



Enabling Greater Independence



ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022

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Values

Impartial

Our support and guidance will be objective and fit for purpose.

Open

We reach out to those that need us.

Together

We are inclusive and value strong relationships.

Friendly

We treat people with respect and in a friendly manner.

Empathetic

We will listen to develop our understanding.

Who are we?

We are a charity based in Leeds providing impartial assessments and advice to people with a disability or long term condition on equipment and practical aspects of daily living, so they can live more independently.

Vision

William Merritt Centre provides support and guidance on daily living for older people, disabled people of all ages and those with long-term condition to reach their full potential, reducing barriers and enabling greater independence.

Mission

Our mission is to empower older people, disabled people of all ages and those with long-term condition to maximise their independence through impartial advice, information and clinical assessments on daily living aids and driving.

Chairperson's Report

We entered this administrative year knowing that we were facing another extremely challenging time in order to restore our activity to pre pandemic levels.

Regrettably recruitment of new staff has been extremely slow. There seems to be fewer people in the job market, and even fewer with the requisite exacting qualifications, experience and skills that we require of our staff.

Raising activity levels has been further hindered by the understandable reluctance of many of our service users to expose themselves following a period of stringent lockdown and isolation. Despite these extraneous pressures we have maintained our scrupulous adherence to delivering a high quality service to people who need our help.

It is of immense credit to our staff that they have striven tirelessly to achieve our operational goals. They willingly cover gaps in our staffing rota, change their operational base and do this with a smile on their face and an eager disposition.

We are lucky to employ such a focused and professional group of people.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the work of our Manager. David leads by example and is always there to offer support and advice to both staff and trustees. Despite the difficult times experienced by every agency we have continued to benefit from professional and financial support from our traditional sponsors. In return for this support we endeavour to offer cost effective and effective services.

On our own behalf we have continued to raise money by organising sponsored events. I would particularly draw attention to our Charity Ball which we used to mark our fortieth anniversary and launch our appeal to provide a mobile toy library. The Ball was well attended, a huge success and we were delighted to be able to entertain our Patron in the person of the Lord Mayor of Leeds.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to all my fellow Trustees. I would particularly like to welcome Nicki Prior to the Board: Her expertise in marketing has already raised our public profile.

I couldn't wish to be associated with a more committed and engaged group of people.



Visitors

2021 -2022

2,378

2020 -2021

1,359

Centre Footfall

67% Clinical Assessments

13% Room Hire Attendees

8% Driving Lessons

7% Group Visits

3% Casual Information

4% Training Courses

Assessments

2021 -2022

1,131

2020 -2021

657

Clinical Assessments

53% Driving

16% Walking and General Mobility

11% Daily Living

10% Scooter & Powered Wheelchairs

4% Passenger Access

1% Leisure & Work

Info Requests

2021 -2022

495

2020 -2021

294

Centre Footfall

69% Physical Impairment

19% Dementia

8% Learning Disability

1% Mental Health

1% Sensory

General Manager's Report

Without dwelling too much on the problems COVID presented in the previous 12 months, I have to acknowledge how difficult the year has been and congratulate the staff for remaining focused on service provision.

Targets were again affected, due to a reduced workforce and recruitment difficulties during the pandemic. As we returned to service provision we experienced high levels of cancellations, as clients and staff struggled to venture out due to isolation rules. Although this was challenging we managed to provide a varied and valued service, as you will see from the different articles in this report.

During the year we were able to add to the team and welcomed 5 new employees: Nicola Blakey (Driver Assessor - Occupational Therapist), who has re-joined our team in Leeds, Chris Harrison (Driver Assessor – Approved Driving Instructor) to complete the Drivers assessment team in Leeds and Sheffield office, Emma Tipple (Finance officer) who will be introducing a new digital accounting system for the organisation and Kyle Harrup-Thornton & Jade Harriman (Shopmobility Operatives), who have joined us to head our Shopmobility service at the White Rose Centre and Merrion Shopping Centre.

We remain clear in our strategic objectives which are to provide life-changing information and advice about daily living aids and outdoor mobility for disabled people and the frail / elderly community in Leeds and across the Yorkshire region.

