



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 01/01/2023

Period start date To 31/12/2023

Period end date

Charity name: The Links Group

Charity registration number: 1196067

Objectives and Activities

	SORP reference	
Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document	Para 1.17	The Links Group promotes the education of the link between the abuse of people and animals to professionals and the wider UK population in such ways as the charity trustees think fit
Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.	Para 1.17 and 1.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Provision of education and training to human and animal health care professionals;a. Provision of advice and guidance to human and animal health care professionals;a. Promotion of inter-agency working;a. Commissioning and publishing research and adding to collective knowledge and understanding of the link between the abuse of people and animals;b. Promotion of best practice across the voluntary, public and private sectors
Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit	Para 1.18	<p>All Trustees have received the following and will be completing the NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course in early 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Constitution (Governing Document)• CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3)• Charity Governance Code• Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct• Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

	SORP reference	
Policy on grant making	Para 1.38	N/A
Policy on social investment including program related investment	Para 1.38	N/A
Contribution made by volunteers	Para 1.38	The Links Group is run solely by volunteers who use their professional knowledge, experience and expertise to promote the purposes of the charity and ensure that it was run and governed effectively
Other		

Achievements and Performance

	SORP reference	
<p>Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.</p>	<p>Para 1.20</p>	<p>Training</p> <p>Veterinary undergraduate training raises awareness amongst veterinary undergraduates about the link between the abuse of animals and abuse of people. It introduces the concept that perpetrators of domestic abuse often abuse the close bond between victim-survivors and their animals, deliberately harm an animal, may lie about how an animal has sustained injuries, can withhold access to veterinary treatment, and that this may be as part of a coercive and controlling relationship.</p> <p>Course content includes highlighting the different types and signs of abuse, being aware of the diagnostic indicators of non-accidental injury (NAI), what to do if NAI is suspected or there are concerns about other members of the household (adults and children) and reporting pathways.</p> <p>We also cover the importance of specialist animal fostering services for the pets of people fleeing domestic abuse.</p> <p>The impact of this training is that most recent (up to 20 years qualified) veterinary graduates have an awareness of the link between the abuse of people and animals, the role that the veterinary team plays in dealing with cases and the importance of multi-agency working.</p> <p>Veterinary undergraduate training that has taken place at UK universities in 2023 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bristol • Cambridge • Edinburgh • Glasgow • Liverpool • Nottingham • Royal Veterinary College (University of London) • Surrey <p>These undergraduate talks have been available since 2003, initially as an optional 'extra' for undergraduates and now as part of the curriculum. The training now equates to reaching circa 1,200 veterinary undergraduates who will join the veterinary workforce in the next two years.</p>

As the undergraduate training has only been available since 2003, there are many veterinary surgeons in practice who have not benefited from this awareness raising. The Links Group had been supported pre-pandemic by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) to run regional training days for veterinary teams across the UK.

These re-started, as planned, in early 2023 with delivery in Antrim, Nottingham, Exeter, and London; with 170 people attending. In line with the purposes and main activities of the charity, the format of these training sessions has evolved into multi-agency training days. This allows us to use subject matter expert speakers in domestic abuse, child abuse and animal abuse and welfare, to bring a holistic awareness of the issues across the professions, highlight barriers to reporting for veterinary professionals and learning from our allied professionals in human health and social care, and emphasise the need for intersectionality in strategy and delivery of best practice. This series of training days is due to complete in 2024 with days in Cardiff, Southampton and the Northwest region.

Speakers at these events include:

- Women's Aid,
- the NSPCC,
- regional police forces,
- the RSPCA,
- the specialist domestic abuse pet fostering groups,
- a veterinary forensic expert witness,
- and the Links Group speakers.

Delegates and guests have been open to and attended by members of veterinary teams and any other agencies or individuals working in child and/or domestic abuse. This includes:

- private and charity sector veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons and practice managers,
- presidents and senior members of major veterinary professional organisations (RCVS, BVA, BSAVA, BVNA, NIVA, AVSPNI, Vet Support, Young Vet Network, SPVS and the VDS),
- representatives of the vet schools and other academics, students, forensic science,
- social workers, NHS safeguarding leads,

- city and county council representatives,
- police officers and representatives of offices of the Police and Crime Commissioners,
- domestic abuse services for male and female victim-survivors,
- an MP, and in Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and representatives of the Executive Office.

