YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales · Charity number 1125719

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	06654142
Registered	2008-09-04
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Your Voice Counts John Haswell House 8-9 Gladstone Terrace Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE8 4DY
Phone	01914786472
Email	mail@yvc.org.uk
Website	www.yvc.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE CHARITY'S OBJECT IS TO RELIEVE THE NEED OR DISABILITY OF PERSONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE SUFFERING IMPAIRMENT OF THEIR LEARNING ABILITIES. THIS OBJECT WILL BE ACHIEVED BY THE FOLLOWING MEANS: 1. ASSISTING SUCH PERSONS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, TO OBTAIN FULL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES AS CITIZENS; 2. PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT BY PREVENTING SUCH PEOPLE FROM BECOMING SOCIALLY EXCLUDED AND ASSISTING THEM TO INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY; 3. ENABLE AND ENCOURAGING SUCH PERSONS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN OBTAINING FULL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES AS CITIZENS; 4. PROVIDING HELP, SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY TO SUCH PERSONS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS; 5. PROMOTING TO SOCIETY THE ABILITIES AND POTENTIAL OF SUCH PEOPLE, IN PARTICULAR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES; 6. DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE IN SERVICE PROVISION THROUGH CONSULTATION, FEEDBACK, MONITORING AND EVALUATION; 7. DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING TRAINING; 8 .PUBLICISING, MARKETING AND PROMOTING THE WORK OF THE ORGANISATION.

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Activities: Your Voice Counts supports people with learning disabilities, individuals experiencing mental health challenges, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, illness or other challenges. We deliver a range of advocacy and community based services that empower people to have a voice, to have choice and control in their lives and to be connected to the support they need

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Economic/community Development/employment, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** NOT DEFINED. IN PRACTICE, LOCAL
- Gateshead
- Newcastle Upon Tyne City
- North Tyneside
- Northumberland
- Redcar And Cleveland
- South Tyneside

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£1,769,164	£1,734,834	£609,565	69
2024-03-31	£1,489,712	£1,628,781	£575,235	65
2023-03-31	£1,417,746	£1,287,642	£714,304	54
2022-03-31	£1,144,157	£1,061,641	£584,200	48
2021-03-31	£1,063,540	£993,006	£501,684	46

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Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Carl Newbrook		2025-01-05
Gary Devlin		2024-10-22
Jessica Fielding		2023-02-16
Mathew Ife		2018-01-18
Nathan Maddison		2025-10-26
Rachel Thompson		2026-04-23
Rebekah Coombes		2021-08-19
TOM RELPH		2018-03-13

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YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales - Charity number 1125719

Accounts

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Our Year in Review



Annual Report (including the Directors' Report) and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

Your voice counts

Charity registration number 1125719
Company registration number 06654142 (England and Wales)

www.yvc.org.uk

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Making a difference



"I can't ever thank you enough for being on this terrible journey with me. I would have just given up if I didn't have your support. Thank you for the honest, respectful conversations."

Chase, supported by the Financial Wellbeing Service



"Your Voice Counts has changed my life and I can't thank you all enough."

Emma, supported by the Communities team

"I can't thank Sarah enough because the work she does with me has really massively changed my life. With my learning disability and them using posh words in the meetings, it's hard, but Sarah breaks it down for me. Without her help, I wouldn't have known what to do."

Becky, supported by a Voice for Families advocate

"I just wanted to say what a great experience and pleasure we had yesterday whilst meeting with Denise who was supporting a person to feedback to us on their experience of our services. Denise was a huge support to this person, and it was clear she had built up a really strong and positive relationship with her. It was a real pleasure to see, and her support helped to obtain really positive outcomes to the meeting for everyone involved."

Practice and Safeguarding Service Manager



"I never thought I would get the chance to move homes. I really didn't. When the housing team said to me they couldn't help because of staff shortages, Paula just said 'Carol, we've got some work to do.' I knew then we could do it. Honestly, it really has been priceless."

Carol, supported by the Communities team

"My advocate Emer was wonderful - well-informed, highly experienced, honest, caring and genuinely concerned with getting me the very best outcomes. Nothing was too much trouble, she always returned telephone calls and treated me like a genuine human being. She was clearly passionate about her role and constantly encouraged me to be more assertive when faced with delays and poor service. I cannot recommend their advocacy service highly enough."

Suzanne, supported by the Advocacy service

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Welcome from Christina Gates and David Taylor





As Co-Chairs of the Your Voice Counts Board, we are pleased to introduce this year's annual report which reflects not only the achievements of the past twelve months but also the strong governance foundations that will guide Your Voice Counts into the future.

This has been a significant year for our Board. We were delighted to welcome new trustees who have a wide range of expertise and lived experience, bringing skills and insight that strengthen our ability to oversee the charity's work. Ensuring our governance reflects the diversity of the communities we serve is our priority and the balance of lived and learned experience on our Board continues to shape both our discussions and our decisions.

We are proud to have been involved in the development of the new five-year business strategy for Your Voice Counts. The process gave Board members the opportunity to reflect on what was achieved under our previous plan, identify emerging challenges and set a clear direction for the future. We're confident that our new strategic goals will ensure that Your Voice Counts continues to be an organisation that is resilient, ambitious and committed to making a meaningful impact in the lives of the people we support.

Looking ahead, next year will bring changes in Board leadership as we step down from our roles – Christina after six years as Co-Chair, and David after ten years as a Trustee, including the past year as Co-Chair. A thorough recruitment process to appoint our successors will begin. We will also continue reviewing the Board's skills and capacity to ensure development needs are identified and addressed.

We're confident the organisation is well placed to build on its successes and navigate the opportunities and challenges ahead. Our thanks go to our fellow trustees, colleagues, volunteers, funders, partners and, most importantly, the people whose voices continue to inspire and drive our work.

David Taylor
Co-Chair

Christina Gates
Co-Chair

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Welcome from David Woolley



This has been a year of both reflection and renewal for Your Voice Counts, as we close one strategic chapter and embark on a new five-year business strategy for our organisation.

As always, at the heart of everything we do are the voices of the people we support. Their experiences continue to shape our services, challenge us to improve and inspire us to keep pushing for change. This year, we have seen countless examples of courage and resilience — people stepping out of their comfort zones to influence decisions about their lives, to support their peers, to develop their skills and confidence and to challenge systems that don't always work in their favour. You can see snapshots of this in action throughout this annual report.

We have also laid important foundations for the future by developing our new five-year business strategy. This really was a team effort, as we worked with our colleagues and the people we support to reflect on our previous strategic plan and identify and analyse the strengths, challenges and aims that shape our strategy for the next five years.

Financially, we have managed a challenging environment with care and foresight, making sure our resources are used where they are most needed. We are grateful to our funders and partners who share our belief in the power of advocacy and community-led support.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our journey this year. Together, we are creating communities where people are connected, included and empowered to live the lives they choose. I hope you enjoy seeing examples of this in action throughout this annual report.

David Woolley,
Chief Executive, Your Voice Counts



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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Advisors
Auditors:

Azets Audit Services,
Bulman House,
Regent Centre,
Gosforth,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE3 3LS

Main Bankers:

Lloyds Bank,
17 Ellison Walk,
Gateshead,
NE8 1BF

Savings:

Hampshire Trust Bank,
55 Bishopsgate, London,
EC2N 3AS

Aldermore Savings, 1st Floor,
Block B, Western House,
Lynch Wood, Peterborough
PE2 6FZ

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building, Broadway,
Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3TA

Our Board

Your Voice Counts is a registered charity and limited company governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. Our Governance Handbook sets out how we ensure our governance is effective and inclusive.

Our Articles

Our Articles set out that at least 50% of our Board need to have lived experience of our services, which includes family carers of people who have used our services. We call the Directors with lived experience of our services Lived Experience Trustees. We call Directors who don't have experience of our services Learned Experience Trustees.

Our Articles also set out that we should have a Chair and Co-Chair and that one should be someone with a learning disability and the other someone without a learning disability.

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Our Directors

Our Directors serve for a term of four years and are eligible for re-appointment by the Directors. There are no restrictions on the number of terms a Director can serve.

There are arrangements for induction, training and support of Board members, which are reviewed by our Operations Committee. Each new Board member is given an induction pack and attends an induction session with the Senior Leadership team and meets the Co-Chairs. The Operations Committee reviews the training needs of the Board members and arranges training as required.

Our Co-Chairs hold an annual appraisal of the Board and of individual Directors to ensure that the skills and time provided by Directors are used to best effect. Additionally, Board skills are kept under review to inform Board member recruitment, engagement and support.

Board meetings

Our Board meets six times a year. Our Lived Experience Trustees also hold a pre-meeting before each Board meeting to give them additional time to prepare for the meeting. Our Lived Experience Trustees and Learned Experience Trustees also meet separately six times a year in order to explore themes and key subject areas in more detail.

The Board holds an annual plan which includes:

- Agreeing the operating budget
- Reviewing monthly management accounts
- Reviewing the organisation's strategic priorities
- Monitoring performance within agreed targets
- Considering risk and ways to mitigate these risks
- Considering strategic issues; and
- Receiving reports and minutes from our sub-committees.

Our sub-committees include:

- People Committee
- Operations Committee
- Finance and Governance

Directors during 2024/2025

	APPOINTMENT DATE
Lived Experience Trustees	
Preddi Bononge	16/02/2023
Gary Devlin	22/10/2024
Jessica Fielding	16/02/2023
Jason Roche	22/10/2024
David Taylor	17/06/2015
Learned Experience Trustees	
Rebekah Coombes	19/08/2021
Christina Gates	15/08/2019
Matthew Ife	18/01/2018
Kirsty McNally	05/01/2025
Carl Newbrook	05/01/2025
Tom Relph	13/03/2018
Shona Crooks	03/03/2025

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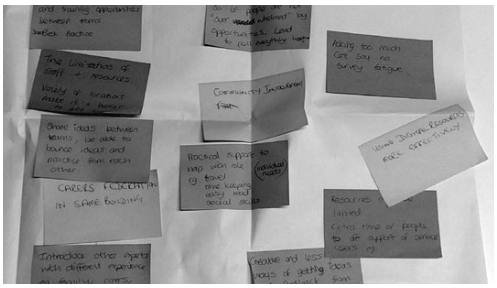
OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES

Our new organisational strategy

This year we developed a new organisational strategy to refine our priorities and identify the factors that will support us to make progress in these areas.

We worked with our staff team, stakeholders and people who use our services to write the strategy, carrying out a number of in-person sessions with these groups to discuss our current position and get their views on how we move forward. This included an all staff away day which we held in February to ensure colleagues from all our service areas contributed to the planning process.

These consultation activities provided valuable insights and suggestions which the Board and Senior Leadership team reviewed at a special away day before finalising the five-year strategic goals that underpin the strategy.



Our five-year strategic goals

Goal 1. Our Approach **We build resilience and purpose, co-producing solutions and enabling connection.**	Enablers: • Robust self-help toolkit. • Flexible support.
Goal 2: Our Growth **We creatively address unmet need by using our expertise.**	Enablers: • Technology to improve service efficiency and reach. • Clear and compelling brand identity.
Goal 3: Our People **We are an inclusive and sought-after employer.**	Enablers: • Dynamic and adaptable workforce. • Accessible and collaborative workspaces. • Living our organisational values. • Developing our people.
Goal 4. Our Influence **We create impactful change through our positive activism.**	Enablers: • Effective communications strategy. • Utilising market opportunities. • Strong strategic leadership.

To ensure we move forward and build momentum, we identified five key actions for us to work towards during the first year of our strategy – read more about these on page 26.

Public Benefit Statement

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'Public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main activities and the people we aim to support are described in this report. All of our charitable activities focus on supporting vulnerable people - particularly those with learning disabilities and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

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Communities team highlights

Tackling health inequalities

NHS North East & North Cumbria

Our Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team provides a specialist service in South Tyneside to help people with a learning disability and autistic people engage with health services and take positive steps to manage their health. This includes 1 to 1 support as well as delivering accessible health education and awareness raising linked to health pathways such as vaccinations, smoking cessation, cancer screening, weight management and mental health support.

We established our men's health group this year, launching it with a special session during Men's Health Awareness Month in November. We also delivered winter wellness workshops covering topics such as eating well, staying warm and combatting loneliness.



World Mental Health Day mindfulness session for colleagues and people we support

We held two pop-up vaccination clinics which saw 14 clients and 4 colleagues receive covid/flu vaccinations while two other clients were supported to attend their local pharmacies for vaccination.

This year we were also pleased to take part in a consultation with Skills for People and the North East and Cumbria Learning Disability Network to refresh the materials for the Structured Diabetes Education Course, ensuring the information was accurate, accessible and up to date.



Sophie, Just Play Football Coach

Just Play Football!

We launched Just Play Football following feedback that some of the people we support would like the chance to do more sports. Sophie was keen to be involved so attended our planning meetings and co-designed the programme with us. We've since supported her to complete an Introduction to Coaching course with England Football so she can lead our sessions.

Sophie said: "I felt proud when I completed the course. Coaching is a big responsibility and people look to me as a role model. I am determined to succeed and doing the football makes me feel like I'm doing something worthwhile. I won't let my learning disability get in the way."

Care and Treatment Reviews (CTRs)

This year we coordinated 18 Care and Treatment Reviews (CTRs) and held panel meetings for 15 people. CTRs provide a person-centred, independent review of a person's care and treatment to ensure it is given in the least restrictive way. Panels are made up of Clinical Experts and Experts by Experience (EBEs) and we were pleased to recruit three new EBEs to the team - Ricky, Jodie and Chloe – and thank Ross who left this year.



18 Care and Treatment Reviews during 2024/2025

Helping people stay well

7 people supported to get annual health check	**12** people received help to complete their hospital passport	**143** health appointments made with our help	**16** people received weight management support
2 people supported with smoking cessation	**18** participants in Dry January mocktail class	**18** pieces of Easy Read health info created	**2** x 6 week health awareness sessions delivered
4 people supported with cancer screening appointments	**232** interventions in total		

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Helping people manage their money

Our Financial Health team provides training and 1 to 1 casework to help people with a learning disability manage their money and overcome any financial challenges and barriers they may face. Our service is delivered with a specialist case worker and peer support worker and includes helping with benefits applications and appeals, budgeting tools, managing debt and understanding bills and housing costs.

The Henry Smith Charity
founded in 1628

1 to 1 support delivered this year:

48 people in Gateshead

59 people in South Tyneside

107 people in total

SUPPORT PROVIDED	NUMBER OF INTERVENTIONS
Benefit appeals, reviews, queries and support	53
Budgeting exercises	7
Debt issues	6
General bills support	33
Housing issues including Housing Benefit and rent arrears	3
JobCentre Plus appointments	5
PIP and Capability for Work claims, assessment meetings, appeals, tribunals and support	27
Universal Credit claims	25
TOTAL	159

Managing your Money

Our Managing Your Money course was co-developed and co-delivered with a worker with lived experience. We designed the course to simply, practically and directly address the issues that the people we support bring to us, such as:

- Managing and understanding benefits
- Saying NO to direct debits and mate crime
- Online spending, banking and scams
- Budgeting.

We used simple and memorable golden rules (such as 'Say NO when you don't feel right' and 'Nobody gives anything away for free') and discussed financial abuse and mate crime which are reoccurring issues for the people we support. Our sessions give people a space to practice saying no so they have the words and confidence to do this in a real-world situation.

Managing a household budget can be an incredibly complex task, particularly when a learning disability might limit a person's ability to do basic sums, so we also help people work out their budget and provide practical tools such as multi-pocket folders to help keep bills and documents safe.



Mel shared with us that she was in credit with her energy bills for the first time

> "I found it helpful – especially talking about boundaries with family members and direct debits."

> "I found it helpful – especially talking about lending money to friends and who to trust. I had a friend about four years ago who took my bank card from me and started using it and ran up debts."

Case Study: Falling through the gaps

Alan has a learning disability and lives in 24-hour supported housing. He was referred to us by a Your Voice Counts advocate who noticed Alan was in financial hardship, receiving only £104 per month in benefits. Alan has a significant learning disability, lives in housing for people with high support needs and is clearly unable to work but had received no support to apply for Universal Credit since moving in a number of years ago. As soon as he was referred to us, we arranged a Universal Credit application and secured Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity without the need for assessment. Within six weeks, Alan's income rose to £913 per month, giving him the security, stability and financial support he was entitled to.

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Developing skills, confidence and connections

Drop-in sessions

Our popular weekly drop-in sessions in Boldon, Gateshead and Jarrow are a key part of our community-based offer for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

The sessions provide opportunities for people to connect, develop friendships and take part in activities while also providing a space where our community connectors and peer support workers can engage with people around the How Am I Doing framework, identify issues and plan how further support can be accessed.

The sessions are informal to provide a relaxed and safe space for people to develop relationships with their peers and our staff but we also include structured activities so people can learn new skills and access information and services relevant to them.

People supported by Enabler projects

Gateshead: 48

South Tyneside: 120

The Your Voice Counts Oscars



During this year's Learning Disability Week we organised the first ever YVC Oscars to recognise the contribution people we support have made to challenging stigma and stereotypes around learning disabilities and autism.

We presented people who had featured in our awareness-raising films with a YVC Oscar and celebrated our achievements as a group.



Cooking with Confidence

With funding from Persimmons Homes, Heart Research UK and the Oliver Ford Foundation, our Cooking with Confidence programme has continued to be popular this year. We run fortnightly sessions which are supported by a community connector and designed to help people develop skills and confidence to cook healthy meals independently.

Scott was referred to the Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team for support with his mental health and weight management. He wanted to become more active so we worked with Scott to make a plan for going back to the gym. We also introduced Scott to Cooking with Confidence – he had basic cooking skills and wasn't sure about taking part but with support he came along and has become a regular participant. His social skills have grown, he has developed friendships and is now much more confident about cooking healthy meals for himself.





43
Cooking with Confidence participants

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ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The YVC Young People's Club

Young autistic people and people with learning disabilities can be at an increased risk of loneliness and social isolation so our young people's club, supported by the Morrisons Foundation, provides opportunities for young people to get together and build their skills and confidence.

The group meets every other week, supported by our community connectors and health and wellbeing facilitators.

During the sessions, we have access to a sports hall where the young people play games and football. We also invite guest speakers and have enjoyed hearing from the North East Autism Society, Foundation of Light and Northumbria Police this year.

Ten pin bowling and pizza nights continue to be popular but this year we also supported the group to go nightclubbing in Newcastle which for many was the first time they had experienced such an environment. It was a huge success which we hope to repeat in the coming year.

17 people aged 18 to 25 in our young people's group

Case study: Liam

Liam attended his first session with his dad for support. He sometimes struggled to leave the house due to anxiety but was keen to make new friends and become more independent. Liam soon became one of our group regulars, developing friendships with other members and taking part in special events and activities. Since joining the group, Liam has told us that his mental health has improved, he feels less isolated and is more confident. He now volunteers at Tailored Leisure, Kayaks and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital when he is not at college and is spending more time out of the house.



Know Your Neighbourhood

Funded by the South Tyneside Know Your Neighbourhood Fund at Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, this project helped people develop their skills and confidence around how to plan and take part in social activities with peers.

Volunteers were at the heart of Know Your Neighbourhood, with people with learning disabilities and autistic people supported to take a proactive role in organising activities and running special interest groups such as our photography club, cinema group and women's wellbeing group.

Twenty-one people who had been identified as at risk of loneliness took part, with six going on to become lived experienced volunteers (read more on page 21).

100% of participants reported that the sessions had helped to increase their understanding of different ways to manage their wellbeing, improving their quality of life, emotional wellbeing, mental health and confidence.



A Know Your Neighbourhood group trip to the cinema

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Community Voice voting awareness session

Community Voice

Our Community Voice project was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered in partnership with Sense-Ability Matters and Bliss=Ability.

The project was aimed at people who have learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, sight loss or who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Over the year, we organised regular sessions to give people the chance to develop supportive friendships while learning new skills and accessing information and guidance from partner organisations.

Sessions were varied and designed to respond to specific issues and concerns relevant to the group, including grief awareness, communication skills and online safety. Special Black History Month and voting awareness sessions were also popular.

This year we also established a Trans Support Group to provide a safe space for the trans people we support, which included social and wellbeing activities as well as support around reporting hate crime which included a visit from a Community Engagement Police Officer who provided advice and reassurance around making a report.

"I enjoyed the session it stopped me from feeling sad."

"It was good doing different things it was nice thinking about the things that make me happy."

Well Connected

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, this is a partnership with ACTS, Age UK Gateshead and Sense-Ability Matters that is designed to help the people we work with in Gateshead and South Tyneside use technology to reduce social isolation and manage their day to day lives more effectively.

Well Connected provides personalised support to help people overcome the specific challenges they face and achieve goals that matter to them. This includes learning how to set up and use email and online calendars, gaining confidence to join video calls and online meetings and using the internet to stay in touch with friends and family. We have also provided support to help people learn about online shopping, how to access training and learning resources and digital tools to take part in hobbies and activities that boost skills, confidence and wellbeing.





Stephen joined the Your Voice Counts photography group and was keen to learn how to share the pictures he takes. With our support, he learned how to take and share photos digitally, going on to become the official photographer for South Tyneside Libraries during Learning Disability Week which had a huge impact on him:

"I was well over the moon. I felt emotional when they gave me the official photographer badge."

Stephen now regularly photographs our group activities for use on our website and social media channels.

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The power of lived experience

Coaching health and social care colleagues in South Tyneside

During International Coaching Week we attended the Yes We Can 'Coaching... Making a Difference' conference in Newcastle to talk about our coaching project that trains people with lived experience of learning disability and autism to be coaches for people working in the health and social care sector in South Tyneside.

The project is funded by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board in South Tyneside and directly supports South Tyneside's Learning Disability Alliance strategy that ensures the voices and views of people with a learning disability are at the centre of how services are planned and delivered in the area.

We have provided training to six coaches who now offer coaching sessions to help professionals from different health, housing and social work roles to find their own solutions to particular goals they've identified in their working practice.

6 Lived Experience Coaches



Lindsay Henderson, Shaun Armour and Lucie Henderson presenting at 'Coaching...Making a Difference'



"The Changemakers meeting is important because it has a focus on long-lasting changes to improve the accessibility of the organisation." **Ricky, Trainer and Coach**

Working in the Communities team with lived experience

We're very proud and vocal about the fact that a significant proportion of our workforce has lived experience of learning disabilities and autism – currently there are 15 people on our staff team working across 23 roles that we created specifically for people with lived experience.

Supporting people into paid employment with us is one of the most valuable ways of ensuring our services truly meet the needs of the communities we want to support. We've increased the number of lived experience roles over the years (from only 7 in 2019) and with that have taken time and effort to develop our processes around how we recruit, onboard and support these colleagues in their positions.

This year we established our Changemakers group which is a space for our lived experience colleagues to meet to share their insights and suggestions about how we can help them to fulfil their potential.

Roles for colleagues with lived experience

1	8	4	4	2	1	3
Commissioning Officer	Peer Support Workers	Project Workers	Quality Checkers	Care and Treatment Review Experts by Experience	Financial Health Support Worker	Travel Champions

Equal People

Our Equal People self-advocacy groups meet in Gateshead and South Tyneside every month to discuss improvements to local health and social care services. Representatives from local organisations also attend to present service design proposals and get feedback and insight from members of the groups. The Equal People groups also offer advice about how to make service resources accessible and can provide Easy Read resources on request. This year, the groups supported:

- Health Watch South Tyneside and their research into women's health care
- North East Ambulance Service's survey about issues people with a learning disability and autistic people face
- Hate Crime Awareness Week with a visit from a Northumbria Police Officer to discuss hate crime, crime on public transport and home safety at night
- A session with a local church minister about grief awareness and how to provide accessible information
- A Your Voice Counts funding bid by providing insight to include in a National Lottery Community Fund submission.



Chloe, Equal People Peer Support Worker

23 Equal People members

Gateshead: 10 people

South Tyneside: 13 people

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Self-advocacy highlights

We support the Speaking Up Together self-advocacy group which connects and empowers people to share their views and speak up for what they want and need. Here the group shares their highlights from this year.

Access: Newcastle Cathedral



The focus of our work this year has been our Heritage Lottery funded project 'Access: Newcastle Cathedral'. As part of this project group members planned and delivered an accessible history course based around the cathedral. Sessions were planned with people with learning disabilities in mind.

During each session we would focus on an interesting feature of the cathedral and look at its history (the Vampire Rabbit was a favourite!). We also enjoyed craft activities relating to what we found, for example making glass coasters inspired by the stained-glass windows we had seen. This work features on the cathedral's website and blogs from group members.

There was an exhibition about Speaking Up Together held at the cathedral. We also planned and delivered guided tours of the building with members of the group taking turns to be tour guides.

Be Cancer Aware

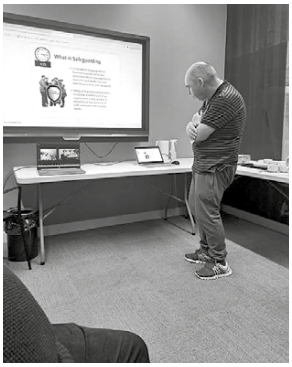


Speaking Up Together have continued our involvement in this project. We welcomed two new trainers, Jodie McCarthy and Victoria Thirkell, who now join Derek Peters as peer educators.

The training is designed by and for people with learning disabilities and focuses on recognising the early signs and symptoms of cancer, the importance of going to your GP and of attending your screenings.

This year we have delivered this training to tenants at Danesfield, members of the Your Voice Counts Health and Wellbeing Group and the Ability Sports and Social Group.

Policies



This year our board have spent some time developing an accessible volunteer policy as well as a safeguarding policy.

We designed our own accessible training around safeguarding which all of our board members have completed and which we delivered to volunteers from Your Voice Counts too.

Charitable status

We are waiting to hear back from the Charity Commission about our application for charitable status. Watch this space for updates.



Plans for the coming year



We have just been awarded a grant from English Heritage Community Connections for a project around Bessie Surtees House in Newcastle. The focus of this will be bringing to life the history of the house for people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who cannot physically access all areas of the house.

Find out more

If you're interested in finding out more or joining Speaking Up Together please email **joanne.speakinguptogether@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/speakinguptogether.**

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Advocacy in action

This year we supported over 3,150 people across our advocacy services. From safeguarding concerns to support during big life decisions, we made sure that people's rights, voices and choices were at the heart of every conversation.

	2023/2024	2024/2025	Growth
New referrals	1,842	1,922	Up 4.3%
Total cases	2,623	3,152	Up 20.2%

Our advocacy services

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)
- Independent Mental Health Act Advocacy (IMCA)
- Care Act Advocacy
- Relevant Person's Representative (RPR)
- NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy
- Community/general advocacy

We received referrals from families, community teams, hospitals and the voluntary sector as well as self-referrals from people who reached out for support themselves.

Statutory advocacy referrals received this year

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA): **513**
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA): **503**
- Relevant Persons Representative Service (RPR): **1552**
- Care Act Advocacy: **339**

How we spent our time

Advocacy is about being there when people need a voice - and this year, that meant showing up in all kinds of ways. From listening, explaining rights and preparing for meetings, to following up with professionals, our advocates dedicated thousands of hours to making sure people were heard.

28,804 hours in total providing advocacy services which included:
(up 27.8% from 2023/2024)

20,985 miles travelled
to meet people where they were, including in their homes, care settings and community spaces

4,400 IMCA hours
supporting people who lacked capacity during life-changing decisions

3,480 Care Act hours
supporting people to be involved in needs assessments, care planning and safeguarding enquiries

13,000 RPR hours
spent visiting, listening and representing people deprived of their liberty under DoLS

3,530 IMHA hours
helping people understand and exercise their rights under the Mental Health Act

Meeting people where they feel safe

Sarah, a young adult with a learning disability, was facing the challenges of a child protection process.

She struggled with formal meetings, finding them overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Recognising this, her advocate collaborated with the Communities team, who run regular drop-in sessions that Sarah had attended before and felt comfortable in.

By working together, the advocate and Communities team created a supportive, familiar environment where Sarah felt safe and empowered to express her concerns. This joint approach ensured that Sarah's needs were met in a person-centred way, highlighting how integrated working between teams can provide more effective, compassionate support for individuals going through challenging circumstances.

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Meeting people at critical moments

Our IMCA and Care Act advocates were involved in over 170 safeguarding cases, helping people understand what was happening and speak up during complex, often distressing processes. We also worked with professionals to help them better understand people's wishes and best interests.

Over 40 IMCA reviews of care	**Almost 160** changes of accommodation	**Over 90** serious medical treatment decisions	**More than 70** IMCA safeguarding cases	**Over 70** Care Act needs assessments
More than 50 care and support plan preparations	**Almost 100** safeguarding enquiries (Care Act)	**Nearly 150** DoLS IMCA referrals	**Over 1,550** people supported via paid Relevant Person's Representatives (RPRs)	

Expanding our NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service into Newcastle

In October, we became the statutory provider of NHS Complaints Advocacy services in Newcastle as well as continuing to deliver the service in Gateshead.

This is a vital service that helps people navigate the NHS complaints process and the expansion into Newcastle was a highlight of our year as we work to grow our reach across the region.



Spotlight on volunteers

This year, we welcomed new volunteers and interns into our advocacy teams. One intern, studying health and social care, joined us in Newcastle and quickly made a difference by helping advocates prepare visit packs, follow up referrals and sit in on meetings where appropriate. With support and supervision, they began to develop the skills and confidence needed for a future in person-centred work.

"I didn't realise how powerful advocacy could be until I saw it for myself. Just listening and taking someone seriously can change everything for them."

Through their involvement, the volunteer also helped us improve how we explain advocacy to people who've never used it before. They've helped shape how we communicate — not just with those we support, but across teams and services.

Volunteers were also placed in local care homes where they visited residents in between formal advocacy visits. This provided support to our advocates while also providing extra opportunities for concerns to be raised or noticed.

"Thank you, the residents have all thoroughly enjoyed time with the volunteers, time reminiscing and chatting about their lives has had a positive effect. It's just so nice for them to tell their stories to other people not just the staff."

Care home manager

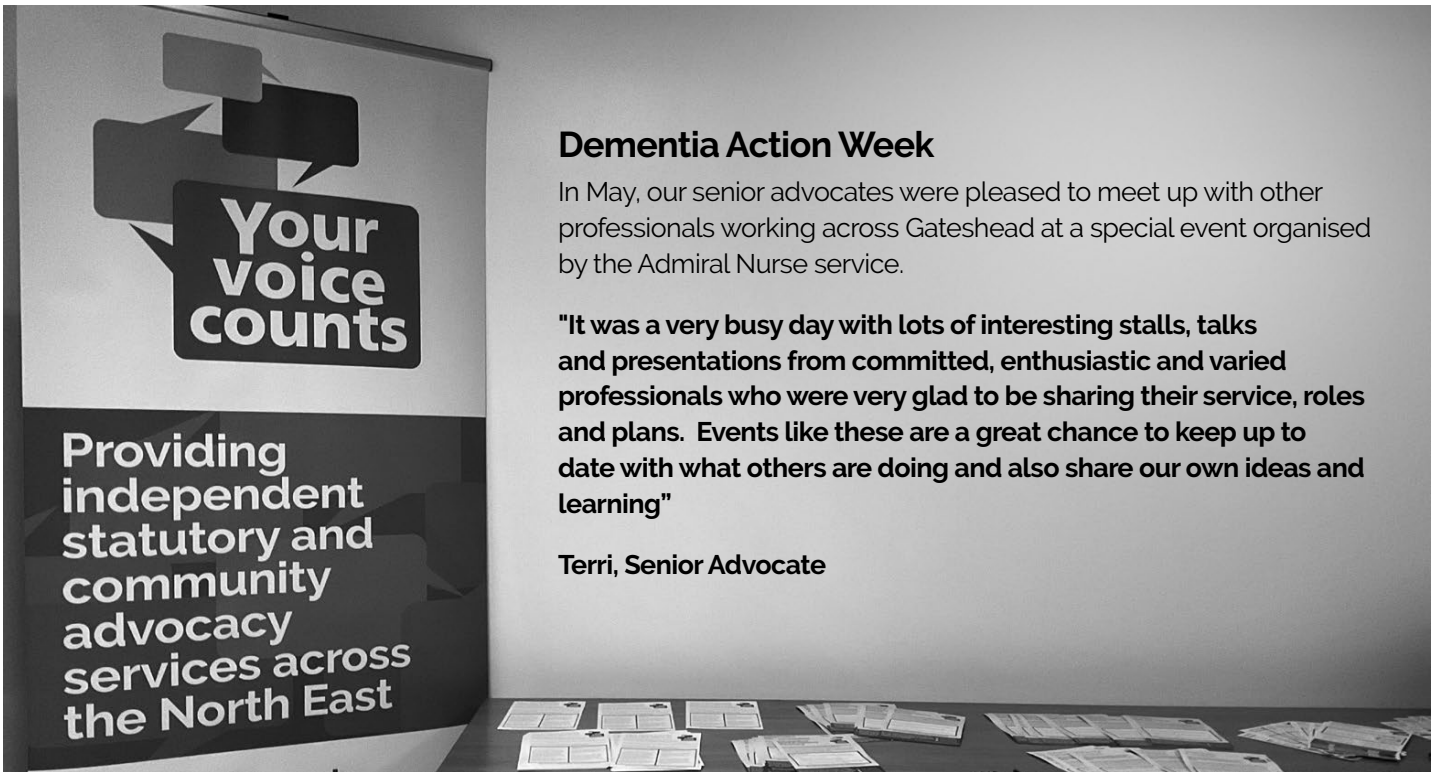
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Raising standards, sharing voices

This year, we've continued to raise awareness of advocacy through:



- Presentations to our local Safeguarding Adults Boards, provider forums and nursing/residential care groups
- Publishing our new 'Advocacy in 7 Minutes' guides
- Joining ADASS North East Curators of Change sessions
- Contributing to a University of Sunderland research project on safety in later life
- Growing our volunteer programme and co-production Facebook group
- Attending conferences and events such as the Revival recovery conference
- Taking part in national campaigns including Advocacy Awareness Week, Dementia Action Week, International Day of Older People, Sign Language Week and Learning Disability Week
- Raising the profile of our advocates and sharing information about the work they do (including our popular 'My day as an advocate' video).



