



31 January 2025

Annual Report and Accounts

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Opening thought

Community is not built in a day, nor with grand declarations. It grows quietly, like seeds waking beneath the soil, through countless small acts of presence and kindness. A smile offered at the garden gate. A hand steadying another as we lift a watering can. A shared silence in meditation, where even the breath feels communal. These gestures may seem fragile, but together they weave the strong, invisible fabric that holds us all.

At Living Vital as our community garden flourishes, so too do the connections among those who tend it. Again, this year people came to dig the earth, to plant beans and herbs, and as they did strangers became neighbours, neighbours became companions, and slowly, through the rhythm of soil under our nails and laughter in the air, a different kind of harvest emerged: belonging.

We have always known that tending the land is also tending the soul. Yet this year, something new blossomed. We began to sit together in stillness, practicing meditation as another way of remembering our shared life—human and more-than-human alike. In that quiet space, the robin's song became our teacher, the breeze through the leaves our companion. Meditation taught us that community is not only the food we share or the hands we clasp, but the presence we bring to each moment.

And in times when the world shouts disconnection and division, such acts are quietly radical. To pause and look someone in the eye is to resist invisibility. To care for a plant, a bird, a neighbour, is to insist that life matters in all its forms. To sit in silence together is to remember that beneath our differences, we share one breath.

Our garden is more than rows of vegetables—it is a living classroom, a sanctuary, a place where generosity teaches generosity. And you, dear friend, are part of this unfolding story. Whether you've planted seeds, joined in meditation, shared a recipe from our harvest, or simply believed in our vision—you have added your thread to this ever-growing tapestry.

As we look back on the year, I do not see statistics or charts as the truest measure of our work. I see moments: the person who ate their first tomato from the vine, the elder who found companionship after years of loneliness, the group that gathered under the oak tree and fell into shared silence as if it were the most natural thing in the world. These moments are our report. They are our proof.

So let us keep tending—to the soil, to one another, to this fragile, miraculous web of life we share. Every small kindness matters. Every moment of presence is seed and root, branch and fruit. And together, they grow a community that is not just alive, but vital.

With gratitude and hope,
Nick Grist

Chair, Living Vital



Our vision and strategy

Vision:

People living deeply connected vital lives with a clear sense of their role and responsibility in the human and more than human world.

Mission:

To create spaces that allow for sharing of skills, knowledge and ideas along with the experience of connection, purpose and integration with all beings.

Values:

- Respect (for ourselves, each other and the natural world)
- Connection (with our entire being, each other and the natural world)
- Vitality (physical, mental, spiritual and ecological)

How we will get there

We achieve our mission through:

1. organic food growing for the community and local food banks
2. sharing traditional skills
3. cooking
4. storytelling
5. nature connection
6. activities that foster vitality

We run volunteering sessions open to anyone in the local community with volunteers coming from across East and West Sussex ranging in age from 18 to 80.

Our project gives anyone the opportunity to enjoy the space we are creating and be a part of our organic food growing community.

This Year in the Garden

Little things have a big impact:

The magic of the garden continued to flourish and sparkle throughout 2024, proving once again that nature has the power to inspire and heal. Butterflies, bees, and countless other creatures enjoyed sharing our garden space, while the pond was once again alive with damselflies and dragonflies laying their eggs for the next generation.

Our community members found themselves captivated by these garden visitors, spending time observing and learning about the intricate web of life around us. These moments of wonder sparked meaningful conversations about how "we are nature" – not separate from it – amplifying our collective desire to protect and nurture the environment that sustains us all.

The established grapevine in the polytunnel continued to provide both delicious fruit and the precious vine leaves that are so important to our refugee community for traditional cooking. This simple plant represents so much more than its harvest – it's a living symbol that this garden truly belongs to everyone who tends it.





Spot the Robin!

Skills Building – Woodwork Project

This year saw exciting developments in our practical skills offerings. Members came together on multiple woodwork projects, including a new raised bed for increased accessibility, and building a beautiful deck by the pond. These projects have become wonderful opportunities for knowledge sharing, with more experienced members teaching newcomers traditional woodworking techniques and the satisfaction of working with their hands to create something lasting and beautiful.

