

Style Acre

Supporting people with learning disabilities



Annual Review 2014-15



A message from the Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees

Style Acre exists to provide people with learning disabilities with the same opportunities as everyone else. In 2014-15 we supported 150 adults with learning disabilities and enabled 77 people to live in their own homes.

“Across Oxfordshire, Style Acre continues to offer amazing opportunities to people with learning disabilities. This year has been no exception.

After eighteen months of hard work our new resource centre and supported living flats in Banbury finally opened in May 2015 with our Vice Patron, John Craven, doing the honours. The building was declared open in front of a crowd of over a hundred supporters and beneficiaries. We have also taken on the care of two ladies with very complex needs from a local NHS Trust, developed a supported living home for four people in Wantage and provided another service for two people in Didcot.

On a personal level, it has been a sad year for me as I have taken the very difficult decision to retire from Style Acre after twenty-four years, working in a number of guises as a manager and Trustee and finally as Chief Executive.

I am so proud of what we have all achieved over that time and know that the charity is in great shape as it welcomes a new Chief Executive, Chris Ingram, who will take over in October 2015.

Style Acre is a unique, challenging, creative organisation that will continue to grow and develop. The people we support, their families and friends, our staff, volunteers and supporters have all made it an amazing organisation that will keep pushing boundaries.”

Kate Liddle
Chief Executive



“Style Acre has had an outstanding year; a major project in Banbury was completed just after the end of the financial year, and we were awarded an incredible grant of just over £271,000 from the Big Lottery to help fund some of the project’s running costs for three years. It has also been a difficult year with our Chief Executive of fourteen years, Kate Liddle, resigning for family reasons.

There are some big challenges ahead for Style Acre with the settling in of a new Chief Executive, the full implications of the Care Act and the Care Certificate becoming evident, huge cuts in funding in social care and the constant quest to find good support staff in an expensive county. I

know that everyone at Style Acre will rise to these challenges in the same way that they have over the last 20 years making Style Acre an incredibly successful charity.”

