

smile

mediation



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Governance Report 2014/15

Welcome to the annual report for Smile Mediation.

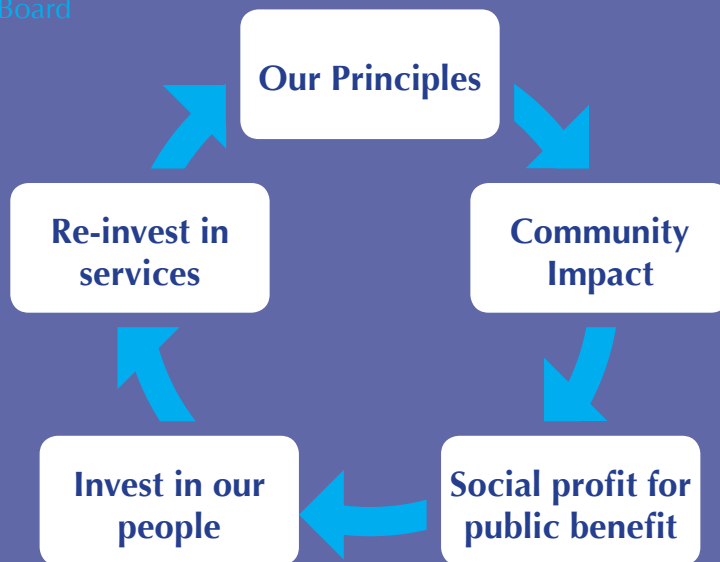
As a charity with strong social values, operating in challenging times, we have looked to improve how we operate to give better services and improve the value for money we give to our partners. We want to ensure that the company grows and proves its worth to those who pay for our services.

As we continue to successfully develop our approach to growth and diversification, the Smile Mediation Board is mindful of its role, and the important role that corporate governance plays in that development. The continued pressures in the economy, among other factors, have served to heighten the ongoing commitment of the Board to good governance and leadership, and the Board's view remains that the right processes and people are in place at Smile to support that development. To that end we are working to deliver our three year plan set out as 'our ambitions'.

Finally, I would like to thank our mediators and staff in contributing to another successful year.



Ian Clark
Chair of Smile Mediation Board



Making it happen	Growing the business	A company to do business with
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Governance• Board Member Skills• Effective measures & feedback• Managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marketing & PR• New Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear service offer• Great services/people• Viable• Value for money

Manager's Report 2014/15:

I'd like to start on a high and celebrate one of our most exciting achievements in 2014/15! Our services in the field of mediation received external recognition of the excellent work we do across the North West – Smile won the Professional Mediators Regional Award (PMA) 2014 for best practice in the North West.



Much of this year has focused on building the foundations for the new staffing structure to ensure Smile is able to respond to ever growing challenges and opportunities. With this in mind the trustees approved a new approach to volunteer recruitment whereby Smile will provide an open recruitment policy for volunteers to enable Smile to 'grow our own' people. This development has occurred as a result of the staff recruitment during 2014/15 which clearly showed that people volunteering with Smile and then applying for paid positions had a much clearer understanding of our purpose and what it means to work in a volunteer led organisation.

A significant development has been the employment of a graduate into a new trainee position – this is a paid role for one year. A comprehensive work plan, including regular mentoring and one to one supervision, has been developed which will ensure that the trainee learns all aspects of the business and can evidence new skills. Whilst there is no guarantee of employment after one year, Smile will support the trainee to find suitable employment in the event that a position does not become vacant.

"After graduating with a degree in Psychology I joined Smile as an office volunteer. Volunteering opened up an opportunity to become a trainee under Smile's new Policy.

The trainee position brought me more than a professional experience. It gave me the amazing opportunity to test my communication skills in difficult conversations, manage a caseload, co-ordinate and manage projects, carry out evaluative work with the volunteer mediators, assist in delivering training and becoming a trained mediator.

I had the privilege of working with a great team of professionals who were willing to share and advise along the way. The traineeship has provided me with the largest professional progression in my career and I am now employed as the co-ordinator of a new hate crime service".

This additional role did mean that the trustees approved a deficit budget at the start on 2014/15 in order to invest in our services. This was a risk; however with careful and prudent budgeting the deficit has been kept to a minimum and the investment will help Smile to grow in the future.

Closely linked to Smile's 'grow our own' policy and the trainee position, Smile has strengthened its working partnership with UCLan to offer a rolling student placement programme. Students will be offered a six week volunteer programme with Smile and two other partner charities (Coldwell and Freshfields) and the intention is to recruit one student to the trainee position in June 2017 providing they successfully complete the volunteer programme over two years.