The collaborative nature of these builds strengthens our community bonds while giving everyone a sense of pride in the physical transformation of our shared space.



Refugee and Migrant Community

We continued our cherished partnership with Voices in Exile throughout 2024, holding multiple dedicated sessions where we had the privilege of sharing our garden with members of our refugee and migrant community.

In these sessions, we exchanged food growing wisdom across cultures, cooked incredible meals led by our community members, played games, and found peace in the beauty of our green sanctuary. We all enjoyed sharing skills, recipes and food stories.

Some participants from these sessions discovered such joy in the garden that they joined our regular weekly sessions. These connections remind us daily that our differences are our greatest strengths.

Our Refugee & Migrant Coordinator shared: "The garden has brought me close to nature and peace of mind, being a foreigner, I have always been welcomed with open hearts... I feel the garden has given me a family."



We enjoyed our voices in exile sessions and the delicious food that was made!



Morning Meditation

One of our most treasured new offerings this year was Nick's introduction of 30-minute morning meditations before our Saturday garden sessions. These gentle gatherings have covered diverse topics – from honouring the changing seasons to loving-kindness meditation, from cultivating community to understanding the moon cycles and the chakras.

Participants consistently note how these sessions are both educational and deeply nourishing for mind, body, and soul. The post-meditation conversations often sparkle with insights and connections that carry through the rest of our garden time, creating a sense of centeredness that infuses all our activities.



Harvest

After several challenging growing years, 2024 brought its own unique weather patterns – making it one of the wettest years in recent memory, complete with an abundance of slugs! Yet nature, as always, found ways to surprise and delight us.

Despite the challenging conditions, certain crops absolutely thrived in the moisture-rich environment. Courgettes, squash, cucumbers, and tomatoes produced bountiful harvests that kept our community well-fed throughout the growing season. While some plants didn't survive the persistent rains and determined slugs, we learned valuable lessons about resilience – both in our gardens and in ourselves.

The abundance we did achieve was shared generously, with members taking home basketfuls of fresh produce and sharing meals together that celebrated the fruits of our collective labour.





Our Members

This year marked an important evolution in how we see ourselves. We've consciously moved away from the word "volunteers," instead embracing "members" to better reflect how our garden is truly co-created by everyone who joins us. This isn't just a semantic change – it represents our deeper understanding that the garden thrives on reciprocal relationships where members give their energy and time while receiving the countless benefits of community, connection, and harvest.

Our membership has grown beautifully throughout 2024, with over 30 members attending our busiest Saturday sessions and over 120 people in our WhatsApp community. Word continues to spread about the nourishing impact of the garden, with friends bringing friends and the circle of care expanding naturally.

"This is a place where you are valued for who you are, not for what you do or what you have." – One of our members at our Community Members Meeting Sep 2024.

Our members span from age 18 to 80, some bringing their children, representing a wonderful diversity of backgrounds, identities, and life experiences. We've welcomed several new members through social prescribing via local GPs, and these individuals have shared powerful testimonials about how the garden has supported their wellbeing and recovery.

People come to us for many reasons – some seek new friendships and the proven benefits of green therapy through hands-on gardening. Others want to learn practical skills, whether in growing food or woodworking projects. Many simply want to be part of a growing community filled with kind and generous souls.

From our last members' meetings, we've heard time and again how the garden provides something essential that many people struggle to find elsewhere: genuine community, purpose, and connection to the natural world.

We are endlessly grateful for this community we're building together. Every person who joins us – whether offering a helping hand in the garden, supporting our Voices in Exile sessions, or simply providing warm smiles and

heartfelt hugs – contributes to something larger than any of us could create alone.









2024 Annual Open Day

In July 2024, we had the joy of co-hosting the Stanmer Organics Open Day, a vibrant celebration where 300-400 community members explore the 16 diverse plots within Stanmer Park, with Living Vital proudly among them. This annual event represents one of our biggest opportunities to share what we've built together with the wider community.