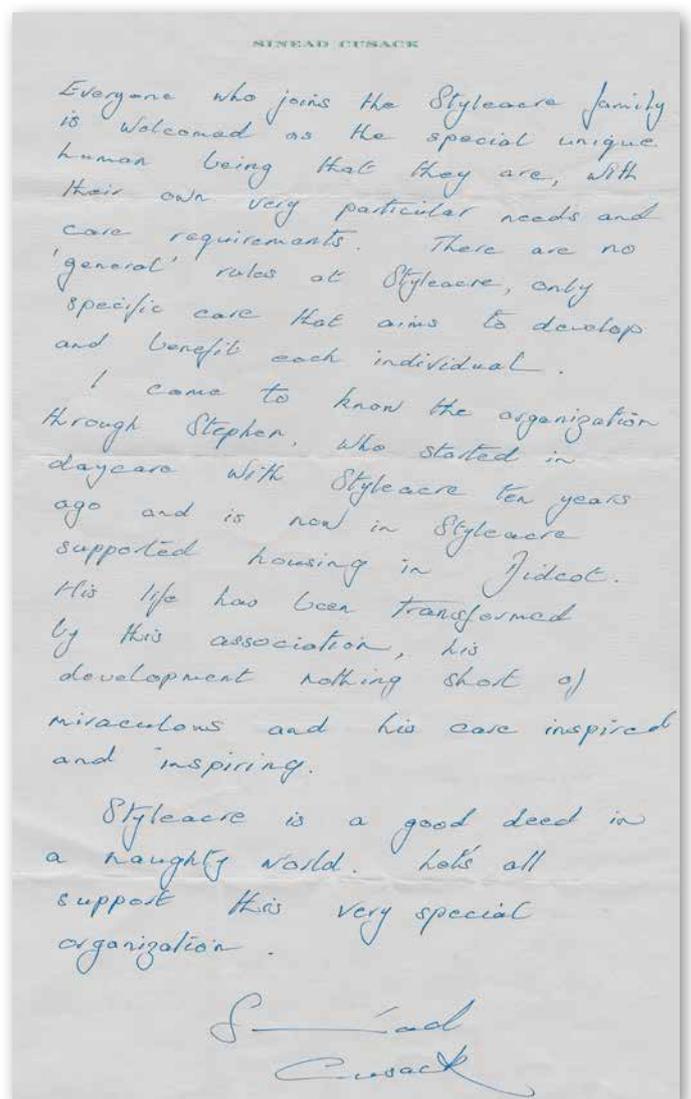
Tony Vernon
Chair of Trustees

“Style Acre advocates that people with learning disabilities have as much right to be a part of their local community as everyone else. The charity will surely be a dynamic and welcome asset to Banbury and the surrounding villages and towns.”

John Craven OBE
Vice Patron



Message from Sinead Cusack our Patron



Raising awareness

There are an estimated 1.5 million adults with learning disabilities living in the UK (just over 2% of the population). People with a learning disability often need more time to learn and most will need support to develop new skills, understand complex information and interact with other people.

Key facts:

- People with learning disabilities want to lead ordinary lives and do the things that most people take for granted. They want to study at college, get a job, have relationships and friendships and enjoy leisure and social activities. (Valuing People Now)
- Just 7% of adults with a learning disability are in paid employment, yet 65% want to work. (Valuing Employment Now)
- People with learning disabilities are withdrawing from society: with nearly half (47%) saying the services they receive do not enable them to take part in community life and over one third (34%) being unable to work or take part in volunteering or training activities after losing support services. (The other care crisis: Making social care funding work for disabled adults in England)
- People with learning disabilities are increasingly dependent upon their family: with nearly four in ten (38%) seeking support services saying they have experienced added stress, strained relationships and an overall decline in the wellbeing of friends and family. (The other care crisis: Making social care funding work for disabled adults in England)
- The Government estimates that 29,000 adults with learning disabilities live in the family home supported by a parent who is aged seventy or over. (The Housing Timebomb)
- Two thirds (67%) of the British public feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people. (Current attitudes to disabled people – Scope)



Providing lifelong care and support

Style Acre supports adults with learning disabilities living in their own homes (often in specially adapted accommodation to suit their individual needs and requirements). Being able to live in your own home is of great benefit to the people we support as, historically, they have been a group of people for whom housing has been difficult to obtain.

In addition, the support we provide can be crucial to families as they will have been the primary carers for many years and this enables them to feel reassured

over the long-term future of their loved ones.

Supported living also provides tangible benefits to local communities which gain from the overall experience of getting to know people with learning disabilities and recognising that they have the same rights of access to the local community as every other member of society. If people with learning disabilities and other associated conditions were not supported to live in ordinary houses they would be at risk of being forced into more institutionalised forms of care.

Mark's story

One surprising statistic is that 80% of parents in the UK have not planned for their disabled children's long-term futures. Determined not to be just another statistic the parents of four middle-aged adults with learning disabilities approached us to help them find their children a home of their own.

One set of these parents were in their eighties whilst the others were all over sixty years of age. Having found the bricks and mortar, the four new tenants moved in and quickly settled into their new home with Style Acre providing the person-centred care needed to give them all safe and fulfilling lives. One of the tenants is Mark, aged 43, who has Downs Syndrome and additional complex health problems. He is a relatively able young man, who is very friendly, caring and sociable believing everyone he meets

to be his 'friend'. As such, he has a very wide social circle but he is also quite vulnerable. Living in his new home, Mark is very much part of the local community. He has lots of hobbies such as playing snooker, birdwatching, listening to music and enjoying films and watching TV. He is an independent man who was very eager and happy to take the next steps into supported living with his friends.

Many parents tell us that they are concerned about what will happen to their child after they die; most are extremely worried about an uncertain future for them which is one of the consequences of short-term planning.

At Style Acre we know the benefit of long-term planning which has a huge impact on the stability and well-being of people with lifelong care needs.

