



Our Mission, Vision and Values

We aim to empower people with disabilities so they can take control of their lives, achieve their aspirations and enjoy life to the full.

We believe that every person in society should be respected, listened to and given the same opportunities, regardless of any disability.

Our work is shaped by the people and families who use our services and we are committed to excellence in everything we do.

Contents

A message from the Chair of Trustees, Jim Grassick	03
A message from the Chief Executive Officer, Steve Hyde	04
Children and Young People's Service	06
Housing Independence Support Team	09
The Centre	10
Shared Lives	13
Community	14
Home Management	17
Short Breaks	18
Supported Living	21
Fundraising	25
Business Support and Finance	26

A message from the Chair of Trustees, Jim Grassick



Jim Grassick
Chair of Trustees

2014-15 has come and gone, and I am delighted to see so many success stories from our services throughout this time.

Our core services have been in focus, including Short Breaks and its guest houses, Supported Living, and the Shared Lives team. These are all 24-hour services where we believe our concentration on the users, their families, and the high standards we strive to achieve give us an advantage over the larger, faceless PLC competitors. We now have a manager for each Short Breaks guest house who both work closely with the staff. Homework concerning the guests is done before they arrive, and parents are regularly invited for coffee mornings to discuss progress and any changes or improvements to guests' care plans.

Both Shared Lives and Supported Living have seen a growth in the number of people using their services. We like to think that this is partly due to the good staff we have, the training we give them and the involvement of the families wherever possible. In the background are the managers and senior managers all of whom are focussed on seeing that the users receive the best care, support and development that can be given. The government have introduced a new structured approach for charities such as Independent Options called Progress for Providers, which includes a keen focus on person-centred approach, an ideal that we have followed for some years and are still developing. The CEO will focus more on this later.

This past year, local government cuts have forced us to reorganise after we were advised that our Housing Independence Support Team would be amalgamated into several other services that we are not currently involved with and put out to tender. Consequently we have combined our remaining part-time services, including Children and Young People, Community, and Home Management, into one larger service, Supported Activities and Independent Living Skills service (SAILS) under one manager. As a result of this some staff, seniors and a manager left us at the end of this period, as we tried to reduce costs in line with the reduced funding. Since the end of our financial year, a new Government has been elected and already one of the local authorities we work with has signalled that further cuts will have to be made. We therefore expect to see further financial pressures forcing more changes to come but be assured, the needs of the users are always at the heart of our decision-making.

At the end of the year it became apparent that one of our guest houses needs a complete re-roofing which, combined with the other difficulties we have endured, means that we have ended the year with a small deficit. However our fundraising team is working hard to supplement our income and things are looking positive for the coming year.



Steve Hyde
Chief Executive Officer

A message from the Chief Executive Officer, Steve Hyde

At Independent Options we believe in a person-centred approach, which means that the people we support are at the heart of the planning for their service. This approach is only one of our fundamental values of care, but it is the most important one.

We have been going through a difficult funding period due to the severe cuts that are affecting the local authorities we work with, who have been hit very hard and in turn have passed that on to us, the service users we work with and their friends and families.

At times like these it can be easy to forget the core values and beliefs of an organisation in the face of such a severe challenge. I am glad to report that we remain fully committed to this approach in everything we do and hope that as you read this year's review you will be able to see what that means in practice.

Central to our efforts as an organisation is our Person Centred Approaches (PCA) group which meets regularly throughout the year, reviews our PCA systems and checks on progress. This year we have been very pleased to have Louise Skelhorn, an expert in PCA, join the group as an advisor.

Over the past 12 months we have been building on the success and the changes we made the previous year and we have achieved many of the new goals we set for ourselves. We have now reviewed and reorganised our community services and have amalgamated the separate teams into one so as to provide a more flexible and responsive service.

Our guest houses are working well and we are pleased to note high levels of satisfaction from guests and families and I can see that the management changes we made have been successful. We do face some practical challenges as Hallfield Guest House looks like it will need to have a new roof, and that won't be cheap! However, booking requests are high and the future looks bright.

Growth has continued in Supported Living as we are planning new tenancies and working closely with families to identify people who want to live together and find suitable properties for them to live in. I have been very pleased indeed with the working relationship we have with Care Housing Association which is apparent when you see, as I do, the very high quality homes we are able to provide for our tenants.

