



STRM - SEND the Right Message
Registered Charity 1193572



Annual Report

Reporting Period: February 2024 – March 2025

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Our Mission & Vision

Mission:
To improve the lives of families in Southend and Essex where a child or young person (aged 0–25) is neurodivergent or disabled, by providing inclusive, peer-led support.

Vision:
A future where families are empowered, connected, and supported to thrive with neurodivergent and disabled children reaching their full potential.



1.2 Our Story

STRM – SEND the Right Message Charity was created to support families in Southend and Essex who are caring for children with, or suspected to have, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The idea for the charity began in 2019, when Maggie Cleary, STRM's Co-Founder and CEO, was searching for the right support for her neurodivergent children. Like many parents, Maggie felt overwhelmed by the complex SEND system and often isolated, unsure where to turn. She realised that families faced even greater challenges when children began to struggle with their mental health often linked to unmet needs, delays in early intervention, and a lack of timely identification.

Maggie connected with other parents who shared similar experiences. Together, they created a supportive space built on empathy, shared experience, and hope.

This collaboration led to the establishment of SEND the Right Message Charity (STRM), formally constituted and registered on 17 February 2021.

Today,
STRM remains a
by-parents, for-parents
organisation, offering
practical support, genuine
understanding, and a strong
sense of community for
families navigating the
world of SEND.

1.3 Our Values – The GUIDE Framework

At STRM, our work has always been grounded in inclusiveness, commitment, empowerment, and integrity.

Our GUIDE Values
Growth, Understanding, Integrity, Diversity, and Encouragement – build on our original principles while introducing a clearer, more memorable framework.

Building on these foundations, we have developed a new set of values that reflect how STRM works today.

They highlight STRM's neuro-affirming, family-led approach and bring forward key qualities such as growth, diversity, and encouragement, which capture the essence of how we help families and communities to thrive.



- G Growth:**
We learn, adapt, and evolve together with the families and communities we serve.
- U Understanding:**
We listen first and respond with empathy, recognising every individual journey.
- I Integrity:**
We act transparently and ethically, ensuring accountability in all we do.
- D Diversity:**
We celebrate difference and actively promote equality, inclusion, and accessibility.
- E Encouragement:**
We empower families and volunteers to build confidence, resilience, and hope.

1.4 Chief Executive’s Report – Maggie Cleary

Pride in Our Year

Looking back over the past year at STRM (SEND the Right Message Charity), I feel immense pride in what we have achieved together.

This year has powerfully reaffirmed the strength of being community-driven and parent-led. As a grassroots charity, we celebrate our differences and share our stories, knowing that the SEND journey and raising a disabled or neurodivergent child can be incredibly challenging but also fulfilling.

At STRM, we work to build trust, validate each other’s experiences, and co-produce support that genuinely meets families’ needs. Creating a warm, welcoming space where everyone can be themselves isn’t just something we do – it’s who we are.



A New Home for STRM

A significant milestone was our move from Labyrinth House in Westcliff to our new home on High Road, Benfleet. A more accessible, welcoming space for families and staff alike.

Inclusive Clubs & Courses
Our inclusive Bouldering Club, delivered with Indirock, offers neurodivergent children a safe space to build confidence, coordination, and friendships.

We also delivered financial wellbeing course called “Multiply Courses” in partnership with SAFE Essex, Myotas, and Enable East, equipping parents with practical numeracy and budgeting skills.



Celebrating Six Years Online
In March, we proudly marked six years of our trusted online parent forum, which now connects more than 2,000 parent carers every day, a vital safe space for advice, solidarity, and shared lived experiences.

Expanding Peer Support & Training
We expanded our delivery of peer support groups, disability benefits workshops, and parent training sessions to empower families with knowledge, confidence, and connection.
In partnership with Cadent and SAVS, we also provided Cost of Living and Energy Advice to help families navigate rising expenses and the additional costs of disability.

National Reach of Our Flagship Guide

Our flagship guide *Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child*, co-written by myself, Paula Farrow & and Sam Read from Myotas, co-produced with Essex Family Forum, Health & Education Partners, and parent carers, continues to deliver national impact.



Over 17,000 families across Southend, Essex, Thurrock and 12 other regions have used this trusted resource, jointly commissioned by Essex County Council and the five ICBs as part of ‘Waiting Well’ Early Help. We’ve secured funding for a further year and are exploring expansion aligned to devolution plans.

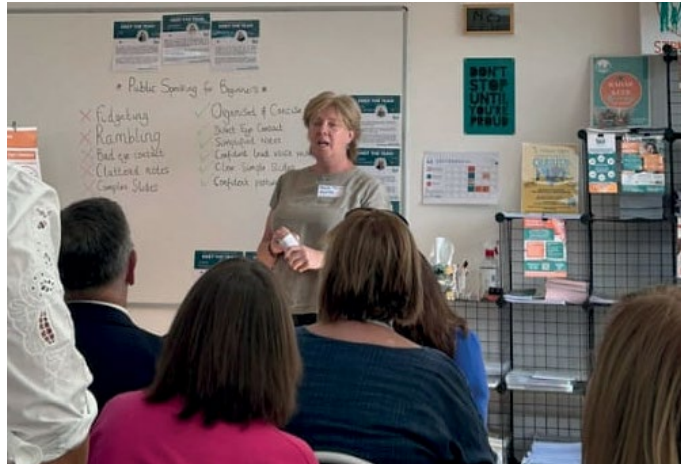
A Great Start for Community Collaboration

In September 2024, STRM Charity proudly hosted a community event bringing together families, volunteers, and key local leaders including Lynsey McCarthy-Calvert, Mayor of Castle Point, Rebecca Harris MP, Nigel Leonard, Board of Directors, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), Glenn Westrop, Deputy Director of Quality and Safety, EPUT, Clare Angell, Deputy Director for Babies, Children and Young People, SEND & Specialised Commissioning, and Senior Responsible Officer for Learning Disabilities and Autism, and Cllr Andrew Sheldon, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills & Training, Essex County Council.

The event featured inspiring contributions from guest speakers and partner organisations, including Maggie Cleary, CEO of STRM Charity; Paula, CEO of MyOTAS; Andrea, SAFE Essex; and Rachel, RAW Learning. Together, they highlighted the importance of collaboration across health, education, and community sectors in improving early identification, reducing delays, and empowering families navigating neurodivergence.

The event embodied partnership, inclusion, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for neurodivergent and disabled children across South Essex. Together, families, professionals, and civic leaders are strengthening early help, building trust, and continuing to SEND the Right Message across our communities.





IT-HelpDesk.Co



Strengthening Our Systems

Thanks to IT Help Desk, Leigh-on-Sea, for keeping our systems secure and GDPR-compliant as we grow. Their expertise enables STRM to maintain a reliable digital infrastructure, strengthen governance, and uphold the highest standards of data protection and operational security.

Stronger Governance & Recognition

We welcomed new trustees bringing fresh skills and experience to STRM's board. Nationally, we continue to contribute to SEND and mental health policy conversations. Locally, we were honoured to welcome the Mayor of Castle Point, the Mayor of Rochford, and David Burton-Sampson MP to see our work first-hand.



Looking Forward with Confidence

Our services are available in person, online, and via our digital forum, allowing families to choose how and when to engage. Many of our team are SEND parents themselves, walking this journey alongside the families we support.

We remain committed to creating safe, trusted spaces and practical resources where every child and family can be heard, understood, and grow with confidence and connection. None of this would be possible without our dedicated team, volunteers, trustees, partners, funders, and most importantly – the families we serve.

