



# ANNUAL REPORT

For the year to 31st March 2025

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Charity No. 1155682

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# Welcome from the Chair

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As Chair of the Board of Trustees for Supporting Older People, (SOP) it is with pride and gratitude that I present the annual review for the financial year ending March 2025. In a time of persistent economic uncertainty, the urgency of our mission has never been clearer. National data confirms that the scale of loneliness remains staggering, with estimates showing that nearly one million older people in the UK are often lonely, and hundreds of thousands may go a week without any meaningful social contact. Our charity continues to stand as a vital bridge against this tide of isolation, demonstrating that a simple conversation can be profoundly transformative.

At SOP we have a small, dedicated team comprising of Kate, Julia and Lorna. Together they organise and deliver a growing number of events, including befriending and social activities to keep up with the ever-growing demand from our ageing population. They do this with great skill and boundless enthusiasm for the charity. Without them the charity would not be able to continue to grow and bring comfort to isolated older people in Harrogate and Knaresborough. I sincerely thank them for all that they do and for supporting me this year.

We continue to work with a number of Partners including Harrogate Town AFC Foundation and Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington. This cooperation and coordination is vital in delivering the services and care to our beneficiaries. We do this to support people to stay Healthy, Independent and Connected in our area. We are supported in doing this by the awarded grants from North Yorkshire Council. We will continue to work with them to ensure we deliver the best service we can to our clients.

Our Fundraising Team has worked tirelessly this year to help support the good work of SOP. The events include a Ladies' Day and our Summer Ball. Our annual Summer Ball continues to grow and was a great success which raised over £14k towards supporting our services.

We continue to source providers of local grants for SOP. We work closely with the benefactors to show that the grants awarded are wisely spent and support the local work that we do. This is a vital source of funding for SOP and we dedicate time and resources to ensure that we deliver the service as promised and give value for money. I want to thank those who have awarded us grants and we will continue to build the relationships going forward.

I would also like to thank our dedicated team of Trustees who oversee the charity and provide support and guidance to the SOP team. Their due diligence and critical friend approach means so much to me and the SOP Team.

Our volunteers are vital to SOP and support us in so many ways. We are extremely grateful and thank them for their dedication, kindness and support. We could not function without them. We always need more volunteers and I can vouch that it is so fulfilling.

We face challenges, as a small charity, to provide sufficient funds to support the vital work that we do. We continually look for new ways and events to raise monies. We face competition in grant funding and increased austerity in 2025. We need to work hard in ensuring the charity can continue to provide these vital services to the older people we support. We will continue to work with our partners, volunteers and benefactors to continue taking the charity forward.



# Introduction from the Director

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Reading this annual report at the end of another incredibly busy and successful year, I am once again so proud of everything our small charity has achieved during challenging economic times. Demand for our services continue to rise and we have reached the end of our second year of partnership with Harrogate Town Community Foundation and Age UK, North Yorkshire and Darlington. We look forward to the third year of “Together in Harrogate” and once again would like to thank North Yorkshire Council for their faith in us. At the time of writing we are waiting to hear if there will be an additional year of this vital funding.

Partnerships have continued to be extremely important to us during 2024-25 and I have enjoyed working with our colleagues in the voluntary and business sectors and at North Yorkshire Council as well as the members of the Harrogate and District Chamber of Commerce, after becoming a member of the management committee in 2023. You can see from our activity reports that they have gone from strength to strength, with demand for them continuing to grow. Befriending has seen a slight downturn in demand as we have found since the pandemic that, when they are able, people prefer to meet in groups, thus forming wider friendship groups. Befriending, however, still has a valuable place for those less able to go out.



We have continued to diversify our funding sources in light of increased competition for grants. Our third annual ball, organised by our small fundraising team, was another huge success and we were delighted that several local businesses sponsored us and joined us on the evening, helping us raise over £14,000. We also held our first Ladies' Day fundraiser since before the pandemic, hosting a lunch and sweepstake for Cheltenham Ladies' Day at Hotel du Vin, which raised £2,500. A huge thank you to the local businesses which continue to give their staff time to support us as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, especially by driving our members to our events. This makes a huge difference, and they are acknowledged later in this report.