Shared Lives remains a popular choice for many. It is all about matching the right person with the right family, and when that happens amazing things are possible. Increasingly local authorities are recognising the value of Shared Lives and that is pleasing to know.

Our fundraising and marketing efforts are paying dividends now. For example we have been able to embark on a major programme of training for our staff on dealing with difficult behaviour due to securing the funding from the Zochonis Charitable Trust, which I'm thrilled about.

Behind everything we do is our wonderful backroom team of HR, admin and finance staff who work quietly but tirelessly in the background ensuring everything is in place to enable us to provide high quality services.

Last but not least is our wonderful children and families Centre. After a worrying period we did secure some funding which allowed us to continue. Volunteers and parents have helped develop this further and The Centre has never been busier or had more children attending. In the course of the next year we will be looking at funding for the future.



Children and Young People's Service

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to provide individually tailored support to children and young people aged 4 to 25 years old who have a learning disability or are on the autistic spectrum, either on a one to one basis or in small groups.

During the past year the team has supported between 44 and 55 children and young people. Approximately 10 of those stopped being supported by the team, predominantly because the children had turned 18 and their funding had ceased. However one person also stopped having support as she had developed her independence skills to such an extent that she was going to seek a Saturday job, which in turn would mean she would no longer be available to go on the weekends away.

The weekends away continue to prove popular. They see a small group of children and young people supported to enjoy a weekend away to places of interest including Liverpool, Wales and Windermere.

In addition to the young people being supported to see the sights, have fun and enjoy activities such as swimming, the trips also provide an opportunity for them to develop their independent living skills. During their time away the young people are encouraged to be involved in planning and preparing meals, washing and cleaning up afterwards and even washing the vehicle, which builds their skillset.



Case Study

Adam

The Children and Young People's team first started to support Adam in September 2013; he had 1:1 support after college and during school holidays, as well as two weekends away per month.

Adam was a very lively young man when he first started accessing the weekends away, and at times wouldn't respond to instructions or liaise with the group to try new things or go to new places. His behaviour could be quite disruptive, which impacted on the other young people's enjoyment of the trip. Adam's behaviour resulted in guidelines and consequences having to be discussed. The senior of the team and Adam wrote and agreed the guidelines together. Adam signed to agree that he would adhere to the guidelines on support sessions and throughout the weekends away.

At times when Adam didn't adhere to the guidelines, the support workers would refer him back to them, and on occasion, this has resulted in Adam missing out on entertainment or an activity. Adam has now been following his guidelines for over six months and his behaviour has significantly improved when he is being supported.

Adam has come on a long way from when he first started using the support service; he now enjoys trying out new things and is able to enjoy the support sessions and weekends away without displaying behaviours which impact negatively on others. Adam is a valued member of the group during weekends away, and is able to contribute positively and join in with the activities, which means that he and the other young people are able to enjoy some great weekend trips.



Housing Independence Support Team

For many years our Housing Independence Support Team (HIST) successfully supported vulnerable adults who found themselves at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Many of these service users had a mixture of learning difficulties and/or mental health issues, they didn't easily fit the criteria for support from the local authority and were therefore at risk of 'falling through the net'.

The team was commissioned by Stockport Council's Supporting People who used a Payment by Results system for the service. This meant that the team had to be able to quantify all of the achievements that our service users were making as a result of having support or face significantly reduced funding for the service. We are very proud that we consistently achieved very high results and this translated into good levels of funding.

In order to achieve this the team worked on creating very specifically targeted support plans for individuals that took into account each service user's development needs and future aspirations. This meant working more closely with individuals to create a support plan that was both achievable and ambitious.

The team developed strategies for creating these new style support plans, and saw a vast improvement when compared to those that had been used in the past as they were more person-centred and targeted. Service users also had a clearer idea of how we would help them achieve their aims and were more involved in planning how to improve their daily living skills.

Another advantage was that the new system allowed service users and staff to monitor achievements more clearly which in turn helped to motivate all those involved to keep on developing their new skills.

Despite the tremendous success of the team, in early 2015 the decision was made by the council to reconfigure HIST along with several other services, and this meant that on March 31st 2015 the team was disbanded.

The council is currently working on plans to replace the service and this will be developed over the next few years in an entirely new form and we wish them the best of luck.

