><u>870,508</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>870,508</u></u>	<u><u>813,635</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

Advocacy Focus

Statement of Financial Position 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	31/3/24 Total funds £	31/3/23 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	12	64,021	-	64,021	48,165
Investments	13	142,125	-	142,125	250,603
		<u>206,146</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>206,146</u>	<u>298,768</u>
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	14	308,033	-	308,033	216,736
Cash at bank and in hand		436,096	-	436,096	375,306
		<u>744,129</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>744,129</u>	<u>592,042</u>
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	15	(79,767)	-	(79,767)	(77,175)
		<u>664,362</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>664,362</u>	<u>514,867</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS					
		<u>870,508</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>870,508</u>	<u>813,635</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES					
		<u>870,508</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>870,508</u>	<u>813,635</u>
NET ASSETS					
		<u>870,508</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>870,508</u>	<u>813,635</u>
FUNDS	17				
Unrestricted funds				870,508	813,635
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>870,508</u>	<u>813,635</u>

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

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 29 July 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

Dean Rodgers - Trustee

Advocacy Focus

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	31/3/24 £	31/3/23 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	(23,077)	(12,459)
Net cash used in operating activities		(23,077)	(12,459)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(29,113)	(25,183)
Purchase of fixed asset investments		-	(50,000)
Sale of fixed asset investments		93,751	-
Interest received		3,353	(520)
Dividends received		15,876	8,565
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		83,867	(67,138)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		60,790	(79,597)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		375,306	454,903
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		436,096	375,306

The notes form part of these financial statements

**Notes to the Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

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

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	56,873	5,604
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	13,257	10,799
Losses on investments	14,727	31,878
Interest received	(3,353)	520
Dividends received	(15,876)	(8,565)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(91,297)	6,726
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	2,592	(59,421)
Net cash used in operations	<u>(23,077)</u>	<u>(12,459)</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/4/23	Cash flow	At 31/3/24
	£	£	£
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	375,306	60,790	436,096
	<u>375,306</u>	<u>60,790</u>	<u>436,096</u>
Total	<u>375,306</u>	<u>60,790</u>	<u>436,096</u>

**Notes to the Financial Statements
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

1. LEGAL STATUS OF THE CHARITY

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, registered in England and Wales. The charity's registered number and registered address can be found on the Charity Information page. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £10 per member of the charity.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of investments which are included at market value, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Allocation and apportionment of costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include back office costs, finance, personnel, payroll and governance costs which support the Trusts advocacy services and activities. These costs have been allocated to other resources expended. The bases on which support costs have been allocated are set out in note 5.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Improvements to property	- 5% on cost
Office equipment	- 25% on reducing balance
Website	- 10% on cost

Tangible fixed assets are initially recognised at cost.

Taxation

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

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

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

Financial instruments

Basic financial assets, including trade and other receivables, cash and bank balances and investments in commercial paper, are initially recognised at transaction price, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest.

Basic financial liabilities, including trade and other payables, bank loans, loans from any fellow group charities and any preference shares that are classified as debt, are initially recognised at transaction price, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest.

Fixed asset investments

Fixed asset investments are initially recorded at cost and reviewed annually with an adjustment to the current market value being passed through the Statement of Financial Activities.

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Other fixed asset invest - FII	15,876	8,565
Deposit account interest	3,353	(520)
	<u>19,229</u>	<u>8,045</u>

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Activity	31/3/24	31/3/23
		£	£
Service level agreements	Provision of advocacy services	2,209,400	1,927,020
Training and private contracts	Provision of advocacy services	20,675	23,425
Other income	Provision of advocacy services	207,996	135,249
Grants	Provision of advocacy services	5,500	15,000
		<u>2,443,571</u>	<u>2,100,694</u>

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Awards For All	<u>5,500</u>	<u>15,000</u>

Advocacy Focus

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the year ended 31 March 2024

5. RAISING FUNDS

Other trading activities

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Purchases	2,540	1,381

6. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs £	Support costs (see note 7) £	Totals £
Provision of advocacy services	1,782,690	605,970	2,388,660

