



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 01/01/2024

Period start date To 31/12/2024

Period end date

Charity name: The Links Group

Charity registration number: 1196067

Objectives and Activities

	SORP reference	
Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document	Para 1.17	The Links Group promotes the education of the link between the abuse of people and animals to professionals and the wider UK population in such ways as the charity trustees think fit
Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.	Para 1.17 and 1.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Provision of education and training to human and animal health care professionals;a. Provision of advice and guidance to human and animal health care professionals;a. Promotion of inter-agency working;a. Commissioning and publishing research and adding to collective knowledge and understanding of the link between the abuse of people and animals;b. Promotion of best practice across the voluntary, public and private sectors
Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit	Para 1.18	<p>All Trustees have received the following and will be complete the NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Constitution (Governing Document)• CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3)• Charity Governance Code• Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct• Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

	SORP reference	
Policy on grant making	Para 1.38	N/A
Policy on social investment including program related investment	Para 1.38	N/A
Contribution made by volunteers	Para 1.38	The Links Group is run solely by volunteers (with some paid contracted professional support) who use their professional knowledge, experience and expertise to promote the purposes of the charity and ensure that it was run and governed effectively
Other		

Achievements and Performance

	SORP reference	
Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.	Para 1.20	<p>Training</p> <p>Veterinary undergraduate training raises awareness amongst veterinary undergraduates about the link between the abuse of animals and abuse of people. It introduces the concept that perpetrators of domestic abuse often abuse the close bond between victim-survivors and their animals, deliberately harm an animal, may lie about how an animal has sustained injuries, can withhold access to veterinary treatment, and that this may be as part of a coercive and controlling relationship.</p> <p>Course content includes highlighting the different types and signs of abuse, being aware of the diagnostic indicators of non-accidental injury (NAI), what to do if NAI is suspected or there are concerns about other members of the household (adults and children) and reporting pathways.</p> <p>We also cover the importance of specialist animal fostering services for the pets of people fleeing domestic abuse.</p> <p>The impact of this training is that most recent (up to 20 years qualified) veterinary graduates have an awareness of the link between the abuse of people and animals, the role that the veterinary team plays in dealing with cases and the importance of multi-agency working.</p> <p>Veterinary undergraduate training that has taken place at UK universities in 2024 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bristol • Cambridge • Edinburgh • Glasgow • Liverpool • Nottingham • Royal Veterinary College (University of London) • Surrey • Cambridge <p>These undergraduate talks have been available since 2003, initially as an optional 'extra' for undergraduates and now the universities have adopted as part of the curriculum. The 2024 training equates to reaching circa 1,400 veterinary</p>

