

Spire Foundation

Annual Report 2023



Spir Foundation Annual Report

AGM 2023

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Chair's Report

AGM December 2023

- Report covering 01 July 2022 - 23 November 2023

Activities and objectives and achievements over the course of the last year:

The Foundation's Objectives over the course of the relevant period have been largely three-fold:

1. To achieve charitable status.
2. To secure at least 10 members outside of the Trustees.
3. To support at least 2 further beneficiaries.

Charitable Status:

Charitable status was achieved on 01 July 2022. Huge thanks go to CP for his tireless efforts to secure this. Amongst other things, charitable status will mean that we are able to claim gift aid on donations made. We made and have received a back-dated gift aid claim which has helped us increase our finances further still.

10 Further Members

We have not yet opened the floor up to formal membership. One of my main targets for the foundation of the next 12 months is achieve a membership framework which we can then roll out and promote with a view to meeting this target in 12 months' time.

Whilst we don't have the 10 "members", I am pleased that the number of Chambers membership now contributing to the Foundation by way of the monthly donation based on receipts in has increased on last year.

Support at least a further 2 beneficiaries

We have met this aim and more. We now support 3 students at ATQ on an annual basis.

We have also provided laptop computers to beneficiaries through the Yorkshire Children's Centre.

We have donated substantial resources to Field Head Carr primary school to modernise the SEND offering they are able to provide to their students. In numerical terms this will have directly assisted a significant number of children now and will be available for future students too.

We have provided a further laptop for somebody returning to education and we have also paid for an annual season ticket to assist a mature student to get to college.

Our most ambitious project currently is helping a Leeds primary school. Around 40% of their students have special educational needs, with most of those cases being Autism, ADHD, Dual diagnosis, or SEMH needs linked to trauma. As part of their research, they visited an 'outstanding' SEN provision in Essex and decided to emulate their system, which facilitates learning using IT to remove the barriers to accessing information. They have used their evidence base to evaluate the needs of every child and detailed the resources that would make a difference in allowing the children to move into the next stage of learning.

The pressure on all school budgets is enormous, so resources must be juggled to survive, let alone trying to improve outcomes and enhance children's potential through access to learning. We knew we had to be involved and are funding laptops and equipment and specialised training for staff... Once completed, the equipment we are funding or supplying will benefit over 20 children directly and indirectly.

The Foundation's Activities

1. Liz Shaw's Sponsored Skydive! Liz finally jumped out of the plane as promised and raised a fantastic sum of money.
2. Members of Chambers hiked the Yorkshire 3 Peaks and paid in a donation to the Foundation to take part.
3. Attendees at the Spire Barristers summer and autumn conferences each paid a donation to the Foundation to be able to attend the conferences – all were greatly received.
4. We have agreed with the North Eastern Circuit to give consideration to providing a donation to prospective a barrister or barristers who meet our criteria. Candidates will be identified through the NEC scholarship application process. The Foundation's sign-off on this came too late for it to have a meaningful impact in this round of applications. We hope to have more to report on this in 2024.
5. Anybody reading this report should also read the helpful document entitled "The Spire Foundation Beginnings" prepared by CP. This became a published article over the last 12months, and we are very grateful to CP for his efforts in this regard.

Performance and Public Benefit

I am very pleased with the Foundations' performance over the course of the last 12 months.

We have been able to vastly widen the scope of our donations and have assisted a significant number of beneficiaries.

At the same time, our available funds have in fact increased over the last 12 months notwithstanding our spending. Finances will be addressed by CP in the Treasurer's report. We of course hope this continues.

As to our public benefit, our contributions to beneficiaries have increased in their number. We continue to support ATQ and have increased our commitment therein. The Field Head Carr initiative noted above has significant public benefit. It ensures beneficiaries who requires SEND support at primary school now and in the foreseeable future will have the necessary resources to help them achieve educationally whilst freeing up scant school funding for other key projects within the school.

Chair's Objectives for the Foundation for the next 12 months

1. Achieve an external membership structure for individuals and organisations.
2. Widen the scope of fundraising methods/activities.
3. Support at least a further 5 beneficiaries beyond those we are currently committed too.
4. Secure at least one new Trustee.

Ash Lord
Chair, Spire Foundation
21 November 2023

Secretary's report

AGM December 2023

Report covering 01 July 2022 - November 2023

Current Chair	Ashley Lord.
Secretary	Jacqui Thomas KC
Treasurer	Colin Philpott
Other Trustees	Sarah Blackmore
	Liz Shaw
	Sharon Tappin
	Leigh Royall
	Reagan Persaud

Meetings have been held on regular occasions, the most recent being 18 September and 15 November 2023.