With heartfelt thanks,

Maggie Cleary
Chief Executive Officer



1.5 Highlights of 2024/25

Expanded service delivery across

Castle Point, Rochford and Southend



Delivered more than
68 peer-to-peer sessions,
workshops and benefit
appointments

Partnered with
Myotas Charity, SAFE Essex,
Indirock and Raw Learning
to co-deliver projects



Supported over
1,200 families
through guidance, training
and community activities

Launched a new digital
CRM system
to improve impact tracking
and reporting



Strengthened
volunteer programme
and introduced new
training pathways

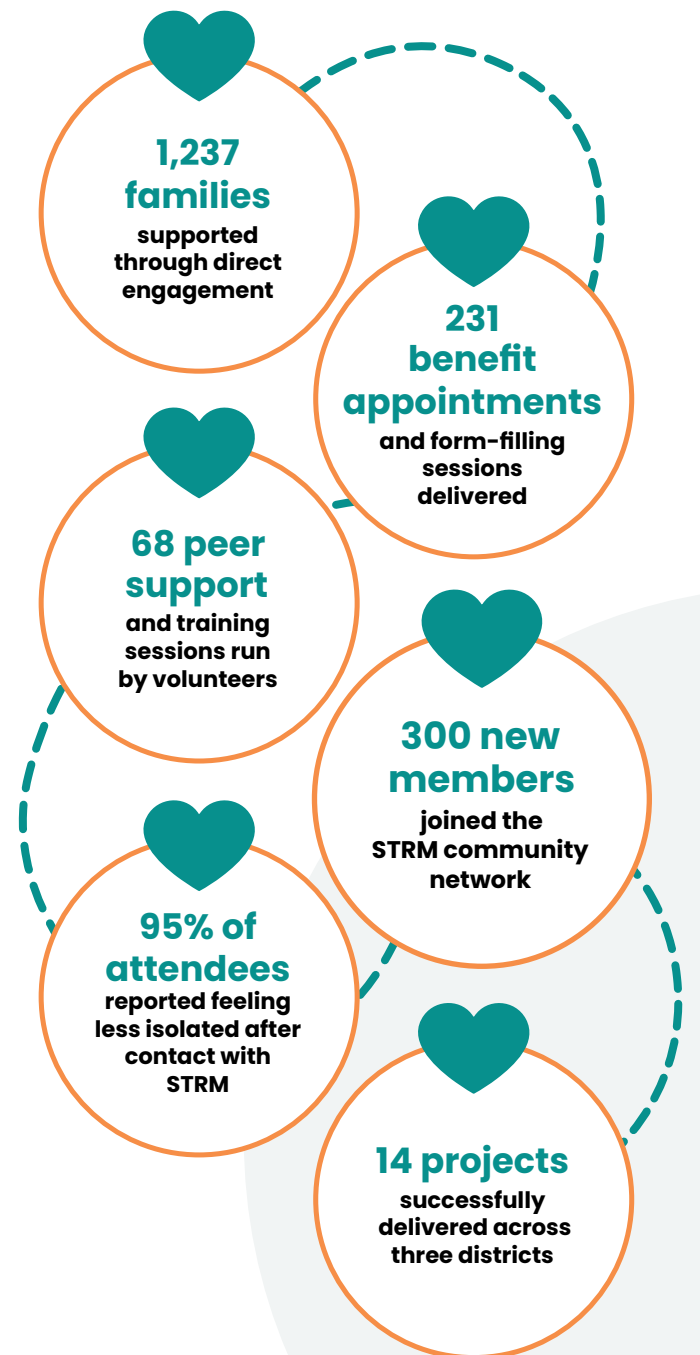
Recognised by local
authorities and funders
for lived-experience leadership



1.6 Our Impact at a Glance

STRM continues to reach a growing number of families across South Essex, delivering measurable improvements in confidence, connection, and access to support.

2024/25 Impact Summary (13-month period):



1.7 Acknowledgements

We extend heartfelt thanks to the families, volunteers, and community partners who make STRM's mission possible.

Their dedication, trust and shared values inspire everything we do to enable STRM to support SEND families across South Essex to feel seen, heard and supported.

GOVERNANCE

2.1 Our Charity Structure & Approach

Board of Trustees

STRM is currently governed by a Board of six Trustees, each bringing direct, lived experience of caring for a child or young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Operational Structure

Led by our Chief Executive Officer, the charity is supported by a small, modest team of paid staff and dedicated volunteers, many of whom share lived experience, ensuring authentic, family-led decision-making at every level.

Origins and Community Roots

Born from grassroots community networks of SEND parents, STRM was founded by those who have personally experienced the highs and lows of navigating the system. This foundation ensures that every strategic and operational decision is grounded in genuine understanding and empathy.

Lived Experience as a Core Value

- The majority of Trustees, staff, and volunteers are parents or carers who have personally navigated the complex SEND pathways.
- This experience builds trust, relatability, and deep insight into families’ day-to-day realities.
- We embed this understanding in all training, communications, and service designs.

Inclusive and Flexible Support Channels

Recognising that families face a range of access barriers, for example, financial, health-related, digital, cultural, or logistical, STRM delivers support through multiple routes:

- Online forum and self-help guides for 24/7 peer connection.
- Flexible appointments (in-person/virtual / out-of-hours).
- Pop-up walk-in services bring help closer to where families live.

Commitment to Welcoming and Inclusive Environments

Every participant is valued and supported according to their circumstances.

- Accessibility and reasonable adjustments are offered across all settings.
- Diversity in culture, neurotype, disability, gender, and age is celebrated.
- Confidentiality and non-judgement underpin everything we do.

Understanding Marginalisation

We recognise that disability or caring responsibilities often lead to isolation and barriers to support.

By centring lived experience and flexible delivery, STRM actively reduces these barriers and reaches those most in need.

2.2 Board of Trustees

Trustee Responsibilities

Our Trustees act in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and Charity Commission guidance (CC3). The Board meets regularly to oversee strategy, finances, safeguarding, and quality assurance. Individual Trustees hold designated leads for safeguarding, finance, HR, and health & safety.

Trustee Biographies

Bob – Trustee

A retired global telecoms leader, Bob brings decades of experience in engineering, project management, and quality assurance. His background in data security and ISO standards, alongside managing million-pound budgets, strengthens STRM’s governance and strategic development.

Vicki – Trustee

Vicki is a qualified BSL Interpreter, professional trainer, and proud parent of two neurodivergent children. As an ADHDer herself, she contributes vital lived experience and inclusive communication expertise to the board.

Clare – Trustee

With a strong background in recruitment and a passion for equity, diversity, and inclusion, Clare brings a people-focused perspective. She draws on her experience in mentoring and team development to help STRM nurture both talent and culture.

Induction, Development & Conflicts of Interest

All Trustees complete conflict declarations and withdraw from related decisions. Induction covers legal duties, STRM’s mission and safeguarding policies. Continuous learning and reflective practice are encouraged.

Alison – Trustee

An experienced HR professional in the legal sector, Alison combines her extensive knowledge of systems, project management, and communication with personal experience as a parent of an autistic young adult. She is especially passionate about post-16 transition support.

Brian – Trustee

An IT engineer and former local councillor, Brian has held multiple governance roles and remains deeply engaged in community initiatives. As a parent of a neurodivergent daughter, he champions inclusive services and grassroots change, particularly in SEND advocacy and the arts.

Simon – Trustee

Simon brings wide-ranging voluntary experience and professional training in counselling, mental health, and neurodivergence. As a Lived Experience Ambassador, he advocates for peer support, co-production, and trauma-informed practice across STRM’s work.



2.3 Safeguarding, HR & Health and Safety

Safeguarding

We operate under a robust, annually reviewed Safeguarding Policy. All staff and volunteers receive induction and refresher training. Named Safeguarding Leads respond to concerns promptly, ensuring every child, young person, and adult is safe and supported.

Health & Safety

We maintain clear procedures for risk assessment, lone working, safe venues, and insured events. Annual policy review and training uphold compliance and well-being.



HR & Safer Recruitment

All appointments follow safer recruitment, including DBS checks and references. Our HR Trustee oversees policy compliance and well-being.

2.4 Data Protection & GDPR Compliance

STRM is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and fully compliant with UK GDPR. Our Data Protection Policy explains how personal information is collected, stored, and safeguarded. Regular audits and transparent consent procedures ensure continued compliance.

2.5 Risk Oversight & Strategic Planning

The Board monitors key risks across safeguarding, finance, delivery, and reputation.

While STRM does not yet maintain a formal written risk register, Trustees track and review emerging risks each quarter.

Plans for 2025/26 include adopting a documented Risk Register, embedding it into Board cycles, and strengthening strategic reporting.

Strategic Oversight & Annual Planning

Trustees oversee STRM's long-term direction, budget planning and annual priorities. In 2024–25, focus areas included capacity-building, inclusive volunteer pathways, and stronger family navigation support.

Accountability & Continuous Improvement

We maintain transparency through independent financial examination, open reporting, and user consultation.

2.6 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

At STRM, equality, diversity, and inclusion are central to our mission and values.

We are a by-and-for charity that believes everyone deserves to be valued, respected, and empowered.

Our Commitments

- Celebrate diversity and challenge discrimination.
- Co-produce accessible, inclusive projects with families.
- Remove barriers so every family can access support equitably.
- Continuously learn by listening to our community.

Progress This Year

- Over 75 % of Trustees, staff, and volunteers have lived experience of disability or a caring role.
- Achieved Disability Confident Employer status.
- Reaffirmed support for the White Ribbon Campaign.
- Participated in Cranfield Trust's Journey to Excellence programme.

