

Annual report & accounts



The Board of Trustees present
their annual report and accounts
for the year
01/03/2024 to 28/02/2025

info@fromebirthtalk.org.uk

07399 356863

www.fromebirthtalk.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1175641

Registered Address: Black Dog Cottage, Chapmanslade,
Wiltshire, BA13 4AE

Welcome!

2024-2025 was another exciting year of growth for Frome Birth Talk, marked by the launch of our new website, logo and refreshed visual identity.

Our counselling service continued to experience high demand, and our regular drop-in groups supported more families than ever before. Our board of trustees also evolved this year, as we warmly welcomed new members and said heartfelt goodbyes to some much-valued colleagues.

We've been busy shaping bigger, bolder ambitions for the charity, underpinned by an ambitious business plan to guide our next phase of growth.

At the same time, we've been preparing for the end of our National Lottery grant in 2025, with a renewed focus on community fundraising and exploring support from major donors. There is always more to do, but we feel energised, optimistic and ready for the next stage of our development.

Laura Alexander
Chair of Trustees



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Aims, objective and activities

The objective of Frome Birth Talk is for the public benefit by the relief of sickness and the preservation of health of pregnant women and new parents in Frome and the surrounding area by the **provision of a free counselling service** and **wellbeing events and activities.**

What our service users say

We invite everyone who use our services to give qualitative feedback. Please see below for just some of the responses:

“This service **was a lifeline** during our time in NICU when our son was there for 5 weeks. It took a huge toll on my emotions and mental state. Knowing I had an outlet each week to share what I was going through **helped me to get through** a very challenging time.”

”

“

“I have needed **more support than the NHS were able to offer** and Frome Birth Talk were able to fill the gap.”

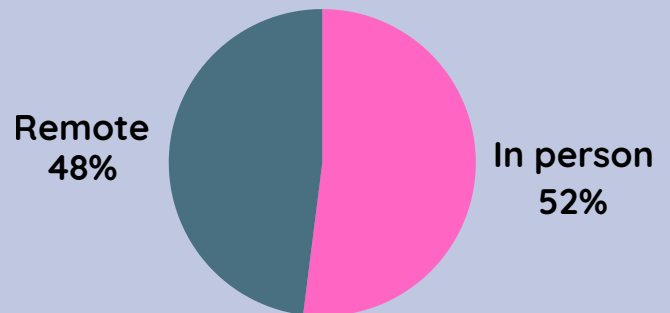
“Outstanding waiting time and contact. The **prompt response** was so important when needing help. I asked, and it was there. Thank you.”

“My whole life had been taken over by the responsibilities of having a newborn baby. Frome Birth Talk was the first time **I felt able to talk and think about myself again**, and really focus on how I was feeling rather than being swept up in the motions of being a new mother. The sessions allowed me **space to feel like myself again** rather than just a mum, and gave me tools to take forward with me. **It was really transformative.**”

Our impact: Counselling

We continued this year with a mixture of face-to-face and remote counselling, but responded to the needs of our clients by offering a more even split between in-person and remote sessions.

The number of referrals we received was 137, with 15 referrals from returning clients.



137

Referrals

We were able to respond to client demand by adding or reducing sessions based on our waiting list. This helped keep our waiting times short, and our vacant slots to a minimum.

We have improved our referrals process this year. Clients now fill out a simple Microsoft Form when registering with Frome Birth Talk, which is accessible directly via our website. This has streamlined the process, freeing up staff capacity and allowing at-a-glance analysis of service user information. Additional key questions can be added and removed as needed.

100%

of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their referral was handled

Our impact: Counselling

We request feedback from counselling clients via an online questionnaire at the end of their sessions.

Throughout this year:



98% said the counselling **made a difference** to their lives



94% of clients told us they were **'very satisfied'** with the service they received



50% say they feel **less anxious** since having counselling with Frome Birth Talk



57% say they feel they are now able to be **more open about their feelings**



53% say they feel **hopeful about the future** thanks to counselling

"This is an **essential service for new parents**, I'm amazed this type of service isn't more widely available across the country! I feel **very lucky** to have been able to be seen and heard."