The constitution provides as follows;

Not less than three nor more than five elected trustees, not more than one ex-officio trustee and not more than two nominated trustees.

There must be at least three charity trustees.

Officers and trustees are appointed in accordance with the constitution for terms of 1 year, renewable, for up to two years.

AGM – November 2023

The object of the organisation remains as set out in the constitution;

A charity aimed at supporting vulnerable adults and children, who have learning or physical disabilities, or have experienced the care system, in the North of England. The North of England for these purposes refers to the geographical area from the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire in the west, across Greater Manchester, and covering Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire in the east. The charity has the aims of supplying those individuals with funds and support to enable them to advance themselves, through education such as the funding of courses or work placements, or other means including funds for equipment or assistive technology. This is in order to help them to improve their life outcomes, and their interactions with the care system where appropriate.

All trustees are due to retire and stand again if they so wish. The Foundation have also invited new Trustees to attend at the AGM if interested.

JTKC intends to stand down as Secretary of the Foundation. A new Secretary will need to be appointed at the AGM.

The Chairs' report sets out the beneficiaries over the last two years.

Jacqueline Thomas KC
Secretary, Spire Foundation
21 November 2023

Treasurer's report

AGM December 2023

Report covering 01 July 2022 - 30 June 2023

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

Following our successful application for charitable status, our opening funds transferred from the inaugural entity was £9119.66.

On the income side this first full year, well 13 months, has been steady again with our income totalling £17,393.97. The generous donations of those who continue to contribute regularly through a percentage of their own monthly receipts or thorough payroll give the Foundation a regular income. We continue to be very grateful to these individuals for their ongoing support. (£12,547 and £654 respectively).

We received £325 from entries for our 3 Peaks challenge and there was an additional £50 from the intrepid Miss Shaw's skydive. Sales from the chambers Tuck Box totalled £256 and we received £28 from Amazon Smile and thank the consumers who supported us in this way. The hamper raffle which was drawn at the Spire Barristers Christmas party raised £850. Bank interest contributed £55.

On the Expenditure side the grants of £2,400 were made to Ask the Question, a charity who support schoolchildren by providing individual weekly tuition. In this year we started off helping one individual and raising this to two at the beginning of the new academic year in September. We made donations of two laptops to Pause for individuals returning to Education and an additional laptop to the Yorkshire Children's Centre as part of our continued support for them. We also purchased laptops to the value of £980 as part of our project to assist a school in Leeds – more details are contained elsewhere within this annual report.

The only other costs are £407.64 for our limited website but this is double in this period due to the renewal being in July and £50 in bank charges for the monthly account fees.

In summary we raised £17,393.97, made grants and donations of £14,593.59, incurred costs of £457.64 and retain £2,342.74. This, when added to the forward balance gives us £11,462.40 to begin the new year.

Colin Philpott
Treasurer, Spire Foundation
31 October 2023

Section A, Unrestricted funds		2022/23		Prior	
Receipts					
	Net Membership Subscriptions	0.00		0.00	
	Gift Aid	2,527.08		0.00	
	Donations	13,201.09		0.00	
	Miscellaneous	297.76		0.00	
	Events	463.08		0.00	
	Raffles	850.00		0.00	
	Bank Interest	54.96		0.00	
	Total receipts	17,393.97		0.00	
Payments					
	Administration	0.00		0.00	
	Grants and Donations	9,074.43		0.00	
	Equipment Provided	5,519.16		0.00	
	Events	0.00		0.00	
	Publicity	187.06		0.00	
	Website	220.58		0.00	
	Miscellaneous	0.00		0.00	
	Bank Charges	50.00		0.00	
	Total payments	15,051.23		0.00	
	Net Receipts (Payments)	2,342.74		0.00	
	Cash funds Transferred	9,119.66		9,119.66	
	Cash funds this year end	11,462.40		9,119.66	
Section B, Restricted income funds					
The charity has no restricted income funds					
Section C, Endowment funds					
The charity has no endowment funds					
Section D, Statement of Assets and Liabilities at year end					
Cash funds		Unrestrict ed funds	Restrict ed funds	Unrestrict ed funds	Restrict ed funds
	Caf Cash Bank account	6,387.22		9,078.66	
	Cash	41.00	0.00	41.00	0.00
	Deposit account	5,034.18		0.00	
	Other account	0.00		0.00	
		11,462.40	0.00	9,119.66	0.00
Other monetary assets		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Investment assets		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Assets retained for the society's own use		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Debtors		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Liabilities - Funding and Underwritten by Trustees		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