Fundraising HIST



We secured **£8,000** for **Team Teach Training** for the HIST staff, although this has actually benefited the whole organisation.

The Centre

This year presented a new start and a new challenge for The Centre. Despite beginning the year with a reduced budget and staffing, we were full of positivity and determination. With financial support from BBC Children in Need as well as hands on support from Independent Options' staff and the families, we made the transition to the new style service smoothly.

We created a new timetable of groups, continuing with our popular After School Club and Sing and Sign sessions while adding a new Sensory Group, as well as more groups in school holidays.

Sam, the Centre Manager, recruited volunteers to help with the day to day running of The Centre, and as a result we currently have a wonderful team who dedicate so much of their free time to help out at the groups and create a welcoming and fun environment for the families.

Many of the family members who come to The Centre also became volunteers and also became heavily involved in fundraising - it is passion like this that really makes our children's Centre unique and demonstrates to us the continuing need for the service.

Over the last year we have had the privilege of being a part of many children's journeys in hitting significant milestones such as using signs to communicate, developing speech, riding bikes, and making friendships. We hope to continue to have positive impacts on families of children who have learning disabilities throughout this upcoming year and are looking forward to what the future brings for The Centre.



Fundraising The Centre

Received money (£1,765) from **CDL** to fund our 2014 **summer holiday groups**.

Case Study

Isla and Merrily

Isla is three and a half years old and has been coming to The Centre for around two years along with her family. At first, Isla had no diagnosis but it was clear to her parents that something was different from an early age as she had a short attention span and would have regular crises if other children came near her or used a toy she wanted. Her speech was also delayed and she didn't speak or make any verbal noises until the age of three.

By coming to The Centre, play around other children was normalised for Isla as she began to get used to other children being around, having lots of things available to play with, and even having to wait for a turn on something. Isla loves coming to The Centre now. She enjoys the freedom to play in the garden or inside with the toys and crafts, and really likes to play on the touch screen computers which are easy for her to use. Isla responds well to the staff and volunteers at The Centre and is confident to ask for help. She doesn't yet play with other children, but is now doing well developing her imaginative play skills.

Isla's older sister, Merrily, also enjoys coming to The Centre and loves doing arts and crafts. Merrily's Mum, Julia, says she just doesn't have time to do things like crafts at home due to Isla's needs. Merrily has made new friends with other siblings and children who she looks forward to seeing when she comes here.

Julia said: "Isla was diagnosed with Autism quite recently but The Centre has provided us with support and a safe, inviting place to play since well before then. As part of her Autism, Isla has speech and language delay but one of the first words Isla spoke was when we were driving past The Centre and she shouted 'messy play!'", so we knew then just how vital it was for her to come here. Her older sister also loves coming to play in the holiday sessions. It's such an important place to our family."



Case Study

Claire

My name is Claire and I had been in an emergency placement through Independent Options' Shared Lives service, which ended up being a long-term placement due to the illness of a family member.

I now live with Sharon and Barry and their dogs, and am happy in my placement. I enjoy visiting my family for weekend stays every now and again, and I also like spending time with Sharon and Barry's family.

I go for breaks with my long-term carers to their caravan and enjoy going to the beach, eating out or having a barbecue, I also like going for girly shopping trips with Sharon, or going swimming, dancing, or for walks.

Sharon and Barry are both very experienced carers who have undertaken support with many service users, and I feel very happy staying with them.

Shared Lives

Shared Lives schemes are one way of providing more personalised services for the most vulnerable people in our society. Schemes recruit, assess and support Shared Lives carers who offer accommodation and/or care and support to vulnerable people with a disability in their family home, as an alternative to more traditional approaches, such as residential care.



The service enables people to continue to live, or start to live as part of a family, which is important to them as they make friends, therefore feel less isolated and more valued and consequently, live better lives.

The independent Shared Lives Scheme currently has 75 Shared Lives Carer Households across Stockport and Trafford. All our Shared Lives Carers have been specifically recruited and trained to provide quality, person-centred care for vulnerable disabled people in the Shared Lives carer's own home.

Over the last financial year our Shared Lives Carers provided 62 long term placements, 3 Emergency Placements, over 2,400 Short Breaks nights, including several Shared Lives Holidays to destinations in the UK and abroad and 2,048 day supports.