The day buzzed with activity as visitors discovered our corner of the park. We prepared a feast of garden-fresh food and snacks, showcasing the incredible harvests our community produces together. Interactive games and hands-on activities gave families and individuals a taste of our regular sessions, while our handcrafted items – including aromatic vinegars, jams, syrups, and beautifully

carved wooden spoons – demonstrated the diverse skills our members are developing.

What made the day truly special wasn't just the footfall, but the genuine connections formed. Many visitors were so inspired by what they experienced that they signed up to join our mailing list, many expressing eager interest in becoming part of our growing community and upcoming workshops. These conversations reminded us how hungry people are for authentic connection and purposeful activity.

The Open Day has become an event we anticipate with excitement each year – not just as a showcase, but as a celebration of how far we've come and an invitation for others to join this journey of growing food, building community, and nurturing both the land and each other.



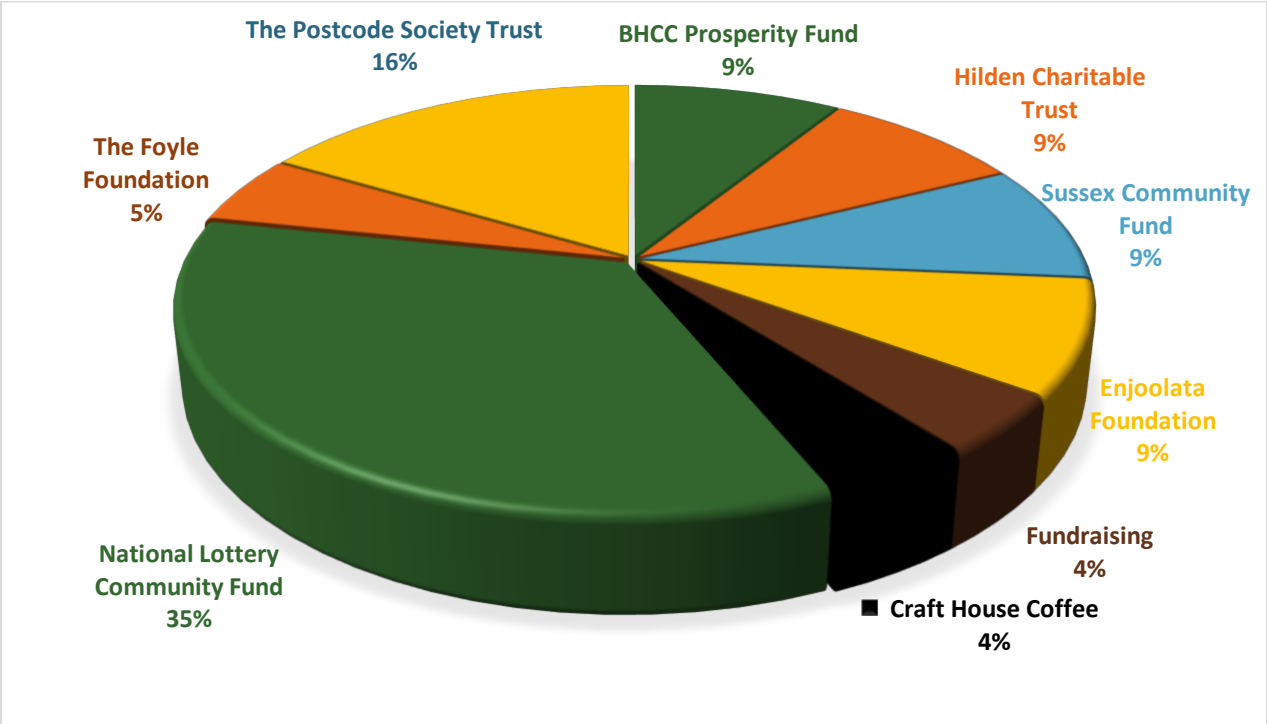


Financial summary 2024-25

Income

The sector is facing increasing hardship and demand has been amplified by the cost-of-capitalism crisis. Budgets, funds and support has been cut and many funders were only able to provide a proportion of the money we applied for. We are enormously grateful to those who have continued to support our work through this difficult period.