We achieved this through the provision of services such as: a comprehensive display of daily living aids, clinical assessments, driver assessment services - using our fleet of adapted vehicles, Try b4u Fly simulator and Paediatric assessments, to name but a few.



We have also been working hard on the return of our Accessibility event which is planned for June 2022. After missing the last 2 years we are looking forward to inviting health professionals and our clients, from across the region, to join us at Elland Road again.

We continue to work in partnership with our colleagues in the Council, NHS Leeds and Third Sector partners, ensuring the Third Sector continues to be seen as a valued asset in the provision of Healthcare services across the City.

Working as part of the collaboration with Local Care Partnerships, with West Leeds and Bramley/ Middleton in particular, we have been able to develop the work done in previous years and put into action opportunities to provide a holistic service to clients. This has remained a key objective in identifying opportunities to work with our statutory partners, especially in providing services to combat frailty and social isolation/loneliness.

This collaboration saw the introduction of Occupational Therapists from the local Primary Care Network team as they agreed to use the William Merritt Centre as their base. This has been a very productive partnership and we hope this will continue to develop as we look to extend services enabling disabled and elderly people to remain independent and in their own homes for longer.

During lockdown we looked at opportunities to enhance the services we offered and introduced 2 new services. Using the skills and resources from our Driver Assessment service we now have a William Merritt Driving School offering tuition and practical assistance to disabled people wishing to learn to drive. This will be a part time service initially and we hope to recruit a full time Approved Driving Instructor next year. We also began working with our local Police force to introduce the Police Fitness to Drive initiative. This is a new initiative, supported by Driving Mobility, to help Police forces across England to offer older and disabled drivers the opportunity to take a Fitness to Drive Assessment at one of our Centres, rather than resulting in immediate prosecution for minor road traffic offenses. This got off to a positive start, with West Yorkshire Police sending their first clients in January 2022. We hope to expand this to the other Police forces in the region.

Another successful partnership development has seen our Shopmobility service expand into a 2nd site in Leeds. In December 2021, we were asked if we would provide the Shopmobility service in the White Rose Shopping Centre. This is an excellent opportunity for the William Merritt Centre to work in partnership with a retail/ commercial organisation. This service will enable frail and disabled people to visit a popular shopping centre, helping to combat isolation and loneliness while contributing to the local economy.



As we look forward to the next year and the opportunity to continue to help people of Leeds and beyond, to remain independently mobile, we would like to say a big thank you for the continued support of our partners, individuals and organisations that support and work with us. In particular Department for Transport, Driving Mobility, NHS Leeds, Leeds City Council, Leeds Adults and Health and Children's Social Care Services. We are also very grateful for the continued support of the many retailers and manufacturers who loan equipment and their services.

Finally, many thanks for the continued support of our board of trustees, who continue to provide expert support and encouragement to the Centre.

Driving Assessments

Highlights:

- William Merritt Centre – York relocated to a more accessible office and established a permanent fleet of vehicles.
- The expansion of the William Merritt Centre - Driving School in York and Leeds, we are currently delivering a minimum of 50 hours Driving tuition per week for those with additional needs.
- Approved Driving Instructors, Chris Harrison and Lee Moxon-Webb increased their hours to full time working in both Sheffield and Leeds.
- Congratulations to our Occupational Therapists, El Veasey and Rebecca Houlden on receiving their Post-Graduate certificates in driving assessments and outdoor mobility at Chester University.
- Occupational Therapist, Rebecca Houlden joined the Sheffield team as a full time Driving Assessor. Rebecca is the Clinical Lead in the Telematics project with Sheffield University, the project is supported by the Road Safety Trust. Investigating the use of new technologies and the feasibility of accessing driving safety using remote monitoring devices. Participants will have telematics technology installed in their vehicle which will monitor their driving behaviour for a 12 month period. This is an exciting opportunity to help shape possible new approaches for older drivers!