STRM is proudly registered with the Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator, and ICO, ensuring integrity and accountability.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Foreword from The Chair of Trustees (By Proxy)

Opening Thanks

I am once again privileged to sit down at my computer, tasked with writing our annual report on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Every year, SEND The Right Message goes from strength to strength, and we are only able to do so because of the commitment from all our staff and volunteers. In acknowledgement of this, I would like to start with a few notable thank-you messages.

Tribute to our CEO

First, I would like to formally thank Maggie Cleary, our co-founder and CEO. Anyone who has engaged with Maggie via our charity will have no doubt about her dedication to the work that we do – the woman is a trailblazer. Quite literally forging out a space for our families to be heard, seen and to have their needs met. Without her, we would not be where we are and on behalf of all Trustees, I would like to say thank you for everything that you have done for us over the years.

Trustee Changes

With a heavy heart, I stepped down as Chair of Trustees earlier this year. It was the right time for me and for the charity. I continue to serve on the Board as a Trustee, and I'm proud to support STRM in this capacity. Tricia Cowdrey kindly agreed to act as our interim Chair until we could source a permanent replacement. Having excelled as Chair, she completed her interim term and stepped down from her role as Trustee. Tricia was a respected and valued member of the Board and she had a well-earned reputation for being someone who could get the job done. She worked tirelessly to ensure that all our governance documents, as well as our policies and procedures, were up to date, and she has left behind a robust infrastructure that will continue to serve us as we grow and evolve. On behalf of the Trustees, I extend our appreciation and gratitude to Tricia for all your efforts.

A New Home in Castle Point

Last year marked an important transition with our office move from Westcliff to Castle Point in 2024. We have been warmly welcomed into the area, and this new home gives us the opportunity to strengthen our roots while extending our reach.

As a resident of Southend, I am proud that we continue to maintain our outreach services in Southend, ensuring families remain supported where our work first began. We also continue to serve Rochford residents, building trusted relationships and providing inclusive opportunities locally. We are grateful to Rochford District Council for awarding us a small grant to strengthen this outreach, recognising the value of community-led support. Together, these connections across Southend, Rochford, and Castle Point reflect our growing commitment to families across the wider Essex area. Initiatives such as the popular bouldering sessions at Indirock in Southend show how we can embed fresh, inclusive opportunities in local venues while keeping continuity with our Southend roots.

Volunteer Programme Investment

I am also delighted that we will be investing in our Volunteer Programme, creating structured pathways for training, recognition, and impact. We are grateful to Castle Point Borough Council and the Essex Association of Local Councils for their funding support, recognising the importance of building local capacity as part of the wider devolution agenda. Their backing demonstrates confidence in STRM as a partner in shaping resilient, community-led solutions.



Welcoming New Leadership

Moving forward, Bob Carr will be stepping into the role of Chair, and we are excited to be welcoming Bob as our new Chair in 2025/26 and to see where his leadership will take us. Bob has a strong professional background in project management, governance and compliance and is an excellent choice to take over the role – thank you, Bob.

Community Gratitude

I simply do not have the word count to individually thank everyone as I would like, but please know that regardless of whether you volunteer your time to a specific project, you fundraise for us in your community, or even if it is something as small as helping us pack away the chairs at the end of our coffee mornings... We see you and we value all that you do to keep us running efficiently. It takes a village and we're building one!



What Does 'Good' Look Like?

Back in February, the Board of Trustees held an away day facilitated by the fabulous Lance Ramsay from the Cranfield Trust. The scope of the day was defined by one simple question: What does 'good' look like for us?

We talked about what we wanted to achieve as a Board and how we might use this piece of work to inform our decisions. I don't want to give away all our secrets, but it is useful to highlight a few of the emerging theme.

Laying Strong Foundations

"The secret to getting ahead is getting started."

Mark Twain, Laying Strong Foundations

As any community or grass-roots organisation will tell you, most of them are started by people who simply had passion and an idea... but then went on to build something that came without an instruction manual.

STRM was built quickly from the ground up to meet the needs of a local community, which we did, with success. However, we also took the time to review our journey and recognised that as we continued to grow at an exponential rate, we would need to shore up our policies and procedures because they acted as our foundational underpinning.

Small but Mighty

"I have learned you are never too small to make a difference."

Greta Thunberg

As a by-and-for charity, we have historically spent a lot of our time firefighting; reacting and responding to issues as they arose and working to mitigate the risks to our community. Our goals are always aligned to the principles of inclusive design and equitable access to spaces. As a consequence, we spend a lot of our time educating, representing at stakeholder conferences and events, providing resources for parents so that they feel empowered to advocate for themselves and their families, or working with professionals to help them understand the lived experiences of the families we work with. Our away day allowed us the time and space to think smarter about how we could continue to achieve those aims. For example, we recognised the importance of collating meaningful data to support our work, so we have been working closely with our software provider. We discussed diversifying our income stream and have been working on creating a portfolio of training and workshops.

Agility and Growth

"And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and ¾ percent guaranteed)"

Dr. Seuss

I often joke about how STRM are a charity with champagne dreams, but a lemonade budget. We know what our community needs to thrive, but like all small charities, funding (or the lack of) will remain an ongoing risk factor in our work. We spent a lot of time during our away day talking about how we can remain agile as an organisation; constantly reviewing the gap between what it needs and what resources it has available. The Board of Trustees had already taken steps in this direction by sourcing additional Trustees who not only personally aligned with our work but also came to us with specific skill sets that would benefit the charity and guide us through our next stage of growth. In 2025/26 we are establishing a fundraising sub-committee to strengthen our income generation and sustainability.

Alongside this, we continue to embrace opportunities to connect with our community – you'll see us again at this year's Southend Halloween Parade 2025, costumes and all!

Looking Ahead

This is the point where I glance back at last year's report and I am pleased to note that we have once again exceeded our own expectations, achieving what we set out to do. This realisation fills me with a sense of joy, but I am also cognizant of certain unknowns which may affect our charity as we progress through the year. One of the most impactful being the Local Government Reorganisation; we have no way to predict how this may affect our funding streams or the families we support, so we are keeping a watchful eye on how this unfolds.

As I said in last year's report, "I remain forever optimistic." – a statement which still holds true. Over the years, I have held one thing as absolute truth, and that truth is that STRM are outstanding at what we do. We get it, because we have shared lived experiences. We can see the issues, we are trusted by the families we work with, and we are able to work professionally with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes that benefit all. That hasn't changed in all the time that I have been involved, and the positive impact has been clearly evidenced elsewhere in this report. I couldn't be prouder of SEND The Right Message.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all our supporters; we could not do any of this without your goodwill and continued faith in us.

Vicki Lamb

Warmest regards,

On behalf of the Chair of Trustees



OUR OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

3.1 Charitable Objects

Our charitable objects are:

For the public benefit, the relief of neurodivergent and disabled children, young people, and adults and their parents or carers in Essex and Southend, in particular, but not exclusively, by:

- Providing support services, assistance, information, activities, and training programmes.
- Relieving financial hardship.
- Creating opportunities for respite breaks.
- Promoting social inclusion and raising awareness and acceptance.
- Developing and promoting innovative and early interventions for the health and well-being of beneficiaries.

3.2 STRM Impact at a Glance (Timeline of Key Activities 2024–25)

A year of growth, connection, and innovation for families across Southend and Essex.

March 2024

- Hosted Coffee Morning at the Megacentre, Rayleigh
- Delivered Cost-of-Living session at St Mark's Hall, Rochford
- **Raised £94.91** through Cash 4 Coins fundraiser
- Featured in SAVS' Social Prescribing Case Study
- Relocated STRM HQ from Labyrinth House, Westcliff, to High Road, Benfleet
- Co-hosted Feeding Support Session with EPUT's Jigsaw Team at SAVS

April 2024

- Hosted Coffee Morning at the Megacentre, Rayleigh
- Launched weekly Boulderling Club at Indirock Southend for neurodivergent children and young people (ages 6–17)
- Delivered "Multiply Courses" supported by Essex County Council, Enable East, and Quest Training
- Delivered "Creating a Neurodivergent-Friendly Home" workshop at STRM HQ, Benfleet
- Held Online Evening SEND Support Session

May 2024

- Hosted Coffee Morning at the Megacentre, Rayleigh
- Delivered "Primary to Secondary Transition" workshop at St Mary's Hall, Southend
- Facilitated weekly 1-to-1 Benefit Appointments at STRM HQ
- Hosted guest speaker Rachel King on Dyslexia
- Continued "Multiply Courses" and Boulderling Club sessions
- Delivered Online Evening SEND Support Session

