



Supporting people affected by rape and sexual abuse

Annual Report  
2020 - 2021

30 Years of Service in  
Local Communities







# Contents

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Chair's Review	4
This is Us	6 - 7
Transforming Lives	8 - 11
Our Services	12 - 13
Our Impact	14 - 16
Funding Thanks	17
CEO Review	18
Our Future	19
Treasurers Report	20 - 23

"I feel continuously strengthened and valued in a way where sexual abuse doesn't become the defining subject."

Survivor of Sexual Assault



# Chair's Review

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“This year, the Board will be working with our CEO to ensure Birchall not only assists those who have suffered sexual trauma but also advocates for a society free of sexual abuse and violence.”

Our counsellors and clients adapted to working virtually so successfully that the number of people who received counselling increased from 329 in the previous year to 368. The lessons learned have led to an ongoing flexible approach to service delivery.

The impact of the pandemic not only affected Birchall as an organisation but also as individuals, leading to many re-evaluating their priorities. As a result, some of our staff and counsellors decided to pursue different options, including our CEO Karen Greenhow who had given many years of valued service to Birchall.

We were delighted to be able to appoint Vanessa Dixon as CEO and her experience and skills have already had a positive impact on the organisation. Since her appointment Vanessa has worked with the Board of Trustees to develop a strategic plan and ensure the charity has a sound financial footing.

In the latter part of the year the Board adopted the Small Charities Governance Assessment framework to ensure we were acting in line with best practice. This highlighted some areas requiring attention which have been acted on and the Board will

integrate key points into our ongoing governance monitoring.

Finally,

Thank you to all those who have worked for Birchall during this difficult year and contributed to “service as normal” while managing their own pandemic related challenges. To those who have taken new paths, our best wishes. A special thanks to Jan Athorn who took additional responsibility to maintain services in the period when we were without a CEO.

Gratitude to our funders and supporters who have recognised the value of our work and provided the financial backing to ensure our services are available to all who require them.

Lastly, a personal thank you to my fellow board members who have committed so much time and effort to ensure Birchall has emerged from the past year stronger and fitter for the future.



Dr. Elizabeth Taylor







# This is us

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Sexual abuse and rape inflict deep trauma - the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated. Birchall understand complex trauma, we have specialist training on how the body and brain responds when someone feels like they're under significant threat. We understand the impact that sexual violence has on everyone who experiences it, be that as a one-off incident or years of grooming and abuse.

We offer advice and information, practical support to deal with things such as; flashbacks, sleep patterns, improving mental wellbeing. In the longer-term we offer counselling and play therapy where we start to really help people recover from their trauma and to put their emotional and psychological safety as a key priority.

## Sharing our Vision

Here at Birchall we believe that we should be able to live in a society that is free of sexual abuse, rape, exploitation and sexualised violence.

## On a Mission

We empower people affected by these issues to recover from trauma so they can lead safe and fulfilling lives. As soon as someone contacts us, we ensure they know they have been heard and believed and that we can support them in their next steps, whatever they are.

## Delivering Outcomes

Trauma effects an individual's physiology, emotions, impulse control, self-image and their ability to think, learn, concentrate and form relationships. People can suffer from a range of complex feelings, including anger, shame and guilt and exhibit challenging behaviour.

By working with our specialist team, people can build their self-awareness, develop healthy coping strategies and improve their physical and mental health. They learn to trust others and form relationships that are healthy and fulfilling. They can manage their symptoms of anxiety and are able to cope with life on a day-to-day basis. They often find creative ways to express their thoughts and feelings rather than more harmful coping strategies.





## Taking a Trauma Informed Approach



At Birchall, we work in a trauma informed way, which means we realise the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery.

Seeking to actively resist retraumatisation, we recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma in those accessing our services, in their families and in others involved in the systems.

We respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into our policies, procedures and practices.

We offer support, ideas and techniques around stabilisation and grounding, allowing people the space to become ready for that deeper work, ensuring they are not overwhelmed and can use

their counselling time to the best effect.

