End of year review 2018/19

Chairman's introduction

A warm welcome from me to this review of our second year. It has been an amazing year in so many ways as we have seen some of our 'alumni' move on into various jobs and further education and we have been incredibly proud of their achievements. We have also piloted work experience provision for our younger beneficiaries to help them make that transition from the classroom to the workplace.

The year hasn't been without its challenges as ill health has forced us to cut back some activities that we had planned, but through the sterling work of our staff and volunteers, PALS Society has continued to flourish. This time has been well spent building partnerships to take the PALS model wider than we can deliver.

I would like to offer a personal thanks to my fellow trustees for keeping the charity going, and to the army of staff, parents and volunteers who have made all of this possible. A massive thanks to the people of Fareham, the employees at ONS, and the many businesses who have donated IT equipment to our computer upcycling. And an especial thanks to our volunteer mentors who have given freely of their specialist knowledge to help our young people with their projects. Finally, a thanks to the group of people who form our Steering Group and have contributed their ideas, energy, expertise and connections that have been instrumental in shaping what we do.
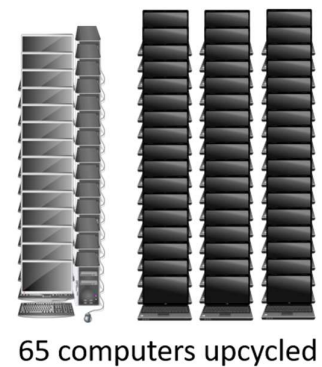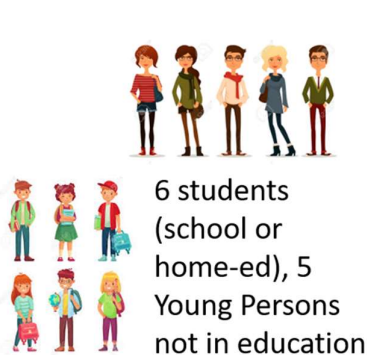
As with any charity, we are truly indebted to the foundations, trusts, and generous public who have provided the funds to keep us going. This year, we also must thank the caring customers for our upcycled computers and PALS Computing Confidence™ services which have truly exceeded all of our expectations, and this gives us not only finances to deliver it, but confidence that we are on the right track. If we can both help our beneficiaries who love computers and members of our community who lack confidence with computers, then this is a real win-win and will start the process of community building.

Next year we need to grow and need to raise the money to fund this growth. The demand for our services far outstrips our ability to deliver and we will do this through organic growth and partnership.
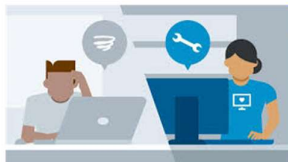
Delivery

This year saw a big change in our delivery model. Rather than taking car boots-full of equipment and tools to different community rooms, we hired a room at the offices of Community Action Fareham along with some storage space. We also employed our first member of staff who worked in the office three days per week. This allowed us much greater flexibility in the services that we could offer including a much better employment experience for those not in education, and formal work experience sessions for those who are. We also used the conference room at CAF on Saturdays for the traditional PALS upcycling sessions that aimed to improve confidence and socialisation in addition to producing computers for sale or providing services for customers.

Delivery in numbers.

6 students (school or home-ed), 5 Young Persons not in education

866 PALS hours upcycling and coding

65 computers upcycled

Activities

All delivered by 6 volunteers, 6 technical mentors, and 1 member of staff

Confidence

Over 100 IT customer services delivered as part of PALS Computing Confidence™

PALS SOCIETY

£11,000 in grants
£6,000 in donations
£5,000 in sales

The PALS Computing Confidence™ brand took a slight change this year as we moved from operating in community centres and the Tesco community space, to working out of our offices. This helped us with the management of the events and provided a base for working on customer services. It also provided more consistency for our beneficiaries who didn't like the anxiety associated with working out of different places – a particular problem for people with autism.
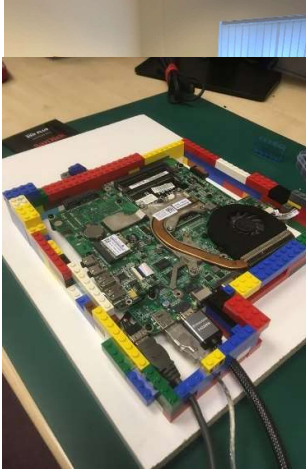
On the down-side, the office was immediately too small for our operations –at a push we could accommodate two people although on occasion we had more than this with volunteers working alongside our young people.