“
There just isn't a word bigger than thank you – if there were we would use it - so thank you to you all for giving us the gift of knowing that Mark will be cared for and safe for the rest of his life.”

Mark's parents



Mark (third from the left) with his three friends

Growing in confidence

Style Acre provides many opportunities to help our beneficiaries develop confidence and increase their independence. Self-esteem and confidence are vital when it comes to giving people with learning disabilities a sense of value and a feeling that they have an important role to play in the heart of their local community. They are also crucial for helping to reduce depression and improve mental health.

Style Acre's work development programme

Style Acre operates a work development programme helping our beneficiaries forge an employment pathway to voluntary and paid work. As part of this programme we run a tea room in a garden centre in Blewbury with the sole purpose of employing and training people with learning disabilities as catering assistants.

It offers a safe environment in which they can learn and develop work skills and is run by experienced part-time caterers who are supported front of house by local volunteers. All the cakes sold in the tea room are made by Style Acre beneficiaries at our base in Wallingford, and other simple foods such as soup and sandwiches are made in the tea room. The tea room is open seven days a week and is often

very busy attracting up to one hundred customers a day. In 2014 the tea room employed twenty-one adults with learning disabilities (eight on new work experience placements on a rotational basis undergoing work training, nine on a permanent paid basis and four as permanent volunteers). In addition, our charity shop in Wallingford provides a safe and encouraging environment for the people we support to begin their pathway into work. In 2014-15 we had six people in permanent volunteer slots and fourteen new placements in the shop. The programme also provided work placements at several local businesses including Crowmarsh Pre-School, The Partridge Restaurant in Wallingford, Waitrose in Wallingford and many others.

“ We are thrilled that Nicky can take part in such a valuable training programme and that she can actually have some real work experience. It was beyond our wildest dreams that she would be able to do such a thing. We are very proud of her and grateful to Style Acre. ”

Nicky's parents - Angela and Peter

Showcases

Showcases staged by T2 (our Didcot-based support hub for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities) give our beneficiaries the chance to explore the creative arts.

Nearly everyone takes part and performers are able to choose their art form, research it, rehearse and practise their contribution, finally presenting or performing their work to an invited audience (family members, staff members, care workers etc). These have been so successful, T2 is working on introducing a series of creative arts workshops which will enhance the skills and self-confidence of our beneficiaries whilst at the same time providing opportunities for people to meet up with friends and have fun. These showcases make a vital contribution to general health and well-being as each person feels valued, respected and included.



Developing independence

Trips and Outings

During the year members of T2 are offered the chance to go on short activity breaks at the Calvert Trust in Exmoor. These prove to be amazing experiences and give the groups a chance to enjoy exciting adventure activities, which have been specifically designed for people with both physical and learning disabilities. These visits are not just about having fun, they are also intended to help develop vital life skills such as building self-confidence, improving independence, making friends and developing new hobbies and skills. By pushing boundaries in a safe environment many of our beneficiaries feel more comfortable about trying new things at home.



“ At the Calvert Trust I learned archery skills - how to hold the bow and pull it right back. Staying at the B&B was fun. I also learned how to paddle the canoe with a group of people. I enjoyed the trip, it was a good experience. ”

Rachel, a member of T2

Travel Training

Travel training provides practical support to people to encourage independent use of public transport as well as travel by other means such as walking and cycling. It can play an important role in ensuring disabled people can access education, training and employment as well as other key services. Travel training really helps to increase the confidence and independence of participants. It is an important part of T2 and is available to anyone who needs it. It has been so successful with one of the T2 members (Dean), that he has now taken it upon himself to deliver travel training to his peers!

Cooking at Turnstyle

In order to be truly independent in life, cookery skills are essential. Teaching cookery to people with learning disabilities is a skill which can help to maintain a high quality of life. It not only enables individuals to become more independent, it also gives them a chance to acquire other essential skills such as shopping, basic maths and reading. Some people with learning disabilities may find maintaining a

healthy weight difficult, and may need help understanding information and advice about diet and nutrition, cooking and regular physical activity. Our Turnstyle day service, for example, provides plenty of opportunities for our beneficiaries to learn about making healthy choices and cooking nutritious meals. Many of our beneficiaries also make a wide range of delicious foods, some of which are sent for sale in our tea room.



