



CONNECT 2 PURPOSE
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 22.03.2023- 21.03.2024
Charity Number: 1190770 www.connecttopurpose.co.uk



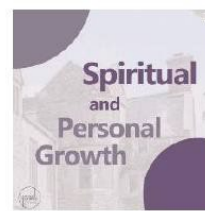
About Us

Welcome to our annual report for 2023/24. We are a charitable incorporated company founded on 9th August 2020, by our founders: Georgina Saralis, Ali Grafton and Neil Clark.

Our Objectives:

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the preservation and protection of the historic buildings from which the charity operates, in particular, by implementing a programme of renovation and subsequent maintenance to sustain the building for the public.
2. To advance in life and relief the needs of young people in the UK through a) the provision of recreation and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, designed to improve their conditions of life; b). advancing education; c). providing support and activities which develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society.

Our values are identity and heritage, nature and nurture, spiritual and personal growth, love and compassion.



Structure and Governance

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Company governed by its constitution. Connect to Purpose was founded by three trustees who worked together previously, pioneering an outstanding alternative provision for disengaged young people (aged 8-18), the success of which included going beyond the school gates in supporting families.

- **Georgina Saralis** (PGCE, M.Ed) was recently Regional Executive Headteacher at Compass Community, which operates residential, fostering and educational services for children in care, and independent special schools. She is now a trainee Family Therapist at Oxford NHS Trust CAMHS, and as a volunteer Family Support at Hampshire Children's Services.
- **Neil Clark** (B.A.Hons Oxon), a retired headteacher, has over 40 years' experience, including 17 years as head of Trelors, a nationally acclaimed specialist school for disabled children.
- **Ali Grafton** is a specialist Senior Paediatric Occupational Therapist who works with children, young people and their families particularly with children with special needs, which involves partnerships with a range of local authority agencies and statutory bodies.

The trustees are passionate about working with young people and committed to making a difference to their life chances, underpinned by a belief that every child and their family matter.

Other trustees may be appointed by two or more trustees being present at a trustees meeting. It is our intention to ensure we have a balanced representation of young people aged 16-25 serving on our board of trustees and to them being integral to the leadership of the organization.

We have 2 volunteers. Jonathon Pine, retired bank manager (Newzealand Bank) and a farm owner, and Joe Johnson, who was one of our students and is now a film maker. (It is our intention to ensure we have a balanced representation of young people aged 16-25 serving on our board of trustees.)

We are committed to equality, inclusion and diversity in the leadership of our charity and to aim for a cross section of society. We strive to have representation from individuals who fall into marginalised groups such as women, BAME, LGBTQIA+, disabled, those who have been in care and those who have lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage, since they reflect the nature of our beneficiaries.

We encourage and have attracted volunteers.

All trustees will have an opportunity to undertake training for the role of trustees. All trustees working with our beneficiaries will have safeguarding training and will be registered on the DBS Update system.

We also have three experienced trainers to deliver our CONNECT Programme, with a background in social care and mental health: Bernadette Davis, Emillia Dolton and Lisa Hicks.

Activities

The trustees believe they have displayed due regard to the commission's public benefit guidance, which is known to the trustees and adhered to when making decisions in relation to the activities of the charity, and as described in this report.

This first section outlines our intentions for the charity.

Connect to Purpose supports young people aged 8-25 who feel their life is not going in the direction they want for themselves, so they can thrive and live with joy and purpose, rather than simply survive.



Our focus is on young people who feel they are struggling to succeed in our education system - who are vulnerable to low-attainment and who are in danger of becoming a 'lost-learner' by refusing to attend school, and/or to being excluded - since prospects for those who leave school without good grades are bleak. For instance, the consequences for young people who are excluded from school are reported to be poverty, loneliness and social isolation, alcohol and substance misuse, poor mental health, homelessness, the criminal justice system and even suicide.

Our holistic approach to supporting the young people along with their family is underpinned by evidence that these young people also experience dysfunctional family or foster situations that are often a reflection of their parents/carers suffering wider problems, such as family breakdown, single parenting, poor mental and physical health, bereavement, trauma, substance abuse, lack of employment, financial difficulties, or coping with a child with special needs or challenging behaviour and poverty.

Our focus is also on redressing the high number of children and young people going into care, at both points of prevention and intervention, including supporting post 16 care leavers' support in the community and, if appropriate, reunification with their family.