Governance of Smile is extremely important and the Board of trustees increased to six members during the year. The skills and experience they bring are helping to ensure Smile is fit for purpose. Following a governance review the trustees are working towards a three year plan to deliver our purpose:

'getting people to talk to one another again'.

Our overarching principles are: community impact, social profit for public benefit, investing in our people and re-investing in services. It is our ambition that Smile is seen as a company to do business with and experts in our field.

The theme of our conference this year was how improved communication skills can transform the most challenging situations. Smile shared many mediation tips and techniques with delegates that they can use in everyday situations. A big thank you to our speakers, Catherine Dobson, Joanna Williams, Sam McConnell and David Liddle for contributing to an excellent day.

Last year I reported on a new project working in partnership with Inspire (East Lancashire Substance Misuse Service). This pilot project to offer family mediation and conflict resolution training is being funded for two years by Lloyds Foundation and for one year by East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group through the Social Prescribing Grant. Those families who have worked with our mediators are providing feedback that their relationships are improving and they are better able to talk to each other as a result of mediation.

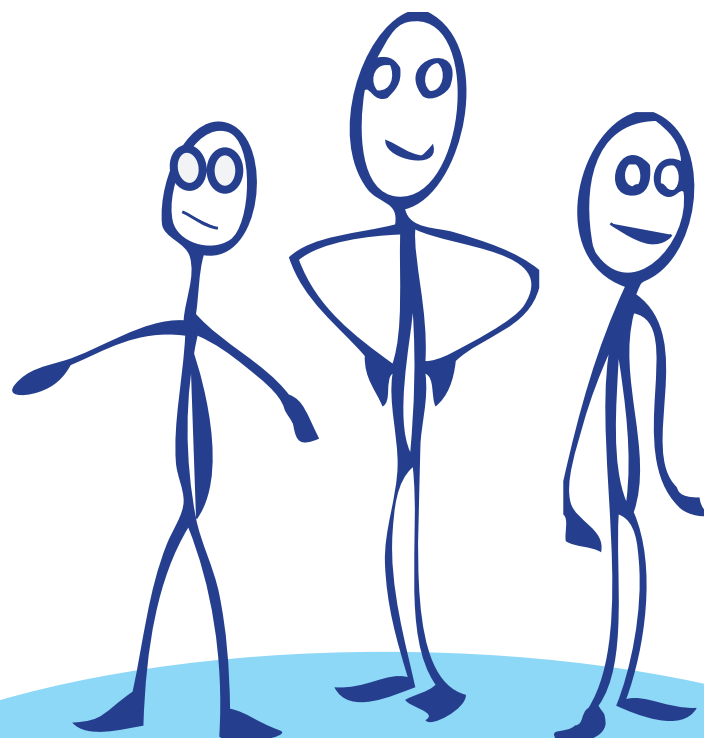
During 2014 Smile started to work with three new partners to develop a support service for victims of hate crime. The partnership included Disability First, Independent Hate Crime Hub and Lancaster and Wyre Hate Crime Partnership. Together we planned and delivered a hate crime roadshow in Fleetwood in March 2015 to raise awareness about the range of services available to support people and to provide more information about what a hate crime is. The funding from the Police Crime Commissioner is to deliver four roadshows in total in different towns across Lancashire. There is scope to develop this partnership further in the future.

It goes without saying that the day to day business has continued; however this is only possible because of the commitment of our volunteers and the staff team whose role it is to help people talk to each other again. Thank you to everyone who supports Smile Mediation.