“ I have helped people to learn different bus routes. They meet me in my village and I teach them where to get on and off the bus to go to different places. I have really enjoyed doing this and would love to do it again ”

Dean, a member of T2

“ Language is so tightly woven into human experience that it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it ”

(Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, 1974)

Improving life skills

Communication skills are vital to our ability to succeed in life, stay healthy and safe, enjoy and achieve, contribute and work. They are fundamental skills enabling us to take control of our lives, become independent, make friends, make choices and express ourselves.

Estimates suggest that between 50-90% of people with learning disabilities also have communication difficulties (BILD – All about people). As part of our strategy to help our beneficiaries address these issues, Style Acre operates a communication programme, run by speech and language therapists (SLTs) to provide a service which will develop and enhance the communication skills of our beneficiaries. We provide assessment, diagnosis and specialist interventions and staff training in the following topics:

- Total Communication (communicating with people in whatever means are accessible to them)
- Makaton – (a language programme using signs and symbols to help people communicate)
- Intensive Interaction (an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning disabilities and/or autism)
- Autism and Asperger’s Awareness and Dementia Awareness

Our SLTs work closely with our Information Technology Manager to ensure everyone has access to equipment and software that may enhance communication.



Enhancing lives through technology

Assistive and personalised technology can make a huge difference to the lives of adults with learning disabilities. In 2014 Style Acre won a Didcot Business and Community Award (in the category of Best Use of Science, Technology and Innovation).

Our Technology for Independence programme assesses each beneficiary and profiles their physical and cognitive abilities to use a range of technologies. Everyone is assessed to discover how their lives can be enhanced and improved by technology, their independence increased and communication skills improved and which items of equipment and learning programmes would best achieve all of this. Beneficiaries are then trained in the use of the equipment as are their carers, support staff and families. Our Information Technology Manager also works closely with the Style Acre speech and language therapists to ensure communication skills are maximised and enhanced by technology.



With this programme, we have successfully taught people to use voice recognition software so that they can use computers, even though they can’t write. We have found numerous applications for tablets that can prompt people to carry out daily living tasks or can enable them to simply enjoy sounds, pictures and games. The options are endless and we are constantly seeking out new products to enhance the lives and develop the skills of our beneficiaries. The use of Skype and FaceTime is also highly valued as it can bring our supported adults closer to their families, who get the chance to talk to them over the Internet. It is reassuring for all involved, keeps people in touch – and is also fun!

Staying healthy, making friends and having fun

Style Acre provides plenty of opportunities to keep healthy, make friends, have fun and learn new skills. A very important by-product of many of the activities on offer is that they are helping individuals to take part in a wide variety of daily or weekly exercise. Physical activity also has a significant impact on mental health. Experts believe that exercise releases chemicals in the brain that make people feel good.

The T2 walking group started by taking short walks each week and gradually over time have built this up to the point that the walks have become longer. This has helped to improve confidence and levels of physical fitness and stamina. The crowning achievement of the group was organising a walk through the New Forest and then camping overnight.

Cycling is great exercise for our beneficiaries who see it as 'fun' rather than exercise. People with learning disabilities often find themselves with limited opportunities to fully enjoy leisure time and exercise. Support workers at T2 run a cycling club which is well attended; beneficiaries go out on bike rides improving health and having fun. They also use the bikes to access other community activities.



Wantage market garden

Working in partnership with Sustainable Wantage and the Wantage Day Service, our market garden is tended by adults with learning disabilities, promoting health, well-being and social inclusion. Working in the garden can help improve the self-esteem, self-confidence and social interaction of many of our beneficiaries.

