Grace Eyre Impact Report 2024-2025





Our Mission

Grace Eyre's vision is for a society where people with a learning disability and/or autistic people are respected as equal citizens, are part of and contribute to their communities and where people can fulfil their dreams and wishes.

Grace Eyre's mission is to deliver Our Charter, created by people with a learning disability and/or autistic people. It informs every aspect of our work.

Our Charter:

- We want to be listened to
- We want to be part of the community
- We want strong and supported relationships
- We want good housing
- We want jobs
- We want to travel around
- We want to try new things
- We want to be healthy



Our year in numbers



700

people supported across Sussex and parts of London to have great lives

293

people in supported living and accessing the community with our Choices team

182

people took part in our Active Lives day activities

318

kind and friendly staff provided excellent service

63

people in supported arrangements through Grace Eyre Shared Lives

162

people chose where and how they wanted to live with support from Grace Eyre Housing

101,861

outreach hours provided by our Choices team

182,065

support hours provided by our Choices team

Chair's Introduction

As Chair of Grace Eyre, I'm proud to present our Impact Report, which showcases the incredible progress we've made in empowering people with a learning disability and/or autistic people to grow, thrive, and live more independently.

This year, our housing provision has expanded significantly, and our supported living services continue to offer greater choice and autonomy. Meanwhile, our Active Lives programme – now working in partnership with over 20 organisations and venues – delivers a diverse and inspiring variety of skills, arts, leisure, and wellbeing activities across Brighton and Hove and West Sussex.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our dedicated staff, volunteers, ambassadors, trustees, partners and funders. Your continued commitment has made these achievements possible, even as the voluntary sector faces increasingly tough financial challenges.



Anna Cooley, Chair

CEO's Introduction

This year has seen some challenges to us as a charity. We have experienced major changes to our funding picture with low fees from local authorities and our costs going up beyond what we can manage, including through increases to employers' National Insurance and the unfunded raise in the Real Living Wage. Together with other not-for-profit organisations, we continue to campaign and work with our commissioners to try and reverse some of the worst effects for us.

Grace Eyre continues to co-produce our work with people we support and continues to work towards our target of 20% of our workforce being people with lived experience of a learning disability and/or autistic people.

Together, the board of trustees and all staff at Grace Eyre are confident we can achieve this and ensure our long-term future.



Eva Eriksson, CEO

We want to be listened to

- 82% of Our Voices team have a learning disability or are autistic
- 20 people Grace Eyre support co-produced the community outreach and supported living service operational plan
- 3 Trustees, 12 Ambassadors and 8 Purple Production volunteers have a learning disability or are autistic

Grace Eyre aims to be a user-led organisation. We listen to the people we support and ensure they have a voice, as we want people with a learning disability and autistic people to be making decisions at all levels of Grace Eyre.

We do this throughout all our departments, including our Board of Trustees, but a key part of this is the role of the Our Voices team, more than 80% of whom have a learning disability and/or are autistic. They work to make Grace Eyre and wider society more inclusive, through the Grace Eyre Ambassadors, the Purple Productions events team and other work to promote accessibility.

This year, the Ambassadors have campaigned against disability discrimination, against benefits cuts and to demand proper funding for social care. They led Grace Eyre presences, alongside people supported by and working for Grace Eyre, plus other care providers and advocates, to ask local authorities in both West Sussex and Brighton and Hove to save social care by demanding urgent investment in the sector.

Our Ambassadors, who all have a learning disability and/or are autistic, have also got more involved with communications at Grace Eyre this year and have started to create more of our social media, reflecting Grace Eyre's commitment to co-production.

To help more people to have a voice and be listened to, they also developed scenario-based self-advocacy training, which was been presented at the annual staff conference, as well as to people supported by Active Lives and The Reach. In June, the Ambassadors worked with Brighton & Hove Speak Out to organise an accessible hustings in the run up to the General Election. Over 70 people attended and asked questions to some of the people standing for election.

The Our Voices team have also provided trustee training to other organisations to ensure people with a learning disability are listened to in other charities too.





- 1373 participants attended events run by Grace Eyre Purple Productions
- 293 people supported by Grace Eyre Choices service to access community venues
- 50 events hosted by Purple Productions including Big Purple Funfest our first ever festival!

Making sure that the people we support are fully part of and involved with their community is a crucial part of our work.

This year, Active Lives navigated a successful move to our new headquarters and has further developed its services to become more community based, now offering activities such as cooking, performance and sport in multiple locations across Brighton & Hove, as well as at its current base at Telecom House, plus further sports and skills courses throughout West Sussex. We also took part in another successful Artists Open House, attended by 530 people from our local community.

Our Choices services supported nearly 300 people through a flexible, bespoke service, at home and in the community, varying from a few hours each week to 24-hour daily support, depending on each person's needs.

In Brighton, our city-centre base The Reach went from strength to strength, providing a service for people with lower support needs living in Brighton & Hove in a way that meets their needs and enables them to make connections with others, access support when they need it and increase independence.