Karen Ainsworth

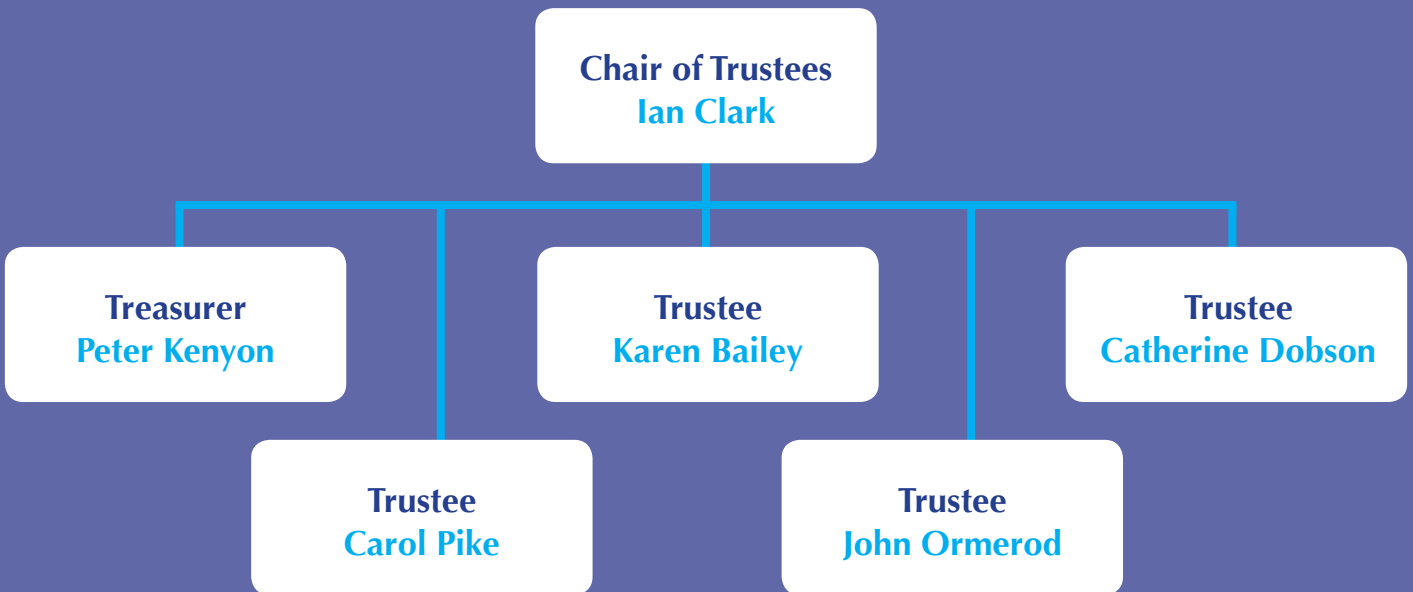
Karen Ainsworth

Mediation Services Manager

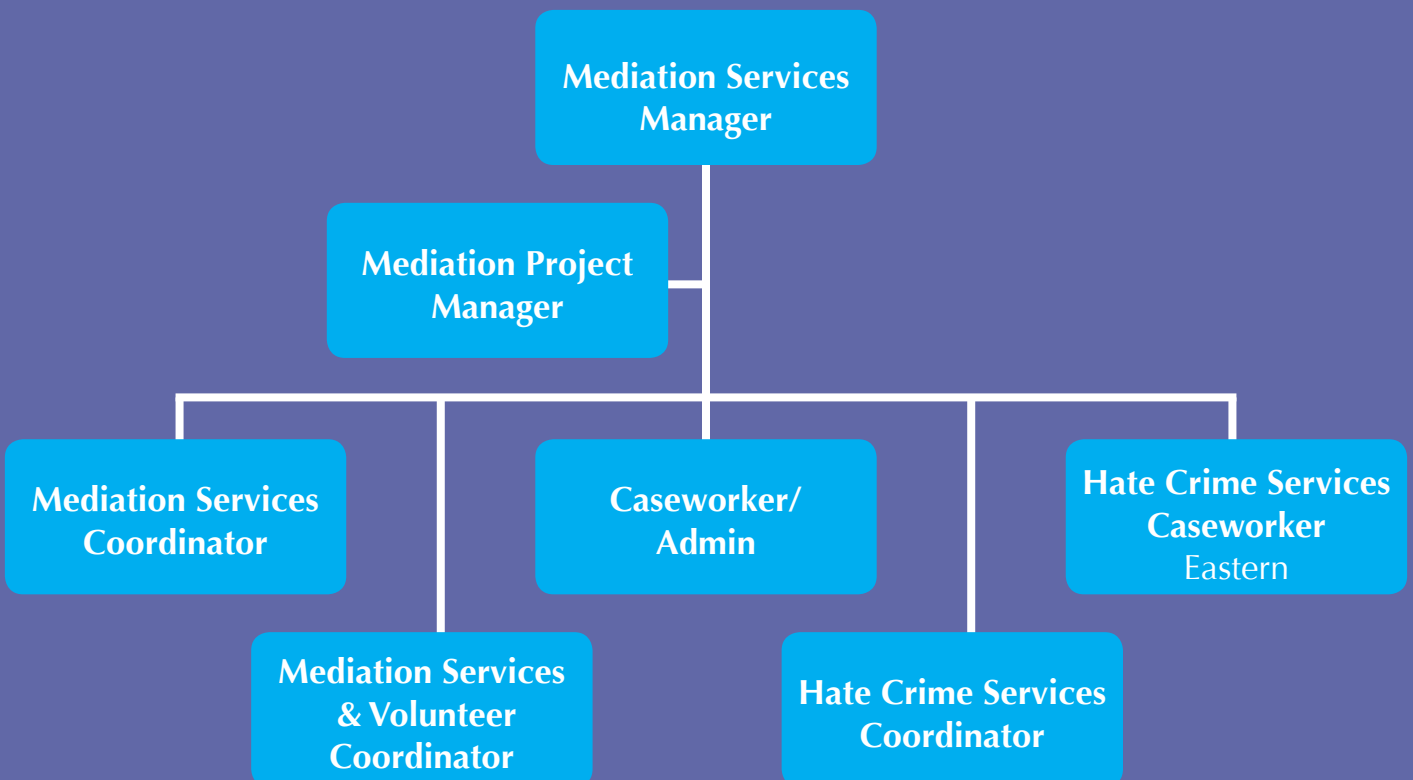


Who's who at Smile – the Team:

Directors:

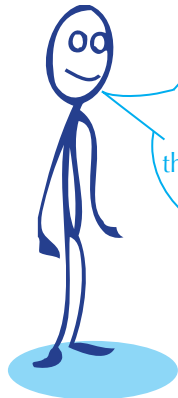


Organisational Chart:



Community Mediation Service:

This year Smile received 191 referrals; of these 151 were for community mediation, 10 family cases, 1 workplace case and 29 initial assessments. All referrals involve at least two people and many involve multiple 'parties' which means that we engage with more than 400 people each year.



'83% of people felt positive about the situation following mediation'

Mediation is a cost effective and long term solution to resolving conflict and disputes. For each referral Smile saves our referring partners two to three working days which means they are able to spend valuable time working on other priorities. More than 80% of cases remain closed following mediation.

Every referral that is made to Smile results in a mediated conversation. Mediation is 'free' to enter and 'free' to leave and it is up to the people involved in the dispute whether or not to take part in the face to face mediation process. A conversation that is mediated helps people to think differently about the conflict or dispute they are involved in. The most common comment we receive from people is:

'no one has ever listened to me before...'



'98% of people would recommend Smile's mediation service'



'92% of people are satisfied with the service'

Case Study:

A dispute lasting over one year was resolved following a face to face mediation which took just two hours...

J and A used to be close friends. They lived in adjoining first floor flats and soon after J moved in A befriended her as she was new to the area. Fast forward two years when the friendship broke down when J and her partner split up.

J believed that A was being supportive of her ex-partner and taking his side. She witnessed A and her partner hugging and although she knew they did not have a close personal relationship this just reinforced her belief that A was taking his side. Soon after the ex-partner left the area; however in the meantime J could not bring herself to speak to A and their friendship ceased. J confided in other neighbours, as did A. Neither spoke directly to the other person to check out whether the stories were true.