When we receive a referral for Shared Lives, we involve both the service user and their family (where appropriate) in the assessment and support planning process to ensure that everyone's

wishes, views, feelings, and beliefs are taken into account. We try to look at a person's life holistically and consider their needs in the context of their skills, ambitions, and priorities. Above, all we try to maintain and forge new relationships and opportunities for people, whilst ensuring that their needs are met.

Shared Lives has seen many changes this past financial year, including the loss of several service users who have passed away, but we have also lost our close friend and colleague, Lynn Fairbrother, who passed away at the end of March 2015.

Many people will remember Lynn, who managed the Shared Lives Short Breaks in Stockport, for her sunny nature, professionalism and her ongoing determination to maintain a person-centred service for the people we support. Lynn will be sadly missed by the team and always in our thoughts.

Community

Over the last year the Adult Community Support team supported around 60 people to access activities within the local community to meet their individual needs and provide opportunities for skill development.

Activities included trips to museums, zoos, music recitals and the theatre, as well as places of historic interest, keeping fit via swimming, using the gym, dance, cycling and Zumba classes, and help finding voluntary work.

Some individuals plan which activities they would like to do with support on an ongoing basis, while for others, support is agreed to help meet a particular desire that the individual has. This may be improving fitness or finding and securing work.

One gentleman, Andrew, had support commissioned to help him find voluntary work, and as a result began working at Stepping Hill Hospital. This

has been highly successful for Andrew, who has since been supported to become familiar with his responsibilities in the role and develop competence in the skills required to complete the voluntary position.

Support was later able to be withdrawn so that the work could be continued independently. Andrew said: *"Gill supported me and told me lots of positive things about myself and how I would be good in the role."*

He continued: *"She showed me good ways of doing specific tasks in the job and told me what I needed to think about when doing the job."*



Allotment

The individuals who are supported to tend to Independent Options' allotment gain a great deal of satisfaction from being involved in the process of planting various fruits and vegetables, as well as tending to them, watching them grow, and harvesting their crop. The produce grown on the allotment provides real evidence of all the work and effort they put in over the year.

This year, the allotment was subject to an arson attack. The shed was set on fire and the plot ruined, along with tools, the wheelbarrow and also the work clothes. Understandably, the staff and service users who all work incredibly hard on the allotment were devastated, as this meant all their work had been in vain and was set to cost a lot of money to replace the shed and its contents.

The service users' work on the allotment was forced to cease immediately, at a time of year when they would have started to see the fruits of their labour. However, what soon became apparent was the positive relationship the service users had developed with the other allotment holders, as they rallied around to help clear the debris from the fire. Contributions for a new shed and materials flooded in from the local community, while others donated tools and equipment. Within no time, the team was able to order a new shed and the allotment was up and running again.

The individuals who use the allotment were supported to be involved in choosing and shopping for new tools, wellington boots, gloves and overalls. These activities help to develop an individual's daily living skills of managing and handling money, budgeting, and also knowledge of appropriate protective clothing and shoes to wear while gardening.

As more service users began to use the allotment on different days, the team introduced a communication book so they could work collaboratively detailing tasks they have completed or need completing and communicating to each other what they would like to grow and where on the allotment. This has enabled the individuals to develop their skills in communication, planning, compromise and working as part of a team; all skills which are transferrable to other areas of their lives.

The service users have successfully grown potatoes and onions, as well as daffodils and courgettes. Those who tend the allotment can take home the produce that is harvested to enjoy with their families, and whatever is not needed is sold for donations, which helps to buy seeds for the next year.

Those who tend to the allotment have shown great enthusiasm and strength of character in light of the fire, and have worked hard to restore the space, which is a testament to the service users' commitment, passion and gardening skills.

Case Study

Stewart

Stewart had ongoing problems with his teeth; he was struggling with toothaches and abscesses which resulted in him needing to take strong painkillers. He was conscious that his teeth did not look as good as he would like them to, but he had a real fear of the dentist so would refuse to go. Support workers encouraged Stewart to see the dentist, and went along with him to reassure him while he was given a referral for the dental hospital to have his teeth removed. It took a long time for the appointment letter from the hospital to arrive, so Stewart's support team contacted the hospital to find out why.

It transpired that numerous letters for appointments had been sent out, but Stewart had been so scared of going that he had thrown all the letters away. The support worker spoke to Stewart about the importance of going to hospital for the treatment, and he agreed that the letters could be sent to the office so that his team could make sure they didn't go missing.