The link between physical activity and improved health and fitness has long been recognised. The garden helps teach a variety of new skills, improving chances of future employment and enhancing lives. Produce from the garden is used in Style Acre's tea room in Blewbury and at the Charlton Centre in Wantage. Any excess produce is sold or goes to the local food bank.

Having fun is vitally important in helping to manage stress and enabling people to have a 'good day'. Style Acre is famous for its parties, whether they are Christmas parties, summer parties or any other kind of party. Staff and beneficiaries alike all look forward to the annual summer party which in 2014 was held at the Thomley Hall Activity Centre in Buckinghamshire. The sun shone for us and the day was filled with activities, such as drumming and yoga classes. There was also a visit from some rescued rare breeds.



Engaging the local community

Having been in operation for twenty years, Style Acre is naturally deeply embedded within Oxfordshire, having both supported and employed many people in our community. As our community fundraising and volunteer needs have increased, we were pleased to appoint a Community Fundraiser and Volunteer Officer in 2014 to add value to our lean and efficient fundraising department.

Milton Hill House Hotel in Steventon continued to support us, both by providing work experience for our beneficiaries, and via fundraising activities; hosting our May Ball, we raised over £15,000. We also held a charity Barn Dance and BBQ, and a Michael Jackson Tribute and Curry Night, both raising funds and well attended by the local community and people we support. Wallingford's music festival, "Bunkfest" also invited our beneficiaries to run their shop and donated £1,000 towards our work.

In 2014 Style Acre was chosen as the Didcot National Citizenship Programme charity and

young people raised over £1,000 towards a much-needed new kitchen for our Didcot service. We were also supported by local schools, where pupils have family members who we both support and employ. Wallingford PCC has funded new projects for many years and this year was no exception as they helped us to revamp our sensory room. They also provided our beneficiaries in supported living with food donated from their Harvest Festival and held a special Christmas service for Style Acre.



Oxfordshire Valuing Volunteers Charter



Involving the local community

We are constantly looking for participatory activities for our beneficiaries and took the lead in organising Access All Areas, a one-day festival for people with learning disabilities at Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot, which provided taster sessions, workshops, speed dating and Strictly Come Dancing!

We are indebted to the many volunteers who work alongside the individuals we support,

Raising our profile

We continue to develop productive partnerships with the media wherever possible and the Banbury fundraising campaign yielded many features in BBC regional news and the local press. Additionally, ITV Tonight featured residents of our supported living homes in a programme addressing the many daily challenges faced by people with learning disabilities.

BBC South Today also covered the opening of our sensory garden.

We are proactive in our social media and engage with a wide range of individuals and organisations in this way.

helping out at our tea room and charity shop. With very limited paid staff, volunteers have been our lifeline. Corporate volunteers from Vodafone and PepsiCo have also supported us throughout the year at our Wantage market garden.

Volunteer hours donated to Style Acre during the year add up to an estimated value of £30,897.



Raising funds

The majority of our income comes from statutory sources and covers the delivery of most of our supported living and day service provision. Income raised by the fundraising department from voluntary sources goes to provide all those items and activities which can really make a difference to the quality of someone's life. This can be anything from sensory equipment or support to carry out a work experience placement to assistive technologies – none of which would be covered by statutory funds. With major cuts being made to social care, voluntary donations and grants have never been more important.



2014-15 turned out to be a very successful year for Style Acre in terms of raising funds. During the year a large proportion of our efforts were focussed on raising funds for our new support hub and supported living flats in Banbury called SABRe (Style Acre Banbury Resource). Purchasing and turning a derelict night club in Banbury into this amazing resource cost well over £1.3 million, with the majority of the funding coming from a generous legacy, trust and foundation grants, companies, our own reserves and event and community fundraising. Acre Housing, a local charity providing specially adapted housing for adults with learning disabilities, also very generously donated £200,000 to the project whilst Banbury Town Council donated a further £10,000.



In addition, we were successful in raising a substantial three year grant (just over £271,000) from the Big Lottery Fund to help cover some of the project's essential running costs.