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Management £	Governance costs £	Totals £
Provision of advocacy services	601,861	4,109	605,970

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

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

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Auditors' remuneration	3,650	3,350
Depreciation - owned assets	13,257	10,799
Other operating leases	40,836	28,604

9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2024 nor for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Trustees' expenses

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Trustees' expenses	459	273

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024

10. STAFF COSTS

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,771,869	1,519,668
Social security costs	127,229	141,920
Other pension costs	85,667	70,579
	<u>1,984,765</u>	<u>1,732,167</u>

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

	31/3/24	31/3/23
Charitable	52	43
Support	18	17
	<u>70</u>	<u>60</u>

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

	31/3/24	31/3/23
£60,001 - £70,000	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Charitable activities			
Provision of advocacy services	2,100,694	-	2,100,694
Investment income	<u>8,045</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,045</u>
Total	<u>2,108,739</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,108,739</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds	1,381	-	1,381
Charitable activities			
Provision of advocacy services	<u>2,069,876</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,069,876</u>
Total	<u>2,071,257</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,071,257</u>
Net gains/(losses) on investments	<u>(31,878)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(31,878)</u>
NET INCOME	5,604	-	5,604
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	<u>808,031</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>808,031</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>813,635</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>813,635</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Improvements to property £	Office equipment £	Website £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2023	3,084	132,572	10,200	145,856
Additions	-	29,113	-	29,113
At 31 March 2024	3,084	161,685	10,200	174,969
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2023	2,478	94,193	1,020	97,691
Charge for year	154	12,083	1,020	13,257
At 31 March 2024	2,632	106,276	2,040	110,948
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2024	452	55,409	8,160	64,021
At 31 March 2023	606	38,379	9,180	48,165

13. FIXED ASSET INVESTMENTS

	Listed investments £
MARKET VALUE	
At 1 April 2023	250,603
Disposals	(93,750)
Revaluations	(14,728)
At 31 March 2024	142,125
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2024	142,125
At 31 March 2023	250,603

There were no investment assets outside the UK.

Cost or valuation at 31 March 2024 is represented by:

	Listed investments £
Valuation in 2024	142,125

If fixed asset investments had not been revalued they would have been included at the following historical cost:

	31/3/24 £	31/3/23 £
Cost	141,180	235,000

Fixed asset investments were valued on an open market basis on 31 March 2024 by the Trustees.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

14. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Trade debtors	211,930	165,201
Other debtors	31,250	-
Prepayments and accrued income	64,853	51,535
	<u>308,033</u>	<u>216,736</u>

15. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Trade creditors	16,523	14,520
Social security and other taxes	32,535	32,911
Other creditors	12,396	19,774
Accrued expenses	18,313	9,970
	<u>79,767</u>	<u>77,175</u>

16. LEASING AGREEMENTS

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

	31/3/24	31/3/23
	£	£
Within one year	6,600	7,200
Between one and five years	118,000	-
	<u>124,600</u>	<u>7,200</u>

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1/4/23	Net movement in funds	At 31/3/24
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	533,635	(3,127)	530,508
Running costs	280,000	60,000	340,000
	<u>813,635</u>	<u>56,873</u>	<u>870,508</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>813,635</u>	<u>56,873</u>	<u>870,508</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Gains and losses £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	2,401,306	(2,389,706)	(14,727)	(3,127)
Running costs	60,000	-	-	60,000
	<u>2,461,306</u>	<u>(2,389,706)</u>	<u>(14,727)</u>	<u>56,873</u>
Restricted funds				
Restricted Fund	1,494	(1,494)	-	-
	<u>1,494</u>	<u>(1,494)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u><u>2,462,800</u></u>	<u><u>(2,391,200)</u></u>	<u><u>(14,727)</u></u>	<u><u>56,873</u></u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1/4/22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/3/23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	528,031	5,604	533,635
Running costs	280,000	-	280,000
	<u>808,031</u>	<u>5,604</u>	<u>813,635</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u><u>808,031</u></u>	<u><u>5,604</u></u>	<u><u>813,635</u></u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Gains and losses £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	2,108,739	(2,071,257)	(31,878)	5,604
	<u>2,108,739</u>	<u>(2,071,257)</u>	<u>(31,878)</u>	<u>5,604</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u><u>2,108,739</u></u>	<u><u>(2,071,257)</u></u>	<u><u>(31,878)</u></u>	<u><u>5,604</u></u>