Our impact: Counselling

To measure the impact of our counselling service, we use a clinically validated evaluation tool, Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE). Not only does this provide us with useful data about percentage improvements in client wellbeing, it also helps us practice safely and can help our counsellors recognise where there is a risk of harm and the need to involve other health professionals.

On 1st January 2024 we implemented a new data collection system for CORE scores, which has ensured consistency between all team members who enter information. It is now easier than ever to look at our CORE score data and see improvements, trends and patterns. This has been extremely helpful when providing information in grant applications.

We have 137 complete sets of CORE scores for people who used our counselling during 2024-25, a notable improvement since the introduction of our new system. Below is a breakdown of the improvements we have seen since using this system:

	Before	After	
Wellness	2.04	1.07	48% improvement
Problems & Symptoms	2.7	0.94	65% improvement
Functioning	1.18	0.64	46% improvement
Risk	0.09	0.03	67% improvement
All scores total	1.3	0.7	46% improvement
All scores (minus risk)	1.52	0.82	46% improvement

Groups and activities

Bump to Baby Group:

This group is for anyone who is expecting a baby, or who has a pre-mobile infant. This year it continued to run on Wednesday mornings at Frome Community Hospital, and saw a large increase in numbers. An average of 10 families attended each time - a total of 106.



The group benefited from our now-weekly volunteer Dinah Smith, who along with retired midwife Sarah Hartley and Margaret Graham, a retired counsellor, provided consistent friendly faces for visitors each week.

Some notable events from throughout the year included:

- In April, we ran another 'Let's Talk About Birth' session, facilitated by midwives, and invited a specialist pelvic health physio guest speaker to visit the group
- In June, we welcomed massage therapist Sarah who offered free taster sessions for new parents
- In October, Geraldine from Frome Baby Link joined us for a session: 'introducing family foods to your baby'
- In December, Alice from Frome Baby Link ran an informal Q&A session for parents with questions
- In February, we hosted a pop-up 'Maternal Journal' session - a craft and journaling workshop designed to harness creativity through the emotions of motherhood

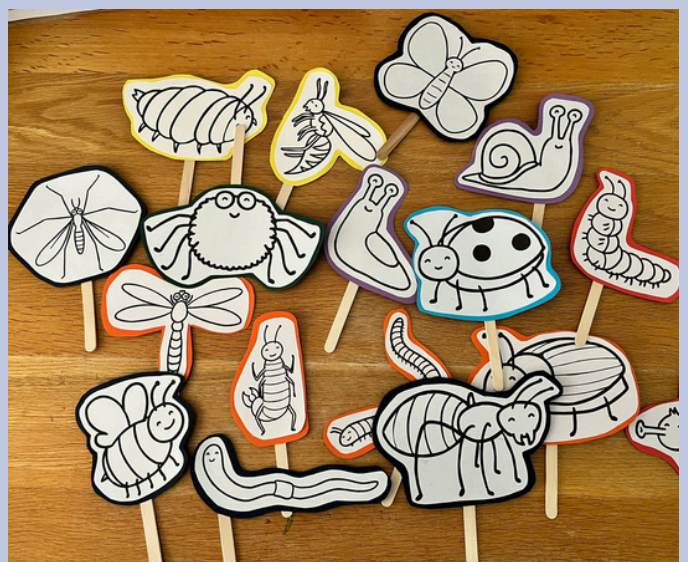
Groups and activities

Toddler Group:

Our Friday morning toddler group continued to run at Trinity Church Hall with approximately 8-15 families attending each week - 142 families in total for the year period. Of these, 15 families attended five times or more. Carers and children are provided with a safe, warm and fun place to relax and play, as well as free healthy snacks and hot drinks. Volunteers Lisa Richards, Leah Jones, Judy Carter, Harriet Peatman, Emma Metcalf, Ebony Collis and Julie Lowe helped run the group. Thanks to more volunteers, pressure has been reduced on paid staff - and continues to improve as more volunteers come on board.

We organised several special events to attract new people to the group during the year:

- In June we ran a crafting session all about 'mini beasts'
- In October, Rhiannon from Maverick Mums joined to inspire parents' sense of adventure
- ... and we ran a spooky halloween crafting morning!
- In December we hosted a festive Christmas party with gift bags for all children and a music session with Willow from Sing-a-ling.