With young children in therapy, we use play, art and sand therapy. These activities enable them to communicate without using words and helps them to process their experience

Our services allow people to work on a deeper level and address the trauma they have experienced.

# Transforming Lives

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## Ida's Story

I received weekly counselling from the Birchall Trust for some considerable time. It's with the help of Birchall and other specialised professionals, that I am alive today. The understanding I have gained of trauma during my own recovery has given me a voice to raise awareness of the importance of specialised help in treatment of sexual trauma.

Sexual abuse is a unique type of crime because it attacks us at the most vulnerable core of our being, our sexuality. Unlike many other types of crime, it's often perpetrated by people who we admire, trust and even love. It also uniquely isn't often characterised by brutal force but by careful psychological manipulation that leaves victims not only confused but also often feeling responsible for being victimised in the most callous way.

*It's a crime that thrives on silence, for as long as a victim feels responsible, they won't expose the perpetrator. Asking for help is an act of direct defiance against the abuser, and any victim who takes that step deserves to be heard by a professional who is trained to understand what courage this has taken.*

My first experience with a counsellor, who didn't understand this very specific type of trauma, was catastrophic. Due to successful manipulation I was confused about the events, and as a result, my counsellor recommended me a book for 'women who ignore nice men and try to make bad boys change

their ways instead.' In reality, my partner had repeatedly raped me for two years.

After it had taken me so much courage to speak up, this reaction was devastating. In my head, a person of authority, a trained professional, used the same words as my rapist. It had, indeed, been all my fault.

I then decided to never speak out again.

However, my experiences didn't leave me alone and by the time I reached out for help again, I was amidst suicidal depression. Throughout my time with the Birchall Trust, my counsellors worked at my pace. Gently, carefully, layers of manipulation were removed and finally the only thing left was the devastating truth.

Then, and only then, the long road to healing could begin. I could rightly accredit my counsellors at the Birchall Trust for countless things but the most crucial thing they did was hear me. With their tireless help I understand past events as the crimes that they were, and can now say the following: It was not my fault.



## Jenny's Story

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Jenny, aged 18 Jenny was referred for support after allegations of sexual assault towards her by her dad and the subsequent breakdown of their relationship.

Jenny also had a miscarriage and was struggling at home, particularly with her relationship with her mum. Jenny had been self-harming for several years as a way of coping with her feelings. In her sessions Jenny was able to talk through her feelings about her dad and decided that she didn't want any further contact.

Jenny did some artwork in her sessions to reflect and process her feelings around her miscarriage.

Through this she was able to discover new outlets for her strong emotions which she was able to use in everyday life: meaning that she no longer relied on self-harm as a method of coping.

Her artwork also helped her confidence grow and helped her nurture her own identity; which enabled her to: cope with strong feelings, stop self-harming, build a positive relationship with her mum and apply for a job and a place at college.









## Sammy's Story

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Sammy, aged 13, was referred to us following a disclosure of sexual assault by his Great Uncle. His case was being investigated by the police and his Uncle had been placed under bail conditions, therefore initially his counsellor worked with him on a Pre-trial basis.

When Sammy came along for his initial assessment, he was very quiet and nervous. His counsellor reassured him that they would work at his pace and in a way that felt comfortable for him. They began to slowly get to know each other by exploring the things that Sammy liked to do, such as playing computer games, football and building things. They also played 'snap' which Sammy loved.

They explored the notion of safety and Sammy was encouraged to create a 'safe place', where he felt he could be himself and relax. He drew a small imaginary bedroom in his parents' flat and told his counsellor he would like to live with them.

He began to explore his thoughts and feelings about school and his struggle to develop and maintain friendships and tendency to get into fights with his peers, often resulting in exclusion from school. Sammy told his counsellor that he didn't know how to talk about his feelings but knew how to 'be angry'.

It was at this point that Sammy disclosed that he had a particularly difficult relationship with his Grandad and would like it to improve. In time Sammy disclosed that his Grandad had been verbally, emotionally, and physically abusive towards him over a number of years.

