

# ANNUAL REPORT

NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORKS  
2022/23





# CONTENTS

- Pg 4-5 Introduction
- Pg 6-7 Tree Planting
- Pg 8-11 Staff Wellbeing Fund
- Pg 12-13 Bowel Screening
- Pg 14-17 ihub & Big Plan
- Pg 18-19 Cake Decorating
- Pg 20-21 The Helix Gathering
- Pg 22-23 Digital Co-ordinator
- Pg 24 Quality Street Returns
- Pg 25 ILF Grant Success
- Pg 26-27 Equalities & Human Rights
- Pg 28-29 Finances

# INTRODUCTION

**As we enter our third decade of facilitating peer support services, I am aware of the impetus on organisations like Neighbourhood Networks to be flexible, innovative and bring “added value”.**

We are operating in increasingly financially challenging times with the third sector under pressure to bring more to the table for the same. It can be a challenge but at the same time we have a lot to reflect on across the organisation of the “added value” that our members, staff and trustees make in each other’s lives, to the communities they live in and the organisations they work or volunteer in.

We have peppered this year’s annual report with stories about bringing something extra to the table. In Neighbourhood Networks we value contribution and when a climate is created where this is encouraged and celebrated, we will always achieve more than we set out to do.

**“This year’s report creates an opportunity to reflect on our work and one of our core values: We can all be involved in making where we live, work or socialise a better place.”**

We hope that our report is testament to making things better through the value of our own contribution and through the resources and capacities we have tapped into over the year to keep things moving forward. We are grateful and appreciate



the difference this makes and for the influence from all our stakeholders: members, Trustees, staff and funders.

It’s inspiring to see the impact this brings, like our new Chair of the Board, Paul McGinley, stepping into his new role, giving of his time, and taking up training opportunities through ACOSVO with our Vice Chair Neil Park. We see it in the growth in confidence of members of the new independent networks currently being developed. Members delivering the Active, Connected and Included Programme in communities across Scotland bring the added value of their skills and experience and we are richer for it.

We have numerous examples of personal contribution including the day-to-day acts of peer support that take place across networks, too many to reference in this report. We want to acknowledge the difference this makes and the added value it brings and thank everyone for continuing to give of themselves.

**“We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in our hands to make a difference.”**  
**Nelson Mandela**

Heather Calvo – Chief Executive Officer





# TREE PLANTING

NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORKS – LIVING LEGACY

**On Saturday the 2nd April members from different networks gathered together in Seafar Woods in Cumbernauld to help mark Neighbourhood Networks 20th birthday celebrations.**

Neighbourhood Networks have a long standing relationship with TCV and we approached them to see if we could take part in any conservation work to help in the local community. Paul from TCV was really pleased that members and staff from Neighbourhood Networks wanted to donate their time to give something back. This is where the plan of Neighbourhood Networks living legacy was born.

Members came together with shovels in hand and planted just over 250 trees. As this was thirsty work members enjoyed taking regular breaks to top up on energy having a cup of tea and enjoying some sandwiches and of course a chocolate biscuit.

This was a fantastic day which brought people together as well as giving something back to the environment.

**“Neighbourhood Networks would like to say a massive thank you to Paul Barclay from TCV Scotland and Cumbernauld Living Landscape for making it all happen.”**

Since the planting, members from local networks have enjoyed a visit to Seafar Woods to see the trees grow. Members have said it has been great to see their hard work paying off and how quickly the trees grow.

Neighbourhood Networks have planted a living legacy which people will be able to enjoy for hundreds of years to come!



# STAFF WELLBEING FUND

**Neighbourhood Networks submitted a bid to Inspiring Scotland for the Staff Wellbeing Fund where we were awarded £9,412.**



We carried out a wellbeing survey across all the staff within Neighbourhood Networks to gauge what staff would like to see to help with health and wellbeing. From the results of the staff survey a programme of events was put together.

In January 2023 we launched the Calm app across the whole organisation. Since launching the Calm app it has been greatly received across the organisation as every member of staff received access to a full membership and this also included 5 full memberships which they could gift to families and friends.

