

Trustees' Annual Report - 1st May 2023 to 30th April 2024

Charity Name: MyOTAS (My Own Time And Space)

Charity CIO registration number: 1184723

Registered Office: 57a Highcliffe Road, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8JP

Our Trustees (during the above period):-

Daniel Ireland – Chair

Alex Harding

Jenne Seibolt

Maria Denton – Treasurer

Sharon Adonri

Chantelle Poulter

Trisha McClure

Our Aims, Objectives and Values

Our aim is to support neurodivergent (Autism, ADHD, OCD, Dyslexia etc.) children and young people and their families within Essex, through 3 pillars of activity:

**Activities
for
Children &
Young
People**

**Family
Support for
Parents &
Carers**

**Raising
Awareness
and
Acceptance
within the
community**



Our Values

- **Non-judgemental** – valuing people for who they are;
- **Inclusive** – everyone is welcome, no diagnosis needed;
- **Be kind**;
- **Innovative thinking** – exploring new ideas and finding different ways to do things;
- **Collaboration** – working openly with other voluntary organisations and service providers.



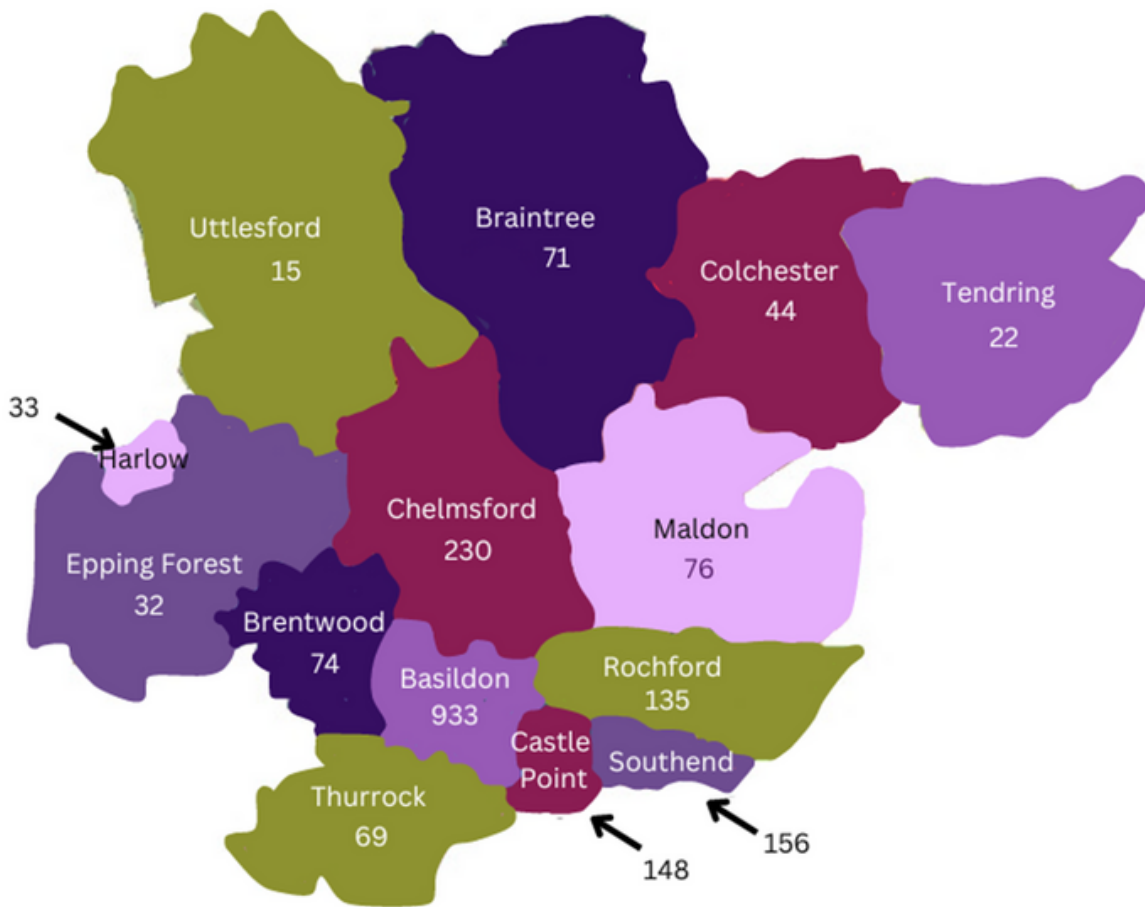
We review our aims, objectives and activities each year.