Social Services agreed that Sammy could stay with his parents at their one-bedroom flat in the short term and after a formal assessment the family were subsequently allocated a house in Barrow so Sammy could have his own bedroom. Sammy told his counsellor that he loved living with his parents and had never felt as safe.

They spent time developing coping mechanisms which helped him regulate his feelings and deal with his anger, which sometimes resulted in self-harm. He had also had thoughts about killing himself after his assault. He was encouraged to share this with his Mum who reassured him that he could always talk to her or his Dad. In his counselling

sessions he explored how he could approach his parents and decided that he would use a code word if he was feeling unsafe or worried.

Sammy was considering finishing counselling, but his family were concerned as they'd learned that his Uncle was due to be released from prison. Sammy became extremely anxious so in his counselling sessions he worked on how to manage any difficult feelings, focusing on his ability to keep himself safe and to continue communicating to his parents.

Sammy's counselling finished in March 2021. His family felt Sammy had matured, his relationships had improved and that he was much happier. They were all very proud of him. They felt that continuing to receive telephone support during lockdown had acted as a 'safety net' helping Sammy to stabilise, to regulate his feelings and develop coping strategies, particularly throughout his Grandad's illness and when his Uncle was released from prison.

# Our Services

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## Adult Counselling

“All in all, it has been a fantastic year. Looking back, nothing makes me prouder than the transformative work we complete with our clients - supporting them to lead a safe and fulfilling life remains at the heart of everything we do.”

2020 was an unprecedented year for Birchall, counselling was completely halted and we reverted to working digitally, closing our 4 buildings overnight. This was a plunge into the unknown for our service yet the staff team, counsellors and play therapists completely rose up to meet the challenge head on.

Training was sought to ensure we were providing a safe digital service. Paperwork was re-drafted and processes were changed to ensure we could still operate ethically whilst working home from home. We sorted our infrastructure and set up daily team buzz sessions. Further training to support grief and loss was completed to ensure we could deal with issues that the pandemic brought for so many.

Over the year, digital counselling became a new norm and settled into a constructive way of working for many of the adults who successfully completed their counselling. Looking back at the feedback we receive from clients, Birchall was still able to work its' magic and live up to its standards as an excellent counselling support service.

Jan Athorn  
Head of Services



12





## Children and Young People Counselling

“It is important that parents and carers are offered a space to understand and learn about the impact of the abuse their child has experienced and how this affects their child’s emotional, social and physical wellbeing.”

Birchall continues to be recognised and valued by clients, parents and carers, and professionals. Support for parents and carers is immensely valuable and we have now formally introduced parent consultation sessions and parent collaborative work to our Children & Young People service.

Maintaining the therapeutic relationship with Counsellors throughout this pandemic year has been vital for children and young people. Throughout what has been an extraordinary lived experience - with changes to schooling, family and social life - the one constant has remained their therapy sessions and contact with their Counsellor.

This year, we have worked much more closely with external agencies involved with our clients and their families.

This has proved extremely beneficial to the holistic and shared 'Team around the Family' support offered to our young clients, enabling them to achieve their best outcome within our service and beyond.

As CYP Lead, I continue to be in awe of the wonderful Counsellors and Therapists working with the children and young people in the service. Their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for working with children and young people, including writing reports, attending meetings and communicating with parents/carers and professionals, is what makes The Birchall Trust such a unique and holistic service for our young clients.

Kim E Robinson, CYP Lead

*Kim E Robinson*



# Our Impact

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During the pandemic we reorganised, retrained and invested in technology to ensure we continued to deliver services to **517** adults and **75** children and young people.