Dementia Action Week

In May, our senior advocates were pleased to meet up with other professionals working across Gateshead at a special event organised by the Admiral Nurse service.

"It was a very busy day with lots of interesting stalls, talks and presentations from committed, enthusiastic and varied professionals who were very glad to be sharing their service, roles and plans. Events like these are a great chance to keep up to date with what others are doing and also share our own ideas and learning"

Terri, Senior Advocate

Standing strong in child protection - Voice for Families

Julia, one of our specialist advocates, supported a parent during child protection proceedings. The process had been overwhelming:

"They didn't understand I was autistic... Julia explained it. She checks if I'm understanding, and she asks if I need a break."

By explaining things clearly, helping professionals slow down and listen, and supporting the parent to have their voice heard, Julia helped create space for better understanding. As well as support at meetings, Julia helped the parent understand written reports, prepare questions, and think about next steps. The parent was also supported to build confidence outside of child protection — connecting with others, attending drop-ins, and getting help with their diabetes.

This case shows that advocacy is about more than just formal meetings — it's about standing alongside someone and helping them stay strong through the most difficult moments.

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Operations, Finance and Business Development key achievements

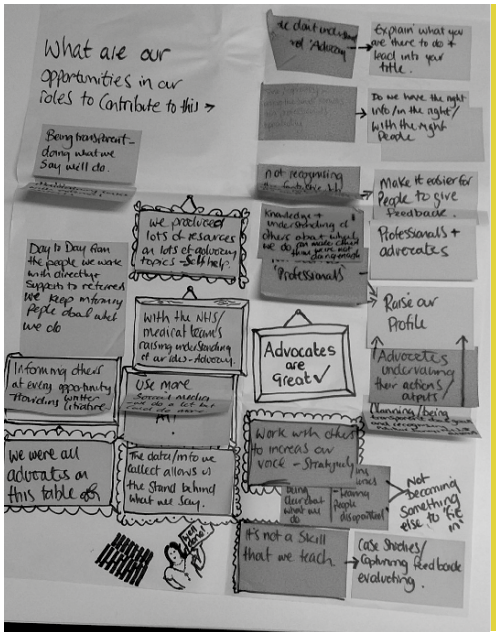
Our team of operations, finance and business development colleagues works behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly and ensure we have the people and processes we need to be successful.

Our People

Nikki Terry joined us this year as our Head of HR, a role we created to lead on the development of our organisational culture, leadership and people policies. Over the year, Nikki has been busy reviewing our policies and processes and identifying areas we can develop to ensure we continue to be an accessible and inclusive employer of choice.



Nikki Terry



Looking Ahead Together

Looking Ahead Together was the theme of our all staff away day which we held in February following feedback that colleagues wanted more opportunities to meet as a whole staff team. During the session, we wanted to reflect on the last five years and work together to develop our new business strategy that will guide the next five years of our work.

It was a fantastic day where we shared key achievements from each service area, including our individual, team and organisational accomplishments as well as 'wow' moments that stood out as giving us job satisfaction and making us proud.

During the day, the Senior Team introduced our new five year goals that underpin our new business strategy and the key actions we will focus on during the year ahead. We worked together to identify opportunities and challenges that we may face and explore solutions that will help us achieve our goals. (Read more about our new strategy on page 9.)

Some of our WOW moments

Completing the ICB peer research project	The YVC Oscars	Celebrating together at Christmas	Seeing NDTI highlight our advocacy work
Getting out of my comfort zone	Making a difference to a safeguarding case	Launching Oliver's Training	Seeing the people we support achieve their own goals

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In November we arranged a session with Be Magnificent CIC. Colleagues from different teams took part to understand more about different learning styles and how we can apply this insight to working with each other and the people we support.

"It was a very informative session, and we all took a lot away from it."

Ady, Senior Community Connector

Board and Governance

After a very successful recruitment round earlier in the year, we were pleased to welcome new trustees Kirsty Ann McNally, Carl Newbrook and Shona Crooks who have further diversified and strengthened the skills of the Board. This year we have also been succession planning for the departure of our long-standing Co-Chairs who will step down next year. While we are sad that it is time to say goodbye to two trustees who have been involved with the organisation for so long and given so much, we also recognise the fresh opportunities that new leadership will bring next year.

Operations

Ensuring our office spaces meet the evolving needs of our staff and services is a key priority for us so this year we reviewed our current office arrangements and explored alternative options to better support our work. In February, we were pleased to open a new base at Regent Centre in Newcastle which provides us with a centrally located and accessible space for the delivery of our advocacy service in the city.

We have also been seeking a new location for our head office and are pleased we have been able to secure space at John Haswell House in Gateshead. This is a well-established hub for voluntary organisations and we look forward to relocating there in the coming year.



Co-Production

Our Co-Production team has become established this year, building strong relationships with key partners and connecting with organisations that support our efforts to engage people who use services. While we've attended a range of meetings and events, we've also been trialling other co-production channels, such as launching our YVC Advocacy Chat Facebook group to provide an online space for people to share their insights, experiences and ideas.

Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training

We have continued to work with our partners in Good Life Collaborative to roll out Oliver's Training across the region and have been developing capacity to do this at scale by recruiting and supporting Expert Trainers to co-deliver sessions to local health and social care staff. We have been promoting our Tier 1 and Tier 2 modules as well as offering Tier 2 taster sessions to raise awareness of our training offer.

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Volunteering

Our Volunteer Coordinator Ann supported 38 volunteers, including 18 new volunteers who were recruited throughout the year.

17 volunteers
with lived experience

21 volunteers
volunteers without lived experience

403.5 hours
of volunteering

Many of our lived experience volunteers move into volunteering with us after engaging with our Communities service. To recruit other volunteers, we advertise using our website and social media, via partners and through promoting our opportunities at volunteer and recruitment fairs and networking events across the region.



Developing our volunteers, Red Cross Everyday First Aid training

The impact of our volunteers

Our volunteers have a huge impact on our organisation. They support us in a range of roles, from directly working with people in our sessions for people with a learning disability and autistic people, to providing back office admin support, to carrying out internships and placements within our advocacy team.

This year we recognised the contribution our volunteers make and thanked them through special celebration events to mark International Volunteer Day and Volunteers Week.



We provide training and support to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles and to help them meet their own volunteer and career goals. Our Volunteer Coordinator Ann provides a range of training as well as organising external providers where needed.

Case study: Know Your Neighbourhood

Our Know Your Neighbourhood project tackled social isolation by helping people with a learning disability and autistic people to develop their skills, confidence and social networks. Six volunteers with lived experience were at the heart of the project, who were supported by two other volunteers to organise and run social activities for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

Jodie volunteered with our Know Your Neighbourhood project, supporting her peers to take part in groups including our photography club and diabetes support sessions. Jodie has a learning disability and a hearing impairment and is passionate about teaching British Sign Language and helping others to join in and feel supported.

"I think volunteering has helped me become more confident to speak in a larger crowd. It gives other people confidence to volunteer because if they see me then they think they can do it too. I want to help people with their confidence."

Jodie has gone on to secure paid employment with Your Voice Counts as a trainer and member of our Care and Treatment Review panel.



Volunteer Coordinator Ann Henderson with Jodie

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Our year in numbers

Communities:

168

people supported in total

159

financial wellbeing interventions

232

health interventions

Advocacy:

3,152

cases open

28,804

hours spent providing advocacy

20,985

miles travelled delivering services

Community fundraising :

£1,571

8

Great North Run entrants

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Our team:

23
roles for people with lived experience

18
new volunteers recruited

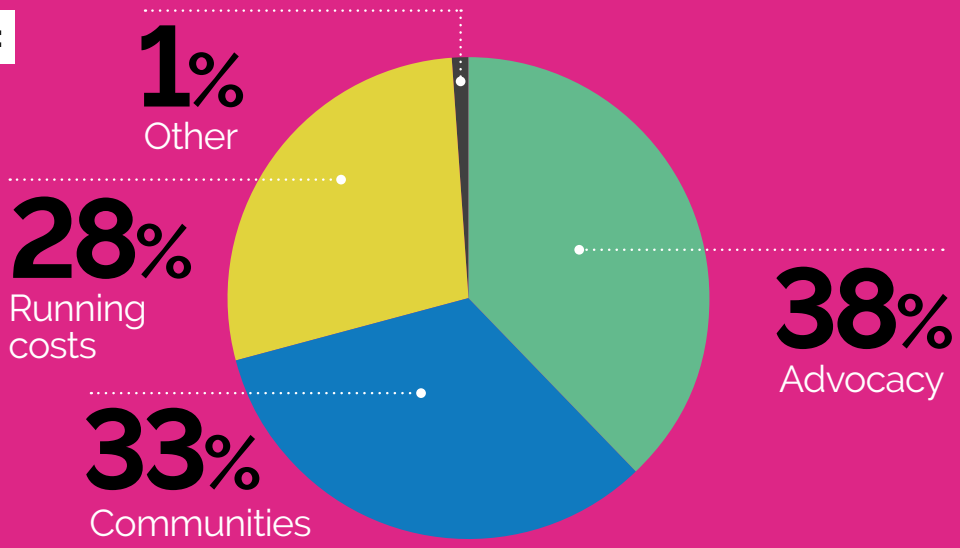
403.5
hours of volunteering

Our finances:

£1,769,164
Income

£1,734,834
Expenditure

How we spent it:



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REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Your Voice Counts aims to maintain a robust financial position in the face of continuing economic uncertainty in order to continue delivering much needed services to the people we support.

The charity receives most of its funding from statutory sources and grants from foundations and charitable trusts. Our internal structure comprises Advocacy, Communities and Operations and is aligned to our funding sources. We seek to recover our full costs from all projects.

This year, we have been pleased to continue to benefit from contract and services income and from the generosity of grant funders, allowing us to continue to grow our income despite the challenging economic environment: **£1,769,164 (2024 £1,489,712).**

We are extremely grateful to our existing funders, including Henry Smith Foundation and The Lottery & Access to Justice Foundation, and our new funders who have supported us this year: the Motability Foundation, Karbon Homes Community Investment Fund, and Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust.

We have continued to control our costs and are reporting expenditure of **£1,734,834 (2024 £1,628,781).** Trustees continue to monitor financial controls, performance and stewardship via a bi-monthly Finance and Governance Committee. Review of business development remains a standing agenda item and we have continued to invest in our Business Development function in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

This year we are reporting an in-year surplus of £34,330 (2024 deficit: £139,069). This leaves us with overall reserves of £609,565 (2024: £575,235). Trustees take a forward-looking and proactive approach to financial management and so have again taken the decision to designate funds this year. These funds are for projects we are undertaking over the next year to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation for the benefit of our clients. Many of the infrastructure improvement projects of the last few years have now come to a successful end so we are designating fewer funds this year. This has led to an increase in free reserves.
The areas we are investing in are:

Business Development:
£2,975

Co-production:
£4,583

Volunteer Coordinator:
£2,069

Marketing and Communications:
£5,000

Company Secretary:
£4,954

HR Manager:
£4,211

We hold between three and six months necessary operating expenses as a minimum reserve. Based on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2025, three months would equate to £254,039 and six months to £508,078. Our free reserves (unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets) stand at £278,081 (2024: £277,747). Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

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FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY

Your Voice Counts takes a proactive and structured approach to fundraising and complies with 'Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20).' A fundraising strategy is in place and is updated each year and reviewed by Trustees. A donations policy is also in place. These were developed using Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator and Institute of Fundraising guidance.

Your Voice Counts undertakes minimal public fundraising as most of our funding comes from statutory sources and grant funders. The charity does not use a professional fundraiser. The charity has a Business Development function which is managed by the Head of Finance. Fundraising is a standing agenda item on the Finance and Governance Committee and this sub-committee of the Board scrutinises all fundraising activity.

The charity regularly seeks input and advice from Lived Experience Trustees and Learned Experience Trustees on the impacts of all its activities, including fundraising, on vulnerable people and no issues with its fundraising activity have been raised.

This year, a two-year grant from the Motability Foundation has enabled us to lead on developing a Travel with Confidence programme in partnership with five other North-East organisations. The project addresses a significant gap in support by providing travel training and travel buddy support to help people with learning disabilities develop their skills and confidence in traveling independently.

A total of £1,571 was also raised through our annual Great North Run campaign which saw eight charity runners take part in the race on our behalf this year.

Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budget and future cash flows in making their assessment. Based on these assessments, the Trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.



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PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Our new organisational strategy sets out five key actions for the year ahead to focus our work and ensure our day-to-day actions make a real contribution towards achieving the 5-year objectives set out in the strategy.

Our key actions for 2025/2026

1. Invest in and refine our approach to co-production

We want to grow our capacity so that we can develop our co-production approach. We've identified grant funding opportunities that may be able to support us and have submitted bids that, if successful, will enable us to build on our successful Community Voice and Know Your Neighbourhood projects. We'll also be reviewing our organisational structure to ensure our Co-Production Worker team has the right resources and leadership to take this work forward.

We also want to build on our experience and learning from working with the North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board through the roll out of Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training across the region. As part of the Good Life Collaborative, we'll be working to build capacity by recruiting more people with a learning disability and autistic people into Expert Trainer roles and using our expertise as a lived experience employer to make sure the Trainers have the support they need to be successful.

2. Improve our data capture so that we are intelligence/data led

We want to improve how we collect and use data to inform our decision-making and help us to have a better understanding of our impact. A Data and Reporting Task and Finish Group, chaired by a Board member, will lead this work during the year ahead. We'll also be exploring options for new systems that will manage our people data so we can respond more effectively to emerging needs and trends.

3. Embed a community-led approach across our services with a focus on connecting people and building networks of support.

We want to embed our community-led approach across all of our services. We'll be working with our commissioners to help shape what advocacy contracts should look like in the future, with a focus on including non-statutory advocacy within contracts. We'll also explore how to use our existing model of community-based services to reach new people who need advocacy support, as well as launching new drop-in groups to expand our offer for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

We also want to build capacity and resilience in communities so people can advocate for themselves so we will work to develop a comprehensive self-help and self-advocacy offer to empower people to speak up for what they want and need.

4. Develop our people and provide them with the tools/skills to be great in their roles.

We are committed to supporting our staff to thrive. With our Head of HR now in post, we plan to develop an internal leadership programme to build the confidence and capabilities of our managers so they can support our teams to be great in their roles. We also plan to review our staff training programme and explore how we can build on our growing team of lived experience trainers to deliver a more comprehensive in-house offer.

5. Improve our messaging.

We want to raise our profile and broaden our reach so that we can influence more effectively on behalf of the people we support. A refreshed Communications and Marketing Strategy, developed with external expertise, will help us clarify our voice, amplify our impact and campaign more actively for change.

We'll also be working more closely with our local Safeguarding Adults Boards and other system leaders to proactively share data, themes and trends in order to positively influence the quality of health and social care services across the region.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

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

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

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and

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

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

Auditor

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Reappointment of auditor

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution for the re-appointment of Azets Audit Services as auditors of the charity is to be proposed at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 07 October 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Christina Gates 07 Oct 2025 10:59:10 BST (UTC +1)

.....
C D Gates
Trustee

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Opinion

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

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

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Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the entity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

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Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud
Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above and on the Financial Reporting Council's website, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

We obtain and update our understanding of the entity, its activities, its control environment, and likely future developments, including in relation to the legal and regulatory framework applicable and how the entity is complying with that framework. Based on this understanding, we 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. This includes consideration of the risk of acts by the entity that were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

We identified the following applicable laws and regulations as those most likely to have a material impact on the financial statements: Health and Safety; employment law (including the Working Time Directive); and compliance with the UK Companies Act and Charities Act.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, we designed procedures which included:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims as well as actual, suspected and alleged fraud;
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Assessing the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the entity through enquiry and inspection;
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- Performing audit work over the risk of management bias and override of controls, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business and reviewing accounting estimates for indicators of potential bias.

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 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.

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

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Simon Brown 14 Oct 2025 07:35:49 BST (UTC +1)

Simon Brown BA ACA DChA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Azets Audit Services

14 October 2025

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Bulman House
Regent Centre
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 3LS

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Current financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	**2**	35,939	-	35,939	33,438
Charitable activities	**3**	1,242,576	479,090	1,721,666	1,446,347
Investments	**4**	7,752	-	7,752	7,493
Other income	**5**	3,807	-	3,807	2,434
Total income		1,290,074	479,090	1,769,164	1,489,712
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	**6**	1,405,914	328,920	1,734,834	1,628,781
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(115,840)	150,170	34,330	(139,069)
Gross transfers between funds		114,936	(114,936)	-	-
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		(904)	35,234	34,330	(139,069)
Fund balances at 1 April 2024		278,985	296,250	575,235	714,304
Fund balances at 31 March 2025		278,081	331,484	609,565	575,235

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED) INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Prior financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	**2**	33,438	-	33,438
Charitable activities	**3**	1,126,243	320,104	1,446,347
Investments	**4**	7,493	-	7,493
Other income	**5**	2,434	-	2,434
Total income		1,169,608	320,104	1,489,712
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	**6**	1,345,786	282,995	1,628,781
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(176,178)	37,109	(139,069)
Gross transfers between funds		177,561	(177,561)	-
Net (expenditure)/income for the year/ Net movement in funds		1,383	(140,452)	(139,069)
Fund balances at 1 April 2023		277,602	436,702	714,304
Fund balances at 31 March 2024		278,985	296,250	575,235

The financial statements on pages 31 to 45 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 13 October 2025 signed on their behalf by:

Matt Ife 13 Oct 2025 11:36:00 BST (UTC +1)

.....

M Ife
Trustee

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**11**		-		1,238
Current assets					
Debtors	**12**	134,148		96,109	
Investments	**13**	81,175		80,699	
Cash at bank and in hand		657,984		461,119	
		873,307		637,927	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**14**	(263,742)		(63,930)	
Net current assets			609,565		573,997
Total assets less current liabilities			609,565		575,235
Income funds					
Restricted funds	**16**		331,484		296,250
Unrestricted funds					
Designated funds	**17**	23,792		98,123	
General unrestricted funds		254,289		180,862	
			278,081		278,985
			609,565		575,235

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 13 October 2025

Matt Ife 13 Oct 2025 11:36:00 BST (UTC +1)

M Ife
Trustee

Company registration number 06654142

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STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash generated from/(absorbed by) operations	**22**		189,589		(43,782)
Investing activities					
Current asset investment income		(476)		(473)	
Investment income received		7,752		7,493	
Net cash generated from investing activities			7,276		7,020
Net cash used in financing activities			-		-
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents			196,865		(36,762)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			461,119		497,881
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			657,984		461,119

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Your Voice Counts is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is John Haswell House, 8-9 Gladstone Terrace, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 4DY, United Kingdom.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the entity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The entity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

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

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

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

1.3 Charitable funds

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

Designated funds comprise funds which have been set aside at the discretion of the trustees for specific purposes. The purposes and uses of the designated funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

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

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the entity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the entity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the entity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Investment income is recognised when it becomes due.

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1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a basis consistent with the use of resources, for example, allocating property costs by floor areas, or per capita, staff costs by the time spent and other costs by their usage.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets costing £2,000 or more are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

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

Fixtures and fittings	25% reducing balance
Computers	33% straight line

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the entity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

1.9 Financial instruments

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

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

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

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1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method 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. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors 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 payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

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

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the entity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the entity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.11 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.12 Leases

Rentals payable under operating leases, including any lease incentives received, are charged as an expense on a straight line basis over the term of the relevant lease.

1.13 Agency accounting

The charity acts as an agent in distributing funds to partners under the Mobility Foundation programme. Payments received and subsequently disbursed to partners are excluded from the Statement of Financial Activities as the charity does not have control over the charitable application of the funds.

2 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £
Donations and gifts	35,939	33,438

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3 Charitable activities

	Advocacy 2025	Grants 2025	Total 2025	Advocacy 2024	Grants 2024	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Advocacy and Grants	1,323,540	398,126	1,721,666	1,127,726	318,621	1,446,347
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds - general	844,450	398,126	1,242,576	1,090,110	36,133	1,126,243
Restricted funds	479,090	-	479,090	37,616	282,488	320,104
	1,323,540	398,126	1,721,666	1,127,726	318,621	1,446,347

4 Investments

	Unrestricted funds general 2025	Unrestricted funds general 2024
	£	£
Interest receivable on bank deposits	7,752	7,493

5 Other income

	Unrestricted funds general 2025	Unrestricted funds general 2024
	£	£
Other income	3,807	2,434

Other income relates to reimbursed expenses.

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6 Charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly 2025 £	Activity support costs 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Activity undertaken directly 2024 £	Activity support costs 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Staff costs	1,211,904	-	1,211,904	1,082,283	-	1,082,283
Depreciation and impairment	1,238	-	1,238	413	-	413
Telephone and internet	11,125	-	11,125	12,783	-	12,783
Training costs	3,558	-	3,558	9,862	-	9,862
Room hire	12,668	-	12,668	8,657	-	8,657
Travelling expenses	16,720	-	16,720	16,847	-	16,847
Other costs	44,708	-	44,708	45,573	-	45,573
	1,301,921	-	1,301,921	1,176,418	-	1,176,418
Share of support costs (see note 7)	-	420,613	420,613	-	440,963	440,963
Share of governance costs (see note 7)	-	12,300	12,300	-	11,400	11,400
	1,301,921	432,913	1,734,834	1,176,418	452,363	1,628,781
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds - general	973,001	432,913	1,405,914	893,423	452,363	1,345,786
Restricted funds	328,920	-	328,920	282,995	-	282,995
	1,301,921	432,913	1,734,834	1,176,418	452,363	1,628,781

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7 Support costs

	Support costs	Governance costs	2025	Support costs	Governance costs	2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	294,644	-	294,644	295,480	-	295,480
Premises costs	23,975	-	23,975	26,098	-	26,098
Insurances	8,948	-	8,948	6,174	-	6,174
Death in service insurance	3,099	-	3,099	7,351	-	7,351
Light and heat	-	-	-	11,649	-	11,649
Telephone and internet	10,192	-	10,192	10,594	-	10,594
Legal and professional fees	5,667	-	5,667	13,098	-	13,098
Room hire	7,857	-	7,857	7,708	-	7,708
Travelling expenses	3,109	-	3,109	6,854	-	6,854
Accountancy/audit fees	-	12,300	12,300	-	11,400	11,400
Other costs	63,122	-	63,122	55,957	-	55,957
	420,613	12,300	432,913	440,963	11,400	452,363
Analysed between						
Charitable activities	420,613	12,300	432,913	440,963	11,400	452,363

Governance costs includes payments to the auditors of £10,250 (2024 - £9,500) for audit fees.

8 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the entity during the year.

9 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
Management	4	3
Finance	1	1
Advocacy, Communities and Operations	64	61
Total	69	65

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9 Employees (Continued)

Employment costs	2025 £	2024 £
Wages and salaries	1,292,943	1,192,268
Social security costs	99,101	92,285
Other pension costs	114,504	93,210
	1,506,548	1,377,763

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

10 Taxation

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

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings £	Computers £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2024	7,879	21,930	29,809
At 31 March 2025	7,879	21,930	29,809
Depreciation and impairment			
At 1 April 2024	6,641	21,930	28,571
Depreciation charged in the year	1,238	-	1,238
At 31 March 2025	7,879	21,930	29,809
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2025	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,238	-	1,238

12 Debtors

Amounts falling due within one year:	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	132,263	88,415
Other debtors	950	951
Prepayments and accrued income	935	6,743
	134,148	96,109

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13 Current asset investments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Short term deposits	81,175	80,699

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other taxation and social security	24,181	25,254
Trade creditors	217,808	17,823
Accruals and deferred income	21,753	20,853
	263,742	63,930

15 Retirement benefit schemes

Defined contribution schemes

The entity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the entity in an independently administered fund.

The charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes was £114,504 (2024 - £93,210).

Contributions totalling £6,439 (2024: £5,673) were payable to the scheme at the end of the year and are included in creditors.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

16 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

		Movement in funds				Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance 31 March 2(
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Operations	534	80,000	-	(534)	80,000	80,000	(61,984)	(18,000)	80,0
Community	368,011	202,488	(273,392)	(149,768)	147,339	362,881	(251,997)	(78,219)	180,0
Advocacy	68,157	37,616	(9,603)	(27,259)	68,911	36,209	(14,939)	(18,717)	71,4
	436,702	320,104	(282,995)	(177,561)	296,250	479,090	(328,920)	(114,936)	331,4

Restricted Funds:
Restricted funds represent funds received from statutory sources and grant funders where use of the funds has been specified by the funder. YVC classifies these business area.

- Advocacy reserves are mainly from statutory sources and are predominantly to be used for advocacy in Newcastle and South Tyneside.
- Communities reserves are mainly from grant funders and are to be used in a variety of individual projects in areas such as Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Operations reserves are predominantly for core costs.

Transfers in the year have been reflected when all terms and conditions of restricted funding have been met.

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

17 Designated funds

The income funds of the charity include the following designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes:

				Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2023	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance 31 March 20
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Business development	23,554	(23,554)	23,554	23,554	-	(20,579)	-	2,9
Marketing and communications	9,100	(9,100)	10,000	10,000	1,500	(11,500)	5,000	5,0
Co-production	28,894	(5,518)	-	23,376	-	(18,793)	-	4,5
Admin development	22,781	(22,781)	-	-	-	-	-	
Volunteer Coordinator	14,824	(14,824)	14,824	14,824	-	(12,755)	-	2,0
Company secretary	14,400	(1,856)	1,856	14,400	-	(9,446)	-	4,9
HR Manager	11,969	-	-	11,969	-	(7,758)	-	4,2
	125,522	(77,633)	50,234	98,123	1,500	(80,831)	5,000	23,7

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18 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Fund balances at 31 March 2025 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	-	-	-	1,238	-	1,238
Current assets/(liabilities)	278,081	331,484	609,565	277,747	296,250	573,997
	278,081	331,484	609,565	278,985	296,250	575,235

Included in unrestricted funds balance above is £23,792 (2024 - £98,123) relating to designated funds.

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19 Operating lease commitments

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

	2025 £	2024 £
Within one year	5,520	5,520
Between two and five years	1,422	6,942
	6,942	12,462

20 Agency arrangements

The charity distributed funds to partners under the Mobility Foundation programme in 2025. In the accounting period ending 31 March 2025, the charity received £381,215 and disbursed £314,582. The charity is entitled to the balance of £66,633 relating to their share of the agreement.

21 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2024 - none) other than a payment to trustee J Fielding for training services provided totalling £57.

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel is as follows.

	2025 £	2024 £
Aggregate compensation	62,476	63,314

22 Cash generated from operations

	2025 £	2024 £
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	34,330	(139,069)
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(7,752)	(7,493)
Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	1,238	413
Movements in working capital:		
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(38,039)	98,141
Increase in creditors	199,812	4,226
Cash generated from/(absorbed by) operations	189,589	(43,782)

23 Analysis of changes in net funds

The entity had no debt during the year.

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Thank you to all of our partners and funders who supported us during 2024/2025.

We are grateful for your support and look forward to more joint-working so we can continue to support the people who need us.

Access to Justice Foundation

Arnold Clark Community Fund

Baily Thomas Charitable Fund

Barbour Foundation

Bernicia Community Fund

Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust

Charities Aid Foundation

Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland

Henry Smith Foundation

Karbon Homes Community Investment Fund

Motability Foundation

National Lottery Fund

The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

www.yvc.org.uk

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Your voice counts

Your Voice Counts | Greenesfield Business Centre | Mulgrave Terrace | Gateshead | NE8 1PQ

Registered Charity No. 1125719. Company limited by guarantee No. 6654142

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales - Charity number 1125719

Accounts

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Our Year in Review



Annual Report (including the Directors' Report) and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

Your voice counts

Charity registration number 1125719
Company registration number 06654142 (England and Wales)

www.yvc.org.uk

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Making a difference

"It was very beneficial to have the assessment and report presented by one of your Quality Checkers who is living with a disability and was able to give us a first-hand perspective and insight into our practice."

GP Practice Manager

"I didn't know which way to turn, the situation was unbearable but my advocate was totally calm and took a weight off me. He really listened and was able to put into words what I wanted to say."

Advocacy client



"Since last year my life changed with all the help Your Voice Counts has given me. Before I moved house I wanted to end my life. With all the help from YVC I don't feel like that anymore. I am walking around with 'A GEET BIG SMILE AND MY HEAD HELD HIGH'. I wake up everyday and can't believe that this is my home. I don't feel scared to go to sleep or leave the house now. I can get on with my life and even have friends over."

Barry, supported by the Communities team



"The support from Your Voice Counts has helped me be more confident and I am travelling independently now to new places. I think YVC is a really good organisation. Everyone is different but we are all treated the same. There is always a quiet space to go to if you feel overwhelmed. It's given me somewhere new to go to make friends with disabilities and if I need help with anything in my life I know I can ask someone at YVC."

Jodie, Volunteer and Lived Experience Coach

"Thanks to all the RPR's and admin supporting ongoing work. I really do appreciate the prompt emailed updates before visiting placements and I have been able to pick up on some of the issues / comments made about the person, the care being provided or other dynamics. Your team are generally involved when a person does not have anyone to visit and / or independently listen to them and therefore your efforts often go unrecognised."

Social worker of a person supported by a Relevant Person's Representative advocate



"You know what, without your help I don't think I would be here anymore, it's wonderful everything that you and YVC have done for me, the groups and everything."

David, supported by the Communities team

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Welcome from Christina Gates and David Taylor





On behalf of the Board of Your Voice Counts we'd like to say thank you to all of the staff, volunteers, partners, stakeholders and the people we support who have been part of our organisation and supported us over another busy and rewarding year.

Your Voice Counts is built on the principles of co-production and lived experience and our Board continues to lead from the front on this with Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience working alongside each other and ensuring everyone has an equal say in how we make decisions.

We've seen some changes to our Board this year with a number of members coming to the end of their terms. Our Co-Chair Matthew also stood down this year and we're hugely grateful to him for the contribution he made to Your Voice Counts and wish him well for the future.

This year we were keen to develop more ways for people with lived experience of our services to contribute to our governance. Our new Board Reference Group is a fantastic example of this, allowing people to be involved in our decision-making without the commitment of being a Trustee and we're excited to see the impact of this as we move forward.

Co-production runs throughout the organisation and we're very pleased that this year we were able to create paid employment for 18 colleagues with lived experience. We also launched our dedicated Co-Production team to ensure our opportunities for people with lived experience span all of our services.

Being featured as an example of governance best practice in the NPC 'Centring lived experience in an organisation' guide was also a particular highlight for us, giving us the chance to showcase what we do and encourage others to think about how they can include people with lived experience in their own decision-making.

We're incredibly proud of the progress we've made this year. We've grown our existing services, introduced new ones and, above all, done this with people with lived experience at the front and centre of everything. Thank you to all who have supported us, we look forward to seeing what the next year brings.

Christina Gates
Co-Chair

David Taylor
Acting Co-Chair

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Welcome from David Woolley



It's a pleasure to introduce this annual report and reflect on another year of change, challenge and growth for Your Voice Counts.