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1/4/22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/3/24 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	528,031	2,477	530,508
Running costs	280,000	60,000	340,000
	<u>808,031</u>	<u>62,477</u>	<u>870,508</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>808,031</u>	<u>62,477</u>	<u>870,508</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Gains and losses £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	4,510,045	(4,460,963)	(46,605)	2,477
Running costs	60,000	-	-	60,000
	<u>4,570,045</u>	<u>(4,460,963)</u>	<u>(46,605)</u>	<u>62,477</u>
Restricted funds				
Restricted Fund	1,494	(1,494)	-	-
	<u>1,494</u>	<u>(1,494)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>4,571,539</u>	<u>(4,462,457)</u>	<u>(46,605)</u>	<u>62,477</u>

18. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2024.

19. FRC ETHICAL STANDARD - PROVISIONS AVAILABLE FOR SMALL ENTITIES

In common with many other businesses of our size and nature we use our auditors to prepare and submit returns to the tax authorities and assist with the preparation of the financial statements.

Advocacy Focus

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2024

	31/3/24 £	31/3/23 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		
Investment income		
Other fixed asset invest - FII	15,876	8,565
Deposit account interest	3,353	(520)
	<hr/> 19,229	<hr/> 8,045
Charitable activities		
Service level agreements	2,209,400	1,927,020
Training and private contracts	20,675	23,425
Other income	207,996	135,249
Grants	5,500	15,000
	<hr/> 2,443,571	<hr/> 2,100,694
Total incoming resources	<hr/> 2,462,800	<hr/> 2,108,739
EXPENDITURE		
Other trading activities		
MHFA training costs	2,540	1,381
Charitable activities		
Wages	1,249,924	1,030,801
Social security	77,005	91,974
Pensions	60,371	47,152
Other operating leases	40,836	28,604
Rates and water	432	-
Insurance	9,517	7,728
Light and heat	8,281	7,902
Telephone	58,454	52,577
Postage and stationery	4,948	3,233
Advertising	36,144	19,158
Sundries	6,970	13,377
Repairs and maintenance	6,223	2,859
Volunteer expenses	8,565	3,291
IT costs	43,806	36,605
Staff training	25,903	17,775
Travel and subsistence	75,028	69,149
Legal and professional fees	30,910	42,669
Bank charges	406	511
Professional subscriptions	2,603	3,164
Health insurance	23,107	10,277
Improvements to property	154	152
Fixtures and fittings	12,083	9,627
Computer equipment	1,020	1,020
	<hr/> 1,782,690	<hr/> 1,499,605

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Advocacy Focus

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2024

	31/3/24 £	31/3/23 £
Support costs		
Management		
Wages	521,945	488,867
Social security	50,224	49,946
Pensions	25,296	23,427
Bookkeeping support	4,396	4,408
	<hr/> 601,861	<hr/> 566,648
 Governance costs		
Trustees' expenses	459	273
Auditors' remuneration	3,650	3,350
	<hr/> 4,109	<hr/> 3,623
 Total resources expended	<hr/> 2,391,200	<hr/> 2,071,257
 Net income before gains and losses	 71,600	 37,482
 Realised recognised gains and losses		
Unrealised gains/(losses) on fixed asset investments	(14,607)	(31,878)
Realised gains/(losses) on fixed asset investments	(70)	-
Charges on redemption of fixed asset investments	(50)	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net income	<hr/> <hr/> 56,873	<hr/> <hr/> 5,604