This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous 12 months. The review looks at the success of each key activity and the benefits they have brought to those groups of people we are set up to help. The review also helps us ensure our aim, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purposes.

We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

Our beneficiaries

We support neurodivergent children and young people and their families, within Essex and beyond.



In addition to the above there are approx. 70 parents registered from Havering and Greater London, as well as a few from other parts of the country. We do not have location data for every member, as some people choose not to share it.

Trusted relationships are often difficult to form for neurodivergent young people, so we seek to build ongoing and sustainable relationships, for young people of all ages, through to independence. We have created partnerships with SAFE Essex (Charity for autistic people of all ages) and Exceptional Individuals (Recruitment and employment services for neurodivergent people) to support this pathway.

A diagnosis is not required to access our services. Some of the families requiring the most help have a child who is undiagnosed. For example, a child may be on a waiting list for assessment - waiting times for assessment have increased dramatically and in our area, timescales are currently c.18-24 months rather than the NICE guideline of 18 weeks, so this is often a critical time for support. Neurodivergent conditions are often genetic, so parents may also have their own challenges or may not see the presenting difficulties as anything unusual.

Activities for Children & Young People

Provision of Inclusive and accessible small group sessions. Parents or carers attend with their child, and remain responsible for them. This helps to minimise anxiety for young people at the groups and can become a positive bonding experience. We provide support for accompanying parents.

In this reporting period, we have increased the variety of groups that we run and also the number of places available.

**177 CYP attended
Woodland
Warriors with a
total of 886
places being
booked**

**46 CYP booked
places on
Mindful Crafts
sessions**

**20 CYP attended
pilot sessions of
Yoga,
Therapeutic
Nature Group
and Teen Girls
Social Group**

3 sessions per week with
148 sessions over the year

2 sessions per week with 60
sessions over the year

15 sessions over the year

Principles

- Low pressure – Accessible
- Support for the wider family
- Small groups for that children do not become overwhelmed
- A nominal charge is requested for some activities, but finance should never be a barrier to accessing our services, so we offer sessions for free in cases of financial hardship



Family Support for Parents & Carers

Empowering parents to better understand and support their children through 1:1 support, training, face to face and online support groups, signposting to other relevant services and provision of useful resources.

Principles

- Providing information and support
- Every family feels informed and validated
- Encourage connection to peers
- Outreach where needed

**Just wanted to say,
Wow! I am so glad I
joined this group.**

In total 251 families received support at our CYP's activities and an additional 145 families requested 1:1 help from the Family Support Team

Worked collaboratively with other local community groups including ATF, SEND4All, Basildon Parents 4 Parents, Motivated Minds and Castledon School

Our On-line Support Group had 2.1K members as at May 2024 from all over Essex and beyond - with over 1.3K active members a week



Family Feedback

‘Friendly, knowledgeable and caring people who make you feel less alone’



‘It’s nice to meet other parents who totally understand what you’re dealing with’.

‘I’m so glad I came. I always feel so much better after talking to you guys. I can feel myself relax a bit.’

Composed and distributed 4 page newsletter to over 300 subscribers with up to date cost of living crisis info for parents

The Family Support team answered 256 questions from parents, with a further 127 questions being answered by other parents within the group.

Raising Awareness & Acceptance

We relentlessly represent the needs of neurodivergent children, young people and families – at a local and national level.

We provided training on ND and inclusivity to the Scout Group leaders, Essex Football Association and Family Solutions. Initiating an increased range of therapeutic activities for children, through building relationships with the groups above and Mind, Friends of Wickford Memorial Park, etc.

Basildon District – Council events, Wickford Voices, BasildON Creative, parish and town council meetings and with our local MP.

Essex wide – inputting to Start-Well and Live Well NHS strategies, members of the Essex All Age Autism Partnership Board. Close links to Essex Family Forum.

Provided training in neurodiversity and inclusion to Essex FA and Basildon Scouts' leaders



Continued close working relationships with Essex Family Forum, SEND the Right Message and SAFE charities



In February 2024 our Operations Manager Sam Read, was highly commended in the fundraising champion category at the Basildon Voluntary Awards.