Challenges:

- There is a lack of driving instructors for students with additional needs and vehicle adaptations.
- After what has been a previously unsettled period in terms of staff absence, Maternity leave and vacancies within the team, the team are glad to be finally back on track and working successfully towards delivering assessments again.
- Staff absences and client cancellations due to illness as a result of COVID-19

Looking forward:

- Further expansion of the York driving school in line with the strategic plan.
- Pursue the possibility of an outreach centre from York.

Client Story



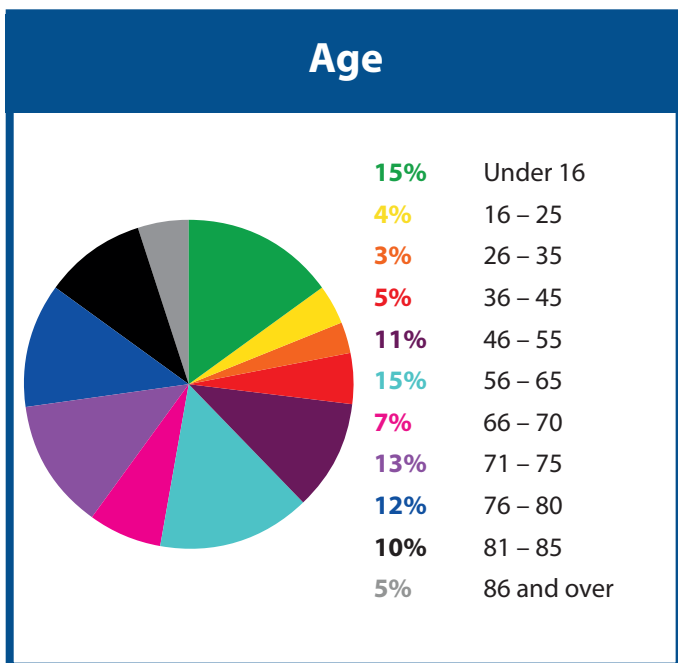
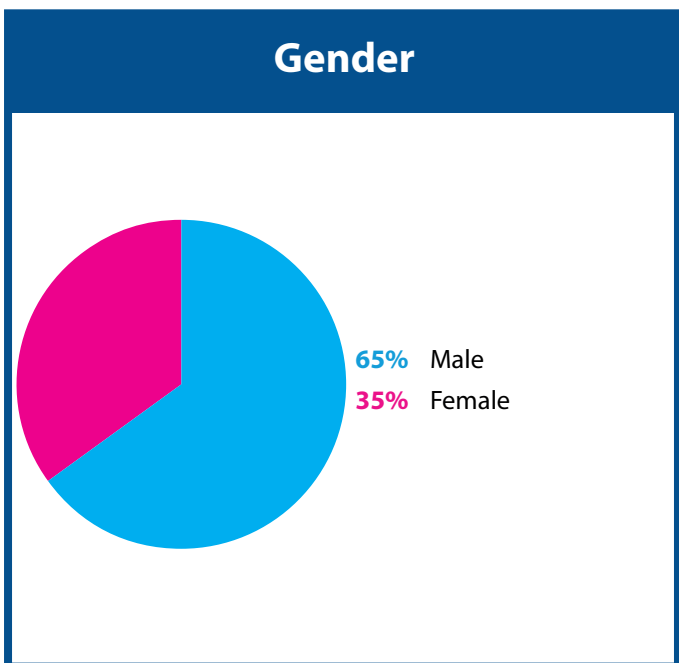
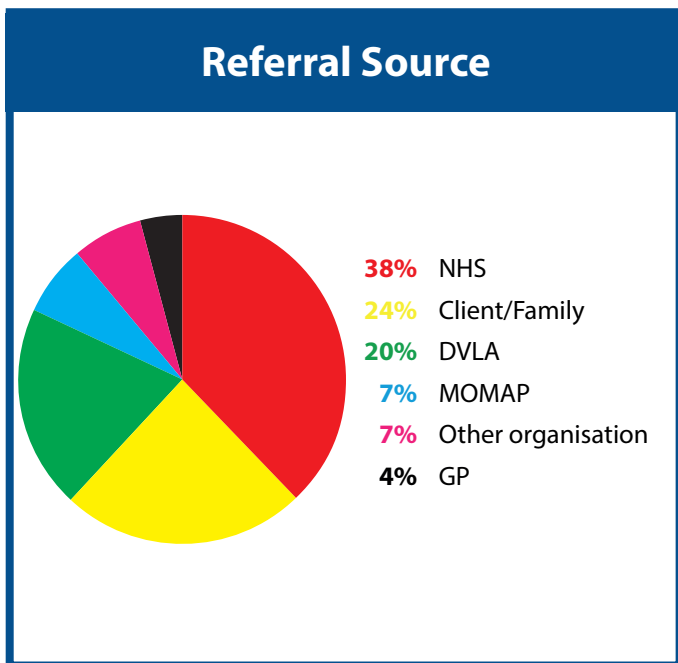
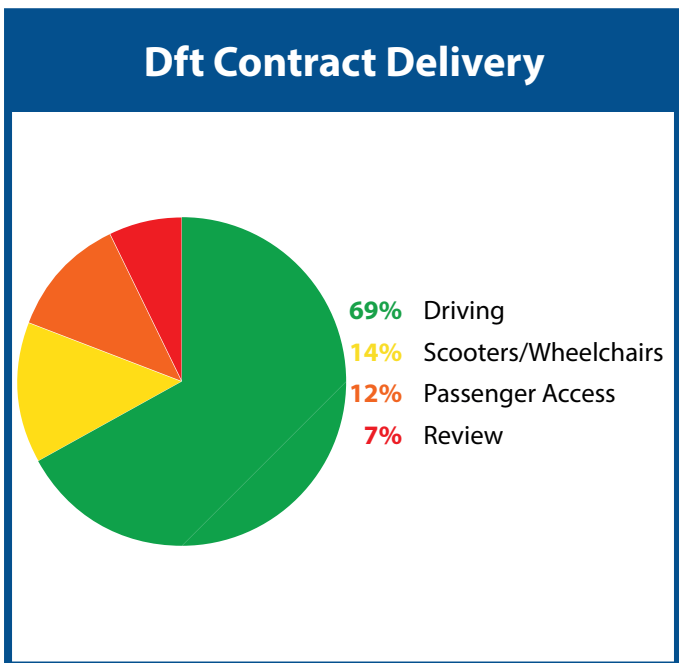
An NHS referral was received for a client who had a stroke resulting in right sided weakness mainly to their upper limb and an altered gait pattern to their right lower limb. The initial assessment highlighted no altered sensation to their lower limb and restricted movement to their right upper limb especially their wrist and hand. The client was keen to drive with their lower limb and reported they had not driven for 18 months. Following a discussion it was agreed a lodgesons lollipop on the left of the steering at the 10 o'clock position would be best suited.