The Spire Foundation Beginnings

AGM December 2023

As reported in Barrister magazine September 2023

In 2016, we broke away from being a fully common law set, re-naming as Spire Barristers and re-branding to become the only specialist Family and Public Law set on the North East Circuit. A number of realities prompted this move; a recognition that we had a reduced number of criminal practitioners, that family work was the most substantial growth amongst our members and, importantly that we had a growing reputation for excellence across chambers. Having been a traditional set since the mid 40's, this seemed to be a bold move.

We have been fortunate, and our confidence has not been misplaced. We are privileged to have a growing number of dedicated and talented junior practitioners who add depth and breadth to our talented and highly experienced members. This depth provides an unparalleled service to our clients by members and staff from within a chambers culture and ethos that is certainly not traditional.

We have fostered a very collegiate environment which provides professional and emotional support, and responsible and caring surroundings to all members and staff. This strong culture where we share strong values gives us strong ownership and direction. We take seriously the issues facing the Bar, under-representation, retention of women, diversity and access, racism, bullying and equality of opportunity and we implement policies to underpin our thinking and actions. Our Senior Clerk, Leigh Royall, refers to this as 'living our values.' It gives us purpose and direction.

Family practice in care is set apart by a number of factors; the length of time it takes to reach a resolution; the number of affected parties ranging from children to grandparents, Local Authorities to guardians; child neglect, abuse and serious injury and more. All parties are emotionally invested and believe their view is best. Sadly, there is often an underlying background of deprivation, a hand-to-mouth existence, poverty, poor education, and academic achievement. Add to that the pressures of a care system that is struggling to cope with manpower shortages, overburdening caseloads, and chronic underfunding. In the middle are the legal teams trying to achieve the very best outcomes. This is understandably draining – emotionally and psychologically and despite professional distance and objectivity, the pressure and circumstances take their toll.

As a chambers, we are continually trying to communicate our values and to live up to our social responsibility conscience. Leigh regularly challenges us, questioning if we do enough or asking how we demonstrate that we do 'live our values.' In chambers, our caring ethos is a cornerstone in our thinking, but he asked, are there any concrete ways we can demonstrate this that will make a real difference and give us a way to 'give back'?

Chambers has always supported charities over the years, and for the last few years, we have supported the 'Gold from the Stone' Christmas dinner charity. We help the Leeds and the Bradford dinners, spurred on by Liz Shaw, an inaugural prime mover and champion. We also support International Women's Day, the Legal Walks and other causes when asked. This is the right thing to do, but it is following rather than leading.

How and where do you make a difference? Initially, and having limited resources, we knew it must be targeted help to make it count. After consideration, we focused on individuals striving to make fundamental changes to their lives and life outcomes through education. We would provide funds for equipment, travel to and from college, tuition fees and additional courses – the list went on. Our experience of the care system told us that those who are care experienced were those whose education had been the most disrupted and who found access to 'extras' the hardest. Hence the other criteria was that a beneficiary should be care experienced and/or with special academic needs. We found Trustees, and with a committed and driven Chair, Ashley Lord, finalised our aims and geographical area and were ready to go. Although our aim was to be a fully registered Charity with both the Charities Commission and HMRC for Gift aid, subsequently achieved, we decided that we would begin immediately.

A considerable amount of thought has been given as to how we would identify individuals who need help. We have utilised contacts we have made in several charities that have direct contact with potential beneficiaries. This has worked well, and we have supported individuals through the Samantha Sykes Foundation, Bradford Pause, The Yorkshire Children's Centre, and Ask the Question CIC.

We realised that initially all fundraising would fall mainly within the pool of chambers members and staff. Although the Foundation is not part of Chambers, it is closely allied. The aims of the Foundation, growing from our own work-life experiences, have created a strong bond and resonance amongst members and staff alike. Our ambition, now that we are registered and can recover Gift Aid, is to broaden our message and fundraising potential by including our clients, other members of the profession and anyone who would like to join. We will offer various membership levels, offering regular updates, and opportunities to take part in fundraising and attending our AGM. All for a modest annual fee.