Groups and activities

Baby Loss Support Group:

Our first Baby Loss Support Group was held in February 2024 at Frome Town Hall. This group offers in-person support for anyone who has experienced baby loss, whenever and however they experienced it.

"I think the group is lovely. And it's what I would have wanted for myself when I lost my baby through a medical termination 28 years ago. I spent so many years feeling alone with my loss, which I feel increased my difficulties in coming to terms with it and finding a healthy way forward. I was stuck for many years."

The group is facilitated by qualified practitioners with lived experience of loss, including our counsellor Melina Robinson.

In February 2025 we moved location to The Good Heart Cafe, which has excellent links with Frome Grief Network.



One of our aims for this year is to continue to build numbers for this group. We understand that this kind of group takes time to develop, and requires ongoing efforts to connect with relevant groups in our community.

Other activities & events

In July 2024, we took part in Frome's annual Children's Festival, organised by Purple Elephant. This is a free event for families and includes entertainment and activities for all ages. We provided a free 'Feed and Change' tent, allowing parents of small children a quiet space to tend to their children's needs. We provided snacks, nappies and toys.



In February 2025, we had a stall at the FIND LIVE for Under 5s event, hosted by Frome Town Council. This event brought together all Frome's offerings for families of young children, so people could find out about what's available to them in the area.

A THANK YOU

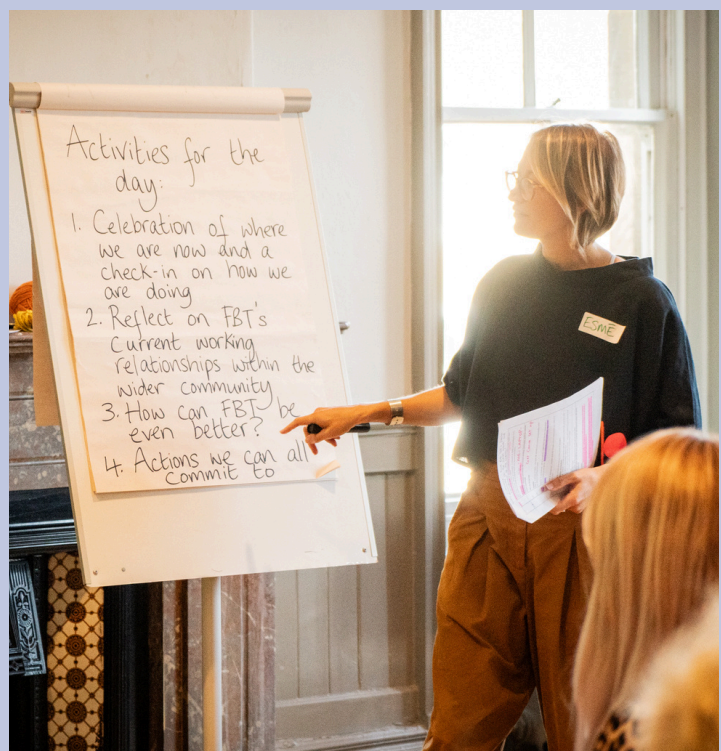
Huge thanks go to Made by Katie website design, who in January 2025 created a beautiful, functional website for us pro bono, and to Nick at Inkcapp Design for our new logo and branding.

Other activities & events

In October 2024 we held our annual Community Day. The focus of this event was ‘how can our community support Frome Birth Talk?’ and saw staff, volunteers, service users, healthcare providers and enthusiastic supporters come together to develop ideas for the future of the charity.



Following this event, a WhatsApp group named ‘the Impact Collective’ was set up, which provides a space for FBT supporters to connect, and for the charity to send out ad-hoc requests for ‘micro volunteering.’ Much of the day’s discussion also informed our ongoing business plan.



Our people: staff

All our trustees, staff and volunteers have either used our services, have lived experience of post-natal depression or baby-loss or are active within the community of young families in Frome.

Director:

Suzy Cristinacce continues to lead the organisation as its Director, and is contracted to work 14 hours per week.

Counselling Coordinator:

Lucy Hill continued to co-ordinate our counselling service, as well as lead on marketing and communications output. She is contracted to work 8 hours per week.