As chair, Peter Hannon has continued to be a valuable source of support and guidance to me and the whole team, and we look forward to continuing to work with him in the future. Sadly, at this year's AGM, James Houseman is retiring as our Treasurer. We will all miss him and I would like to thank him for his hard work and commitment to our charity over the years. Peter Hannon has agreed to take over as Treasurer from November 2025 and his finance background will stand us in good stead. All our trustees make steering a small charity through sometimes choppy waters much less of a burden and I am extremely grateful to them and indeed to all our volunteers, without whom we would not exist. They make a huge difference to the lives of those with whom they are matched.

Finally, every year I finish my introduction by thanking my wonderful colleagues, Julia Lightfoot and Lorna Daniel, for their continued dedication, commitment and innovation which place us in a strong position to meet the challenges ahead and make Supporting Older People such a wonderful place to work. This year is now different - SOP would not be the organisation it is without you.

# Activites

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## Home Befriending



Our fantastic team of 94 volunteers visit 96 members of Supporting Older (two volunteers visit two members of SOP). Without this support our Befriending Service would not function. Taking an average of one hour a week over a yearly period our volunteers give an impressive 4888 hours of volunteering.

Using the Living Wage as guidance this would amount to £59,682.48. More than 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone, and more than a million older people say they go over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member.

People can become socially isolated for a variety of reasons, such as getting older or weaker, no longer being the hub of their family, leaving the workplace, the deaths of spouses and friends, or through disability or illness.

Someone who's lonely probably also finds it hard to reach out. There's a stigma surrounding loneliness, and older people tend not to ask for help because they have too much pride.

Supporting Older People's befriending service works towards alleviating loneliness and isolation. Our Befriending Manager carefully matches volunteers with referrals ensuring a long lasting friendship. Our befriending members look forward to a weekly visit from their volunteer giving them a chance to chat and catch up over a cup of tea.

All our volunteers are DBS checked and are matched with a member according to their interests, location and how much time they can offer.



# Activites

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## Tea & Talk

There are 77 members of Supporting Older People who attend all or some of the Tea & Talks that are held at the Crown Hotel on a monthly basis.

There is an afternoon tea giving everyone the opportunity to catch up and enjoy a meal together.

Our wonderful volunteers give up their time to transport our members to this event ensuring they are picked up from their door and returned safely.

We have great entertainment from choirs, solo singers, magicians and quizzes.



## Dining Out Club

Both the Harrogate and Knaresborough Dining Out Clubs have been very popular and around 15 to 20 members attend the monthly event. As far as possible small, independent restaurants are booked. This gives everyone the opportunity to perhaps eat somewhere where they would not normally go to.



# Activites

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## Outings

We have had a wonderful year of exciting trips such as The Astoria, Barnsley - a wonderful renovated theatre with upbeat organ music, Wentworth Garden Centre, seaside trip to Bridlington, Skipton canal, Northallerton, Ilkley, Christmas shopping and a seasonal trip to Nostell Priory to see the Christmas decorations.

Our thanks to the Happy Wanderers and their wonderful volunteer drivers for getting us there and back very safely!



## Cinema Club

We were approached by Harcourt Gardens Care Home to use their cinema for showings of popular films on a monthly basis. The Harcourt Gardens and SOP Cinema Club was launched. Up to 12 members enjoy coffee and homemade cake before watching a movie complete with popcorn and drinks.

We are grateful of the relationship with Harcourt Gardens Care Home. Not only do they offer the cinema club but our members are invited to various events at the home. Residents of Harcourt Gardens attended our fund raising Ladies Day.



# Activites

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## Music & Movement

This weekly group has 20 members.

The group is run by wonderful volunteers and without their time and dedication the group would not happen. Thanks go to our Chair, Peter Hannon who attends the group and deals with the finances.



## Harlow Friendship Group

This group is overseen by Lorna, Supporting Older People's administrator who puts together a varied and exciting programme of speakers, entertainers and quizzes. There is around 25-30 members attending the weekly sessions.





# Benefits of eating together in later life

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Eating together encourages older people to consume healthier meals, as shared mealtimes often involve a wider variety of food options. It helps to foster an environment where individuals are more likely to try new foods, diversify their nutrient intake, which will in turn help to improve overall nutrition. In addition to this, older people who eat together are more likely to have regular eating patterns, reducing the likelihood of skipping meals, or relying on unhealthy snacks.

## Better physical health

Enjoying mealtimes together can positively affect physical health in several ways. Firstly, older adults tend to eat more slowly when they are dining with others, which helps to aid digestion. This in turn can also help with promoting mindful practices, like savouring the flavour and texture of food, which can lead to better digestion.



