



WM Funders Annual Report 2024-25

1.0 Reference Information

Charity Name WM Funders Network

**Charity Registration
Number** 1173579

Principal Office Hollingworth House
109 Court Oak Road
Harborne
Birmingham
B17 9AA

Trustees Steven Simpson (Chair) apt. November 2024
Melinda Connelly apt. November 2022
Tina Costello apt. November 2023
Peter Cunnison apt. November 2022
Peter Hardisty (Treasurer) apt. November 2022
Wesley Lovett apt. November 2023
Debbie Pippard apt. November 2022
Pauline Roche apt. June 2022 – retired November 2024
Stuart Ashmore apt. November 2024
Carla Belle apt. November 2024
Sophie Tobin apt. November 2024

**Person of Significant
Control** Dipali Chandra Secretariat

Bank Lloyds Bank
32-24 Alcester Road South
Kings Heath
Birmingham
B14 7PU

**Independent Verifier
Of These Accounts** Nick Wallace

2.0 Introduction

This period marked the first year of WMFN's refreshed three-year strategy (2024-27), developed following in-depth consultation with members and stakeholders. The new strategy refocuses WMFN's priorities into a leaner, more purposeful programme of work – focused on four key thematic pillars that underpin its work: Equity in funding; environmental sustainability; data, evidence and digital innovation and strengthening funder collaboration for impact.

The lives of citizens continue to be impacted by the rising cost of living, exacerbated by the continued global crises of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, conflict in the Middle East and wider geopolitical and international trade uncertainty. Though there has been a change in government, there continues to be civil unrest with areas of the country where communities remain divided and continued lack of public confidence in leadership of key institutions. This continues to create a challenging environment for the not-for-profit sector and the grant-making sector as a whole.

Despite these challenging times, the Network and its members remain committed to their vital role in the region, as evidenced by the work we have undertaken. This would not be possible without the ongoing support of our members, the dedicated voluntary time contributed by our Trustees, Ambassadors and the invaluable assistance of our funders and sponsors, led by the Network's Secretary.

The Trustees consider that the following report and statements for the year ending 31st March 2025 meet the statutory reporting requirements as detailed in the Charities Act 2011.

3.0 Background and Context

West Midlands Funders Network (WMFN) was established as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in June 2017 to continue the work of Charitable Trusts West Midlands an organisation that existed for over forty years.

We are a cross-sector network of people and organisations who give funding to charities, voluntary organisations and community projects in the West Midlands. We work with trusts and foundations, local authorities, lottery funders and corporate investors, helping them to use their resources efficiently and effectively to support local communities of place and interest.

4.0 Governance

The Network has up to 12 trustee posts, 10 of which are currently filled. Trustees serve a 3-year term and can be re-nominated as a Trustee for up to three 3- year terms. Trustees meet 4 times a year to consider the strategic, financial and operational performance of the organisation, the management of risk and other matters necessary. The trustees ran two sub-groups during the year: Programme Planning committee that consider, plans and evaluates the programme of activities, and a National Funders sub-group that shares their regional

approach to grant-making in the region, directed by their nationally agreed strategies, where there might be opportunities for learning and collaboration. Both committees during the year reported to the main board of Trustees at each meeting.

The Trustees have commissioned a secretariat service to provide day to day management of the Charity. This includes clerking the Board of Trustees, acting as the first line of contact with organisation's members and, most importantly, the day-to-day delivery of the strategic priorities, programme of work, as prescribed by the sub-committees and Board of Trustees.

Induction and Training of new Trustees

New Trustees are recruited from within the organisation's membership or the wider funding sector. After an interview with the Chairperson and Secretary, new trustees receive an induction from the Secretary that outlines the work of the organisation as well as sharing an information pack comprising key policies and procedures, constitution, latest annual report and end of year accounts, management accounts and the organisation's latest strategic plan.

5.0 Risk

The organisation has a risk register that is updated at least twice throughout the year but more frequently if circumstances demand it. Risks are assessed on the basis of their likelihood (scored 1 to 3 with 1 less likely and 3 almost certain) and their impact (scored 1 to 3 with 1 being minimal impact and 3 being maximum impact). The likelihood score is then multiplied by the impact score and then the impact score is added to the total to arrive at an overall risk score that balances the probability and effect of any risks.

