

Style Acre

Supporting people with learning disabilities



Annual Review 2019



Style Acre supports people with learning disabilities and autism in Oxfordshire, offering supported living homes, community hubs, a work programme and a gardening project.



About Style Acre

Style Acre began supporting people with learning disabilities in 1995 when a group of parents purchased the residential home where their children were living. In 2004, the Style Acre house was sold and supported living care teams were established to enable people to live in homes with their peers. From 20 people in 2004, we now support 276 people with learning disabilities and autism across Oxfordshire. As well as our 31 supported living households, we also have three dynamic community hubs in Wallingford, Didcot and Banbury.

Style Acre is rated 'outstanding' by Care Quality Commission as of 2018, the independent regulator for adult health and social care services. Just 2% of adult social care inspections achieve this outstanding rating.

Ways to Wellness

We are always looking to help the people we support to become healthier, happier and fitter. In 2019, both people we support and people who work for Style Acre made commitments to improve their health and wellbeing by joining in with our Ways to Wellness campaign. Feel Fab February encouraged people to try things that made them feel good. We cooked with fresh ingredients, sang our favourite songs, danced at home or in a class, and stepped outside into the fresh air – and the snow!



Community Hubs

Over 220 people with learning disabilities attend our community hubs in Wallingford, Didcot and Banbury where they learn new skills, make friends, develop independence and confidence, and most of all, have lots of fun.

People can choose to take part in sports, arts, crafts, photography, exercise sessions, yoga and all sorts of other activities out and about in their local community. People with learning disabilities and autism can increase their independence and learn new skills through a variety of sessions, including cooking, travel training and budgeting, all while being in a friendly, welcoming and safe environment.

Many people with learning disabilities struggle to gain support and develop independence after

school and college. Our community hubs are essential services for those who attend, and often a support for their wider families too. At our Didcot and Banbury hubs we support people with mild to moderate learning disabilities, who often have little or no government-supplemented income to support their needs.

Our Didcot community hub is also home to our catering training kitchen, where people we support learn basic catering skills with the aim of gaining work opportunities. Style Acre's baking group use the kitchen to make all the cakes for our Tea Room in Blewbury. There's a huge sense of pride among the group, who have been perfecting their baking skills and have even made cakes to sell at community events.



Supported Living

Over 100 people with learning disabilities and autism live with friends and peers in Style Acre's 31 comfortable, safe and happy supported living households. The people we support range from those with complex learning, health and / or physical disabilities needing 24-hour care, to others who need a few hours support per week.

Our person-centred approach ensures that Style Acre's supported living is designed around the needs and wishes of the individual.

Wherever possible, people we support have an input into where, how and with whom they live. Our specialist team work hard to ensure that people we support can live as independently as possible. This includes our Quality Manager, who helps people to make choices and express their opinions about what happens in their lives. Support teams undertake comprehensive, regular training to ensure these standards are reflected across all of our homes.



Bryan Way housemates

Dick, Mark, Marianne and one other housemate live together in a Style Acre supported living home in Wantage. It is a really happy household; they refer to each other as family. They participate in many social activities together and are supported to go out for meals in the evening, to the theatre, or to attend one of several clubs in the local community. They also regularly enjoy attending a nightclub evening for adults with learning disabilities.

Mark, Dick and Marianne are regulars at Style Acre's Market Garden in Wantage, and have this year grown lots of veg in their own garden. One of Dick's favourite hobbies is cutting the lawn, and they also enjoy cooking outside in the summer on the barbecue. Dick, Mark and Marianne are regulars at T2, our Didcot community hub and are often the first hands up for volunteering or taking part in Style Acre events.

Mark and Marianne particularly love helping out, and this year got stuck into street

collections, selling raffle tickets at Dorchester Festival and at our Tea Room Fete. As if that wasn't enough, they have regular volunteering and work placements, and receive 1:1 support on certain days to do practical things like shopping and banking.

Our fourth housemate is happy to join in informal social activities with the rest of the household, attends our Wantage Market Garden and enjoys relaxing in the comfort of his own home.