		<p>undergraduates who will join the veterinary workforce in the next two years.</p> <p>As the undergraduate training has only been available since 2003, there are many veterinary surgeons in practice who have not benefited from this awareness raising. The Links Group was supported pre-pandemic by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) to run regional training days for veterinary teams across the UK. These re-started after Covid-19 in early 2023 and completed training in all 12 BSAVA regions by the end of 2024.</p> <p>In line with the purposes and main activities of the charity, the format of these training sessions has evolved into multi-agency training days. This allows us to use subject matter expert speakers in domestic abuse, child abuse and animal abuse and welfare, to bring a holistic awareness of the issues across the professions, highlight barriers to reporting for veterinary professionals and learning from our allied professionals in human health and social care, and emphasise the need for intersectionality in strategy and delivery of best practice.</p> <p>In 2024, this series of training days completed with days in Cardiff, Southampton and the Northwest region, with 113 attending over those 3 days.</p> <p>Speakers at these events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Aid, • the NSPCC, • regional police forces, • the RSPCA, • the specialist domestic abuse pet fostering groups, • a veterinary forensic expert witness, • and the Links Group speakers. <p>The training days have been open to and attended by members of veterinary teams and any other agencies or individuals working in child and/or domestic abuse. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private and charity sector veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons, practice managers, and practice owners • presidents and senior members of major veterinary professional organisations (BSAVA, RCVS, BVA, BVNA, BVRA, NIVA, AVSPNI, Vet Support, Young Vet Network, SPVS
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		<p>and the VDS),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representatives of the vet schools and other academics, students, forensic science, criminology • social workers, NHS safeguarding leads in community and hospitals, • city and county council representatives, • police officers and representatives of offices of the Police and Crime Commissioners, • domestic abuse services for male and female victim-survivors, • an MP, and in Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and representatives of the Executive Office, • the judiciary, the Nuffield Family Justice Centre, Centre for Justice Innovation, the Homicide Timeline. <p>In addition, the team has attended /delivered at over 40 training sessions engaging a diverse range of professionals including veterinary colleagues, animal welfare organisations, domestic and sexual abuse services, police, social workers, housing teams, health workers, substance misuse services and more across the UK and internationally. Through this activity we have provided training to over 2,000 professionals in 2024.</p> <p>The impact has been to drive that awareness about the link, raise the profile of the issues and promote inter-agency working to help tackle them.</p> <p>Direct outcomes from these 2024 meetings have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaising with the RCVS Professional Conduct department to increase awareness and ensure clarity on Section 14 of the supporting guidance (Client Confidentiality) to the Codes of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses. • liaising with the Welsh government advisor on “links” awareness, rural mental health, linked crimes/public protection, • delivering training for the VDS, • collaboration with the University of Sussex in delivering training to postgraduate practising social
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		<p>workers, and developing a training stream for undergraduate social workers and veterinary nurses,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing a chapter on The Link for Veterinary Teams in a textbook on veterinary social work, • becoming an off-site partner of the Foyle Family Justice Centre, the only centre of its type in the UK or Ireland; and a Links member sitting on their Board in an advisory role, • ongoing collaboration with Hestia to bring their Online Safe Spaces portal to the major veterinary organisations in the UK. Hestia is a crisis charity with a focus on domestic abuse. Hestia delivered the Home Office's 'Ask for ANI' domestic abuse safe space codeword scheme which runs in pharmacies, • Liaising with the University of Liverpool School of Law & Social Justice on animal welfare in Northern Ireland, their development of a toolkit and the vet-facing side of it, • Exploration of connections in the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts and provision of training to those working in the women's sector and criminal / family problem-solving courts with respect to a specific women's problem-solving court network, • Developing online and face-to-face training of veterinary teams offshore UK, • Developed a link to improve our e-learning capacity. <p>These outcomes were deemed so significant that the British Small Animal Veterinary Association has agreed to support a second series across the UK from 2025-2027.</p> <p>In 2015 we launched our free online training course hosted by the Virtual College to introduce the concept of the link and animal welfare to those working in any capacity in the human health and safeguarding sectors. Since launch, this</p>
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	<p>course has been accessed by 10,830 allied professionals, helping them to understand how poor animal welfare can be an indicator of other issues within a home. Throughout 2024 we continued work to update this course content and its delivery ready to launch in 2025.</p> <p>The Links Group is internationally recognised with talks delivered at the Eurogroup for animals, participation in One Welfare Phoenix, and our Chair, Dr Paula Boyden being awarded the British Veterinary Association's Outstanding Service (Chiron) Award.</p> <p>Fostering</p> <p>A further key element of the Links Group is the animal fostering group, made up of specialist domestic abuse pet fostering organisations that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dogs Trust Freedom ▪ Cats Protection Lifeline ▪ Endeavour ▪ Refuge4Pets <p>The teams have continued to work together to raise awareness of their services and of the issues facing all victim-survivors of domestic abuse, both people and their animals.</p> <p>In 2024 our animal fostering services supported 1500 pets to escape domestic abuse by providing free and confidential pet fostering for over 1100 victim-survivors. All four reported an increase demand for services.</p> <p>Cats Protection Lifeline expanded into Scotland and Dogs Trust Freedom celebrated 20 years of providing their specialist domestic abuse dog fostering.</p> <p>Refuge4Pets continued a pilot study where they have been attending Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) across Devon and Cornwall. MARAC meetings are convened for the most serious cases, where agencies work together to safeguard victim-survivors of domestic abuse. Refuge4Pets role at MARAC is to promote factoring animals into the safety plans for victim-survivors. The team at Refuge4Pets continued their work with SafeLives (a national domestic abuse charity) to develop MARAC templates and guidance to include animals ready for a national roll out.</p>
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		<p>In 1997, Paws for Kids/Endeavour founded the UK's first pet fostering service to enable families to keep their pets safe and flee abusive households. Their foster service has grown to cover the Northwest in partnership with Dogs Trust Freedom. Endeavour has seven community projects supporting families in their homes and in temporary accommodation, with 2024 bringing our oldest ever client and pet owner, aged 99.</p> <p>All four reported a rise in pet fostering clients across their individual services that have died by domestic abuse-related deaths relating or suicides in 2024 compared to previous years of service. This has had a significant impact on the teams and highlights again the ongoing abuse and impact that domestic has even after the point of fleeing, and the importance of the availability of these services.</p>
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Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Achievements against objectives set	Para 1.41	<p>Current priority objectives (progress against which is summarised above)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the Links Group as a sustainable organisation 2. Deliver one under-grad training course per year in all established UK vet schools which are graduating vets 3. Deliver a 3 a year (rolling average) funded Links Veterinary Training programme alongside partner organisations at different locations across the UK 4. Create a suite of resources and collateral for vet teams, animal welfare teams and a broad range of professionals in touch with victim-survivors of abuse. 5. To set and regularly review appropriate standards for pet fostering services 6. Establish an overarching and underpinning marketing and communications plan
Performance of fundraising activities against objectives set	Para 1.41	<p>We were successful in attracting a grant via a charitable trust for the first time. This funding supported our core activity, extending delivery and impact, including</p>

		paid support for a Strategic Delivery Lead (externally contracted) to help drive activities forward.
Investment performance against objectives	Para 1.41	N/A

Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period	Para 1.21	On 31/12/24 The Links Group had a cash balance of £53,469 held in its named bank account. This represented an in year increase in available funds of £20,474 (balance on 01/01/24, £32,995).
Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held	Para 1.22	The charity doesn't currently hold any reserves.
Amount of reserves held	Para 1.22	N/A
Reasons for holding zero reserves	Para 1.22	A reserves policy will be developed in 2025
Details of fund materially in deficit	Para 1.24	N/A
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	Para 1.23	The Trustee Board has no concerns with the charity's ability to continue as a going concern