The cost of living crisis has continued to have a significant impact on the people we support so it was important this year that we made a concerted effort to reach more people who could benefit from our help. It remains a challenging financial environment for charities and so we've looked for new and creative ways to have impact with the resource available to us. This has meant reaching out to other organisations and looking for opportunities to work together on shared challenges.

Our Communities team launched exciting new initiatives this year, including our first ever coaching project which uses an innovative model of training people with lived experience to be coaches for staff working in health and social care services. Our new Well Connected digital inclusion programme and Know Your Neighbourhood social skills project have also made a significant impact already, demonstrating the wide range of tailored services we offer to people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Growing our advocacy service was a priority for us as we knew there would be opportunities to secure additional contracts and we've had significant success in this area this year. We were appointed as the statutory provider of advocacy services for Gateshead Council, and also took over the contract to provide Independent Care Act Advocacy services in South Tyneside, making us the main statutory provider in this area too. These are fantastic achievements and testament to the expertise and professionalism of our staff which I hope position us to achieve further growth in the years ahead.

At this point last year, we were getting ready to launch our brand new Co-Production team and I'm pleased to say the team is now in place and has hit the ground running. A key area of work for the team this year has been expanding our established co-production approaches across our advocacy service and I'm looking forward to seeing this progress.

Our role in the delivery of Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training across the health and social care system in our region is a source of great pride for me, not least because the training is co-delivered by people with learning disabilities and autistic people. This year we've worked closely with the North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board to build capacity in the region to deliver this training at scale. Expert Trainers are at the heart of this, so we've ensured their experience is prioritised as the training is rolled out.

Internally, our People Plan has continued to drive how we develop as an employer with the launch of our accessible staff handbook a highlight of the year for me. This was co-produced with colleagues and has been well-received. We've also refreshed our approach to supervision and appraisal to allow more flexibility around the different conversations we want to have with our staff team throughout the year.

This has been another fantastic year for Your Voice Counts. We wanted to expand our offer and increase our reach and, as this report shows, we've done just that. As always I'm indebted to the staff members, Trustees, volunteers, partners, stakeholders and funders who make this all possible.

David Woolley,
Chief Executive, Your Voice Counts

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Advisors
Auditors:

Azets Audit Services,
Bulman House,
Regent Centre,
Gosforth,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE3 3LS

Main Bankers:

Lloyds Bank,
17 Ellison Walk,
Gateshead,
NE8 1BF

Savings:

Hampshire Trust Bank,
55 Bishopsgate, London,
EC2N 3AS

Aldermore Savings, 1st Floor,
Block B, Western House,
Lynch Wood, Peterborough
PE2 6FZ

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building, Broadway,
Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3TA

Our Board

Your Voice Counts is a registered charity and limited company governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. Our Governance Handbook sets out how we ensure our governance is effective and inclusive.

Our Articles

Our Articles set out that at least 50% of our Board need to have lived experience of our services, which includes family carers of people who have used our services. We call the Directors with lived experience of our services Experts by Experience. We call Directors who don't have experience of our services Advocates by Experience.

Our Articles also set out that we should have a Chair and Co-Chair and that one should be someone with a learning disability and the other someone without a learning disability.

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Our Directors

Our Directors serve for a term of four years and are eligible for re-appointment by the Directors. There are no restrictions on the number of terms a Director can serve.

There are arrangements for induction, training and support of Board members, which are reviewed by our Operations Committee. Each new Board member is given an induction pack and attends an induction session with the executive team and meets the Chair. The Operations Committee reviews the training needs of the Board members and arranges training as required.

Our Co-Chairs hold an annual appraisal of the Board and of individual Directors to ensure that the skills and time provided by Directors are used to best effect. Additionally, Board skills are kept under review to inform Board member recruitment, engagement and support.

Board meetings

Our Board meets six times a year. Our Experts by Experience also hold a pre-meeting before each Board meeting to give them additional time to prepare for the meeting. Our Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience meet separately six times a year in order to explore themes and key subject areas in more detail.

The Board holds an annual plan which includes:

- Agreeing the operating budget
- Reviewing monthly management accounts
- Reviewing the organisation's strategic priorities
- Monitoring performance within agreed targets
- Considering risk and ways to mitigate these risks
- Considering strategic issues; and
- Receiving reports and minutes from our sub-committees.

A sub-committee is also appointed to scrutinise finances throughout the year.

Directors during 2023/2024

Directors who served during the year up to the date of signing the financial statements were:

	APPOINTMENT DATE	RESIGNATION DATE
Matthew Bailey	16/02/2023	21/04/2024
Preddi Bononge	16/02/2023	N/A
Rebekah Coombes	19/08/2021	N/A
Jessica Fielding	16/02/2023	N/A
Christina Gates	15/08/2019	N/A
Matthew Ife	18/01/2018	N/A
Andrew Lane	17/12/2020	20/06/2024
Sophie Swanston-Newbrook	20/10/2022	15/07/2024
Derek Peters	19/08/2014	03/04/2024
Tom Relph	13/03/2018	N/A
David Taylor	17/06/2015	N/A

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OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES

About Your Voice Counts

Your Voice Counts is a registered charitable company limited by guarantee. The charity's object is to relieve the need or disability of persons, particularly those suffering impairment of their learning abilities.

What does Your Voice Counts do?

Your Voice Counts is a charity that exists to support people to speak up for their rights and take positive steps to fulfil their potential. We offer independent advocacy services as well a range of advice, development and community services tailored to the needs of different groups of people. Our services are delivered by our advocacy and communities teams, working with older people, people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability or illnesses such as dementia, cognitive impairments and mental health problems.

We achieve our object, or our aims, by focusing on our mission to help people to be connected, to have choice and control in their lives, and to speak up for what they want and need. We believe in listening to and empowering people with different needs and abilities to bring about positive change. To do this, we work with our partners to design and deliver learning, personal development and social opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, and promote and support self-advocacy and user-led groups that are run by adults with learning disabilities.

We are also a statutory provider of mental health and learning disability advocacy services for people living in Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead and South Tyneside.

How do we decide what services to offer?

We have a five-year organisational strategy that has been approved by our Board of Directors. This strategy guides our work and ensures all of our activities work towards at least one of our six priority areas:

1. Design services that make a difference to people
2. Learn from what we're doing so that we get better at helping people
3. Improve how the Board works
4. Help our staff and volunteers be great at their jobs
5. Ensure the organisation is financially resilient
6. Make sure people know who we are, what we do and the difference we make to the people we support.

Our strategy also sets out our commitment to ensuring the voices of lived experience underpin all of our work, and we're proud to co-produce and co-deliver our services with people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who have experienced mental ill health.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'Public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main activities and the people we aim to support are described in this report. All of our charitable activities focus on supporting vulnerable people - particularly those with learning disabilities and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

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Communities team highlights

Tackling health inequalities

People with learning disabilities often have poorer health outcomes and lower life expectancy than the rest of the population so we have continued to develop services that help people to understand and look after their health and wellbeing.

This year we've delivered:

- Campaigns where colleagues shared their own lived experiences to raise awareness of issues such as stammering, menopause and feeding tubes
- Targeted activities to tackle specific areas of need by, for example, organising a Movember challenge and 60K movement challenge to promote men's health
- Activities such as a seaside walk during National Walking Month to help people connect and take part in exercise
- Deaf Awareness Week activities and sign language taster sessions
- Type 2 Diabetes training and support where we've held awareness-raising sessions and enabled people with learning disabilities to run their own peer support groups
- Quality checks on four different GP surgeries to help practices understand how accessible they are for people with learning disabilities.



This year we coordinated Care and Treatment Reviews (CTRs) and held panel meetings for 22 people. CTRs ensure care for people in the community or in mental health hospitals is given in the least restrictive way.

This year we supported:

7	2	13
community CTRs	community C(E)TRs (Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews)	in-patient CTRs

"Thank you to Ross, you are inspirational. It's my first CTR and I've learnt a lot."
OT in Hopewood Park hospital

Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team

Our Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team provides a specialist service for people in South Tyneside to help them engage with health services and take positive steps to manage their health. This includes 1 to 1 support as well as delivering accessible health education that supports South Tyneside's vital health pathways that include vaccinations, diabetes, smoking cessation, cancer screening, weight management and mental health support.

NHS North East & North Cumbria



Our health education sessions are designed to meet the specific needs of people with learning disabilities to create a friendly and supportive environment.

"Connor was amazing, the delivery was simple and was at a good pace for us to take in the information. I enjoyed learning about the different ways stress can be managed." **Stress bucket session participant**

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Helping people stay well

22 people supported to get annual health check	**17** people received help to complete their hospital passport	**72** health appointments made with our help	**3** people booked their own appointments following our support
50 people accompanied to appointments	**9** people received weight management support	**4** people supported with smoking cessation	**15** participants in Dry January mocktail class
20 pieces of Easy Read health info created	**19** health awareness sessions delivered	**2** people supported with cancer screening appointments	**233** interventions in total

Helping people access vaccinations

1 pop up Covid and flu jab clinic at our weekly drop-in group

11 people contacted to offer support to get flu jabs

12 people supported to Covid booster appointment

Helping people manage their money

Our Financial Health team continued to provide casework and training to help people with learning disabilities become more financially resilient and address specific financial issues they face. Our service is delivered with a specialist case worker and peer support worker and includes helping with benefits applications and appeals, budgeting tools, managing debt and understanding bills and housing costs.

The Henry Smith Charity
founded in 1628

1 to 1 support delivered this year:

31 people in Gateshead

41 people in South Tyneside

72 people in total

SUPPORT PROVIDED	NUMBER OF INTERVENTIONS
Benefit appeals, reviews, queries and support	63
Budgeting exercises	17
Debt issues	9
General bills support	11
Housing issues including Housing Benefit and rent arrears	5
JobCentre Plus appointments	3
PIP and Capability for Work claims, assessment meetings, appeals, tribunals and support	32
Universal Credit claims	4
TOTAL	144

We've delivered eleven educational sessions over the year as well as a Community Voice benefits session in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions. 22 people have attended our sessions which were tailored to issues relevant to the people we support, including energy costs, savings and mate crime and financial abuse.

"I found it helpful – especially talking about lending money to friends and who to trust. I had a friend about four years ago who took my bank card from me and started using it and ran up debts."

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Developing skills, confidence and connections

Drop-in sessions

Our popular weekly drop-in sessions in Boldon, Gateshead and Jarrow are a vital part of our South Tyneside Enabler project funded by South Tyneside Council and our Gateshead Enabler work that is funded by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

The sessions provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people to connect, develop friendships and take part in activities while also providing a space where our community connectors and peer support workers can engage with people around the How Am I Doing framework, identify issues and plan how further support can be accessed.

The sessions are informal so people can chat, ask questions and enjoy snacks in a relaxed environment, but we also include structured activities such as arts and crafts and talks from other organisations so people can learn new skills and access information and services relevant to them.

This year we also arranged specific activities to respond to needs within the groups, such as a special grief awareness session due to a number of people disclosing they were struggling following a bereavement.

We also work with our Community Voice team to help people organise activities and events so they can develop their confidence around visiting new places, with Beamish Museum, The Hoppings and South Shields just some of the trips we've organised this year.

People supported by Enabler projects

Gateshead: 56

South Tyneside: 104



Cooking with Confidence

With funding from Persimmons Homes, Heart Research UK and the Oliver Ford Foundation, our Cooking with Confidence programme has continued to be popular this year. We run fortnightly sessions which are supported by a community connector and designed to help people develop skills and confidence to cook healthy meals independently. This year we had 50 regular attendees at our sessions where we focussed on healthy eating and cooking on a budget.

We bought several air fryers to introduce people to different cooking methods and implemented a new assessment tool to help us develop our offer and recognise progression.

"It helped me change my lifestyle and get more active. It helped me lose weight and feel better about myself. I also enjoyed trying new foods that I eat all the time now."

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ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The YVC Young People's Club

Young autistic people and people with learning disabilities can be at an increased risk of loneliness and social isolation so we were pleased to launch our young people's club, supported by the Morrisons Foundation, to provide opportunities for young people to get together and build their skills and confidence.

In addition to organised trips to take part in activities such as bowling and watersports, the group also meets every Monday evening supported by our community connectors and Health and Wellbeing team with regular guest presentations from organisations such as Northumbria Police and Foundation of Light. These sessions include access to a sports hall where the young people play sports and this year we were pleased to see a significant increase in teamwork, problem solving, socialisation, mental health and physical fitness among the group members.



Evaluating the impact of the group

- **100%** said their feelings of isolation were reduced
- **89%** felt their physical health and wellbeing improved
- **78%** noted improved confidence and motivation
- **78%** said coming to the group helped them learn new skills

19 people aged 18 to 25 in our young people's group

Know Your Neighbourhood

In September we launched our Know Your Neighbourhood project to tackle social isolation among people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Funded by the South Tyneside Know Your Neighbourhood Fund at Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, we designed the project to help people develop their skills and confidence around how to plan and take part in social activities with peers. Volunteers are at the heart of this project, with people with learning disabilities and autistic people supported to take a proactive role in organising activities and running special interest groups such as our photography club, cinema group and women's wellbeing group.

We also delivered a range of sessions to help people prepare for taking part in social activities, covering topics such as using public transport and mate crime as well as arranging a 'Friendkit' session from Friends Action North East.



18 beneficiaries

11 volunteers

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Community Voice

We have continued to deliver our Community Voice project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund that we've worked on in partnership with Sense-Ability Matters and Bliss-Ability.

The project is aimed at people who have learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, sight loss or who are Deaf or hard of hearing and throughout the year we organised regular sessions to give people the chance to get together and develop their skills and experience.

49 people have participated in the project this year supported by 13 volunteers, who have took part in a varied programme of information, advice and guidance sessions and social activities such as cinema visits, all designed to support the project's aims to combat social isolation and improve mental health and wellbeing.

"I enjoyed doing something different as would have spent the day in the house. Nice safe atmosphere, found it relaxing, would do it again."

49 participants

13 volunteers

64 sessions delivered

Well Connected

We were pleased to launch our Well Connected project this year to help people develop their digital skills and confidence. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, this is a partnership between YVC, Age UK Gateshead and Sense-Ability Matters and led by ACTS that is designed to help the people we work with in Gateshead and South Tyneside use technology to reduce social isolation and manage their day to day lives more effectively.

To deliver the project, we developed a digital skills assessment tool and completed this with 63 people so we could understand their specific needs and provide tailored support and training. Online banking, DBS applications, passport renewals, using WhatsApp and staying safe online were some of the most common issues, so we arranged group and 1 to 1 support sessions to provide advice and support to help people develop their skills in these areas.



Helping Mel use IT to manage day to day life

Mel had a tablet and a mobile phone but was struggling to use her mobile efficiently as she didn't know how to update it, remove notifications or synchronise her emails. With our support, she's learned how to update and secure her devices and now uses online banking and her phone calendar to help her manage her day to day life.

"I think Your Voice counts is good, the people there are nice, and the staff are really friendly".

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The power of lived experience

Coaching health and social care colleagues in South Tyneside

This year we launched our new coaching project to train people with lived experience of learning disabilities and autistic people to be coaches for people working in the health and social care sector in South Tyneside.

Funded by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board in South Tyneside, this project directly supports South Tyneside's Learning Disability Alliance strategy that ensures the voices and views of people with learning disabilities are at the centre of how services are planned and delivered in the area. To support this, we've co-produced an accessible training programme with help from Yes We Can Coaching. This programme trains people with learning disabilities and/or autism to provide coaching to professionals then matches coaches to staff so they can take part in three coaching sessions together. We've recruited six coaches to be part of the project and are excited to develop this innovative model of coaching and service improvement.

Working in the Communities team with lived experience

We're delighted that this year the number of colleagues with lived experience of learning disabilities, autism or mental ill health working in the Your Voice Counts Communities team is 18 people working across 22 different roles.

People with lived experience bring amazing skills and insight to our organisation and work in a range of jobs from peer support roles to commissioning to research and we're incredibly proud of the commitment our team has made to employing and supporting lived experience colleagues to achieve their potential and make such a positive contribution to our organisation.



Chloe, Equal People Peer Support Worker

Equal People

"Equal People is a group that aims to collect the views and opinions of people who have a learning disability and/or are autistic and allows people to give their input on how services should be run. The group also gives people information on services in their local area that they can access.

"My role as a Peer Support Worker is to facilitate the conversation and to organise inviting individuals and organisations to come into our space and talk to and get the input of people who use our services.

"We've had some big achievements this year. Our South Tyneside group were involved in developing an Easy Read safeguarding leaflet for South Tyneside Council, helping to develop the wording, select photos and decide what types of abuse people with learning disabilities need to be aware of. In Gateshead, we had input into the Our Gateshead website where, over a number of months, Mark from Our Gateshead joined our meetings to get feedback on the layout and content of the website.

"Our groups meet every month and new members are always welcome. Visit www.yvc.org.uk for more details."

Chloe Douds, Peer Support Worker

23 Equal People members

Gateshead: 10 people

South Tyneside: 13 people

Shaun Armour, Commissioning Officer with Lived Experience



Shaun Armour

"I work at Your Voice Counts as Commissioning Officer for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board in South Tyneside - it's a very long job title and it took a lot of practicing to remember it all! I am the lead for the Voice of the Person group and I am involved in developing a pathway for people with learning disabilities and autistic people that is easier to access. I am there because I can bring a different view to the strategic discussions and bring it back to the fact there is a person at the centre of these services. I use my lived experience to help improve services and the experience of people using them.

"I also play a lead role in the delivery of Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in the region. I deliver training to health and social care professionals and offer my ideas about accessible ways to engage with people with learning disabilities. This might involve making sure information is accessible and engaging people in a fun way.

"I like that my lived experience is valued and that I have been able to have work experience like this. The things I do feel quite important and will make people's lives better."

Roles for colleagues with lived experience

1	9	4	5	2	1
Commissioning Officer	Peer Support Workers	Project Workers	Quality Checkers	Care and Treatment Review Experts by Experience	Financial Health Support Worker

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Self-advocacy highlights

Your Voice Counts believes in supporting and connecting people to be advocates for themselves so they can share their views and speak up for what they want and need.

We are proud to support the Speaking Up Together self-advocacy group and work closely with the members of the group to help make sure their voices are heard within our organisation and beyond.



Newcastle Cathedral History Project in Action.

Here are some of their highlights from this year.

"It has been another busy year for Speaking Up Together, a small group of committed self-advocates and supporters.

We pride ourselves on our peer led projects, campaigning and partnership working. We have continued to work with our partners on new, interesting initiatives and are actively involved and committed to We Are Human Too, campaigning for the rights of patients in secure hospitals.

Our Equality Matters Project came to an end and made way for our current, exciting local history project: Access: Newcastle Cathedral. As with other projects, it is peer lead. Members develop accessible workshops which include creative activities, to teach about fascinating aspects of the cathedral and its links to our local history. It has been wonderful to welcome new members and a pleasure to work in partnership with the Cathedral's Lantern Initiative.

We like to regularly get together at local art and culture venues such as the Baltic Art Gallery, museums and parks and support theatre companies including Twisting Ducks, Lawn Mowers and Alphabetti Theatre.

This year we have been working towards our application to the Charities Commission and have developed accessible safeguarding training which we have been able to share with others outside our organisation.

We continue to provide our Easy Read review service for Inspired Services and we are grateful for the management support we continue to receive from Your Voice Counts."

Gary and Terri, Co-Chairs of Speaking Up Together

Find out more

If you're interested in finding out more or joining Speaking Up Together please email **joanne.speakinguptogether@gmail.com or visit www.facebook.com/speakinguptogether.**

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Our advocacy services

Expanding our services

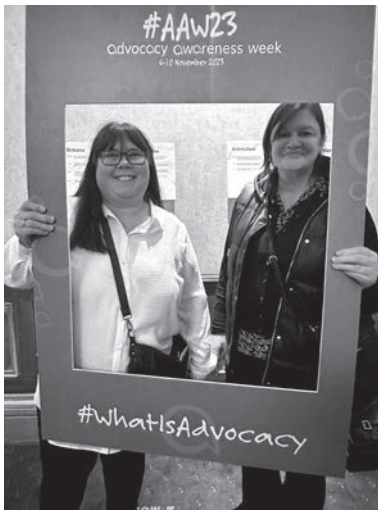
We have set ambitious aims for the growth and development of our advocacy services and are pleased to have secured two significant contracts this year that further establish our role as a key provider of statutory advocacy services across our region.

In June 2023, we were appointed as the statutory provider for the Gateshead local authority area. This appointment entrusts us with the responsibility of delivering advocacy services under the Mental Health Act, the Mental Capacity Act, the Care Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards legislation, in addition to the NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy service that we have been providing since 2022.

We were also delighted to be awarded the contract to provide Independent Care Act Advocacy services in South Tyneside from March 2024. This new contract complements the existing statutory services we deliver in this area and makes us the primary provider for this local authority.

Raising the profile of advocacy

The theme of this year's Advocacy Awareness Week was 'What is advocacy?' which we embraced by creating a photo series to illustrate that advocacy matters and happens everywhere, not just behind a desk or phone. Throughout the week we shared snapshots of our advocates' caseloads, demonstrating the variety of issues we're involved in, the practicalities of how we deliver our service and, most importantly, the impact we have on the people we support. The series was featured on our website and social media channels as well being published by the National Development Team for Inclusion.



The National Advocacy Conference also took place in Birmingham during Advocacy Awareness Week with five members of our team travelling to share best practice and hear from other advocates working across the country.

To mark Safeguarding Adults Week in November, we were pleased to share some examples from our advocates that show the role advocacy plays in safeguarding processes and attended events organised by our local safeguarding boards to deliver presentations and share and learn with others.



Advocacy Awareness Week photo series

Tuesday – Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle City Centre

"I'm on a visit this morning to the RVI hospital to meet with Irene and her consultant. Irene was admitted for tests that suggest cancer and a decision regarding surgery needs to be made. However, Irene has been assessed as unable to make this decision for herself and doesn't have any family or close friends available to assist in making the decision so this is where I step in.

"I'm here as an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) to make sure that the principles of the Mental Capacity Act are followed and that Irene's wishes, feelings and beliefs are taken into account when making a decision about her treatment."

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Care Act Advocacy

This year we've had the privilege of providing Care Act Advocacy across Newcastle and Gateshead, making a real difference in the lives of those who need support with Care Act processes. We played a crucial role in almost 170 Care Act processes, ensuring that each individual was fully involved in key decisions such as:

- Local authority assessments
- Care reviews
- Care and support planning
- Safeguarding processes
- Carer's assessments.

Care Act Advocacy

195 people supported

1,994 hours of advocacy

170 Care Act processes supported

South Tyneside Community Case Advocacy for people with a learning disability

This service helps people facing a wide range of challenges, including accessing essential services, securing housing and preventing eviction, navigating complex benefits systems, and managing debt.

A key aspect of our work is building strong, trusting relationships with the people we support, allowing us to empower individuals towards self-help whenever possible and helping people move forward with confidence and positivity.

"It was a pleasure to work with Denise. She has been excellent at connecting with the young woman we worked with. Denise really helped build her confidence and make decisions. Because of Denise, this young woman is taking steps forward with her life in a positive way."

Community case advocacy

55 people supported

553 hours of advocacy

An advocate's view from South Tyneside

"A significant milestone for us this year was being appointed as the statutory provider of Care Act advocacy for South Tyneside.

"I'm also particularly pleased with the bespoke case advocacy services we've provided, especially our tailored support for individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people, as well as the general advocacy we've offered to those with physical disabilities, mental health issues, and parents with learning disabilities navigating the child protection system.

"We've faced some challenges, particularly in raising awareness of our services and increasing referral rates for IMCA and Care Act referrals, which have been lower than expected. To address this, we're planning to enhance our referral processes, strengthen our relationships, and expand our Voice for Families service in South Tyneside."



Helen, Senior Advocate in South Tyneside

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Activities, achievements and performance

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

This year our IMCA services in Newcastle, Gateshead and South Tyneside worked with over 440 people who lacked the capacity to make important decisions about their lives, supporting:

- 33 care reviews
- 148 changes of accommodation
- 69 safeguarding cases
- 77 serious medical treatment decisions.

IMCAs play a crucial role in protecting the rights of people who cannot make certain decisions for themselves. They ensure that the individual's best interests are prioritised, helping them understand their options, participate in decisions, and ensuring that these decisions are made with fairness and transparency. Whether it's guiding care reviews, assisting with accommodation changes, or advocating during serious medical treatments, our IMCAs make sure that the voices of those who might otherwise go unheard are represented.

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy

443 people supported

3,701 hours of advocacy

Relevant Person's Representative Service (RPR)

RPRs are essential in safeguarding the rights of people who are subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). This year, our RPR advocates in Newcastle, Gateshead and South Tyneside played a critical role in supporting 1,351 individuals who were deprived of their liberty.

Our primary role is to ensure that the individual's liberty is only restricted when absolutely necessary and in their best interests, and advocates regularly visit the people they support to monitor the conditions of their care and advocate on their behalf. They also assist in challenging decisions and, if necessary, support appeals to the Court of Protection.

Relevant Person's Representative Service

815 new referrals to our service

1,351 people supported in total

10,697 hours of advocacy

NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (NHS ICA)

Our NHS ICA service in Gateshead plays a vital role in helping people navigate the often complex and challenging NHS complaints system. Advocates help people understand their rights, gather relevant information and articulate their concerns clearly when making a complaint about an NHS service they have received.

In addition to direct support, we also provide self-help resources and tools on our website and self-help information packs for people who prefer to manage their complaint independently.

Of the cases closed during this period, over 90% of people achieved two or more of their stated desired outcomes, demonstrating the effectiveness of our advocacy.

"The advocate explained everything. He was the voice of reason. He pushed for information, and I got the report."

NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy

58 people supported

507 hours of advocacy



Terri, Senior Advocate in Gateshead

An advocate's view from Gateshead

"This year we were thrilled to secure the contract to provide statutory advocacy services in Gateshead-a fantastic achievement for both our team and the community we serve.

"We're fortunate to have established strong working relationships, not only within our team but also with the diverse stakeholders and partners we collaborate with. Looking ahead, we're excited to further deepen our relationship with Gateshead Council and raise the profile of our services in the area.

"We're also committed to involving volunteers and our co-production team more closely in our work. Volunteers bring valuable perspectives and energy, enhancing the support we provide, while our co-production team plays a crucial role in shaping our services to better meet the needs of the community. Together, we look forward to continuing to grow and make a positive impact across our advocacy services."

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Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

Our IMHA services have had a significant impact this year, supporting 455 people across Newcastle, Gateshead and South Tyneside. This service plays a crucial role in supporting the rights of people detained under the Mental Health Act.

This work is central to empowering individuals, helping them navigate complex mental health systems, and ensuring that their voices are heard and respected throughout their journey. Our IMHAs are committed to providing compassionate, knowledgeable support, making a real difference in the lives of those they work with.

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for your help. It made such a difference having you involved with discharge planning."

Independent Mental Health Advocacy



455 people supported



4,394 hours of advocacy

Voice for Families

This year our Voice for Families project made a profound impact by supporting parents with learning disabilities who are navigating the complexities of child protection. Our dedicated advocates have been at the forefront, ensuring that these parents' voices are heard and their needs are prioritised during some of the most challenging times in their lives.

We've been right there with parents, making over 120 contacts with social services to ensure their concerns are addressed and understood. Our advocates have actively participated in more than 50 critical meetings, 100 legal meetings and connected directly with families nearly 300 times.

We've helped parents through important assessments—like parenting and independent living evaluations—to make sure they're linked to the right services and resources.

The Voice for Families project has been a vital lifeline for parents with learning disabilities going through child protection, reflecting our deep commitment to helping families not just survive, but thrive. We're incredibly proud of the impact we've made and look forward to continuing this crucial work in the coming year.

Voice for Families



24 parents supported



699 hours of advocacy

An advocate's view from Newcastle

"This year we were delighted to have our statutory advocacy contract for Newcastle renewed-a testament to the hard work of our team and a positive development for our community.

"Our Newcastle advocacy team is highly dedicated, with each member bringing unique specialisms to the table. We pride ourselves on the strong relationships we've built with professionals across various sectors, all with the shared goal of achieving the best outcomes for those we support.

"One of my key commitments is to continually expand the skills and qualifications of our advocates. We're excited about the opportunities ahead to strengthen partnerships with other organisations in Newcastle and to raise awareness of our services within the community.

"The main challenge we face in Newcastle is meeting the high demand for advocacy support. Our focus is on ensuring that advocacy is provided where and when it's needed most. To achieve this, we're working closely with our co-production team to find ways to be both effective and efficient, and planning to recruit more advocates to help us meet these growing needs."



Gillian, Senior Advocate in Newcastle

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Operations, Finance and Business Development team highlights

Our team of operations, finance and business development colleagues works behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly and ensure we have the right processes and people in place to work towards our business objectives.

Our People

This year our People Plan has continued to guide how we develop and improve as an employer so we can make Your Voice Counts an even better place to work.

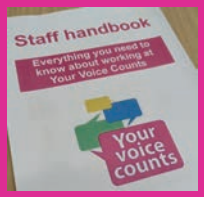
Many of our staff have taken advantage of the increased range of benefits we have introduced, such as pension salary sacrifice and travel pass schemes, and we continue to be a Real Living Wage employer. We were also pleased to be able to implement the increase in the Real Living Wage early again this year to help our lowest paid staff cope with the challenges they face.

Lived experience is at the heart of Your Voice Counts and we're proud that this year we have 18 staff members with lived experience in paid employment with us.



We launched our accessible staff handbook in September which was co-produced with our lived experience colleagues. The handbook is designed in an Easy Read format so it's easy for people with learning disabilities to understand, and also includes links to short videos that provide the information in an alternative format for people who would rather watch a video. Staff told us:

- "I think it's brilliant"
- "The videos are really well done explaining everything"
- "It's to the point and easy to follow"
- "I liked the lack of jargon"



Board and Governance

We were sad to say goodbye to some great Trustees this year. Derek Peters, Andrew Lane, Matthew Bailey and Sophie Swanson-Newbrook all moved on to new opportunities and we miss their contributions. However, we are excited about the possibilities to bring new skills to the Board that this opens up and we continue to recruit new Trustees, both with lived experience and those who bring other skills to our team. We are also excited that we have recruited an Executive Assistant this year to help our Board members be even more effective in their roles.

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Volunteering

Our Volunteer Coordinator Ann has continued to recruit and support volunteers who have worked in a range of different roles this year.

25 new volunteers recruited during April 2023 – March 2024

12 volunteers with lived experience

13 volunteers without lived experience.

Thanking our volunteers





We took the opportunity to celebrate and thank our volunteers as part of International Volunteer Day in December and Volunteers Week in June. We presented certificates of recognition to all of our volunteers in June, and also held a special drop in event for volunteers to meet up with people interested in volunteering.

Our team of volunteers helps us to reach more people who need our support. In return, they benefit from valuable and rewarding work experience, training and development opportunities and mentoring and support from our staff team and we're grateful to everyone involved in making volunteering at Your Voice Counts such a positive experience.


Edwina and Kathy.

Volunteering in our advocacy service

Our advocacy volunteer programme tackles loneliness and isolation among the people we support who live in residential care settings.

Edwina had over 30 years' experience of health and social care when she brought her expertise and passion to our team as a volunteer advocate and has since become a familiar face at Cestria Care Home in Newcastle, where she regularly spends time with residents making sure they feel connected and heard.

Edwina goes the extra mile—literally—by taking residents out for walks, helping them stay active, enjoy the community, and get some much-needed fresh air.

Edwina said: "It's incredibly rewarding to be that outside person who checks in, makes sure residents are happy, and addresses any issues they might have. Building relationships with the staff has been fantastic too—they've become so comfortable discussing any concerns with me."

Kathy Burns, the Care Home Manager, agrees: "The residents absolutely love it. Seeing new faces and having different interactions really lifts their spirits. Plus, it's a great support for our staff as well."

Edwina's involvement is a shining example of the positive impact our volunteers can have—bringing warmth, support and a fresh perspective to the lives of some of the people we support.

Case study: "Volunteering here has been a rewarding experience filled with learning, growth, and meaningful connections"



Aishat worked with us as an admin volunteer this year, providing us with much needed support while she completed her studies at the University of Sunderland. Aishat was invaluable in supporting the volunteer administration process, helping us to recruit and onboard volunteers as well as carrying out general admin duties.

"As my time at Your Voice Counts comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey I've had over the past year as part of their dedicated admin team.

"Volunteering here has been more than just a commitment; it has been a rewarding experience filled with learning, growth, and meaningful connections. Working alongside such a passionate and dedicated group of individuals has been a privilege. Thank you for the learning opportunities. The memories and experiences will stay with me, and I leave with a heart full of gratitude."