A lot of staff have reached out to say this has been a lifesaver to be able to gift to friends and family as some have been struggling with mental health. Staff have been using the Calm app on a regular basis for themselves as there is a lot of meditations, stories, and calming music which they can listen to at any time. The app also has built in features to help manage stress in the workplace. The App has an anonymous reporting tool to show what the most popular themes are e.g. stress at home, stress at work, anxiety and from this as an organisation we can check, react to these themes as we are getting an understanding of what is having an impact on staff across the organisation.

We are also using the app to share with the members of the organisation by running a digital wellbeing session open to all staff and members.

In February 2023 we held a wellbeing retreat which was for all staff in the organisation to bring them all together in the one place where we enjoyed some group cooking, mindfulness walks, treasure hunt, quiz and silent disco. Prior to going away we formed sub-groups to help plan the event e.g. a food group, activities group. This was great to bring staff onboard from across the organisation to help with the planning and take on some responsibility and share skills through peer support. The overnight wellbeing retreat was such an amazing experience for everyone.

Due to Covid some staff had never met in person before, so this was a special occasion to bring the whole organisation together. The event itself was brilliant and staff did not want to leave the next day. Some staff who have family commitments were unable to come along to the overnight so to ensure they did not miss out the rest of the wellbeing activities were planned so they were able to attend as we held these during work time to ensure it was accessible to all.

In March 2023 we again planned an activity for the whole organisation where we all got together to play some mini golf, axe throwing and shuffleboard. Afterwards we all went to a buffet restaurant to enjoy a wide variety of food. Due to an underspend in the above activities we were able to expand more on Wellbeing activities. We were able to book Mrs Brain Trainer who delivered a session on mindset and confidence within yourself - this was for the whole organisation.

We have bought wellbeing 'fidget toys' for the office which are used to help maintain concentration. We were also able to give each manager in the organisation a budget to manage for their team to do a local wellbeing activity within their local community so we were able to give back

to local communities and the whole organisation was able to benefit from this also; some of the activities were wellbeing days, attending a yoga class followed by a healthy lunch, cruise on Loch Lomond, escape room, alpaca trek, float tank, reiki, and bowling.

## SOME QUOTES FROM STAFF:

**"I am only new to this organisation and I have never worked anywhere where they take time to promote staff getting to know each other and focus on wellbeing, it's really refreshing."**

**"I honestly cannot thank you enough, Covid has been hard for us all, my mental health was poor but coming together with colleagues and forming bonds, that's priceless."**

**"I just love my job; you see us and appreciate what we do and to have wellbeing top of the agenda that's just amazing."**

**"Cost of living crisis has been hard; this has allowed me time and to try things I would never be able to afford."**

The funding has been such a boost to Neighbourhood Networks. For the past 3 years we have been fire-fighting as a third sector organisation. During Covid as we remained fully operational throughout the whole pandemic, staff went over and above their day job to help members and then coming out of Covid we were faced with fuel poverty and cost of living crisis both of which has a significant impact on both staff and members.

The fund has really helped to boost moral especially as times have been tough, it has enabled us to say thank you to our staff in a meaningful way by bringing them together.





It has given staff a boost in confidence as they are now volunteering to do extra things to help both staff and members, e.g. staff are running digital coffee/cake catch ups so they can still stay connected on a regular basis, another member of staff is developing LGBTQ+ training sessions for staff as it was a prominent topic in discussions.

By bringing staff together in a safe space and it not being work related has allowed them to find confidence in themselves and others which is now spilling over into their work life and they are bringing more to the organisation and sharing their skills. The fund has been flexible to meet the wellbeing needs as we were able to try different things which were able to be fully implemented across the organisation.

The funding has had a significant impact on staff retention also as all of the new recruits that we have taken on have managed to benefit from all aspects of the funding and shared that they have never had opportunities like this.

**"It's amazing when an employer invests in staff and we feel seen and valued'. For long standing staff they have also echoed the same, that they have formed bonds, feel even more passionate about their work and it has also helped to promote others sharing their skills."**

This has been a fantastic opportunity for Neighbourhood Networks and we would like to say thank you. Without this, staffs' moods would not be lifted, and the pressures that we are all facing would seem that bit heavier.





# BOWEL SCREENING

NORTH LANARKSHIRE NHS BOWEL SCREENING WEBSITE SUPPORT

**During 2022, the NHS Health Improvement Practitioner for the Bellshill area in North Lanarkshire contacted our local networks to ask if we would be willing to be part of a consultation to improve information about bowel screening on the NHS website.**

This work was to help improve the take up of health screening amongst people with a learning disability, as this has been found to be below the general population. The work was initially for the NHS Lothian area, however the plan was that once developed it would then be accessible for people in Lanarkshire too.