Volunteer Co-ordinator:

This role was funded by grants from Frome Town Council and Somerset Community Foundation. Experienced Volunteer Co-ordinator, Becky Newton, began in this role in November 2023 alongside her Volunteer Co-ordinator role at Dorothy House hospice. This position is contracted for 7 hours per week.

It is worth noting that the salary and number of hours for all our employee roles are low given the amount of work and responsibility they involve. In order to ensure our organisation's long-term sustainability, we will continue to factor this in when creating our future fundraising strategies.

Our people: trustees

The voting members of the charity are the board of trustees, and their number must be no fewer than three and no more than twelve. The board seeks to meet the needs of Frome Birth Talk by recruiting and retaining trustees with relevant skills and expertise.

The trustees who served the whole period from 01.03.2024 to 29.02.2025 were:

- **Karen Patrick** (appointed 08.11.17): an experienced midwife, who brings clinical knowledge to the team. Karen completed a Masters by Research at the University of Southampton on the Continuity of Carer model being implemented across the UK following the government's 'Better Births' report in 2016. Karen has been our safeguarding lead throughout this period.
- **Jessica Taylor** (appointed 01.11.21): a local mother who is an experienced events co-ordinator and workplace mental health champion. Jess leads on fundraising events.
- **Annabel Litchfield** (appointed 09.09.22): a local mother who specialises in supporting charities of all sizes with their impact monitoring and evaluation. Annabel is leading on developing our monitoring and evaluation systems.
- **Rebecka Mau** (appointed 23.01.24) is a local mother with experience of event management and serving on charity trustee boards. She also provided cover for our Counselling Co-ordinator role in this period, so has an in-depth knowledge of the organisation.

Our people: new trustees

The trustees who joined part way through this period were:

- **Laura Alexander** (appointed 17.04.24): a local mother who works for a large local charity in a Commercial Director role.
- **Aaron Calver** (appointed 17.04.24): a local father, accountant and trainee counsellor. Aaron is our treasurer.

Trustees who now sit on the board but who joined after 28.02.2025 are:

- **Holly Brown** (appointed 08.05.2025): a local mother who has extensive experience in HR and policy
- **Gail Norris** (appointed 02.07.2025): a local mother with experience in health care, charity settings and volunteer management.
- **Annette Schwalbe** (appointed 02.07.2025): a local mother and somatic & creative arts psychotherapist with 25 years of experience in private practice and various charity settings

Trustee resignations

- **Hayley Clements** (resigned 18.04.24)
- **Kathryn Riddick** (resigned 23.10.24)
- **Jaime Swift** (resigned 23.10.24)
- **Hanna Fisher** (resigned 23.10.24)



Thank you to all retiring trustees!

Trustee payments

Rebecka Mau continued to do occasional paid work providing cover for our Counselling Co-ordinator role.

The trustees are satisfied that this is for the benefit of the charity as she was recruited in an open and fair manner before becoming a trustee. Rebecka does not contribute to discussion where there would be a conflict of interest e.g. discussion of staff pay.

In 2025, Jess Scott joined as a volunteer minute-taker for the board. She has now taken on the role of covering the Counselling Co-ordinator position where needed.

Hanna Fisher was paid a small one-off fee for creating and delivering an organisational development day in April 2024.

The trustees were satisfied that this was for the benefit of the charity as the fee was a fraction of the usual fees charged by someone with Hanna's qualifications and experience, and Frome Birth Talk would not have been able to afford such an intervention otherwise.

“Becoming a parent, whether it’s for the first time or not, can be so exhausting and so overwhelming. I have two boys, and when they were tiny I really benefitted from Frome Birth Talk’s free groups. I’m now a volunteer trustee for the charity!”

Our people: counsellors

In 2024 we welcomed new student counsellors Kadie Schofield and Esmeralda Vere. Lynne Gregory continued to work towards qualification in July 2025.

In the summer of 2024 students Lisa Beattie, Melina Robinson and Lucy Edwards qualified, with Lisa and Melina both returning in 2025 as paid counsellors. In October 2024 volunteer counsellor Sue Pollock stepped down due to family commitments.