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Our year in numbers

Communities:

201

people supported in total

up 2% from 2022/23

144

financial wellbeing interventions

up 5% from 2022/23

257

health interventions

Advocacy:

1,581

people supported in total

up 89% from 2022/23

22,545

hours spent providing advocacy

up 56% from 2022/23

2

significant new contracts secured in addition to existing provision

Community fundraising :

£1910.81

8

Great North Run entrants

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Our team:

18
members of staff with lived experience

23
new volunteers recruited

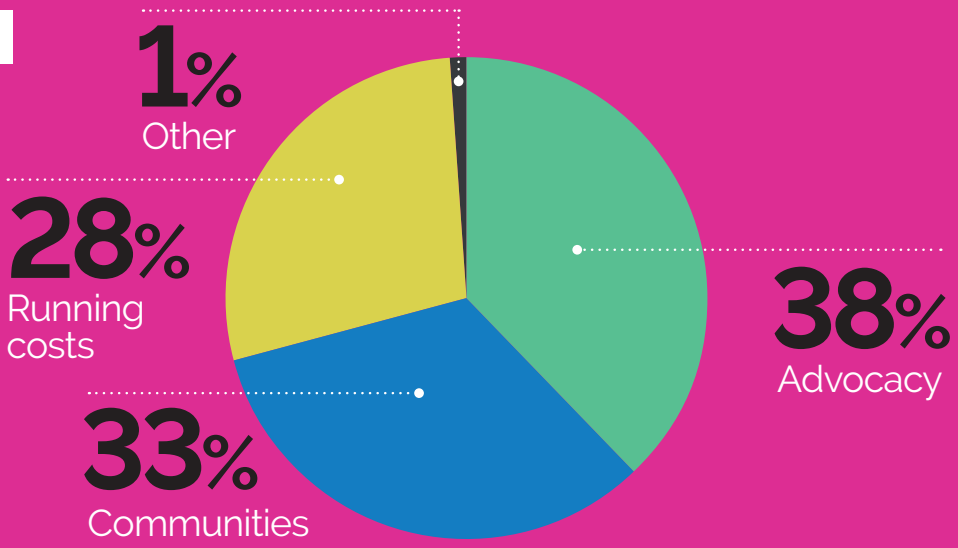
5
volunteers moved onto paid employment

Our finances:

£1,489,712
Income

£1,628,781
Expenditure

How we spent it:



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REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Your Voice Counts aims to maintain a robust financial position in the face of continuing economic uncertainty in order to continue delivering much needed services to the people we support.

The charity receives most of its funding from statutory sources and grants from foundations and charitable trusts. Our internal structure comprises Advocacy, Communities and Operations and is aligned to our funding sources. We seek to recover our full costs from all projects.

This year, we have been pleased to continue to benefit from contract and services income and from the generosity of grant funders, allowing us to continue to grow our income despite the challenging economic environment: £1,489,712 (2023: £1,417,746).

We are extremely grateful to our existing funders, including Henry Smith Foundation and the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, and our new funders who have supported us this year: The Lottery and Access to Justice Foundation, Charities Aid Foundation, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, Sir James Knott, Barbour, and Bernicia Community Fund. We have continued to control our costs and are reporting expenditure of £1,628,781 (2023: £1,287,642).

Trustees continue to monitor financial controls, performance and stewardship via a bi-monthly Finance Committee. Review of treasury and investment management and review of business development remain standing agenda items and we have continued to invest in our Business Development function in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

This year we are reporting an in-year planned deficit of £139,069 (2023 surplus: £130,104) as we spend down our restricted reserves for the benefit of our clients. This leaves us with overall reserves of £575,235 (2023: £714,304). Trustees take a forward-looking and proactive approach to financial management and so have again taken the decision to designate funds this year. These funds are for projects we are undertaking over the next two years to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation for the benefit of our clients. The areas we are investing in are:

Business Development:
£23,554

Marketing and Communications
£10,000

Co-production:
£23,376

Volunteer Coordinator:
£14,824

Company Secretary:
£14,400

HR Manager:
£11,969

We hold between three and six months necessary operating expenses as a minimum reserve. Based on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2024, three months would equate to £248,225 and six months to £496,450. Our free reserves (unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets) stand at £277,747 (2023: £275,951). Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

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FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY

Your Voice Counts takes a proactive and structured approach to fundraising and complies with 'Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20).' A fundraising strategy is in place and is updated each year and reviewed by Trustees. A donations policy is also in place. These were developed using Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator and Institute of Fundraising guidance.

Your Voice Counts undertakes minimal public fundraising as most of our funding comes from statutory sources and grant funders. The charity does not use a professional fundraiser. The charity has a Business Development function which is managed by the Head of Finance. Fundraising is a standing agenda item on the Finance Committee and this sub-committee of the Board scrutinises all fundraising activity.

The charity regularly seeks input and advice from Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience, including those on the Board, on the impacts of all its activities, including fundraising, on vulnerable people and no issues with its fundraising activity have been raised.

This year, a two year grant from Charities Aid Foundation's Keystone Fund has enabled us to create a co-production team. With lived experience of health inequalities, this team is focused on strengthening our user voice activity, engaging with the communities we serve to better understand the issues they are facing and to co-design solutions together with commissioners and other key decision makers.

We were also delighted to be one of the few organisations nationally to receive a five year Improving Lives Through Advice (ILTA) grant. Delivered by The Access to Justice Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund, ILTA has been established to support the delivery of free legal advice to marginalised people and communities across England. The grant will enable us to develop our specialist social welfare legal advice services and to strengthen our influencing, partnership and fundraising work.

Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budget and future cash flows in making their assessment. Based on these assessments, the trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.



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PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We're currently coming to the end of our current five year business strategy, so in the year ahead we'll be reflecting on our achievements and speaking to the people we support, our staff and other stakeholders about what we want to achieve over the next five years. We'll dedicate significant time and effort to this, with a focus on our strengths and opportunities as well as areas of challenge.

Innovation and collaboration

The economic environment continues to pose significant challenges in our sector so our focus, as always, will be on using the resources available to us to ensure the best possible impact for the people we support. We will look at how we can use technology to reach more people, as well as exploring how we can use our knowledge and expertise to work with local health and social care partners to improve outcomes. The ongoing roll out of Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training will continue to be a priority for us as we support Lived Experience Trainers to use their stories to directly influence health and social care practitioners in our region.

Addressing unmet need

Delivering our established services gives us unique insight into areas where the needs of the people we support are not being met. We want to do more to meet these needs wherever we can, so we will look at how we can make our offer flexible enough to do this. Much of our work in recent years has been focused around addressing crisis and then supporting people to set goals and achieve outcomes. We want to find ways to work with people before they enter crisis, and will explore how to do this by considering the needs of parents and carers as well as routes to working with people earlier in their lives. As always, partnership working will be key and we will consider how we can work with others to support those with the most complex needs who statutory and universal services struggle to accommodate.

Co-production

We will continue to look at how the people who use our services have the opportunity to co-design and co-deliver services that meet their needs. We will look for ways to create even more paid and voluntary opportunities for people with lived experience and, where we can, create leadership roles that enable people to directly influence decision-makers in the wider health and social care system.

Our Co-Production team will be at the heart of finding ways to engage with people who have used our advocacy services, as well as playing a key role in gaining insight into how we can improve as an employer of people with lived experience. We want to be an employer of choice and for Your Voice Counts to be a truly inclusive place to work; the work of our Co-Production team, along with our newly created role of Head of HR and continued enhancements to our People policies, will help us drive forward the improvements we want to make.

Raising our profile

Raising our profile locally, regionally and nationally will help us to reach more people and give us greater influence on behalf of the communities we support. We will continue to promote our key messages, develop our relationships and share our learning and experiences so that we can develop as an organisation and position Your Voice Counts as experts in our sector with a clear and achievable vision as we develop our new business strategy.

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Your Voice Counts

TRUSTEES' REPORT

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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

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

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

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

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

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

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Reappointment of auditor

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution for the re-appointment of Azets Audit Services as auditors of the charity is to be proposed at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 18 October 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Christina Gates 17 Oct 2024 15:47:36 BST (UTC +1)

.....

C D Gates

Trustee

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Your Voice Counts (the 'entity') 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 significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

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

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

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Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the entity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

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Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud
Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above and on the Financial Reporting Council's website, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

We obtain and update our understanding of the entity, its activities, its control environment, and likely future developments, including in relation to the legal and regulatory framework applicable and how the entity is complying with that framework. Based on this understanding, we 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. This includes consideration of the risk of acts by the entity that were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.

We identified the following applicable laws and regulations as those most likely to have a material impact on the financial statements: Health and Safety; employment law (including the Working Time Directive); and compliance with the UK Companies Act.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, we designed procedures which included:

- Enquiry of management and those charged with governance around actual and potential litigation and claims as well as actual, suspected and alleged fraud;
- Reviewing minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Assessing the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the entity through enquiry and inspection;
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- Performing audit work over the risk of management bias and override of controls, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business and reviewing accounting estimates for indicators of potential bias.

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 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.

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

Simon Brown BA ACA DChA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Azets Audit Services

Simon Brown 18 Oct 2024 13:04:58 BST (UTC +1)

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Bulman House
Regent Centre
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne

Date: 18 October 2024

Azets Audit Services is a trading name of Azets Audit Services Limited

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Current financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	**2**	33,438	-	33,438	12,898
Charitable activities	**3**	1,126,243	320,104	1,446,347	1,398,599
Investments	**4**	7,493	-	7,493	3,588
Other income	**5**	2,434	-	2,434	2,661
Total income		1,169,608	320,104	1,489,712	1,417,746
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	**6**	1,345,786	282,995	1,628,781	1,287,642
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(176,178)	37,109	(139,069)	130,104
Gross transfers between funds		177,561	(177,561)	-	-
Net income/(expenditure) for the year/ Net movement in funds		1,383	(140,452)	(139,069)	130,104
Fund balances at 1 April 2023		277,602	436,702	714,304	584,200
Fund balances at 31 March 2024		278,985	296,250	575,235	714,304

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED) INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Prior financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	**2**	12,898	-	12,898
Charitable activities	**3**	974,600	423,999	1,398,599
Investments	**4**	3,588	-	3,588
Other income	**5**	2,661	-	2,661
Total income		993,747	423,999	1,417,746
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	**6**	1,033,253	254,389	1,287,642
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers		(39,506)	169,610	130,104
Net income/(expenditure) for the year/ Net movement in funds		(39,506)	169,610	130,104
Fund balances at 1 April 2022		317,108	267,092	584,200
Fund balances at 31 March 2023		277,602	436,702	714,304

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2024 £	2023 £	2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**11**		1,238		1,651
Current assets					
Debtors	**12**	96,109		194,250	
Investments	**13**	80,699		80,226	
Cash at bank and in hand		461,119		497,881	
		637,927		772,357	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**14**	(63,930)		(59,704)	
Net current assets			573,997		712,653
Total assets less current liabilities			575,235		714,304
Income funds					
Restricted funds	**16**		296,250		436,702
Unrestricted funds					
Designated funds	**17**	98,123		125,522	
General unrestricted funds		180,862		152,080	
			278,985		277,602
			575,235		714,304

The financial statements on pages 31 to 45 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 18 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Matt Ife 17 Oct 2024 15:42:57 BST (UTC +1)

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M Ife
Trustee

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STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2024 £	2023 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	**21**		(43,782)		176,401
Investing activities					
Current asset investment income		(473)		(939)	
Investment income received		7,493		3,588	
Net cash generated from investing activities			7,020		2,649
Net cash used in financing activities			-		-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents			(36,762)		179,050
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			497,881		318,831
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			461,119		497,881

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

The address of its registered office is: 14-16 Greenesfield Business Centre Mulgrave Terrace, Gateshead, England, NE8 1PQ

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the entity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”) and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The entity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

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

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

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

1.3 Charitable funds

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

Designated funds comprise funds which have been set aside at the discretion of the trustees for specific purposes. The purposes and uses of the designated funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

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

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the entity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the entity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the entity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

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1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, 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 classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a basis consistent with the use of resources, for example, allocating property costs by floor areas, or per capita, staff costs by the time spent and other costs by their usage.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets costing £2,000 or more are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

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

Fixtures and fittings	25% reducing balance
Computers	33% straight line

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the entity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

1.9 Financial instruments

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

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

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

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1 Accounting policies **(Continued)**

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method 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. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans 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 payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

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

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the entity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the entity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.11 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

2 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds general 2023 £
Donations and gifts	33,438	12,898

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3 Charitable activities

	Advocacy 2024 £	Grants 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Advocacy 2023 £	Grants 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Advocacy and Grants	1,127,726	318,621	1,446,347	900,473	498,126	1,398,599
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds - general	1,090,110	36,133	1,126,243	861,289	113,311	974,600
Restricted funds	37,616	282,488	320,104	39,184	384,815	423,999
	1,127,726	318,621	1,446,347	900,473	498,126	1,398,599

4 Investments

	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds general 2023 £
Interest receivable on bank deposits	7,493	3,588

5 Other income

	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds general 2023 £
Other income	2,434	2,661

Other income relates to reimbursed expenses.

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6 Charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly 2024 £	Activity support costs 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Activity undertaken directly 2023 £
Staff costs	1,082,283	-	1,082,283	847,133
Depreciation and impairment	413	-	413	3,447
Telephone and internet	12,783	-	12,783	9,853
Training costs	9,862	-	9,862	11,100
Room hire	8,657	-	8,657	4,058
Travelling expenses	16,847	-	16,847	13,434
Other costs	45,573	-	45,573	42,585
	1,176,418	-	1,176,418	931,610
Share of support costs (see note 7)	-	440,963	440,963	347,272
Share of governance costs (see note 7)	-	11,400	11,400	8,760
	1,176,418	452,363	1,628,781	1,287,642
Analysis by fund				
Unrestricted funds - general	893,423	452,363	1,345,786	1,033,253
Restricted funds	282,995	-	282,995	254,389
	1,176,418	452,363	1,628,781	1,287,642

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7 Support costs

	Support costs	Governance costs	2024	Support costs	Governance costs	2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	295,480	-	295,480	241,929	-	241,929
Depreciation	-	-	-	1,909	-	1,909
Premises costs	26,098	-	26,098	18,562	-	18,562
Insurances	6,174	-	6,174	3,848	-	3,848
Death in service insurance	7,351	-	7,351	-	-	-
Light and heat	11,649	-	11,649	13,016	-	13,016
Telephone and internet	10,594	-	10,594	7,073	-	7,073
Legal and professional fees	13,098	-	13,098	13,422	-	13,422
Room hire	7,708	-	7,708	-	-	-
Travelling expenses	6,854	-	6,854	3,232	-	3,232
Accountancy/audit fees	-	11,400	11,400	-	8,760	8,760
Other costs	55,957	-	55,957	44,281	-	44,281
	440,963	11,400	452,363	347,272	8,760	356,032
Analysed between						
Charitable activities	440,963	11,400	452,363	347,272	8,760	356,032

Governance costs includes payments to the auditors of £9,500 (2023- £7,300) for audit fees.

8 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the entity during the year.

9 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
Management	3	3
Finance	1	1
Advocacy, Communities and Operations	61	50
Total	65	54

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9 Employees (Continued)

Employment costs	2024 £	2023 £
Wages and salaries	1,192,268	962,071
Social security costs	92,285	75,997
Other pension costs	93,210	50,994
	1,377,763	1,089,062

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

10 Taxation

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

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings £	Computers £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2023	7,879	21,930	29,809
At 31 March 2024	7,879	21,930	29,809
Depreciation and impairment			
At 1 April 2023	6,228	21,930	28,158
Depreciation charged in the year	413	-	413
At 31 March 2024	6,641	21,930	28,571
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2024	1,238	-	1,238
At 31 March 2023	1,651	-	1,651

12 Debtors

Amounts falling due within one year:	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	88,415	192,420
Other debtors	951	445
Prepayments and accrued income	6,743	1,385
	96,109	194,250

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13 Current asset investments

	2024 £	2023 £
Short term deposits	80,699	80,226

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Other taxation and social security	25,254	19,871
Trade creditors	17,823	20,982
Accruals and deferred income	20,853	18,851
	63,930	59,704

15 Retirement benefit schemes

Defined contribution schemes

The entity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the entity in an independently administered fund.

The charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes was £93,210 (2023 - £50,994).

Contributions totalling £5,673 (2023: £4,422) were payable to the scheme at the end of the year and are included in creditors.

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16 Restricted funds

The income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the following unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust for specific purposes:

		Movement in funds			Movement in funds			
	Balance at 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Balance at 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Operations	534	-	-	534	80,000	-	(534)	80,000
Community	216,053	384,815	(232,857)	368,011	202,488	(273,392)	(149,768)	147,339
Advocacy	50,505	39,184	(21,532)	68,157	37,616	(9,603)	(27,259)	68,911
	267,092	423,999	(254,389)	436,702	320,104	(282,995)	(177,561)	296,250

Restricted Funds:
Restricted funds represent funds received from statutory sources and grant funders where use of the funds has been specified by the funder. YVC classifies these by business area.

- Advocacy reserves are mainly from statutory sources and are predominantly to be used for advocacy in Newcastle and South Tyneside.
- Communities reserves are mainly from grant funders and are to be used in a variety of individual projects in areas such as Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Operations reserves are predominantly for core costs.

Transfers in the year relate to transfers from restricted funds to unrestricted reserves representing unspent amounts to be used for general purposes.

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17 Designated funds

The income funds of the charity include the following designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes:

	Balance at 1 April 2022	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 1 April 2023	Resources expended	Transfers	Balance at 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Business development	45,866	(22,312)	-	23,554	(23,554)	23,554	23,554
Finance development	12,463	(12,463)	-	-	-	-	-
Communities team	23,268	(11,634)	(11,634)	-	-	-	-
Marketing and communications	10,080	(9,256)	8,276	9,100	(9,100)	10,000	10,000
IT infrastructure	8,158	(8,158)	-	-	-	-	-
Co-production	28,894	-	-	28,894	(5,518)	-	23,376
Admin development	22,781	-	-	22,781	(22,781)	-	-
Volunteer Coordinator	-	-	14,824	14,824	(14,824)	14,824	14,824
Company secretary	-	-	14,400	14,400	(1,856)	1,856	14,400
HR Manager	-	-	11,969	11,969	-	-	11,969
	151,510	(63,823)	37,835	125,522	(77,633)	50,234	98,123

18 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024	Restricted funds 2024	Total 2024	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fund balances at 31 March 2024 are represented by:						
Tangible assets	1,238	-	1,238	1,651	-	1,651
Current assets/(liabilities)	277,747	296,250	573,997	275,951	436,702	712,653
	278,985	296,250	575,235	277,602	436,702	714,304

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19 Operating lease commitments

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

	2024 £	2023 £
Within one year	5,520	5,520
Between two and five years	6,942	12,477
	12,462	17,997

20 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2023 - none).

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel is as follows.

	2024 £	2023 £
Aggregate compensation	63,314	60,421

21 Cash generated from operations

	2024 £	2023 £
(Deficit)/surpus for the year	(139,069)	130,104
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(7,493)	(3,588)
Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	413	5,355
Movements in working capital:		
Decrease in debtors	98,141	173,078
Increase in creditors	4,226	6,452
(Decrease) in deferred income	-	(135,000)
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations	(43,782)	176,401

22 Analysis of changes in net funds

The entity had no debt during the year.

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Thank you to all of our partners and funders who supported us during 2023/2024.

We are grateful for your support and look forward to more joint-working so we can continue to support the people who need us.

Access to Justice Foundation

Barbour Foundation

Bernicia Community Fund

Charities Aid Foundation

Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland

Henry Smith Foundation

Leeds Community Foundation

LGA Foundation

Newcastle Building Society

National Lottery

Persimmon Community Champions Fund

Sir James Knott Trust

The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

The 1989 Willan Charitable Trust

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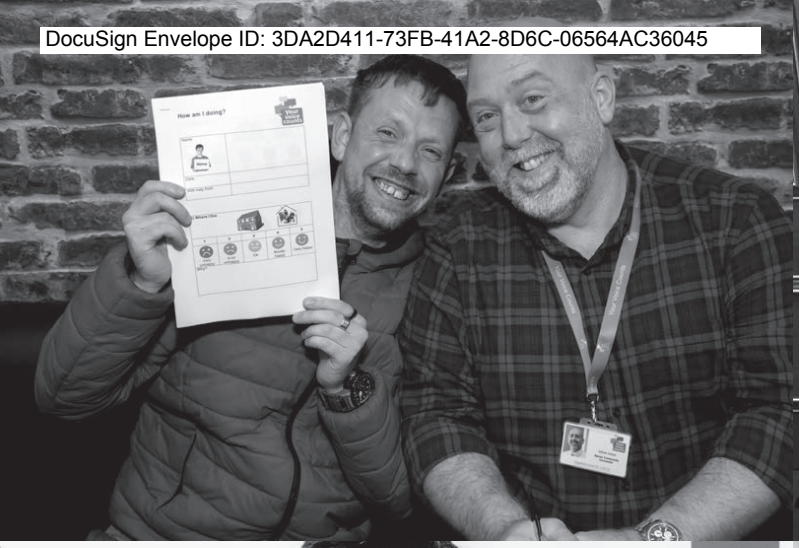
Registered Charity No. 1125719. Company limited by guarantee No. 6654142

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales - Charity number 1125719

Accounts

DocuSign Envelope ID: 3DA2D411-73FB-41A2-8D6C-06564AC36045









Your Voice Counts

Our Year in Review

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023

Your voice counts

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Making a difference

"Simon is excellent at engaging with and knowing the people he works with and advocates for, being able to give insights into the wants and desires of patients, always ensuring the patient voice is heard and their views expressed. He is brilliant to work with, offering insights and understanding to the clinical team as well as appropriate challenge when required."
Clinical Nurse Specialist



"I enjoyed everything, looking forward to September's session."
Karen, Community Voice participant



"I thoroughly enjoy my role at Your Voice Counts. I think it's such an important service for so many people. I've enjoyed meeting new people and maintaining contact with Your Voice Counts users I have known for many years. I would recommend volunteering with Your Voice Counts to anyone considering it. The staff are welcoming and supportive and I always look forward to my visit."
Heather, Your Voice Counts volunteer

"Thanks so much for letting me know. This has put my mind at rest - I feel that this man has hugely slipped through many nets, it's such a shame. I really appreciate you acting so quickly on this case."
Best Interests Assessor



"Previously having worked as a Mental Health and Learning Disability Nurse for around 30 years, I was keen to undertake a new challenge that also utilised the skills that I have built up over the years. I have to say, I have never regretted moving to Your Voice Counts, for a minute – I get immense job satisfaction from working with a fantastic team and some great clients, and really feeling that I am making a positive impact in a holistic way. This is how I truly feel and could not be happier.'
John, Your Voice Counts Health and Wellbeing Facilitator



"I have recently been diagnosed with diabetes. It was useful to find out how to eat healthily if you are a diabetic."
Lillian, Diabetes group member

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Welcome from Matthew Bailey and Christina Gates





As we reflect on another year, we would like to say a huge thank you on behalf of the Board of Your Voice Counts to all of the staff, volunteers and partners who have once again shown such hard work and commitment to Your Voice Counts and our aims.

There have been some big changes on the Board this year, with our longstanding Co-Chair Lisa Kelly standing down in February – Lisa is a tireless campaigner for the rights of people to have a voice and as Co-Chair always helped and challenged us to put the people we support at the heart of our services. On behalf of everyone at Your Voice Counts we want to say a big thank you to Lisa and we're delighted she remains on our Board in an Expert by Experience role. We also say a massive thank you to Nick Herron who also stood down from the Board this year after many years of service.

Matthew has now taken over from Lisa as Co-Chair, joining the Board this year alongside other Experts by Experience Jess Fielding and Preddi Bononge, and Sophie Swanston-Newbrook who has joined as an Advocate by Experience.

Our new members bring a range of skills, experiences and specialisms to our Board, really helping to strengthen and focus the Board on what we want to achieve for Your Voice Counts.

We have established two new sub-committees – our Services and Quality Committee and our People Committee – and earlier this year we held an away day with the Board and Senior Management Team so we could talk about what we do well and plan what we want to focus on and get better at. This was a highlight of the year for us all and we're looking forward to seeing our plans come to life.

It has been a busy year for Your Voice Counts with many, many achievements – we're particularly proud of the three national awards we won at the start of this year, including a Charity Governance Award for how we support people with learning disabilities to be part of our Board.

Co-production and lived experience are at the heart of Your Voice Counts, from the Board to our staff team to our volunteers and the people who use our services so this award was very special for us and we're proud our approach has been recognised.

Our commitment to co-production has gone from strength to strength this year – not only with Matthew, Jess and Preddi joining our Board but the number of people with lived experience on the staff team increasing to 20.

We've also committed funding to create a new dedicated Co-Production team that will help to make even more progress in this area. We hope this investment shows the importance we place on this and we're looking forward to seeing this work develop over the next year.

Best wishes,

Matthew and Christina,
Co-Chairs, You Voice Counts

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Welcome from David Woolley



At this point last year, we set ourselves some big targets for the year ahead and now we're looking back over the last twelve months it's incredibly satisfying to see the progress we've made.

Developing and improving

One of our main goals for this year was to grow our advocacy offer beyond the statutory services we already deliver, so I am delighted that we launched Voice for Families, our service to support parents with learning disabilities. We also secured funding to deliver a community mental health advocacy project which we will be mobilising in the coming months.

We wanted to employ more people with lived experience of using health and social care services, and I'm incredibly proud that we've done that, increasing the number of employees with lived experience to 20 colleagues working in a range of different roles. Supporting all of our staff is a priority for us so I'm also pleased we've been able to implement pay rises, introduce new staff benefits and develop our first People Plan.

Improving how we measure and articulate our impact has been a key aim for us in recent years but this year, with the support of the Lloyds Foundation, we have developed new impact management systems which are helping us to better understand and articulate the difference our work makes. This complements our desire to raise our profile and promote the work we do so we can increase our ability to influence on behalf of the people we support. Growing our social media presence and establishing an e-newsletter are just some of the ways we've been doing this.

Economic climate

Looking more widely, the rising cost of living has been a big challenge this year, both for the people we support and our staff.

We want our staff to feel valued and to receive a good wage with employee benefits that make a difference to their lives, so we were pleased Board approved a 5% cost of living pay increase for all staff this year. We also signed up to the Living Wage Foundation to show our commitment to paying a fair wage and adopted the increase five months early so our staff could benefit as soon as possible.

For the people we support, we established our Financial Health team to provide specialist 1 to 1 support to help people access the financial support they need and the benefits they are entitled to, while developing key skills such as effective budgeting. We also provided opportunities to help people make changes that have a positive impact on their lifestyles and finances, such as healthy cooking classes and free and low-cost activities such as group walks and arts and crafts at home.

Building on our strengths

At the start of this year we won three awards in the space of three weeks, which was fantastic recognition at a national level for the work we do. The awards celebrated our approach to Board diversity and inclusion and the work we do to champion and embed co-production within our advocacy and community-based services.

We've also been reflecting on our experience of winning new contracts and setting up new projects this year - not only across advocacy, but our new Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team, and the Co-Production team we're preparing to launch. This puts us in a great position for the year ahead, and with the dedication and expertise of our fantastic staff team I'm confident we can build on this momentum to ensure our support reaches the people who need it and makes the difference we know we can make in more people's lives.

David Woolley,
Chief Executive, Your Voice Counts

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Advisors
Auditors:

Azets Audit Services,
Bulman House,
Regent Centre,
Gosforth,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE3 3LS

Main Bankers:

Lloyds Bank,
17 Ellison Walk,
Gateshead,
NE8 1BF

Savings:

Hampshire Trust Bank,
55 Bishopsgate, London,
EC2N 3AS

Aldermore Savings, 1st Floor,
Block B, Western House,
Lynch Wood, Peterborough
PE2 6FZ

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building, Broadway,
Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3TA

Our Board

Your Voice Counts is a registered charity and limited company governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. Our Governance Handbook sets out how we ensure our governance is effective and inclusive.

Our Articles

Our Articles set out that at least 50% of our Board need to have lived experience of our services, which includes family carers of people who have used our services. We call the Directors with lived experience of our services Experts by Experience. We call Directors who don't have experience of our services Advocates by Experience.

Our Articles also set out that we should have a Chair and Co-Chair and that one should be someone with a learning disability and the other someone without a learning disability.

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Our Directors

Our Directors serve for a term of four years and are eligible for re-appointment by the Directors. There are no restrictions on the number of terms a Director can serve.

There are arrangements for induction, training and support of Board members, which are reviewed by our Operations Committee. Each new Board member is given an induction pack and attends an induction session with the executive team and meets the Chair. The Operations Committee reviews the training needs of the Board members and arranges training as required.

Our Co-Chairs hold an annual appraisal of the Board and of individual Directors to ensure that the skills and time provided by Directors are used to best effect. Additionally, Board skills are kept under review to inform Board member recruitment, engagement and support.

Board meetings

Our Board meets six times a year. Our Experts by Experience also hold a pre-meeting before each Board meeting to give them additional time to prepare for the meeting. Our Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience meet separately six times a year in order to explore themes and key subject areas in more detail.

The Board holds an annual plan which includes:

- Agreeing the operating budget
- Reviewing monthly management accounts
- Reviewing the organisation's strategic priorities
- Monitoring performance within agreed targets
- Considering risk and ways to mitigate these risks
- Considering strategic issues; and
- Receiving reports and minutes from all our sub-committees.

Sub-committees

The Board appoints sub-committees, which are responsible for more detailed oversight of strategy and activities within their area of responsibility. The sub-committees that met during the year were:

- Finance Committee
- Operations Committee
- Services and Quality Committee.

Our new People Committee will meet in the coming year.

Directors during 2022/2023

Directors who served during the year up to the date of signing the financial statements were:

	APPOINTMENT DATE	RESIGNATION DATE
Matthew Bailey	16/02/2023	NA
Christina Gates	15/08/2019	NA
Lisa Kelly	12/03/2011	NA
Derek Peters	19/08/2014	NA
David Taylor	17/06/2015	NA
Jess Fielding	16/02/2023	NA
Preddi Bononge	16/02/2023	NA
Nick Herron	12/03/2011	15/2/23
Matthew Ife	18/01/2018	NA
Tom Relph	13/03/2018	NA
Andrew Lane	17/12/2020	NA
Rebekah Coombes	19/08/2021	NA
Sophie Swanston-Newbrook	20/10/2022	NA

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OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES

About Your Voice Counts

Your Voice Counts is a registered charitable company limited by guarantee. The charity's object is to relieve the need or disability of persons, particularly those suffering impairment of their learning abilities.

What does Your Voice Counts do?

Your Voice Counts is a charity that exists to support people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, illness or other challenges.

We achieve our object, or our aims, by focusing on our mission to help people to be connected, to have choice and control in their lives, and to speak up for what they want and need. We believe in listening to and empowering people with different needs and abilities to bring about positive change. To do this, we work with our partners to design and deliver learning, personal development and social opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, and promote and support self-advocacy and user-led groups that are run by adults with learning disabilities.

We are also a statutory provider of mental health and learning disability advocacy services for people living in Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead and South Tyneside.

How do we decide what services to offer?

We have a five-year organisational strategy that has been approved by our Board of Directors. This strategy guides our work and ensures all of our activities work towards at least one of our six priority areas:

1. Design services that make a difference to people
2. Learn from what we're doing so that we get better at helping people
3. Improve how the Board works
4. Help our staff and volunteers be great at their jobs
5. Ensure the organisation is financially resilient
6. Make sure people know who we are, what we do and the difference we make to the people we support.

Our strategy also sets out our commitment to ensuring the voices of lived experience underpin all of our work, and we're proud to co-produce and co-deliver our services with people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who have experienced mental ill health.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'Public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main activities and the people we aim to support are described in this report. All of our charitable activities focus on supporting vulnerable people - particularly those with learning disabilities and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

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Communities team highlights

Tackling health inequalities

People with learning disabilities often experience poorer health outcomes and lower life expectancy than the rest of the population so we have been developing the services we offer that help people to understand and look after their health and wellbeing.

Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team

Our Health and Wellbeing Facilitator team was established in July 2022 to provide a specialist service that helps people with learning disabilities in South Tyneside take positive steps to manage their physical and mental health and to engage with the healthcare services that are available to them.

NHS North East & North Cumbria

This includes providing 1 to 1 support as well as delivering accessible health education that supports South Tyneside's vital health pathways that include Covid and flu vaccinations, diabetes, smoking cessation, cancer screening, weight management and mental health support.