Where our income came from

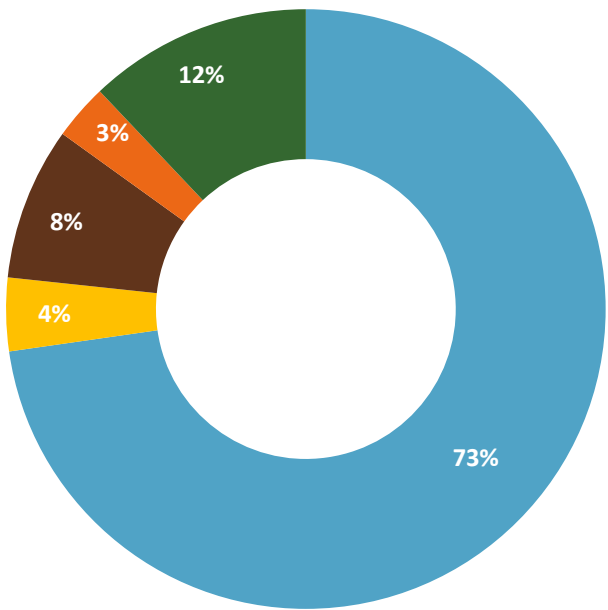


We remain heavily reliant on grants for much of our income and we are enormously grateful to the organisations that have supported us throughout the year and enabled us to achieve so much. The money we receive allows us to plant our crops, develop our site, grow our food and host sessions with local volunteers and with the refugee and migrant community. Thank you to those funders who supported us this year:



There have also been many generous donations of materials, tools and time from our volunteers and supporters to whom we are eternally grateful for their generosity and their continuing support.

Where we spend our income



- Staffing:**
Our focus was to ensure we ran as many sessions as possible. Session workers were able to receive recompense and less of their time was donated this year as we ran over 70 open volunteering sessions and 7 specifically for the refugee and migrant community.
- Session food and transport:**
This includes hot drinks and refreshments for volunteers and for the refugee sessions all the ingredients being used in cooking. We also provide soups and snacks for the volunteering sessions. Participants who can't afford transportation have bus tickets provided and this section includes the costs of getting provisions and materials to and from the site.
- Rent, insurance, utilities and office costs**
These have been kept to the minimum with a competitive insurance policy secured through Social Farms and Gardens and reasonable rates for the utilities and rent thanks to Brighton and Hove Council. Some of the administrative and funding work for the project is still unpaid.
- Seeds and inputs**
As a certified organic grower, we can only use organic seeds and inputs such as compost. We save seed each year, and are increasing our capacity to produce our own compost. This year we have planted green manures and our food forest is being predominantly planted with perennials helping to keep these costs down.
- Building materials, tools and utensils**
As our sessions grew and our volunteer numbers swelled, we needed to ensure we had enough tools for everyone to get stuck in. We also built a decking area for the pond and a raised bed in the kitchen garden. We needed materials for the repairs to the water system on site.

Financial performance

Now in our fourth year of operations we have significantly reduced reliance on individuals donating time and personal tools and equipment. We managed to secure our highest ever level of funding this year after creating a solid platform and process to our fundraising. The charity needs to generate more income and diversify income sources to remain sustainable. We also need to grow our reserves to help us weather uncertain times.

Income

Income for the year was again largely in the form of one-off grants (with one two-year grant). We continue to look at diversifying the income streams and approached more corporate supporters and looking at ways of working with them. We are primarily focused on securing additional grants but hope to reduce our reliance on grant funding as we develop the charity.

Costs

Our costs this year are a more accurate reflection of the amount of time and resources dedicated to the project in order to deliver the services we have. We are shifting from investment in the site to delivering our services but where possible we are looking to fund small projects to continue developing and to maintain the existing infrastructure. We are still reliant on individuals devoting time, energy and resources without financial recompense. Our intention is to continue increasing our income to enable us to fully remunerate all individuals working for the charity.

Net Assets

The charity's net assets position depreciated slightly over the year due to the lack of investment in the site and the structures. This is to be expected as we are not looking to invest heavily in site development but to maintain the existing infrastructure.

Reserves

The purpose of the reserves policy for the charity is to ensure the stability of the delivery of our mission, sessions, employment and ongoing operations of the charity.

