

The Swan Song Project
Charity number 1178096

Annual Report and Financial Statements
for the year ended 30 April 2025



The Swan Song Project

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 April 2025

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Prepared by West Yorkshire Community Accountancy Service CIO

The Swan Song Project

Trustees' report for the year ended 30 April 2025

Reference and administrative details of the charity, its trustees and advisors

The trustees during the financial year and up to and including the date the report was approved were:

Name	Dates
Adrian Sinclair	
Jeannie Lumb	Resigned 10 December 2024
Christopher Martin	
Graham Hyde	Appointed 19 September 2023, resigned 19 November 2024
Morag Maclean	Resigned 6 January 2025
Richard Gibson	
Tanja Young	Appointed 17 September 2024
Lindsey King	Appointed 17 September 2024

Charity number 1178096 Registered in England and Wales

Registered and principal address	Bankers
Old Chapel Music Studios	The Cooperative Bank
Crossland Court	PO Box 250
Czar Road	Skelmersdale
Holbeck	WN8 6WT
Leeds	
LS11 9PR	

Independent examiner
Katy Sargeant ACA
West Yorkshire Community Accountancy Service CIO
StringerHouse
34 Lupton Street
Leeds
LS10 2QW

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) foundation formed on 25 April 2018 and is governed by a constitution.

Method of recruitment and appointment of trustees

The trustees of the charity are appointed by the members at the AGM.

The Swan Song Project

Trustees' report (continued) for the year ended 30 April 2025

Objectives and activities

The charity's objects

The relief of sickness and the preservation of mental and physical health among people facing end of life, bereavement by death of a person or the anticipation thereof and the protection and preservation of public health, particularly through the prevention of any sickness which may arise from bereavement by death of a

The charity's main activities

The main activity of the charity is the creation of original music and lyrics with beneficiaries to help them to address the emotional impact of death on the individual involved, their family, carers and loved ones. The original songs are recorded and shared with loved ones as a lasting record. Individuals and families we support have the opportunity to share their work with the wider public if they choose to do so, both as a recording or as a live performance.

Public benefit statement

In furtherance of the objects of the charity the charity works with people facing end of life, due to terminal illness or old age, their families, carers and loved ones. We help to address the mental and physical health issues associated with end of life.

Achievements and performance

During the year we worked with 18 families creating new Swan Songs. We completed 18 new Swan Songs, some of which can be heard on our website: <https://swansongproject.co.uk/swan-songs/>. A further 5 songs were started that were unable to be completed, primarily due to deterioration in the health of beneficiaries. Currently we work in person with those in Yorkshire and online with others elsewhere in England.

We continue to receive exceptional feedback from participants. One said:

"I can't express how much I love it, it surpassed all my expectations.

The whole of the UK should be aware of the incredible work you do."

Another said:

"I have achieved something I never thought I would"

Through the year we hosted 8 Music and Memories group workshops. These are a chance for people to come together and share songs that hold special memories for them. They are very enjoyable and emotionally moving sessions usually with 8-10 participants per session. We host them at our partner organisations (primarily hospices) and occasionally in more public settings and with community groups.

In October we introduced our Song Share event where we invited previous beneficiaries of the charity and their loved ones to come together to share their songs and stories. We created the Song Share event based on feedback from participants telling us they would like more opportunities to stay connected with the charity, meet others we've worked with and have more opportunities to share their song.

Through Song Share we tick all of those boxes and celebrate the love and memories that the Swan Songs honour. We intend it to be a bi-annual event going forward.

We worked with Leeds City Museum on this event and planned our second Song Share event at Leeds Central Library for May 2025.

The first event featured 8 original Swan Songs written between 2018 and 2024 shared by their writers. One participant told us:

"It had a profound impact on me ...grief is a lonely road and when you come together to share the pain of your loss it helps a little. Please keep giving people this outlet. it's just an amazing time capsule memory of your loved one."

We were proud to showcase our work in some new places this year.

The Swan Song Project

Trustees' report (continued) for the year ended 30 April 2025

Achievements and performance continued

We presented at an international songwriting conference at The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance in London on the benefits of songwriting in relation to acceptance of death. The conference was titled "Saved By A Song - The Transformative Power of Songwriting" and featured prominent songwriters from around the world. We were very proud to have the opportunity to share more about our work and we made a lot of great connections at the event.

We were also featured in a public exhibition at Leeds City Museum called "Living with Death". Information about our work was available and some of the songs we have helped to write could be listened to.

We expanded our network of related organisations we work with this year to include Child Bereavement UK, Manorlands Hospice (Keighley) and York Bereavement Alliance. We maintain strong relationships with a large range of related organisations who make referrals to our service. This year included several from Overgate Hospice (Elland), Marie Curie Hospice (Bradford) and the RAF Widows Foundation.