Direct outcomes from these 2023 meetings have included:

- delivering training for the VDS,
- collaboration with the University of Sussex in delivering training in the to postgraduate practising social workers, developing a training stream for undergraduate social workers and veterinary nurses, contributing to a textbook on veterinary social work,
- becoming an off-site partner of the Foyle Family Justice Centre, the only centre of its type in the UK; and a Links member sitting on their Board in an advisory role,
- collaboration with Hestia to bring their Online Safe Spaces portal to the major veterinary organisations in the UK.

In addition, the team have attended over 31 bespoke training sessions engaging a diverse range of professionals including veterinary colleagues, animal welfare organisations, domestic and sexual abuse services, police, social workers, housing teams, health workers, substance misuse services and more across the UK and internationally. Through this activity we have provided training to over 3,500 professionals in the last twelve months. The impact has been to drive that awareness about the link, raise the profile of the issues and promote inter-agency working to help tackle them.

In 2015 we launched our free online training course hosted by the Virtual College to introduce the concept of the link and animal welfare to those working in any capacity in the human health and safeguarding sectors. Since launch, this course has been accessed by 10,830 allied professionals, helping them to understand how poor animal welfare can be an indicator of other issues within a home.

The Links Group is internationally recognised with talks delivered at the Link II Conference in Lisbon and also at the World Small Animal Veterinary Association conference.

Pet Fostering

A further key element of the Links Group is the animal fostering group, made up of specialist domestic abuse pet fostering organisations that include:

- Dogs Trust Freedom
- Cats Protection Lifeline
- Endeavour
- Refuge4Pets

In 2023 our animal fostering services supported 728 individuals/families to escape domestic abuse by fostering 952 animals.

The Cats Protection Lifeline and Dogs Trust Freedom teams have been busy expanding the service even further this year. Both services now cover much of the UK, with a planned expansion into Northern Ireland in 2025.

The Cats Protection Lifeline team have been working hard to raise awareness about the importance of animal fostering services through their partnership with Refuge. Both organisations collaborated with 7th Pencil, a talent artist to depict the depth of bond that so many survivors of domestic abuse have with their animals.

Cats Protection's Christmas Appeal focused on the Lifeline service from November 2023 which saw a 74% increase in cats helped to safety through the service. The team have just received the news that they have won a 'People's Choice' Award in the Smiley Charity Film Awards, for their film 'Mr Biggles & Ava, Together Again' which has been shown across national TV.

Over the last 12 months Refuge4Pets have led a pioneering pilot where they have been attending Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) across Devon and Cornwall. MARAC meetings are where agencies work together to safeguard victim-survivors of domestic abuse. Refuge4Pets role at MARAC is to promote factoring animals into the safety plans for victim-survivors. The team at Refuge4Pets have been working with [SafeLives](#) (a national

		<p>domestic abuse charity) to develop MARAC templates and guidance to include animals ready for a national roll out.</p> <p>In 1997, Paws for Kids/Endeavour founded the UK's first pet fostering service to enable families to keep their pets safe and flee abusive households. Their foster service has grown to cover the Northwest in partnership with Dogs Trust Freedom. Endeavour has seven community projects supporting families in their homes and in temporary accommodation, with 2024 bringing our oldest ever client and pet owner, aged 99.</p> <p>Governance and charity management Priority activity in 2023 was a review of membership and the resulting creation of a new suite of non-voting 'Supporter' categories</p>
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Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Achievements against objectives set	Para 1.41	<p>Current priority objectives (progress against which is summarised above)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the Links Group as a sustainable organisation 2. Deliver one under-grad training course per year in all UK vet schools 3. Deliver 3 funded LVTI days per year alongside partner organisations at different locations across the UK 4. Create a suite of resources and collateral for vet teams, animal welfare teams and a broad range of professionals in touch with victim-survivors of abuse. 5. To set appropriate standards for pet fostering services 6. Establish an overarching and underpinning marketing and communications plan
Performance of fundraising activities against objectives set	Para 1.41	Fundraising plan to be developed in 2024
Investment performance against objectives	Para 1.41	N/A

Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period	Para 1.21	On 31/12/23 The Links Group had a cash balance of £32,995 held in its named bank account. This represented an in year reduction in available funds of £6,418 (balance on 01/01/22, £39,413). However, further sponsorship income of £9,990 is pending, to be received in early 2024.
Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held	Para 1.22	The charity doesn't currently hold any reserves.
Amount of reserves held	Para 1.22	N/A
Reasons for holding zero reserves	Para 1.22	A reserves policy will be developed in 2024
Details of fund materially in deficit	Para 1.24	N/A
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	Para 1.23	The Trustee Board has no concerns with the charity's ability to continue as a going concern

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)	Para 1.47	<p>Sponsorship The Links Group's main income is currently in the form of sponsorship from MSD Animal Health to support charity administration and the delivery of veterinary undergraduate training programmes. In 2023 the charity received £9,990 income from this source with a further commitment of £9,990 to be received.</p> <p>Donations The charity also received an unexpected, one off donation of £1,000 from the Guide Dogs Association</p> <p>Membership fees There were no membership receipts in 2023 as we revised our membership / supporter categories. Future income will be recorded as 'donations'</p>
Investment policy and objectives including any social investment policy adopted	Para 1.46	The charity doesn't hold any investments
A description of the principal risks facing the charity	Para 1.46	A risk register will be developed in 2024

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:		
Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter)	Para 1.25	CIO Constitution adopted on 05/10/21
How is the charity constituted? (e.g unincorporated association, CIO)	Para 1.25	CIO
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Para 1.25	Trustees are recruited through an expression of interest process and then appointed by voting members

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	Para 1.51	<p>All Trustees receive / complete the following induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course Read our Constitution (Governing Document) Read CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3) Read Charity Governance Code Sign Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct Sign Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests Signposted to key policies and procedures (e.g. expenses policy and claim form) More experienced Trustees provide mentorship to those joining the Board
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	Para 1.51	<p>The Trustee Board meets on a regular basis (roughly monthly) to monitor progress and agree actions.</p> <p>Some activity is delegated to sub-committees most notably the Pet Fostering Group who oversee their areas of responsibility and make recommendations to the board. The board retain accountability for this activity and decisions</p>
Relationship with any related parties	Para 1.51	<p>Several charities and corporate organisations are supporters of the Links Group. These include –</p> <p>Charity members/partners who provide pet fostering services</p> <p>Dogs Trust (also provide registered</p>

		address) Cats Protection Refuge for Pets Endeavour Corporate Supporters CVS IVC Vet Partners Partner organisations BVA BSAVA
Other		

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	The Links Group
Other name the charity uses	
Registered charity number	9GHF42TR
Charity's principal address	The Links Group c/o Dogs Trust 17 Wakley Street London EC1V 7RQ

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Description of the assets held in this capacity	N/A
Name and objects of the charity on whose behalf the assets are held and how this falls within the custodian charity's objects	N/A
Details of arrangements for safe custody and segregation of such assets from the charity's own assets	N/A

Additional information (optional)

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

N/A

Exemptions from disclosure

Reason for non-disclosure of key personnel details

N/A

Other optional information



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Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

	
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Full name(s)

Paula Boyden	Mike Elliott
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Position (eg Secretary,
Chair, etc)

Chair	Treasurer
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Date

02/09/2024



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Links Group

1196067

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

1/1/2023


To

12/31/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	1,954	-	-	1,954	-
Sponsorship	9,990	-	-	9,990	-
Membership subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	11,944	-	-	11,944	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	11,944	-	-	11,944	-
A3 Payments					
Admin/Office expenditure	-	-	-	-	-
Insurance	134	-	-	134	-
Website / IT costs	862	-	-	862	-
Marketing, Design, Print & Storage	8,615	-	-	8,615	-
Volunteer Expenses	4,488	-	-	4,488	-
Volunteer Recruitment & Training (inc. Trustees)	55	-	-	55	-
Service Delivery	4,067	-	-	4,067	-
Membership Fees	141	-	-	141	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	18,362	-	-	18,362	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	18,362	-	-	18,362	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 6,418	-	-	- 6,418	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	39,413	-	-	39,413	-
Cash funds this year end	32,995	-	-	32,995	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account	32,995	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	32,995	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Mike Elliott (Treasurer)	9/2/2024	

Boyer

Paula Boyden (Chair)

2/2/2024