June 2024

- Hosted "Transition Planning" workshop at St Mary's Church Hall, Southend
- Delivered "Understanding Puberty" with guest speaker Charmaine Champ – Continence, Sleep & Behaviour Consultant at the Megacentre
- Represented STRM at the British Psychological Society Conference, London
- Attended the Castle Point Community Fayre, Benfleet

July 2024

- Launched Trustee Recruitment Campaign
- Championed a Sponsored Swim by Clayton, a Boulderling attendee, **raised £219**
- Hosted EHCP Legal Session with Birkett Long Solicitors
- Summer Raffle **raised £1,490**
- Delivered "How to Make a Referral for ASD/ADHD" session at St Mark's Hall, Rochford
- Attended the Essex Local Offer Roadshow in Canvey Island

August 2024

- Supported young people in Work Experience placements in partnership with Indirock
- Delivered "Work Solo Not Alone" DLA course at the Salvation Army, Southend
- Published Carbon Monoxide Safety Awareness campaign with Cadent and SAVS

September 2024

- Hosted STRM HQ Open Day, attended by representatives from ECC, ICB, EPUT, SAFE Essex, and Raw Learning
- Delivered "Through the Lens of Neurodivergence – Lord Darzi Report Recap"
- Distributed shopping vouchers to 50 Southend SEND families
- Hosted guest speaker Vicki Lamb – "Debunking ADHD Myths" at St Mary's Hall, Southend
- Facilitated "Multiple Course" at STRM HQ

October 2024

- Hosted joint Cost-of-Living event with South East Community Hub (SECH) and Citizens Advice Southend at Indirock
- Co-facilitated "Multiple Course" at Mother's Kitchen, Pitsea
- Hosted guest speaker Nicola Durrant – SEND Station – "Understanding PDA" at St Mary's Hall

November 2024

- Hosted guest speaker Richard Dellow at St Mary's Hall
- Met the High Sheriff of Essex at STRM HQ
- Represented STRM at the SAVS Volunteer Fayre
- Delivered Online Evening SEND Support Session

December 2024

- Distributed Fuel Bank Vouchers to 62 families
- Provided Shopping Vouchers to 60 Southend SEND families
- Hosted Christmas Bouldering Party for 40 families, attended by MP David Burton-Sampson and the Mayor of Rochford
- Hosted Carers' Christmas Brunch at the Megacentre, attended by the Mayors of Castle Point and Rochford as well as Carer's First Essex & Southend
- Became official White Ribbon Ambassadors
- Launched campaign on the impact of ADHD shared care agreement withdrawals



January 2025

- Delivered guest talk "Neurodivergent Burnout" with Vicki Lamb at St Mary's Hall
- Launched "Multiple Course" Online Partnership with Quest Training
- Delivered "Work Solo Not Alone" Benefits Session at the Salvation Army, Southend
- Delivered Cost-of-Living session at St Luke's Community Hub, Southend
- Continued Bouldering Club sessions

February 2025

- Received recognition award from Cadent and SAVS for Centre of Warmth project
- Hosted Coffee Morning at STRM HQ, Benfleet
- Delivered Cost-of-Living session at St Luke's Community Hub
- Facilitated "Multiple Course" at STRM HQ
- Hosted guest speaker Tanika Palmer – Vital Minds Counselling – "Mental Health & Neurodivergent Young People" at St Mary's Hall
- Published case study on ADHD and GP shared care withdrawals
- Celebrated the 6th anniversary of our Online Parent Forum
- Open Day Event at STRM with guest speakers, dignitaries and partners
- Volunteers attended the Volunteer Passport (VP) Accredited Course supported by SAVS and Southend-on-Sea City Council.



March 2025

- Delivered SEND Parent Support Session
- Celebrated Neurodiversity Week
- Spoke at the University of Reading on "Disability and Motherhood in Law" in partnership with Myotas Charity
- Launched ARFID Support Sessions (online and in person)
- Achieved Disability Confident Committed accreditation
- Delivered EHCP Legal Workshop with Birkett Long Solicitors at St Mary's Hall
- Featured in Evening Echo – Vicki Lamb, Chair of Trustees, on ADHD shared care agreement withdrawals
- Attended Southend City Celebration Event – Shoeburyness



3.3 Membership & Community Growth

STRM's membership and online reach both grew significantly this year, reflecting continued demand for family-led, accessible support.

- Registered STRM Members: Increased from 450 to 1,300 **(+188.9%)**
- Online Forum Community: **337** new families joined, bringing total active members to **2,049** **(+19.7%)**

3.4 Peer Support, Training & Practical Help

In-Person Delivery

465 families supported through:

- Peer-to-peer support groups
- Coffee mornings
- Online Q&As
- Guest-led training (ARFID, Mental Health, Legal, Cost of Living)



Digital Access & Community Support

- 1,300** registered members accessed online peer support, practical resources, and membership services via STRM's digital platform.
- 2,049** active users engaged with the online forum, accessing peer advice, on-demand support, and community sharing.

Blended Engagement Model



2,514 families and individuals Supported

STRM supported **2,514 families and individuals** (465 in-person + 2,049 online) through a hybrid delivery model combining structured face-to-face sessions with flexible digital support.

3.5 Additional Practical Support

- 232** successful Carefree Breaks referrals for unpaid carers
- 54** parents completed "Multiply Courses", building everyday numeracy, budgeting skills, and confidence with money management

3.6 Energy & Cost of Living Support

Delivered in partnership with Cadent Gas and SAVS under the Southend Centre of Warmth Programme.

- 3,007** energy advice interactions
- 62** families received Fuel Bank Vouchers
- 110** families supported through Shopping Vouchers (via Southend Emergency Fund)
- 50** families supported through SEND Family Energy Drop-Ins

Home Safety & Efficiency

- 149** carbon monoxide alarms provided
- 426** 1:1 safety sessions delivered
- 457** CO safety leaflets distributed
- 398** PSR signposting, 28 successful registrations
- 347** families received appliance advice
- 314** supported with condensation/damp
- 41** accessed the Warm Homes Discount
- 352** received Tier 3 Combined Energy Support

Recognition

Joint case study published with Cadent & SAVS; formal recognition award received.

3.7 Young People's Participation

- 670** children and young people attended weekly Boulderling Club sessions **(+127.1%** increase from 295 last year)
- 60** young people participated in work experience placements at Indirock

3.8 Community & Christmas Events

- 77** parents and carers attended festive community gatherings
- 42** children and young people joined the Christmas Boulderling Party

3.9 Benefit Support Services

- Personal Independence Payment (PIP): **57**
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA): **158**
- Carer's Allowance: **111**
- Universal Credit: **26**

3.10 Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child – National Reach

- 17,000** printed copies distributed to families (+30.8% from 13,000 last year)
- 12** national areas adopted and localised the guide

3.11 Digital Development & CRM Upgrade

This year STRM upgraded its Lamplight CRM system, funded by the Tudwick Foundation and Fowler Smith & Jones Trust.

The upgrade improved data collection, volunteer management, and impact reporting, enabling GDPR-compliant note-keeping, case tracking, and streamlined evaluation.

3.12 Community Partnerships & Collaboration

Collaboration remains at the heart of STRM's work.

We continue working alongside MyOTAS Charity, SAFE Essex, Indirock, and Raw Learning to co-deliver outcomes and share expertise.

Partnerships with Cadent Gas and SAVS (Centre of Warmth) and Essex County Council (Multiply) have extended our reach and strengthened our impact.

3.13 Impact Measurement & Evaluation

At the heart of our work is a strong community of families supporting one another.

Our non-deficit, peer-to-peer model creates safe, welcoming spaces where parents and carers feel understood, empowered, and uplifted.

This year, we enhanced delivery by introducing structured Q&A sessions, clearer visual resources, and take-home tools, increasing accessibility and engagement.

A key innovation was the launch of our fundraising shop, which generates unrestricted income while providing families with affordable sensory tools and practical learning opportunities.

3.14 Alignment with STRM's Charitable Objectives

Everything STRM delivers directly reflects our five charitable purposes.