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)	Para 1.47	<p>Sponsorship The Links Group's main income is currently in the form of sponsorship from MSD Animal Health to support charity administration and the delivery of veterinary undergraduate training programmes. In 2024 the charity received £20,670 income from this source.</p> <p>Donations The charity also received £1,706 in donations from individual and group supporters.</p> <p>Grants The charity also received a grant of £30,894 from a charitable trust to further its work and increase its impact</p> <p>Membership fees There were no membership receipts in 2024 as in 2023 we revised our membership / supporter categories. Future income will be recorded a 'donations'</p>
Investment policy and objectives including any social investment policy adopted	Para 1.46	The charity doesn't hold any investments
A description of the principal risks facing the charity	Para 1.46	A risk register will be developed in 2025

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:		
Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter)	Para 1.25	CIO Constitution adopted on 05/10/21
How is the charity constituted? (e.g unincorporated association, CIO)	Para 1.25	CIO
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Para 1.25	Trustees are recruited through an expression of interest process and then appointed by voting members

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	Para 1.51	<p>All Trustees receive / complete the following induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course Read our Constitution (Governing Document) Read CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3) Read Charity Governance Code Sign Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct Sign Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests Signposted to key policies and procedures (e.g. expenses policy and claim form) More experienced Trustees provide mentorship to those joining the Board
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	Para 1.51	<p>The Trustee Board meets on a regular basis (roughly monthly) to monitor progress and agree actions.</p> <p>Some activity is delegated to sub-committees most notably the Pet Fostering Group who oversee their areas of responsibility and make recommendations to the board. The board retain accountability for this activity and decisions</p>
Relationship with any related parties	Para 1.51	<p>Several charities and corporate organisations are supporters of the Links Group. These include –</p> <p>Charity supporters/partners who provide pet fostering services</p>

		Dogs Trust Cats Protection Refuge for Pets Endeavour Corporate Supporters CVS IVC Vet Partners Partner organisations BVA BSAVA
Other		

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	The Links Group
Other name the charity uses	
Registered charity number	9GHF42TR
Charity's principal address	Until 31 st March 2025 The Links Group c/o Dogs Trust 17 Wakley Street London EC1V 7RQ From 1 st April 2025 The Links Group C/O Cats Protection National Cat Centre Chelwood Gate Haywards Heath RH17 7TT

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Paula Boyden	Chair (re-elected Sept '24)		
2	Mike Elliott	Treasurer		
3	Vicki Betton	Vice Chair (re-elected Sept '24)		
4	David Martin			
5	Rebecca Ashman			
6	Rachel Dalton			
7	Mary Wakeham		Until June '24	
8	Rebecca Stephens		From 02/09/24	
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved

[illegible]

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

[illegible]

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Description of the assets held in this capacity	N/A
Name and objects of the charity on whose behalf the assets are held and how this falls within the custodian charity's objects	N/A
Details of arrangements for safe custody and segregation of such assets from the charity's own assets	N/A

Additional information (optional)

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

N/A

Exemptions from disclosure

Reason for non-disclosure of key personnel details

N/A



Other optional information

Declarations

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

	
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Full name(s)

Paula Boyden	Mike Elliott
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Position (eg Secretary,
Chair, etc)

Chair	Treasurer
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Date

13/10/2025



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Links Group

1196067

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

1/1/2024

To

12/31/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	1,706	-	-	1,706	-
Sponsorship	20,670	-	-	20,670	-
Membership subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-
Grants	30,894	-	-	30,894	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	53,270	-	-	53,270	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	53,270	-	-	53,270	-
A3 Payments					
Admin/Office expenditure	129	-	-	129	-
Insurance	174	-	-	174	-
Website / IT costs	1,479	-	-	1,479	-
Marketing, Design, Print & Storage	3,090	-	-	3,090	-
Volunteer Expenses	6,846	-	-	6,846	-
Volunteer Recruitment & Training (inc. Trustees)	-	-	-	-	-
Service Delivery	2,276	-	-	2,276	-
Membership Fees	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Fees	18,802	-	-	18,802	-
Sub total	32,796	-	-	32,796	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	32,796	-	-	32,796	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	20,474	-	-	20,474	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	32,995	-	-	32,995	-
Cash funds this year end	53,469	-	-	53,469	-

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	Bank Account	53,469	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	53,469	-	-
	(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
	Mike Elliott (Treasurer)	7/7/2025

Boyd	Paula Boyden (Chair)	7/7/2025
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CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of

Charity Name

The Links Group

On accounts for the year ended

31st December 2024

Charity no (if any)

1196067

Set out on pages

CC16a Pages 1 and 2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2024

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 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 (~~other than that disclosed below~~ *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn 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:

19/09/2025

Name:

Yvonne Smithers

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

FCCA

Address:

Flat 3, Capricorn Place

Lime Kiln Road

Bristol BS8 4SX

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight 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.