Our qualified counsellors were: Helen Enright, Jane Henderson, Tracy Creed, Amanda Falconer and Kat Cross.

At the end of February 2025 we had nine counsellors providing 14 in-person and 14 remote sessions per week (28 sessions per week in total).

Providing opportunities to trainee counsellors

Counselling students must complete initial training before seeing clients, then accrue clinical hours for full professional registration. By using trainee counsellors, we can significantly increase the number of sessions on offer, for the cost of professional supervision and mileage costs.

Working with student counsellors also helps us build a team of qualified counsellors who know our organisation ready for increased demand.

Safeguarding

All staff, counsellors, trainee counsellors and volunteers have DBS checks, renewable every three years, organised and paid for by the charity. Safeguarding training has been provided for staff, counsellors, volunteers and trustees and will be repeated every year.

Our safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy is reviewed and ratified annually. Our DSL for this period was Karen Patrick. Our safeguarding reporting procedure was updated in 2024: all concerns, no matter how minor, are reported via a securely-stored Microsoft Form and reviewed by the DSL. Using this form means all incidents - from minor welfare concerns to larger safeguarding referrals are safely recorded and securely stored, enabling our team to build a reliable and accurate picture of safeguarding concerns.

Our finances

Financial sustainability

FBT has been sustained largely by grant funding from the National Lottery Communities Fund and other organisations during this financial period. Our National Lottery grant ended in April 2025.

Our income during this financial period was £53,172 and our expenditure was £60,678. We aim to hold sufficient unrestricted reserves for three months' expenditure, which is currently £15,169.

We currently have £16,835 in unrestricted reserves.

Our finances

Grants

In 2024, we secured the following grants and large donations, totalling £42,264:

- £23,014 from the National Lottery Community Fund
- £10,000 from the Friends of Frome Hospital
- £8,250 from Somerset Community Foundation for additional counselling
- £1,000 from Frome Carnival

Community fundraising

In 2024, we received £10,908 through community fundraising. Some notable events from this period included:

- Local author Libby Page raised money at her book launch
- Grateful grandfather Gary Strangwood, whose daughter used our counselling service, ran the Brighton Marathon
- Local nurseries, Bright Stars & Rainbow, held bake sales
- A local winning pub quiz team donated their yearly prize pot



Community fundraising

- Trustee Jess hosted a 'Mini Yoga Retreat'
- A face painting duo raised money at Frome Town Council's 50th Anniversary event
- A local tarot reader hosted a fundraiser for us
- As part of the Big Give week (where funds were matched and essentially doubled) we held a festive Christmas movie night for families, featuring a screening of The Muppet Christmas Carol and a tuck shop
- Frome Birth Talk was one of Frome's local Co-Op 'chosen causes', meaning shoppers who chose us and scanned their membership cards added to a community cash pot, without spending any extra pennies!



Our governance and organisational management

Frome Birth Talk (FBT) is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) established on 8th November 2017. The charity is governed by its CIO constitution.

The board of trustees met six times during the year ending 28th February 2025. Frome Birth Talk is not currently an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) but chooses to follow its Ethical Framework for Counselling and Psychotherapy guidelines, in line with our self-employed counsellors' practice and that of the Bath College of Psychotherapy and Counselling (BCPC), for whom we are an agency for trainee counsellors on placement.

Public benefit

The board of trustees confirm they have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and have complied with their duty under section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives; and in implementing current and planning future activities.

The Charities Act 2011 sets out 13 different aims which are recognised as charitable purposes, and Frome Birth Talk fits within the aim of **the relief of sickness and preservation of health**. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and continue to be committed to providing all our services free of charge, although donations are welcomed.