Once his new appointment was made, the Home Management team coordinated extra support for Stewart so that he could be supported by a member of the team who he knew and trusted during his visit to the hospital and throughout his treatment. They stayed at the hospital while Stewart was being treated so that there was someone familiar there when he came around, and reassured him that he would be alright staying in the hospital overnight. After Stewart had been discharged, there was another support worker that he knew well to collect him. Stewart said that he would never have been able to get his treatment without the support of the Home Management team.

For Stewart and many individuals the team supports, having regular support from workers they know and trust is vital as the team supports them to cope with getting through some of the more difficult things in life, such as Stewart's dental treatments, which was crucial to his well-being and without which, Stewart would still be in pain with his teeth now.



Home Management

The Home Management team supported 36 people throughout the year to manage their own homes and live independently in their community. Support is based on the individual's needs.

Among other things, this includes working with people to develop their own skills in cooking, cleaning, shopping, making and attending appointments, or reading mail. There is much to consider when enabling someone to manage their own home, as it can also involve diverse activities including support attending slimming classes, taking pets to the vets, or empowering service users who have children to secure appropriate activities for themselves as a family.

The different activities the team support people with are constantly changing as a result of the ever-changing needs of the service users, so throughout this year we have also supported individuals to seek and maintain employment. Having a job helps bring a steady income, a sense of self-worth and a way for individuals to utilise their skills and talents.

The Home Management team's biggest achievement is the achievement of the people it supports. All 36 service users managed to continue to maintain their own homes with support provided by the team, in some cases that is as little as two hours a week.

In the current economic climate, this is a fantastic achievement for any of us. One individual was supported to sell his home which was in a relatively isolated location and to purchase and move to a new apartment which is close to local amenities, which enables him to be more independent rather than relying on support workers to help him access these facilities.

The team truly meets the ethos and values of Independent Options as it enables individuals with a learning disability or diagnosis of mental illness to live independently.

Short Breaks

The Short Breaks service has two guesthouses which provide respite for adults of 18 years and above.

Our service provides opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to spend time away from home and enabling them to gain valuable new life skills.

The past year has seen the service grow from 63% occupancy at Beech Avenue in April 2014 to a fantastic 92% by March 2015, which takes the overall average occupancy for the year to 84%. Hallfield Guest House also increased from 76% occupancy in April 2014 to 99% by March 2015, taking the average to 88% for the year. Not only has the occupancy increased, but there has also been an increase in referrals, with approximately 14 new referrals between the two houses.

Short Breaks staff are embarking on new training for Independent Options' person-centred approach, with new paperwork soon to be rolled out.

The management team at Short Breaks has focussed its attention on making the service responsive to the requirements of its service users and their families, so created a quarterly feedback form system. The forms are sent out regularly each quarter and have been imperative to helping improve the themed trips and how the service is run. In order to further create a more person-centred service, the management team have hosted several coffee mornings, with family members attending and contributing suggestions as to how the service is run. It has also given them an opportunity to become more familiar with the team and feel more confident when raising issues and complaints.

Meanwhile, Short Breaks has seen many successes in its day-to-day activities, including its personalised themed trips which are proving ever more popular.

The management team sent out questionnaires to determine what trips the guests would be particularly keen to go on, and had some excellent feedback with many suggesting going on the Coronation Street tour, which was then offered as an option by staff. Such was the demand for the trip, staff organised five separate visits to accommodate everyone who wanted to go. Guests were keen to let the management staff know how much they had enjoyed their trip. The trips make the guests' stay more enjoyable, and gives them something to look forward to.

Short Breaks has gone from strength to strength in the past year, but it has not been without its challenges. The staff turnover has proved difficult for the team, but the service has rallied together with many members of staff picking up extra hours to help cover shifts, and used regular agency workers when it has been short on staff to provide consistency.

Short Breaks has also seen a decrease in allocation of nights, which made it particularly difficult to personalise the service with limited night stays available per service user. However it worked closely with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council in promoting what the service does, as well as working with other agencies in facilitating transitions from children's services to adult. In turn, those agencies have been able to recommend Independent Options to families who use their service to come to Short Breaks as adults.



Fundraising Short Breaks

Secured a grant of £958.91 from **Stockport Homes** to improve the garden at **Beech Avenue**.