So far in addition to our Christmas Hamper draw, we have held the occasional auction, had a sponsored skydive, taken part in our Three Peaks challenge, and made profits from the Tuck Box sales. We have benefitted mainly from the generosity of our members, a proportion of whom pledge either a fixed or limited amount or a small percentage of their monthly receipts to the Foundation. We are very appreciative of all of our contributors and could not achieve what we can do without them. On average, we receive around £800 to £900 per month before Gift Aid. This £10,000 per annum makes a difference.

Our projects so far include contributing 50% of course fees for 2 years for a Masters student to complete their additional degree. We sponsor two students for the year to receive extra academic tuition each week. We have provided robust laptops for GCSE students, where it was identified that this would remove barriers to learning. We provided a similar laptop for someone returning to education and have paid for an annual season ticket for a mature student so getting to college was affordable.

Our most ambitious project currently is helping a Leeds primary school. Around 40% of their students have special educational needs, with most of those cases being Autism, ADHD, Dual diagnosis, or SEMH needs linked to trauma. As part of their research, they visited an 'outstanding' SEN provision in Essex and decided to emulate their system, which facilitates learning using IT to remove the barriers to accessing information. They have used their evidence base to evaluate the needs of every child and detailed the resources that would make a difference in allowing the children to move into the next stage of learning. The pressure on all school budgets is enormous, so resources must be juggled to survive, let alone trying to improve outcomes and enhance children's potential through access to learning. We knew we had to be involved and are funding laptops and equipment and specialised training for staff... Once completed, the equipment we are funding or supplying will benefit over 20 children directly and indirectly.

We are always looking for additional contacts and charities to help; word of mouth is increasing our social media presence to aid this growth. Setting up has not been straightforward and has taken resolve to reach this point. We are thrilled to have received so much positive feedback from the Charities and Schools we have worked with. It is true that shortages of funding from care to education and beyond creates a need greater than we could ever hope to meet. We are happy to have made a small difference, and if we can do it, can you?

It is good to look back, having just passed our first anniversary as a registered charity, on how we have helped and who we have helped. It is essential to gratefully acknowledge our donors and the continued support of chambers. It is very gratifying how we are making a difference by not just saying we have a social conscience but doing something positive, helping people make fundamental changes in their life outcomes.

Colin Philpott
Spire Foundation Treasurer
Spire Barristers Chambers Administrator.

Spire Foundation,

Thank you so much for your generous donations towards our school! We are extremely grateful and we appreciate all the support you have given us. Your donations have helped us support children on our SEN register with assistive technology.

As a school we currently have 85/362 pupils on the SEN register, the various types of need within school include ASD (Autism), ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder), medical conditions including epilepsy, selective mute, children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and mental Health) needs, cognitive and learning difficulties, dyslexia, hearing and Speech and Language impairments. We are fortunate to have access to a range of agencies that work with the school to provide training and support however in order to support some of our children assistive technology is essential to ensure all children can access their learning.

With the support from yourselves we have been able to give 20 children the access to their own laptop or iPad which has been empowering for these learners. With your support we have also been able to give each class their own visualiser which has been a huge success in the classroom for both pupils and staff.

From all the staff and children at Fieldhead Carr, thank you!

Kind regards,

Rebecca Widnall

Deputy SENCO

Year 6 Teacher

Fieldhead Carr Primary School

Comments from staff-

'The Ipad are very useful as the children I work with rely heavily on visuals. Making visual resources is very time consuming which takes me away from interacting with the children. I have noticed how engaged they are in their learning as they have belief in themselves.'

'X child has trouble with fine motor skills, so during computing lessons she finds using a mouse and keyboard really tricky. Having the Ipad takes away her barrier to learning so she can access the same learning as the rest of the class.'

'It has given these children more independence and are less reliant on the support of a TA (which is sometimes not an option)'

'My visualiser has transformed my classroom! The children can't wait to show their learning to their peers. They take so much pride in their work now, just so they can use the visualiser.'

Pupil Voice

'I feel confident now I have my Laptop'

'I never thought I would be able to write a story without spelling everything wrong.'

'Look forward to my lessons now because the iPad helps me with my spellings'

Spire Foundation Annual Report

AGM 2023

The logo for the Spire Foundation is located in the bottom-left corner of a solid gray square. It consists of the words "Spire" and "Foundation" stacked vertically in a white, sans-serif font. A large, thin white 'X' is drawn across the entire gray background, intersecting at the center.

**Spire
Foundation**