Risk Management

Effective risk management is crucial for ensuring the ongoing success and stability of our charity. We have identified two primary risks that require continuous attention and proactive management:

1. Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Maintaining long-term financial sustainability is essential for our charity to continue providing valuable services and support to our beneficiaries. To address this risk, we are implementing several strategies:

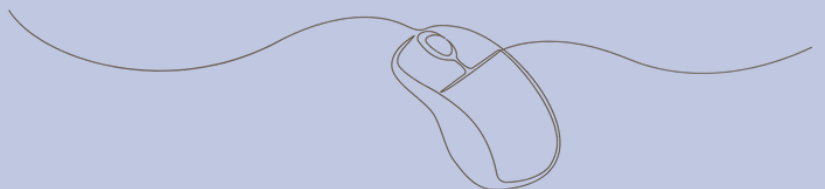
- **Diversified Funding Sources:** We are continuing to expand our funding sources to include grants, donations, corporate partnerships, and fundraising events to reduce dependency on any single revenue stream.
- **Financial Planning and Budgeting:** Rigorous financial planning and budgeting processes are being put in place to ensure funds are allocated effectively and efficiently, with regular reviews to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.
- **Reserves Policy:** We maintain an adequate level of financial reserves to provide a buffer against unforeseen financial challenges, ensuring we can sustain our operations in times of uncertainty.

2. Loss of Key Staff/Trustees

The dedication and expertise of our staff and trustees are integral to our charity's success. To mitigate the risk associated with the loss of key personnel, we have established the following measures:

- **Succession Planning:** We are developing a comprehensive succession plan to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of leadership and critical roles within the organisation.
- **Professional Development:** we are enhancing our continuous professional development opportunities provided to staff and trustees to enhance their skills and capabilities, promoting job satisfaction and retention.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** We are actively cultivating a strong network of volunteers who can provide support and potentially step into key roles as needed.

By implementing these risk management strategies, we are committed to safeguarding the future of our charity and continuing to fulfill our mission effectively.



**Thank you for taking the time to read
this report.**

**The next year will be pivotal for Frome
Birth Talk as we continue to meet
growing demand and strive towards
sustainability.**

**Please do get in touch if you would like
to discuss any aspect of our work!**



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CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Frome Birth Talk	1175641
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Receipts and payments accounts

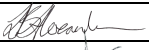

CC16a

For the period from	01/03/2024		To	28/02/2025
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds National Lottery Community Fund - RC South West Region	Restricted funds Frome Town Council	Restricted funds Somerset Community Foundation	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts							
Grants	10,000	23,014	-	8,250	-	41,264	54,488
Donations	6,928	-	-	-	-	6,928	3,703
Fundraising	4,980	-	-	-	-	4,980	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	21,908	23,014	-	8,250	-	53,172	58,191
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).							
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	21,908	23,014	-	8,250	-	53,172	58,191
A3 Payments							
Counsellor Fees	12,748	7,502				20,250	20,918
Bank fees	15					15	-
Student Supervision	-	2,091				2,091	2,622
Software, Admin, Welfare and Consumables	1,072			250		1,322	604
Salaries and Pension	5,893	15,000	1,440	5,062		27,395	19,961
Printing, Post and Marketing	-	454	200			654	327
Mileage and Travel	-	782	120			902	1,446
Training and consultancy	-	80	1,080			1,160	1,635
Subscriptions	473					473	215
Activities	-			1,271		1,271	557
Mobile Phone	204					204	91
Insurance	-	391				391	352
Room Rental and Storage	1,735		1,080			2,815	4,413
Cost of Fundraising and facilitators	1,445		160			1,605	50
DBS Checks	130					130	259
Sub total	23,715	26,300	4,080	6,583	-	60,678	53,451
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)							
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	23,715	26,300	4,080	6,583	-	60,678	53,451
Net of receipts/(payments)	(1,807)	(3,286)	(4,080)	1,667	-	(7,506)	4,739
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	18,642	3,286	4,080	-	-	26,008	21,269
Cash funds this year end	16,835	-	-	1,667	-	18,502	26,008

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	Unrestricted Funds	16,835		-
	Somerset Community Foundation		1,667	-
				-
	Total cash funds	16,835	1,667	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details			
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details			
	Computer equipment	Unrestricted	-	400
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details			
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Laura Alexander	16/12/2025	
		Aaron Calver	16/12/2025	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Frome Birth Talk

On accounts for the year
ended

28/2/25

Charity no
(if any)

1175641

Set out on pages

18-19

(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 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 (other than that disclosed below *) 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.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

14/12/25

Name:

Caroline Bee

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

FCA

Address:

11 Cuckoo Walk

Trowbridge
BA147GG

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.

None