The Health Improvement Practitioner met with some of our North Lanarkshire members at their Thursday night group and spoke of the plan. The group were very happy to help and other meetings followed.

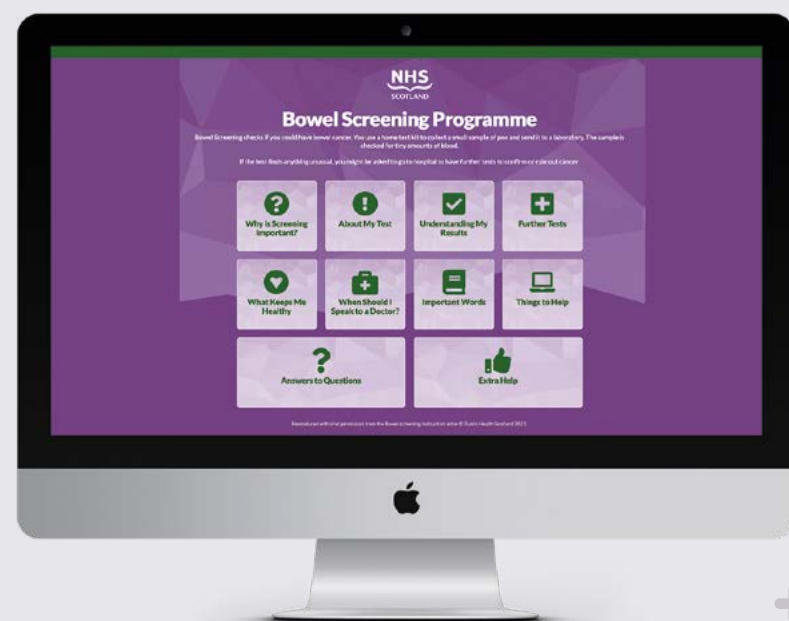
The mock website was shown and feedback was requested. Some people were able to give their thoughts then and there and others took their time and completed questionnaires with support from Neighbourhood Networks staff.

Suggestions ranged from navigation needing to be smoother, font to be bigger, phone numbers on the main page in case you need to speak with someone. The videos were very helpful and explained what to expect. People

wanted it made clear from the beginning that they can take someone with them to the appointment. It was also recognised that there is a Learning Disability Hospital liaison nurse across the 3 Lanarkshire sites, and this will need to be front and centre on the Lanarkshire screening website, as many people did not know of this service.

Once all the information was collated the final mock website was reviewed again. People were pleased that their ideas and suggestions were taken on board and the website flowed more easily.

**“We are happy to report that the new updated and more accessible website was launched in May this year. Many thanks to all the members from the North Lanarkshire networks whose advice and input made this possible.”**



# ihub & The Big Plan

NEW MODELS FOR LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE – HEALTH IMPROVEMENT SCOTLAND

**“The Same As You” government report stated the need for a wholesale shift in thinking and approach to services for people with learning disabilities.**

“The Keys to Life” government report recognised that further work was required to reach the aspirations of a truly person-centred network of service provision and opportunities.

The Scottish Government commissioned Health Improvement Scotland via the “ihub” to facilitate a 2.5-year programme from October 2020 to March 2023 to look at the redesign of Day Services for People with Learning Disabilities. Neighbourhood Networks was asked by Falkirk Council to be their Third Sector Partner in this work.

## Over the 2.5 years sessions were facilitated to:

- gather and provide insights into different approaches to review and design of services.
- develop and test tools to support services to understand the needs of supported people, carers to inform future service design.
- support exploration and define the issues in a local context.
- provide opportunities to meet and learn from peer teams throughout Scotland.
- share learning from different models of day support.
- provide access to team coaching support.
- host a space to share innovation, and
- influence national organisations.

## Here are some links to the reports of Phase 1 and 2 of this process.

[Click Here For More Information On Phase 1](#)

[Click Here For More Information On Phase 2](#)

This was a significant commitment of Neighbourhood Networks but over the time frame we had lots of information to both share and learn from the process that will inform and influence policy and practice both internally and externally going forward.

