



EMPOWERING
BLIND
CHILDREN
YOUNG ADULTS

Be inspired

VICTA
Annual report
and accounts
2019



Welcome to the 2019 VICTA annual report and accounts

VICTA's activities and services aim to empower children and young adults to be independent and ambitious for their own futures.

As a community, our families and young adults come together to create a network of support to motivate and celebrate each other through their achievements.

Read our stories and be inspired!

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Chair's review | Pamela Lewis

As Chair of the VICTA Trustee Board, I'm conscious that I am very much a steward.

My goal is clear – to ensure that the charity continues to do great work for the benefit of our young people and their families, through a team of talented people who are happy and fulfilled.

We are not a charity that shouts loud about our achievements, nor seeks to embellish the extent of need within our community. Yet I feel we should take great pride in the relative scale and breadth of support we provide. This Annual Report describes the impact of our work over the last year and the crucial part played by our many volunteers and supporters in facilitating our support for children and young adults with a vision impairment. It has been another very strong year for VICTA, and I am especially pleased that, yet again, we have increased our core charitable expenditure for a third consecutive year.

Reflecting on our 2019 Activities Calendar filled me with admiration. It showed the awe-inspiring Dangoor Infinity Project with the British Exploring Society that took seven of our students wild camping in Iceland for four weeks alongside the seemingly more sedate Family Day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. In one respect they couldn't be more different. Yet viewed another way, they are exactly the same. Activities that are helping to make a real difference to people's lives by building confidence and friendships. Just as pleasing is the fact that nearly half of the families who attended our Spring Family Weekend were new to VICTA. These points are not unrelated and for me, this is what our vision 'empowering children and young people who are blind or partially sighted' really means.

As a Trustee Board we place a significant focus not just on our strategic plans but also on the wider culture of our charity. This why in 2019, we also embraced and created opportunities to engage the whole VICTA family on the purpose and values that define our organisation. Encouragingly, this extensive consultation not just supported the shift in outcomes within our activities but requested more from us in terms of age, reach and focus. And that focus will continue to create opportunities that develop and strengthen the life skills of children and young adults that enable meaningful participation and, ultimately employment.

Again, I must give heartfelt thanks to all our many and varied supporters. I regard their efforts



Team VICTA fundraisers at the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon

as especially impressive, given a generally difficult fundraising climate. We had the financial strength to successfully deliver our most ambitious and complex event to date, the International Camp on Communication and Computers. A 10-day residential activity for 120 participants from across Europe and Japan.

It would also be remiss not to mention our own staff and volunteers, who work tirelessly with such creativity, enthusiasm and commitment. As I look ahead to all the challenges and opportunities we face, I am



Families getting hands-on at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park



VICTA volunteers at the Family Weekend

reminded of the following quote: "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." In just one sentence, Francis of Assisi has captured the essence of VICTA. If we follow his advice and harness the talents and energy of everyone connected to the charity, I'm confident together we'll continue to achieve great things.

Pamela Lewis
Chair, Board of Trustees



Chief Executive's review | Nick Schofield

2019 has been another significant and transformative year for VICTA.

We continued the focus on strengthening our activities and services programme by re-shaping the way the charity supports children and young adults to greater independence through increased collaboration and strengthened partnerships. As such, ensuring the voices of our young people and their families are at the forefront of our decision-making has been a key objective in the past 12 months. We have also developed new tools to measure what we do and offer structured ways to provide feedback. As well as student focus groups, we used our Family Weekends to create parent forums to generate ideas and provide direction on our services.