In December 2024 we were one of only 11 organisations awarded a "Shine a Light" award from The Good Grief Trust. They celebrate work across the UK that has "gone above and beyond to support the bereaved". We are very grateful for this recognition.

Our song writing and bereavement podcast reaches large numbers of people, promoting healthy conversations about bereavement. It is educational and inspiring, relating to both the practicalities of song writing as well as featuring real stories of people dealing with bereavements. This year we produced 15 episodes and for the first time featured our beneficiaries on episodes, giving another valued opportunity to share their stories. It also featured notable guests such as Hannah White, Professor Sophie Daniels, Chaz Jankel (The Blockheads) and Justin Sullivan (New Model Army). Our podcast has been downloaded over 29,000 times and our YouTube channel has around 19,000 views.

Continuing our successful media engagement, we were featured on BBC Look North in January. This was the 3rd time Look North have featured our work. With funding from the national lottery we have also engaged the services of an external social media manager. This has led to an increase in engagement on our social media channels as well as freeing up some more time for our core staff. We are confident this will lead to an increase in both donations and referrals in the coming months.

We saw a few changes to the board of trustees this year. Jeannie Lumb, Graham Hyde and Morag McLean all stepped down and we thanked them for their service to the charity. We ran a successful recruitment campaign and welcomed Marika Finne and Lindsey King to the board who have been great additions to the team.

We are proud to have retained a loyal staff team who continue to do great work for the organisation. Our founder Ben Buddy Slack continues to lead the organisation as Creative Director and 6 of the 7 songwriters recruited in 2022 continue to deliver regular high quality work with our beneficiaries. We are grateful for all of the hard work the team continues to put in to support the charity's mission. We appreciate that the work our team does can be very emotionally challenging and we are committed to supporting them as best we can and offer regular check ins and therapeutic sessions if required. We also continue to be a Mindful Employer.

We continue to work with a strong team of songwriters who are delivering great work. We intend to recruit and train a new cohort of songwriters in the upcoming year.

The charity recognises that it would benefit from more diversity in its team and will make efforts to address this in all future recruitments.

We are an ambitious small charity and want to support more people through our work. This year we worked with external consultants ImpactAP to support our strategy development. This was very productive and helped us shape some of our plans. We intend to continue working with ImpactAP on further plans in future.

With such a small team it can be hard to balance fundraising alongside the practical delivery of the work. We engaged the services of a freelance grant fundraiser and a member of our songwriting team (who is a professional fundraiser elsewhere) supported some community fundraising efforts. We ended the year in a solid financial position with plans in place for the year ahead.

The Swan Song Project

Trustees' report (continued) for the year ended 30 April 2025

Achievements and performance continued

Our Christmas fundraising campaign hit its target, raising £2,500. We were successful with grant applications to The National Lottery Community Fund the Postcode Community Trust and we received our 3rd year grant from The Brelms Trust. We remain very grateful to all of the funders who continue to support and invest in our work.

In April we came together to mark 7 years of the charity at a music venue in Leeds City Centre, raising £1,000. The event was well attended and featured a range of local musicians performing. It was a great chance to reflect on our achievements and celebrate our work.

We intend to continue working with the freelance grant fundraiser and target some more multi year grants alongside regular community fundraising and hosting more of our own events. We are confident these activities will enable the charity to grow and continue to support families across the country in the coming years.

The charity continues to recognise the importance of safeguarding when working with vulnerable people. It is a set point on the agenda of every meeting to check in regarding any safeguarding concerns, our team are supported to recognise and share any concerns with their line manager or directly with the safeguarding lead on the board.

We regularly ask the people we work with if they would like to write a blog about their experience working with us. The following is an extract from a recent blog post. More can be found on our website:

“It’s not often I’m lost for words but; being part of The Swansong Project has really blown my mind!

When you hear that you have an incurable disease that will lead to a terminal diagnosis, your World crumbles apart. Working alongside Ben, Holly and The Team brought me so much joy; it was a fun, positive, uplifting experience. It brings Hope and Joy, Love, Laughter and Tears.

It’s about some of the most important things I’ve done; some of the most wonderful people I’ve been fortunate to meet, and includes some of the most incredibly, beautiful places I’ve had the chance to visit in my short life! It truly is a beautiful, lasting legacy”

Financial review

Thenet receiptsfor the year were £3,310, including net payments of £1,122 on unrestricted funds and net receipts of £4,432 on restricted funds.

Reserves policy

The charity's free reserves, at the year end were £17,467.

In line with the finance policy commitment to review prudent levels of unrestricted reserves on an annual basis, the trustees have determined that an unrestricted reserve of between 6 and 12 months worth of expenditure is prudent for the organisation to enable the smooth running of the charity and to enable an orderly winding up should the charity need to close. At the end of this financial year the charity was within this window and feels confident in it's current financial position.