MyOTAS was also nominated as the best voluntary group and our Treasurer Maria Denton was nominated as a community star for her tireless work behind the scenes.

We were very proud to be recognised alongside other organisations and individuals delivering amazing support and services across the Basildon Borough.

Raising Awareness & Acceptance

Nationally – we are active members of:

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

The Council for Disabled Children

The Charlie Waller Trust

The Place Network



**Children & Young People's
Mental Health Coalition**

We sit on the Mental Health Act Bill working group with the DHSC, the Children's Commissioner's Office, the Council for Disabled Children and policy analysts and equality researchers from organisations such as Mind, Article 39 and JustEquality, to represent the lived experiences of our families.

We are active members of the Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition and have represented the needs of neurodivergent children and young people in the priorities for inclusion within the Mental Health Bill. Our CEO, Paula will form part of the panel providing feedback to the Department of Health and Social Care. Paula is also working with the coalition legal team to ensure that the needs of neurodivergent people without learning disabilities have access to the same mental health opportunities as those with autism and/or learning disabilities.

In July 2023 Paula (CEO Myotas - My Own Time And Space) and Maggie (CEO STRM - SEND the Right Message Registered Charity) attended a conference at the **National Children's Bureau**, to represent the mental health needs of neurodivergent children and young people, led by the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, with representatives from the **Children's Commissioner for England**, Department of Education, Department of Health & Social Care and the Director of the **Council for Disabled Children**.



It was exciting to hear about the work that is taking place to support the mental health needs of all children in schools and to discuss the specific challenges faced by neurodivergent children and young people in mainstream education, with policy makers. We were also able to highlight the higher level and more complex needs of those struggling to access education and health services.

Raising Awareness & Acceptance

In April 24 our Chair of Trustees, Danny Ireland, met with Matt Hancock and other charity and business leaders, to discuss the Parliamentary Bill to introduce neurodivergent screening in all primary schools, to ensure no child starts secondary education not knowing if they are neurodivergent. The Bill passed the first stage, but there is still a long way to go before agreement is reached to put this process in place.



The 'Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child' book, co-written by Paula Farrow and Sam Read from MyOTAS, in collaboration with Maggie Cleary from STRM Charity and Katrina Farrell from Essex Family Forum, has now been distributed to over 12K families via support groups, with a further 5,000 families requesting a copy in the post. The writing team undertook an extensive update during Winter 2023, adding new sections on

The rights to adapt the contents have been bought by 8 other areas, including Manchester, Luton & Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk



'I have been a parent for 12 years, have hundreds of books on neurodiversity and have never seen anything of the depth and quality of this resource'

Governance, Operations and Finances

Principal Funding Sources

The principal funding sources for the charity during this year were grants from a variety of sources.

- National Lottery
- Essex Community Foundation
- Community 360
- Active Essex

In addition, we received funding towards the co-production of the Supporting Your Neurodiverse Child family support pack from the Essex Joint Commissioning Board.

Our total income in money terms was £82,000. However, although not included in our Receipts & Payments Accounts, we have calculated that the donations of services, equipment, office/storage space and volunteer time was in excess of £6,500.

Investment Policy

Aside from retaining a prudent amount in reserves each year most of the charity's funds are to be spent in the short term so there are few funds for long term investment. A review of investment policies will be taken if our income stream significantly increases.

Reserves Policy

The Management Committee has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be approximately 3 months of the annual expenditure. Budgeted expenditure for 2024/25 is £120,000 and therefore the target is £30,000 in general funds. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Management Committee are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding.

The level of reserves available to the charity as at May 2023 was £15,000 therefore falls short of this target level. Although the strategy is to continue to

Governance, Operations and Finances

build reserves through planned operating surpluses, the Management Committee is well aware that it is unlikely that the target range can be reached for at least five years. In the short term the Management Committee has also considered the extent to which existing activities and expenditure could be curtailed, should such circumstances arise.

Our main funders are the National Lottery (3 years for core operational costs), Essex County Council, the Postcode Lottery and the Essex Alliance (NHS)

We have received smaller grants from Tesco, Active Essex, Wickford Town Council, Basildon Town Council and Foster, Smith & Jones

Corporate donations have been received from Forsters and Sage Publishing

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

The organisation is a foundation CIO and was set up in May 2019 and was formally registered as a charity in August 2019. The charity was established under a constitution which established its objects and powers.