**“The engagement with this work also provided an invaluable opportunity to raise the profile of the organisation and the model of peer support that Neighbourhood Networks develops.”**

One key piece of learning for example was the use of tools such as the PDSA Model to learn and reflect on work. We used this tool in Neighbourhood Networks to influence the delivery of a Big Plan Exercise in Falkirk. This was part of the final phase of the collaborative work we carried out with the local authority.

**Here is a link to the Easy Read report of the final phase of the work.**

[Click Here For More Information On Phase 3](#)

## Big Planning

Neighbourhood Networks had invested some organisational capacity in this training staff in Big Plan Facilitation a number of years ago through the Thistle Foundation. As part of the final phase of the collaborative, we used and shared these skills to facilitate a Big Plan Process for a group of 6 young people and their families who lived in the Falkirk Area.

We hoped that this process would have individual and positive outcomes for this group of young people in their final year of high school and their families. We also hoped that the process would help to glean valuable insights with the potential to inform and influence Learning Disability Strategy, especially around the transition experience of young people.

## What is a Big Plan?

A Big Plan brings a group of young people and their families and network of support together to plan for the future in a series of sessions. Each family was assigned a facilitator and over 7 sessions we worked on gathering information for each young person which focused on the following themes.

- Who am I?
- What are my gifts?
- What are my dreams?
- What’s in my community?
- Where and how can I use my skills and pursue my interests?



**AT THE START OF EACH SESSION, WE REMINDED OURSELVES OF THE QUESTION?**

**“What would it take for this man or woman to have an interesting, fulfilling life where they can get to know people who would become their friends and are able to make a contribution to the community.”**

We also had some speakers come along to share information about resources and opportunities to give people other tangible ideas and inspiration. This led to each young person developing their own action plan to develop positive destinations for leaving school.

At every stage of the process the young people and their families shared information with each other with the help of the group facilitators. This led to a positive collaborative process. The combination of all the families knowledge with the input of some locally employed staff was a powerful force for harnessing the potential of young people to lead active and included lives.

At the end of the process each young person and their family left with a focused plan for leaving school. There was a positive energy and more optimism for the future at the end of the sessions.



In terms of Strategy the process also confirmed the need for local community hubs where all young people could access meaningful activities. These hubs need to work for everyone with a focus on full accessibility, particularly for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The process also reinforced the importance of employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

We learned a lot about the Big Plan process as well as the hopes and aspirations for this group of young people leaving school. The legacy of this work within Neighbourhood Networks is significant as well as for our colleagues Falkirk Council who also took part and contributed to this process.

We also gained a few new members to the local network as some participants opted to sign up to join networks. We worked in collaboration with this process, and we want to acknowledge the commitment and input of colleagues from Falkirk HSCP, Dates and Mates Falkirk , ILF Scotland and The Fun Music Factory. Thank you for sharing and contributing to this learning opportunity.





# CAKE DECORATING

**As part of the organisation's 20-year anniversary celebrations, we decided to bring out the creative talents of our members and staff and host a festive online cake decorating event.**

The event was a huge success, with over 70 members and staff submitting photographs of their creative and vibrant cake masterpieces. All the cakes looked delicious and the judges had a tough task of choosing the winners.

Our East Renfrewshire networks enjoyed participating in this event so much that we decided to seek funding to learn how to bake and decorate cakes.

**"We were awarded a grant from the East Renfrewshire Youth Participatory Budget and in November 2022, we collaborated with The Young Enterprise Academy who kindly provided us with kitchen space to host the sessions."**

Members learned how to make a range of tasty cakes, including brownies, scones and cupcakes. The final session was a cake decorating session, where members presented their cakes to a panel of judges at a public online event. We invited members and staff from across the organisation to also take part in this event and submit photographs of cakes that they decorated.



**"Once again, the event was a huge success with over 30 wonderfully decorated cakes submitted."**

Following on from this, The East Renfrewshire networks then wanted to learn how to cook healthy meals, on a budget, as well as bake cakes. We were delighted to be awarded funding from The East Renfrewshire Council Humanitarian Food Fund to run a kitchen project consisting of 12 cooking sessions commencing in 2023.