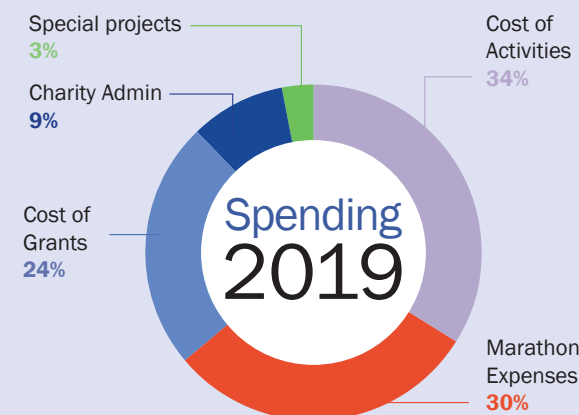
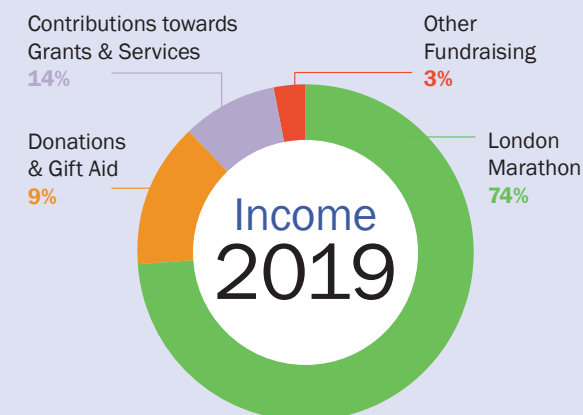
It is fair to say that VICTA has developed an enviable reputation for delivering high-energy physical

activities from skiing in Italy to rock climbing in the Brecon Beacons to hiking expeditions in the Peak District. While highly popular we wanted to introduce a more balanced calendar that delivered creative activities for those with an interest in the arts. In conversation with parents, we developed a better sense of what might prove popular. And as a result, in 2019 we introduced workshops with performing arts

group Extant and a photography course with the London Institute of Photography that qualified for an Explore Arts Award.

Whatever the activity, we recognise the need to combine fun and creativity with personal challenge to ensure learning, skills development and increased confidence are takeaways from every event. Our youth and young adult programmes prepare young

Earning John Muir Environmental Awards in the Peak District





Parents sharing in the fun at the Family Weekend and building support networks

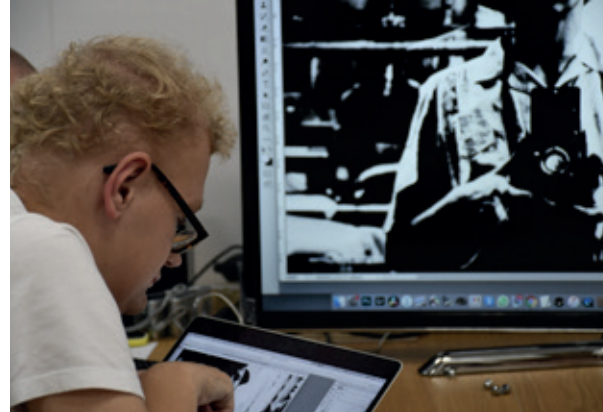
people who are blind or partially sighted for the transition to higher education, work and adult life. Through experiential learning, our young people increase their independence and employability skills through residential activities, expeditions, overseas travel, social networking and practical experience. And looking forward, our first bespoke pre-teen activities (for those 10-13 years old) will similarly challenge personal limits, develop new skills and increase physical activity. They are designed to help children develop undiscovered talents.

Our pre-teen activities have been introduced as a direct response to parent need. In 2020, these activities will bring younger children together to take part in fun days out away from their

parents, often for the first time, and to meet other children with a vision impairment. Being able to relate to someone of a similar age going through some of the same hurdles is not always possible in schools or local settings. These activities allow positive relationships to grow during a challenging growing up phase as children prepare to leave primary school and enter secondary school.

At our Family Weekends and Family Days, there is only ever one topic of conversation – education. And more specifically, Education, Health and Care Plans. We know that EHCPs can be a huge source of stress and anxiety. Often fuelled by a lack of information as parents struggle to understand their rights and entitlements, and the responsibilities of schools and councils. To counteract this, in 2019 we developed our EHCP FAQ to provide answers to the key questions parents have. Aimed at myth-busting false information and streamlining the EHCP process, this FAQ has become a wealth of information to the many parents who have made use of it.

Building on the success of the EHCP FAQ our thoughts turned to



creating a more comprehensive resource for parents. Over the years, many parents have expressed frustration as they describe the thankless and often impossible task of trawling the internet trying to find information needed to support their child. To fill this gap, last year we launched the VICTA Parent Portal, a one stop information hub for all parents and carers raising a child who is blind or partially sighted. Together with our Parent Network, we hope to give parents access to information, resources

and emotional connections to empower them to help their child discover, develop and strengthen their abilities and move forward with confidence.

In the current climate of immense political and economic uncertainty, I want to thank everyone, including staff, who have supported our work with children and young adults this year, giving their time as volunteers, through financial support, or helping us bring about change. We couldn't do

what we do without the hard work, commitment, dedication and passion of this amazing group of people. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind."