Helping people stay well

21 people supported to get annual health check	**15** people received help to complete their hospital passport	**59** health appointments made with our help	**27** people accompanied to appointments
15 attendees at weight management sessions	**54** participants in Dry January mocktail class	**12** pieces of Easy Read health info created	**13** health awareness sessions delivered

Helping people access vaccinations

123 people contacted to offer support to get flu jabs

1 pop up Covid and flu jab clinic at our weekly drop-in group

8 people supported to vaccination appointments

Understanding Type 2 Diabetes

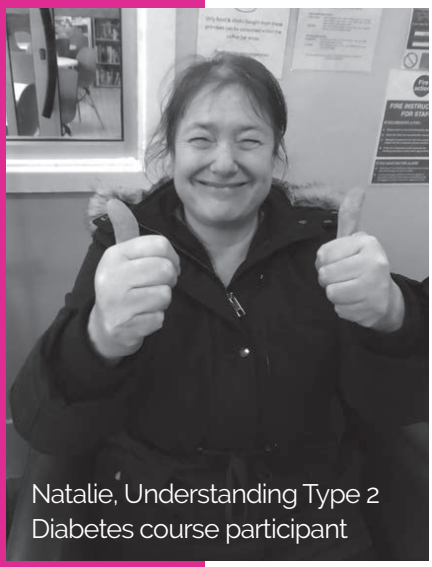
Thirteen people attended our Understanding Type 2 Diabetes courses which were developed by Skills for People in collaboration with North East and Cumbria Learning Disability Network and Your Voice Counts with funding from the NENCICS in South Tyneside.

Each course ran over six weeks and was specially designed for people with learning disabilities to help them understand and manage their condition.

"Since attending the course I have increased my exercise routine and have been more aware of my overall health. I am looking at better alternatives to food, counting my calories and looking at the sugar content of food. I feel happier in my life as I have learned more about my overall health.

"It is worth to attend as the staff is so lovely and are non-judgmental, they are there to help you. The content was informative, and I learnt a lot of different things about diabetes, things that give me a wakeup call."

Natalie



Natalie, Understanding Type 2 Diabetes course participant

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International Day of Happiness

To mark the end of a project funded by NHS Charities Together we held a celebration event to coincide with International Day of Happiness on 20 March.

The funding had been awarded by NHS Charities Together, Newcastle Hospitals Charity and County Durham Community Foundation with Your Voice Counts chosen as one of seven local organisations to deliver initiatives that address health inequalities, improve mental health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation for people with learning disabilities.

Over the course of the project, we provided a range of opportunities for people with learning disabilities to improve their skills and confidence and connect with others so we were pleased to use leftover funding to organise an International Day of Happiness event to celebrate the end of the project.

The theme of the day was being mindful, being grateful and being kind so there were lots of activities on offer to give people a reason to smile, including face painting, arts and crafts, bracelet making, Henna, bingo, yoga and mindfulness sessions.

The Your Voice Counts Quality Checkers

People with learning disabilities can find it difficult to access NHS services, often due to complicated forms, words or confusing layouts in buildings.

Our Quality Checkers programme is one way we are trying to change this and we're proud to have a contract with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board in South Tyneside to carry out regular reviews of GP practices in South Tyneside.

At these reviews, our team of Quality Checkers, who have lived experience of having a learning disability or being autistic, take a tour of the surgery and speak to patients with learning disabilities to hear about their experiences of using that practice. This information is then shared with the surgery so they can understand what is and isn't working well for their patients with learning disabilities and make any improvements that are needed.

"Working with the NHS Quality Checkers has been an excellent, worthwhile experience. The Quality Check process helps us to identify areas where we can make improvements and where we do things well. I'd recommend being part of this process to all practices."

Suzanne Roberts, Practice Manager, Imeary Street Surgery



Quality Checker David with Suzanne Roberts, Imeary Street Surgery Practice Manager

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Helping people manage their money

Funding from the Henry Smith Charity enabled us to create a Financial Health team that provides vital casework and training to people with learning disabilities to improve their financial resilience and address specific financial issues they are facing.

This year we have provided 1 to 1 support to 58 people, offering much needed assistance as people face the rising cost of living and struggle to navigate the generic support services that are not designed to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.

Our service is delivered with peer support workers and includes helping with benefits applications and appeals, budgeting tools, information about managing debt, food bank referrals and help to understand bills and housing costs.

FINANCIAL INTERVENTIONS OFFERED	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
General benefit queries or support	9
New benefit claims	30
Welfare benefit appeals and PIP tribunals	12
Budgeting, bills, debt and food bank support	69
Housing benefit and rent arrears support	16
Safeguarding alert (due to loan shark threats)	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVENTIONS	137

Ali's story

Ali was in an abusive relationship for many years. Her ex-partner had total control of the household finances so when he moved out she was left with piles of bills, policies and letters which she couldn't understand or manage. She had no confidence and didn't know what to do next or how to budget for herself.

We started meeting weekly, working our way through her finances, setting up direct debits and developing a manageable budget plan. We also helped her liaise with the DWP and supported her through the Capability for Work Process and connected her to other Your Voice Counts services that have helped to improve her mental health and wellbeing.

"I think you've been amazing. I couldn't have coped without you. I'm over the moon about it all." Ali

Working in the Communities team with lived experience

We're incredibly proud that this year the number of employees with lived experience of learning disabilities, autism or mental ill health working in the Your Voice Counts Communities team increased to 20 members of staff. People with lived experience bring amazing skills and insight to our organisation and work in a range of jobs from peer support roles to commissioning to research.

"I joined Your Voice Counts in September 2017 and have had a range of different jobs. I enjoy working for Your Voice Counts, I really like working within the Communities team as working with other people is the best part of the job, it is insightful to talk to people to find out how they feel and ways to help them. This is why I've stayed at YVC because I enjoy working with people and have gained a lot of knowledge and understanding by being around the clients and always work to the best of my ability." **Melissa, Peer Support Worker**

"I have worked with Melissa over the last year on the Community Voice project, it has been great to see her confidence and presentation skills develop as well as her enjoyment in her work." **Lucie, Project Support Worker**



Lucie and Melissa

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Developing skills, confidence and connections

Drop-in groups

Our popular weekly drop-in groups in Boldon, Gateshead and Jarrow are a vital part of our South Tyneside Enabler project funded by South Tyneside Council and our Gateshead Enabler work that is funded by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

The sessions provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people to get together, make friends and take part in activities while also providing a space where our team of community connectors and peer support workers can engage with people around the How Am I Doing framework, identify issues they may be experiencing and plan how further support can be accessed.

The sessions are informal so people can chat, ask questions and enjoy snacks in a relaxed environment, but we also include structured activities such as arts and crafts, health and wellbeing sessions and talks from other organisations so people can learn new skills and access information and services relevant to them.



We also organise regular day trips to give people the chance to visit somewhere new and develop their confidence and this year have enjoyed visits to places such as St James' Park, Happy Hooves animal sanctuary and Jarrow Hall.

Cooking with Confidence

Our regular Cooking with Confidence sessions take place in person and online to help people develop their skills and confidence to cook healthy meals independently.

With support from the Prime Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, this year we were able to offer support to 75 people with learning disabilities who were facing social and financial disadvantage.

Many of these people lived independently lacking basic cooking skills and living on microwave meals, struggling to afford the food they wanted. By using accessible equipment and Easy Read recipe cards we were able to show them how to cook affordable, nutritious meals at home while also having fun.

After taking part:

- 29 people cooked a low cost hot meal at home for the first time
- 5 people shared their own recipes
- 3 people have taught preparing a meal to others in the group.





The YVC Young People's Group

We launched our first group specifically for young people in November. Funded by the Morrisons Foundation and facilitated by our community connectors and peer support workers, the group is for people who live in South Tyneside who are 18 – 25 years old and have a learning disability or are autistic.

Designed with young people in mind, the group has 15 members and meets every Monday evening with regular trips out too, providing opportunities for group members to develop friendships and tackling issues such as social isolation and loneliness.

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Community Voice

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and delivered in partnership with Vision & Hearing Support and Bliss=Abilty, the Community Voice project was launched in July and is aimed at people who have learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, sight loss or who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

49 people have participated in the project, taking part in a varied programme of activities including information, advice and guidance sessions, pre-employability training and creative and historical workshops, all designed to support the project's aims to combat social isolation and improve mental health and wellbeing.

Five volunteers have also been recruited to help deliver the sessions which has been a fantastic support and an opportunity for people to further develop their skills and confidence.

100%
of participants felt their emotional wellbeing and mental health improved after taking part

100%
felt more confident

83%
felt their physical health was improved





From participant to volunteer

Ricky was diagnosed with a learning disability in later life and started attending our drop-in groups to make friends and access support with many aspects of his life. As Ricky's confidence grew, he told us about his passion for art and showed an interest in being part of Community Voice so we encouraged him to become a volunteer to help deliver the arts sessions.

Through doing this his confidence grew and he was able to choose an art activity for the group, arrange the equipment needed and promote the session. He's now confident enough to apply for job opportunities and look for ways to develop his skills further.

"I was nervous at first and didn't know what to say to people but enjoyed doing the art sessions and helping people. I like helping people and have made friends... I was quiet at first, but YVC has boosted my confidence."



Ricky

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The power of lived experience

Leading the way in co-production

Shaun Armour is an Expert by Experience working for Your Voice Counts who is a Commissioning Officer for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (NENCICS) in South Tyneside. This year, Shaun has been working alongside our Project Support Worker Amy Broughton to raise awareness and promote the benefits of involving people with lived experience in the delivery of services and projects.



Amy and Shaun at an NHS Health Education England event

Voice of the Person

We are very proud to be part of South Tyneside's Learning Disability Strategy that aims to improve the services and support that are available to people with learning disabilities in the area. Central to the strategy is making sure that people with lived experience of learning disabilities are given the chance to have their say and play a real part in creating change. This year Shaun was chosen to lead on the Voice of the Person element of the strategy that will see him responsible for ensuring people with lived experience are a central part of the work.

Training health and social care staff

This year we became approved lead trainers for the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training programme and worked with Skills for Care to design the training framework and 'train the trainers' model that will be used for its national roll-out.

The training is mandatory for all NHS and social care staff and is designed to teach people about the specific needs of autistic people and people with learning disabilities so they receive safe, compassionate and informed care when they need it.

The programme is named after Oliver McGowan whose death highlighted the need for better training across the sector and has been co-produced, co-evaluated and is co-delivered by people with a learning disability and autistic people who are paid for their time.

We also won the contract for a second consecutive year to run the National Workforce Advisory Group that enables people with learning disabilities to influence best practice among the health and social care workforce. The group meets regularly and is chaired by Shaun to ensure lived experience runs throughout the group.

Sharing our peer support worker best practice

We were honoured to attend an NHS Health Education England event in Leeds in July where Shaun delivered a presentation about how we create opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people to use their lived experience to support others. We received lots of great feedback about Shaun's presentation and answered many questions afterwards from other organisations that are interested in peer support worker roles and hope by sharing our experience we can encourage others to consider how they can also create opportunities for people with lived experience.

Understanding autistic people's experiences of being diagnosed with autism

We were commissioned by the NENCICS to carry out a peer research project around the support people receive before, during and after the process of being diagnosed with autism.

Working across the region, our researchers designed, delivered and wrote up the research which was framed around finding out what support people think would be useful and who should deliver this. The results of the research are due to be published in 2023/2024.

What is peer research?

Peer research is carried out by people who have lived experience of the subject they are researching. This project was delivered by peer researchers from Your Voice Counts who have received a diagnosis of autism as adults so their lived experience could inform how the research was designed and delivered.

"The reason I became a peer researcher for this project was due to my own experiences of being diagnosed as having autism just this year. I think involving autistic people and considering the different communities and intersections of barriers in this type of research help to breaks down barriers. Where people do not just become figures on a research page, voices can be clearly heard, and this should be supported in any way to improve the lives of autistic people."



Anthony, YVC Peer Researcher

seven
focus groups

318
survey responses

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Self-advocacy highlights

Your Voice Counts believes in supporting and connecting people to be advocates for themselves so they can share their views and speak up for what they want and need. One of the ways we do this is by supporting and championing self-advocacy groups like Speaking Up Together.



Speaking Up Together is run by and for adults with learning disabilities. This year the group has taken part in many activities together, including an Equality Matters course, Recipe for Success healthy eating group, cathedral choir, book club and a regular Women's Group.

Influencing and raising awareness is at the heart of the group, and this year the group has been part of the Insights Network where they worked with professionals and carers in Gateshead to help improve services.

The group has also delivered peer-led Be Cancer Aware training with the Learning Disability Network to help people with learning disabilities understand and attend cancer screenings and learn more about how they can look after their health by staying safe in the sun.

We Are Human Too

The group works in partnership with other local self-advocacy groups and this year has been heavily involved in the We Are Human Too group alongside Sunderland People First and Skills for People. The groups work together to campaign for the rights of patients with learning disabilities who are in assessment and treatment units and we are also proud that members spoke at the national HOPE(S) conference this year as well as co-hosting the Building Community Capacity conference.

You can find out more about We Are Human Too by watching this video at https://youtu.be/ABzVxU1SMRU?si=tZr7J_pDrWcXf_Bw or by scanning this QR code opposite.

Paula Lowson

In October, our first Co-Chair Paula Lowson sadly passed away. Paula was a committed and passionate self-advocate and the founder of Speaking Up Together. Paula is greatly missed by all of the group but the memory of Paula's drive is an inspiration for us all.



Find out more

If you are interested in finding out more about Speaking Up Together, please contact **joanne.speakinguptogether@gmail.com** or search for Speaking Up Together on Facebook. www.facebook.com/speakinguptogether

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Advocacy services highlights

Expanding our services

In April, we became the statutory provider of NHS independent complaints advocacy services in Gateshead for the first time, providing information and support to people who need help to navigate the NHS complaints process.

We also launched our Voice for Families service this year after being awarded a three-year grant to provide advocacy support for parents with learning disabilities and their families in Newcastle and South Tyneside. The project is funded with the support of the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington and works with parents to help them navigate challenges, be involved in decision-making about their family and improve their support networks.

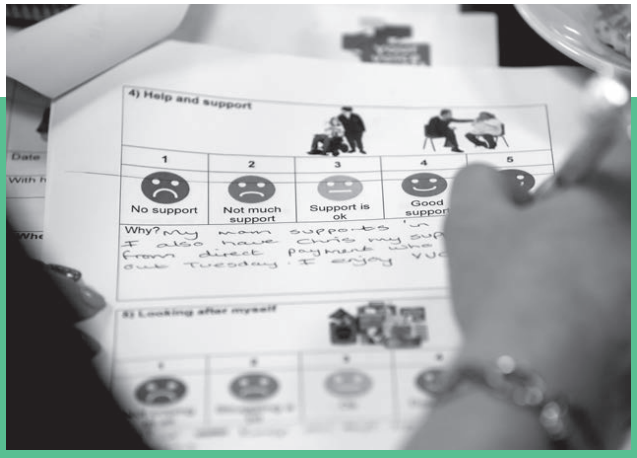
THE MERCERS' COMPANY
Trustee to The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

Professional development

Our regular supervision and team meetings ensure our advocates are able to reflect and get support around their professional practice but we are also keen to take part in other professional development opportunities to ensure our advocates keep up to date with best practice.

For example, in May 2022, our advocates took part in a dementia interpreter course to help them better understand the communication barriers faced by people living with dementia. We were also pleased that our advocates received training in July around the HOPE(S) model that is designed to reduce the need for restrictive practice in hospital admissions.

Our advocates also benefit from Your Voice Counts' wider staff training and development initiatives and were able to take part in a menopause awareness session delivered in our office in August.



Partnership working

We work closely with colleagues across the health, social care and local authority sector to ensure we share our experiences and improve the services available in our local area. This year we took part in Newcastle's Safeguarding Board's Task and Finish group around the Mental Capacity Act and also got involved with an advocacy leaders' group to explore how advocacy could be improved for people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people in restricted settings.

Two of our advocates also took part in a regional project delivered by Inclusion North to look at the different needs of people receiving advocacy support in hospital compared to people being treated in long term seclusion; the findings of which will feed into a national advocacy review in addition to being shared with our local Integrated Care Board.

#AAW22 Advocacy Awareness Week 7th - 11th November 2022

Raising the profile of advocacy

We took part in Advocacy Awareness Week and Safeguarding Adults Week to raise awareness of the role and impact of advocacy where we used case studies and 'day in the life' features to illustrate what advocates do and the difference they make to the people they support.

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Our advocacy services

Independent Care Act Advocacy (ICAA)

Local authorities have a legal duty under the Care Act of 2014 to arrange for an independent advocate to represent and support a person who has a 'substantial difficulty' in understanding the Care Act process and has no one else appropriate to support them.

The aim of our advocates is to enable people to be involved in the relevant Care Act process and to be supported as fully as possible in understanding what is happening, why and what it may mean for them. Where necessary our advocates will represent the person and speak on their behalf and ensure their wishes, feelings and needs are at the heart of the process.

ICAA in Newcastle



72 people supported



1,094 hours of advocacy

South Tyneside Community Case Advocacy for people with a learning disability

Our community advocates work with people who have difficulties being involved in decisions that affect them. Community advocates can support people to have their voice and views heard by others, gain access to relevant information to make decisions and to act on information, attend meetings, and assist with issues such as benefits, housing, and to be afforded fair and equal treatment.

Our community case advocacy service also offers support to parents with a learning disability where they are involved with the local authority in child protection procedures.

Community case advocacy in South Tyneside



39 people supported



1,053 hours of advocacy

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

This service supports people who are detained under the Mental Health Act in hospitals or in the community, helping people to understand what their rights are in relation to their legal situation, their medication and treatment and discharge plans.

They can help the person communicate with medical teams and other appropriate professionals and assist with raising their own issues or complaints. Advocates can attend meetings, tribunals and appeals and assist the person to access legal support.

IMHA in South Tyneside and Newcastle



280 people supported



2,597 hours of advocacy

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Activities, achievements and performance

Case study: A joined up advocacy service

Simon was referred to us by the local authority when a decision was being made about where he should live and if a secure setting was the right option for him. Simon has complex needs with a history of offending and drug and alcohol misuse as well as having a learning disability so it was important that he had the support of an advocate to help him understand the process and make sure his human rights were upheld.

"I worked with Simon for over two years - my role was to primarily provide an Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) service because Simon was deemed to lack capacity to make the decision about where he should live. Simon was clear that he did not want to have his liberty restricted, so as an IMCA I supported him to convey his wishes and help him be involved in the decision-making process as much as possible. On the surface, this involved practical tasks such as arranging independent mental capacity assessments and contributing to the many court hearings, reports and multi-disciplinary team meetings that are a necessary part of any legal process.

"Simon was also entitled to a Relevant Person's Representative so I was also appointed to this role so there would be consistency in the service he received from us. As part of this, I helped Simon to access legal representation and liaised with his solicitor throughout the process, ensuring Simon's wishes were heard and he was supported to understand what was happening.

"It's more than all that though – at the basis of it all was building a relationship with Simon, making sure he trusted me and could rely on me as a consistent presence throughout the process. Some of this was as simple as ringing Simon at a regular time every week, even when I had no updates about his situation, so that he knew he could trust me and that I wouldn't judge him.

"The court finally recommended supported accommodation for Simon and I'm pleased to say he's doing well. He told me that he doesn't want his life to go back to the way it was before he lived there, showing how much progress he's made and just how important it was that he had an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate to represent him and help him challenge the original plan to move him to a secure setting."

Your Voice Counts Advocate

Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

Our IMCA service provides independent advocacy for people who are deemed to lack decision-making capacity for a specific decision at the time that decision needs to be made. This might include where they live, what medical treatment they receive, what care and support they need or as part of safeguarding protective measures to ensure they are safe from harm or neglect.

IMCA in South Tyneside and Newcastle



232 people supported



2,176 hours of advocacy

Paid Relevant Person Representative (RPR)

RPRs work with people who are subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). They ensure that when it is necessary to deprive someone of their liberty it is the least restrictive option possible to provide the required care and treatment and to keep the person safe from harm. If the person is objecting the advocate can request a review or support the person to access legal support and take their case to the Court of Protection.

RPR services in South Tyneside and Newcastle



350 new people supported



535 people supported in total



7,007 hours of advocacy

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NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (NHS ICA)

Our NHS ICA service can help people who live in Gateshead who need support with an NHS complaint. An advocate can help people through the NHS complaints procedure by providing information about the NHS complaints process, helping to draft letters, providing support to prepare for and attend complaints resolution meetings and liaising with NHS complaints teams.

Not everyone making a complaint about the NHS will need an advocate but may benefit from useful information so we can also provide Self-Help Information Packs for people who want to make a complaint by themselves.

NHS ICA in Gateshead

63 people supported

509 hours of advocacy

4 complaints successfully resolved

Voice for Families

Our new Voice for Families service uses targeted early intervention to help parents with learning disabilities access the support they need to play a proactive part in family life. This may be through providing support to help people manage and thrive in their role as parents or, where this may not be possible, ensuring parents are supported to be involved in any decision-making that affects their family.

Our advocates can help parents to engage with other services, understand what is happening, put their point across and develop relationships. This can include helping people to navigate the health, legal and social care system, addressing underlying needs (such as housing or financial issues) and working with parents to identify goals, build support networks and develop their skills and confidence.

Voice for Families in Newcastle and South Tyneside

5 people supported

30 hours of advocacy

Case study: Helping parents with learning disabilities have their voices heard

Kim has a learning disability and was supported by our Voice for Families service after experiencing domestic abuse. An advocate supported Kim through family court proceedings and helped Kim access support and develop the relationships needed to improve her circumstances and feel more positive and confident.

"Before my social worker told me about Your Voice Counts I didn't know which way to turn. I was in a really bad situation and didn't feel safe for me and my daughter where I was. My advocate helped me to find a refuge place. She helped me to speak up at lots of meetings about me and my daughter and she went with me to court. I was really nervous but she calmed me down and helped me to understand what was going on. She helped me to get a house and to get back on my feet. She also helped me to build my confidence back up and to get into volunteering at Your Voice Counts."

Kim

Outcomes for the people support

Through our advocacy services we ensure people receive the support they need to be involved in important decisions about their lives. This year, this has included:

299 people deprived of their liberty had their views represented

279 people detained under section supported to understand their treatment and hospital discharge plans

228 incapacitated people had their rights and views represented while decisions were made by others on their behalf

72 people supported to take part in their Care Act assessment or review

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Operations, Finance and Business Development team highlights

Our team of admin, finance and business development colleagues works behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly and ensure we act on opportunities to grow and develop, and work towards our business objectives.

Our People



This year we developed our approach to recruitment, using different advertising styles and channels to advertise roles across our services. These included newly created posts such as our Advocacy Practice Manager, Volunteer Coordinator and Communities Manager roles that are intended to grow our capacity to make improvements and to support our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to making Your Voice Counts a fantastic place to work and are proud of the enhanced benefits package we offer, including death in service, pension salary sacrifice and travel pass schemes that were agreed this year. This year we wrote our People Plan that sets out how we support and develop our staff. Making sure our staff feel valued and receive a fair wage is important to us so we also joined the Living Wage Foundation and adopted the Real Living Wage increase early, along with giving all staff a 5% cost of living pay increase in light of the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Lived experience is at the heart of Your Voice Counts and we're proud that we have created new job roles that increase the number of staff members with lived experience to 20 colleagues.

9	3	1	3	1	2	1
Peer Support Workers	GP Quality Checkers	Commissioning Officer	Peer Researchers	Diabetes Trainer	Care and Treatment Review Experts by Experience	Workforce Advisory Group Facilitator

Board and Governance

Our long-standing Co-Chair Lisa Kelly stood down from her position as Co-Chair but remains on the Board as an Expert by Experience. We also thank Nick Herron who resigned this year but are pleased to welcome new members Sophie Swanston-Newbrook, Preddi Bononge, Jess Fielding and Matthew Bailey.

We wanted to strengthen our Board by diversifying the range of specialisms and experiences members have, so we carried out a robust recruitment process to ensure we appointed people who help us to do this. Sophie has extensive experience around charity boards and equality, diversity and inclusion and Preddi, Jess and Matthew bring invaluable lived experience of learning disabilities, autism and mental ill health. The field of candidates for our Expert by Experience Board roles was so strong that we also decided to develop a Lived Experience Reference Group to work alongside the Board to further strengthen the voices of people who use our services. We've invited the candidates to join this group which we plan to establish early next year.



Jess Fielding



Preddi Bononge

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Meet our new Co-Chair Matthew



Matthew has been involved with Your Voice Counts for many years after receiving support from us at one of our drop-in groups. Matthew went on to become a volunteer then joined our staff team as our first Learning Disabled Commissioning Officer working as part of South Tyneside Council's Joint Commissioning Unit. Matthew went on to pursue other opportunities and we're delighted to welcome him back as he takes up the role of Co-Chair of our Board, using his lived experience to challenge and guide us.

Fundraising



This year, for the first time ever, we entered a team of charity runners into the Great North Run who raised over £2000 in sponsorship. Eight runners, including staff and people who use our services, took part and we are incredibly grateful for their efforts.

We also held our first Your Voice Counts bake-a-thon where people from our regular Cooking with Confidence sessions took on a fundraising challenge to bake 300 cakes in one day. A great day was had by all with £413 raised through sponsorship and the sale of the cakes at Boldon Community Association the following day.

We have also promoted digital ways of supporting us this year, including online shopping via Easyfundraising and Amazon Smile and our 'Donate now' button on our website.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We want to improve the diversity of our organisation and ensure our services are accessible to all of the communities we support so we have ensured EDI is high on the agenda across all of our services. We continue to run our EDI staff group so our colleagues can help steer this work, and we were pleased to recruit Sophie to our Board so her extensive EDI experience can support us to move forward.

This year we also joined the Connected Voice Haref Allies to support work happening across our region to tackle the health inequalities faced by ethnically minoritised communities.

Volunteering

Ann Henderson joined us this year as our new Volunteer Coordinator, helping us to develop the volunteering opportunities we offer and supporting the people who volunteer with us to get the most out of their roles. Successes have included increasing the number of volunteers from four to 14, recruiting volunteers with lived experience and supporting two volunteers into paid employment with Your Voice Counts. Ann has also been developing our links with other organisations, local colleges and universities and attending jobs and recruitment fairs.



2021/22
Number of volunteers



2022/23
Number of volunteers

Award success

In the space of three weeks we won three national awards: a National Advocacy Award for our advocacy services, a Charity Governance Award for our approach to board diversity and inclusion, and a Weston Charity Award for our communities work. Not only were these awards fantastic recognition of our work at a national level, they provided us with valuable funding through prize money along with strategic business support from Pilotlight charity consultancy. We were incredibly proud of these awards and hope to build on this success in future.



Lisa Kelly accepting our Charity Governance Award as YVC Co-Chair

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Our year in numbers

Communities:

198
people supported in total

137
financial health interventions

123
people supported with vaccinations

Advocacy:

1,215
people supported in total

14,466
hours spent providing advocacy

228
incapacitated people had their views represented during decision-making

Community fundraising :

£2,413
raised

8
Great North Run entrants

445
cakes baked and sold at the YVC Bake-a-thon

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Our team:



20

members of staff with lived experience

14

volunteers



Our finances:

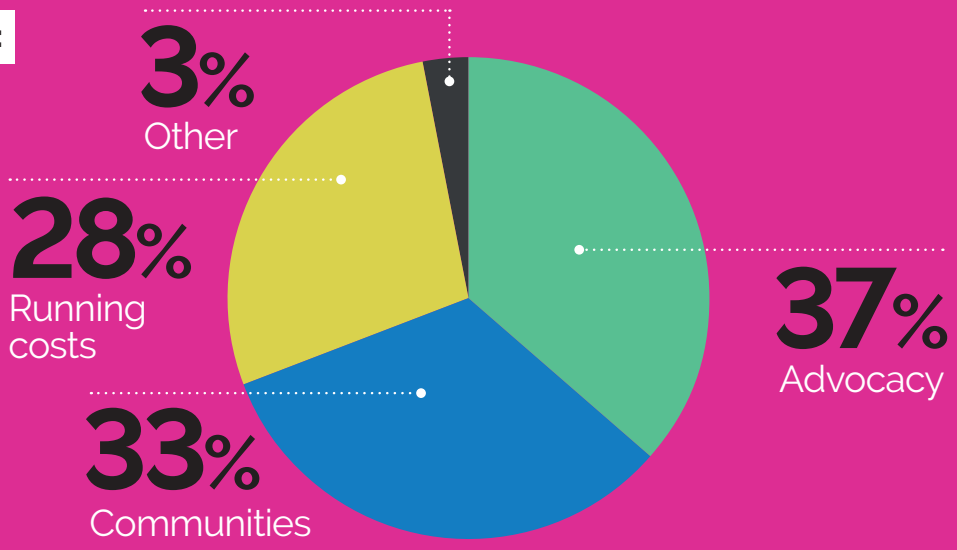
£1,417,746

Income

£1,287,642

Expenditure

How we spent it:



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REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Your Voice Counts aims to maintain a robust financial position in the face of continuing economic uncertainty in order to continue delivering much needed services to the people we support.

The charity receives most of its funding from statutory sources and grants from foundations and charitable trusts. Our internal structure comprises Advocacy, Communities and Operations and is aligned to our funding sources. We seek to recover our full costs from all projects.

This year, we have been pleased to continue to benefit from contract and services income and from the generosity of grant funders, allowing us to continue to grow our income despite the challenging economic environment: £1,417,746 (2022: £1,144,157). We are extremely grateful to our existing funders, including Lloyds Foundation and The Lottery, to new funders who have supported us this year, and to the trusts and foundations that have supported us through a cost-of-living uplift. We have continued to control our costs and are reporting expenditure of £1,287,642 (2022: £1,061,641).

Trustees continue to monitor financial controls, performance and stewardship via a bi-monthly Finance Committee. Review of treasury and investment management and review of business development remain standing agenda items and we have continued to invest in our Business Development function in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Due to this additional income and cost control, we have produced a surplus of £130,104 this year (2022: £82,516). This leaves us with overall reserves of £714,304 (2022: £584,200). Trustees take a forward-looking and proactive approach to financial management and so have again taken the decision to designate funds this year. These funds are for projects we are undertaking over the next two years to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation for the benefit of our clients. The areas we are investing in are:

Business Development: **£23,078**

Marketing and Communications **£9,100**

Co-production: **£28,894**

Admin Development: **£22,781**

Volunteer Coordinator: **£14,824**

Board Support: **£14,400**

HR: **£11,969**

We hold between three and six months necessary operating expenses as a minimum reserve. Based on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2023, three months would equate to £116,168 and six months to £317,336. Our free reserves (unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets) stand at £151,216 (2022: £158,592). Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

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FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY

Your Voice Counts takes a proactive and structured approach to fundraising and complies with 'Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20).' A fundraising strategy is in place and is updated each year and reviewed by trustees. A donations policy is also in place. These were developed using Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator and Institute of Fundraising guidance.

Your Voice Counts undertakes minimal public fundraising as most of our funding comes from statutory sources and grant funders. The charity does not use a professional fundraiser. The charity has a Business Development function which is managed by the Head of Finance. Fundraising is a standing agenda item on the Finance Committee and this sub-committee of the Board scrutinises all fundraising activity on a bi-monthly basis.

The charity regularly seeks input and advice from Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience, including those on the Board, on the impacts of all its activities, including fundraising, on vulnerable people and no issues with its fundraising activity have been raised.

Core funding from Lloyds Foundation supported us to strengthen our operations and to increase our co-production activity, including delivering training across our staff team on embedding co-production approaches.

Funding from Henry Smith enabled our Financial Health Team to provide vital casework and training to people with learning disabilities to improve their financial resilience and address specific financial issues they are facing.

With a three year grant from the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, we have also launched our new Voice For Families service that helps parents with learning disabilities in Newcastle and South Tyneside to navigate the challenges they face, to have their voices heard when it comes to decision making about their family circumstances, and to improve their support networks.

Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budget and future cash flows in making their assessment. In particular, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been considered. Based on these assessments, the trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.



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PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We have ambitious plans to grow Your Voice Counts over the coming year and are developing our growth and organisational strategies to guide us.

We will focus on key areas of work including:

Growing our advocacy offer

As well as mobilising our new Community Mental Health Advocacy project, we want to position ourselves to expand our advocacy offer by delivering our current services in new areas while also increasing the independent advocacy services we provide across the region.

This will require an organised and thorough approach to tendering and bidding where we can share our impact and demonstrate our experience and expertise in the sector.

Establishing and embedding our new Co-Production team

This year the Board approved investment from our reserves that will enable us to establish a new team that will be dedicated to developing our approach to co-production and supporting even more colleagues with lived experience to gain paid employment with us. We want to get this team up and running and making a difference as soon as possible.

Sharing our expertise

We are approved lead trainers for the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training programme that is being rolled out across NHS and social care staff. We want to share our learning and experience of employing people with lived experience of autism and of learning disability across the sector, and make the most of this opportunity to be involved in delivering this training at scale.