Trusts and foundations (donating sums of £10,000 and above) include: Garfield Weston Foundation, The Clothworkers' Foundation, The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, Banbury Charities, PF Charitable Trust, The Beatrice Laing Trust, The Nineveh Charitable Trust, The Albert Hunt Trust, Whalley White Charitable Trust, The Band Trust,

The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund and The David and Claudia Harding Foundation. We are extremely grateful to all those who donated funds to this very special project.

Our fundraising campaign in Banbury was also supported by a number of companies and organisations, notably by building contractor Kingerlee, who nominated Style Acre as their first Charity of the Year. We contracted Kingerlee to undertake our building works and they provided pro-bono project management, valued at £25,000. In addition, they donated a portakabin (worth over £10,000) to provide a quiet space for our beneficiaries and organised employee fundraising opportunities. As the Banbury Cherwell Rotary Club's chosen charity, we benefitted from fundraising and a raised profile through a range of events including their annual Cycle Sportive at Broughton Castle, An Evening with John Craven and their President's Ball, raising £5,250. We were delighted that three Banbury Councillors each awarded Style Acre £1,000 from their Oxfordshire County Council Big Society Fund.



We continue to receive support from individuals. Guy Hayne from Nationwide in Wallingford ran the Great North Run to benefit Style Acre, raising awareness about us in the local branch. Chris Savage, Managing Director of regional magazine 'Round and About', ran the London Marathon raising £3,365 and regularly promoting Style Acre in the publication. People we support love to fundraise too and have taken part in numerous bag-packs and collections over the year.

Spending our money

Style Acre has had another busy and successful year. Income has grown from £4,986,432 last year to £6,217,273 this year.

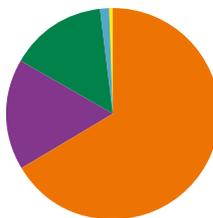
We received donations and pledges of £921,188 in the year of which £451,652 was used for the renovation of the Banbury Support Hub and has been included in the accounts of Style Acre Trading Ltd. We had designated funds of £700,000 towards the purchase and renovation costs of the Banbury project last year, £630,000 of which have been utilised in the year. The balance of £70,000 will be used to install an intruder alarm throughout the building, undertake some modifications to the infrastructure and complete the fitting out of the second-hand book shop. Our supported living and day opportunities services are funded through grants from local councils (replacing the Independent Living Fund in June 2015), local authority contracts and direct payments. Income from these activities totalled £5,187,620 this year. The Trustees are satisfied that expenditure exceeds income by a very small amount to enable us to maintain general funds at £866,166; a level that will sustain the charity for approximately two months. Our total reserves amount to £1,866,701 of which £789,000 have been designated to the development of a respite facility/hotel.

Last year we said we would:

- Develop new support services in Oxfordshire ✓
- Fundraise for, and progress, the refurbishment of our Banbury project to open in 2015 ✓
- Fundraise to support the IT project and communication support service ✓
- Open three new supported living services in Wantage, Witney and Didcot ✓
- Look for a new respite/hotel facility to support people with disabilities and their families. This was not achieved in 2014-15 but remains part of our plans for 2015-16.

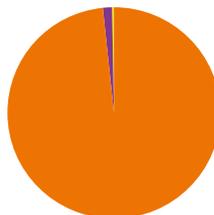
Looking forward, the plan for 2015-16 is to:

- Continue looking for a new respite/hotel facility
- Continue to develop the Banbury day service and increase capacity at this facility
- Create a new volunteering project called "Just 60 minutes"
- Expand T2, our support hub in Didcot
- Commission a new service in Didcot for 6 adults with complex needs and two new services in Wheatley supporting 8 people with varying needs
- Welcome a new Chief Executive



Income

- Supported living fees: £4,140,134
- Day opportunities income: £1,047,486
- Voluntary income: £921,188
- Other incoming resources: £83,312
- Investment income: £25,153



Expenditure

- Charitable activities: £6,176,265
- Fundraising and raising awareness: £96,715
- Governance: £6,900



Contact us

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Vice Patron

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