Case Study

Tom

This is Tom. He began accessing Short Breaks at Beech Avenue Guest House in September so that he could gain more experiences, meet new people and learn new skills. At the same time, Tom's parents were able to take a break from their caring role.

Tom was understandably nervous of his new surroundings so preferred to visit the house one night at a time, but he soon gained confidence to stay for longer and would ask to stay for additional nights. Tom has made some great new friends, and between the team and his Mum, every effort is made so that he stays over when his friends will be there too. When Tom comes to visit, the staff at Beach Avenue are able to help him enjoy his favourite activities by taking him on train journeys and on trips to the cinema.

Tom has come on extremely well in such a short space of time, blossoming from a quiet, shy character into a confident, chatty young man with a fantastic sense of humour.

Working to achieve personal goals

Dane and Alex

Dane and Alex live in a supported tenancy together and had identified that they wanted to experience driving a car for the first time.

With the help of staff from Independent Options, the pair researched companies that could help them in their goal. They were supported to make contact and get information on what was involved, such as prices, times and what would happen during the experience. Once Dane and Alex had all the information they needed they were able to decide whether this was something they wanted to do or not and to arrange to visit the office of the driving school to discuss what they wanted from the experience and place a booking.

After weeks of excitement waiting for the day of the experience to come it finally arrived and both gentlemen were able to access a long held dream. Dane commented after, *"It was well good."*



Supported Living

Supported Living services help people to set up and live in their own homes with the appropriate support that they need to live as independently as possible. Each supported tenancy is completely bespoke and set up with the needs and wants of the tenants at the heart of the service.

Every aspect of the tenancy, from choosing who to live with, picking a property to live in, choosing a team to provide support and the ongoing person-centred support is shaped by the service users and their families. This is something that is imperative from the outset and throughout the duration of the tenancy, something that we have been ensuring since our very first tenancy opened 14 years ago.

Supported tenancies are set up by service users who have an individual budget, which means that they self-direct their support and commission their service from us, according to their needs and preferences. As a result of this, we are held truly accountable to the service user and their families in all aspects to deliver a person-centred service and ensure we excel in the service we provide.

Throughout the past year, Supported Living has seen its management structure expand, with two managers and three seniors now on board, as well as a growing team of committed staff who continue to provide excellent care as the service develops supporting more people in their tenancies.

All the services provided by Supported Living are regularly audited and work to ensure quality is assured in all aspects and that service users are giving feedback on how they would like to progress and be assisted to achieve their goals and outcomes.

Working with a family and circle of support

Suzie Franklin

Jennie has a Personal Budget from the local authority that is managed by her Circle of Support. They use this budget to commission Independent Options to provide the support and staff Jennie needs to live a happy, active, safe and fulfilled life in her own home. Jennie's service is person-centred, which means the things that are important to her are at the heart of everything she does and how her service is managed. Jennie is supported to make decisions in all aspects of her life, including staff recruitment, what activities she does and who she spends her time with - something we are all entitled to. Jennie needs a very specialist staff team to provide the support she needs to live independently.

We use person-centred tools during recruitment to ensure we pick the right people, such as matching staff characteristics and personal qualities as well as shared interests and activities to Jennie. This process has made a huge positive difference to Jennie and ensured she has a great life. We don't use agency staff, only those that are familiar to Jennie and have been highly trained to work with her. Jennie has regular person-centred reviews to ensure things are working well in her life. We have spent some time looking at outcomes for the next 12 months to make sure that Jennie has a good quality of life but also ensuring we are spending public money well and helping Jennie to contribute to her community.

One of the outcomes was to look into Jennie taking on some voluntary work. She loves animals so we are looking at what she can do in this area; possibly dog walking or helping out at a horse riding stable. Another outcome was to explore setting up a social enterprise where Jennie could use her art and craft skills to design gifts, cards, designs for mugs, t-shirts, and other items, and we are going to look at the best way of doing this and supporting Jen to contribute to her community.



Working with families to set up a service

Lyn Reeve

Making the decision to set up a supported tenancy for your son or daughter is very emotional but ultimately incredibly rewarding. It is a dream I have been able to realise this year despite discussing for many years with a close friend how good it would be if our daughters, who both have learning disabilities, could share a house together – we never really thought our dream would come true.