Delivering our People Plan

Our new People Plan sets out our goals for how we will develop and support our staff. This is a substantial and ongoing piece of work so we want to invest in our HR and people management capacity so we have the resources and expertise needed to better support and develop our staff.

Governance

Our Board is committed to being innovative and inclusive and we're proud of the ways we ensure Experts by Experience are a genuine part of our governance. We will continue to invest in our Board support function so that we can ensure lived experience will always be at the heart of our decision-making.



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Your Voice Counts

TRUSTEES' REPORT

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Your Voice Counts for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- 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 adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and 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.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Reappointment of auditor

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution for the re-appointment of Azets Audit Services as auditors of the charity is to be proposed at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 24/10/2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Christina Gates

.....

C D Gates
Trustee

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Your Voice Counts

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Your Voice Counts (the 'charity') 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 a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is United Kingdom Accounting Standards, comprising Charities SORP - FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and applicable law (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity'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; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 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 charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements were 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 auditor's report 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 there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

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Your Voice Counts

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

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

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

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.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities (set out on page 27), the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- enquiries of management about any known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations and fraud;
- challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in their significant accounting estimates;
- reviewing board minutes;

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Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

- auditing the risk of management override of controls, including through testing journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business and reviewing accounting estimates for bias; and
- reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to support documentation.

Because of the field in which the charity operates, we identified the following areas as those most likely to have a material impact on the financial statements: Health and Safety; employment law; and compliance with both the UK Companies Act and UK Charities Act.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that some material misstatements in the financial statements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the ISAs (UK). For instance, the further removed non-compliance is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the auditor is to become aware of it or to recognise the non-compliance.

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 trustees, 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 charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Simon Brown BA ACA DChA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of
Azets Audit Services
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor
Bulman House
Regent Centre
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 3LS

Date: 26-10-2023

Azets Audit Services is a trading name of Azets Audit Services Limited

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Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	12,898	-	12,898	10,135
Charitable activities	4	974,600	423,999	1,398,599	1,130,273
Investment income	5	3,588	-	3,588	1,355
Other income	6	2,661	-	2,661	2,394
Total Income		993,747	423,999	1,417,746	1,144,157
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	7	(1,033,253)	(254,389)	(1,287,642)	(1,061,641)
Total Expenditure		(1,033,253)	(254,389)	(1,287,642)	(1,061,641)
Net (expenditure)/income		(39,506)	169,610	130,104	82,516
Net movement in funds		(39,506)	169,610	130,104	82,516
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		317,108	267,092	584,200	501,684
Total funds carried forward	19	277,602	436,702	714,304	584,200

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

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Comparative Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2022 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	10,135	-	10,135
Charitable activities	4	734,036	396,237	1,130,273
Investment income	5	1,355	-	1,355
Other income	6	2,394	-	2,394
Total income		747,920	396,237	1,144,157
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	7	(799,612)	(262,029)	(1,061,641)
Total expenditure		(799,612)	(262,029)	(1,061,641)
Net (expenditure)/income		(51,692)	134,208	82,516
Net movement in funds		(51,692)	134,208	82,516
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		368,800	132,884	501,684
Total funds carried forward	19	317,108	267,092	584,200

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Your Voice Counts

(Registration number: 06654142)
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	12	1,651	7,006
Current assets			
Debtors	13	194,250	367,328
Investments	14	80,226	79,287
Cash at bank and in hand	15	497,881	318,831
		772,357	765,446
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	16	(59,704)	(188,252)
Net current assets		712,653	577,194
Net assets		714,304	584,200
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted		436,702	267,092
Unrestricted income funds			
Designated funds		125,522	151,510
Unrestricted funds		152,080	165,598
Total unrestricted funds		277,602	317,108
Total funds	19	714,304	584,200

The financial statements on pages 31 to 46 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on 24/10/2023 and signed on their behalf by:

.....
M Ife
Trustee

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Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Note	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash income		130,104	82,516
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items			
Depreciation		5,355	4,844
Investment income	5	(3,588)	(1,355)
Current asset investment income		(939)	-
		130,932	86,005
Working capital adjustments			
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	13	173,078	(295,762)
Increase in creditors	16	6,452	719
(Decrease)/increase in deferred income		(135,000)	135,000
Net cash flows from operating activities		175,462	(74,038)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	3,588	1,355
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		179,050	(72,683)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April		318,831	391,514
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March		497,881	318,831

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

1 Charity status

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

The address of its registered office is: 14-16 Greenesfield Business Centre Mulgrave Terrace, Gateshead, England, NE8 1PQ

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
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 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation
Your Voice Counts meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

These financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency of the entity and rounded to the nearest £.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Estimation uncertainty and judgements
The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported.

There are considered to be no significant judgements (apart from those involving estimations) that management has made in the process of applying the entity's accounting policies which effect the amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Donations and legacies

Donations are recognised when the charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance by the charity before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that these conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents amounts received for future periods and is released to incoming resources in the period for which, it has been received. Such income is only deferred when:

-The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
-The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Investment income

Investment income is included when receivable.

Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

Charitable activities

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Support costs

Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a basis consistent with the use of resources, for example, allocating property costs by floor areas, or per capita, staff costs by the time spent and other costs by their usage.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Governance costs
These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees's meetings and reimbursed expenses.

Government grants
Government grants are recognised based on the performance model and are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Taxation
The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
Individual fixed assets costing £1,000 or more are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Fixtures and fittings	25% reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% straight line

Current asset investments
Current asset investments are included at the lower of cost and net realisable value / market value.

Trade debtors
Trade debtors are amounts due from customers for merchandise sold or services performed in the ordinary course of business.

Trade debtors are recognised initially at the transaction price. They are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. A provision for the impairment of trade debtors is established when there is objective evidence that the charity will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of the receivables.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Trade creditors
Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if the charity does not have an unconditional right, at the end of the reporting period, to defer settlement of the creditor for at least twelve months after the reporting date. If there is an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least twelve months after the reporting date, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Trade creditors are recognised initially at the transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside for specific purposes at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted income funds are those donated for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Defined contribution plans
Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised as an expense in the period in which the related service is provided.

Agency accounting
The charity acts as an agent in distributing funds under the NHS Charities Together Community Partnership Grants Programme. Payments received and subsequently disbursed are excluded from the Statement of Financial Activities as the charity does not have control over the charitable applicable of the funds.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2023 £
Regular giving and capital donations	12,898	12,898
	12,898	12,898

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Regular giving and capital donations	9,311	9,311
Government grants - HMRC furlough claims	824	824
	10,135	10,135

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2023 £
Advocacy	861,289	39,184	900,473
Grants	113,311	384,815	498,126
	974,600	423,999	1,398,599

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Advocacy	679,873	49,715	729,588
Grants	54,163	346,522	400,685
	734,036	396,237	1,130,273

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2023 £
Interest receivable and similar income;		
Interest receivable on bank deposits	3,588	3,588
	3,588	3,588

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Interest receivable and similar income;		
Interest receivable on bank deposits	1,355	1,355
	1,355	1,355

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

6 Other income

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2023 £
Other income	2,661	2,661

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Other income	2,394	2,394

Other income relates to reimbursed expenses.

7 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and related costs	851,890	241,929	1,093,819	921,839
Premises costs	-	18,562	18,562	19,697
Insurances	-	3,848	3,848	2,370
Light and heat	-	13,016	13,016	3,923
Telephone and internet	9,953	7,073	17,026	10,102
Postage and stationery	35	1,647	1,682	1,788
Bank charges	34	402	436	524
Legal and professional services	-	14,882	14,882	11,413
Training costs	11,100	2,140	13,240	9,137
Subscriptions	-	732	732	727
Room hire	4,058	2,249	6,307	5,701
Travelling expenses	13,434	3,232	16,666	9,840
Repairs and maintenance	-	2,795	2,795	720
Volunteer expenses	309	-	309	205
Accountancy/audit fees	-	7,300	7,300	5,500
Depreciation	3,446	1,909	5,355	4,844
Other costs	37,351	34,316	71,667	53,311
Total for 2023	931,610	356,032	1,287,642	1,061,641

8 Analysis of governance and support costs

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Governance costs

	2023	2022
	£	£
Audit fee	7,300	5,500

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charity during the year.

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	962,071	818,579
Social security costs	75,997	58,860
Pension costs	50,994	42,565
	1,089,062	920,004

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management / leadership team) employed by the charity during the year was as follows:

	2023	2022
	No	No
Management	3	3
Finance	1	1
Advocacy, Communities and Operations	50	44
	54	48

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £60,421 (2022 - £58,678).

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

11 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Furniture and equipment £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2022	7,879	21,930	29,809
At 31 March 2023	7,879	21,930	29,809
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2022	5,513	17,290	22,803
Charge for the year	715	4,640	5,355
At 31 March 2023	6,228	21,930	28,158
Net book value			
At 31 March 2023	1,651	-	1,651
At 31 March 2022	2,366	4,640	7,006

13 Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	192,420	365,490
Prepayments	1,385	-
Other debtors	445	1,838
	194,250	367,328

14 Current asset investments

	2023 £	2022 £
Short term deposits	80,226	79,287

15 Cash and cash equivalents

	2023 £	2022 £
Cash on hand	64	75
Cash at bank	497,817	318,756
	497,881	318,831

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	20,982	15,931
Other taxation and social security	19,871	16,902
Other creditors	-	584
Accruals	18,851	19,835
Deferred income	-	135,000
	59,704	188,252

	2023 £	2022 £
Deferred income at 1 April 2022	135,000	-
Resources deferred in the period	-	135,000
Amounts released from previous periods	(135,000)	-
Deferred income at year end	-	135,000

17 Obligations under leases and hire purchase contracts

Operating lease commitments

Total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Other		
Within one year	5,520	37,020
Between one and five years	12,477	49,440
	17,997	86,460

18 Pension and other schemes

Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension cost charge for the year represents contributions payable by the charity to the scheme and amounted to £50,994 (2022 - £42,565).

Contributions totalling £4,422 (2022: £3,304) were payable to the scheme at the end of the year and are included in creditors.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

19 Funds

	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Unrestricted funds					
General					
General	165,598	993,747	(969,430)	(37,835)	152,080
Designated					
Business development	45,866	-	(22,312)	-	23,554
Finance development	12,463	-	(12,463)	-	-
Communities team	23,268	-	(11,634)	(11,634)	-
Marketing and communications	10,080	-	(9,256)	8,276	9,100
IT infrastructure	8,158	-	(8,158)	-	-
Co-production	28,894	-	-	-	28,894
Admin development	22,781	-	-	-	22,781
Volunteer Coordinator	-	-	-	14,824	14,824
Company Secretary	-	-	-	14,400	14,400
HR Manager	-	-	-	11,969	11,969
	151,510	-	(63,823)	37,835	125,522
Total unrestricted funds	317,108	993,747	(1,033,253)	-	277,602
Restricted funds					
Operations	534	-	-	-	534
Community	216,053	384,815	(232,857)	-	368,011
Advocacy	50,505	39,184	(21,532)	-	68,157
Total restricted funds	267,092	423,999	(254,389)	-	436,702
Total funds	584,200	1,417,746	(1,287,642)	-	714,304

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
Unrestricted funds					
General					
General	265,607	747,920	(758,075)	(89,854)	165,598
Designated					
Business development	50,949	-	(17,628)	12,545	45,866
Finance development	15,476	-	(3,013)	-	12,463
Communities team	23,268	-	(11,634)	11,634	23,268
Marketing and communications	7,500	-	(5,420)	8,000	10,080
IT infrastructure	6,000	-	(3,842)	6,000	8,158
Co-production	-	-	-	28,894	28,894
Admin development	-	-	-	22,781	22,781
	103,193	-	(41,537)	89,854	151,510
Total unrestricted funds	368,800	747,920	(799,612)	-	317,108
Restricted					
Operations	534	-	-	-	534
Community	128,044	346,522	(258,513)	-	216,053
Advocacy	4,306	49,715	(3,516)	-	50,505
Total restricted funds	132,884	396,237	(262,029)	-	267,092
Total funds	501,684	1,144,157	(1,061,641)	-	584,200

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Transfers are made due to capital expenditure in the period.

Designated Funds:
YVC has designated additions funds in the year of £37,835.

Restricted Funds:
Restricted funds represent funds received from statutory sources and grant funders where use of the funds has been specified by the funder. YVC classifies these by business area.
• Advocacy reserves are mainly from statutory sources and are predominantly to be used for advocacy in Newcastle and South Tyneside.
• Communities reserves are mainly from grant funders and are to be used in a variety of individual projects in areas such as Gateshead and South Tyneside.
• Operations reserves are predominantly for core costs.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

20 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds	Total funds at 31 March 2023
	General £	Designated £	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	1,661	-	-	1,661
Net current assets/ (liabilities)	150,419	125,522	436,702	712,643
Total net assets	152,080	125,522	436,702	714,304

	Unrestricted			
	General £	Designated £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31 March 2022 £
Tangible fixed assets	7,006	-	-	7,006
Net current assets/(liabilities)	158,592	151,510	267,092	577,194
Total net assets	165,598	151,510	267,092	584,200

21 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year.

22 Agency arrangements

The charity distributed funds to partners under the NHS Charities Together Community Partnership Grants Programme in 2022. In the accounting period ending 31 March 2022, the charity received £47,433 and disbursed £47,433. An amount of £nil was included in creditors at the year end. This arrangement has not continued in the period ending 31 March 2023.

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Thank you to all of our partners and funders who supported us during 2022/2023. We are grateful for your support and look forward to more joint-working so we can continue to support the people who need us.

Barbour Foundation

Charity Governance Awards

County Durham Community Foundation, NHS Charities Together

Heart Research UK, Healthy Hearts grants

Henry Smith Foundation

Leeds Community Foundation

LGA Foundation

Lloyds Bank Foundation

Lottery Community Fund

Morrisons Foundation

Oliver Ford Foundation

The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

Weston Charity Awards

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Your voice counts

Your Voice Counts | Greenesfield Business Centre | Mulgrave Terrace | Gateshead | NE8 1PQ

Registered Charity No. 1125719. Company limited by guarantee No. 6654142

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales - Charity number 1125719

Accounts

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Our Year in Review

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

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Welcome from Lisa Kelly and Christina Gates





On behalf of the Board we want say a massive thank you to our amazing team of staff and volunteers who have done such fantastic work over the last year. Seeing the difference that the organisation has been able to make in so many people's lives at such challenging times has been really inspiring, well done everyone!

This year the Board have been focused on making sure we support the organisation in the best way that we can. We've challenged ourselves to be more inclusive, and have made changes to how we work to make sure our Experts by Experience are able to contribute fully. We've undertaken a full Board appraisal which involved speaking to each Board member individually and coming together as a group to look at what we're doing well and what we want to be better at. We now have a plan for how we want to improve and in particular we want to make sure that we spend more time with our staff teams seeing the work that they do and understanding the challenges they face. We've identified some areas where we need extra help, and have recruited some new Board members who have the knowledge and skills we need to guide the organisation going forward.

We've also realised that we haven't spent time together in person in well over a year! We're really looking forward to meeting together face-to-face at our next Board meeting. Being able to see first-hand how well the organisation has coped with so many challenges in the last couple of years has been a privilege. We've been able to see how passionate the team are about improving things for the people they support and we've been blown away by their creativity and commitment. We're excited about the organisation's plans for the future and looking forward to helping the staff team to achieve the goals we've set together.

Lisa Kelly and Christina Gates,
Co-Chairs, You Voice Counts

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Welcome from David Woolley



Like most organisations, our focus this year was moving on from Covid and building on what we learned as we began the process of carefully returning to face-to-face working, all while negotiating changing restrictions and government guidance.

Our staff and volunteers have been amazing. Their willingness to adapt and go the extra mile has been humbling and it's no exaggeration to say that some of the people we support simply wouldn't have coped at times without them. However, it's been challenging and as we have moved forward we have explored with everyone how we want to operate in future. Having the flexibility to work from home has been convenient and efficient, but staff also reported feeling isolated and less of a connection to the organisation. We reflected that we wanted to bring people back together in physical spaces so they could feel that connection, but also so that we could encourage the type of peer support that is hard to replicate when working remotely. We agreed to a hybrid model of working, allowing staff the freedom and flexibility to work from home when it made sense to do so, but also making sure we had office spaces to allow them to come together.

Moving on also gave us an opportunity to reflect on our priorities as an organisation. We renewed our commitment to co-production and were delighted to employ a new lived experience team that has been challenging and improving our approach to co-production.

Renewing our Advocacy QPM was also a fantastic opportunity for us to reflect on what we do well in our Advocacy services, and where we need to improve. The process of assessment was rigorous and challenging but also incredibly rewarding, and we were delighted to be awarded the QPM for a further three years.

The Board has also invested in our Business Development and Communications capacity so that we can continue to secure much-needed investment for the people we help. We also recognised the amazing contribution that volunteers make to our organisation and have prioritised developing our approach to finding and supporting volunteers.

Your Voice Counts was founded on a principle that people with lived experience of services are best placed to design the solutions that meet their needs. As we look ahead to the future we recognise that there are significant challenges on the horizon, for our organisation and for the people we support. Despite this we find ourselves in a strong position to navigate these times successfully and to go from strength to strength.

Next year we want to make sure we reach more people in need and make sure that our support is delivered in a way that works for them. To do this we'll create more opportunities for people with lived experience to join our team in paid and volunteer roles, and we'll create more opportunities for the people who use our services to tell us how they want these services to be delivered. We're committed to learning and growing as an organisation and to nurturing the creativity, flexibility and passion that our teams have demonstrated in this last year. By investing in our staff and volunteers we'll make sure that they can continue to make a huge difference in the lives of the people we support.

David Woolley,
Chief Executive, Your Voice Counts

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Advisors
Auditors:

Azets Audit Services,
Bulman House,
Regent Centre,
Gosforth,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE3 3LS

Main Bankers:

Lloyds Bank,
17 Ellison Walk,
Gateshead,
NE8 1BF

Savings:

Hampshire Trust Bank,
55 Bishopsgate, London,
EC2N 3AS

Aldermore Savings, 1st Floor,
Block B, Western House,
Lynch Wood, Peterborough
PE2 6FZ

Redwood Bank
The Nexus Building, Broadway,
Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, SG6 3TA

Our Board

Your Voice Counts is a registered charity and limited company governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. Our Governance Handbook sets out how we ensure our governance is effective and inclusive.

Our Articles

Our Articles set out that at least 50% of our Board need to have lived experience of our services, which includes family carers of people who have used our services. We call the Directors with lived experience of our services Experts by Experience. We call Directors who don't have experience of our services Advocates by Experience.

Our Articles also set out that we should have a Chair and Co-Chair and that one should be someone with a learning disability and the other someone without a learning disability.

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Our Directors

Our Directors serve for a term of four years and are eligible for re-appointment by the Directors. There are no restrictions on the number of terms a Director can serve.

There are arrangements for induction, training and support of Board members, which are reviewed by our Operations Committee. Each new Board Member is given an induction pack and attends an induction session with the executive team and meets the Chair. The Operations Committee reviews the training needs of the Board members and arranges training as required.

Our Co-Chairs hold an annual appraisal of the Board and of individual Directors to ensure that the skills and time provided by Directors are used to best effect. Additionally, Board skills are kept under review to inform Board member recruitment, engagement and support.

Board meetings

Our Board meets six times a year. Our Experts by Experience also hold a pre-meeting before each Board meeting to give them additional time to prepare for the meeting. Our Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience meet separately six times a year in order to explore themes and key subject areas in more detail.

The Board holds an annual plan which includes:

- Agreeing the operating budget
- Reviewing bi-monthly management accounts
- Reviewing the organisation's strategic priorities
- Monitoring performance within agreed targets
- Considering risk and ways to mitigate these risks
- Considering strategic issues; and
- Receiving reports and minutes from all our sub-committees.

Sub-committees

The Board appoints sub-committees, which are responsible for more detailed oversight of strategy and activities within their area of responsibility. The sub-committees that met during the year were:

- Finance Committee
- Operations Committee.

The Board intends to establish a Quality and Services Committee, and People Committee in the coming year.

Directors during 2021/2022

Directors who served during the year up the date of signing the financial statements were:

	APPOINTMENT DATE	RESIGNATION DATE
Lisa Kelly	12/3/2011	NA
Christina Gates	15/8/2019	NA
Derek Peters	19/8/2014	NA
Nick Herron	12/3/2011	NA
Bryan McClelland	30/6/2011	24/2/2022
David Taylor	17/6/2015	NA
Matthew Ife	18/1/2018	NA
Andrew Lane	17/12/2020	NA
Rebekah Coombes	19/8/2021	NA
Tom Relph	13/3/2018	NA
Lorraine Scott	3/2/2011	21/10/21

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OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES

About Your Voice Counts

Your Voice Counts is a registered charitable company limited by guarantee.
The Charity's Object is to relieve the need or disability of persons, particularly those suffering impairment of their learning abilities.

What does Your Voice Counts do?

Your Voice Counts is a charity that exists to support people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who are at risk of exclusion due to disability, illness or other challenges.

We achieve our Object, or our aims, by focusing on our mission to help people to be connected, to have choice and control in their lives, and to speak up for what they want and need. We believe in listening to and empowering people with different needs and abilities to bring about positive change. To do this, we work with our partners to design and deliver learning, personal development and social opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, and promote and support self-advocacy and user-led groups that are run by adults with learning disabilities.

We are also a statutory provider of mental health and learning disability advocacy services for people living in Newcastle upon Tyne and South Tyneside.

How do we decide what services to offer?

We have a five-year organisational strategy that has been approved by our Board of Directors. This strategy guides our work and ensures all of our activities work towards at least one of our six priority areas:

1. Design services that make a difference to people
2. Learn from what we're doing so that we get better at helping people
3. Improve how the Board works
4. Help our staff and volunteers be great at their jobs
5. Ensure the organisation is financially resilient
6. Make sure people know who we are, what we do and the difference we make to the people we support.

Our strategy also sets out our commitment to ensuring the voices of lived experience underpin all of our work, and we're proud to co-produce and co-deliver our services with people with learning disabilities, autistic people and people who have experienced mental ill health.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'Public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'. Our main activities and the people we aim to support are described in this report. All of our charitable activities focus on supporting vulnerable people - particularly those with learning disabilities and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

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Communities team highlights



Coping with Covid

Evolving and adapting our activities to respond to the continuing Covid situation ensured we were able to provide the support that people with learning disabilities and autistic people needed to cope with the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

- We ran Winter Wellness sessions where group members shared how they coped with lockdowns and social isolation then created a useful poster as a reminder of techniques that can help when feeling low or lonely.
- When Covid restrictions allowed, we welcomed people back to face-to-face activities and drop-in groups but we were mindful that some people weren't ready to mix in person and continued to run our online sessions such as our arts and crafts and cooking groups that had been popular during lockdowns. These groups enabled people to maintain their links with us and each other, with those attending the in-person cooking group often making extra food to deliver to group members who were shielding or self-isolating.



- We provided practical support to help people with learning disabilities access their Covid-19 vaccine, speaking to 948 people over the course of five days in April to provide accessible information about vaccinations and directly booking appointments for 132 people.
- We partnered with the Gateshead Learning Disabilities Team and the Physical Health Hub in South Tyneside who visited our groups to show people how to do lateral flow tests.
- We delivered a Covid Champions project in South Tyneside where we developed an accessible Covid Coping Plan and shared it with everyone we support.
- Thanks to NHS Charities Together, Newcastle Hospitals Charity and County Durham Community Foundation we were fortunate to receive funding from the Covid-19 Community Partnership Grants Programme (North East and North Cumbria). This made £183,000 available for us to work in partnership with LD:NorthEast, Skills for People, Adapt and Inclusion North and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) on projects to help people with learning disabilities and autistic people to improve their mental and physical health.

Case study: Ian's story

Ian accessed all the online groups we offered and built up confidence in his cooking abilities, leading Ian to focus more on his health and creating healthy meals. Our Cooking with Confidence sessions helped Ian overcome his Covid anxiety as his desire to cook encouraged Ian to go shopping and travel independently. We also helped Ian to book his Covid vaccinations and supported him when he caught Covid, helping him to arrange a test and ensuring he was aware of the guidance he needed to follow.



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Helping people with learning disabilities to thrive online

Our Digital Toolkit

During lockdown restrictions, we realised many people had no access to the internet and we were concerned about the risk this posed to people with learning disabilities and autistic people who were cut off from their usual support networks. Thanks to funding from The National Lottery Coronavirus Community Support Fund, we delivered a Digital Toolkit project to provide practical and emotional support to help people get connected online so they could join in with social activities as well as interact with the services that support them.

Case study: Peter's story

"I was angry because I had nobody to talk to, I couldn't go to my meetings and see my friends, it was like I was locked in a shell".

Peter was at risk of social isolation so we gave him a phone and showed him how to use it so he could join our online sessions and feel connected to his friends.

"Now I can do cooking online which I never did. It's nothing to be frightened of, you can do it as long as someone shows you how. Now everybody in our group has got a phone or a tablet. It's just great, magnificent, how it's brought the glory out of me and all my friends."



Sharing our digital inclusion best practice

We promoted our Digital Toolkit learning through a series of short films that shared the stories of some of the people we supported through this project, focussing on our message that 'with the right support, people with learning disabilities can thrive online.' We also showcased the expertise we developed around this through a presentation at the "No one left behind – Improving digital health and care inclusion" event hosted by the Academic Science Health Network in October.

Digital Voice for communities

We partnered with local organisation Digital Voice to produce a number of short films this year which we used to share our learning and best practice. These included our Digital Toolkit series and a Digital Me video about hate crime, and we were delighted that our work with Digital Voice was nominated for two Royal Television Society awards.

Co-production

Lived experience, co-production and partnership working are at the heart of our work so we were pleased to launch our Our Lives, Our Leadership programme this year that saw us recruit three leaders with lived experience of learning disabilities, autism and mental health services to deliver a project that used staff training to embed co-production processes throughout the organisation.

We were also involved in a number of other' co-production projects, including:

- co-producing a piece of work looking at accessibility with the Learning Disability Transformation Board
- holding a focus group for young people to understand their needs and priorities then presenting the findings to the Strategic Alliance, leading the review of 0-25 services in South Tyneside
- establishing our GP Quality Checkers programme where people with lived experience of learning disabilities and autism inspected and provided feedback to GP surgeries across South Tyneside to improve how they deliver their service and challenge the health inequalities people face.

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Using our co-produced framework to guide our support

Case study: Preddi's story

Preddi is 21 and was referred to us by AutismAble this year because he wasn't accessing any training, employment or education and had been rejected for an EHCP plan and needed help to challenge this decision. To support Preddi, we used our co-produced framework of nine key areas that helps people identify the goals they want to work towards and guides the support we provide.

1. **Where I live** – Preddi lives with his mum but identified he would like to live independently with support so we discussed options with him and how this might work.
2. **People in my life** - We provided emotional support to his mum and helped her connect to carer services.
3. **My health** - Preddi was admitted to hospital after a deterioration in his mental health. We maintained regular contact with him to ensure some familiarity in his support during a difficult time and we attended all MDT and CTR meetings so the hospital staff had a good insight into Preddi's life before the admission.
4. **Help and support** - Preddi was largely unknown to services so we arranged MDTs to build support around him and supported him to attend and share his perspective. We referred Preddi for support from community nursing, liaised with his social worker and worked with him to help him understand and attend his medical appointments.
5. **Looking after myself** - Preddi has been part of our Cooking with Confidence group to help him learn how to prepare healthy meals for himself.
6. **Money** - We supported Preddi with his Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment claims, helped him to use internet banking and provided professional observations to his social worker for a financial capacity assessment claim
7. **How I spend my time** - Preddi attends our group sessions and we have introduced him to other activities such as the Twisting Ducks theatre group.
8. **Having choices and speaking up** - We helped Preddi to produce an About Me book to help healthcare professionals understand his needs and preferences.
9. **Phones and the internet** - We taught Preddi how to access internet banking on his phone.



"Your Voice Counts are a good support to me. They have nice people there that can help us with anything. For example, they have helped me understand things like my money. They help me to think about the future, and gives us the skills we need to build a better life. YVC are very special."



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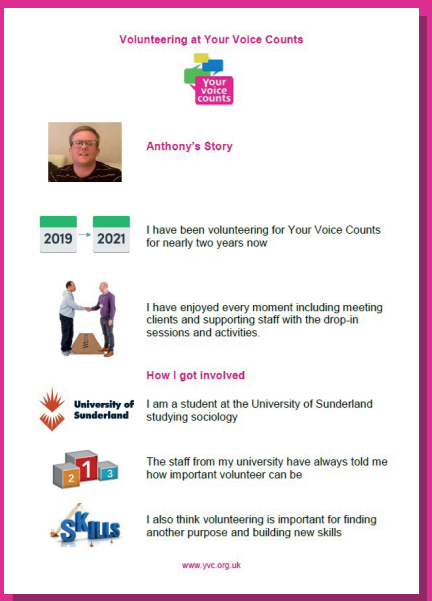


Making a contribution nationally

- We took part in "The Other One Show," an interactive afternoon chat show hosted by people with learning disabilities and recorded by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and London South Bank University.
- We co-produced a Skills for Care webinar on digital accessibility.
- Our Commissioning Officer with lived experience won a Skills for Care and Health Education England contract to co-facilitate an Experts by Experience Workforce Advisory group which reviews training for the social care sector.
- Our Commissioning Officer with lived experience sat on the Oliver McGowan national steering group that reviews mandatory training to increase the skills of healthcare staff working with people with learning disabilities and autism.

Ensuring information is accessible and sharing our insight

- We create Easy Read versions of documents so our information and resources are accessible to as many people as possible.
- We supported the South Tyneside and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to put the LeDeR report into Easy Read.
- We worked on a Making Safeguarding Personal leaflet with the South Tyneside Safeguarding Children's and Adults' Partnership.
- We provided feedback to the South Tyneside commissioning team on health check surveys and their learning disability strategy outcomes measurements.
- We presented at two Financial Abuse Practice Priorities events in South Tyneside.
- We took part in a number of consultations, including the South Tyneside Better Lives consultation with South Tyneside Strategic Alliance led by Even Better and Northumbria University's wellbeing and health in South Tyneside research.


Volunteering at Your Voice Counts

Anthony's Story

2019 → 2021

I have been volunteering for Your Voice Counts for nearly two years now

I have enjoyed every moment including meeting clients and supporting staff with the drop-in sessions and activities.

How I got involved

University of Sunderland

I am a student at the University of Sunderland studying sociology

The staff from my university have always told me how important volunteer can be

SKILLS

I also think volunteering is important for finding another purpose and building new skills

www.yvc.org.uk

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Wise Steps job coaching

Our Wise Steps programme links people with learning disabilities with Job Coaches to help them develop skills and confidence and access training that can prepare them for employment.

COMMUNITY FUND

European Union
European Social Fund

Coping with Covid

This year we had to adapt our service to help keep people motivated at a time when employment felt like a low priority for many. Some people experienced a deterioration in both their physical and mental health due to lockdown and isolation restrictions so we spent time focussing on health and wellbeing so they could more actively take part in our targeted work around employment skills.

Face-to-face engagement was strongly preferred by people on the programme, so we arranged and delivered Covid-secure meetings as much as possible.

We also made use of Specialist Partner referrals to ensure people received 121 tuition in specific areas where needed. This included literacy and numeracy skills, leading two people to pass exams in English, and IT training from Leonard Cheshire, leading one person to a successful volunteering role that has had a positive impact on her life.

Wise Steps 2021/2022

20 people

between the ages of 18 and 65 supported

eight people

have found jobs (with more pending before the end of the project in December 2022):

- Two jobs with Your Voice Counts as Peer Support Workers
- Four jobs with Sunderland University in Expert by Experience roles
- One gardener job
- One kitchen porter job

People who took part in Wise Steps also showed an increase in soft skills such as communication and interpersonal skills as they learned to manage social isolation. Many have participated in wellbeing activities such as visits to garden centres, the theatre, picnics, sports day events, guitar sessions and cooking. We also engaged people in Christmas wellbeing activities and arranged a Christmas Day lunch, welfare calls and gifts for people who would otherwise be alone.



Anthony, Barry and Ricky took part in a sport research project at Northumbria University that involved cycling, walking and mental agility tasks over several weeks.

'Thanks to YVC staff and my Wise Steps Job Coach, I am in a far better place than I was this time last year.' Ricky

Anthony is 60 and loves gadgets but had little confidence in using IT. By working with his Your Voice Counts Job Coach and an IT Specialist at Leonard Cheshire, Anthony's confidence increased and he learned how to use Microsoft Office and how to browse and explore the internet safely.

