



Building Communities with People with Learning Disabilities

www.larche.org.uk



L'Arche is about living and sharing life with,
rather than providing a service for, people with
learning disabilities

Change, challenge and growth

L'Arche communities are places where people with and without learning disabilities share life together. How we do this is evolving. The professional landscape in which we find ourselves is undergoing great change. The introduction of individualised budgets and the *Valuing People Now* strategy in England and Wales and *Same as You* in Scotland will have a radical effect.

Two questions are emerging; “How do we move forward as a first class support provider?” and at the same time “How do we build community?”

In the midst of all these changes, it is essential that we hold onto the fundamental values which make L'Arche unique.

- Our commitment as people with and without learning disabilities to sharing life.
- Our commitment to supporting each person with or without learning disabilities to grow to their full human potential, including in their spiritual life.
- Our commitment to decisions being taken at the lowest possible level in the organisation and a culture where competition has no place.
- Our commitment to L'Arche as an international movement. We are part of an expanding federation of over 130 Communities worldwide from Australia to Zimbabwe.

For L'Arche it is not a question of choosing between either providing excellent professional support or building community based on our core values. One is an integral

part of the other. L'Arche's organisational structure is underpinned by an absolute commitment to providing excellent professional support which not only meets, but exceeds inspection requirements.

In this review, people who share life in L'Arche Communities reflect upon their different personal experiences and some of the key issues facing L'Arche today; independence, inclusion, friendship and spirituality.

- **L'Arche does not have to choose between building community and being a good support service. One is vital to the other.**
- **Some things about L'Arche make it different from other support organisations.**
 - We are people with and without learning disabilities who share life together.
 - We want people to grow and to have a spiritual life if they wish to.
 - We like to make our decisions together whenever we can.
 - There are L'Arche communities all over the world.

The UK's National Speaking Group ensures the inclusion of people 'with learning disabilities' in debates which affect their lives and communities

01 Inclusion

Last October, Richard Keagan-Bull, spoke to the International Assembly of L'Arche in Kolkata, India about his role as Chair of the L'Arche UK National Speaking Group.

L'Arche has always been good at speaking on behalf of people who can't communicate. This is a valuable skill, but it is not a substitute for including people in a decision making process. The UK's National Speaking Group was set up to ensure the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in debates which affect their lives and Communities.

"As an organisation which values difference, it was expected that delegates with a learning disability should play a role in The Assembly in India," says John Sargent, National Co-ordinator.

The charge of tokenism is easy to levy. Just by putting someone onto a group does not mean they understand the discussion. The whole thrust of the Mental Capacity Act is that capacity is decision specific; that people have the capacity to make some decisions but not others. It is important to recognise that people have a variety of abilities that allow them to join decision-making processes in various ways and at various levels.

People with learning disabilities have always been part of the decision-making process in their own L'Arche Communities. The traditional weekly 'House Night' grew from a desire to create a forum in which everyone could 'own' and share the plans for the week ahead.

Within their Communities in the UK, people with learning disabilities are involved in interviews and appraisals, monthly listening groups and Community councils.

In L'Arche Bognor the Committee meeting of local trustees always begins with a report from one of the people with disabilities living in the Community. In the Lambeth Community they have recently begun a newsletter written by people with learning disabilities, for people with learning disabilities.

In the first edition Richard Keagan-Bull talks about another recent trip, this time to Auschwitz.

"I think in life we should try and understand each other and work things out and never want war- just be happy with what we've got. It doesn't matter if you're black or white, if you can speak or not speak-it's what you can give that counts."

- The National Speaking Group enables people with learning disabilities to have a say about things that affect their lives.
- Some people with learning disabilities are able to make some decisions but not others.
- People with learning disabilities are involved in lots of decision making in L'Arche Communities .



Linda will have the flat she always dreamed of as part of a community, a network of established relationships which will support her to take new risks and to grow

02

Independence

In L'Arche Liverpool Linda is one of three people watching with special interest as a purpose-built block of flats slowly takes shape. Everyone in the block will have their own front door and a lease in their own name. There will also be a flat for assistants, so some support will always be available.

Linda will have the flat she has always dreamed of, as part of a community, where a network of established relationships will support her to take risks and to grow. In return Linda in her independence will bring a new richness and diversity to community life.