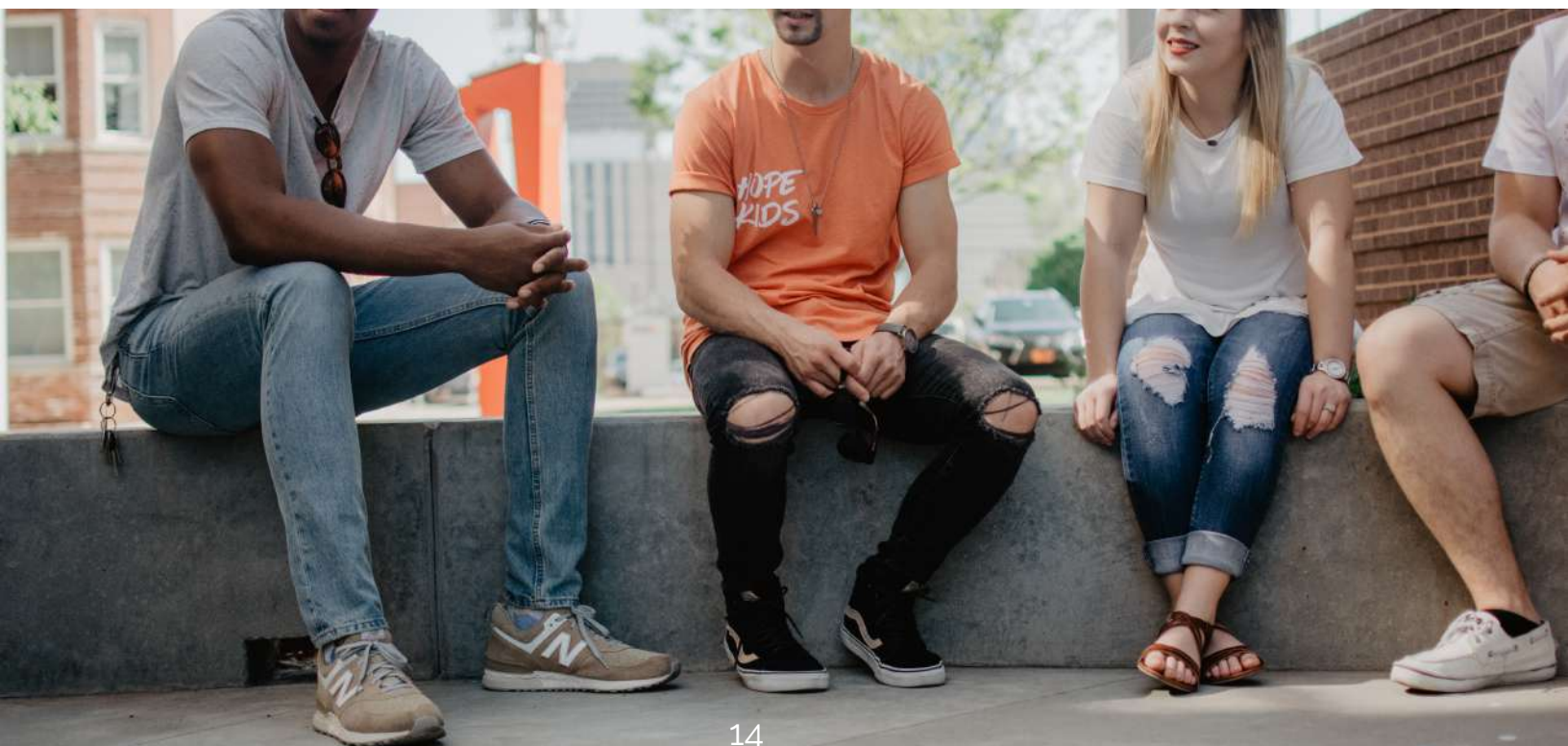


85% of our adult clients define as female  
13% define as male.  
1% identify as transgender  
1% identify as non binary



75% of our CYP define as female  
23% define as male  
1% define as transgender  
and 1% are gender fluid

As a service that is proud to hold male accreditation; we encourage males to come forward and engage as research suggests males are less likely to report sexual violence.





4,806

Counselling sessions were completed

10-40

Counselling sessions were received by clients

22%

Received additional sessions for complex issues

A total of 399 females aged 18 or over contacted the service and received support, such as advice and signposting, or entered the service for counselling.

254 women received 3213 sessions of counselling over the year, which is an average of around 12 sessions per client.