We spent a lot of time this year working on customer services through diagnosis, repair, performance improvement, and upgrading hardware. This all required the development of procedures to manage data security, sensitive components, and the development of a consistent specification for a product that we were happy to sign off for our customers.

One of our learnings as an organisation, and a learning for our young people, is that although the people who work with us have special interests within the broader area of IT, to complete a customer order requires working outside this area of interest. This is the transition that has to be made from a 'hobby' to 'work'. Although at times it was a struggle for our young people, they all produced work to incredibly high standards and consistency.

> I ordered a 2 screen PC for Ready2Shine which has specific requirements to accept dyslexia equipment. Steve and his team were great in supporting me and were REALLY knowledgeable. We have asked them for two laptops too!

> Having access to a host of new and up to date computers has helped our learners towards achieving their goals of gaining an IT qualification.
>
> It has also proven to be immeasurably useful to provide the local community with reliable equipment they can use in Job Club. Allowing them to search for new jobs, write CVs, fill in online application forms, and ultimately improve their lives.

Projects

Laptop Reuse

We call it 'Laptop in a Box'. We get donated a lot of laptops that have broken screens or keyboards, or battered cases which cannot economically be upcycled.

Rather than sending them for recycling, we asked one of our young people 'can the innards of a laptop be used to create a working computer that can be installed in a 3-D printed case?' To make the challenge greater, we wanted the plastic case to be fully waterproof.

We had a mentor from ONS, Graham, who was both a computer whizz and an electronics engineer and he helped our young person understand the requirements and, in particular, how to ensure that the resulting computer didn't over heat.

We started with Lego mockup so that we could prototype the product and start to understand how all the bits worked together.

We then advanced the idea with plastic storage boxes of various size and design and ended up creating our first 'single use pc' – a computer designed for the single task of wiping our hard drives. Although PCs are generally set up for multiple use, if we create one that costs less than £20 to build, is fully

waterproof, lightweight, with no 240V inside the box, then this can be used in a variety of locations as an incredibly safe computer. We can also strip out a lot of the operating system and create something that is easy for people who are not computer-savvy to use. This is PALS Computing Confidence™ in another guise.

Hard Drive wiping.

This year with the advent of GDPR and a focus on data security, and through the literally hundreds of hard drives that we had donated, we needed to revise our management of permanently removing sensitive information. This led to a brand new process which ensures that hard drives and solid state drives are logged, locked up, and processed securely through either our new wiping software or degausser unit that wipe to CESG, NATO, and US DoD standards.

This year we have erased in excess of 150 hard drives and SSDs that we reuse in our upcycling operations, and have permanently degaussed over 300 units that subsequently went for metal recycling.

We have a massive 'thank you' to the Tesco Bags for Good initiative that allowed us to purchase the degausser and Kill Disk software.

Web Scraping.

Based on a project sponsored by the Office for National Statistics, one incredibly talented young man has been working on producing the code that will help analysts extract data from local authority planning portals and compare results from across the country.

The young person working on this project had background in the coding language (python) but no knowledge of web scraping and so the project was both a development of his talents, and also an opportunity to do so for a piece of work that had a purpose to it. The work was supported by two mentors – Ben from the ONS who got things started, and Verity from the University of Southampton who instilled good practice and the development of industrial standards.

The project is still on-going and the next stage is to create a small team to replicate the code across the 350+ local authorities in England.

Pi for Africa

Based on the emotive story of a young girl in Syria[1] who was forced to flee her home and leave behind all her school books, we have devised a product based around the microcomputer Raspberry Pi that will enable a full set of education text books to be carried around in a pocket and connect anywhere there is electricity and a television set.

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[1] http://www.tedxteen.com/speakers/muzoon-rakan-almellehan
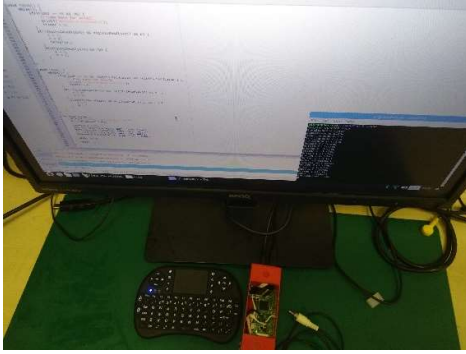
This project has involved engineering, design work, electronics to create the unit (see photos below), and is now moving into the coding phase where we create the operating system and application to read the books that will be stored on a memory card in the Pi unit.