Over a period of one year A reported J to the landlord for excessive noise and A retaliated by reporting J for verbal abuse after a confrontation on the street. The Housing Officer became involved in the dispute and eventually suggested mediation to A and J as a way of stopping the dispute from escalating further. Both reluctantly agreed to speak to the mediators.

A face to face meeting took place and as soon as A spoke after listening to J she apologised for the misunderstanding that occurred during the time J was splitting up from her partner. The subsequent reports of noise and verbal abuse had arisen because they both believed that the other person was out to cause trouble.

J and A made an agreement to speak and acknowledge each other when they saw each other on the street and although they weren't ready to rekindle their friendship they accepted that not speaking directly to each other had made matters much worse. Both said 'this is really silly' and they wished they had been able to sort it out without mediation but their stubbornness was getting in the way. Both J and A said they would talk to each other rather than report issues to the landlord in the future.

Smile's Mediation Conference:

This year our conference offered people an opportunity to borrow skills and techniques used in mediation and apply them to everyday situations at home, with friends and in the workplace. Our speakers Catherine Dobson and Joanna Williams presented ideas and information about the power of conversation, how to carry out effective consultation and the importance of effective listening skills.

David Liddle, CEO of TCM Group gave a heart wrenching talk about the power of mediation in the most extreme circumstances, including mediating between two families following the death of a daughter by dangerous driving. Using the mediation process David was able to facilitate a difficult conversation which helped all those affected by the accident to move on.