In the event of the charity being wound up trustees are not required to financially contribute.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

The trustees of the charity for the purposes of charity law and under the charity's Constitution are known as members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Constitution the members of the Management Committee are elected to serve for a period of three years, after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting. All Trustees give their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity for work undertaken as trustees. Due to the nature of neurodiversity support much of the charity's work inevitably focuses upon parents and children.

Governance, Operations and Finances

The Management Committee seeks to ensure that the needs of this group are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the trustee body. The more traditional business, educational and medical skills are well represented on the Management Committee. To maintain this broad skill mix, members of the Management Committee are requested to provide a list of their skills (and update it each year) and in the event of particular skills being lost due to retirements, individuals are approached to offer themselves for election to the Management Committee.

Trustee Induction and Training

Most trustees are already familiar with the practical work of the charity having been encouraged to attend some of our activities. Additionally, new trustees are invited and encouraged to read our book Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child to familiarise themselves with the ethos of the charity, the context within which it operates and most importantly provide them with an overview of neurodiversity and its comorbid conditions.

Trustees are also provided with the following documents:- MyOTAS' governing document (Constitution), the latest published accounts, Code of Conduct for Trustees/Volunteers/Staff and the Charity Commission's guide "the Essential Trustee". Trustees are also signposted to review all of the charity's current policies, including Safeguarding, GDPR, Health & Safety, Financial Management, etc.

Risk Management

The Management Committee has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces.

Securing 3 years of National Lottery core cost funding from February 2024 will have a significant positive impact upon our ability to expand services, bring in new processes and mitigate against key risks, such as the dependency on key individuals. During the next financial year we will also be implementing new data management and protection procedures and moving all personal information to a secure server.

Governance, Operations and Finances

Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which will allow for the diversification of funding and activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of volunteers and service users.

The charity follows the Institute of Fundraising Practise guidelines.

All procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity. We ensure that all trustees/volunteers have the relevant DBS checks and safe-guarding training.

Organisational Structure

MyOTAS has a Management Committee of up to 12 members who meet quarterly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. During the year 2023-2024 the Committee had 8 members (5 trustees and 2 part-time management staff) from a variety of professional backgrounds, relevant to the work of the charity. A scheme of delegation is in place and day to day responsibility for the provision of the services rest with the Chair along with the rest of the committee. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the charity delivers the services specified and that key performance indicators are met. The CEO has responsibility for the day-to-day operational management of the charity, individual supervision of the team and also ensuring that the team continue to develop their skills and working practices in line with good practice.

**As at May 2024 we
employed 4 part-
time staff (60 hours
per week total)**

Related Parties

In so far as it is complementary to the charity's objects, the charity is guided by both local and national policy. Three of the management committee are also Family Champions for Essex Family Forum. This is a multiagency group with Essex SEND as its focus. The representation of local organisations within this group has proved invaluable to the charity in establishing improved links within the community and identifying relevant gaps in support, policy developments and prospective funding.

Governance, Operations and Finances

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Neurodivergent people, particularly those without learning difficulties, face multiple inequalities throughout their lives.

We support a number of families who only require a light touch of support; information and signposting to help. However, there are a significant number of families who are 'off-grid' with service providers, for example if their young person is unable to attend school for reasons of exclusion or emotionally based school avoidance; or they are experiencing complex mental health challenges for which there is little, or no support available. We are committed to working patiently and supportively with these young people and their families to find an access point to help.

We support families from some of the most deprived postcodes in the Basildon Borough and offer outreach sessions to communities in traditionally hard to reach areas. We have had notable successes helping many families with complex needs. (e.g. liaising with assessment services to triage an urgent appointment for a child whose details had dropped off the system, liaising with family solutions to find appropriate help, helping families to access support for their child at school).

Recent research suggests that autistic people are three times more likely to identify as trans, and eight times more likely to be asexual. (www.theraincharity.org.uk).

We recognise this in the young people that we support and are keen to expand our offering of training and support groups to provide dedicated help for LGBTQA young people and their families.



Governance, Operations and Finances

Environment

As a charity seeking to improve outcomes and wellbeing for the people that we support, we recognise our responsibility to role model good practice in the way that we impact the environment. We do not currently have our own premises, but the environment is a consideration in all that we do.