A healthy and active mind engaging in conversations and interactions during shared mealtimes can provide valuable mental stimulation for older adults including recalling memories, sharing stories and discussing current events. These conversations help to exercise memory, attention and language skills, ultimately contributing to better cognitive health. Regular social interactions during meals can also help to reduce feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety, which all helps to improve emotional well-being.

# Case Study

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## **The Power of Friendship**

It is a big step to join a new group especially if you are older, have lost a loved one or moved to a new town. At Supporting Older People we understand how difficult this is. If we have a call from someone who has built up the courage to come along to one of our events we ensure they are welcomed, are sat with like minded people and are made to feel welcome.

We have some wonderful friendships that have started at Supporting Older People. Coming along regularly to our events gives our members the opportunity to meet new people and form great friendships. We have had members going to the theatre, out for meals and even going on holiday.

Research suggests that having close ties to friends and family, and participating in meaningful social activities, may help people maintain their thinking skills better in later life and slow down cognitive decline.

People who are socially engaged seem to have a lower risk of dementia, but the evidence is not yet strong enough to draw firm conclusions.

Evidence indicates that the numbers of social connections, and the type, quality and purpose of relationships, can affect brain function. So it seems that better social engagement is good for brain health.

There is also evidence that loneliness increases the risk of loss of thinking skills in older people.

We are delighted so many of our members have found long lasting friendships through Supporting Older People.



# Risk Management

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Supporting Older People maintains a risk register and the Board of Trustees ensures that all major risks to which the charity is exposed are reviewed on a regular basis and also that systems and procedures are in place to manage such risks. We also work with our insurance broker, Marshall Wooldridge to ensure that risks are minimised.

The main controls used by the charity include agendas and minutes of all meetings held; reporting through the organisational structure; policies and procedures formally adopted by the board and activity specific or individual risk assessments which are developed and maintained by the staff team and approved by the Director.

## Public Benefit

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We have referred to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and are confident that Supporting Older People meets their requirements. Our Home Visiting Scheme is free to all and, whilst we ask for a contribution towards the cost of our activities, these are subsidised by us. Equal access to our services is important to us and people join us regardless of gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation or any other factor. We are now doing specific work with veterans, both male and female.

Provision of our 1:1 befriending and group activities for older people who live alone aims to avoid social isolation, encourages friendships and helps to prevent mental and physical ill health. A significant number of our older volunteers also live alone. Volunteering their time to visit others alleviates their loneliness and gives their lives a focus, without which they may become in need of interventions.

# Future Plans and Possibilities

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Whilst our work has not changed hugely in the past year, we are thinking about the future. We held a planning day in April 2025 with our staff, trustees and our district lead from North Yorkshire Council, who stated that our activities, mission and geographical coverage sit well with them. As a charity we need to start succession planning, as key staff members approach retirement age. An independent facilitator led the day, and we have developed draft considerations for strategy development around:

- Increased diversification of funding, including a Business Champions Campaign to encourage more local businesses to support us.
- Impact monitoring around key indicators for both beneficiaries and volunteers. This will make sure we are on the right track but also aid funding applications.



- Future proofing and succession planning – streamlining processes and making sure that key staff's operational knowledge is recorded for successors. A Customer Resource Management system will aid this and we have identified and are looking for funding to purchase the Beacon CRM.
- Strengthening our relationship with volunteers moving forward to look after them better and find alternatives to befriending if necessary.
- Strengthening our trustee board – recruiting someone with legal expertise would be particularly helpful.
- Improving our offering and reach via well-chosen partnerships
- Addressing the reduced demand for befriending and considering how to get to those who would benefit from befriending. The success of our group activities has coincided with a downturn in demand for 1:1 befriending. Often we get a referral but when we visit the individual they are not interested in having a visitor. It seems that when they are able, people prefer to form the wider friendships which they get in groups.



# Future Plans and Possibilities

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We are also planning to start a men's group, in response to request from the men we support who occasionally feel overwhelmed by the 75% of our members who are women! We are looking for a partner organisation to work with on this.

## Together in Harrogate

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In early 2023 we were successful in our application to North Yorkshire Council to deliver this project in partnerships with Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington who provide specialist Information and Advice Service for older people and Harrogate Town Community Foundation who are expanding their range of physical activity groups for older people, e.g. walking football.

We reached the end of the second year in March 2025 and our project fund supported six charities, including the Happy Wanderers, Resurrected Bites and Harrogate Neighbours Community Hub to support existing work or start new activities with vulnerable people in Harrogate.