A total of 71 males aged 18 or over contacted the service and received support, such as advice and signposting, or entered the service for counselling.

37 men received 483 sessions of counselling in the year, which is an average of around 13 sessions per client.

Males made up 13% of the adult clients that engaged in counselling.

Males made up 15% of the adult clients that received advise and signposting.

"The Birchall Trust has a knack of hearing the silence, always challenging and developing me in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance"



82%

Experienced reduced PTSD symptoms



74%

Experienced reduced anxiety

88%

Reported their ability to cope with everyday life had improved



91%

of clients reported their health and wellbeing improved

80%

Experienced reduced depression

“Counselling was different to what I had expected and I had ‘breakthroughs’ when I least expected it. The Birchall Trust is a well organised, excellent and essential service”

Male, Age 67



# Funding Thanks

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As for many charities the last year posed many challenges for the Birchall Trust in securing its financial future.

We were fortunate to receive some extra funding and support from a number of our existing funders including Children in Need, Lloyds Bank Foundation and Cumbria Community Foundation. We also received emergency grants from the Ministry of Justice



Grants enabled us to provide extra administrative support and supervisions for our counselling team, extra time for our freelance fundraiser, trial our service one evening a week and purchase essential PPE to enable us to safely return to our premises.



Lloyds Bank Foundation also provided extra resources which helped strengthened our delivery. Our senior staff team were provided with 1-1 coaching and our fundraiser was given the opportunity to work with the Foundation for Social Improvement (FSI). Their support was invaluable in helping us compile a Funding Strategy and develop an Evaluation Framework and Theory of Change.



Over the last year we have continued to work with a volunteer from the Royal Statistical Society as part of a joint programme with the National Lottery. This has made a big difference in our ability to accurately report our outcomes, helping us complete yearly evaluations and strengthening our funding applications.



We are particularly grateful to have received ongoing support from local funders, the Frieda Scott Trust, the Francis Scott Trust, Cumbria Community Foundation and the Sir John Fisher Foundation. Their support has been vital in helping us move forward and secure larger grants for the next three years from national funders, Children in Need and the Henry Smith Charity.



Despite the limitations posed by national lockdowns our supporters were innovative in their fundraising. A variety of activities took place including online raffles, sponsored walks, Facebook birthday fundraisers and a client being sponsored to grow a moustache during Movember! We are very grateful to all those who have raised funds for us including two student groups from Lancaster University, Ludus Dance and Amnesty International.



Local businesses continue to support us in a variety of ways including local Co-op stores in Morecambe, BAE 'Give As You Earn Scheme' and the Waterworks Studio who donated selection boxes to our Children and Young People's services at Christmas.



# CEO Review

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The year saw the whole world come to a standstill due to the pandemic – here at Birchall we knew we wouldn't have that option. The amazing team pulled together, put things in place and swiftly moved over into a new world of online services.

Many were reluctant and thought it couldn't work, and in some cases unfortunately it didn't. but for many others that continued to link with our services, it genuinely saved their lives during a very difficult time.

I joined this amazing team in December 2020 – the team were tired and frazzled, it had been a difficult time for everyone, both inside and outside of work, but the passion and dedication of the team shone through right from the start.

What has also been amazing is their trust in me as a new CEO with different ideas and ways of working. Developing a new strategy and taking them on a period of change could have pushed them over the edge but they all embraced it, rolled up their sleeves and announced loudly that they were ready.

We are now in our 30th year as a charity, and sadly, there remains a need for our services. In fact, we are seeing demand increasing.

We have worked hard to future-proof our services and to raise awareness of the impact rape and sexual abuse has on those using our services.

Going forwards, we have an even stronger team and vision. We have reviewed the services we offer and expanded those to be more holistic, involving our service users, stakeholder and funders. We are about to launch our new volunteer programme – Birchall Ambassadors and are looking forward to working in partnership with our community.

I would like to thank the staff team, especially Jan Athorn (who stepped up as the interim CEO in a very uncertain time), the Board of Trustees, our funders, volunteers and the local community for their continued belief and support.