This type of independence has always been embraced by L'Arche. People with learning disabilities in the Lambeth, Kent, Edinburgh, Inverness, Ipswich and Liverpool Communities are living in their own flats and yet are still very clearly part of their local L'Arche Community, with all the relationships and informal support that brings.

Veronica from the Lambeth Community says "I need my own space. It's my dream."

In the Kent Community, Vince lives happily in his own flat. "It means I can eat when I want to," he says.

A year ago, George moved into his own flat in Edinburgh. He had been keen to have his own place for a long time. The move has given George the domestic independence he craved. "Doing the washing up, doing the bed, doing the floor is best.

I put my sheets in the washing machine. You press the button and put the powder in and that's it, it takes the muck away."

There is a natural tension between independence and a desire for community. What we all need is a balance between the freedom of independence and the security of community.

John Redwood, Community Leader in Edinburgh says "Independent living for people with and without learning disabilities may imply freedom, opportunity and happiness but the reality can be very different. We may think we long for independence, when we really crave a form of interdependence: a place of our own but supported by a network of relationships and activities that keeps us connected and engaged with the world.

"We would argue that the ideal is *interdependent* rather than *independent* living. It is the relationships that George has already established in L'Arche and the wider community that protect him from isolation and loneliness."

- L'Arche has always supported people with learning disabilities to live independently.
- Living in Community or being interdependent protects people who live on their own from being lonely.





To every blade of grass God has given an angel
that bends over and whispers in its ear,
'Grow, grow, grow!'

The Talmud

03

Spirituality

About a year had passed since Yvonne had suddenly been taken from us. The house had slowly gone back to its normal rhythm. Bob hadn't mentioned her for a long time and I was nervous about raising memories which might be painful for him. He sat patiently in his wheelchair while I did my best to untangle the laces of his boots. Bob started to bang his foot on the floor and make the humming sound that was his unmistakable impersonation of Yvonne. "You still miss her and it hurts." I said. Bob nodded and quietly said her name. "Me too." I said.

Caring for each other in Community means so much more than ensuring an acceptable level of material comfort. Our hearts are hungry for relationship, mutual respect and the nourishment of our spirit.

Since its beginning L'Arche has treasured the sacred gift of the spirit within each person. God is present to us through each member of our Community. Ensuring the availability, for those who wish them, of times of prayer, membership of a faith community (such as a parish) and celebrations of the feasts of the year of your religious tradition, are only the beginning of how we have learned to nourish the spirit within each person. Each of us in L'Arche is called to listen deeply to those with whom we have chosen to share our lives in community. We listen to each other with our eyes and with our hearts. "What gives you life?" "What makes you smile?" "What is your heart hungry for?"

Much good work is being done in academic circles today which confirms the insight that L'Arche has held from its beginning; to flourish as people we need opportunities to nourish our inner lives. Those people in our society who have a learning disability have too often been deprived of this essential element of a full and rich life.

For some of us, finding space, silence, creativity and meaningful relationships is easy. Some of us need help to find the food for our spirit that is essential if we are to continue to grow to our full potential. Spiritual accompaniment, retreats, a chance to have our voice heard in decisions about our religious choices are a basic right of each one of us, if that is what we want.

In a world that is often too busy to be still, a world that often seems to value people in material or economic categories, the members of L'Arche want to say something different. We do not live on bread alone. Life in its fullness, the life of the spirit, is a gift to be treasured and nourished in each one of us.

- **Caring for each other in L'Arche is about more than making each other comfortable. It is about listening to each other's needs.**
- **It is important to find time for a spiritual life if this makes us happy. For L'Arche this is a basic right.**



Mutual relationships and friendships continue to be at the heart of L'Arche

04

Friendship

“Will you be my friend?” This was the question that started L'Arche. It was put to Jean Vanier by a man with a learning disability living in a large institution. Jean, seeking an authentic way to say ‘yes’, invited some people from this institution to come and live with him, and so L'Arche began.

Friendships continue to be at the heart of L'Arche – friendships that transcend the categories into which we all too easily put people; assistant, person with a learning disability, committee member, etc. Friendships don't recognise these distinctions because friendships are relationships based on the mutual attraction of one person to another, not because of what you do but because of who you are.