1. Providing Support Services, Assistance, Information, Activities, and Training Programmes

- Peer-to-peer sessions, training workshops, and online Q&As
- "Multiply Courses" and confidence-building sessions
- Online forum and digital resource library

- Regular youth activities, including bouldering and work experience

2. Relieving Financial Hardship

- Fuel Bank and shopping voucher distribution
- Warm Home Discount, Tier 3 Energy Support, and appliance guidance
- Multiply programme to strengthen budgeting and money skills
- Targeted benefits support including PIP, DLA, Carer's Allowance, and Universal Credit

3. Creating Opportunities for Respite Breaks

- 232** successful Carefree Break referrals
- Regular community sessions providing informal respite and connection

4. Promoting Social Inclusion and Raising Awareness and Acceptance

- Online community and peer forum fostering understanding and mutual support
- Inclusive activities such as bouldering and youth work experience
- Community and Christmas events promoting visibility and belonging
- National reach of the Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child resource
- Social media campaigns celebrating acceptance and inclusion

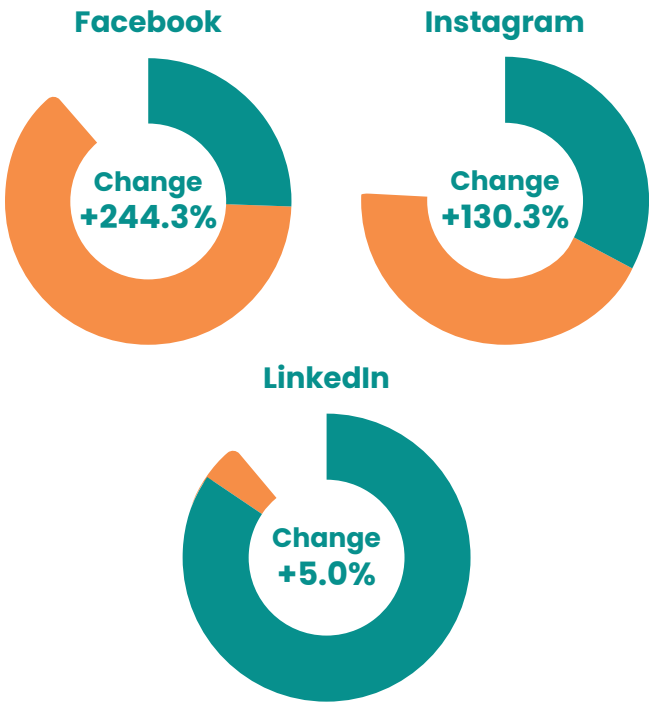
5. Developing and Promoting Innovative and Early Interventions for Health and Well-being

- Early help through energy advice, CO safety, and cost-of-living guidance
- Nutrition and appliance workshops reducing financial and emotional strain
- Specialist ARFID and SEND-focused training
- Multiply, bouldering, and employability routes promoting practical early support



3.15 Social Media Reach & Performance

Reach Last Year ■
Reach This Year ■



Additional Insights

Facebook impressions increased to **645,500** (+61.3%)
Instagram impressions rose by **179.5%**
LinkedIn connections grew to **1,003**

3.16 Outcomes & Impact Summary

Voices from Families

"Before STRM, I felt completely overwhelmed and lost. You helped me take the first step."

"STRM made me feel human again."

"We were stuck in limbo for years. STRM gave me the confidence to act."

"I thought I was the only one. Finding STRM was like walking into a room full of people who get it."

"The Multiply course helped me believe I could learn again."

"The Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child book made me cry with relief — finally, something written for us."

Bouldering & Wellbeing Outcomes

"Bouldering has helped my son make his first real friends."

"My daughter couldn't use a pen before — now she's writing and drawing again after climbing."

"She was situationally mute — now she chats to the STRM team and lights up every week."

"Climbing has lowered his anxiety. It's the one place he feels safe to unmask."

3.17 Referral Pathways & Navigation

STRM's approach to referrals is practical, transparent, and family-first.

We encourage families to access statutory routes such as SENDIASS, SET CAMHS, and Local Offers, while providing guidance where access barriers remain.

The majority of referrals are self-referrals, showing trust in STRM's services.

Our new professional referral system will be embedded within the CRM, enables schools, social care, and NHS teams to refer directly and track engagement.

Partnerships with the CAVS Family Team demonstrate joined-up working, reducing duplication and identifying unmet needs.

In the year ahead, we will continue developing a holistic support pathway across four pillars, financial, emotional, practical, and training, rooted in lived experience and early intervention.

OUR FINANCES

4.1 Treasurer's Report

Every £1 spent this year helped a SEND family feel less alone, more informed, and more supported — through benefits guidance, peer networks, and inclusive community projects across South Essex.

STRM's growth this year was underpinned by partnership working — sharing resources, co-delivering projects, and collaborating with local charities, grassroots groups, and statutory partners to extend reach and reduce duplication.

This steady rise in income demonstrates the trust placed in STRM by national funders, local authorities, and our community, reflecting our reputation as a transparent, well-governed, and impact-driven organisation led by lived experience.

This report provides a detailed overview of STRM Charity's financial performance, sustainability progress, and future priorities for the year ending 31 March 2025

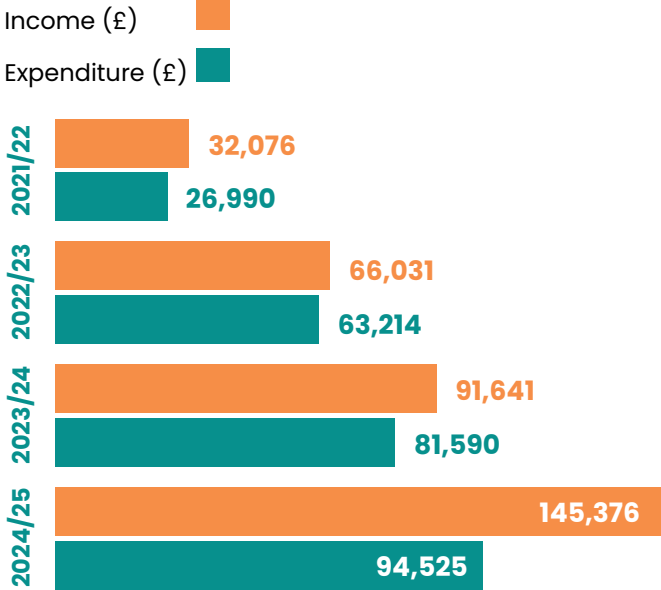
4.2 Opening Position

STRM began the financial year with a stable opening balance, providing a strong foundation for project delivery and operational costs.

Prudent management in previous years enabled the charity to enter 2024/25 with confidence and well-established financial controls.

Note: This year's accounts reflect a 13-month reporting period following a change to STRM's financial year-end, ensuring better alignment with project-funding cycles and major-funder reporting requirements.

4.3 Income & Expenditure Growth



STRM's income has grown by more than 350 percent in three years, reflecting both rising demand and growing confidence from funders and partners in our grassroots, family-led model.

4.4 Financial Highlights

Total income (13 months): **£145,376**

Total expenditure: **£94,525** — the majority directed to front-line delivery

- A modest year-end surplus was reinvested into delivery and reserves
- Service delivery expanded across Castle Point, Rochford and Southend
- Restricted grants supported 14 key projects; unrestricted income strengthened resilience
- CRM and digital upgrades improved impact reporting and transparency
- STRM continues to strengthen data collection and outcome measurement to evidence change and inform policy conversations

4.5 Income Overview

STRM's income came from a balanced mix of grants, community fundraising, and donations, with growing unrestricted income through charitable sales and training delivery. This diversified income base has strengthened STRM's resilience and reduced reliance on single-source funding.

Key unrestricted and partnership-linked income sources:

- People's Postcode Lottery (Millionaire Street Core Grant) — **£20,000**
- Cadent / SAVS Centre of Warmth Project — **£15,000**
- Essex Community Foundation (Core Grant) — **£7,000**
- Multiply Course (partnership with Myotas Charity and SAFE Essex) — **£6,501**
- Youth Volunteering Project (in partnership with Indirock) — **£2,652**
- Souter Trust — **£2,000** (designated unrestricted grant)
- Provide Community — **£4,000** (designated unrestricted grant)
- Donations and Fundraising (combined Gift Aid and community events) — **£23,697**

4.6 Expenditure Summary

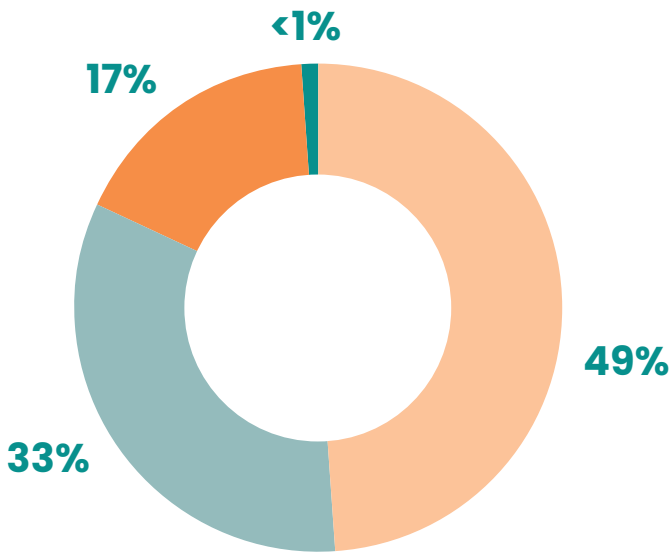
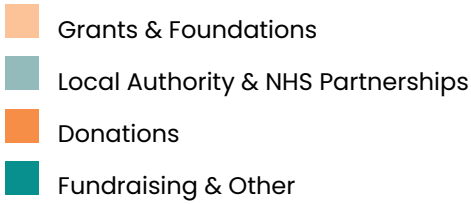
Expenditure covered staffing, volunteer costs, venue hire, materials, insurance, travel, marketing and equipment.