Initially the adaptations were demonstrated to the client by the approved driving instructor and they were driven to a quiet area where they could trail the adaptations. Following the assessment the client felt happy with the adaptations. As, the client reported they had not driven for 18 months, the assessors felt there was an element of skills fade which contributed towards the drive along with trialling a new adaptation.

The assessors recommended the following:

- Engine stop/start button
- Lodgesons lollipop switching unit fitted to the left of the steering wheel
- 1-2 months of driver tuition with an approved driving instructor and a review assessment

The client had 6 driving lessons over 2 months at the William Merritt Centre - York Driving School. They adapted quickly to the Lodgesons Lollipop control, training was focused on being able to safely negotiate all road and junction types due to the time away from driving. The client's confidence in their driving ability improved and this was further boosted by the confirmation from their workplace that they could start a 'Phased Return' back to work.



Daily Living Assessments

Highlights:

- Leisure and Support Pop Up Event in October 2021: This event was well attended and it was exciting to welcome people back into the Centre again.
- Driving Mobility secured funding from the Department for Transport (DFT) to develop a Powered Wheelchair Mobility Scooter (PWMS) Course for retailers to offer some uniformity and consistency in standards across the industry. The Pilot scheme was held at the William Merritt Centre, Leeds in September 2021 and also at QEF. This is now being rolled out across the UK.
- We have made links with some organisations including: Whizz-Kidz; The West Leeds Local Care Partnership – Children, Young People and Families; The Advonet Group; The Circle Parenting Support Group; and Bramley Lawn Centre.
- Adults have started to attend our Tricycle Clinic, raising awareness of the use of tricycles as a means of independent mobility for both adults and children.

