

# Trustees Annual Report



**Better Together Community Support Group®  
for Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme**

**Charity number: 1193906**  
**Reporting period: 2024/2025**

The Trustees of Better Together Community Support Group® for Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme are pleased to present their annual report for the 2024/2025 period.

The charity continues to be governed by its constitution, originally adopted on 23 November 2020. During this period, the charity has been overseen by five Trustees, each bringing a diverse range of skills, professional experience, and lived understanding relevant to the charity's aims. Trustees meet regularly throughout the year to ensure good governance, financial oversight, and strategic direction.

## **Overview and Strategic Context**

2024/2025 has been a period of significant challenge, resilience, and organisational maturity for Better Together. Demand for our services has continued to rise sharply, reflecting the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, increasing food insecurity, growing social isolation, and pressure on statutory services.

Despite a complex external environment, Better Together has remained firmly committed to its mission: providing practical, compassionate, and inclusive support to individuals and families across Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Our core services continue to include:

- Free children's playgroups and family activities
- Parental and family support
- Community fridge and food provision
- Food and hygiene parcels
- Community café and garden activities
- Assistance with form filling and signposting
- Befriending and emotional support

A notable development has been the continued operation of the Foodbank at Royal Stoke University Hospital, established at the request of the hospital chaplaincy. This service remains a vital lifeline for hospital staff who are unable to access community-based provision due to shift patterns and workload pressures.

Our Community HQ in Trent Vale continues to function as a welcoming and trusted hub, providing a safe and inclusive space for people of all ages. Through in person support, the charity has worked proactively to reduce isolation and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

## **Charitable Objectives**

As set out in the charity's constitution, Better Together Community Support Group® operates with the following objectives:

### **1. Prevention and relief of poverty and financial hardship**

To prevent or relieve poverty in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire by providing items and services to individuals in need, and to other charities or organisations working towards similar aims.

This is achieved through the provision of free food, clothing, toiletries, baby items, craft sessions, playgroups, and opportunities for social interaction.

### **2. Promotion of social inclusion**

To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing social exclusion, relieving the needs of those who are socially excluded, and supporting their integration into society.

We deliver this objective through free and accessible activities such as community walks, a community café, youth provision, and inclusive social spaces that support both physical and mental wellbeing and the increase of community belonging.

### **3. Community development and wellbeing**

To benefit residents of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, and surrounding areas without discrimination, by bringing together residents, local authorities, voluntary organisations, and other partners to advance education, social welfare, and recreational opportunities.

Our community garden continues to play a key role in this objective, offering opportunities for learning, connection with nature, and intergenerational engagement.

In furtherance of these aims, the charity continues to work towards securing, maintaining, and developing community facilities, while strengthening partnerships with statutory bodies and voluntary sector organisations.

## **Activities and Public Benefit**

Throughout the year, Better Together has supported thousands of individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, financial hardship, loneliness, and poor mental wellbeing.

The charity has continued to signpost service users to appropriate partner organisations for specialist support, including counselling, financial advice, housing support, and health services.

All income during the reporting period has been derived from grants, donations, and fundraising activities. The Trustees wish to place on record their sincere gratitude for the continued generosity of funders, donors, partners, and the wider community.

The contribution of volunteers remains central to the charity's success. Their commitment, compassion, and reliability enable Better Together to deliver services with dignity and respect.

## **Achievements and Progress**

- Continued expansion of services and activity groups across the local area

- Increased capacity following the acquisition of an additional property to support community activities
- Strong community engagement, with many service users choosing to give back through volunteering, advocacy, and peer support
- Ongoing recognition through local and international media, social platforms, and community feedback

The Trustees acknowledge the dedication of staff, volunteers, and supporters who consistently go above and beyond to support people facing hardship and isolation.

## **Challenges and Responses**

### **Rising demand for services**

During 2024/2025, the charity experienced a significant increase in service requests. This placed sustained pressure on staff, volunteers, resources, and infrastructure. The Trustees responded by prioritising safeguarding, improving triage processes, strengthening partnerships, and seeking additional funding streams to meet growing need while maintaining service quality.

### **Malicious defamation and funding impact**

The charity also faced a period of serious challenge due to malicious and unfounded allegations made externally, which resulted in reputational harm, the loss of some local partnerships and the loss of one external but vital funding source.

These matters were taken extremely seriously. Better Together fully cooperated with all appropriate processes and reviews, including engagement with the Charity Commission. Following thorough examination, the Charity Commission confirmed that there was no wrongdoing by the charity.