Some projects required additional investment due to higher family demand, managed through close monitoring and the use of unrestricted funds.

The move to STRM's new Benfleet office provided a more cost-effective base with increased space and flexibility for teamwork, meetings, and delivery preparation. This transition strengthened operational efficiency while reducing ongoing overheads, ensuring resources could be directed where they matter most — to supporting families.

4.7 Restricted vs Unrestricted Funds

Funding Mix Summary



Restricted funds supported:

- Bouldering sessions for SEND families (in partnership with Indirock)
- Parent and carer peer-support sessions and coffee mornings
- Carer respite and wellbeing breaks
- Disability benefit guidance workshops
- CRM and digital infrastructure upgrades

Unrestricted funds supported:

Operational stability, volunteer coordination, training and strategic capacity building.

4.8 Closing Balance

At year-end STRM held:

- Total funds: **£114,603**
- Unrestricted funds: **£84,751** of which **£6,071** is held as unrestricted reserves
- Restricted funds: **£29,852**

Note: "Total funds" refers to all balances carried forward (restricted and unrestricted) at 31 March 2025, not total income received during the year.

The rise in turnover resulted in new bank charges. The Treasurer and CEO are reviewing cost-effective options to minimise fees while maintaining robust banking safeguards.

4.9 Reserves & Sustainability

STRM maintains unrestricted reserves in line with its Reserves Policy to safeguard service continuity, staff costs, and operational resilience.

- Target Level: 3–6 months of core operating costs (**approx. £30,000**)
- Current Level (31 March 2025): **£6,071** — around one month's cover
- Monitoring: Reviewed at each trustee meeting and annually against budget and risk
- Purpose: To protect against funding delays, unexpected expenditure or emergencies, ensuring families continue to receive uninterrupted support

Trustees aim to grow reserves steadily through sustainable fundraising, designated core grants and careful budgeting, in line with Charity Commission guidance (CC19) and SORP (FRS 102).

4.10 Financial Commentary

- Financial activity aligned closely to budget expectations
- Income diversification has improved stability
- Cash flow remained positive and debt-free
- Focus remains on securing multi-year core funding and maintaining transparent reporting
- Interim Treasurer Bob Carr continues to oversee financial governance until a new Treasurer is appointed in September 2025
- STRM is embedding data collection and impact reporting systems within its CRM to strengthen accountability, evidence change, and influence local policy

4.11 Thanks to Our Funders & Supporters

We extend heartfelt thanks to all our funders, partners and community supporters who made 2024/25 a year of growth and impact.

Major funders and partners include:

People's Postcode Lottery • National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All) • Essex County Council (via Active Essex Phab Fund) • Essex Community Foundation • Southend Community Investment Board • Castle Point Borough Council • Rochford District Council • Mid & South Essex ICB • Cadent / SAVS Centre of Warmth • Arnold Clark Community Fund • Fowler Smith & Jones Trust • Tudwick Foundation • Souter Trust • Provide Community • Eastwood, Leigh, Rayleigh & Castle Point Lions Clubs • Rochford Rotary Club • Rosca Trust • Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) Microgrants

We are especially grateful to funders who supported CRM and digital development — Tudwick Foundation, Fowler Smith & Jones Trust, and Essex Community Foundation — whose support has enabled STRM to enhance communication, track impact and evidence outcomes through data-led evaluation.

4.12 Looking Ahead

In the coming year, STRM will:

- Secure multi-year funding to maintain stability and ensure continued delivery across Castle Point, Rochford and Southend
- Strengthen data collection and impact reporting to evidence outcomes, demonstrate value for money and influence systemic change
- Deepen partnerships with community, education, health and statutory organisations to enhance inclusion and reduce duplication
- Continue working alongside partners such as Myotas Charity, SAFE Essex, Indirock, and Raw Learning to co-deliver family-led outcomes, while actively building new partnerships and professional networks to extend reach and collaboration
- Invest in staff and volunteer capacity to meet growing demand
- Build unrestricted reserves to secure long-term sustainability
- Champion the voices of SEND families to shape local systems and policies

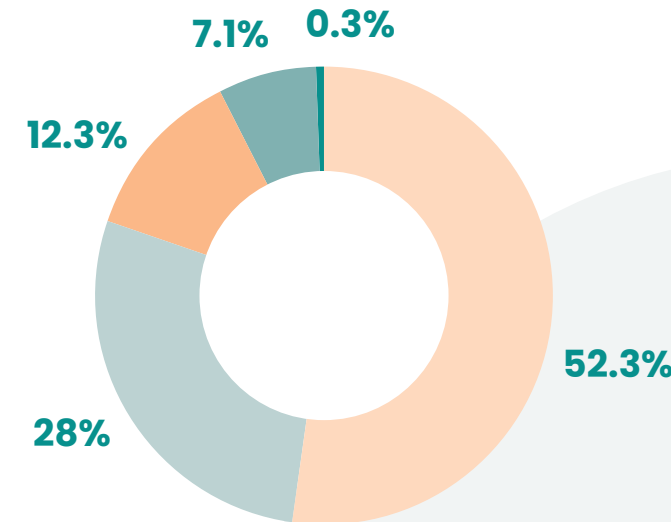
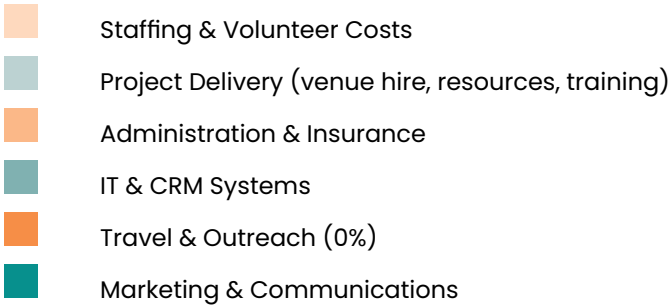
Every partnership, donation and volunteer hour this year has helped SEND the Right Message not just to families, but to systems proving that lived experience led support, changes outcomes and builds stronger, more inclusive communities.



FINANCIAL DETAILS & VISUAL SUMMARY

5.1 Breakdown of Income by Source

Approximate distribution of 2024/25 expenditure:



5.2 Fundraising Strategy Summary

STRM is diversifying its income base through:

- Community Fundraising & Events — building local engagement and visibility through accessible family activities and peer fundraisers.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) — developing relationships with local businesses for sponsorships, matched funding and volunteering schemes.
- Grant Diversification — expanding applications to regional and national funders, including multi-year core funding.
- Charitable Sales & Training Delivery — growing income from resources such as the “Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child” guide and paid training sessions for schools and professionals.
- Digital Donations & Gift Aid — improving online giving and Gift Aid claims through integrated CRM tools.



5.3 Independent Examiner’s Report and Financial Statements

The Trustees’ Annual Report is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP): Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

Our Annual Reports – STRM Support



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6.1 Funders & Partners

Diversity of Funders

A broad and inclusive funding model underpins our resilience as a charity. We are grateful to receive support from a diverse mix of:

- Foundation and trust grants
- Corporate contributions
- Community fundraising initiatives
- Individual giving and regular donations

This blend of funding streams ensures STRM remains sustainable, independent, and responsive to the real needs of our beneficiaries.

Donors and Funders

Foundation Grants

- Arnold Clark Community Fund
- Aviva Community Fund
- British Airways Community Fund
- CAF – Charities Aid Foundation
- Castle Point Council UK Shared Fund
- Charles S French
- Essex Association Local Councils – EALC
- Essex Community Foundation – Southend Community Fund
- Essex Public Health Accelerator Bids (PHAB) Grants Programme
- Postcode Lottery
- Provide Community CIC
- Rochford District Council
- ROSCA Trust
- SAVS – Cadent Project
- Southend Community Investment Board
- Southend Emergency Fund
- Souter Trust
- TNL Lottery Awards for All
- Tudwick Foundation



Community Clubs & Service Organisations

- Castle Point Lions
- Eastwood Lions
- Rayleigh Lions
- Rochford Rotary Club



Community, Voluntary & Strategic Partners

We are proud to work alongside a wide network of dedicated partners who share our vision of inclusive, community-led, and strengths-based support for neurodivergent and disabled children, young people, and their families.