Challenges:

- We have seen an increase in referrals in Adult Services. It has been a busy time as everyone starts to recover from the impact of COVID.
- Due to the current global supply issues, children are waiting longer for equipment that is manufactured abroad. This also impacts on our abilities to obtain equipment for children to trial for assessments.
- Staffing is currently a major issue as two members of the department are leaving us; Senior Occupational Therapist, Sophie Thomson is reducing her hours; and Occupational Therapy Assistant Charlotte Allen is leaving.

Looking forward:

- Starting to hold CPD and product awareness sessions here at the Centre again for Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists from Community Services and Hospitals.
- Continuing to work with our partners and local suppliers without whom we could not operate!
- Increasing our portfolio and hosting Whizz-Kidz assessments at the Centre.
- Employing some new colleagues to ensure the smooth running of the Paediatric Department.

Eyad's Story



Eyad attended the Centre in April 2021 as he was struggling to mobilise and get out and about due to chronic pain and other medical issues. Being housebound and isolated was in turn adversely affecting his mental health. He was keen to look for employment and volunteering positions but his reduced mobility stopped him from being able to pursue this. He also has a dog and needs to be able to get out to walk him regularly. He tried a mobility scooter and powered wheelchair and was able to use both these with ease. A home visit was also carried out to establish which mobility aid would be most compatible with his access and ground floor flat and it was decided that a powered wheelchair would be the best option. Charitable funding was applied for and after some months Eyad became the proud owner of a Q600ES Pride Mobility powered wheelchair!

Eyad says of "I'm using the powered wheelchair a lot and it has transformed my life. I can now exercise my dog and go to the GP to collect my medication"

Technology Assessments

Highlights:

- We had a demonstration from the tech company Eyeteck. The company created the world's first all-in-one, hands-free screen control tablet with predictive eye-tracking technology. We are looking forward to working in partnership to begin offering assessments to clients at the centre.
- £13,000 was raised at the William Merritt Centre's 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner, all funds raised will go towards the mobile toy library project, providing disabled children across Yorkshire the opportunity to play with switch adapted toys.

Challenges:

- We are looking forward to welcoming Maxine, our Therapist Assistant, back so more specialist gaming assessments can once again be offered to clients. Her vast technology knowledge has been missed during her time away on Maternity leave!

Looking forward:

- We are very excited about developing and launching the William Merritt Centre Mobile Toy Library!

Brogan's Story

Three year old Brogan visited the centre with her family and Speech Therapist for a technology and switch assessment.

Brogan was born with multiple complex learning difficulties, as well as physical impairments and partial sight loss. She cannot use an iPad or play in a normal way, but loves coloured lights, dancing to her favourite Disney songs and watching her singing Olaf snowman pop and bop. She has recently been awarded an iPad by Guide Dogs for the Blind charity, which her parents wanted to set up so it can be operated using switches. Using a Pretorian Applicator and wired switch, Brogan's Dad was able to follow instructions to set the switch to start and stop music on Youtube. Brogan hit the switch to start 'Let it Go' and had a big smile as she boogied in her buggy!



Brogan also enjoyed tapping the Cosmo switches along to the garage band game. The family are going to investigate charity funding to purchase their own set, so Brogan can practice her physiotherapy exercise on the floor whilst reaching and engaging with lights. She has an older brother, who has an ADHD diagnosis, and her parents believe they will be able to play together taking turns to hit the lit switches.

The family also borrowed Dancing Paddington from the toy library and plan to swap it for another toy in a couple of weeks.

Honorary Treasurer's Report

For the second year running, the Centre's financial performance was affected by the Covid pandemic. We were closed for the first three months of the financial year, not re-opening until July 2021. Since many activities involve personal contact with often vulnerable people, normal service proved impossible and for much of the rest of the year, there remained a general reluctance among clients to visit the Centre.

