CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 01/01/2025 Period start date To 31/12/2025 Period end date

Charity name: The Links Group

Charity registration number: 1196067

Objectives and Activities

	SORP reference	
Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document	Para 1.17	The Links Group promotes the education of the link between the abuse of people and animals to professionals and the wider UK population in such ways as the charity trustees think fit
Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.	Para 1.17 and 1.19	a. Provision of education and training to human and animal health care professionals; b. Provision of advice and guidance to human and animal health care professionals; c. Promotion of inter-agency working; d. Commissioning and publishing research and adding to collective knowledge and understanding of the link between the abuse of people and animals; e. Promotion of best practice across the voluntary, public and private sectors
Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit	Para 1.18	All Trustees have received the following and will be complete the NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course. • Our Constitution (Governing Document) • CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3) • Charity Governance Code • Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct • Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

	SORP reference	
Policy on grant making	Para 1.38	N/A
Policy on social investment including program related investment	Para 1.38	N/A
Contribution made by volunteers	Para 1.38	The Links Group is run solely by volunteers (with some paid contracted professional support) who use their professional knowledge, experience and expertise to promote the purposes of the charity and ensure that it was run and governed effectively
Other		

Achievements and Performance

	SORP reference	
Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.	Para 1.20	**Training** *Veterinary undergraduate training* raises awareness amongst veterinary undergraduates about the link between the abuse of animals and abuse of people. It introduces the concept that perpetrators of domestic abuse often abuse the close bond between victim-survivors and their animals, deliberately harm an animal, may lie about how an animal has sustained injuries, can withhold access to veterinary treatment, and that this may be as part of a coercive and controlling relationship. Course content includes highlighting the different types and signs of abuse, being aware of the diagnostic indicators of non-accidental injury (NAI), what to do if NAI is suspected or there are concerns about other members of the household (adults and children) and reporting pathways. We also cover the importance of specialist animal fostering services for the pets of people fleeing domestic abuse. The impact of this training is that most veterinary graduates trained in the UK over the last 20 years have an awareness of the link between the abuse of people and animals, the role that the veterinary team plays in dealing with cases and the importance of multi-agency working. Veterinary undergraduate training that has taken place at UK universities in 2025 includes: • Bristol • Surrey • Nottingham • Royal Veterinary College (University of London) • Liverpool • Edinburgh • Cambridge • Glasgow • Nottingham (2nd cohort) These undergraduate talks have been available since 2003, initially as an optional 'extra' for undergraduates and now the universities have adopted as part of the curriculum. The 2025 training equates to reaching circa 1,100 new veterinary

		undergraduates who will join the veterinary workforce in the next two years. *Veterinary team training and multi-agency training* As the undergraduate training has only been available since 2003, there are many veterinary surgeons in practice who have not benefited from this awareness raising. The Links Group was supported pre-pandemic by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) to run regional training days for veterinary teams across the UK. These re-started after Covid-19 in early 2023 and completed the first series of training in all 12 BSAVA regions by the end of 2024. In line with the purposes and main activities of the charity, the format of these training sessions has evolved into multi-agency training days. This allows us to use subject matter expert speakers in domestic abuse, child abuse and animal abuse and welfare, to bring a holistic awareness of the issues across the professions, highlight barriers to reporting for veterinary professionals and learning from our allied professionals in human health and social care, and emphasise the need for intersectionality in strategy and delivery of best practice. As a result of the impact of these days, the BSAVA have supported a second series. In 2025, this series of training days included days in Wetherby and in Hinckley; with the event in Edinburgh moved to 2026 as a courtesy to another veterinary organisation. 73 attending over those 2 days. Speakers at these events include: • Women's Aid Federation of England, • the NSPCC, • regional police forces, • the RSPCA, • the specialist domestic abuse pet fostering groups, • a veterinary forensic expert witness, • and the Links Group speakers. The training days have been open to and attended by members of veterinary teams and any other agencies or individuals working in child and/or domestic abuse. This includes: • private and charity sector veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons,