Local Authorities & Statutory Services

- Essex County Council (ECC)
- Southend-on-Sea City Council
- Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT)
- Mid & South Essex ICB



Health, Education & Research

- British Psychological Society
- University of Reading – School of Law
- University of Surrey
- Autistica – Research Network



Voluntary & Community Sector (VCSE & CVS)

- SAVS (Southend Association of Voluntary Services)
- RRAVS (Rochford District Association of Voluntary Services)
- CAVS (Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services)
- RAW Learning
- SAFE Essex
- SECH (Southend Education Community Health)
- Enable East
- Quest Training
- MyOTAS Charity
- Essex Family Forum – Strategic parent carer participation
- Indirock Southend – Inclusive activity & employment partner



Charity Supporters

- Fuel Bank Foundation
- Carefree Charity
- Southend Foodbank
- St Vincent's Southend
- Citizens Advice Southend



6.2 Delivery Sites & Community Spaces

- IT Help Desk (Leigh-on-Sea) – Technical support
- The Megacentre, Rayleigh
- St Mark's Hall, Rochford
- St Mary's Church Hall, Southend
- St Luke's Community Hub, Southend
- Salvation Army, Southend
- Indirock, Southend
- Labyrinth House, Westcliff (former STRM office)

6.3 Corporate & Local Business Supporters

We're proud to be backed by a range of local businesses, raffle prize donors, and national partners, including: Logos

- EasyFundraising partners
- Northsouth Design & Marketing Graphic Design northsouthdesign.co.uk
- IT Help Desk (Leigh-on-Sea) it-helpdesk.co
- RiverLeigh HR Consulting
- Community 360 – Community Accounts Service
- CFC Maintenance – who also supported our Portable Appliance Testing (PATs)
- Birkett Long Solicitors – Legal Workshops & Advice
- Cash 4 Coins – Recycling Fundraising Partner
- Families Who Donated Raffle Prizes
- HR Breathe – HR systems and admin support
- Lamplight Database – Charity CRM and data management
- Bookwhen – Booking and registration system
- QuickBooks – Financial management software



STRM has benefited from the ongoing support of IT Help Desk team in Leigh-on-Sea, whose expertise has been crucial in keeping our systems secure, reliable, and fit for purpose as we grow.

Their timely assistance and expertise have enabled us to maintain a stable digital infrastructure, deliver flexible services, stay GDPR-compliant, and minimise disruption. This vital partnership has strengthened our operations and allowed us to focus entirely on supporting families.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our IT Help Desk team for their invaluable contribution.

IT-HelpDesk.Co

6.4 Volunteer Highlights & Fundraising Heroes

Fundraising Heroes – Thank You

Every act of generosity — big or small — helps STRM make a lasting impact.

Your support keeps our services running, our sessions free, and our mission alive.

Here's to the changemakers in our community.

Monthly Donors

Your regular support gives STRM stability and strength.

Thanks to GDPR-compliant donation systems, we can plan ahead and continue offering vital services to local families all year round.

With special thanks: Caroline Norton
Chris's Toys Box



EasyFundraising Champions

Every click matters! By choosing STRM when shopping online through EasyFundraising, supporters can raise free funds simply through everyday purchases, using a passive but powerful way to give.

eBay Shop Supporters

Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who donates, lists, or buys through the STRM eBay Shop. Your support gives pre-loved items a second life and creates sustainable income for our charity. We extend special appreciation to the volunteers and members who keep donating year-round.

Facebook Fundraisers

Whether for a birthday or just because we thank you for raising both funds and awareness! Your peer-led fundraisers create a ripple effect of generosity among your family and friends.

Organisers: Amanda, Arijadna, Bex, Bhong, Caroleanne, Catherine, Channy, Char-Lou, Dan, David, Jenny, Kayleigh, Kerry B., Kerry T., Lara, Leanne, Maggie, Rob, Siân, Simon, Tia, Vicky R.

Donors: Alex, Andrea, Anna Liza, Eleanor, Hannah, Holly, Janyis, Jo, Joanne, Kathy, Katie, Kay, Laura, Mary Lou, Natalie, Paula, Richard, Ricky, Sharon, Simone, Susan, Tracy Ann, Vicky T.

Clayton's Charity Swim Challenge

In a year of rising demand and stretched budgets, young fundraiser Clayton reminded us all of the power of community spirit.

Swimming for 1 hour 30 minutes, he completed 104 lengths (2 000 m) raising funds for STRM's free, inclusive Bouldering Sessions at Indirock.



Clayton's determination and generosity have inspired everyone at STRM. His efforts went beyond fundraising — they reflected the true spirit of community support and inclusion.

STRM Swimathon Team

On 29 March 2025, three incredible people (Paula, Katrina, and Maggie) completed a 5 km Swimathon at Wickford Pool and Fitness Centre.

Delivered in partnership with MyOTAS Charity, the event raised essential funds for neurodivergent children and young people in South Essex.

Weeks of training and teamwork demonstrated commitment and collaboration.

We are so grateful to everyone who contributed from generous donors to enthusiastic cheerleaders on the day.



Raffle Donor Acknowledgements

We extend heartfelt thanks to the incredible local businesses, creatives, and individuals who supported our Christmas and Summer Spectacular Raffles.

Your donations help fund vital services for neurodivergent families across South Essex.

Summer Spectacular

Donors: Abbie's Beauty at Home, Adventure Island, Babos Grocery Ltd, Ben's Barbell Club, Birkett Long Solicitors, Caddies, Call of the Wild Zoo, Carolina Norton – Beauty Therapist, Cheeky Monkeys, Chris' Toy Box, Cliffs Pavilion & Palace Theatre Southend, Colchester Zoo, David Lloyd (Southend), Diggerland, Families Who Donated Raffle Prizes, Hidden Beauty, Indirock, Leigh Brewery, Leigh-on-Sea Brewery, Local Photographer, MegaCentre Rayleigh, Monkey Bizness Hockley, Move It or Lose It!, Personal Trainer, Rayleigh Leisure Centre, Scoopy's Ice Cream Van (Canvey), Sealife Adventure Zooquarium Southend, Sketchy Kids Art Club, So Sew by Zoe, Tesco MN, Tesco Southend, Westley & Family Greengrocers.

Christmas Raffle

Donors: Altons Garden Centre, Call of the Wild Zoo, Crystals on Sea, For Goodness Cakes, Hello Homemade Happiness, Karen Hewitt, Lara Jayne Designs Resin Creations, Mouthful of Crumbs, Pretty Things That Sparkle, Scrumptious Scents, The Best of Threads, The Happy Bunny.

Chosen Beneficiary – Great Wakering Primary Christmas Fayre

We were honoured to be the chosen charity at Great Wakering Primary's Christmas Fayre, raising both funds and awareness for SEND families.



Volunteer Appreciation

Thank you to all volunteers who gave their time, energy, and compassion.

Special thanks to those leading events, benefit appointments, and peer sessions.

Staff & Volunteer Summary

Between March 2024 and March 2025, STRM employed two part-time staff members and was supported by one long-standing volunteer.

Volunteer roles have become more embedded across delivery and administration, reflecting our commitment to lived experience and peer-to-peer support.

STRM has begun developing a Volunteer Recognition Programme (launching 2026), which will offer access to national qualifications such as the NCFE Level 1 Award in Volunteering, supporting personal development and long-term engagement.

We plan to recruit a part-time Volunteer Coordinator in the next financial year to lead training, wellbeing, and supervision.

Volunteer Highlight – Joan

We are proud to recognise Joan, a long-standing volunteer whose contribution continues to shape STRM's work.

With a background in family law and education governance, Joan brings both professional insight and lived experience to her role. She supports families through peer-led sessions and plays a vital part in behind-the-scenes operations.

Joan's calm, compassionate presence and unwavering commitment reflect the heart of our values.

Thank you, Joan — your dedication and wisdom make a lasting impact on the STRM community.



Southend Volunteer Passport (VP) Accredited Course.

Joan and Rebecca officially began their volunteer journey with STRM, taking their first steps toward completing the Southend Volunteer Passport (VP) Accredited Course.