Nick Schofield
Chief Executive



Learning new skills and earning Arts Awards on the VICTA photography course



Blind Photography

In most people's minds, photography is so absolutely entwined with the idea of 'seeing', that the concept of blind and partially sighted people taking photographs challenges their deepest preconceptions about what the visually impaired are capable of and what it means to 'see'.







Blind photography

In November 2019, working with Holger Pooten, an award-winning photographer and founder of The London Institute of Photography (LloP) in London's dynamic Shoreditch, we successfully delivered our first Blind Photography course.

In most people's minds, photography is so absolutely entwined with the idea of 'seeing', that the concept of blind and partially sighted people taking photographs challenges their deepest preconceptions about what the visually impaired are capable of and what it means to 'see'. The common perception is that sight is of paramount importance in life – photography allows visually impaired people to demonstrate the possibilities of different ways of seeing and the capacity of our other senses.

The team at LloP designed a four-day course (to deliver an Arts Award Explore) that would trigger an insightful journey in participants that explored a hidden

Why would blind and visually impaired people want to take photographs?

The first thing to acknowledge is that blindness and sight loss comes in many forms. A person's individual experience of blindness is central to how they use a camera and generate photographs. While some take photographs in response to the world around them, others have images in their minds that they seek to recreate in a photograph. The visually impaired photographer employs sound, smell, touch and taste to take their photographs as well as relying on intuition, feeling and collaboration.

However, the question most often levelled is not 'how', but 'why' anyone who cannot see would wish to take photographs. Central to any response must be an understanding that photography is not just the creation of a visual product, but a communicative process that involves all the senses and whose key enabling purpose is as a tool for analysis and dialogue with others. In sensory photography, this takes on a particular relevance as blind photographers often experience their own images through the descriptions given by sighted viewers. The dialogue that ensues builds a bridge between the visual and non-visual world, an exchange in understanding as to how each other sees.

For some, photography has helped them come to terms with their loss of sight and the depression, isolation and adjustment that came with that process. Blind photographer Alicia Meléndez says that 'each click of the camera is an achievement that enhances my self-belief'. Similarly, Alberto Loranca says that 'photography is something that allows me to give shape to the things in my mind'. If we assume that photographers, regardless of their visual abilities, take photographs to explore, acknowledge, document and communicate, then the potential of photography exists for everyone.

potential to express creatively, stimulate emotions and intellect, and elevate self-confidence in the Arts. They wanted to use the creative process to focus and strengthen thinking, senses, judgement, insightfulness and intuitiveness. Moreover, they wanted to prove to our students that photography is fun, accessible, sociable and satisfying.

The phenomenal feedback from our six participants speaks to the diligence

and knowledge of Holger and his team. Without prompt, all discovered that while photography is uniquely personal, it is also hugely liberating.

Without conventional boundaries, they learned a little more about themselves, and how their images become an extension of their personality. In the words of one participant, "I want to represent me through my images".



In July, we successfully hosted the 25th International Camp on Communication and Computers (ICC), welcoming 120 students to the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford.

Success is a team effort









Success is always
a team effort

In July, we successfully hosted the 25th International Camp on Communication and Computers (ICC), welcoming 120 students to the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford. This was undoubtedly the largest and most complex VICTA event to date and we would like to acknowledge and thank those individuals and organisations that supported us in our quest.

Each year, this 10-day residential camp brings blind and partially sighted students together from across Europe and Japan to find answers and share information about issues that are unique to them. Exposed to views and behaviours outside their 'norm', students are encouraged

to challenge their own perceptions of what is possible. Drawing on a wealth of different backgrounds, experiences and expectations, students are motivated to question limiting presumptions they might have, helping them to view themselves and their potential in a new way. As declared by one student, "I think that many blind individuals like me sometimes just need to be among other blind people. ICC is that place."

Not all learning is formal. One student argued that the leisure time activities are at least as enriching as the workshops because "they are about personal contact and making new friends, one of the most important goals of ICC." And based upon the premise that sport and music can engage, motivate and inspire, learning beyond the ICC classroom was focussed on activities such as blind cricket, blind football, goalball group and performance skills including singing. Indeed, there's a growing body of research that links physical activity and the characteristics of sport such as cooperation, respect and discipline to improvements in educational achievement.