Recently L'Arche's stance on friendships has been challenged. There are those who take the view that friendship between 'service users' and 'employees' who are paid to support them is unprofessional and therefore not possible. We would prefer to say it is 'non professional': a mutual choice to go beyond the boundaries of professional relationships of support.

The debate centres on whether it is possible, as we contend, to provide a support service that meets the required professional standards *and* at the same time to be friends with the people you are supporting.

At policy level this can be seen as an example of the clash between what is referred to as the 'safeguarding agenda'

on the one hand and the 'personalisation' agenda on the other. The safeguarding agenda is concerned with keeping vulnerable adults safe – but safe from what? Life is inherently risky. Attempts to eliminate risk completely from people's lives, will potentially also eliminate any possibility of leading a meaningful adult life.

The personalisation agenda is concerned with putting people with learning disabilities in control of their own lives. The messages coming through from people with learning disabilities and their families are clear. They want real, fulfilling friendships – if these friendships overlap with people in professional roles, so be it.

In the long run, we believe that this is good news for L'Arche. Essentially, it is an affirmation of our identity and our mission. People with learning disabilities are still asking that same question. “Will you be my friend?” We hope that L'Arche will continue to offer an authentic “Yes”.

- Friendships are at the heart of L'Arche.
- Friendships take time and help people to grow.
- Friendships keep people safe.
- L'Arche says “Yes” to friendships.



Supporting L'Arche in the UK

L'Arche communities in the UK receive no financial help from government sources to fund new properties or to modify existing ones. This means that to improve or expand our services in order to meet the changing needs of the people with learning disabilities we support, we must raise the money ourselves. Last year we began an appeal to help fund the start-up costs for the new L'Arche communities in Glasgow and Manchester. So far we have raised nearly £50,000 towards these projects, but more donations are needed to hit the £250,000 target.

We must also raise money to help our small team of administration staff and volunteers based in Silsden, West Yorkshire. They support all the L'Arche Communities in the UK by disseminating best practice, promoting and monitoring good standards and ensuring the charity meets its legal and financial requirements. Without this team, communities would be over-burdened with legal responsibilities, leaving less time to support our members. Their role is invaluable.

Being part of the L'Arche International Federation brings many gifts to people living in L'Arche communities and membership of this worldwide family is embraced and welcomed. The same is true of our spiritual activities such as retreats and L'Arche training, which are so vital to maintaining our standards, vision and identity, but which are often difficult to fund from traditional sources.

L'Arche in the UK also raises money to help support other L'Arche communities around the world. In particular, we have a special relationship with the communities in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Financial help is vital and can make the difference between life or death for the men, women and children with learning disabilities living there.

We thank all our supporters for their generous gifts through donations, legacies and grants. Your support is vital to our work and can make a real and lasting difference to the lives of people with learning disabilities both in the UK and overseas. Please continue to support us.

Donation Form

Please complete, detach and return in the enclosed envelope or return to L'Arche, FREEPOST BD 3209, 10 Briggate, Silsden, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD20 9BR.

I wish to make a donation of £ _____

Please use my donation towards the work of:

L'Arche UK or Overseas L'Arche UK L'Arche Overseas

I enclose a cheque CAF voucher

Please make cheques payable to L'Arche

OR - please debit my Visa / MasterCard / CAF Card

Card No.

Expiry Date:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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L'Arche can reclaim tax on your donation at no cost to you.

Yes, I am a UK Taxpayer and I want L'Arche to treat my donation as Gift Aid, reclaiming tax on this and all donations made from this date until I notify you otherwise. (Please delete if not applicable)

My contact details are:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other _____

First Name _____

Surname _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

No, please do not include my details on your mailing list

Please send information about

Leaving a legacy Becoming an assistant

Books, CDs & DVDs/Videos

Would you like to receive this or further news about L'Arche publications by email? Yes No

Identity & Mission

The L'Arche Identity and Mission statements set out the basis for our Communities in the UK and around the world.

Identity Statement

- We are people with and without learning disabilities, sharing life in Communities belonging to an International Federation.
- Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together.
- We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need of one another.