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Mark's mum:

Bryan Way is an absolutely wonderful house. It is ideal - the four are like a family. They bonded as a family within weeks of living there. The house is on a nice street and we are extremely happy with it. Mark loves it there, Bryan Way is his home. (...) Knowing Mark is safe, loved and cared for - there are no words to describe how good that feeling is.

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Speech & Language Therapy



Every person we support has access to specialist Speech & Language Therapy to help their communication. By assessing individuals with particular communication difficulties, our Speech & Language Therapist supports people to express their thoughts and feelings more easily. Style Acre promotes an Inclusive Communication approach so that all staff use the communication method most meaningful to the people they support, whether it be through signing, or using objects, social stories or visual resources.

Active Support ensures staff understand how to do things with people, rather than for them. To achieve this, we alter the way we communicate with the people we support. We provide physical prompts such as hand-under-hand support and break down tasks so that each individual can be involved

in any activity at whatever level they can.

All staff undertake thorough communication training, including a Communication Induction, Makaton and Autism. This training helps staff to understand how communication difficulties can impact on people's daily lives, and also shows them how to use vital communication tools. Our Communication Champions receive specialist training to become a role model for their service; we now have 25 Communication Champions across Style Acre.

Our SLT also co-ordinates our ASDAN training programme, which enables people to develop practical skills while opening up vital communication channels, helping to benefit an individual's general health and wellbeing. We currently have 25 people working through the ASDAN programme.

Technology for Independence

Our IT Manager works closely with our Speech & Language Therapist to help people we support communicate through the use of IT and Technology for Independence aids. Each individual supported by Style Acre undertakes an assessment so that we can identify appropriate IT and communication tools to help enhance their everyday activities.

In 2019, we have continued



to introduce smart technology throughout Style Acre's supported living homes to assist communication and provide valuable tools for both people we support and people we employ. Amazon Echo technology helps with medication reminders, shopping lists, music, recipes and setting routines.

Virtual Reality headsets have been introduced to activity and communication groups across Style Acre. They can help people learn practical day-to-day tasks in a safe environment, including road safety or how to catch a bus. People can gain experience of any environment they may feel anxious about, prior to getting out and about, such as a trip to the supermarket or an event. They are also fun, offering someone an experience that they wouldn't otherwise be able to have, such as swimming with turtles or even flying!



Garden Project

Since 2015 Style Acre has offered gardening sessions for people with learning disabilities and autism at Wantage Market Garden. The garden is run in partnership with Sustainable Wantage. Our Garden Co-Ordinator leads sessions and runs a programme of special events throughout the year.

The garden offers people we support an opportunity to be outside with nature, to develop gardening skills and enjoy a peaceful, creative environment. Sensory and artistic activities include Christmas wreath making, growing herbs and scented flowers, and creating pictures from things found in the garden.

In 2019, we widened our Garden Project with 84 people now engaged in gardening either at Wantage Market Garden, in our community hubs or in their homes, by introducing Project Carrot. Through Project Carrot, people in our supported living homes and our three community hubs have been growing vegetables in newly-installed vegetable trugs.

Project Carrot helped boost our Ways to Wellness campaign this year, which was celebrated at our Wantage Village Show in September. People we support enjoyed a day of wellbeing activities, and brought along their produce to enter our competition categories. These included the 'most perfect tomato', 'longest bean' and 'best vegetable cake'!



Our Garden Co-Ordinator also runs horticultural training sessions for people to develop new gardening skills. Throughout 2018 and 2019, seven people we support have completed training and some now have paid work in our garden maintenance social enterprise, Green Acre. They visit houses to offer services such as lawn mowing, pruning and hedge cutting.



Dan

Dan was looking for a job and had been doing some gardening at home with his Gran. When Green Acre, Style Acre's garden maintenance team began, Dan was keen to get involved. Dan successfully completed his training period and now has a paid job on the team. He particularly enjoys learning more about plants, as well as hedge cutting and pruning jobs.

'I really like getting out and about and seeing different places. I like using new skills and learning how to use different equipment. I enjoy it, it's a nice job'. Dan, Green Acre team member.

Our Garden Co-ordinator has noted how hard Dan works and that he has really developed his confidence in talking to people since starting this job. Dan feels able to talk openly with the team now he has got to know them. He also enjoys chatting to the residents of the houses where Green Acre works.