We would like to thank...

our Patron Michel Roux Jr, Glen McCorquodale and Patrick Allpress for their kind generosity. We gratefully acknowledge awards from the Deymel Charitable Trust, DM Thomas Foundation for the Young and the Jim Marshall Charitable Trust. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following organisations for their generous donations in support of ICC: Amazon, Banders, Inlumi, Microsoft Research Limited.

The importance and significance of this camp is best expressed in the words of a participant:

"It is really important for sighted people to understand that the blind are not necessarily limited by their disability. We only need a little help to do the same things as they can".



Introducing the VICTA Parent Portal and Network

A one stop information hub for all parents and carers
raising a child who is blind or partially sighted.

victaparents.org.uk



Introducing the VICTA Parent Portal

The VICTA Parent Portal has been created with parents at its heart. Over the years, we have heard parents describe the endless hours they would spend trawling the internet trying to find the information they needed. Information on schools, benefits, hobbies and more. With no one central site providing this information, parents would end up frustrated and disheartened.

To fill this gap, we launched the VICTA Parent Portal. A one stop information hub for all parents and carers raising a child who is blind or partially sighted. The Portal has a wealth of information covering topics from Early Years to Assistive Technology, and signposts to many other organisations

who can help. The 'Stories' section has first-hand accounts from parents and young adults who are visually impaired, providing advice, encouragement and inspiration.

However, we weren't happy to stop at just providing information. VICTA has a vision of bringing parents together for friendship and support. We want to use parent experience to better assist and encourage other parents. We have therefore created the VICTA Parent Network. This project empowers parents to support and advise one another, and run local events and groups to create networks of parents across the country.

Our Parent Ambassadors that are part of this new scheme all have first-hand experience of raising children who have a vision impairment. We believe that these are the people best placed to provide help and advice.


We created the VICTA Parent Network Facebook group as a safe space for parents to support each other, ask questions or seek advice on any topic related to raising a child who is visually impaired. We encourage parents to join the group by visiting Facebook.

We are excited to have launched these new services, and to have created new opportunities to connect parents.



Supporting parents with EHCPs

VICTA Trustee Gurvinder Kaur, is a Solicitor in the area of Special Educational Needs Law. Gurvinder developed a framework on the Parent Portal designed to guide parents through the process of obtaining Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and to answer questions parents frequently have.



Idil became a VICTA Young Ambassador in 2019 and during her time with us as an intern coordinated the publication of our STRiVE newsletter. Here she shares her experiences as she gained the confidence to travel.

Finding travel courage as a VI individual



Finding travel courage as a VI individual

Planning and organising a holiday can be a very stressful process for individuals who are visually impaired (VI). As a VI individual myself, I have always found myself choosing the safe and secure option to travel abroad with family or close friends who have had the opportunity to grow their understanding of my eye condition and the impact that it has on my ability to perform certain tasks.

Despite being lucky and having the opportunity to travel to many European countries with family and friends, I had never had the opportunity or courage to take on the challenge of travelling to a

country outside of Europe. And that is when I decided that it was time for me to step outside of my comfort zone and embark on the adventure of a lifetime with VICTA and travel to Thailand!

Despite having been on previous VICTA international trips to European countries and having had the opportunity to form many unforgettable memories and long-lasting friendships, the thought of going off to South-East Asia made me feel very nervous as I had many apprehensions about the challenges that I would experience as a VI tourist. Once I got the chance to read the incredible itinerary that VICTA through Seable Holidays had organised for us, which included; visiting temples, flower markets and bamboo gardens; meeting elephants; voyaging on an overnight sleeper train and spending the last couple days of the trip on an island beach resort indulging ourselves to massages, I decided to place all my preconceptions and fears aside and sign-up to the adventure of a lifetime!