Vanessa Dixon





# Our Future

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“The future of The Birchall Trust will be one in which we meet the needs of growing numbers of children and adults in Cumbria and Lancashire who have been subjected to sexual violence, rape, sexual abuse, trafficking, online abuse, and exploitation regardless of gender identity sexuality, ethnicity, culture, or religion.”

To provide high quality trauma informed services to survivors of sexual abuse, rape, and sexualised violence in an accessible way

To develop and enhance our services to meet new and emerging needs with the involvement of our clients

To build a strong profile and to use our experience and expertise to be a positive influence to reduce sexual abuse violence and build better services for those affected by it

To be a strong, sustainable and effective independent organisation



# Statement of Financial Activities

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The Birchall Trust has ended the financial year April 2020-March 2021 with a healthy financial balance of £316,306 (2020: £275,182). The funds are made up of an unrestricted balance £183,325 and a restricted balance £132,981.

The restricted funds of £132,981 will be used towards delivering our services in the next financial year 2021/2022.

The unrestricted funds of £183,325 provide the charity with the security of a 'Reserves Policy'. The reserves policy is calculated to accommodate a 6 month 'wind-down' period, should the charity fail to secure funding support in the future. It also provides a small amount of funding to be spent at the

discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the charity's objectives (see annual accounts for details).

In the same way as previous years, I have analysed the end of year accounts using the three key ratio's. Fundraising and administration costs to total expenditure (FACE, up 3%), Administration costs to total expenditure (ACE, up 1%) and fundraising costs to total expenditure (FCE, up 2%).

This year we have made major changes to our organisational structure and staffing. As can be seen in the key ratios these have driven increases in both administration and fundraising costs. These changes have been made to improve our productivity and to ensure that we continue to deliver our service to the highest quality standards.

## How we have spent our funds

The Covid pandemic has driven our operating costs up. We have needed to invest significant amounts in specialist cleaning equipment to ensure the safety of our staff and clients visiting our facilities along with laptop computers to enable staff to work from home. However, even though we have had these additional costs we have still been able to increase spend on charitable activities by £17,797 a 7% increase on the previous year.

The pandemic has also had a major impact on the availability of funding. We will need to keep a sharp focus on our fundraising activities to ensure we can maintain our current service levels.

We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from donations and grant making organisations, whose support has enabled our charity to carry on delivering this vital service in south

Cumbria and north Lancashire.

I would like to thank all of the Birchall Trust team for all their hard work and dedication, which has enabled us to continue to support our clients through these extremely challenging times.

Simon Hanson  
Treasurer







# Treasurers Report

For the Year Ended 31 March 2021

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM Charitable activities</b>				
Counselling, advice & Support	7,640	402,968	410,608	329,451
Other Trading activities	2	1	3	216
Investment income	122	-	122	912
<b>Total</b>	<b>7764</b>	<b>402,969</b>	<b>410,733</b>	<b>330,579</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON Charitable activities</b>				
Counselling, advice & support	(478)	370,087	369,609	333,319
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>	<b>8,242</b>	<b>32,882</b>	<b>41,124</b>	<b>(2,740)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>				
Total funds brought forward	175,083	100,099	275,182	277,922
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>183,325</b>	<b>132,981</b>	<b>316,306</b>	<b>275,182</b>

# Balance Sheet

31 March 2021

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2021 Total Funds £	2020 Total funds £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Cash in bank and in hand	183,325	132,981	316,306	275,182
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>183,325</b>	<b>132,981</b>	<b>316,306</b>	<b>275,182</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>183,325</b>	<b>132,981</b>	<b>316,306</b>	<b>275,182</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>183,325</b>	<b>132,981</b>	<b>316,306</b>	<b>275,182</b>
<b>FUNDS</b>				
Unrestricted funds			183,325	175,083
Restricted funds			132,981	100,099
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b>316,306</b>	<b>275,182</b>



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Registered Charity No: 1109637 · Company Number: 5424196

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