As with the previous year, this impacted on the expected number of assessments our clinicians were able to carry out and this in turn resulted in a significant reduction in income and a second clawback in the grant provided by Department of Transport in support of the Mobility Service.

Mainly as a result of the Dft clawback, the Centre had its worst ever trading performance incurring an overall deficit of £113,660. This was met from reserves and we were fortunate that these were at a sufficient level to cover the loss and still leave the finances in a comfortable enough position to continue its operations and look forward to a brighter future.

Below are extracts from the audited accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022 which record the details of income and expenditure for the year finishing with the Statement of the Financial Position or balance sheet as at 31 March 2022.

Income and Endowments	2022	2021
Donations and Legacies		
Donations receivable	£3,256	£4,132
Charitable Activities		
Revenue grants	£218,294	£217,727
DETR grant	£484,841	£460,287
Driving assessment fees	£89,013	£45,385
Courses and exhibitions	£43,192	£15,996
Project funding	-	£82,141
Job retention scheme	£8,644	£46,006
Shopmobility	£61,084	£67,432
Sub total:	£905,068	£934,974
Other trading activities		
Fundraising events	£21,175	£904
Investment Income		
Bank interest receivable	£39	£331
National savings income bonds	£58	£501
UK Gilts income	£7,130	£7,130
Sub total:	£7,227	£7,962
Other income		
Gain on disposal of tangible fixed assets held for charity's own use	£6,800	-
Total Income	£943,526	£947,972

Expenditure	2022	2021
Costs of raising funds		
Promotional costs	£7,956	£13,424
Ball running costs	£8,797	-
Sub total	£16,753	£13,424
Expenditure on charitable activities		
Wages and salaries	£513,036	£441,315
Employer's NIC	£42,367	£37,737
Pension costs	£30,465	£29,577
Rent	£65,835	£66,000
Rates and water	£6,659	£6,289
Light and heat	£6,250	£5,226
Cleaning costs	£7,950	£4,116
Insurance	£10,417	£10,321
Repairs and maintenance	£4,642	£5,393
Donations	£144	£216
Travel and substenance	£3,811	£100
Legal and professional fees	£12,695	£12,852
Sundry expenses	£12,251	£6,300
Depreciation	£61,002	£80,848
Courses costs	£25,558	£11,052
Printing, postage and stationery	£4,443	£3,160
Office equipment and computer expenses	£24,097	£25,569
Driver assessment costs	£149,972	£85,820
Shop mobility	£39,383	£16,266
Sub total	£1,020,977	£848,157
Other expenditure		
Movement in market value of investments	£19,456	£20,908
Total expenditure	£1,057,186	£882,489
Net (expenditure)/income	(£113,660)	£65,483
Statement of Financial Position		
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	£101,059	£126,326
Investments	£277,991	£297,448
	£379,050	£423,774
Current assets		
Debtors	£39,138	£39,183
Cash at bank and in hand	£348,786	£436,098
Sub total:	£387,924	£475,281
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£114,154	£132,576
Net current assets	£273,770	£342,705
Total assets less current liabilities	£652,820	£766,479
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	£23,377	£23,377
Net assets	£629,443	£743,102
Funds of the charity		
Restricted funds	£3,253	£21,479
Unrestricted funds	£626,190	£721,623
Total charity funds	£629,443	£743,102

Governance & Management Structure

- The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee; number 01638939.
- The organisation is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association which was last amended on 19th November 2003.
- The organisation is registered as a charity with the Charities Commission. The organisation's Charity Number is 513001.
- Trustees are appointed as vacancies arise. Appointments are made based on the skills, knowledge and experience required to ensure that the Charity is well governed, and that no skill gaps exist.
- Expressions of interest from prospective new Trustees are drawn using standard recruitment methods such as advertising and word of mouth.
- New Trustees are given an induction pack which contains information about the organisation and the role and responsibility of new Trustees.
- All new Trustees are introduced to the staff, and spend time within the organisation.
- Trustees are expected to attend courses as identified to enable them to fulfil their duties.
- Trustees meet a minimum of 6 times each year, more frequently if required to address specific issues.
- The day to day running of the organisation is delegated to the General Manager who has responsibility for the line management of all staff.
- The Manager is expected to present a report of activity to the Trustees at Executive Committee meetings.
- All Policy and Financial decisions are made by the Trustees at their scheduled meetings.
- Sub-committees are established as required.
- The organisation is a member of Driving Mobility, with stringent accreditation standards to be met.
- Driving Mobility is the umbrella organisation for Driving Assessment and Outdoor Mobility Centres in England. It sets standards, acts as a spokesperson and liaises with The Department for Transport about service delivery and funding issues for its members.
- The organisation and Trustees undertake regular health and financial risk assessments, and systems