One of our starting points is South Wales where there are several areas of high deprivation and here there has been a 7% increase in children going into care, with 23-31% (1 in 3) children living in poverty, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and exclusion from school has risen by 51% since 2015.

We are also working in Hampshire, in the areas of Gosport and Havant that also have high areas of deprivation.

Evidence that drives us:

- A staggering 1.4 million UK families are living in relationships that could be described within clinical practice as 'distressed' (RELATE).
- In 2022/23, there were approximately 107,000 looked after children in the UK. In the last five years the population of looked after children in the UK has increased by 8%, and 33% of care-experienced children received youth caution or conviction (NSPCC).
- Published DfE statics for the Autumn term 2022/23 showed an increase in exclusions and suspensions from school compared to the previous year (including children under the age of 6).
- According to NHS England, in 2023, one in five children and young people in England had a probable mental disorder
- In 2022-2023 there was a 7% increase in younger children (aged between 10 and 14) entering the youth justice system for the first time.

Evidence that motivates us:

A loving family is worth more than money and will give you guidance, support, love and advice.'

Boy, 11. The Big Ask, The Big Answer, 2021

Where children do not live with their immediate family, they care about having a happy home. They told us if they were unhappy at home, and with their family life, they were nine times more likely to be unhappy with their life overall, and 70% of them were unhappy with their mental health'

The Big Ask, The Big Answer, 2021

Importance of the work we do

We provide long-term support for children and young people and their families in crisis, a service that is not currently available due to the limited capacity of schools to outreach, and with Children's Services and Social and Health Care at breaking point. In response to the alarming rise in mental ill health, and the call for more services to be accessible by charities such as MIND, there is a move to provide family hubs in each town. However, we tackle the issue of children and young people struggling, by addressing its root cause, which is family circumstance that requires a bespoke approach enabling all members to find a way to create the life they want for themselves, to achieve a long lasting impact on their futures.

COVID-19 exacerbated the need for our work. Although children were minimally susceptible to COVID-19, evidence of a sharp rise in mental health issues now shows how they were hit hardest by its psychosocial impact. The charity Young Minds reports that following the second lockdown, some young people say they are 'deeply anxious, have started self-harming again, are having panic attacks, or are losing motivation and hope for the future.'

Our main objective is to provide targeted personal development, relational, and mental health support for children, young people, and their families, to prevent family breakdown, both to ensure families stay together and thrive, or engage in reunification when children are taken into care.

1. Provide a countryside retreat for families in crisis, to support them to find a way forward together
2. Deliver Parent/Carers CONNECT programme to build a bridge between families and schools.

Our Retreats

What makes us unique is our intention to deliver this transformative support by providing countryside retreats for these young people and their families, giving them the time and space for rest and renewal. Coming away

from their home situation, away from stress and worry, and experiencing a peaceful sanctuary where they can tell their story, be listened to, say what they need, and realise they have the answers and capacity themselves to find a way forward.

We operate from heritage properties of cultural importance to the local community, sustained by social enterprise run by young adults, connecting heritage with young people and their families, to engender a sense of belonging, inclusion and social wellbeing.

Harnessing the power of personal development and transformation for all the family is an innovative strategy as an alternative contribution to the way our society is dealing with:

- the alarming rise in the number of young people with mental ill health,
- the disengagement in education of underserved young people
- eradicating the attainment gap in education,
- reducing the numbers of students excluded from school
- supporting the prevention of children moving into care.

By locating our retreats in heritage properties cultural heritage becomes integral to encouraging our young people and their families to make that connection with their local community; as a starting point for exploring their own family history. In doing so, we hope they will develop a sense of belonging to their local community, and feel empowered to shape its future, as well as their own.

An important part of their long-term programme of personal development support involves engagement in positive and purposeful activities together. Everyone who attends the retreats will be encouraged to participate in the preservation of the heritage home and its gardens, where encouraging care about local heritage is integral to awareness of identity, healing family relationships and building capability to overcome difficulties.

They will have access to personal development coaching and appropriate health and wellbeing therapies; as well as education, creative arts, and holiday activities, and outdoor pursuits. Family support workers will be available to give them information and advice they feel they need, such as in cooking and healthy living, budgeting and finances. The young people, along with their family, will plan their own timetable.

Running the heritage home as a retreat will provide opportunities for community engagement, for both local employment and a high level of volunteering, giving the heritage home an economic value and encouraging social interaction and wellbeing.

An integral part of this is our 'Supported Independent Rural Living (S.I.R.L.) project that will provide transition, housing, education and employment support for 16-25year olds who:

- have left residential care and/or
- have an Educational Health Care Plan and/or
- are disadvantaged by circumstance.