While the experience had a huge financial and emotional impact, the Trustees are proud of the organisation's transparency, governance standards, and resilience throughout this period. Steps have since been taken to strengthen policies, documentation, and communications, ensuring continued trust and accountability.

## **Looking Ahead**

As the charity moves forward, Trustees remain focused on:

- Managing increasing demand sustainably
- Strengthening governance and trustee capacity
- Expanding fundraising and income diversification
- Continuing to build strong, ethical partnerships
- Ensuring the long-term resilience of Better Together

The Trustees believe that the challenges faced during this period have ultimately strengthened the organisation and reinforced the importance of its role within the community.

## **Trustee Declaration**

The Trustees confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate and reflects the charity's activities and financial position during the reporting period.

## **Signed on behalf of the Trustees**

Birgit Allport

Chief Executive Officer (retired in Summer 2025)

Adam Colclough

Chair of Trustees

**Report to the trustees/members of Better Together Community Support Group for Stoke-on-Trent and NUL**

On accounts for the year ended 5<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 – Charity Number 1193906

Set out on pages 7-8

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## Profit & Loss

Accounting Year 2024/25



|                                                                  | Debit         | Credit        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Turnover</b>                                                  |               | <b>11,357</b> |
| Sales                                                            |               | 715           |
| Donation                                                         |               | 4,462         |
| Grant                                                            |               | 1,500         |
| Sales Hug in a Mug                                               |               | 995           |
| Private Loan                                                     |               | 1,164         |
| Transfer from Reserve Account                                    |               | 2,522         |
| <b>add Other Income</b>                                          |               | <b>19,632</b> |
| Grant Income                                                     |               | 19,632        |
| <b>less Cost of Sales</b>                                        | <b>2,660</b>  |               |
| Cost of Sales                                                    | 238           |               |
| Materials                                                        | 2,421         |               |
| <b>Gross Profit</b>                                              |               | <b>28,330</b> |
| <b>less Administration Expenses</b>                              | <b>8,787</b>  |               |
| Office Costs                                                     | 844           |               |
| Utilities                                                        | 3,627         |               |
| Web Hosting                                                      | 349           |               |
| Computer Hardware                                                | 228           |               |
| Cell Phone                                                       | 1,067         |               |
| Stationery                                                       | 56            |               |
|                                                                  | 83            |               |
|                                                                  | 252           |               |
|                                                                  | 39            |               |
|                                                                  | 524           |               |
|                                                                  | 30            |               |
| Accountancy Fees                                                 | 752           |               |
| Subscriptions                                                    | 309           |               |
| Bank/Finance Charges                                             | 365           |               |
| Travel                                                           | 261           |               |
| <b>less Staff Costs</b>                                          | <b>17,382</b> |               |
| Staff Training                                                   | 120           |               |
| Employee Benefits                                                | 32            |               |
| Net Salary Expense                                               | 16,850        |               |
| Payroll Taxes Expense                                            | 380           |               |
| <b>less Tax-Disallowable Admin Expenses</b>                      | <b>296</b>    |               |
| Business Entertaining                                            | 296           |               |
| <b>Operating Profit</b>                                          |               | <b>£1,866</b> |
| <b>less Drawings</b>                                             |               | <b>£0</b>     |
| <b>less Profit &amp; Loss journal entries</b>                    |               | <b>£0</b>     |
| <b>Retained Profit this period:</b>                              |               | <b>£1,866</b> |
| <b>Retained Profit brought forward:</b>                          |               | <b>-£873</b>  |
| <b>Distributable Reserves / Retained Profit carried forward:</b> |               | <b>£992</b>   |

Signed:

Name: Jenna Rowley Dip.MA MAAT FIOS

Address: 25 Harpfield Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 5QJ



# Balance Sheet

As at 04 May 25



|                                        | £     | £    |
|----------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Capital Assets                         |       |      |
| Net Book Value                         | 0     |      |
| ^ Current Assets                       | 1,872 |      |
| Bank Account: Business Current Account | 1,872 |      |
| ^ /less Current Liabilities            |       | 879  |
| Suspense Account                       |       | 879  |
| Net Current Assets                     | £992  |      |
| Total Assets                           | £992  |      |
| Owner's Equity                         |       |      |
| Retained Profit                        |       | 992  |
| Total Owner's Equity                   |       | £992 |