Equality & Diversity

We take a positive attitude towards diversity in the workforce to reflect the diversity of the people who use our services and wider society. We particularly encourage applications for both work and volunteering from disabled people. It is our policy that no user of our services, employee, volunteer or job applicant should receive less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of gender, marital status, age, ethnic origin, disability, race, nationality, religious belief, sexual orientation, employment status, trade union affiliation or political affiliation or through the imposition of any discriminatory requirement that cannot be justified. We give full and fair consideration to applications for employment from disabled people. Appropriate arrangements are made for the continued employment and training, career development and promotion of disabled people employed by the Charity.

Who's Who

Trustees / Directors	Keith Murray	Chair
	Professor Anne Chamberlain OBE	Vice Chair & Clinical Advisory Group Chair
	David Bruce	Hon Treasurer
	Jan Spencer	Trustee & Chair of Appeals and Charity Fundraising
	Trevor McDonnell	Trustee
	Rachel Beverley-Stevenson	Trustee
	Margaret Faulkner	Trustee
	Kieran Preston OBE	Trustee
	Paramita Ghosh	Trustee
	Nicola Prior	Trustee - Appointed January 2022
	Councilor Kevin Ritchie	Co opted Trustee
	Staff	Charlotte Allen
Tracy Andrews		Receptionist (Maternity Cover)
Nicole Blakey		Occupational Therapist & Driver Assessor (Maternity Cover)
David Blythe		General Manager
Terry Butterfield		Shopmobility Operative
Hannah Davy		Administration Manager
Christopher Harrison		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor)
Helen Folan		Driver Assessor (Occupational Therapist)
Lauren Harris		Driver Assessor Team Leader (Occupational Therapist)
Kyle Harrup-Thornton		Shopmobility Operative
Rachel Hirst		Adults Services Team Leader (Occupational Therapist)
Rebecca Houlden		Driver Assessor (Occupational Therapist)
Deborah Marini		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor)
Kate Mckinlay		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor) – Resigned 12/12/21
Lee Moxon-Webb		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor)
Philip North		Driver Assessor Team Leader (Occupational Therapist) Resigned 19/10/21
Emma Perry		Administrator
Bradley Perry		Shopmobility Operative – Resigned 21/04/21
Maxine Pickard		Therapist Assistant
Wendy Scaife		Occupational Therapist
Gillian Stansfield		Administrator
Janet Sutcliffe		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor)
Emma Tipple		Finance Officer – started 9-11-21
Sophie Thomson		Paediatric Services Team Leader (Occupational Therapist)
David Tuke		Driver Assessor (Approved Driving Instructor)
Tracy Waldron		Administration Manager
El Veasey		Driver Assessor Team Leader (Occupational Therapist)
Fern Wickham Warwick		Marketing & Promotions Co-ordinator
Volunteers	Stephen Corker	Vehicle Maintenance
	Colin McDonnell	Gaming and Technology Accessibility Advisor
	Nathan Pople	Newsletter Producer - terminated 2021
	Margaret Stuart	Admin Support – terminated 2021
	Nathan Sumpner	Information Researcher and Assistant – terminated 2021
	Celia Peel	Reception Assistant
Principal Advisors	Solicitors	Irwin Mitchell, Leeds
	Bankers	HSBC PLC. Leeds
	Accountants/ Auditors	Ford Campbell Freedman Ltd.
	HR Consultants	DLP Leeds

William Merritt Centre



*Enabling Greater
Independence*