		practice managers, and practice owners • presidents and senior members of major veterinary professional organisations (BSAVA, RCVS, BVA, BVNA, BVRA, NIVA, AVSPNI, Vet Support, Young Vet Network, Vetlife and Vet Support), • representatives of the vet schools and other academics, students, forensic science, criminology • social workers, NHS safeguarding leads in community and hospitals, • city and county council representatives, • police officers and representatives of offices of the Police and Crime Commissioners, • domestic abuse services for male and female victim-survivors, • politicians and civil servants, • the judiciary. The impact has been to drive that awareness about the link, raise the profile of the issues and promote inter-agency working to help tackle them. Direct outcomes from these 2025 meetings have included: • continued liaising with the RCVS Professional Conduct department to increase awareness and ensure clarity on Section 14 of the supporting guidance (Client Confidentiality) to the Codes of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses; as well as exploring other training requirements for veterinary teams. • liaising with the Defra on “links” awareness, domestic abuse-related deaths, rural mental health, linked crimes/public protection; as well as feeding into strategy and consultations. • creating a partnership with Wrexham University in delivering training to undergraduate students and their academic teams including veterinary nurses, policing, health and social care professionals and criminology/law; as well as supporting research projects in this field.

		• developing a partnership with Vetpol, an organisation which trains Suitably Qualified Persons to discuss & dispense certain categories of veterinary medicines. This has opened up access to a new category of learners who can potentially identify and respond to abuse of animals and abuse of people, particularly in pet and equestrian retail. • an external evaluation of our training content by a veterinary mental health charity; ensuring that our content is relevant, carefully considered and delivered appropriately to support the veterinary community in learning about 'The Link'. This has also increased awareness of 'The Link' amongst the Vetlife team and they are present to support at our events where possible. • discussions on policy and shared training resources with a veterinary charity working with the homeless, helping to support their staff and frontline workers in supporting homeless clients with pets. These outcomes are building on those from 2024 which were deemed so significant that the British Small Animal Veterinary Association has agreed to support a second series across the UK from 2025-2027. *Postgraduate training* continues with a number of academic institutions engaged on our veterinary undergraduate training days, with delivery of training to postgraduates in veterinary and animals welfare courses. This includes our training of vet teams at Langford Vets (University of Bristol) and training commissioned by the Government of Jersey to deliver training to vet teams and allied health and care, policing and animal welfare professionals. These last two are outlined below as they involve creation of bespoke online modular courses. However, the in-person component of this training includes 170 individuals.

		In 2015 we launched our free online training course hosted by the Virtual College to introduce the concept of the link and animal welfare to those working in any capacity in the human health and safeguarding sectors. Since launch, this course has been accessed by 10,830 allied professionals, helping them to understand how poor animal welfare can be an indicator of other issues within a home. We launched an updated version of this course on 01/07/26, called **Protecting Animals, Protecting People: in the Home**. The creation of this free, online modular course was supported by a grant from the Pets Foundation. It is designed to cover the UK from the legislative and supporting resources perspective, although much of the content is suitable for a global audience. Since the release of this course, regional variations have been released; for example, **Protecting Animals, Protecting People: in the Home – Northern Ireland**. Over 350 learners have registered for these courses. This course has been adapted to create a bespoke course for vet teams and allied professionals working in the safeguarding of people in Jersey. This was in response to the Government of Jersey commissioning The Links Group to develop and deliver a training course for vet teams in the island in response to a recommendation in their Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce Report. We created a hybrid training model, created in partnership with animal welfare and safeguarding agencies in Jersey, where learners undertook the online module ahead of some attending an in-person course. The numbers attending the in-person event have been incorporated above; with 107 registered learners on the online courses. The course was adapted in a similar manner to cater for vet teams at Langford vets, with a modular version of the course modified for the south west of the UK, and an in-person training event reflecting the proportion of livestock and equine practitioners attending from this teaching and clinical institution. The numbers attending the in-person event have been incorporated above; with 12 registered learners on the online course. The Links Group is internationally recognised with talks delivered at the