UK Mission Statement

- We will nurture Communities of faith in which mutually transforming relationships can flourish.
- We will promote the gifts of people with learning disabilities and enable them to take a full part in L'Arche and society.
- We will be open and outward looking, actively engaged with those around us and responsive to changing needs and circumstances.

How Could You Support L'Arche?

- Are you interested in living in a L'Arche Community, sharing life with people with learning disabilities as an assistant in the UK or overseas?
- Do you have professional skills? Would you consider becoming a member of a local committee?
- You could support L'Arche by making a donation, or even better by setting up a regular standing order.
- You could organise or take part in a fundraising event.
- You could leave L'Arche a legacy in your will to support growth in the UK.

We have made every attempt to obtain permission from people who appear in the photographs. Some names have been changed on request. L'Arche is registered as a charity in England and Wales, No. 264166, and in Scotland, No. SC038493. L'Arche is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, No. 1055041.

L'Arche Communities in the UK

North West & Wales

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Liverpool
The Ark Workshops
Lockerby Road
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L'Arche Manchester Project
The Parish Office
6 Barlow Moor Road
Didsbury, M20 6TR
E: manchester@larche.org.uk

Brecon
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Brecon
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South

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Dover
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Highlights of 2008

Facts, figures and information about L'Arche in the UK



Recent Highlights Include

- Establishing the National Speaking Group to strengthen the voice of members with learning disabilities in the structures of L'Arche. Delegates from all Communities meet to share views with members of the National Committee and Regional Councils.
- Planning for another new member to be part of the Ipswich Community while living independently.
- Increasing the number of people with disabilities who are supported in Inverness' new work and day provision from 25 to 31.
- One member realising a long held dream of moving into his own flat in Edinburgh.
- Continuing to look at a number of options to extend support within the City of Preston.
- Successful fundraising for and starting work on a new Community Room in Bognor.
- The regular Lambeth Community-organised 'Boogie Nights' that attract increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities not otherwise associated with L'Arche.
- Identification of a variety of sustainable work and day provision activities for members.
- Continuing planning work to develop a group of flats to increase the opportunities for more independent living within the Liverpool Community.
- Tendering for learning disability support services with Liverpool City Council.
- Building a ground floor suite to enable greater accessibility for a member in Kent.
- Developing plans for a training café in the City of Glasgow
- Formal approval from L'Arche Northern Europe Zone for the Project in Manchester.
- Supporting local groups in Nottingham, North Wales, Durham and Ilkley.
- Raising more than £24,000 from participation in the Great North Run and £3,600 from four climbers in the Ben Nevis Challenge.
- Ensuring that the Communities in Uganda and Zimbabwe were able to fund their running costs for the year, through the Overseas Development Fund.

Special Thanks

Special Thanks ... to all our donors, including the following trusts, companies, groups and organisations that donated £500 or more in the year ended 31 July 2008

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Alan Cadbury Trust | Community of Presentation | June Baker Singers | Salisbury Cathedral |
| Alwoodley Golf Club | Community of Transfiguration | Junior King's School | Scottish Executive Council |
| Amelia Chadwick Trust | Crudens Foundation | Kathleen Hannay Trust | Society of Holy Child Jesus |
| Anchor Foundation | Culra Trust | The Leonard Trust | Soroptomists International of Waverley |
| The Batty Trust | The Darton Charitable Trust | Lloyds TSB Foundation | St Augustine's Church |
| Beatrice Hankey Foundation | Daughters of Jesus Provincialate | Monamy Trust | St James Episcopal Church |
| Beatrice Laing Trust | Delbanco Meyer & Co | Naphthens LLP | St Margaret's PCC |
| Bisgood Charitable Trust | Diamond House Trust | National Lottery Awards For All | St Richard's, Aldwick |
| The Bishop's Lent Appeal, Invergordon | Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund | Oak Trust | Thrale Almshouses |
| BT Charitable Trust | Edinburgh Diocesan Synod | The Paragon Trust | Tilyloss Trust |
| BT, Ipswich | Erica Leonard Charitable Trust | PCC St Peter, Woolton | TTSS Copeman Charities |
| Canterbury Cathedral | Forbes Charitable Trust Foundation | Peter Aldridge Concert | Tulloch Homes |
| Cattanach Trust | Friarsgate Trust | PJF Storrs Trust | Ushaw College, Durham |
| Barclaycard | Friends of L'Arche Brecon | Queens Cross Church, Aberdeen | The Will Trust |
| Chichester Cathedral | Garfield Weston Foundation | Richard Fraser Trust | Elizabeth & Prince Zaiger Trust |
| Chislehurst Churches | Gibbs Charitable Trust | Richardson Family Trust | Xiros Plc |
| Christ Church, Ipswich | Holy Trinity Church, Elgin | Rock Church Centre, Everton | |
| | J Murray Napier Fund | Russell Trust | |