Thanks to SAVS and Southend-on-Sea City Council, they have the opportunity to develop their skills, gain valuable experience, and enhance their contribution to our community work. It was a fantastic first session and a brilliant start to their volunteering journey.



6.5 Legacy Giving & Community Recognition

In Memory: Chris Nota (2000–2020)



Julia shared Chris's story in a powerful commemorative statement as part of the inquiry. In it, she spoke with searing honesty about her son, her grief, and her determination that his life would make a difference:

"I want people to know who he was. I want him to be remembered for more than the way he died."

"I was a lone parent, and he was my everything... I was constantly dismissed, ignored, and blamed. But Chris matters. His story matters."

Donations were originally collected by a close friend of Chris's, with the intention of creating a permanent memorial. But after time, reflection, and heartfelt conversations, a different decision was made—one that honoured Chris's spirit more deeply.

Julia shared:

"We decided that our Chris would have wanted his memorial to live on in the children who could be supported. That this was of crucial importance."

With heartfelt thanks to Julia Hopper for the donation. We honour the life and memory of Chris Nota, born on 30 December 2000, and tragically lost on 8 July 2020, aged just 19.

Chris was autistic, had learning disabilities and epilepsy, and was a young man full of warmth, humour, and kindness. His mother, Julia Hopper, described him as:

"A loving and deeply caring boy who just needed understanding, calm and consistency, and to be free from constant pressure."

Chris loved music, dancing, swimming, and being outdoors. He had a beautiful smile and a deep sensitivity to the world around him. Despite significant challenges, he had so much love to give. His death, following multiple missed opportunities and systemic failures in care, has been the subject of national scrutiny through the Lampard Inquiry into deaths of people in mental health services across Essex.

In honour of Chris, Julia chose to donate the funds to STRM Charity, helping us support other neurodivergent children and families so that no one feels unheard or alone. Her gift strengthens our peer-led support model, community advocacy, and the ongoing fight for trauma-informed, inclusive systems.

Julia's determination in the face of unimaginable loss continues to inspire real change. Her willingness to turn grief into action is helping to build a better future for other families navigating similar challenges. Chris's legacy lives on – not only in remembrance, but in the voices now being heard, the systems being challenged, and the hope that others will be met with the understanding and care he was denied.

Media & Public Recognition

We are proud to have been featured in a number of media outlets and public platforms throughout the year, helping to raise awareness of our work and amplify the voices of the families we support. Highlights include our SAVS Case Study, multiple features in the Evening Echo, and recognition from local MPs and the Mayors of Castle Point and Rochford.



- MP David Burton-Sampson
- MP Bayo Alaba
- MP Rebecca Harris
- Mayor of Castle Point
- Mayor of Rochford
- Evening Echo
- High Sheriff of Essex

This public recognition not only celebrates our achievements but also strengthens community trust and helps extend the reach of our impact.

6.6 Ethical Fundraising & Transparency Statement

We are committed to ethical fundraising in line with the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice. We ensure that all fundraising activities are legal, open, honest, and respectful.

All income raised is managed with integrity and used solely to advance our charitable objectives and benefit the communities we support. We are transparent about how funds are spent and welcome questions from supporters about our fundraising or financial decisions. Our safeguarding commitments to children and vulnerable adults underpin all fundraising.

To every donor, volunteer, and partner — thank you for SENDING the Right Message with us. Your generosity fuels inclusion, connection, and hope.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

7.1 Building Momentum, Driving Change, Empowering Families

As we look ahead to 2025/26, STRM is ready to scale our impact and deepen the connection, trust, and early help that families deserve.

We are stepping forward with purpose and building on lived experience, partnership, and innovation to ensure no child or parent ever feels lost in the system again.

We know that neurodivergent and disabled children thrive when support is timely, tailored, and rooted in trust. That's why next year will focus on bold, practical solutions that empower families and drive the systemic change they deserve.

7.2 Highlights of What's Ahead for 2025/26

MP SEND Parent Meeting

A powerful, parent-led platform where families will speak directly to local MPs and decision-makers. This event will spotlight the lived experience of navigating the SEND system, push for urgent reforms, and ensure that voices too often ignored are heard at the highest level.

The TASK Project – Early Help That Works

In partnership with Raw Learning, STRM will expand its "test-and-learn" pilot offering early identification, screening, and hands-on support for families exploring neurodivergence. This project is about catching needs early, reducing delays, and helping families take action with confidence.

Peer-to-Peer Volunteer Programme

We're growing our community from the inside out with training and uplifting parent volunteers to become trusted guides for others. This new model puts lived experience at the heart of delivery, building belonging, confidence, and capacity across Essex and Southend.

STRM Membership Zone

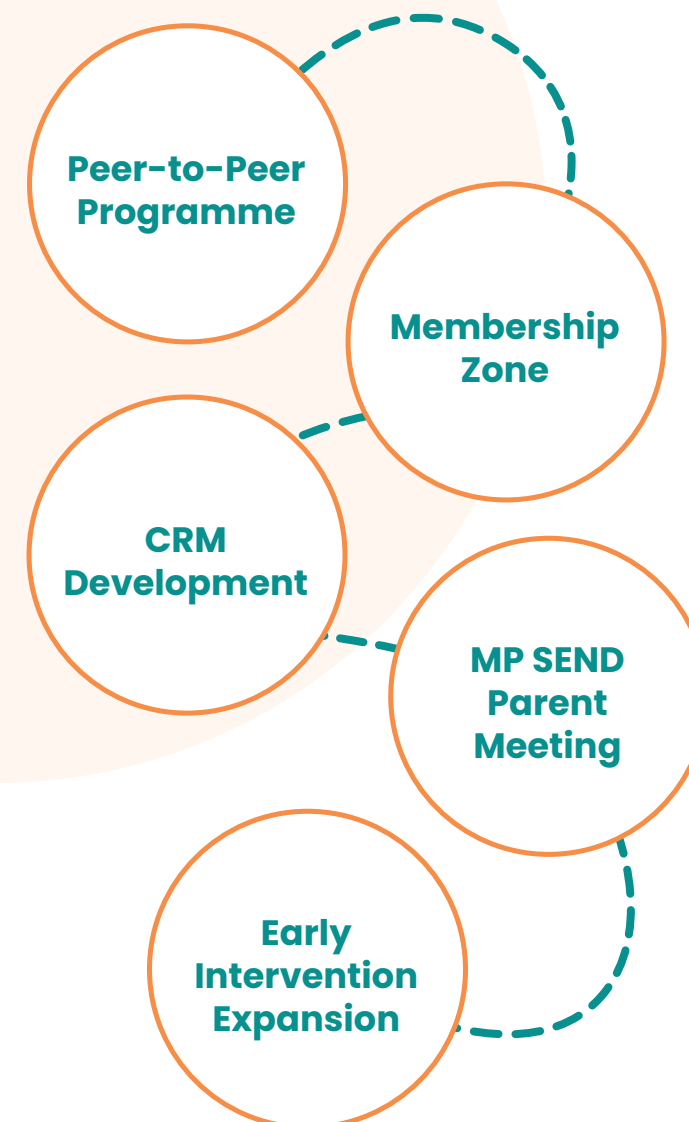
A dedicated digital space where families can access trusted resources, videos, templates, checklists, and guidance — all in one place, all built by and for families like theirs. It's the practical, personal support tool families tell us they need most.

Smarter Systems, Deeper Impact

With our CRM expansion, we'll better track journeys, monitor outcomes, and respond quickly and flexibly to the needs of our community.

This investment means more personalised support, stronger data for funders, and greater impact for every family we reach.

Looking Ahead – Roadmap to Change



Our Ongoing Commitment

- MP SEND Parent Meeting
- TASK Project pilot with Raw Learning
- Peer-to-peer volunteer programme launch
- STRM Membership Zone creation
- CRM development and data-informed support
- Expanded early intervention offers
- Continued commitment to safe, strengths-led, community-first support

We remain fiercely committed to early intervention, co-produced solutions, and a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach that meets families where they are.

We believe in prevention over crisis, connection over isolation, and practical support over red tape.

Together, we are building a future where no family is left behind, every child is understood, and every parent is empowered.

The best is yet to come.

"When I started STRM, I just wanted no parent to feel as alone as I once did.

Today, thanks to our incredible community, that vision is becoming reality.

Together, we are reshaping the story for SEND families — with compassion, courage, and connection at the heart of it all."

— Maggie Cleary, Founder & CEO

"To every donor, volunteer, and partner — thank you for SENDING the Right Message with us. Your generosity fuels inclusion, connection, and hope."



We would like to thank Count on Us CIC for their professional support and for preparing the charity's accounts for the year end.





STRM - SEND the Right Message

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