Approved by the board of trustees on 23/09/2025

Adrian Sinclair (Trustee)

The Swan Song Project

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Swan Song Project

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the CIO for the year ended 30 April 2025, which are set out on pages 7 to 10.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the CIO 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 CIO's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act. 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 charity as required by section 130 of the Charities Act;
- 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.

Katy Sargeant ACA

03/11/2025

West Yorkshire Community Accountancy Service CIO
StringerHouse
34 Lupton Street
Leeds
LS10 2QW

The Swan Song Project
Receipts and payments account
for the year ended 30 April 2025

	Notes	2025 Unrestricted funds £	2025 Restricted funds £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
Receipts					
Grants and donations	(2)	19,477	20,317	39,794	42,644
Total receipts		<u>19,477</u>	<u>20,317</u>	<u>39,794</u>	<u>42,644</u>
Payments					
Salaries, NI, pension etc		15,817	7,20	23,019	25,545
Sessional staff		1,277	2	6,680	9,162
Insurance		874	5,40	874	410
Staff expenses		82	3 -	82	152
Memberships and subscriptions		516	-	516	450
Mar k eting		-	1,283	1,283	351
Independent examination		480	-	480	504
PayPal fees		21	-	21	10
IT expenses		240	-	240	605
Office costs		147	-	147	160
Rent and room hire		987	1,997	2,984	2,682
T raining		9	-	9	-
Travel and refreshments		149	-	149	91
Total payments		<u>20,599</u>	<u>15,885</u>	<u>36,484</u>	<u>40,122</u>
Net receipts / (payments)		<u>(1,122)</u>	<u>4,432</u>	<u>3,310</u>	<u>2,522</u>
Fund balances brought forward		<u>18,589</u>	<u>14,449</u>	<u>33,038</u>	<u>30,516</u>
Fund balances carried forward	(3)	<u>17,467</u>	<u>18,881</u>	<u>36,348</u>	<u>33,038</u>

The Swan Song Project
Statement of assets and liabilities
as at 30 April 2025

	2025 Unrestricted £	2025 Restricted £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Cash funds				
Cash at bank	<u>17,467</u>	<u>18,881</u>	<u>36,348</u>	<u>33,038</u>
Total cash funds	<u>17,467</u>	<u>18,881</u>	<u>36,348</u>	<u>33,038</u>

Debtors and prepayments	2025 £
Prepayments	<u>391</u>
	<u>391</u>

Liabilities	2025 £
Accruals	<u>480</u>
	<u>480</u>

The financial statements were approved by the board of trustees on 23/09/2025

Adrian Sinclair (Trustee)

The Swan Song Project

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 30 April 2025

1 Accounting policies

Basis of accounting

The trustees have taken advantage of section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 and have prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

There has been no change to the accounting policies since last year.

No changes have been made to the accounts for previous years.

Taxation

As a charity the organisation benefits from rates relief and is generally exempt from income tax and capital gains tax but not from VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is included in the cost of those items to which it relates.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or through the terms of an appeal.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the accounts.

The Swan Song Project
Notes to the accounts continued
for the year ended 30 April 2025

2Grants and donations	2025 Unrestricted funds £	2025 Restricted funds £	2025 T otal funds £	2024 T otal funds £
National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF)	-	20,000	20,000	19,989
Brelms Trust	5,960	-	5,960	6,000
The Edward Gostling Foundation	-	317	317	-
Sir George Martin Trust	-	-	-	3,000
Other donations	13,517	-	13,517	13,655
	<u>19,477</u>	<u>20,317</u>	<u>39,794</u>	<u>42,644</u>

3Restricted funds	Balance b/f £	Inc om ing £	O utgoing £	Transfers £	Balance c/f £
NLCF - Awards for All 24	14,449	-	14,449	-	-
The Edward Gostling Foundation	-	317	317	-	-
NLCF - Awards for All 25	-	20,000	1,119	-	18,881
	<u>14,449</u>	<u>20,317</u>	<u>15,885</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>18,881</u>

Fund name	Purpose of restriction
NLCF - Awards for All 24	Towards newsong writing, group sessions, project management, room hire and travel expenses.
The Edward Gostling Foundation	Towards the cost of delivering an event at Leeds Museum as part of Dying Matters.
NLCF - Awards for All 25	Continuation of core songwriting work, production of 10 new podcasts, Marketing and impact framework development.

4Related party transactions

Trustee expenses

No trustee received any expenses during this year or the previous year.
Trustee remuneration and benefits

No trustee received any remuneration or benefit during this or the previous year.

The Swan Song Project

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Signed: 

Name: Katy Sargeant ACA

03/11/2025

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