# THE HELIX GATHERING



**The idea of The Helix Event was to bring all of our members together to celebrate, in person, 20 years of Neighbourhood Networks.**

This was the first big event bringing people together since before the Covid pandemic. The Helix Park was chosen as the venue as it was central to all of our networks which range from North Ayrshire in the West to East Lothian in the East.

The event was kindly funded as part of our Big Lottery Awards for All grant, which supported us to put on a large scale event as well as provide food and refreshments for over 200 of our members. We also benefited from a professional sound production team for the event and managed to keep costs lower by working with Falkirk Council to share the facilities they had booked for earlier the same week.

**"Members and staff had an opportunity to come into the venue and catch up with friends old and new. They were able to try their luck for raffle prizes and tombola and we officially celebrated Neighbourhood Networks 20th Birthday with a non alcoholic toast and birthday cake."**

It was then time for our flash mob dance team to make their surprise appearance. The team had been practicing online for several weeks and this was their opportunity to showcase their skills by dancing to 'Shut Up and Dance With Me' by Walk the Moon.

The highlight of the day then commenced when members from all different networks participated in the talent show. Our staff team even made a surprise appearance with a dance rendition of 'YMCA' which got the crowd going. The party then continued when members made their journeys back to their own local communities with some singing on the bus!

# DIGITAL CO-ORDINATOR

**Last year Neighbourhood Networks recruited a digital co-ordinator to help members work on their digital skills to help them build up their confidence and be better connected to others which helps to promote independence and wellbeing.**

The Digital Co-ordinator started working with a focus group in Falkirk to gather baseline data on where members were at the start of their Digital Journey, what they would like to learn and measuring their progress.

Members expressed an interest in learning how to use a smart phone and get access to Zoom on their mobile devices so they could join in with Neighbourhood Networks digital activities.

**“Some members were able to get an EasyTone smart phone through the Neighbourhood Networks tech fund whilst other members used their own digital devices.”**

This allowed members to learn the basic skills first. Through working with members, the Digital Co-ordinator was able to produce tailor-made Easy Read guides for each individual. The group tested out the Easy Read guides and gave feedback each week so changes could be made. It was found members best responded to colour when using the phone for example ‘Red’ means to hang up and ‘Green’ is to answer when making a phone call.



Through weekly sessions, working through the Easy Read guides and encouragement from Community Living Worker members have been able to continuously improve on their digital skills and learn new ones. Members have now learned the use of their camera phone and enjoy being able to take pictures and share with the rest the members, they have learned how to video call, and access digital activities through zoom.

**“The Digital Co-ordinator also works on running Internet Safety sessions making sure that members have all the knowledge and tools they need to keep themselves safe when using the internet.”**

The Digital Co-ordinator also runs drop in sessions every few weeks to allow members to pop on and ask any digital questions, this has been great as members have been independently asking questions to help them with their Digital journey which shows they are growing in confidence.

The Digital Co-ordinator will continue to work with members from across the different networks promoting digital inclusion, working on what members want to learn and continuing to make the digital world more accessible for all.



# QUALITY STREET RETURNS!

**On Saturday 6th August, we held our first in-person Quality Street meeting since the lock down in 2020 and over 50 members and staff attended.**

## THE THEME WAS 'POLITICS AND PETS'.

Members coordinated and facilitated the meeting in various ways by collaborating in a working group to plan the day, sharing information to attendees of organisations they've received support from, delivering presentations about their lives and sharing their experiences and inviting guest speakers to talk about Human Rights.

Our guest speakers who came along on the day were Cornell Hanxomphou from the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland discussing the importance of the right to a healthy environment, and making sure this right is accessible for everyone.

**"James Macdonald and his pawed helper from Therapet also came along to introduce the work Therapet do."**

We also heard from several of our members, including on the importance of animals and pets in their lives, as well as a board report from Non-Member Trustee Pam, and Member-Trustees William and Paul.

We also welcomed a new Member Trustee, Kallum, at the meeting after he was voted in by all members across the organisation.



# ILF GRANT SUCCESS



**Ryan is a member from the Cumbernauld network in North Lanarkshire. Ryan was successful in getting an ILF grant where he was awarded £1100 and he is even more excited as he has some money still to spend.**

With his award Ryan chose to get a gaming laptop, Warhammer starter box, accessories, painting tools, carry case and external laptop storage.