Unrestricted general fund reserves are intended to provide an internal source of funds for situations such as a sudden increase in expenses, one-time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss in funding or uninsured losses. The reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds.

The current target minimum for unrestricted general fund reserves is equal to three months' average operating costs, including all recurring, predictable and unavoidable expenses. It is our intention to build our reserves as we grow our expenditure and ideally increase the reserves to cover six months of operation.

Our principal risks and uncertainties

The board of directors identify risks, assess potential impact and review mitigating actions. The directors update the board of trustees on significant risks for the charity. The trustees have examined risks and established systems to mitigate the significant risks facing the charity.

Generating Income

This is an ongoing concern for the charity as it is currently heavily reliant on grant funding. Resources are being allocated to fundraising and the diversification of the sources of income for the charity.

Partnerships and external relations

We work cooperatively with other organisations to be able to support people and create impactful change. This can mean that we are sometimes managing different sets of expectations and that we are reputationally associated with other organisations. We will continue to carefully assess the potential consequences of entering into partnerships before doing so and ensure that key relationships are managed by an experienced team.

Loss of key personnel

As a small charity the loss of a senior team member would have a dramatic impact. Policies, process and information dissemination are all in place to reduce the requirement on any one individual. We are also prioritising funding for key roles within the organisation so everyone can be fully remunerated for their time and contribution to the project.

Relationship with local council

We operate on land rented from the local council and continue to work closely with them to ensure we are effectively communicating the value of our work and that our charitable objects are clearly seen and understood by them to align with their vision for the site and the local community. We are enormously grateful to them for their enthusiastic support for our project and continued funding and were delighted to welcome the mayor to the site this summer:



Plans for the year ahead

We start our fifth year of operations in a stable financial position, with good facilities, equipment and infrastructure. We are keen to build on the strong foundation created in our first two years and expand our activities into new areas.

- There is a good deal of work that goes into maintenance of the site and structures as well as ensuring the production and harvest of our crops and we will be continuing this work with the help of our volunteers throughout the year.
- We are introducing more nature connection and Eco-therapeutic work to the sessions so all volunteers can benefit from improved nature connection, mental health and reduced eco-anxiety.
- Our website continues to develop and we are hoping to introduce more video content which we hope will generate further donations and more volunteers for the charity
- We of course need to continue to fundraise and will be putting time and resources into securing funds and opening new income streams

Subject to securing additional funds we are hoping to:

- We are actively fundraising to improve water harvest and irrigation across the site with climate shifting to heavier rains over winter and drier summers we are keen to make better use of natural resources, reducing reliance on mains water and so reducing core running costs.
- Tree felling – necessitated by ash die back and recent heavy winds we urgently need funds to reduce the height of some trees and fell damaged trees to maintain the safety of the site.
- We are hoping to plumb in an outdoor sink to allow for the washing of hands and utensils.
- We are hoping to develop the food forest bringing in additional plants to increase the site yield and diversity. We are also keen to add plants to the wildlife pond and create more habitats for reptiles and amphibians
- If we can secure funding, we would love to create raised beds on the site. For some participants accessibility is an issue and these beds remove the need for kneeling and bending over while working as well as being accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Thanks to our supporters

It has been another successful year for us as a charity with many happy memories. Much of that success is down to our incredible supporters. We have benefitted from the generosity, enthusiasm and expertise of many who have donated their time, tools, money and resources to the project.

Our promise to supporters

We care for each and every one of our supporters and in response to their generosity, we promise to:

- Safeguard their personal details
- Communicate transparently with them about the allocation of funds
- Treat them with respect, honesty and openness
- Take into account the needs of individuals who may be in vulnerable circumstances or require additional care and support to make an informed decision
- Never put them under pressure to make or continue a gift
- Use their gifts for the purpose for which they are given, and spend donations so they have the most impact
- Respect their wishes and preferences
- Listen to them about how they want to be contacted and honour their choices
- Be receptive to feedback and use this to improve our processes and procedures
- Take appropriate action if they are unhappy with our services, and accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator if we cannot resolve the issue

How we support our Fundraisers

It is important to ensure that all our fundraising is conducted in an ethical way and we are committed to fair treatment of all our supporters. We work with our volunteer fundraisers who notify us that they are organising their own event in aid of Living Vital. We ensure they are provided with the appropriate information, support, resources, and acknowledgement. If we have not been notified in advance, we provide a receipt and acknowledgement after the donation has been made.