... and also to all runners, concert-givers, sheep dog trialers, Rotarians, fair and fête organisers ... and to the many un-named but greatly-appreciated individuals who have been so generous both with money and time during the year. We are also most grateful for a number of legacies that we have received during the year.





General Enquiries

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Who's Who... as at 14 February 2009

L'Arche in the UK Management

National Committee Members (Trustees)

Kathleen O'Gorman, Chair
Catherine Baines, Vice-Chair
Peter Whalley, Treasurer
Diane Reid
David Race

Ex-officio as local committee chairs

Sarah Taylor – Kent
Stephen Pennington – Inverness
Simon Holleron – Liverpool
Mark Hudson – Lambeth
Roy Pickett – Bognor Regis
Jeffrey Morris – Brecon
Jim McEvoy – Edinburgh
Judith Chaloner – Preston
Alex Scott-Barrett – Ipswich
Deirdre Blagbrough – Glasgow
Ruth Thompson – Manchester

Professional Membership

L'Arche is a founder member of Association for Real Change, a member of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, ACTS and Churches Together in England.

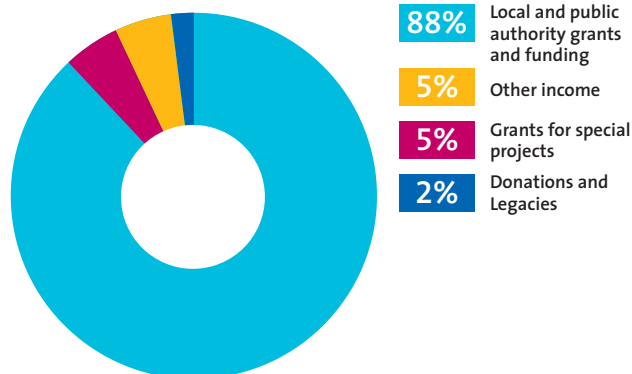
National Team

John Sargent – National Coordinator and Company Secretary
Heather Coogan – Regional Coordinator, Scotland
Anthony Kramers – Regional Coordinator, North England and Wales
Michael Bentham – Human Resources Officer and Acting Regional Coordinator, South England
Debbie Walker – Finance Co-ordinator

Community Leaders

Eddie Gilmore – Kent
Angie Adamson – Inverness
Phil Montanjees – Liverpool
Corinne McDonald – Lambeth
Christopher Bemrose – Bognor
Agnieszka Karolak – Brecon
John Redwood – Edinburgh
Maggy Cooper – Preston
Anne Marie Roszczyk – Ipswich

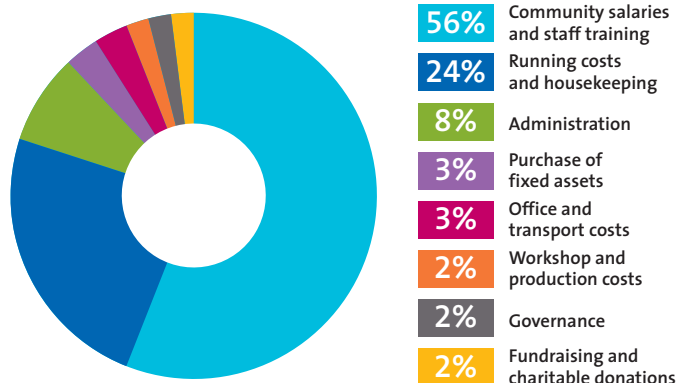
Where our money came from



Income for the year ended 31 July 2008 was £6,855,590.

A full copy of the Annual Report and Financial Statements is available from the Silsden Office

How the money was spent



Expenditure for the year ended 31 July 2008 was £6,480,820