



Children Unite Annual Report 2024-2025



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Directors' Report

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During the year, Children Unite strengthened its governance, welcomed new Trustees and Associates, and completed a full strategic review. Trustees and Associates contributed actively to shaping a new strategy and operating model that positions Children Unite as a small, agile collective that combines consultancy with coordination of learning and support for participatory approaches with exploited children and young people.

Helen Veitch and Jonathan Blagbrough, Co-Directors

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Since 2010 we have worked in over 25 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America with children's rights agencies and donors that are supporting exploited children and young people.

Summary of Activities 2024-2025

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Research on child marriage and child domestic work: Anti-Slavery International

Children Unite continued to co-ordinate the final write-up of research on the interlinkages between child marriage and child domestic work. Building on a long-standing relationship, this work focused on exploring how evidence and learning in these areas could inform future advocacy and programming.

Although Anti-Slavery International remained committed to developing this work during 2024, progress was slower than anticipated and timelines shifted. In early 2025, wider changes in the international funding landscape led to dissemination plans being paused. This experience reflects broader pressures facing organisations working on children's rights and has informed Children Unite's strategic planning and assessment of risk.

Survivor-informed safeguarding: Ignite Philanthropy (Thrive Together)

Children Unite's most substantial body of work during 2024–2025 was its multi-phase consultancy with Ignite Philanthropy to support survivor-informed safeguarding within the Thrive Together participatory grant-making programme.

Building on work that began in 2023, Children Unite completed several phases of consultancy across the year. Phase one on safeguarding for participatory grant-making concluded in April 2024 with the submission of a learning report. Phase two (June–September 2024) focused on assessing the safeguarding capacities of 14 survivor-led organisations selected for funding and identifying minimum safeguarding practices. The third and final phase (December 2024–May 2025) centred on building capacity in priority areas identified by grantees, including risk management, reporting and responding to safeguarding cases, and digital safeguarding.

This work involved co-facilitating workshops, individual organisational support, management of a safeguarding case, and contributions to wider sector learning through webinars and planned blogposts. A key feature of this consultancy has been the translation of survivor-informed safeguarding principles into practical tools and processes for participatory grant-making, an area of increasing interest to donors.

Across all phases, this work required a greater investment of administrative and coordination time than originally anticipated. Learning from this experience has informed revisions to Children Unite's operating model and cost-recovery approach.

Participatory advocacy: ECPAT International

Children Unite completed a consultancy with ECPAT International to develop guidance and tools on participatory advocacy as part of ECPAT's new strategy on children's participation.

Documents produced outlined options, approaches and practical tools for participatory advocacy on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. Although the main consultancy formally ended in mid-2024, ECPAT subsequently requested that remaining consultancy days be used to develop a short practitioner guide on avoiding victim-blaming language and behaviour. This resource is intended to complement ECPAT's global terminology guidelines on sexual abuse and exploitation of children and was still being finalised at the end of the reporting period. The consultancy reinforced Children Unite's influence in this area; the organisation's earlier discussion paper on sexual violence as a human rights violation was referenced across ECPAT's participation-focused terms of reference.

Participatory advocacy: Family for Every Child

In late 2024, Children Unite secured a multi-year consultancy with Family for Every Child focusing on participatory advocacy on sexual violence against boys and young men. Initial work during the reporting period involved designing a participatory grant-making mechanism through which member organisations would assess and select peers to receive grants for advocacy work.

Participatory grant-making represents a new way of working for the Family for Every Child alliance, and Children Unite's role includes supporting learning and reflection across the alliance as the model is piloted and refined. Further phases of this consultancy will continue beyond March 2025.

Learning Partner: Freedom Fund

Jonathan Blagbrough began preparations to transition his work with Freedom Fund on a global learning group on child domestic work into a Children Unite consultancy as a learning partner. The Freedom Fund learning group, meeting quarterly, aligns closely with Children Unite's strategic emphasis on coordinating learning and strengthening networks around participatory approaches.

Strategy Development

A major focus of 2024–2025 was the development of a new strategic plan for Children Unite. Following initial delays earlier in the year, Helen and Jonathan led a structured process involving consultations with Associates, former Trustees, partners, donors and peers across the children's rights sector.

Key themes emerging from these discussions included the importance of Children Unite's role in promoting participatory approaches across research, advocacy and grant-making; the value of sharing learning from consultancy work with funders; and the need to strengthen relationships with grassroots and national partners. The strategy also reflects changing sector dynamics, including shrinking grant funding, increased demand for consultancy, and the growing role of intermediaries and participatory funding mechanisms.