In 2024-25 the risk scoring greater than 7 were:

- Reduction of core grants (score 12)
- Reduction of sponsorship and support in kind (score 12)
- Reduction of trustees and increased skills gaps and availability (score 12)
- Downturn in the economy (score 12)
- International emergencies, global pandemics, terrorism/war leading to disruption of business (score 9)
- Dependency on key contractors for services (score 8)

All identified risks have mitigation strategies based around first preventing the issue and then mitigating its impact.

6.0 Objectives and Activities

The object of the Charity as stated in the Network's constitution as a CIO is to promote the efficiency and effectiveness in the charitable activities of voluntary and not-for-profit organisations and grant making charities working in the West Midlands and its environs (Area

of Benefit) and the effective use of charitable resources for the public benefit in particular but not exclusively by promoting and developing good practice in the making of charitable grants by exchanging information, knowledge, expertise and experience.

The current strategic plan's objectives:

Increase skills, knowledge and expertise among funders and others with an interest in civil society

- Establish WMFN as the 'go to' organisation for networking and sharing learning and information about issues of relevance to funding civil society
- Convene and co-ordinate opportunities for encouraging joined up approaches that work towards improving the lives of people living in the WM
- Build a financially robust organisation with multiple sources of income that will allow us to sustainably to secure the resources we need to deliver the
- above.

During the year, this has been translated into the following:

- 1) Increasing knowledge, understanding, skills and expertise among funders and others with an interest in civil society that is underpinned by the key thematic pillars.
- 2) Establishing WMFN as the 'go to' organisation for networking and sharing learning and information about issues of relevance to funding civil society
- 3) Convening and co-ordinating opportunities for encouraging joined up approaches that work towards improving the lives of people in the WM

WMFN is a membership organisation. Grant makers, and others that award money to civil society organisations pay a membership subscription in order to attend and participate in events run by the Network. Membership subscriptions are based on the amount of money a member awarded as grant income as reflected in the last set of end of year accounts, with those who awarded more paying a larger subscription fee. Under this model those larger organisations do subsidise the membership of smaller members to some extent.

7.0 Achievements and Performance

In this financial year the organisation has held or co-hosted 9 events with 300 booked to attend and 288 people attending (instances of attendance) with a 96% return on bookings. Membership of the Network has slightly increased to 48 organisation members (an increase of 2 on the previous year and one member left) made up of over 90 individuals of Trustees, panel members and staff. Since contracting a marketing and communications consultant, the Network has seen Annual conference engagement grow from the previous year by 25%. Total website visits grew by 43% and unique website visitors grew by 47% from the previous year. The members newsletters campaigns have reduced as part of the Network's strategy to shift to fewer, higher-quality outputs. Open rates have stayed strong at 36–45%, while click rates have remained steady at 4%. Fewer sends, better targeting, and stronger relevance are delivering higher-value engagement from our member communications.

Without the continued member subscriptions, support of funders: Barrow Cadbury Trust, Limoges Trust, Owen Family Trust, resources in kind and sponsorship from Charity Bank, Rathbones, Brewin Dolphin, Heart of England Community Foundation, this would not be possible.

From tackling the big debates in funding practice to exploring the emerging frontiers of AI, the past year has been one of energy, experimentation, and shared learning for members and wider stakeholders. Across a packed calendar of member roundtables, workshops, briefings and our flagship annual conference, members came together to exchange insights, and practice, challenge assumptions, improve learning and strengthen its connection with wider stakeholders that operate in the region.

Learning Together, Acting Together

Our members roundtable exchanges – held in April, July, October, and January – continued to be a cornerstone of the Network with on average 14 members attending. These sessions saw members share updates on strategies, grant programmes, and sector-wide challenges. From the implications of Birmingham City Council's budget crisis to updates on the National Lottery Community Fund's 10-year strategy, these gatherings have been spaces for honest discussion and mutual support. In April, attention turned to the local authority's Section 114 notice and the funding implications for the region's VCSE sector, while October's exchange with IVAR unpacked how funders can become genuine learning organisations. January's session brought the National Emergencies Trust into conversation with members about inclusive funding and supporting communities in times of crisis.