		Eurogroup for animals, participation in One Welfare Phoenix, and our Chair, Dr Paula Boyden was awarded a Fellowship from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. In addition, the team has attended /delivered at over 50 training sessions/events, engaging a diverse range of professionals including veterinary colleagues, animal welfare organisations, domestic and sexual abuse services, police, social workers, housing teams, health workers, substance misuse services, government departments and more across the UK and internationally. Through these activities we have provided training to over 2,950 professionals in 2025. **Fostering** A further key element of the Links Group is the animal fostering group, made up of specialist domestic abuse pet fostering organisations that include: ▪ Dogs Trust Freedom ▪ Cats Protection Lifeline ▪ Endeavour ▪ Refuge4Pets The teams have continued to work together to raise awareness of their services and of the issues facing all victim-survivors of domestic abuse, both people and their animals. In 2025 our animal fostering services supported over 1500 pets to escape domestic abuse by providing free and confidential pet fostering for over 1100 victim-survivors. All four reported an increase demand for services. Together, these groups have over 75 years of providing their specialist domestic abuse animal fostering services and have supported thousands of families and their animals. The work of trustee Mary Wakeham, CEO of Refuge4Pets, has ensured that animals have been included in the new administration templates for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) created with SafeLives national domestic abuse specialists. MARACs are convened for the most serious cases, where agencies work together to safeguard victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

		In July 2025 Mary began a two year part time research study into The Use and Abuse of Animals in Domestic Abuse-Related Deaths. This study is funded by Defra, run at the University of Bristol, and is supported by Refuge4Pets and The Links Group. All four animal fostering services have reported a rise in pet fostering clients across their individual services including those that have died by domestic abuse-related deaths relating or suicides in 2025 compared to previous years of service. This has had a significant impact on the teams and highlights again the ongoing abuse and impact that domestic has even after the point of fleeing, and the importance of the availability of these services.

Additional information (optional)
You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Achievements against objectives set	Para 1.41	Current priority objectives (progress against which is summarised above) 1. Develop the Links Group as a sustainable organisation 2. Deliver one under-grad training course per year in all established UK vet schools which are graduating vets 3. Deliver a 3 a year (rolling average) funded Links Veterinary Training programme alongside partner organisations at different locations across the UK 4. Create a suite of resources and collateral for vet teams, animal welfare teams and a broad range of professionals in touch with victim-survivors of abuse. 5. To set and regularly review appropriate standards for pet fostering services 6. Establish an overarching and underpinning marketing and communications plan 7. Initially planning for our 25th Anniversary Conference (November 2026)
Performance of fundraising activities against objectives set	Para 1.41	We successfully met the requirements set by the Pets Foundation to release the second year of grant funding towards online training delivery.

Investment performance against objectives	Para 1.41	N/A

Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period	Para 1.21	On 31/12/25 The Links Group had a cash balance of £70,536 held in its named bank account. This represented an in year increase in available funds of £17,067 (balance on 01/01/24, £53,469).
Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held	Para 1.22	A reserves policy was agreed by the board in January 2026. The policy, active from that point, states that the Links Group will maintain free unrestricted reserves to the value of three months running costs
Amount of reserves held	Para 1.22	N/A
Reasons for holding zero reserves	Para 1.22	New policy enacted from January 2026
Details of fund materially in deficit	Para 1.24	N/A
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	Para 1.23	The Trustee Board has no concerns with the charity's ability to continue as a going concern

Additional information (optional)
You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)	Para 1.47	**Sponsorship** The Links Group's main regular income is currently in the form of sponsorship from MSD Animal Health to support charity administration and the delivery of veterinary undergraduate training programmes. In 2025 the charity received £11,771 income from this source. In addition we received £5,000 sponsorship from Independent Vet Care. **Donations** The charity also received £984 in donations from individual and group supporters. **Grants** The charity also received a grant of £50,000 from the Pets Foundation. This represented the first two years income from a three year funding agreement to support the running of the Links Group and the development of new online training resources **Membership fees** There were no membership receipts in 2025 as in 2023 we revised our membership / supporter categories. Future income will be recorded a 'donations'
Investment policy and objectives including any	Para 1.46	The charity doesn't hold any investments

social investment policy adopted		
A description of the principal risks facing the charity	Para 1.46	Principle risks include – - Long term sustainability of funding - Demand for supported services