Smile also shared the results of a pilot project which confirmed that using mediation approaches in an initial assessment of low risk anti-social behaviour situations reduces the time it takes to resolve the issue and increases the chances of resolving the problem at the initial point of contact.



Case Study:

Mary reported she was having problems with her neighbour’s daughter and her friends. Over a period of one year they regularly gathered in the garden after school and at weekends to play on the trampoline. More and more children gathered in the garden when mum was out at work and gradually local boys started to join in too. They started to shout and swear at Mary when she asked them to quieten down and her dividing fence was damaged when the children climbed over. She became frightened of confronting the children as the abuse got worse. Mary reported her neighbour to the landlord.

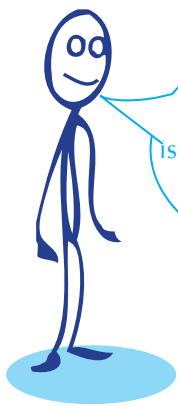
The Housing Officer encouraged them to consider mediation to ensure they both fully understood the other person’s point of view. Both women agreed and it became clear during the face to face meeting that Mary’s neighbour did not fully appreciate the effect that the children’s behaviour was having on her. She believed that Mary was exaggerating the situation and making it seem much worse than it really was; however when she listened to Mary describe the impact on her health and how she had become imprisoned in her own home she apologised for the distress that had been caused. Without mediation the two women would not have reached the level of understanding and Mary would have continued to report problems to the Housing Officer rather than speaking directly to her neighbour.

Our Volunteers:

I love your organisation. You know I do. Everyone is friendly and welcoming; understanding if I can't make a date I said I could before. I love the amount of training you offer and the variety of topics this is on. I am very much looking forward to the Family Mediation and Train the Trainer sessions as I would love to get involved further. One thing which I really like and am impressed by with SMILE is the fact that as a part time volunteer I feel I am part of the organisation. That's not easy to achieve for organisations and you should be really proud of that.'

Volunteering is voluntary. As a volunteer led service Smile invests heavily in our volunteers by providing accredited mediation skills training, ongoing support and supervision and refresher training. We also consult our volunteers and involve them in service developments to ensure they feel valued and part of the Smile team. During the early part of 2015 our trainee carried out a comprehensive and detailed consultation exercise with our mediators to find out what we do well, what could be better and their thoughts and ideas for the future.

The feedback from volunteers was overwhelmingly positive toward Smile Mediation as a service. However, careful analysis has allowed us to discover points on which we can improve the service provided to our volunteers. 75% of the mediators returned their questionnaires and therefore it provides us with a representative and valid view of volunteer thoughts and feelings. Mediators were appreciative of the focus groups and felt they were listened to and enjoyed having the chance to put their ideas forward for helping improve the service.



'I am very happy to be a volunteer at Smile. Smile is well organised and an excellent organisation. I am proud to be part of Smile.'

In order to maintain the numbers of trained mediators necessary to deliver our services Smile offers annual accredited mediation skills training approved by the College of Mediators. This year we trained twelve new people and six of them are still regularly volunteering for Smile.

In addition to volunteer mediators Smile regularly receives requests for office volunteering. Volunteering can help people to improve their confidence and get them work ready when they have been unemployed for a period of time. The trustees approved a new Volunteer Recruitment Policy which formalises Smile's 'grow our own' approach to recruiting staff.

Case Study:

Before I was made redundant I was a senior HR Manager in the NHS. Redundancy occurred when I was on maternity leave so I decided to spend some time caring for my daughter.

After 18 months I knew it was time to return to work but I had lost my confidence and couldn't begin to imagine how I would be able to get up and ready for a paid job; I felt overwhelmed.

When I started my volunteer role with Smile Mediation I was nervous; however by the second day I knew I was doing the right thing. I started to look forward to going to work. The whole experience from getting ready in the morning, giving something back and doing something for myself gave me a real sense of purpose. It was just what I needed to help me start applying for paid work – after two months I'm back in work and much of it is down to volunteering with Smile.