And what an amazing experience I had! Going to Thailand with VICTA was one of the best decisions that I have made in my life. The trip proved to me that Thailand is in fact quite an accessible country that welcomes disabled travellers in a very positive and caring manner. Throughout the trip our tour guides made sure we got as much involvement as possible with the local people and the Thai culture, which enabled

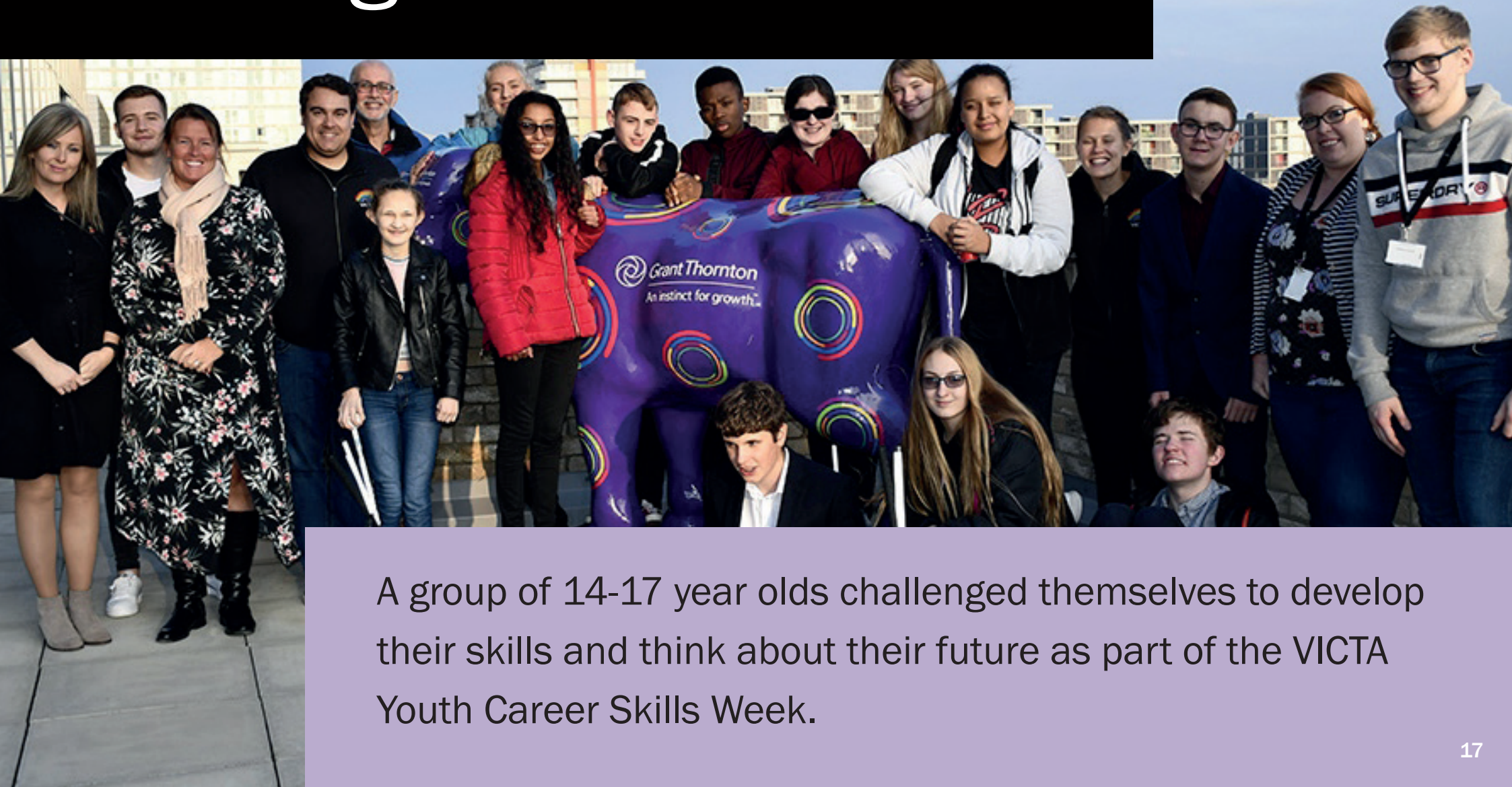
us to experience the 'true' Thai lifestyle. During the trip I made many fun memories and friendships that I will treasure for the rest of my life, but I would have to say that feeding and bathing elephants was the best highlight for me on the trip. I had the great pleasure of receiving a hug and a kiss from an elephant for Valentine's Day!

Going on the Thailand trip with VICTA has definitely given me the confidence to challenge myself and continue to organise holidays with accessible holiday providers and increase the long list of sensory experiences that I have had the opportunity to build – thanks to VICTA and Seable Holidays! Those positive experiences encouraged me to plan and organise a skiing holiday in the Italian Alps for myself and my sister. Once again, this was a fun packed holiday that allowed us to access the VI support that we need and purely focus on enjoying the slopes!