Projected outcomes are:

Our young people will:

- re-engage with their education and be better able to attain their academic potential and personal aspirations.
- connect to purpose and live with joy.

The parents/carers of our young people will:

- feel supported to find ways to overcome their difficulties;
- increase their confidence and capacity to support their children both at home and at school;
- feel personally empowered to achieve their own aspirations.

The whole family will:

- build connection and purpose as a family together, enjoying enhanced opportunities to participate in education, employment and society
- become part of a network of sustainable support, where the retreat venue is a hub for families in the local community;

Disadvantaged young people (16-25) will access:

- education, training, apprenticeship, employment, in crafts, hospitality, land-based and animal care etc;
- leadership as trustees of the charity;
- supported independent rural living, to transition into adult life.

PROJECT ONE (March 2020 – September 2021)

Our first project was to purchase the C12th manor house, Plas Llanmihangel, which is one of the oldest homes in Wales. The aim of the project was the rescue of one of Wales' oldest homes and, rather than let it fall into the hands of private residents, restore it to a comfortable family home to be shared with its wider community; including a diverse range of people who would not normally experience a stay in historic accommodation.

Previously, in September 2019, we applied to the Architectural Heritage Fund for an Impact Fund and were turned down but advised to apply for the Viability Fund. In June 2020, we contacted Eurig Williams from Alwyn Jones Architects, who kindly spent a great deal of (unpaid) time supporting us in producing a plan for the renovation and restoration of Plas Llanmihangel and advising us on the reports we needed for our project and for grant applications. This supported trustees to produce a detailed business plan.

On May 2021, we invited Peter Thomas, a senior planner from the Vale of Glamorgan, and Eurig Williams to visit Plas Llanmihangel to seek further guidance following our struggle with acquiring funding. Following this, with the help of Sarah Woodcock who volunteered her time as a Heritage Consultant, we applied for AHF funding, but it was again rejected. Our grant for the National Lottery Heritage Fund submitted in May 2021 was also turned down in July and they advised we applied again for the AHF's Viability Fund again to validate our application.

Alongside these applications, during lockdown, we launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise awareness of the charity and to raise funds for the purchase of Plas Llanmihangel. We reviewed and improved our website and are grateful for the voluntary work of Florence Saralis, a professional social media producer, for building our new website and setting up a social media platform for the charity, including Facebook and Instagram.

In March, the trustees contacted Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, whom they knew had visited Plas Llanmihangel when he presented the TV programme Hidden Houses of Wales, in 1998, and were very pleased when he agreed to support our charity. On Saturday 24th April 2021, with Laurence attending, we launched the campaign as an online Zoom event and we raised £693. Following this, Laurence took part in several publicity events, including a visit to Plas Llanmihangel on 12th May. With the help of Claire Saralis, Communications Consultant, we had articles published in Wales Online, The Vale, South Wales Argos, Penarth Times, Cowbridge News and Travel Life Magazine.

In addition, the trustees and their wider contacts of friends and business contacts showed tremendous support, and we are grateful for their attempts to raise social investment. Unfortunately, before we could raise the funds to purchase Plas Llanmihangel it was bought by cash buyers in September 2021.

However, we continue to be inspired by Laurence's enthusiasm and ideas he contributed to our vision:

PROJECT TWO (October 2021- July 2022)

We evaluated our campaign and discussed lessons learned. The main issue was that Plas Llanmihangel required a great deal of renovation and restoration, the cost of which was relatively unpredictable. Also, lockdown had an impact on fund raising as many grants focused on recovery from the pandemic.

However, we continue to search for a retreat venue and raise awareness of the charity.

To put us in a better position for attracting social investment, our next project is to carry out a small-scale project, a retreat in a local historical property, to provide an evidence-based programme to validate our approach.

There was a need to consider our identity going forward, now that we had not managed to purchase Plas Llanmihangel, including a change of name.

On 10th July 2022, we received an email of confirmation from the Charity Commission, of the charity's change of name to 'Connect to Purpose'. This was required since we had not purchased Plas Llanmihangel. We also removed reference to Plas Llanmihangel from Objective 1 of the Governance document and replaced this by the more generic term, 'a historic property'; this change was confirmed also on 10th July, by email.