A Trustee strategy day held in October 2024, facilitated by former Trustee Gillian Harrow, provided space for reflection and collective sense-making. Feedback from this session and subsequent Associate meetings was incorporated into a draft strategy, which was refined and prepared for final approval in early 2025. Alongside the strategy, an operational plan and operating model were developed to guide implementation and financial planning.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remained a central priority throughout 2024–2025. Children Unite continued to operationalise its survivor-informed safeguarding policy, ensuring that systems kept pace with expanded consultancy work and a growing pool of Associates.

DBS checks were completed or initiated for Trustees, Co-Directors and Associates in line with policy requirements, alongside reference checks for new Associates. Safeguarding learning from the Ignite consultancy also fed back into Children Unite’s internal practice and external contributions to sector discussions.

Governance

Children Unite experienced significant governance changes during the year. New Trustees, Vince Ion, Martine Miel and Martin Punaks, were formally welcomed to the Board, strengthening the organisation’s collective skills and experience. Adrian Storey continues to act as Children Unite’s treasurer. Long-standing Trustees Audrey Guichon and Gillian Harrow stepped down during the year, and Beth Herzfeld concluded her term at the 2024 AGM. Their very valuable contributions over the years were acknowledged with gratitude.

At the AGM in September 2024, Martin Punaks was appointed Chair, and Martine Miel agreed to take on the role of Designated Safeguarding Trustee. Trustees also began discussions on undertaking a skills audit to inform any future recruitment.

Governance processes, including trustee appointments, statutory notifications, and financial oversight, continued to be managed by the Co-Directors with the support of the Treasurer.

Registration

Children Unite is a company limited by guarantee: 07032485

Children Unite is a registered UK charity: 1136614

Registered address: 33 Skipworth Road, London E9 7JR

Founders and Directors: Helen Veitch and Jonathan Blagbrough

Company Secretary: Helen Veitch

Non-shareholding Directors/Trustees:

Adrian Storey (Treasurer)

Martin Punaks (Chair)

Martine Miel

Vince Ion

Contact us: helen@childrenunite.org.uk

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Finances

Children Unite's income during the year was primarily derived from consultancy work, with Ignite Philanthropy, ECPAT International and Family for Every Child being the most significant contributors. Administrative fees were increasingly formalised to reflect the real costs of managing consultancies and Associates.

During the year, Children Unite made deliberate use of its unrestricted reserves to advance its charitable objectives. This included a one-off donation to the Tanzanian Child Domestic Workers Coalition and a commitment to regular quarterly donations to Haki Sawa, a grassroots organisation led by a former child domestic worker. These donations were investments in core organisational capacity rather than project-specific funding.

Financial procedures were reviewed and updated, and accounts for 2023–2024 were submitted to the Charity Commission and Companies House.

Towards the end of the reporting period, a cashflow forecast and core costs budget were developed to support more proactive financial planning in a challenging funding environment. Trustees are due to review and agree how reserves can be used to support implementation of the new strategy.

Looking Ahead

The final months of the reporting period were marked by increasing uncertainty in the international funding landscape, particularly following cuts to US and UK aid budgets. Children Unite enters 2025–2026 with a clear strategic framework, a realistic understanding of financial risk, and a renewed commitment to working as a collaborative, learning-oriented organisation that supports participatory approaches with exploited children and young people.

Children Unite
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

<u>Balance Sheet</u>	24/25	23/24
Current Assets	19,592	18,439
Cash at Bank	19,592	18,439
Debtors	-	-
Prepayments	-	-
Current Liabilities	-	-
Pending disbursements	-	-
Accruals	-	-
Net Current Assets	<u>19,592</u>	<u>18,439</u>
Funds	19,592	18,439
Balance brought forward	18,439	19,729
Surplus / (Deficit)	1,153	1,289
Reserves carried forward	<u>19,592</u>	<u>18,439</u>
Restricted funds	6,820	5,461
Unrestricted funds	12,772	12,979

For the year ended 31 March 2025 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies

Director's responsibilities:

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with Section 478.

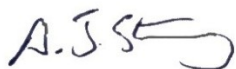
The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the Companies Act 2006.

These accounts have been delivered in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The accounts were approved by the directors and signed on their behalf by:

Director:



Date:

09-Sep-25



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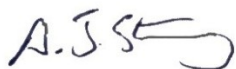
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Director:



Date:

09-Sep-25

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Children Unite

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Children Unite (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Anna Dylewska (Signed Electronically)

Name: Anna Dylewska

Relevant professional qualification or membership of professional bodies (if any): ACMA, CGMA (Member of Chartered Institute of Management Accountants - CIMA)

Address: 15 Fry Road, Stevenage, SG2 0QG

Date: 09/11/2025