Thanks to the incredible holidays that I have experienced with VICTA, I can confess to having the travel bug and can't stop thinking about new travel destinations. As someone who was amazed with the cultural enriches that Thailand had to offer, I have booked yet another long-haul trip with Seable Holidays to Cambodia and Vietnam. I cannot wait!

Written by Idil Serce

Discovering potential and building careers skills



A group of 14-17 year olds challenged themselves to develop their skills and think about their future as part of the VICTA Youth Career Skills Week.



Discovering potential and building careers skills

A group of 14-17 year olds challenged themselves to develop their skills and think about their future as part of the VICTA Youth Career Skills Week.

We believe that it's never too early for students to start thinking about going into higher education or getting a job, about whether they want to stay at home or have ambitions to move away. Even while still at school, students should start working on the skills and qualities they'll need for writing a great personal statement or CV, applying for university places or jobs and doing well in interviews.

Our careers programme was designed to bring a group together to challenge themselves and each other in a series of fun and exciting individual and team tasks that tested communication, teamwork, leadership and problem-solving skills. We believe it is these general skills that make students stand out.



At the end of the week, the group took everything they had learnt into an exclusive Careers Insight Event at Grant Thornton, Milton Keynes. Grant Thornton is one of the world's largest professional services network providing independent accounting and consulting services.

The event allowed them to pick the brains of recruitment experts, learn about useful CV tips and interview techniques as well as taking the chance to ask meaningful questions, including how and when to disclose details of a vision impairment. We encourage our students to become reflective learners and present themselves effectively as they transition into adulthood. More importantly we want our students to walk away with the message that people with sight loss can do anything.

Huge thanks to Grant Thornton for hosting the event and Natasha Collett from The Project Box for bringing the experts together and leading the day.



Grants for accessibility

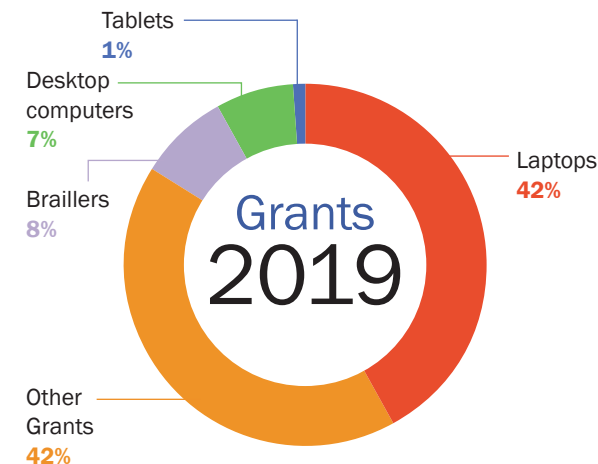
In 2019, the focus of the VICTA programme was to make grants available for the purchase of assistive technologies to support children and young adults up to the age of 29 to reach their full potential.

Whether it is for a Braille or a computer to help young people keep in touch, we want everyone to have the opportunity to learn and grow. We want to encourage children and young adults to develop independent life skills.

This was boosted further in 2019 by our continuing partnership with RNIB which started in 2018 when we worked with them on a product grant programme focussed on supporting independent study using technology including iPads and the Orbit Reader which offers an introduction to braille, book readers and note-taking.



Thank you for the iPad and the Orbit Reader. Both devices are very useful and helpful. For example I pair the orbit reader and the iPad together so that I can send iMessages more easily and quickly. I make notes and have made slide presentations. I am very appreciative and I hope that other children who are registered blind can also receive what I have.





Financial
accounts

Charity details

Key Staff and Trustees

Nick Schofield, Chief Executive

Pamela Lewis, Chair

Special responsibility for finance

Matthew Clark, Trustee

Special responsibility for young people

Gurvinder Kaur, Trustee

Special responsibility for legal matters

Miriam Martin, Trustee

Special responsibility for sector knowledge

Elizabeth Richards, Trustee

Special responsibility grants

Christian Sprenger, Trustee

Special responsibility for engagement, fundraising and marketing

Our Patrons

Michel Roux Jr

Michel Roux Jr took over the helm at the world famous Michelin starred Le Gavroche in 1991. Since then, Michel has won numerous awards for his cuisine and has continued to set the standard for classical French fine dining in London. Prior to Le Gavroche, Michel honed his skills working for master chefs in Paris, Lyon, Hong Kong and London, spending two years with Alain Chapel and cooking at the Elysee Palace for President Mitterrand.