Data in Action

May's hands-on workshop with Birmingham City Observatory and the Digital Neighbourhood Network Scheme (NSS) bridged the gap between open data and practical funding decisions. Members, data analysts, and policy practitioners worked together to tackle real-world questions: from mapping cold spots in service provision to understanding the socio-economic profile of women in East Birmingham. The event underlined a growing appetite among funders to use data more creatively – and more collaboratively.

Annual Conference 2024: Participatory Grant-Making

Our June conference brought nearly 100 delegates together to dive deep into participatory grant-making – a growing movement that hands decision-making power to those with lived experience. Case studies, including the Phoenix Way Programme, Birmingham City Council's Neighbourhood Development and Support Unit, Sported, Smallwood Trust and The Edge Fund highlighted how this approach can challenge entrenched power structures in funding. The message was clear: done well, participatory methods can make funding more equitable, responsive, and rooted in community priorities.

Hot Topics and Emerging Practice

Throughout the year, WMFN provided space to tackle urgent and emerging themes. July's meeting explored environmental justice. In November, members turned their attention to Artificial Intelligence with Adapta Consulting, weighing its potential benefits against ethical, accessibility, and environmental concerns. The session revealed both curiosity and caution – and confirmed the need for sector-wide guidance. In February, a legal masterclass with Higgs LLP clarified the differences between grants, gifts, and contracts, and the fiduciary responsibilities that trustees must navigate. And in March, our place-based funding workshop gathered some of the UK's leading funders to examine how local partnerships can drive systemic change.

The WM Funders Network continues to expand its connections with national and regional stakeholders and other infrastructure bodies, aligning with its mission to support members in making wider connections and enhancing their grant-making effectiveness.

This has been a year of shared purpose. Whether unpacking complex legal duties, trialling participatory models, or exploring the data that underpins better decisions, WMFN's work in 2024–25 reflected our members' shared commitment to collaboration, learning, and improving the impact of funding across the West Midlands.

8.0 Commentary on the Accounts

The organisation has had a successful financial year with a budgeted surplus; as of end of year this was £7,757, far better than the budgeted deficit of £1,534. The important detail to observe however, is that the organisation has moved away from accrual accounts, returning to payments and receipts accounting. This meant that £3,123 of subscription income that could not be reported in the previous year's accrued accounts must now be entered into restated accounts for that period. As a result, the previous year's accounts now show a surplus of £1,543 rather than the earlier reported deficit of £1,580.

In addition, two grants from one donor were paid within the same year (one near the year-start and the other near year-end), constituting two years' grants, but now reported in the payments and receipts accounting period.

The organisation's membership (both numbers and income) has remained reasonably steady, and despite recording two payments from one donor, when the later of these is deducted there is an increase in the amount the organisation received from other trusts (£4,700 more) and sponsorship (£3,500 more). As a result of the move away from accrual accounts, income reported increased significantly by £11,036 to £33,819. The year's income was comprised of £19,200 in grants and donations, £4,000 in sponsorship, £8,533 in membership subscriptions and £2,086 in event income.

All income was generated in the UK and the organisation did not receive any funds from any overseas entities.

Expenditure increased to £26,062, a small increase of £1,699 on the previous year. This was in part due to an increase in the amount spent on marketing and communications and a budgeted rise in secretariat costs, however, costs related to the Annual Conference were £2,756 representing a cost reduction of £812.

9.0 Reserves

The trustees still assert it is prudent to hold 3 months' operating costs in reserve (c.£5,400). The trustees also wish to ensure that the charity always holds one month's secretariat costs in cash at all times (£1,800). As of 30th March 2025, the charity was holding £17,175 in cash which is significantly above the reserve aspiration.

10. Public Benefit

The Trustees of the charity have given due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance regarding public benefit. No individuals have benefited directly from the organisation's activities; however, the public has benefited from the organisation's efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of grant making in the West Midlands. In 2024-25 this public benefit is derived from the efforts the organisation has made to share best practice regarding the equality, diversity and inclusion in accessing funding opportunities; global climate change and environmental challenge, responding to national emergencies, access and use of data and information to inform where funding is needed the most, and applying good practice in funding learnt from participatory grant making approaches that involve those with lived experience of the issues and the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis.

11. Related Parties

No Trustees benefited from their relationship to the CIO and no payments were made to trustees excepting any expense reimbursement once legitimate expenditure has been defrayed and evidenced.