All of our children's activities are environmentally aware and we seek opportunities to reinforce best practice. For example, we ran a reduce/re-use/recycle project at Woodland Warriors, in line with the Basildon District Council programme. Our mindful crafts re-use old CDs and often use natural materials.



Safeguarding

MyOTAS have a safeguarding policy and two trustees (NHS and education experience) with safeguarding responsibilities.

We understand that safeguarding is a significant risk in supporting our young people and we have visited a number of independent schools and other voluntary groups to learn from their experiences.

We have taken a cautious approach to launching and expanding our activities, piloting in small groups first, and maintaining open and honest communication with families. Our approach and principles have developed with safeguarding as a key consideration. For example, we ask parents to attend all of our children's activities and to remain responsible for their child. We also have a family support worker in attendance to be available in case of need and to role model appropriate ways to support children and to help facilitate support and build relationships between parents.

Where children have found sessions difficult, we have found ways to support them without impacting on the wider group. For example, when a child was struggling to play with other children at woodland warriors, we arranged 1:1 sessions, and then re-integrated her back to the group by joining for short but increasing sections of the group session. Another child was unable to access group sessions of mindful crafts because of anxiety about the other children present, and we offered 1:1 yoga sessions, which she was able to access.



Conclusion

This year has been a period of strong and controlled growth for the charity. The award of national lottery funding will enable us to address the key risks in the next reporting year, namely bringing in additional resource to reduce the dependency on key members of staff and to outsource our IT security. As we strengthen our operating platform, we are well placed to meet the increasing demand for our services. We are also increasingly using our lived experience and subject matter expertise to help influence services for neurodivergent people at a local and national level.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

MyOTAS My Own Time And Space

No (if any)
1184723

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01-May-23	To	Period end date 30-Apr-24
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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 and legacies	2,878		-	2,878	4,782
Grants and Trusts	9,589		-	9,589	4,658
Community Fundraising		-	-	-	1,096
Donations - Yoga	7	-	-	7	122
Donations - Crafts	1,132	-	-	1,132	1,198
Donations - Woodland Warriors	5,509	-	-	5,509	6,174
Family Support and Training events		-	-	-	304
Grants and Trusts - Core Costs		30,781		30,781	7,080
Grants and Trusts - Child Activities		18,967		18,967	9,614
Grants and Trusts - Family Supp/Train		9,994		9,994	20,996
Grants and Trusts - Raising Awareness	508			508	500
Corporate fundraising	2,750			2,750	
Refunds			-	-	218
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	22,373	59,742	-	82,115	56,742
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
N/A	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	22,373	59,742	-	82,115	56,742
A3 Payments					
Cost of fundraising	250		-	250	501
Cost of Woodland Warriors	2,252	9,568	-	11,820	12,268
Cost of Mindful Crafts	2,223	308	-	2,530	2,946
Cost of Yoga		198	-	198	1,761
Cost of other children's activities	195	497	-	692	
Parent Support and Training events	223	15,108	-	15,330	17,221
Raising Awareness	1,938	456	-	2,394	4,140
Admin/Management Salaries	9,740	10,401		20,141	18,643
Travel/Petrol/Parking	173	42		214	302
Insurance	526			526	628
Tel/Web/Email/Zoom/IT	310	2,386	-	2,695	777
Print/Post/Advertising/Stationery	267	163	-	430	547
Venue Hire and refreshments	123			123	132
Staff/Volunteer costs inc DBS/training		170		170	19
Memberships/Subs	452	224	-	676	283
Sub total	18,671	39,519	-	58,190	60,168
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Printer and Shredder		-	-	-	195
Computer Equipment	-	1,184	-	1,184	
Sub total	-	1,184	-	1,184	195
Total payments	18,671	40,704	-	59,375	60,363
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,702	19,038	-	22,740	- 3,621
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	13,797	13,611	-	27,408	-
Cash funds this year end	17,499	32,649	-	50,148	12/02/2025 3,621

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	Metro Account	2,504		-
	NatWest Account	14,995	32,649	-
				-
	Total cash funds	17,499	32,649	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets			-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

 2

M Denton



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

MyOTAS My Own Time and Space

On accounts for the year
ended

30th April 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1184723

Set out on pages

1-2

(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 **30/04/2024**.

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:

03/02/2025

Name:

Joanne Butcher

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

Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA)

Address:

40 Arundell Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 2QQ

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