Our aim is to create two prototypes for this unit, one operating solely on two push buttons, and another that interfaces with a Bluetooth keyboard and trackpad that will have greatly extended potential use. Both of these are designed to operate in harsh environments such as Africa and India. The coding has been mentored by Graham, a retired programmer from IBM.

We are looking to partner with a charity that operates in these areas in the education field to take our prototypes into local production.

Augmented reality

We are building a capability for creating augmented reality products and services. These are ideal projects for our beneficiaries as they require multi-disciplinary teams of creative people who think in non-traditional ways. The team comprises developers, graphical designers, video production, animation, audio, to name but a few. The benefit of these projects is that team members can focus on what they are really interested in and their talents, whilst collectively producing some amazing results.

A promise. Next year's annual review for PALS society will be a single sheet of augmented reality poster / web page.

Work experience.

Young people with alternative learning styles often find school incredibly difficult for a variety of reasons. After a long time in education, the transition to employment is equally fraught and opportunities to experience work in a safe setting are uncommon. This is where PALS Society's work experience program aims to fill a need.

We have essentially two different models of work experience that meet different needs.

1. One day per week over an extended period of time working on a specific project for a customers. The aim of these projects are to provide an opportunity to work on an area of interest that cannot be done within the usual school curriculum, or cannot be supported with the technical knowledge base within the school. These are also ideal for young people who are 'Educated Other Than At School' or Not in Employment Education or Training' (apologies for the acronyms which aren't ours).

   These work experience projects are designed to provide customer skills, understanding requirements, technical development, working with technical experts (the mentors that we bring into the projects) working to timetables, planning and delivery.

   They also aim to build self-confidence and reduce social anxiety by working in a safe environment with few demands outside those of the project.

2. Three to five days per week over a two week period working on computer upcycling. This could be extended in future to other projects where a product or service is offered to unspecified customers. These projects are ideal for young people in special schools or pupils suffering from social anxiety where accessing work experience in a traditional workplace is very difficult and impossible if the work also aligns with that person's interest. Typically pupils engaging on such work experience will be in Years 10 or 11 or early college.

These work experiences provide skills around teamwork, quality, delivery, workplace safety and commercial decisions.

They also build self-confidence and provide a break from education in an interesting and fun place to work.

External Support

In addition to the sterling efforts from our team of volunteers, PALS Society have been very fortunate to have had support from a number of external organisations who work in the voluntary sector. The message here is that the work of charity and community groups is incredibly valuable and that there are brilliant organisations out there who want to help – and we are indebted to them all.

🌅 Debevoise and Plimpton have provided pro-bono legal advice as part of the package of support from UnLtd. Our legal team of Ben, Freddie, Martha and Chris have provided advice on topics ranging from employment, a change to our objects through the Charity Commission, and a set of Articles of Association for a social firm linked to PALS Society.

🌅 Trustees Unlimited have connected our chairman with Gordon Muir from Social Investment Business to act as a critical friend and mentor.

🌅 One Community have provided review and advice on preparing grant applications, and in particular the National Lottery Awards for All grant which we won in March.

🌅 One Community and Community First, and Rotary Social Innovation South East Hampshire, Autism Hampshire and National Autistic Society South East Hampshire branch, have supported us locally and continue to connect us with the right people to provide help and support on the ground.

Fund raising

Whereas last year was about raising funds to start us off, this year has been mainly about spending that money. We have been fortunate to have attracted additional funds from:

So, the major sources of income for PALS Society this year (excluding donations made for services or upcycled computers) has been, in time order:

Grant Provider and Use	Amount	Logo
Hampshire County Council to purchase video equipment for our augmented reality projects	£600	Hampshire County Council

This was the second year of our Community Award from Fareham Borough Council that has provided the kit and tools for upcycling and Computing Confidence ™	£4,922	FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
Social Investment Business provided a grant to market test our plans. This is still in progress being carried out by Action Hampshire on our behalf	£10,000	Social Investment Business
Our Treasurer raised money during Stoptober – she resisted all snacks for a month!	£500	
Co-op Community Award	£500 for the first 6 months.	Choose us as your Co-op local cause Go online coop.co.uk/membership

In addition to the monies donated or awarded to PALS Society, we have started to bring in income through sales of computers and the IT services that we offer. A rough breakdown of these is:

Computer Sales & Services   £5,000

Other income   £7,000 (donations)