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:		
Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter)	Para 1.25	CIO Constitution adopted on 05/10/21
How is the charity constituted? (e.g unincorporated association, CIO)	Para 1.25	CIO
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Para 1.25	Trustees are recruited through an expression of interest process and then appointed by voting members

Additional information (optional)
You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	Para 1.51	All Trustees receive / complete the following induction • Attend NCVO's Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Course • Read our Constitution (Governing Document) • Read CC Trustee Welcome Pack (inc. CC3) • Read Charity Governance Code • Sign Links Group Trustee Code of Conduct • Sign Links Group Trustee Declaration of Interests • Signposted to key policies and procedures (e.g. expenses policy and claim form) • More experienced Trustees provide mentorship to those joining the Board
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	Para 1.51	The Trustee Board meets on a regular basis (roughly monthly) to monitor progress and agree actions. Some activity is delegated to sub-committees most notably the Pet Fostering Group who oversee their areas of responsibility and make recommendations

		to the board. The board retain accountability for this activity and decisions
Relationship with any related parties	Para 1.51	Several charities and corporate organisations are supporters of the Links Group. These include – **Charity supporters/partners who provide pet fostering services** Dogs Trust Cats Protection Refuge for Pets Endeavour **Corporate Supporters** CVS IVC Vet Partners **Partner organisations** BVA BSAVA
Other		

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	The Links Group
Other name the charity uses	
Registered charity number	9GHF42TR
Charity's principal address	Until 31st March 2025 The Links Group c/o Dogs Trust 17 Wakley Street London EC1V 7RQ From 1st April 2025 The Links Group C/O Cats Protection National Cat Centre Chelwood Gate Haywards Heath RH17 7TT

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Paula Boyden	Chair		
2	Mike Elliott	Treasurer (re-elected 13/10/25)		
3	Vicki Betton	Vice Chair		
4	David Martin	(re-elected 13/10/25)		
5	Rebecca Ashman	(re-elected 13/10/25)		
6	Rebecca Stephens			
7	Mary Wakeham			
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved

Director name		

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

Trustee name	Dates acted if not for whole year	

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Description of the assets held in this capacity	N/A
Name and objects of the charity on whose behalf the assets are held and how this falls within the custodian charity's objects	N/A
Details of arrangements for safe custody and segregation of such assets from the charity's own assets	N/A

Additional information (optional)

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

N/A

Exemptions from disclosure

Reason for non-disclosure of key personnel details

N/A

Other optional information

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	**Paula Boyden**	**Mike Elliott**
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	**Chair**	**Treasurer**
Date	01/09/2026	

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Links Group	1196067

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/01/2025	To	31/12/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	984	-	-	984	-
Sponsorship	16,771	-	-	16,771	-
Membership subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-
Grants	50,000	-	-	50,000	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	67,755	-	-	67,755	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	67,755	-	-	67,755	-
A3 Payments					
Admin/Office expenditure	134	-	-	134	-
Insurance	178	-	-	178	-
Website / IT costs	2,064	-	-	2,064	-
Marketing, Design, Print & Storage	11,948	-	-	11,948	-
Volunteer Expenses	6,254	-	-	6,254	-
Volunteer Recruitment & Training (inc. Trustees)	-	-	-	-	-
Service Delivery	1,262	-	-	1,262	-
Membership Fees	147	-	-	147	-
Professional Fees	28,701	-	-	28,701	-
Sub total	50,688	-	-	50,688	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	50,688	-	-	50,688	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	17,067	-	-	17,067	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	53,469	-	-	53,469	-
Cash funds this year end	70,536	-	-	70,536	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account	70,536	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	70,536	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		Mike Elliott (Treasurer)	06/07/2026
		Paula Boyden (Chair)	07/07/2026

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name The Links Group		
On accounts for the year ended	31st December 2025	**Charity no (if any)**	1196067
Set out on pages	9 to 12 (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 the 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 (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

* *Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:		**Date:**	26th October 2026
Name:	Yvonne F Smithers		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants		
Address:	Flat 3, Capricorn Place Lime Kiln Road Bristol BS8 4SX		

Section B	Disclosure
	Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).
Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.	