Ryan is going to college to study Introduction into Computing and Digital Media where he will also get to work on coding; Ryan also has a keen interest in cyber security which he is looking forward to studying more. Ryan loves to play games online and as he has applied to go to college this year he felt this would be a great opportunity for him to use his new laptop for gaming and his studies.

Ryan also has a keen interest in learning about Warhammer so wanted to take this opportunity to learn something new. Speaking to Ryan he said

**"I have been able to do a lot more with Warhammer; I go to the shop now and I get a chance to speak to people who have a similar interest, it is helping me to build confidence and meet new people in my local community. Before I received the ILF grant I didn't leave the house but now I have gained confidence and I am getting out I feel great, it has really made a difference."**

We asked Ryan if he had heard of ILF grants before and he said that he had never heard of it until Neighbourhood Networks introduced him to it.  
**Ryan wanted to share...**

**"If people don't use ILF funding it is just a waste of money, it is brilliant, it has been a life saver for me personally, it has really helped me to gain confidence and I have the equipment I need to complete my college studies, I can't wait to get started."**



# EQUALITIES & HUMAN RIGHTS



**Last years annual report mentioned that we had been successful with a three year funding bid with Inspiring Scotland and the Equalities and Human Rights Fund. At that stage our projects were just getting going but now they have been underway for over a year.**



In Stirling, the fund has supported us to develop a new network supporting people with learning disabilities and we had a network launch event in July 2022 at the newly opened Bannockburn Hub.

**“As the new network continues to develop we have been supporting members to develop their digital skills and to get out and about more. The Digital Co-Ordinator met with 3 Stirling members to gather some baseline data.”**

One member in particular had a good understanding of Digital but was struggling to navigate their laptop. The member has cerebral palsy and struggles with accessible equipment to access digital. The Digital Co-Ordinator spent some time with the member to adjust settings on their computer to help make it more accessible to the member's needs.

Our Member Involvement team carried out human rights information sessions across our networks. A programme of photography workshops with a human rights approach also took place digitally.

The sessions ran over 6 sessions providing an opportunity for members to reflect on their Human Rights and express this through different themed photography.

We agreed with Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership that we will work with them to develop an Independent Peer Support Network within the partnership area. This will provide opportunity for marginalised people to come together. This network will be a stepping stone from our two current supported networks in Midlothian, supporting members towards a more independent life for up to 12 individuals who for various reasons require some additional support



# OUR FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES TO 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023

A year of consolidation followed our previous two years of rapid growth. We started the year with 37 networks and ended with the addition of an independent network in North Lanarkshire, the final step in our members journey with Neighbourhood Networks.

The independent network in North Lanarkshire was setup as a pilot Network and it has been so successful we are now exploring the potential to roll it out in other local authority areas. We continue to support over 400 members in our Networks and, when their outcomes are achieved and their independent lives begin, they can share their skills through the Independent Networks.

Income increased by 24% to £1,435k (2022 - £1,151k) and expenditure by 28% to £1,401k (2021 - £1,087k), finishing the year with a surplus of £34k and reserves of £559k, of which £546k is unrestricted.

Our total income in 2022/23 was £1.435 million. Most of our income is Service Contracts with local authorities including North & South Lanarkshire, East & Midlothian, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, and North Ayrshire. All our staff and members benefited from grants awarded by Inspiring Scotland from their Equalities & Human Rights Fund and Workforce Wellbeing Fund for Adult Social Care. Local grants were also secured from East Renfrewshire YPB and Glasgow City Council Wellbeing. We also received a second Scottish Government Adult Social Care Pay Uplift.

## OUR EXPENDITURE

2% Audit & Governance

3% IT & Comms

6% Other

4% Property Costs

85% Staff Costs



**“Our total spend in 2022/23 was £1.401 million. We were delighted to pass on the Scottish Government Adult Social Care Uplift to our dedicated staff who are our biggest asset and account for 85% of our total spend.”**

Our property and other costs included rent, utilities, administration, printing, subscriptions, project costs, and equated to 10% of our overall spend. We continued to invest in our digital programme with the recruitment of our Digital Co-Ordinator who has a remit to support members at risk of digital exclusion, and we invested in equipment and training to enhance our Hybrid Meetings experience.

## OUR INCOME

7% Grant Income

1% Other

92% Service Contracts



**THANK  
YOU!**





Neighbourhood  
**Networks**

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