Work Programme and Social Enterprises

For people with learning disabilities and autism, it can be challenging to gain the experience and support needed to secure paid work. Our work programme enables people we support to access voluntary and paid work placements at our own social enterprises or with local companies.

Our dedicated team include a Head of Work Programme, Job Coach and Employment Support Workers, who help people we support to develop the confidence and skills they need to be successful at work.

As of December 2019, 85 people were being supported to undertake a work placement. The benefits of work opportunities for people we support are impressive, and can be completely different for each individual. As well as developing skills, work opportunities increase self-confidence, independence, communication, general happiness, and help people feel like a valued member of a team. A placement is an opportunity to meet new people and to get involved in the local community. It often gives people we support the confidence to step into other activities across other parts of their lives.

In 2019 we continue to grow our four social enterprises, which are the Style Acre Tea Room in Blewbury, our charity shop in Wallingford, The Little Bookshop in Banbury, and Green Acre – our garden maintenance business. Our

community hubs and IT team also offer work opportunities for people we support. We are delighted to have been accredited as a Learning Disability Inclusive Employer by My Life My Choice this year.

"Our personalised approach helps people with learning disabilities into real jobs, where they can fulfil their aspirations and achieve social and economic inclusion."

Hannah Pritchard-Hawkes, Head of Work Programme



Molly

Molly started a work placement at a gym in 2017. She has now been there for two years and has progressed to being able to complete more organised and challenging tasks. Molly's increased confidence meant that she was keen to start an additional placement, and through our Work Programme started in the office at Jennings Business Park.

Molly has been excelling in work, completing administrative tasks and, for the first time this year, helping out at fundraising events.

"Molly is getting on so well at Jennings. She has always enjoyed working there but now that they pay her for her time as well, she feels really valued. (...) Without you, I don't believe that she would be at Jennings in the first place, let alone get paid work. Thank you for all you do." Maria, Molly's mum

A key part of our Work Programme is working with local companies to find work placements for people we support. We offer support, training and dedicated staff to help the work placement succeed. Molly uses Makaton signing to communicate, and the team at Jennings have enjoyed learning some basic signing through our Makaton training programme. This has helped in the success of Molly's placement.



"It's a pleasure to have Molly as part of the Jennings team. Wonderful to see her smile as she walks into the office and she's really gaining in confidence as the weeks go by. We'd recommend other businesses consider employing people with learning disabilities - such an opportunity for both parties to learn and grow".

Louise from Jennings Business Park (Work Programme employer)

Fundraising. Volunteering. Community

Style Acre raises funds to deliver key services including our community hubs, Work Programme and Garden Project. These projects allow people with learning disabilities to gain vital additional support that wouldn't otherwise be available to them. We also raise funds so that we can purchase vehicles and equipment for our supported living homes, hubs and social enterprises, and technology and communication tools.

We are hugely grateful to the charitable trusts and other organisations that have supported our work in 2019. Local groups and companies have undertaken fundraising events on our behalf, donated in kind, or made us their Charity of the Year. We are also thankful to have received donations from individuals whose friends or relatives receive support.

Creating inclusive events continues to be a priority for the Fundraising team. As well as raising funds, people we support participate in fun events, alongside their friends, peers and the local community. People we support also enjoy volunteering at events, and have done everything from serving wine at Dorchester Festival to bucket collecting in the rain in Wallingford.

Our annual Santa Dash is a popular event - a fun run through the parks and streets of Wallingford, and this year, people we support from our Didcot community hub produced



and performed in an incredible pantomime. We also held our annual Tea Room Summer Fete with newly-founded dog show and new for 2019, Style Acre's Got Talent showcasing our wonderful singers, dancers and comedians.

Our volunteers give their time and expertise generously to Style Acre, helping us at our social enterprises and community hubs, driving people we support to work placements and helping with fundraising events. Teams of volunteers have also joined us as part of their employee volunteering programmes, and helped to rejuvenate several rooms and gardens this year. In 2018-2019, we exceeded 4700 hours in volunteer time!