Volunteer fundraisers who are appointed by the charity must provide their contact details and two references before they are able to begin their roles. All volunteers have a designated point of contact with Living Vital and are supported in their role.

Organisational Structure

Living Vital became a registered charity in England and Wales on 4 January 2021. Living Vital has been set up as a CIO using the foundation model.

Our constitution outlines the charitable purposes and the rules that govern the operation of the charity.

The charity's day-to-day activity is run and managed by the board of directors who report to the board of trustees. Trustees meet on a regular basis to set the vision, strategic framework, and discuss the budgets under which the charity operates.

The trustees set the strategic direction of the organisation and are regularly updated on grants, budgets, activities, and fundraising. New initiatives are normally developed by directors in consultation with our participants and trustee working group, supported by an assessment of project needs. Trustees receive regular financial updates which form the basis of the routine financial monitoring. The charity works to ensure all stakeholders in the organisation are able to participate in its development. We listen to our client groups and many of the service delivery improvements come from our stakeholders.

Specific projects are managed by the directors who share regular project updates with stakeholders, including volunteers, staff, and trustees as appropriate.

Public Benefit Disclosure The trustees confirm they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives, and in planning future activities. The trustees refer to public benefit throughout this report.

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The charity is managed by a board of four trustees selected because they strongly endorse the charitable objectives of the organisation and reflect its values. When selecting trustees, the charity aims to ensure there is a broad range of relevant skills.

Trustees are appointed after interviews with existing trustees and formal visits to the organisation to ensure that they understand our vision and values. Trustees are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks where applicable.

Our Details

Registered charity number:

1192957

Registered office:

Living Vital, Stanmer Organics, Stanmer Village, Brighton BN1 9PZ

Trustees:

Mr N Freer	(appointed 04 January 2025)
Mr N Grist	(Chair of Trustees from 04 January 2021)
Ms R Khan-Williams	(appointed 04 January 2021)
Mr A Weston	(appointed 04 January 2021)

The trustees have not received any remuneration or reclaimed any expenses during the financial year for their work as Trustees. All members of the Trustee Board have given their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity.

In accordance with the conditions in, sections 185 to 188 of the Charities Act 2011, and in line with our Governing Document, Clause 6, one trustee Mr N Grist receives remuneration for services to the charity outside the services provided in his capacity as a Trustee. All remuneration is subject to the conditions set out in the Charities Act

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles outlined in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the latest guidance from the charity commission. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 02 August 2025

And signed on its behalf by:



N Grist – Chair of Trustees

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at year end

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	
Cash Funds			
	21,087		
		5,379	
Total Cash Funds	26,466		
	Details	Cost (£)	Current value (£)
Assets retained for charity's own use	Buildings and Fittings	8,600	5,164
	Seeds, crops and plants	300	240
	Details	Cost (£)	When Due
Liabilities	Prepayments – rent	105	June 2025

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2023

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)'.

Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties regarding the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Receipts

All receipts are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has access to the funds. Any income is only deferred when: - the donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or - the donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Volunteers and donated goods and services

The value of services provided by volunteers is not incorporated into these financial statements.

Payments

Expenditure is accounted for on a payments basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Buildings and structures	- 10%
Fittings and fixtures	- 25%

Fund Accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Contact Us



Connect@livingvital.co.uk



[@Living_Vital](https://www.linkedin.com/company/@Living_Vital)

www.livingvital.co.uk



**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES
ON THE UNAUDITED ACCOUNTS OF LIVING VITAL**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Living Vital for the year ended 31 January 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

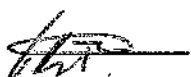
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
3. the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.


C R Tyler FCA DChA FCIE
F1 CRT Limited
Chartered Accountant
Flat 24, Wellingtonia Court
Laine Close
Brighton
BN1 6TD
Date: 16 October 2025