Michel has also been a judge alongside Greg Wallace on Masterchef: The Professionals. Michel has been a great supporter of VICTA Children for many years, he continues to run in the London Marathon raising money to help us to provide our services.

Mardy Smith OBE

Mardy worked at New College Worcester (NCW), a residential school for students who are blind or partially sighted for 27 years, including the last 13 years as Principal. She retired at Christmas 2016 but maintains her commitment to ensuring young people who are blind or partially sighted have a wide range of opportunities and challenges. In addition to such experiences resulting in enjoyment and achievement, the positive impact on self-esteem and self-confidence is invaluable and Mardy is pleased to be able to support VICTA in their work with young people and their families.

Charity details

Registered Charity Details

Registered Charity Name

VICTA Children Ltd

Charity Registration Number

1065029

Company Registration Number

03424608

Principal Office

5 Douglas House
32-34 Simpson Road
Fenny Stratford
Milton Keynes
MK1 1BA

Auditors

Keens Shay Keens MK LLP

Sovereign Court
230 Upper Fifth Street
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 2HR

Bankers

CAF Bank

25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hall
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4JQ

Metro Bank

44-46 Midsummer Arcade
Midsummer Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 3BB

Statement of financial activities

(Incorporating the income and expenditure account)

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

| | (£) | Total Funds 2019 (£) | Total Funds 2018 (£) |
|--|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| INCOME | | | |
| Income from generating funds: | | | |
| Donations and legacies | | 12,815 | 48,973 |
| Other trading activities | | | |
| Fundraising events | 22,121 | | |
| Marathon runners | 644,954 | | |
| Sundry income | 124,832 | 791,907 | 810,528 |
| Income from investments | | 1,203 | 552 |
| Gift aid | | 64,526 | 65,015 |
| Sales of assets | | - | - |
| TOTAL INCOME | | 870,451 | 925,068 |
| EXPENDITURE | | | |
| Charitable activities | 539,822 | | |
| Marathon fundraising costs | 114,045 | | |
| Cost of marathon places | 124,000 | | |
| Charity administration | 79,198 | | |
| Other fund raising costs | 28,703 | | |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | | 885,768 | 871,117 |
| NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) FOR THE YEAR | | -15,317 | 53,951 |
| RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS | | | |
| Total funds brought forward | | 600,727 | 546,776 |
| TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD | | 585,410 | 600,727 |

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

Balance sheet

VICTA Children Ltd Company Limited by Guarantee

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

| | (£) | Total Funds 2019 (£) | Total Funds 2018 (£) |
|---|---------|----------------------|----------------------|
| FIXED ASSETS | | | |
| Office equipment and computers | | 14,095 | 4,821 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| Stocks | 14,609 | | 19,189 |
| Marathon places carried over from 2018 | 15,840 | | 20,817 |
| Other debtors and prepayments | 106,905 | | 118,381 |
| Cash at bank | 791,424 | | 744,366 |
| | 928,778 | | 902,753 |
| CREDITORS: | | | |
| Amounts falling due within one year | | | - |
| Cheque payments not yet cashed | | | |
| Trade creditors | 21,330 | | 26,586 |
| PAYE and social security | 7,400 | | 6,768 |
| Marathon income received in advance for 2018 | 230,862 | | 163,285 |
| Other creditors including grants approved but not yet delivered | 97,871 | | 110,208 |
| | 357,463 | | 306,874 |
| NET CURRENT ASSETS | | 571,315 | 595,906 |
| TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES | | 585,410 | 600,727 |
| NET ASSETS | | 585,410 | 600,727 |
| FUNDS | | | |
| Designated funds | | 321,177 | 372,013 |
| General funds | | 264,233 | 228,714 |
| | | 585,410 | 600,727 |

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime and were approved by the members of the committee and authorised for issue and were signed by Pamela Lewis on 14 December 2020 on behalf of the Charity.

The audited financial statements can be found on the VICTA website and are available on both the Companies House and Charity Commission web sites.



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VICTA

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VICTA Children Ltd. Charity No. 1065029.