12. Future Plans

The charity now has a comprehensive plan for the next three years. This plan focuses on delivering a smaller number of higher quality events for members while diversifying and increasing the charity's income.

2025

Though the charity planned to deliver four high quality events a year from April 2024 that are, in effect, half day conferences. This has been possible, due to unsuccessful bids to secure

funding to finance its delivery – in particular, covering the marketing and communication costs. The charity will continue to develop the traditional format of the members round table discussions but look at timely opportunities to reflect spotlight important Government policy direction on social issues that many members prioritise through their funding programmes. A follow-up to the November workshop on Funding and AI will be the focus of WMFN 2025 annual conference.

The charity plans to investigate ways of opening new and maximising existing income streams by refining its sponsorship offer, implementing a voluntary excess donation scheme and comparatively reviewing its subscription rates.

We will endeavour to secure conference venues that are both more cost effective and linked to disadvantaged communities across the West Midlands or relevant to conference focus. Trustees plan to invest any new funds raised or released in enhanced marketing and communications that will allow us to grow the charity's profile.

2025 and Beyond

As funding to enhance Network's marketing and communications is secured, Trustees will seek to develop more richer content for its news updates and create informative and resource filled follow-ups to events, as the 'go to' organisation for networking and sharing learning and information about issues of relevance to funding civil society.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees by



Steven Simpson
Chairperson

West Midlands Funders Network Annual Accounts

For the Year Ending 31st March 2025

	This Year (2025).		Last Year (2024)	
Receipts (Income)				
Allocation Membership Subscriptions	£	8,533.00	£	13,651.00
Event Income	£	2,085.67	£	2,455.00
Donations from Other Trusts	£	19,200.00	£	9,300.00
Sponsorship	£	4,000.00	£	500.00
Bank Interest	£	0.12	£	0.12
Total	£	33,818.79	£	25,906.12
Payments (Expenditure)				
Secretariat Costs	£	20,720.00	£	19,120.00
Postage and Stationery Costs	£		£	17.97
Travel Costs	£	74.85	£	104.14
Memberships and Subscriptions	£	-	£	
Marketing and Consultancy	£	2,511.00	£	1,552.93
Events Costs	£	2,756.39	£	3,568.20
Total	£	26,062.24	£	24,363.24
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	£	7,756.55	£	1,542.88
Total Cash at Bank at year end	£	17,175.22	£	9,418.67

West Midlands Funders Network Balance Sheet

For the Year Ending 31st March 2025

	2025	2024
Accrual for Income paid in advance	£ -	£ 3,123.00
Cash in the bank and at hand	£ 17,175.22	£ 9,418.67



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
WM Funders Network

No (if any)
1173579

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/2024		31/03/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations, grants and gifts	19,200	-	-	19,200	9,300
Membership subscriptions and sponsorships which are in substance donations	8,533	4,000	-	12,533	13,651
Other	2,086	-	-	2,086	2,955
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	29,819	4,000	-	33,819	25,906
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	29,819	4,000	-	33,819	25,906
A3 Payments					
Advertising, marketing, direct mail and publicity	2,511	-	-	2,511	1,571
Secretariat costs	16,720	4,000	-	20,720	19,120
Event costs	2,756	-	-	2,756	3,568
Travel costs	75	-	-	75	104
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	22,062	4,000	-	26,062	24,363
A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	22,062	4,000	-	26,062	24,363
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,757	-	-	7,757	1,543
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	9,419	-	-	9,419	7,876
Cash funds this year end	17,176	-	-	17,176	9,419

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash funds, as of year end	17,176	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	17,176	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	N/A	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	N/A			
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	N/A			
B5 Liabilities	N/A			
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	[Signature]	Gemma Simpson	25/11/25	
	[Signature]	PETER HARDISTY	25/11/25	

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
WM Funders Network

On accounts for the year ended

31.3.25

Charity no
(if any)

1173759

Set out on pages

Set out on page 9 of the Trustees Annual Report 24-25 and pages 1 and 2 of the accompanying CC16a.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, 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; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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:

21/11/25

Name:

Nick Wallace

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address:

58 Mossfield Road

Kings Heath Birmingham B14 7JB

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.

N/A