We await news on whether there will be an additional fourth year of the grant.

# Administrative Information

Legal and Administrative Information:

Charity Name: Supporting Older People CIO

Charity Registration Number:1155682

Principal Address

Community House

46 – 50 East Parade

Harrogate

HG1 5RR

Trustees:

Supporting Older People CIO is a charitable incorporated organisation registered with the Charity Commission on February 6th 2014 and governed by its constitution of December 3rd 2013. The control and governance of the charity are the responsibility of its trustees.

Peter Hannon Chair

Julie Barlow Vice Chair

James Houseman Treasurer

Theresa Stearn

Martin Taylor

Garrey Haase

Sarah Darbyshire

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity, and for the preparation of accounts for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the association and of its income and expenditure for that period. 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 and for reviewing the risks to which the charity is exposed and the mitigation of these.

Director - Kate Rogata

Examiner - Claire Millington

Bankers - Lloyds Bank PLC

8 -11 Cambridge Crescent

Harrogate

HG1 1PQ

# Sources of Funding and other Support

The main source of funding for the core activities of Supporting Older People was our Staying Healthy, Independent and Connected grant from North Yorkshire County Council

Our activities were also funded and supported by:

Albert Hunt Trust  
Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust  
Carefound  
Co-op Local Community Fund  
Fisher Care Group  
Garrey and Talia Haase  
Grace and Morris Architects  
Harcourt Gardens Care Home  
Home Instead Harrogate, Ripon and Thirsk  
Masonic Charitable Foundation  
Promedica24 North Yorkshire, Lancashire and South Cumbria  
Rebekah French  
Rotary Club of Harrogate Brigantes  
St. James' Place Foundation  
St. Paul's Church, Harrogate  
The Linden Charity  
The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation  
The Shears Foundation  
The Yorkshire Hearing Clinic  
Travel Counsellors  
Two Ridings Community Foundation  
Verity Frearson  
Vida Healthcare Ltd  
Visiting Angels  
Yorkshire Building Society

In addition, Supporting Older People received income from donations from numerous individuals and organisations, together with charges for some group activities. Our fundraising group, chaired by our trustee, Martin Taylor, organised a highly successful ball and Ladies' Day event.

We are extremely grateful to all the organisations and individuals whose generosity has enabled us to carry out our work in 2024-25.

# Finance

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## Treasurer's Report – Financial Year 2024–25

### Overview

Supporting Older People (“SOP”) recorded a surplus of £15,610 for the financial year ended 31 March 2025 (“FY 24–25”) and an increase in total funds from £61,637 to £77,247 over the year. While this represents a marked improvement compared with the prior year, it is important to note that this outcome is not fully reflective of underlying performance.

A significant proportion of the surplus arises from timing differences in relation to North Yorkshire County Council (“NYCC”) Stay Healthy, Independent and Connected (“SHIC”) funding, with two tranches of funding being received during the same accounting period. As such, similar to the situation described in my report last year (albeit in the opposite direction), headline results should be treated with some caution when assessing the charity's ongoing financial position.

Despite this caveat, SOP has continued to operate effectively in a challenging funding and inflationary environment, and the year reflects the continued commitment of Kate, the staff team, and our volunteers in delivering high-quality services whilst carefully managing resources.

### Accounting basis

As a small charity (with gross income below £250,000), the financial statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis, consistent with prior years. As previously noted, this accounting basis can result in material timing differences, particularly in respect of large grant receipts such as SHIC funding.



# Finance

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## Funding during the year

Total income for FY 24–25 amounted to £166,343, a significant increase compared with the prior year. Grant income of £125,168 made up the majority of this total.

The most significant element of grant funding was again the NYCC SHIC grant, with £90,000 received during the year. This includes funding relating to more than one programme year, resulting in a compression of income into FY 24–25 and materially inflating the reported surplus for the period. It is also worth explaining that of this £90,000, SOP only keeps £54,000 – the balance is immediately distributed to the SHIC partner organisations, Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington and Harrogate Town AFC.

In addition to NYCC funding, SOP successfully secured funding from a range of other charitable trusts and organisations, including the Terry Bramall Foundation, Shears Foundation, Two Ridings Community Foundation, Albert Hunt Trust, Anton Jurgens Trust, McCarthy Stone, Rotary Club of Harrogate and the Co-op Food Group. Some grants were restricted for specific activities or purposes, such as Christmas support or particular types of expenditure for example, while others were unrestricted and therefore particularly valuable in supporting core operating costs.