Our programme gave Anthony the opportunity to practice connecting his gadgets, such as his cameras, to a laptop and learn how to use Zoom and social media so he can connect with family and friends and comfortably take part in online sessions and interviews.



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Self-advocacy highlights

Your Voice Counts believes in supporting and connecting people to be advocates for themselves so they can share their views and speak up for what they want and need. One of the ways we do this is by supporting and championing self-advocacy groups that are run by and for adults with learning disabilities.



This year, two of the self-advocacy groups we support, Gateshead People and Talk 2 Us, made the decision to merge and form one group called Speaking Up Together.

Speaking Up Together is open to people living in Gateshead and South Tyneside and we were pleased to support the merger of the groups by providing our advice and expertise to help the new group agree and form its constitution, apply to the Charity Commission and establish fundraising processes to help it achieve its aims.

If you are interested in finding out more about this group, contact joanne.mcgeachin@yvc.org.uk.

We Are Human Too

The self-advocates from Speaking Up Together are part of a regional We Are Human Too campaign to raise awareness of the issue of the abuse that some people with learning disabilities and autistic people experience in hospitals and assessment and treatment units. The group began in response to a BBC Panorama programme about Whorlton Hall. It now has members nationwide campaigning for more measures to be put in place to prevent this abuse from happening.

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Advocacy team highlights

Coping with Covid

Our face-to-face contact with people continued to be limited by restrictions in settings such as hospitals and care homes. However, due to our close links with colleagues in the local authority, hospital trust and care settings we were able to understand and plan how we could individualise our service to each person's needs.

We found that while some people struggled with video calls, with the support of staff working within the settings many people were able to use this method of communication to work with us. This enabled our advocates to talk to people, not only about their rights under the relevant legislation, but more importantly about being human, about being in an institution where everyone around them was working with their faces covered and full PPE, and where seeing a smiling face was now the exception and not the norm. We recognised the value of being able to offer a listening ear and a friendly face while at the same time helping people to consider their options, to uphold their rights, represent their interests and ensure approaches and decisions are person-centred.

Adapting during the pandemic

To ensure our services stayed up to date and responded to the changing Covid picture, we adapted our systems, protocols and guidance.

- We organised virtual advocacy workshops with legal professionals to ensure advocates understood the implications of the Coronavirus Bill and when it would be appropriate to challenge restrictions.
- We designed a Covid-19 risk assessment and integrated it seamlessly into usual practice.
- We used Microsoft Teams to enable our advocates to keep connected, share information and good practice, problem-solve together, and reduce isolation. The team also took part in a variety of virtual training sessions on subjects such as communicating with people with English as an additional language, cultural competency, unpacking neurodiversity, the autistic advocate and as the restrictions began to lift they attended in-person training on dementia awareness.

Quality Performance Mark

We were awarded the Advocacy Quality Performance Mark (QPM) from the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi). The QPM is the UK's only independent quality performance mark for organisations offering independent advocacy and accreditation involves a rigorous self-assessment process and policy review followed by a structured site visit for NDTi assessors to meet advocates and the people they support.

"Your Voice Counts has demonstrated a strong and robust commitment throughout their site visits with all we spoke to; to empowering and/or representing the person through all their interactions; with the person themselves and stakeholders. Your Voice Counts received an exceptionally high standard of feedback regarding their service from those who had accessed the service and stakeholders. As a grounds roots organisation Your Voice Counts see the importance of ensuring there is representation at all levels from those that access their services".

QPM Assessor



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Making a contribution nationally

We campaigned with the Leaders in Advocacy Network and over 50 other organisations about extending the rights of people to receive advocacy support and calling for Independent Mental Health Advocates to have access to high-quality training. We were also part of the pilot training programme on culturally appropriate advocacy developed and delivered in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care.

To mark Advocacy Awareness Week 2021, we shared case studies and reflections on our website and social media channels to raise the profile of advocacy and share examples of how our person-centred approach that puts the needs of the individual at the heart of our work makes a real difference to people's lives.

#AAW21 Advocacy Awareness Week 1st - 7th November 2021

Our advocacy services

Independent Care Act Advocacy (ICAA)

Local authorities have a legal duty under the Care Act of 2014 to arrange for an independent advocate to represent and support a person who has a 'substantial difficulty' in understanding the Care Act process and has no one else appropriate to support them. The aim of our advocates is to enable people to be involved in the relevant Care Act process and to be supported as fully as possible in understanding what is happening, why and what it may mean for them. Where necessary our advocates will represent the person and speak on their behalf and ensure their wishes, feelings and needs are at the heart of the process.

ICAA in Newcastle

111 people supported

1,724 hours of advocacy

Case study: Lee's story

What was Lee's situation?

Lee was referred to our ICAA service when social services were planning to carry out a review of his support. Lee has a family, but professionals were worried that family support made it hard for Lee to say what he wanted for himself while Lee felt that professionals didn't listen to him.

What did our advocate do?

Lee's advocate supported him to access and understand information and have a stronger voice and feel more confident about sharing his wishes and thoughts with other people.

What did that mean for Lee?

Lee was able to take part in his own review where it was agreed that he could be involved in choosing the staff that worked with him. Lee reported to his advocate that he had felt listened to and was hopeful of his future and support being provided in a way that he wanted.

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Activities, achievements and performance

South Tyneside Community Case Advocacy for people with a learning disability

Our community advocates work with people who have difficulties being involved in decisions that affect them. Community advocates can support people to have their voice and views heard by others, gain access to relevant information to make decisions and to act on information, attend meetings, and assist with issues such as benefits, housing, and to be afforded fair and equal treatment.

Our community case advocacy service also offers support to parents with a learning disability where they are involved with the local authority in child protection procedures.

Community case advocacy in South Tyneside



44 people supported



88 hours of advocacy

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

This service supports people who are detained under the Mental Health Act in hospitals or in the community, helping people to understand what their rights are in relation to their legal situation, their medication and treatment and discharge plans.

They can help the person communicate with medical teams and other appropriate professionals and assist with raising their own issues or complaints. Advocates can attend meetings, tribunals and appeals and assist the person to access legal support.

IMHA in South Tyneside and Newcastle



328 people supported



3,037 hours of advocacy

Case study: Sally's story

What was Sally's situation?

Sally has a learning disability and was detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act. Sally found it hard to work with people and wouldn't attend meetings.

What did our advocate do?

Our advocate spent time with Sally to develop a relationship of understanding and trust and attended meetings on Sally's behalf to represent Sally's voice and uphold her rights. Sally did not want to be in hospital so our advocate applied to the Mental Health Tribunal to review this decision and arranged for a special advocate from Sally's local area to assist with discharge planning.

What did that mean for Sally?

Sally's views and wishes were taken into account and the right support was in place to help Sally move on from her hospital stay successfully.

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Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)

Our IMCA service provides independent advocacy for people who are deemed to lack decision-making capacity for a specific decision at the time that decision needs to be made. This might include where they live, what medical treatment they receive, what care and support they need or as part of safeguarding protective measures to ensure they are safe from harm or neglect.

IMCA in South Tyneside and Newcastle



294 people supported



2,778 hours of advocacy

Case study: Maureen's story

What was Maureen's situation?

Maureen was referred for IMCA support when doctors were thinking about which cancer treatment to offer her. She had been assessed and found not to have decision-making capacity so professionals would make a decision in her best interests.

What did our advocate do?

Our IMCA met with Maureen to talk through the situation and to listen to her thoughts and concerns and how she wanted to still be able to do the things she enjoys like going shopping and attending church and was worried surgery would impact her ability to do this by reducing her mobility. Our advocate provided a report to the decision-making team setting out Maureen's wishes around her treatment, asking the team to consider the impact on Maureen if she lost mobility and the support that she would then need to live independently.

What did that mean for Maureen?

Maureen felt listened to and supported during a stressful time and her concerns and wishes were articulated to the team responsible for planning her care and treatment.

Paid Relevant Person Representative (RPR)

RPRs work with people who are subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). They ensure that when it is necessary to deprive someone of their liberty it is the least restrictive option possible to provide the required care and treatment and to keep the person safe from harm. If the person is objecting the advocate can request a review or support the person to access legal support and take their case to the Court of Protection.

RPR services in South Tyneside and Newcastle



350 new people supported, **535** people supported in total



7,713 hours of advocacy

Case study: Harry's story

What was Harry's situation?

Harry had lived in the same care home for ten years. After building up their relationship. Harry told his RPR that he was unhappy living there and wanted to live in the community. Professionals disagreed with Harry and said he didn't know what he was saying.

What did our advocate do?

Our RPR helped Harry to speak to a solicitor and make an appeal to the Court of Protection.

What did that mean for Harry?

People started to take Harry's wishes seriously and he was supported to visit different accommodations. He moved to a new home that he liked and that meets his needs and allows him to be more independent and part of the community.

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Operations, Finance and Business Development team highlights

Our organisation is underpinned by a team of back-office roles that lead and guide our work and provide processes, support and systems that ensure our projects and programmes achieve their aims and objectives. This year, we formalised and created capacity for this by establishing a Business Development function that allows us to take a more strategic approach to grant and bid writing and informs our organisational strategy, planning and monitoring work.

Funding

We developed a fundraising strategy this year and trialled a number of fundraising initiatives, including our Together for 30 thirtieth anniversary fundraising campaign that saw 26 fundraisers take part in a 30 mile challenge that raised £5,107.

Core funding from Lloyds Foundation, Sir James Knott Trust, and Garfield Weston Foundation has also supported us to strengthen our operations and to increase co-production approaches across our organisation this year.

Our Board and governance

We thanked Board members Lorraine Scott and Brian McClelland who stepped down from our Board this year, and we were pleased to welcome HR professional Rebekah Coombes who is providing valuable support and insight as we develop our HR approaches and policies.



Rebekah Coombes

Trustees' Week

We took part in Trustees' Week 2021 by giving a talk about how we make our Board a welcoming and inclusive space. We were able to share some of the practical things we do to ensure that everyone can be included, for example using cards to make it easier for people to speak up or to say if they don't understand something that is being discussed, and our Experts by Experience 'pre-meeting' ahead of our Board meeting where agenda items can be discussed in more detail at a pace that suits.

We also shared our guidance for staff who are asked to present at Board meetings that sets out how our Experts by Experience with learning disabilities prefer to view complicated information – for example we ask people to prepare presentations using 'Easy Read' principles and to use graphs and charts to present financial information where they can.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We're so proud of our volunteer Chloe whose advocacy for LGBTQIA+, autistic and disabled people has won them a place on Dimensions' Learning Disability and Autism Leaders List. This list celebrates inspirational people who are helping to make society better for everyone.

Chloe was nominated for their volunteering and for their contributions to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group. They are a passionate advocate for the LGBT+ community and have shared their own experience to help support our organisation to make positive change.

When advocating for the LGBT+ community, Chloe has used their creativity to help share their experiences. They use poetry, illustration and video to help to get their message across and also to make sure their work is accessible to others. Chloe has used their place on the Leaders List to raise awareness of barriers at Pride events for disabled and autistic people.



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Making a difference

"YVC go above and beyond for people and it is great working in partnership with them. I definitely think working alongside YVC creates positive outcomes for the people we are working with."

"My advocate has helped me to understand what professionals have been saying. You feel silly sitting in the meetings and listening to them when you don't understand it. She helped me to speak up more and to get my point across."

"Thanks for all of your help and the role you've played in getting us to this point. You've advocated for what's best for him throughout the whole process and contributed invaluable ideas to all stages of the transition/ move. The whole process has been the best example of partnership working I've had the fortune to be involved with."

"Ashley and team created a safe and welcoming environment for a new client this week who is facing challenges with acceptance from her family due to her gender identity. She came to us for help to make more friends and develop social networks. Ashley has done a brilliant job to make her feel comfortable and start on this path, and got this message: "Thank you for today I feel like it's really helped with my social anxiety and I had a good time today too:)""

"You are a pleasure to work with, and you maintain professionalism whilst supporting clients in a friendly and approachable way. From my experience, you take an interest in each individual case and offer good suggestions of ways in which our clients can be supported. You act quickly in your professional duties and maintain good levels of communication with all parties involved in the case."

"Thanks for helping this lady in the way you did. Every step of this is textbook quality, caring service and exactly how we should be dealing with things on the frontline."

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Our year in numbers

Our services

Communities:

327
different people attended activities

427
different activities delivered

27
Care and Treatment Reviews arranged for people with learning disabilities

Advocacy:

1,312
people supported

16,053
hours spent providing advocacy

Fundraising – Together for 30:

£5,107
raised

26
fundraisers

445
miles walked

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8

people found jobs through Wise Steps

948

offered Covid-19 vaccine support

4

4 people volunteered with us

Our finances:

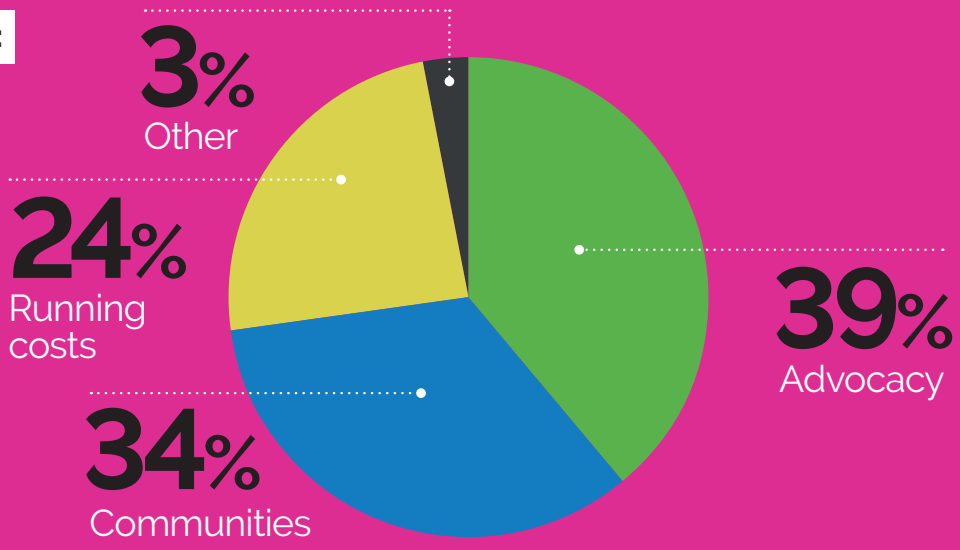
£1,144,157

Income

£1,061,641

Expenditure

How we spent it:



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REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Your Voice Counts aims to maintain a robust financial position in the face of increasing economic uncertainty in order to continue delivering much needed services to the people we support.

The charity receives the majority of its funding from statutory sources and grants from foundations and charitable trusts. Our internal structure comprises Advocacy, Communities and Operations and is aligned to our funding sources. We seek to recover our full costs from all projects.

This year, we have been pleased to continue to benefit from the generosity of grant funders, allowing us to continue to exceed a million pounds of income for the second year despite the challenging economic environment: £1,144,157 (2021: £1,063,540). We are extremely grateful to our funders, both those who have continued to support us and to those funders who have provided us with additional support this year due to the difficult conditions brought about by Covid-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis. We have continued to control our costs and are reporting expenditure of £1,061,641 (2021: £993,006).

We have continued to strengthen our financial controls this year by, for example, putting into place a new Investment Policy. Transitioning to a new audit team and the recruitment of a new Finance Officer have also allowed for fresh insights into our financial procedures. We have continued to invest in our Business Development function in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Due to additional grant funding and to controlling costs, we have produced a surplus of £82,516 this year (2021: £70,534). This leaves us with overall reserves of £584,200 (2021: £501,684). Trustees take a forward-looking and proactive approach to financial management and so have again taken the decision to designate funds this year. These funds are for projects we are undertaking over the next two years to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation for the benefit of our clients. The areas we are investing in are:

Business Development: **£45,866**

Finance Development: **£12,463**

Communities Team: **£23,268**

Marketing and Communications: **£10,080**

Infrastructure: **£8,158**

Co-Production: **£28,894**

Administration: **£22,781**

We hold between three and six months necessary operating expenses as a minimum reserve. Based on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2022, three months would equate to £155,953 and six months to £311,905. Our free reserves (unrestricted funds not invested in tangible fixed assets) stand at £158,592 (2021: £253,757). Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

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FUNDRAISING ACTIVITY

Your Voice Counts takes a proactive and structured approach to fundraising and complies with 'Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties (CC20).' A fundraising strategy is in place and is updated each year and reviewed by trustees. A Donations Policy is also in place. These were developed using Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator and Institute of Fundraising guidance.

Your Voice Counts undertakes minimal public fundraising as most of our funding comes from statutory sources and grant funders. The charity does not use a professional fundraiser. The charity has a Business Development function which is managed by the Head of Finance. Fundraising is a standing agenda item on the Finance Committee and this sub-committee of the Board scrutinises all fundraising activity on a bi-monthly basis.

The charity regularly seeks input and advice from Experts by Experience and Advocates by Experience, including those on the Board, on the impacts of all its activities, including fundraising, on vulnerable people and no issues with its fundraising activity have been raised.

Fundraising activity this year includes the Together for 30 anniversary fundraising campaign that saw 26 fundraisers take part in a 30-mile challenge that raised £5,107. We are also grateful for core funding from Lloyds Foundation, Sir James Knott Trust, and Garfield Weston Foundation who have supported us to strengthen our operations and to increase co-production approaches across our organisation this year.

Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budget and future cash flows in making their assessment. In particular, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been considered. Based on these assessments, the trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.



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PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Over the coming year, we will use our organisational strategy and the priorities it outlines to focus our efforts on making progress in a number of key areas.

We want to grow our advocacy offer beyond the statutory services we deliver

We see a number of the people we support through our IMHA service readmitted to hospital. We want to be able to offer support to people after they move out of hospital to see if we can help them settle back into life in the community. We've also recognised there is a growing need from parents with learning disabilities, particularly around child protection proceedings, and we want to position ourselves to offer more help in this area and to reach more people.

We want to employ more people with lived experience

Our Co-Production Team has been reviewing our approach to co-production and co-design. We are committed to investing in co-production which will mean employing more people with lived experience and creating more leadership roles for people with lived experience, and ensuring these roles are representative of all of the groups we deliver services to. To do this successfully, we will need to make sure our policies and procedures and the systems and processes we use are accessible to our lived experience colleagues. Looking outward, we also want to use our influence to challenge and support other organisations to increase opportunities for co-production in the work that they do.

We want to improve how we measure and articulate our impact

We need to develop how we understand the difference we're making for the people we support, thinking about what we measure, the data we capture and how we provide opportunities for people to give us feedback about our services.

This will be a real challenge as some of our clients are profoundly disabled and may not be able to directly feed back to us, but we're committed to exploring creative ways to understand the quality of service we provide to all our clients. We also want to give people an opportunity to stay in contact with us so that we can continue to have conversations with them about what matters to them and the role we can play in supporting them in future to achieve the things they want to achieve.

We want to tell our story

We will work to raise our profile so that we can influence others on behalf of our beneficiaries, and so we can continue to attract investment from funders and commissioners in order to provide much needed support to the people we work with. We'll be looking at capturing more stories that demonstrate the difference we can make and will be looking at how to use social media and other platforms to increase our reach.

We want to be a fantastic place to work

Our staff and volunteers have been incredible during the last couple of years. They've coped amazingly well with all the changes and challenges that Covid has brought, and have gone above and beyond to ensure the people we work with have been safe and well. We want to make sure that we invest in their development and nurture their creativity, commitment and passion. We're a growing team and we can harness the fantastic skills and experience that our existing staff have to enable our newer team members to develop. We also want to push ourselves to learn and grow as an organisation, so we want to ensure all our teams have the tools and resources they need to be innovative and creative and feel fulfilled and supported at work.

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Your Voice Counts

TRUSTEES' REPORT

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Your Voice Counts for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- 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 adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and 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.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Reappointment of auditor

MHA Tait Walker were appointed to the company in February 2022 after a tender exercise.

Azets Audit Services Limited, trading as Azets Audit Services, were appointed auditor to the company following their acquisition of the trade of Tait Walker LLP, trading as MHA Tait Walker, on 1 May 2022.

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution for the re-appointment of Azets Audit Services as auditors of the charity is to be proposed at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 7.11.2022 and signed on its behalf by:



.....

C D Gates
Trustee

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Your Voice Counts

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Your Voice Counts (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2022, which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, 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 United Kingdom Accounting Standards, comprising Charities SORP - FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and applicable law (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 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 charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements were 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 auditor's report 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 there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

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Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

We have nothing to report in this regard.

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

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

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.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities (set out on page 27), the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- Enquiries with management about any known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations and fraud;
- Reviewing board minutes;

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Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Your Voice Counts

- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in their significant accounting estimates;
- Review financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and
- Auditing the risk of management override of controls, including through testing journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness.

Because of the field in which the charity operates, we identified the following areas as those most likely to have a material impact on the financial statements: Health and Safety; employment law; and compliance with both the UK Companies Act and UK Charities Act.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that some material misstatements in the financial statements may not be detected, even though the audit is properly planned and performed in accordance with the ISAs (UK). For instance, the further removed non-compliance is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the auditor is to become aware of it or to recognise the non-compliance.

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 trustees, 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 charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Simon Brown

Simon Brown BA ACA DChA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of
Azets Audit Services
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Bulman House
Regent Centre
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 3LS

Date: 10.11.2022

Azets Audit Services is a trading name of Azets Audit Services Limited

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Your Voice Counts

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2022 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	10,135	-	10,135	11,703
Charitable activities	4	734,036	396,237	1,130,273	1,048,692
Investment income	5	1,355	-	1,355	2,723
Other income	6	2,394	-	2,394	422
Total Income		747,920	396,237	1,144,157	1,063,540
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	7	(799,612)	(262,029)	(1,061,641)	(993,006)
Total Expenditure		(799,612)	(262,029)	(1,061,641)	(993,006)
Net (expenditure)/income		(51,692)	134,208	82,516	70,534
Net movement in funds		(51,692)	134,208	82,516	70,534
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		368,800	132,884	501,684	431,150
Total funds carried forward	19	317,108	267,092	584,200	501,684

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above two periods.

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Your Voice Counts

Comparative Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2021 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2021 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	3	11,703	-	11,703
Charitable activities	4	731,716	316,976	1,048,692
Investment income	5	2,723	-	2,723
Other income	6	422	-	422
Total income		746,564	316,976	1,063,540
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	7	(731,659)	(261,347)	(993,006)
Total expenditure		(731,659)	(261,347)	(993,006)
Net income		14,905	55,629	70,534
Transfers between funds		(16,308)	16,308	-
Net movement in funds		(1,403)	71,937	70,534
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		370,203	60,947	431,150
Total funds carried forward	19	368,800	132,884	501,684

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Your Voice Counts

(Registration number: 06654142)
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	12	7,006	11,850
Current assets			
Debtors	13	367,328	71,566
Investments	14	79,287	79,287
Cash at bank and in hand	15	318,831	391,514
		765,446	542,367
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	16	(188,252)	(52,533)
Net current assets		577,194	489,834
Net assets		584,200	501,684
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted		267,092	132,884
Unrestricted income funds			
Designated funds		151,510	103,193
Unrestricted funds		165,598	265,607
Total unrestricted funds		317,108	368,800
Total funds	19	584,200	501,684

The financial statements on pages 31 to 46 were approved by the trustees, and authorised for issue on ...7.11.2022... and signed on their behalf by:

.....
M Ife
Trustee

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Your Voice Counts

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash income		82,516	70,534
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items			
Depreciation		4,844	4,586
Investment income	5	(1,355)	(2,723)
Current asset investment income		-	(821)
		86,005	71,576
Working capital adjustments			
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	13	(295,762)	17,747
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	16	719	(20,054)
Increase in deferred income		135,000	-
Net cash flows from operating activities		(74,038)	69,269
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	1,355	2,723
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	12	-	(7,957)
Net cash flows from investing activities		1,355	(5,234)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		(72,683)	64,035
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April		391,514	327,479
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March		318,831	391,514

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

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Your Voice Counts

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

1 Charity status

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England and Wales, and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

The address of its registered office is: 14-16 Greenesfield Business Centre Mulgrave Terrace,, Gateshead,, England,, NE8 1PQ

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates
The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
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 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation
Your Voice Counts meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

These financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency of the entity and rounded to the nearest £.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Estimation uncertainty and judgements
The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported.

There are considered to be no significant judgements (apart from those involving estimations) that management has made in the process of applying the entity's accounting policies which effect the amounts recognised in the financial statements.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Donations and legacies

Donations are recognised when the charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance by the charity before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that these conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Grants receivable

Grants are recognised when the charity has an entitlement to the funds and any conditions linked to the grants have been met. Where performance conditions are attached to the grant and are yet to be met, the income is recognised as a liability and included on the balance sheet as deferred income to be released.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents amounts received for future periods and is released to incoming resources in the period for which, it has been received. Such income is only deferred when:

- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Investment income

Investment income is included when receivable.

Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of resources, with central staff costs allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use. Other support costs are allocated based on the spread of staff costs.

Charitable activities

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Support costs

Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a basis consistent with the use of resources, for example, allocating property costs by floor areas, or per capita, staff costs by the time spent and other costs by their usage.

Governance costs

These include the costs attributable to the charity's compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements, including audit, strategic management and trustees's meetings and reimbursed expenses.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Government grants
Government grants are recognised based on the accrual model and are measured at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are classified as relating either to revenue or to assets. Grants relating to revenue are recognised in income over the period in which the related costs are recognised. Grants relating to assets are recognised over the expected useful life of the asset. Where part of a grant relating to an asset is deferred, it is recognised as deferred income.

Taxation
The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
Individual fixed assets costing £1,000 or more are initially recorded at cost, less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets so as to write off the cost or valuation, less any estimated residual value, over their expected useful economic life as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Fixtures and fittings	25% reducing balance
Computer equipment	33% straight line

Current asset investments
Current asset investments are included at the lower of cost and net realisable value / market value.

Trade debtors
Trade debtors are amounts due from customers for merchandise sold or services performed in the ordinary course of business.

Trade debtors are recognised initially at the transaction price. They are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. A provision for the impairment of trade debtors is established when there is objective evidence that the charity will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of the receivables.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Trade creditors
Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if the charity does not have an unconditional right, at the end of the reporting period, to defer settlement of the creditor for at least twelve months after the reporting date. If there is an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least twelve months after the reporting date, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Trade creditors are recognised initially at the transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Fund structure
Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside for specific purposes at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted income funds are those donated for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Defined contribution plans
Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised as an expense in the period in which the related service is provided.

Agency accounting
The charity acts as an agent in distributing funds under the NHS Charities Together Community Partnership Grants Programme. Payments received and subsequently disbursed are excluded from the Statement of Financial Activities as the charity does not have control over the charitable applicable of the funds.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Regular giving and capital donations	9,311	9,311
Government grants - HMRC furlough claims	824	824
	10,135	10,135

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2021 £
Regular giving and capital donations	4,748	4,748
Government grants - HMRC furlough claims	6,955	6,955
	11,703	11,703

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £
Advocacy	679,873	49,715	729,588
Grants	54,163	346,522	400,685
	734,036	396,237	1,130,273

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £
Advocacy	703,999	-	703,999
Grants	27,717	316,976	344,693
	731,716	316,976	1,048,692

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Interest receivable and similar income;		
Interest receivable on bank deposits	1,355	1,355
	1,355	1,355

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2021 £
Interest receivable and similar income;		
Interest receivable on bank deposits	2,723	2,723
	2,723	2,723

6 Other income

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2022 £
Other income	2,394	2,394

	Unrestricted funds General £	Total 2021 £
Other income	422	422

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

7 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Activity undertaken directly £	Activity support costs £	2022 £	2021 £
Salaries and related costs	729,480	192,359	921,839	881,796
Premises costs	-	19,697	19,697	45,156
Insurances	-	2,370	2,370	2,183
Light and heat	-	3,923	3,923	2,370
Telephone and internet	6,572	3,530	10,102	10,143
Postage and stationery	281	1,507	1,788	6,175
Bank charges	524	-	524	392
Legal and professional services	6,578	4,835	11,413	19,572
Training costs	6,088	3,049	9,137	6,325
Subscriptions	727	-	727	85
Room hire	5,701	-	5,701	2,998
Travelling expenses	9,600	240	9,840	3,035
Repairs and maintenance	720	-	720	816
Volunteer expenses	205	-	205	686
Accountancy/audit fees	-	5,500	5,500	5,700
Depreciation	4,844	-	4,844	4,586
Other costs	26,811	26,500	53,311	988
Total for 2022	798,131	263,510	1,061,641	993,006

8 Analysis of governance and support costs

Governance costs

	2022 £	2021 £
Audit fee	5,500	5,700

9 Trustees remuneration and expenses

No trustees, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charity during the year.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

10 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2022 £	2021 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	818,579	754,534
Social security costs	58,860	60,280
Pension costs	42,565	36,714
	920,004	851,528

The monthly average number of persons (including senior management / leadership team) employed by the charity during the year was as follows:

	2022 No	2021 No
Management	3	3
Finance	1	1
Advocacy, Communities and Operations	44	42
	48	46

During the year, the charity made redundancy and/or termination payments which totalled £Nil (2021 - £10,675).

No employee received emoluments of more than £60,000 during the year.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £58,678 (2021 - £54,039).

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

11 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

12 Tangible fixed assets

	Furniture and equipment £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2021	7,879	21,930	29,809
At 31 March 2022	7,879	21,930	29,809
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2021	4,724	13,235	17,959
Charge for the year	789	4,055	4,844
At 31 March 2022	5,513	17,290	22,803
Net book value			
At 31 March 2022	2,366	4,640	7,006
At 31 March 2021	3,155	8,695	11,850

13 Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	365,490	70,871
Prepayments	-	660
Other debtors	1,838	35
	367,328	71,566

14 Current asset investments

	2022 £	2021 £
Short term deposits	79,287	79,287

15 Cash and cash equivalents

	2022 £	2021 £
Cash on hand	75	316
Cash at bank	318,756	391,198
	318,831	391,514

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	15,931	22,449
Other taxation and social security	16,902	14,198
Other creditors	584	735
Accruals	19,835	15,151
Deferred income	135,000	-
	188,252	52,533

	2022 £	2021 £
Resources deferred in the period	135,000	-

17 Obligations under leases and hire purchase contracts

Operating lease commitments

Total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2022 £	2021 £
Other		
Within one year	37,020	37,420
Between one and five years	49,440	62,050
	86,460	99,470

18 Pension and other schemes

Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension cost charge for the year represents contributions payable by the charity to the scheme and amounted to £42,565 (2021 - £36,714).

Contributions totalling £3,304 were payable to the scheme at the end of the year and are included in creditors.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

19 Funds

	Balance at 1 April 2021 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2022 £
Unrestricted funds					
General					
General	265,607	747,920	(758,075)	(89,854)	165,598
Designated					
Business development	50,949	-	(17,628)	12,545	45,866
Finance development	15,476	-	(3,013)	-	12,463
Communities team	23,268	-	(11,634)	11,634	23,268
Marketing and communications	7,500	-	(5,420)	8,000	10,080
IT infrastructure	6,000	-	(3,842)	6,000	8,158
Co-production	-	-	-	28,894	28,894
Admin development	-	-	-	22,781	22,781
	103,193	-	(41,537)	89,854	151,510
Total unrestricted funds	368,800	747,920	(799,612)	-	317,108
Restricted funds					
Operations	534	-	-	-	534
Community	128,044	346,522	(258,513)	-	216,053
Advocacy	4,306	49,715	(3,516)	-	50,505
Total restricted funds	132,884	396,237	(262,029)	-	267,092
Total funds	501,684	1,144,157	(1,061,641)	-	584,200

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Balance at 1 April 2020 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2021 £
Unrestricted funds					
General					
General	370,203	746,564	(731,659)	(119,501)	265,607
Designated					
Business development	-	-	-	50,949	50,949
Finance development	-	-	-	15,476	15,476
Communities team	-	-	-	23,268	23,268
Marketing and communications	-	-	-	7,500	7,500
IT infrastructure	-	-	-	6,000	6,000
	-	-	-	103,193	103,193
Total unrestricted funds	370,203	746,564	(731,659)	(16,308)	368,800
Restricted					
Operations	13,134	-	(13,134)	534	534
Community	47,813	306,976	(242,519)	15,774	128,044
Advocacy	-	10,000	(5,694)	-	4,306
Total restricted funds	60,947	316,976	(261,347)	16,308	132,884
Total funds	431,150	1,063,540	(993,006)	-	501,684

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Transfers are made due to capital expenditure in the period.

Designated Funds:
YVC has designated funds for Strategic development (£97,193) and IT infrastructure (£6,000).