It was a long and slow process, but that is because every detail had to be right. We chose to use Independent Options to help us on this journey because of its values; everything from the house itself to the team is tailored to what is best for our daughters and what suits them. Completely bespoke personal plans were made for our daughters and information noted down to the tiniest detail so that the team knew everything there was to know about them and as parents we were involved in choosing the house and interviewing the team to ensure absolute compatibility with our daughters.

Our daughters have now been in their home over a year and we as families are still included (if we wish) in all decisions. We have regular parent/team meetings and the relationship between the families, the team and management is very close - if we need to discuss anything between meetings, our senior or manager will do their utmost to assist. The bottom line is that all anyone wants is what's best for our daughters, and with Independent Options we feel that's what we've got.





Fundraising

Last April, Lucy joined us as our first ever full-time Fundraising Manager. In times of austerity, we felt that in order to ensure our services remained at the high standard we pride ourselves on as an organisation, we inevitably needed to reach out and to increase our fundraising efforts within the local community.

Over the last year we have seen our fundraising endeavours blossom; we have received support from local businesses, individuals, schools, and we've even received support from a number of trusts and foundations. We held several very successful fundraising events at our children and family Centre on site, including a Vintage Fair and a Christmas Fair during which we were thrilled to host a performance by Hazel Grove Baptist Church Sign Language Choir, and Father Christmas paid us a visit too.

Over the next year we expect our fundraising efforts to continue to grow and we hope to soon develop a legacy campaign that highlights the importance of people leaving us a gift in their will. We value

each and every individual's fundraising efforts and fully support anyone who chooses to fundraise on our behalf.

In December 2014 we took on a full time Marketing Officer, Claire, to help us ensure that as many people as possible know about the valuable work we do at Independent Options. Claire's role has been to positively promote the organisation in every aspect, and to ensure that our communication with the public is as person-centred as our services are.



Business Support and Finance

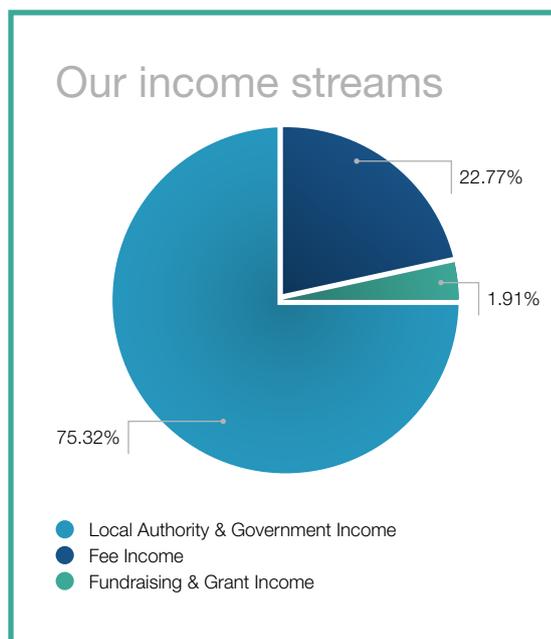
Our Business Support and Finance team perform a vital role behind the scenes allowing our services to concentrate on the excellent work that they do. This work ranges from answering the telephones, processing job applications, and organising training to producing all our sales invoices. We'd like to say a big thanks to all the team for their continued hard work this year.

The 2014/15 financial year saw our income rise by 13.75% to £3,516,453. This was driven predominantly by the opening of new Supported Living tenancies in the year and healthy growth in our Shared Lives services. Our expenditure in the year also rose, by 14.50%, to £3,519,988. The growth of our services was again a driver of this increase, but was exacerbated by redundancy costs following our Community Services restructure and providing for the cost of repairs to the roof at Hallfield Guest House. This resulted in a small deficit for the year of £3,535.

This is the first full year our new finance team have been in place and we have been working throughout the year to improve our systems and processes. We have a new phone system that is

much more flexible and able to meet our needs as we operate at a greater number of sites, and have been working at our accounting systems and processes culminating in a transfer to a new accounting system from the start of the 2015/16 financial year. This is not only cheaper, but will allow us to report to our Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees better and save us a significant amount of time within our accounting function.

Looking forward to the 2015/16 financial year, we expect this again to be a difficult year in light of the current financial climate in our sector. The charity has significant reserves that should allow us to pass through this period of austerity in reasonable shape.





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