PROJECT THREE (September 2022 – January 2023)

In June 2022, our application for the Heritage Trust Network's Digital Heroes project was successful. This was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the Heritage Trust Network's members with their digital development and with the aim to encourage a wider range of people to be involved with heritage (this refers to the Digital Heroes themselves), and provide opportunities for learned skills for the Digital Heroes, who will be taking part in training as part of the project, as well as the charity staff.

This access to digital expertise was timely as we now had to change our website, to remove Plas Llanmihangel, and it was an opportunity to create a 'new look'. Georgina Saralis worked with Gopika Jayasree on transforming the charity's website, including adding the ability for users to donate and volunteer.

The new website is here: [Ngo For Young People And Families | Connect To Purpose | Wales](#)

We are very grateful for the work Gopika did and she writes about her experience here, where she explains how it transformed her career and confidence:

[How becoming a Digital Hero transformed my career and my confidence | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)

PROJECT FOUR

June 2023 – December 2024

This was a time for developing the knowledge and skills of the charity's founders and innovating the approach to supporting our beneficiaries further. In June 2023, founder Georgina Saralis qualified as a Courage and Renewal Retreat Facilitator and in July, attained a post graduate certificate in 'Child, Adolescent and Family

Mental Health and Wellbeing Multidisciplinary practice at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Education Centre, with a view to training as a child psychotherapist. She is also now a Family Support volunteer with both Home-start, and Hampshire Children's Services, as well as a trainee Family Therapist at the Oxford NHS Trust CAMHS department, in Salisbury.

In November, we recruited three people who, in January 2024, along with Georgina Saralis, trained to deliver the Parents/Carers CONNECT Programme.

After researching the various parenting courses available, such as Triple P, Strengthening Families etc, we discovered CONNECT, which has been co-developed over the last 10 years by a team of clinical psychologists at the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre and Dr. Marlene Moretti of Simon Fraser University (British Columbia). It is well-supported by research evidence and is rated as a Level 1 intervention.

Research shows that a strong relationship with parents is the key to helping teenagers thrive and stay safe during adolescence the Connect is an expert-led program designed to help parents/carers build and strengthen connection with their teenage children.

Over 7000 families have participated in Connect© and 900+ families have enjoyed participating in the evaluation study. It is run by a variety of trained professionals in settings such as schools, community agencies and mental health offices across Canada, Sweden, Norway, and Italy, and we are now introducing it in the UK.

It is a 10-week evidenced-based course that helps parents to support their teenage children who are struggling with depression, anxiety or other intense emotional issues, or who are having social and behavioural difficulties. Parents meet in small groups with two trained group leaders for 90 minutes each week. Each session provides parents with a new perspective on parent-teen relationships and adolescent development. Parents watch role-plays and try exercises that encourage more choices for responding to their teens' difficult behaviour.

Parents who have taken part have expressed that they appreciate how the role-plays showed them how to handle different problems, and they value the confidence that they have gained as a parent. Parents have also shared that the leaders have helped them feel positive and hopeful about their parent-child relationship, and they have been excited to see gradual growth in their relationship.

We aim to deliver Parent/Carers CONNECT programme during our retreats, and we will also be developing this as an outreach activity. We aim to deliver the Parent/Carers CONNECT programme in schools, by our qualified trainers, to build a bridge between families and schools. We will establish a network of contacts by liaising with schools and local authorities to work with the young people whom require further support as a stay at the retreat.

The training was delivered Dr Marlene Moretti herself, over six 3-hour sessions that included teaching practice for assessment. To achieve qualified status, we must deliver the course under supervision, and this is what we are now working towards.

We attempted to contact several schools in Cardiff and Newport, to promote the CONNECT course, which we had arranged to deliver at the local sports centre, but we did not have the response required.

In September, Georgina did a presentation to a headteacher at a PRU in Gosport, in Hampshire, and from this has made presentations to two groups of local headteachers, who have expressed interest in the Parents/Carers CONNECT programme and funding is being sourced for this.

In December, we visited a farm in the Brecon Beacons as a possible site for a retreat and this is being investigated further.


Financial Review

As of 19th January 2024, the balance of our bank is £1041.49, which includes £693.24 raised in the Crowdfunding Campaign in 2021, and £348.25 donated directly to the Connect 2 Purpose website during 2024.

Financial Year	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Unrestricted income			
Restricted income	693.24		348.25
Total income	693.24	693.24	1041.49
Wages and salaries			
All other expenditure			
Total expenditure	0	0	0
Surplus/Deficit	693.24	693.24	1041.49

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signed: 
 Georgina Saralis
 Date: 15th January 2024