Restricted Funds:
Restricted funds represent funds received from statutory sources and grant funders where use of the funds has been specified by the funder. YVC classifies these by business area.
• Advocacy reserves are mainly from statutory sources and are predominantly to be used for advocacy in Newcastle and South Tyneside.
• Communities reserves are mainly from grant funders and are to be used in a variety of individual projects in areas such as Gateshead and South Tyneside.
• Operations reserves are predominantly for core costs.

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Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

20 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds	Total funds at 31 March 2022
	General £	Designated £	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	7,006	-	-	7,006
Current assets	158,592	151,510	267,092	577,194
Total net assets	165,598	151,510	267,092	584,200

	Unrestricted			
	General £	Designated £	Restricted £	Total funds at 31 March 2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	11,850	-	-	11,850
Net current assets/(liabilities)	253,757	103,193	132,884	489,834
Total net assets	265,607	103,193	132,884	501,684

21 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year.

22 Agency arrangements

The charity distributes funds to partners under the NHS Charities Together Community Partnership Grants Programme. In the accounting period ending 31 March 2022, the charity received £47,433 and disbursed £47,433. An amount of £nil is included in creditors at the year end.

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Thank you to all of our partners and funders who supported us during 2021/2022. We are grateful for your support and look forward to more joint-working so we can continue to support the people who need us.

Baily Thomas Charitable Fund

Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

Garfield Weston Foundation

Gateshead Council

Lloyds Foundation

Mencap Let's Get Digital Fund

National Lottery Community Fund

NHS Charities Together

Shears Foundation

Sir James Knott Trust

South Tyneside CCG

South Tyneside Council (Covid Community Champions)

1989 Willan Charitable Trust

www.yvc.org.uk

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Your voice counts

Your Voice Counts | Greenesfield Business Centre | Mulgrave Terrace | Gateshead | NE8 1PQ

Registered Charity No. 1125719. Company limited by guarantee No. 6654142

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

England & Wales - Charity number 1125719

Accounts

Charity Number: 1125719
Company Number: 06654142

Your Voice Counts

(a company limited by guarantee)

AMENDED

Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Your Voice Counts
(a company limited by guarantee)

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Your Voice Counts
(a company limited by guarantee)

Report of the Trustees
For the year ended 31 March 2021

The trustees, who act as Directors for the purposes of company law, are pleased to present their annual report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

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), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Practice.

Objectives and activities

Your Voice Counts is a registered charitable company limited by guarantee.

The Charity's Object is to relieve the need or disability of persons, particularly those suffering impairment of their learning abilities.

We do this by:

- assisting such persons, in particular those with learning disabilities, to obtain full rights and privileges as citizens;
- promoting social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing such people from becoming socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society;
- enable and encouraging such persons, in particular those with learning disabilities and/or learning difficulties, to support each other in obtaining full rights and privileges as citizens;
- providing help, support and advocacy to such persons, in particular those with learning disabilities, on a one-to-one basis;
- promoting to society the abilities and potential of such people, in particular those with learning disabilities;
- developing best practice in service provision through consultation, feedback, monitoring and evaluation;
- developing and delivering training;
- publicising, marketing and promoting the work of the organisation.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a charity (PB2)'.

Our main activities and the people we aim to support are described below. All of our charitable activities focus on supporting vulnerable people - particularly those with learning disabilities and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Activities, achievement and performance

Covid 19

The main focus for the organisation in the early part of the year was moving the bulk of our service delivery online and transitioning our staff to remote working. Our initial priority was the wellbeing of our staff, volunteers and the people who use our services. We closed our offices and requested that staff work from home in line with Government guidance. We ensured that staff had the equipment they needed to work from home and shared clear guidance about our expectations, including offering suggestions as to how staff could maintain an effective work life balance. We created online spaces where staff could connect for social as well work reasons, and we introduced a 6 monthly wellbeing survey so that we could better understand how staff were coping. We adapted to the changing guidance throughout the year and made sure that we had appropriate risk assessments in place to cover the emergency face to face activity that needed to take place in order to safeguard the people who used our services.

Communities

Ahead of the first lockdown our Communities team contacted everyone they were currently supporting and undertook an assessment of people's likely ability to cope. We ensured we had a good understanding of their existing support networks, how they would get access to the food and medicines they needed in the coming weeks, and their ability to use online technology. We set up a programme of regular phone contact for all the people we were working with. Those who we felt were more at risk were contacted more often (sometimes daily) and those with better support networks received a lighter touch 'catch up'. Where there were issues or concerns our staff and volunteers dealt with these as they arose. We delivered food parcels when necessary, made safeguarding alerts, undertook door step visits, connected people to the Community Hubs mobilised by local authorities, and delivered activity packs to keep people occupied and entertained. When restrictions eased we set up walking groups so that people could meet together and reconnect safely, and set up support groups and activities in local communities that people could access. Over the winter period we ran Winter Wellness sessions that supported people to stay safe and well during the colder months. The sessions focused on physical and mental health and wellbeing, and offered practical suggestions to help people cope.

While setting up our response to the initial lockdown we connected with other organisations across the region who were in the process of mobilising their own responses. Together we supported each other to develop a consistent approach that could be replicated in different local areas. With the support of local CCGs and using some of the emergency funds we were able to secure, we recruited additional staff to ensure that as many people with learning disabilities and/or autism as possible were supported to stay safe and well. In Gateshead we worked closely with our local authority and health colleagues and contacted over **1,200** people in just under two weeks to understand what support they would need in the coming weeks and months; we provided ongoing support to **292** of these people. In South Tyneside we provided ongoing support to **69** people during this period.

A major challenge for our learning disabled clients was the ability to get online. Many of the people we work with have little or no literacy or computer skills. Some people did not own computers, tablets or phones that would allow them to use the internet, and many couldn't afford the data packages needed to get online. We secured funding that allowed us to buy devices preloaded with data and social media apps that we could give to those who needed them. We also used technology that allowed us to safely access people's devices remotely; this allowed us to support people to set up social media accounts and teach them to learn how use these platform to connect with their peers. We then created a weekly programme of online activity for people to access that allowed them to stay active, to keep occupied and to make and maintain friendships throughout the various lockdowns.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
12:00-2:00: Cooking with Confidence A cooking group with step by step instructions and group support to cook tasty meals at home. Every 2 weeks Contact: Naomi or Danielle **1:00 - 2:00 - FANE Online Safety Workshops** Every 2 weeks Contact: Danielle or Amy	**2:00-3:00: Quiet Group** A small group for those who prefer to have a quieter get together with others. Limited spaces Contact: Hannah	**2:00-3:30: Self-Advocacy Meetings** Meetings are chaired by self-advocates and support members to speak up and have their voices heard on issues that affect their lives in their communities and beyond. Open to people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Contact: Amy, Joanne or Terri	**1:00 - 2:30 Staying Well - Mental Health Group** A course to explore low level mental health issues, what it means and ways that we can get help if needed. Contact: Danielle	**10:30-12:00: Mindfulness Practice Sessions** To support course members to continue using mindfulness in their daily lives. The sessions include guided meditations and discussions. Open to people with learning disabilities and/or autism who have attended a Mindfulness for Life course or similar. Contact: Terri or Jane
3:00-4:00: The Creative Crew. A peer-led group for those with a creative flare. This will include a mixture of arts and crafts using basic things around the home and learning new art/drawing techniques. Contact: Hannah	Your voice counts If you want to join any of the groups just call us on **0191 4786472**	**10:00-11:00: Accessible Fitness (Starting 16th Sep 2020)** A fitness class run by energetic instructor Sarah to help us keep fit to music. Open to anyone - introductory chat needed with a YVC member of staff first to ensure accessibility. Contact: Hannah	**3:00-4:30: Digital Voice Project and other activities** Activities are decided by attendees, alongside activities and short film making. Open to people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Contact: Amy, Joanne or Terri	**2:00-3:00: Catch up and a Cuppa** An online group chat where people chat in small groups about what they are interested in whilst enjoying a cup of tea. Open to anyone - introductory chat needed with a YVC member of staff first to ensure accessibility. Contact: Naomi or Danielle

In South Tyneside we supported the CCG and local authority to ensure that people with learning disabilities could get access to the Covid Vaccine. In just 4 days we contacted **958** people with learning disabilities to help them understand the importance of the vaccine, to answer any questions they had and to help them to make a plan to get the vaccine. Our team were able to book appointments for **132** people and their unpaid carers.

We continued to support Self-Advocacy in Gateshead and South Tyneside. This year the two independent Self Advocacy groups we work with, Gateshead People and Talk 2 Us, took the decisions to merge to form a new group called Speaking Up Together. We've been supporting them to become registered as a charity and to secure funding so that they can continue to support each other to speak up about what is important to them, and to campaign for the rights of all people with learning disabilities.

Advocacy

Despite the pandemic we continued to provide Statutory Advocacy services in Newcastle and South Tyneside including the IMHA, IMCA, Care Act and paid RPR roles alongside our learning disability Case Advocacy service in South Tyneside. We continued to visit clients where we could, but moved to phone calls and video calls where this wasn't possible. Our advocates provided valuable contact with the outside world to clients who were very isolated during lockdown as well providing necessary scrutiny around care and treatment in settings that such as Care Homes and secure hospital wards.

We undertook a pilot in Roselodge Assessment and Treatment Unit in South Tyneside where we increased the advocacy presence on the ward and broadened the scope of our advocate roles in order to share intelligence which highlighted good practice and offer a challenge where we felt improvements could be made. We are working closely with the ward staff and commissioners to help ensure that clients who are being detained without the need for clinical treatment are supported to be discharged in a timely manner.

This year we provided advocacy to **989** people, including:

Service User Group	
Acquired Brain Damage	15
Autism Spectrum Condition	1
Cognitive Impairment	88
Combination	7
Dementia	107
Learning Disability	347
Mental Health	409
Other	8
Serious Physical Illness	4
Unconsciousness	1
Unknown	2
Grand Total	**989**

- We supported almost **100** people with change of accommodation decisions
- We supported **75** adults with safeguarding issues
- We provided advocates for **36** serious medical treatment decisions
- We worked with **337** people subject to the Mental Health Act
- We helped over **100** people under the Care Act with assessment of need, planning support and reviewing services.
- We continue to support and work with almost **500** people living within the framework of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- We made **5,225** contacts with the people we work with, including over **1,000** video calls and over **550** faces to face visits to people in hospital, their own homes, and in residential settings.
- Advocates attended **358** decision making meetings, **39** SG meetings and made over **5,000** calls to staff, had **13,000** contacts with professionals and wrote over **100** reports.

Governance

This year after consultation with our staff and the people who use our service, we developed a new 5 year strategy for the organisation. We refreshed our Vision and Mission and identified the following key objectives:

- To support the people we work with:
    - to have a voice,
    - to be connected to their local communities
    - to have choice and control in their lives.

- To ensure that people with lived experience of our services are at the heart of designing and delivering the solutions that meet their needs.
- To support people with lived experience to be leaders who can affect change within our organisation and in the wider health and social care system.
- To be a be an inclusive and accessible organisation that reflects the communities we serve.

We agreed 6 strategic priorities that we will be focusing on the next 5 years:

1. Design services that make a difference to people
2. Learn from what we're doing so that we get better at helping people
3. Improve how the Board works
4. Help our staff and volunteers be great at their jobs
5. Ensure the organisation is financially resilient
6. Make sure people know who we are, what we do and the difference we make to the people we support.

Review of financial position

Your Voice Counts aims to maintain a robust financial position in the face of increasing economic uncertainty in order to continue to deliver much needed services to our clients.

The charity receives the majority of its funding from statutory sources and grants from foundations and charitable trusts. Our internal structure comprises Advocacy, Communities and Operations and is aligned to our funding sources. We seek to recover our full costs from all projects.

This year, we have been pleased to exceed a million pounds of income for the first time with income for the year being £1,063,540 (2020 - £907,912). We are extremely grateful to our funders, both those who have continued to support us and to those funders who have provided us with additional support this year due to the difficult conditions occasioned by Covid-19.

Exceeding the one million income threshold has given us the opportunity to undergo our first full audit rather than an independent examination. This process has been extremely positive and has demonstrated that the measures we put in place last year to strengthen financial control and reporting are robust.

We have continued to control our costs and are reporting expenditure of £993,006 (2020 - £973,771).

We have continued to build on our improved financial controls. This year we have further developed our financial forecasting with the preparation of a full three-year budget. We have also developed a Fundraising Strategy and Donations Policy and have invested in our Business Development function in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead. YVC undertakes minimal public fundraising as most of our funding comes from statutory sources and grant funders.

Due to additional grant funding and to controlling costs, we have produced a surplus of £70,534 (2020 - deficit of £65,859). This leaves us with overall reserves of £501,684 (2020 - £431,150). Trustees take a forward-looking and proactive approach to financial management and so have taken the decision to designate funds this year. These funds are for projects we are undertaking over the next two years to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the organisation for the benefit of our clients. The areas in which we are investing are: business development (£50,949), finance development (£15,476), communities team (£23,268), marketing & communications (£7,500), and IT infrastructure (£6,000).

Historically, the organisation has taken a cautious approach to classification of reserves and this has meant we have classified monies from both advocacy contracts and grant funders as restricted. The first full audit this year has meant we have revisited these decisions and in discussion with our auditors have reclassified a number of funds as unrestricted. This has led to a prior year adjustment.

We have also taken this opportunity to revisit our reserves policy and going forward we will hold between three and six months operating expenses as a minimum reserve. Based on the accounts for the year to 31 March 2021, three months reserves would equate to £118,544 and six months to £237,088. Our free reserves (unrestricted general funds not invested in tangible fixed assets) stand at £253,757 (2020 - £361,723). Our reserves policy is reviewed annually by the Finance Committee.

Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budget and future cash flows in making their assessment. In particular, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been considered. Based on these assessments, the Trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.

Plans for the future

Our focus in the coming months will be to continue to support our beneficiaries, staff and volunteers to adapt to the changing environment in the wake of the pandemic. We will continue increase the safe delivery of services in local communities while offering an online alternative where this is valuable. We will continue to tackle social isolation and digital exclusion, two of the key issues that have affected the people we support. Following the success of our Help Through Crisis project, which delivered in excess of £1.5 million in benefits income over the life of the project, we will look to develop further ways of ensuring our beneficiaries' financial wellbeing.

We will look to grow our offer of support in Gateshead and to continue to develop our approach to integrated working with our statutory colleagues in South Tyneside. We will look to develop more opportunities for people with lived experience to be involved in designing and delivering this work.

Our contracts were extended this year due to the pandemic and we expect these contracts to go out to tender in the coming year. We will look to maintain our existing advocacy provision and where we see unmet need to grow this beyond the statutory services that make up the bulk of our work.

We will explore the potential for hybrid working with our staff team and will review how best to have a presence in the communities we serve.

We will embed a Business Development function within the organisation with a view to diversifying potential sources of income and ensuring the ongoing financial resilience of the organisation.

We will look to strengthen our Board by recruiting a trustee with a background in Human Resources and a trustee with lived experience of Mental Health services.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity Number	1125719
Company Number	06654142
Registered Office	Unit 12 Interchange Centre, West Street, Gateshead, NE8 1BH, England

Trustees
The trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows;

Ms R Coombes	(Appointed 19 August 2021)
Ms C D Gates	
Mr N Herron	
Mr M Ife	
Ms L J Kelly	
Mr A W Lane	
Mr B McCelland	
Mr D Peters	
Mr T Relph	
Ms L Scott	
Mr D Taylor	
Ms A Groundwater	(Resigned 2 December 2020)

Key Management Personnel

David Woolley	Chief Executive

Our advisors

Auditors	Haines Watts	17 Queens Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1RN
Bankers	Lloyds Bank plc	17 Ellison Walk, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 1BF

Structure, governance and management

Governing document
The charitable company is controlled by its governing documents and a deed of trust. The charitable company is limited by guarantee and therefore has no share capital. In the event of a winding up, every member (who is a trustee) undertakes to contribute to the payment of liabilities such amount as may be required not exceeding the total of £1.

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

The charity may by ordinary resolution appoint a person who is willing to act as trustee and determine the rotation in which any additional trustees are to retire. No person other than a trustee retiring by rotation may be appointed a trustee at any general meeting unless:

- He or she is recommended for re-election by the trustees or
- Not less than fourteen nor more than thirty five clear days before the date of the meeting, the charity is given notice that:
  - i. Is signed by two members entitled to vote at the meeting.
  - ii. States the members' intention to propose the appointment of a person as a trustee.
  - iii. Contains the details that, if the person were to be appointed, the charity would have to file at Companies House,
  - iv. including the names and details of two referees who have not proposed their election; and
  - v. Is signed by the person who is to be proposed to show his or her consent - full election to the board will be at the
  - vi. end of a six month probationary period and will be at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

Organisational structure

The board of trustees administer the charity, where they meet regularly. A Chief Executive is appointed by the trustees to manage day to day operations of the charity. To facilitate effective operation, the Chief Executive has delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and advocacy related activities.

Induction and training of new trustees

New trustees undergo an induction to brief them on:

- their legal obligations under charity and company law;
- the Charity Commission on public benefit;
- inform them of the content of the memorandum and articles of association;
- the committee and decision making processes;
- the business plan; and
- recent financial performance of the charitable company.

During the induction they meet key employees and other trustees. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Key management remuneration

The charitable company's Trustees, consider that they, and the senior management team, comprise the key management personnel of the charitable company, in charge of controlling, running and operating the charity. All trustees give their time freely and no trustee received remuneration in the year.

The pay of the senior management team is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with average earnings. In view of the nature of the charitable company, the trustees benchmark against pay levels in the voluntary sector of similar organisations.

Related parties

During the prior year the subsidiary company, YVC Training Limited, ceased trading. The board took the decision to strike the company off during 2020-21 resulting in the disposal of the share.

Risk management

The trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- an annual review of the principal risks and uncertainties that the charitable company face;
- the establishment of policies, systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the annual review; and
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise or manage any potential impact on the charitable company should those risks materialise.

This work has identified that financial sustainability is the major financial risk for the charitable company. A key element in the management of financial risk is a regular review of available liquid funds to settle debts as they fall due, regular liaison with the bank, and active management of debtor and creditor balances to ensure sufficient working capital by the charitable company.

Attention has also been focussed on non-financial risks from fire, health and safety and management. These risks are managed by ensuring accreditation is up to date, having robust policies in place, and regular awareness training for staff in operational areas.

Planned changes in DoLS legislation have the potential to significantly change how statutory advocacy contracts are delivered. We are closely following how this legislation is being developed and are proactively engaging with Newcastle and South Tyneside Local Authorities around this.

TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure of the charity. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2015 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

So far as each of the trustees is aware at the time the report is approved:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charities 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.

This report was approved by the trustees on ..12.1.22..... 2021 and signed on its behalf, by:

.....
C D Gates
Trustee

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Your Voice Counts for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement 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, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charities affairs as at 31 March 2021, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011

Basis for opinion

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

Conclusions relating to going concern

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

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charities 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.

However, not all future events or conditions can be predicted. The Covid-19 viral pandemic is one of the most significant economic events for the UK with unprecedented levels of uncertainty of outcomes. It is therefore difficult to evaluate all of the potential implications on the charitable company's activities, customers, suppliers and wider economy. The trustees' view on the impact of Covid-19 is disclosed on within the trustees report on page 6 and accounting policies note 1.2.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the trustees' annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, 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 there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the charities and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities Act 2011 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 directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 9, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charities ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to both the charity itself and the industry in which it operates. We identified areas of laws and regulations that could reasonably be expected to have a material effect on the financial statements from our sector experience and through discussion with the trustees and other management. The most significant were identified as the Charities Act 2011, UK GAAP (FRS102) and relevant tax legislation. We considered the extent of compliance with those laws and regulations as part of our procedures on the related financial statements. Our audit procedures included:

- making enquires of trustees and management as to where they consider there to be a susceptibility to fraud and whether they have any knowledge or suspicion of fraud;
- obtaining an understanding of the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- reviewing the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- assessing the risk of management override including identifying and testing journal entries;
- confirmation received directly from the banks to verify the balance at 31 March 2021; and
- challenging the assumptions and judgements made by management in its significant accounting estimates.

Our audit did not identify any key audit matters relating to the detection of irregularities including fraud. However, despite the audit being planned and conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) there remains an unavoidable risk that material misstatements in the financial statements may not be detected owing to inherent limitations of the audit, and that by their very nature, any such instances of fraud or irregularity likely involve collusion, forgery, intentional misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls.

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 auditor's report.

Other Matter
In the previous accounting period the trustees of the charity took advantage of audit exemption the Charities Act. Therefore the prior period financial statements were not subject to an audit.

Use of Our Report
This report is made solely to the charities trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities Regulations 2008. 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 charity and the charities trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Donna Bulmer BA (Hons) ACA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Haines Watts

20 January 2022

Chartered Accountants and
Statutory Auditors

17 Queens Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 1RN

Your Voice Counts
(a company limited by guarantee)

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)
For the year ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 As restated £
Income from:						
Donations	4	11,703	-	-	11,703	19,156
Charitable activities	5	731,716	-	316,976	1,048,692	883,949
Investment income	6	2,723	-	-	2,723	3,461
Other trading activities	7	-	-	-	-	1,346
Other income		422	-	-	422	-
Total income		746,564	-	316,976	1,063,540	907,912
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities	8	731,659	-	261,347	993,006	973,771
Total expenditure		731,659	-	261,347	993,006	973,771
Net movement before transfers		14,905	-	55,629	70,534	(65,859)
Transfers between funds	20	(119,501)	103,193	16,308	-	-
Net movement in funds		(104,596)	103,193	71,937	70,534	(65,859)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		370,203	-	60,947	431,150	497,009
Total funds carried forward		265,607	103,193	132,884	501,684	431,150

The results for the year derive from continuing activities and there are no gains or losses other than those shown above.

Your Voice Counts
(a company limited by guarantee)

Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2021

	Notes	£	2021 £	£	2020 As restated £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	14,15		11,850		8,480
Current assets					
Debtors	16	71,566		89,312	
Current asset investments	17	79,287		78,466	
Cash at bank and in hand		391,514		327,479	
		542,367		495,257	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	(52,533)		(72,587)	
Net current assets			489,834		422,670
Net assets			501,684		431,150
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds			265,607		370,203
Designated funds			103,193		-
			368,800		370,203
Restricted funds			132,884		60,947
Total funds	20		501,684		431,150

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 on 12/1/22 2021 and were signed on its behalf by:

.....
M Ife – Trustee

Company Number 06654142

The notes on pages 17 to 32 form part of these financial statements.

Your Voice Counts
(a company limited by guarantee)

Statement of Cash Flows
For the year ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2020 £
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Cash generated from operations	25	69,269	(16,219)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities		69,269	(16,219)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(7,957)	(4,207)
Interest received		2,723	3,461
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(5,234)	(746)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		64,035	(16,965)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		327,479	344,444
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		391,514	327,479
Cash and cash equivalents consist of:			
Cash at bank and in hand		391,514	327,479

1. Accounting policies

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

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) issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Your Voice Counts meets the definition of a public benefit under FRS 102. The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are prepared in Sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest £.

The significant accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years presented unless otherwise stated.

1.2 Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have reviewed and considered relevant information, including the annual budgets in making their assessment. In particular, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trustees have reviewed their projections to take into account the impact on the charity for possible scenarios brought on by the impact of COVID-19, along with measures they can take to mitigate any risks identified. Based on these assessments, the increased level of demand for the services and the additional funding available the trustees have concluded that they can continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.

1.3 Fund accounting

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

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

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes 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.

1.4 Income

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

Income from charitable activities includes income received under contract or where entitlement to grant funding is subject to specific performance conditions and is recognised as earned. Grant income included in this category provides funding to support performance activities and is recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with reasonable certainty. Income received to deliver services over a specific period covering more than one financial year is accounted for over the specific period; related expenditure is accounted when incurred.

For donations to be recognised the charity will have been notified of the amounts and the settlement date in writing.

Fixed asset gifts in kind are recognised when receivable and are included at fair value. They are not deferred over the life of the asset.

Interest receivable 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.

1.5 Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is possible 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.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the cost against the expenditure was incurred.

1.6 Allocation and apportionment of costs

Support costs are those functions which assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include office costs, finance, personnel, payroll and governance costs which support the charity's programmes and activities.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets

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

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost (or deemed cost) or valuation less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses.

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

Fixtures and fittings	-	25% on reducing balance
Computer Equipment	-	33% on cost

1.8 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.9 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.

1.10 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments which are instantly accessible from the opening of the deposit or similar account.

1.11 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 discounts due.

1.12 Financial instruments

The charitable company 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.

1.13 Pensions

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

2. Judgements in applying accounting policies and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3. Statement of Financial Activities for the prior year

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Designated Funds £	Total funds 2020 As restated £
Income from:					
Donations	4	19,156	-	-	19,156
Charitable activities	5	749,906	134,043	-	883,949
Investment income	7	3,461	-	-	3,461
Other trading activities	8	580	766	-	1,346
Total income		773,103	134,809	-	907,912
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	10	802,280	171,491	-	973,771
Total expenditure		802,280	171,491	-	973,771
Net income/(expenditure) before transfers		(29,177)	(36,682)	-	(65,859)
Transfers	19	-	-	-	-
Net movement		(29,177)	(36,682)	-	(65,859)
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		399,380	97,629	-	497,009
Total funds carried forward		370,203	60,947	-	431,150

4. Donations

	2021	2020
	£	£
Donations	4,748	19,156
Government grants – HMRC furlough claims	6,955	-
	11,703	19,156

5. Income from charitable activities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Advocacy	703,999	699,289
Grants	344,693	184,660
	1,048,692	883,949

6. Investment income

All of the charitable company's investment income arises from money held in interest bearing deposit accounts.

7. Other trading activities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Fundraising income	-	1,346

8. Charitable activities expenditure

	Direct costs	Support costs	2021 Total	2020 Total
	£	£	£	£
Salaries and related costs	776,453	105,343	881,796	828,848
Premises costs	15,727	29,429	45,156	37,004
Insurances	-	2,183	2,183	2,052
Light and heat	-	2,370	2,370	6,205
Telephone and internet	3,098	7,045	10,143	8,756
Postage and stationery	3,291	2,884	6,175	19,489
Bank charges	392	-	392	113
Legal and professional fees	4,348	15,224	19,572	13,699
Training costs	4,421	1,904	6,325	10,062
Subscriptions	85	-	85	14
Room hire	2,998	-	2,998	3,071
Travelling expenses	3,002	33	3,035	24,204
Repairs and maintenance	96	720	816	3,165
Volunteer expenses	686	-	686	4,949
Accountancy/audit fees	-	5,700	5,700	3,540
Depreciation	4,586	-	4,586	4,561
Other costs	336	652	988	4,039
	819,519	173,487	993,006	973,771

9. Support costs

	£
Staff and related costs	105,343
Insurance	2,183
Training	1,904
Travelling	33
Professional fees	15,224
Office costs	43,100
Governance costs (note 10)	5,700
	173,487

10. Governance costs

	2021	2020
	£	£
Audit fee	5,700	-
Independent examination fee	-	3,540

11. Auditors/Examiners remuneration

	2021	2020
	£	£
Audit fee	5,700	-
Independent examination fee	-	3,540

12. Net income/(expenditure)

	2021	2020
	£	£
This is stated after charging:		
Depreciation – owned assets	4,586	4,561

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

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages and salaries	754,534	735,470
Social security costs	60,280	58,738
Other pension costs	36,714	34,640
	851,528	828,848

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

	2021	2020
	No.	No.
Management	3	2
Finance	1	1
Advocacy, Communities and Operations	42	49
	46	52

There were no employees who received total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) of more than £60,000 (2020 – none).

The charity trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment in the year (2020 - £nil) No trustee was reimbursed expenses during the year of £nil (2020 - £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2020 - £nil).

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the trustees and the Chief Executive Officer. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £54,039 (2020 - £49,376).

Included in wages and salaries are redundancy payments of £10,675 (2020 - £5,833).

14. Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures & Fittings £	Computer equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2020	7,879	13,973	21,852
Additions	-	7,957	7,957
At 31 March 2021	7,879	21,930	29,809
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2020	3,673	9,700	13,373
Charge for the year	1,051	3,535	4,586
At 31 March 2021	4,724	13,235	17,959
Net book value			
At 31 March 2021	3,155	8,695	11,850
At 31 March 2020	4,206	4,273	8,479

15. Fixed asset investments

	Shares in group undertakings £
Cost	
At 1 April 2020	1
Disposal	(1)
At 31 March 2021	-
Net book value	
At 31 March 2021	-
At 31 March 2020	1

In the prior year the charity has one wholly owned trading subsidiary which is registered in England and Wales, YVC Training Limited. The company has been struck off in the current year.

16. Debtors

	2021	2020
	£	£
Other debtors	70,906	88,812
Prepayments and accrued income	660	500
	71,566	89,312

17. Current asset investments

	2021	2020
	£	£
Short term deposits	79,287	78,466

18. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade creditors	23,184	25,854
Social security and other taxes	14,198	16,672
Accrued expenses	15,151	27,060
Deferred income	-	3,000
Amounts due to group undertakings	-	1
	52,533	72,587

Deferred income

Deferred income relates to income received for future periods.

	£
At 1 April 2020	3,000
Amounts released to income	(3,000)
Additions during the year	-
At 31 March 2021	-

19. Prior period adjustment

A prior period adjustment has been made in respect of the classification of funds between restricted and unrestricted funds. On review of documentation certain contracts did not fall under the SORP's definition of a restricted fund. The following adjustments has been applied to the brought forward reserve balance.

Change to the balance sheet

	As previously reported	Adjustment	As restated at 31 March 2020
	£	£	£
Funds			
Unrestricted funds	186,920	183,283	370,203
Restricted funds	244,230	(183,283)	60,947
	431,150	-	431,150

Change in Statement of Financial Activities

There has been no change to the Statement of Financial Activities for the previous financial year.

20. Statement of funds

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	At 1 April 2020 Aa restated	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	At 31 March 2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted fund					
General fund	370,203	746,564	(731,659)	(119,501)	265,607
Designated fund					
Business development	-	-	-	50,949	50,949
Finance development	-	-	-	15,476	15,476
Communities team	-	-	-	23,268	23,268
Marketing and communications	-	-	-	7,500	7,500
IT infrastructure	-	-	-	6,000	6,000
Total unrestricted funds	370,203	746,564	(731,659)	(16,308)	368,800
Restricted funds					
Operations	13,134	-	(13,134)	534	534
Community	47,813	306,976	(242,519)	15,774	128,044
Advocacy	-	10,000	(5,694)	-	4,306
Total restricted funds	60,947	316,976	(261,347)	16,308	132,884
Total funds	431,150	1,063,540	(993,006)	-	501,684

20. Statement of funds *(continued)*

For the year ended 31 March 2020

	At 1 April 2019 As restated £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2020 As restated £
Unrestricted fund					
General fund	399,380	773,103	(802,280)	-	370,203
Restricted funds					
Operations	-	15,000	(1,866)	-	13,134
Community	97,629	119,809	(169,625)	-	47,813
Total restricted funds	97,629	134,809	(171,491)	-	60,947
Total funds	497,009	907,912	(973,771)	-	431,150

Transfers are made due to capital expenditure in the period.

Designated Funds:
YVC has designated funds for Strategic development (£97,193) and IT infrastructure (£6,000).

Restricted Funds:
Restricted funds represent funds received from statutory sources and grant funders where use of the funds has been specified by the funder. YVC classifies these by business area.

- Advocacy reserves are mainly from statutory sources and are predominantly to be used for advocacy in Newcastle and South Tyneside.
- Communities reserves are mainly from grant funders and are to be used in a variety of individual projects in areas such as Gateshead and South Tyneside.
- Operations reserves are predominantly for core costs.

21. Analysis of net assets by fund

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	11,850	-	11,850
Net current assets	356,950	132,884	489,834
	368,800	132,884	501,684

For the year ended 31 March 2020

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total As restated
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	8,480	-	8,480
Net current assets	361,723	60,947	422,670
	370,203	60,947	431,150

22. Leasing arrangements

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

	2021	2020
	£	£
Within one year	37,420	35,352
Between two and five years	62,050	78,750
	99,470	114,102

23. Pensions

Defined contribution
Pension contributions payable for the year ended 31 March 2021 amounted to £36,853 (2020 - £34,640).

24. Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2020 - £nil).

25. Reconciliation of net income/(expenditure) to net cash flow from operating activities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Net income/(expenditure) for the period	70,534	(65,859)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	4,586	4,561
Interest received	(2,723)	(3,461)
Current asset investment income	(821)	(854)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	17,747	35,465
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(20,054)	13,929
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	69,269	(16,219)