Income from charitable activities and fundraising remained broadly consistent with prior years. The Summer Ball continued to perform well, generating over £13,000 of income, and paid-for activities such as outings, friendship groups, and ‘Tea and Talk’ provided an important supplementary income stream.

# Finance

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## Expenditure

Total expenditure for FY 24–25 was £150,733, primarily relating to direct charitable activities. SOP continues to operate with a strong focus on cost control and value for money.

As in previous years, staff costs represent the largest component of expenditure and reflect both inflationary pressures and the essential role staff play in delivering and coordinating SOP's activities. Other operating costs also increased in line with general inflation.

Of note, £36,000 of expenditure relates to the onward distribution of the NYCC SHIC grant previously discussed.

Fundraising and event-related costs increased broadly in line with associated income, which is to be expected.

SOP continues to rely heavily on its unpaid volunteers, particularly in the delivery of befriending and group activities. As in prior years, their contribution is not reflected in the financial statements but remains critical to SOP's ability to operate efficiently.

## Financial position and future

At 31 March 2025, SOP held cash of £77,247, of which £75,050 was unrestricted. This represents a strengthening of the balance sheet compared with the prior year and provides a reasonable level of short-term financial security.

Unrestricted reserves continue to cover in excess of six months' planned expenditure, in line with SOP's reserves policy. However, it should be emphasised that the increase in reserves during FY 24–25 is largely attributable to the timing of SHIC funding receipts, rather than a sustained improvement in underlying surplus generation.

Looking ahead, the funding environment remains highly competitive and uncertain. While SOP is not facing any immediate financial concerns, continued caution is required, and the organisation must remain proactive in seeking grant funding, developing fundraising activity and managing costs tightly. The FY 24–25 result should therefore be viewed as providing short-term stability rather than creating scope for complacency. 18

# Finance

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## Change of Treasurer

During the year, I have taken the decision to step down from the role of Treasurer due to increasing work and family commitments. I have tremendously enjoyed working with Kate, the staff team and fellow trustees, and it has been a privilege to support the charity during my time in the role. I am delighted that my successor brings extensive financial experience and, being semi-retired, has more time to dedicate to the position, ensuring continuity and strong financial oversight. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to SOP's wonderful volunteers, whose commitment and generosity of time underpin everything the charity does. Supporting Older People is a fantastic small charity that does truly amazing work, and I wish the trustees, staff, volunteers and service users every success for the future.

# Finance

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES		YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025				
		Unrestricted		Restricted		Total
INCOME		£		£		£
	Donations and grants	36,100		98,257		134,357
	Income from charitable activities	31,468				31,468
	Investment income	518				518
	<b>Total income</b>	<b>68,086</b>		<b>98,257</b>		<b>166,343</b>
EXPENDITURE						-
	Charitable activities	50,697		100,036		150,733
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>17,389</b>		<b>-1,779</b>		<b>15,610</b>
FUND BALANCES AT 31st MARCH 2024		57,661		3,976		61,637
FUND BALANCES AT 31st MARCH 2025		<b>75,050</b>		<b>2,197</b>		<b>77,247</b>
BALANCE SHEET		YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025				
		Unrestricted		Restricted		Total
		£		£		£
NET ASSETS						
	Cash, bank and building society deposits	75,050		2,197		77,247
TOTAL NET ASSETS		<b>75,050</b>		<b>2,197</b>		<b>77,247</b>
FUNDS						
	Unrestricted	75,050		2,197		77,247
TOTAL FUNDS		<b>75,050</b>		<b>2,197</b>		<b>77,247</b>



# Finance



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

## Independent examiner's report on the accounts

### Section A

### Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/  
members of

Charity Name  
Supporting Older People CIO

On accounts for the year  
ended

31 March 2025

Charity no  
(if any)

1155682

Set out on pages

16-19 of the Annual Report

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and  
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting 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:

Date: 25 January 2026

Name: Claire E Millington

Relevant professional  
qualification(s) or body  
(if any): BA  
CA (ICAS)

Address: 10 Hereford Close  
WV7 3RL

**Section B****Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

No matters that the examiner deems are disclosable.





@supportingolderpeople



[www.facebook.com/SupportingOlderPeople](http://www.facebook.com/SupportingOlderPeople)



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