Dorchester Festival



We were delighted to be chosen as the Charity of the Year for the Dorchester Festival in 2019, and can't thank the festival team enough for their support and generous donation. People we support, staff and volunteers enjoyed taking part in several events to raise money for Dorchester Abbey and Style Acre, including an abseil, folk night and Family Fun Run. As well as raising our profile, events like this enable us to develop strong relationships with the wonderful people in our local communities.

Message from Ambassador – Rachel



I have been coming to T2 (our Didcot Community Hub) for several years now. What I like most about Style Acre is that everyone is friendly and the staff are great. I work at the (Style Acre) Tea Room and get paid for it when I work on the weekends. I also work at Didcot Bingo on a Monday evening where I also get paid. I attend fundraising and health and safety meetings for Style Acre and I always find them interesting. My favourite activities at T2 are Karate (I have the purple belt and I'm working towards my blue belt) and I also enjoy street dance and the cooking groups I'm part of. I also like to help people when I'm at T2, I show new people round the building and help with T2 cinema club. I feel that since I have come to T2 I have more confidence and independence.

A Message from Chris Ingram, CEO



2019 has been another fantastic year for Style Acre, full of personal and organisational achievements and some fantastic community partnerships. Our social enterprises have gone from strength to strength giving more people the opportunity to get into work and we welcomed our 100th person into our supported living services. We are also a much healthier charity than 12 months

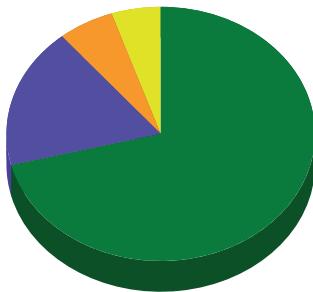
ago; this year saw us greatly expand our wellbeing programme Ways to Wellness, with people we employ and people we support embracing healthier diets, growing their own fruit and vegetables, doing more exercise and focusing on their mental health. It has been truly inspiring to hear people's stories and celebrate their successes.

Financial performance

We were fortunate to receive a higher amount of voluntary income than expected in 2018-19. That along with continued focus on expenditure during the year resulted in a small surplus of £45,538 (before tax) despite the continued

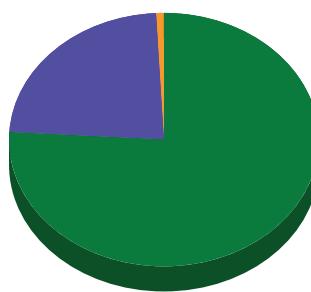
pressure on the personal budgets of the individuals we support. A general fund of £1,135,651 is held in reserves at the end of the year to enable the charity to continue to operate for approximately two months.

Income £7,864,402



- Supported Living £5,585,468
- Day Opportunities £1,408,328
- Voluntary Income £463,014
- Other Income £407,592

Expenditure £7,818,864



- Supported Living £5,936,403
- Day Opportunities £1,818,135
- Fundraising £64,326

What's next for Style Acre?



A Message from Tony Vernon, Chair of Trustees

2020 will see Style Acre celebrate its 25th Anniversary. The charity has come a long way in those 25 years from the old Style Acre House in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell to now supporting more than 100 people in ordinary homes in our community along with our three community hubs. Next year will bring fresh opportunities for exciting new social enterprises and new collaborations across Oxfordshire. We hope that friends old and new will be able to join us in some way as we celebrate and start preparing for the next 25 years.



Our supporters this year have included:

Dorchester Festival
Element Six
Lloyds Bank Private Banking
Lombard
Nationwide Wallingford
National Lottery Community Fund
NatWest Berkshire Commercial Team
Root One Garden Centre
Round and About
Sainsbury's Didcot
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils
Triangle Travel

Supporters – A Thank You!

'We would not be where we are today without the support of individuals, local groups, businesses, Trusts and Foundations. We would like to offer a big thank you to everyone who continues to support us, really helping to ensure people with learning disabilities and autism are given the same opportunities to live their fullest lives as everybody else. Through donations, time and gifts in kind, we have been able to impact more people than ever before, and with continued support will look to extend our reach further in 2020. So, thank you.'



Style Acre

Supporting people with learning disabilities



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