Grand total approximately £23,600

PALS Society Balance Sheet
Year ending - 30th April 2019

	2019	2018
	£	
Fixed Assets		
Office Equipment	-	282.49
	-	282.49
Current Assets		
Debtors	10.00	114.17
Bank Account	17,294.09	16,051.22
VAT Liability	184.21	597.45
	17,488.30	16,762.84
Current Liabilities		
Grants	-	
Creditors : Short Term	-	
VAT Liability	-	339.38
	-	
Current Assets less Current Liabilities:	17,488.30	16,423.46
Total Assets less Current Liabilities:	17,488.30	
Long Term Liabilities		
	-	
Total Assets less Total Liabilities:	**17,488.30**	**16,705.95**
Capital & Reserves		
Funds	1,497.88	
P & L Account	15,990.42	16,705.95
	17,488.30	**16,705.95**

	2019		2018	
Sales	**£**		**£**	
Donations	7,288.40		1,522.91	
Grants	11,991.48		19,116.03	
Sales	4,961.02		245	
		24,240.90		**20,883.94**
Purchases				
		-		-
Direct Expenses				
COGS	32.96			
Advertising	105.08			
Stock for Charity Shop			22.07	
Fund Raising			147.14	
		138.04		**169.21**
Gross Profit/(Loss):		**24,102.86**		**20,714.73**
Overheads				
Rent and Rates	3,650.00		120.00	
Travelling Expenses	518.90		159.50	
Printing and Stationery	1,297.36		485.53	
Telephone and Computer charges	5,624.20		2,855.55	
Maintenance	1,156.08		-	
General Expenses	3,297.54		292.23	
Bank Charges and Interest	0.54		33.48	
Gross Wages	6,983.55		-	
Professional Fees	792.34		62.50	
		23,320.51		**4,008.79**
Net Profit/(Loss):		**782.35**		**16,705.94**

Impact.

Pals impact statement

This statement was prepared with the collaboration of the young people attending pals workshops, their families and education personnel who support the young people at school. All were very happy to contribute to the report. Direct quotes are in italics and inverted commas.

Everyone reported that the experience at PALS has been enjoyable and very worthwhile as a learning activity.

'Thoroughly enjoyed his work experience. He was buzzing when he came home and was eager to go back each day. So much was his enthusiasm, he worked in the half term holiday too.'

'It has provided him with friendships, chatting to like minded people and learning more about computers.'

All the young people said that they had learnt a lot both in their knowledge of the workings of computers but also in their self-awareness and working with other, learning coping strategies in potentially stressful situations. The young people are learning cooperation as well as technical skills.

'At times he struggled to see why things were done in a certain way. It was an opportunity for him to realise that people work in different ways.'

'If he disagrees with Steve or Miles, he is now able to verbalise ideas and opinions and has also learnt to take himself out of the situation instead of losing control.'

'He learnt a lesson about his own traits, and can now empathise with family and peers and their frustrations. This was something he was not able to do before.'

They report that they can see the value in what they are doing and feel well supported by Steve and Miles, who have also drafted in outside expertise when it was needed. They have plenty of tools and equipment but comment on the lack of space in the present premises at CAF. Volunteers report that in previous locations there was space for pastoral work which was helpful.

'If he doesn't see the value in something, he won't do it. This has helped him focus.'

'The sessions at TESCO worked well. The office is too small and difficult to organise.'

'If PALS had a dedicated building it would be a real help.'

Contributors report that social interaction has improved. Social communication and interaction is a major issue for many of our young people and PALS provides opportunities

for talking to others (including people who are relative strangers) ,explaining, following instructions and taking part in a group, all in a safe and understanding environment. The young people were nervous about starting work at PALS. For some of them, this was their first experience of working outside of a school environment and so it has been very important that it has been a positive experience.

''PALS has helped him become more confident, independent, better at explaining himself and more patient and understanding of others.'

'He was anxious about going but once on site and working, the anxiety went away. From a parent's perspective, this is a credit to the team at PALS for making him feel comfortable and engaging him in the work.'

'I felt nervous about coming here and whether I'd be able to do it, but once you're here they'll help you and you feel better.'

'He has had to interact with new faces where before he would refuse to interact with strangers. He is now more tolerant of people around him.'

PALS has helped to prepare the young people for work in the future. It has given them skills and knowledge, teaching them about responsibility and working with others.

'He has learnt a lot about responsibility in a work place environment, understanding that quality of work is a factor in prompting customer satisfaction and future business.'

'It's giving him the skills to get a job. It would be good to walk through the application process with someone he trusts, maybe something for the future.'

All the beneficiaries report that they would wholeheartedly recommend PALS to friends, school mates and colleagues. They are unanimous in their gratitude to the PALS team for all these benefits.

'I feel comfortable here and I've learnt a lot.'