There4u Family Mediation Project:

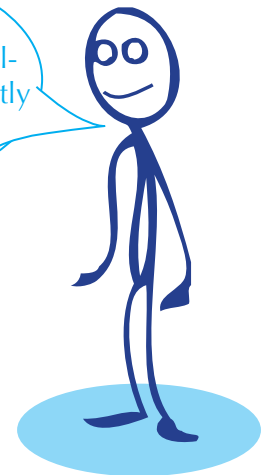
"I cannot emphasise enough how helpful your visits have been; your sensitive, patient, professional manner has encouraged us to move forward"

This project provides family mediation for families where someone is accessing an Inspire service. Working in partnership with Inspire (East Lancashire substance misuse service) Smile is providing conflict resolution training and mediation to assess the impact of family mediation in the context of drug and alcohol misuse.

Despite a slow start the There4u family mediation project started to pick up during the year and due to a successful funding application to the East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group Social Prescribing fund we were able to offer a further ten mediation referrals to the Inspire team.

The initial conversation with individuals is equally as important as subsequent face to face meetings between family members; however some family members are not ready to meet face to face to have those much needed (but not wanted) conversations with each other. We recognise this and whilst families are encouraged to meet together it must be voluntary. Those referrals where families have started to talk to each other, are engaging well and are reporting positive impacts on their relationships. Family conflict can have a significant effect on health and well being.

'74% of people said their health and well-being improved significantly following mediation'



Case Study:

The couple, R and J, are married. Communication between them broke down as a result of R's drinking behaviour and J struggled to understand R's perspective. After a 'flare up,' R was asked to move out of the house. They agreed to mediation and the couple are now talking to each other again:

'we are getting along really well now and we are moving forward'



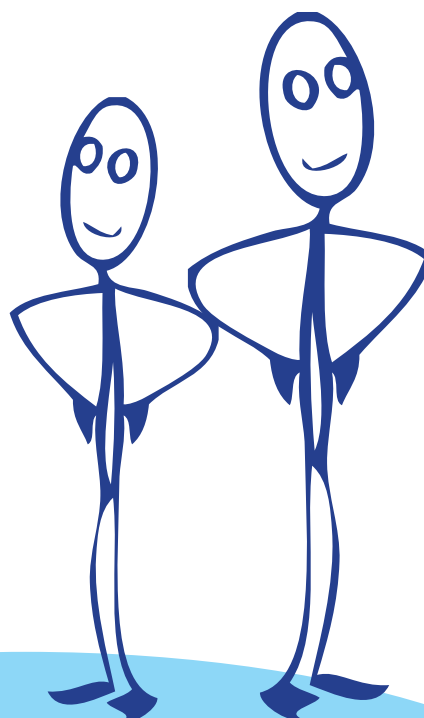
East Lancashire
Clinical Commissioning Group

inspire

East Lancashire Integrated Substance Misuse Service

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Financial Matters:

The Board of trustees approved a deficit budget to enable Smile to begin to deliver the three year plan. Having established the right structure for this to happen, further investment in our people began and a Trainee was appointed in October 2014. The final outturn did show a deficit, however this was significantly less than forecast.

	2015	2014
	£	£
INCOME:		
Mediation Service Contracts	80,378	95,090
Grant Funding	18,570	9,350
Interest receivable	-	3
Travelling income	2,637	4,914
	101,585	109,357
EXPENDITURE:		
Costs of delivering services	2,623	1,543
Rents and rates	426	537
Salaries	75,721	62,982
Sessional Labour	500	2,004
Travelling expenses	2,234	4,386
Printing, postage and stationery	3,276	3,263
Repairs and maintenance	1,003	2,120
Training and conference expenses	5,834	6,475
Accountancy	792	984
Legal and professional	2,976	3,723
Insurances	1,100	1,020
Telephone and fax	1,435	1,366
Subscriptions	390	653
Heat, light and power	995	1,371
Equipment depreciation	2,749	3,028
Sundry expenses	2,129	1,514
	104,183	96,969
SURPLUS (deficit) FOR THE YEAR:	(2,598)	12,388

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the following organisations and their staff for their support during 2014/15:

- Accent Foundation
- Ainsworth's Chartered Accountants
- Be Computing
- Blackburn College
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Burnley Borough Council
- Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale CVS
- Calico
- Canwe Solutions CIC
- College of Mediators
- Disability First
- East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Great Places
- Green Vale Homes
- Hyndburn Homes
- Hyndburn & Ribble Valley CVS
- Inspire
- Lancashire County Council
- Lloyds Foundation
- Mosscare
- Pendle Borough Council
- Pennine Housing 2000
- Ribble Valley Homes
- Rossendale Borough Council
- Southway Housing
- Twin Valley Homes
- UCLan (Preston University)
- Young Lancashire
- Your Housing



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Getting people to talk to one another again

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