And our Purple Productions events team organised and ran 50 events, featuring comedy, gaming, karaoke and, of course, dancing. Excitingly, in August 2024, they ran their first ever festival, which, while designed to be learning disability-friendly, was open to the whole community.

The first Big Purple Funfest was a co-produced day of performances, music, comedy, art, dance, food, drinks, games and activities for friends, families and allies. It was a great success, which raised money and provided lots of fun.

Festival-goers, many with a learning disability, autism, or other disability, fed back that they loved "the uniquely festival vibes" and appreciated its inclusivity and accessibility, which is often missing at this type of event. The second Big Purple Funfest took place in August 2025.

We want to be part of our community

Ben's story

Ben ran the Purple Clubhouse at Grace Eyre on Montefiore Road for several years. When Purple Productions was created, he joined as the Events Co-ordinator with an increase to his role and responsibilities. Instead of running just one event per month, he now helps to run and promote up to six, as well as the Big Purple Funfest.

Ben's journey has not come without its challenges. Being autistic, Ben finds change, stress, troubleshooting and shifting priorities difficult and at times even triggering. Events management include all of those things, so Ben's success in his role is even more impressive. He has learnt to manage his emotions and be an example to the team, while showing real leadership and professionalism. His responsibilities have increased over the year to now include marketing, planning and ticket sales, as well as managing events entirely on his own. Ben has really grown in his role and is a crucial and valuable part of the Purple Productions team.

Andrew's story

Andrew, who lives in a Grace Eyre managed property, has always been passionate about drumming. Every week, he attends a local music studio where he has drumming lessons to improve his skills. He also plays with a band, Beats Express, working with our friends at the Carousel arts organisation, playing both old and new material. Andrew is supported and encouraged by Grace Eyre staff to attend practice.

Andrew recently played with his band at a nightclub near Croydon, in front of two hundred people, the biggest audience Andrew has played in front of and his first paid gig. While each band on the line up was originally due to play three songs, the audience was so impressed with Andrew's band, they cheered them on to perform more songs.





- Over 150 people attended a Pre-Pride party in a community venue, proud to be themselves
- 63 people supported by Grace Eyre Shared Lives individuals and families
- Joined over 100 organisations, including charities, community groups and local LGBTQ+ businesses, to take part in our 4th Brighton & Hove Pride Community Parade

It is important to Grace Eyre that we support people in having good relationships, whether that is spending time with and living with people they get on with, finding and maintaining friendships, or being able to have a romantic relationship.

Lots of our services provide the opportunity for people to form different types of relationships, whether that is through our Active Lives sessions, at the Reach or through Grace Eyre Housing's peer-to-peer scheme. This year, lots of friendships have been made at each that have continued away from Grace Eyre services.

We know that it is important that people live with others they get on with and we support this in a range of living situations. Our Shared Lives service carefully matches people who are 16 years old or older and need support with a carer who can offer that, in their own home or – for Shared Lives Local – in the community. The right Shared Lives relationship can make a big, positive impact in lots of different ways.

Grace Eyre support several people in individual flats in one of our supported living buildings. Some of the residents have developed friendships within the building, often spending evenings and sharing meals together. Two have even been on holiday together to visit family overseas. This has a positive impact on them all and to their wellbeing.

However, where needed, Grace Eyre support staff have provided advice and support on how to have healthy friendships and set boundaries, as some of the tenants have different expectations of what friendships entail.



We want to have strong and supported relationships

This year, Grace Eyre also launched Homeshare Sussex and became a member of the national Homeshare network, which provides companionship and light support for vulnerable people living alone. This service matches people with their own home, who may need a very small amount of help, with a person looking for affordable housing who would be happy to help in return for a lower rent. Grace Eyre manages these arrangements to ensure everyone is safe.

We also support family relationships wherever we can, for example through the growth of our mother and baby service this year in West Sussex.

The events run by Purple Productions, including the long-standing Purple Clubhouse, provide a safe space to have fun enabling people to socialise, sometimes spending time together in a way that is not always otherwise possible.



Stuart and Gayle

Stuart and Gayle met through Grace Eyre Active Lives around 15 years ago, became a couple shortly afterwards and are now engaged. They currently live in separate Shared Lives homes but would love to live together one day. Stuart explains the importance of the Purple Clubhouse night for them both:

"The Purple Clubhouse is a very positive experience for me and Gayle. We find it very useful because when we come to the events as it's like a date and an opportunity for us to be together later in the evenings. It's more like being on a proper date that we usually don't get to do."

And of course, it is crucial that everyone supported by Grace Eyre is able to choose who they have a relationship with. Grace Eyre once again showed our support for our LGBTQIA+ community – whether that is the people we support, our staff or anyone else – at Brighton and Hove's Pride Community Parade, while also enjoying the iconic Brighton celebration.



We want good housing

- 162 tenants across Brighton & Hove and West Sussex through Grace Eyre Housing
- 95 people supported to live independently in Brighton and Hove and West Sussex by Grace Eyre Choices service
- 34 tenants received 1-1 visits about the Peer-to Peer project during its first year to build rapport making tenants feel comfortable and safe

At Grace Eyre, we support people in choosing where they live and who they live with, enabling them to be as independent as possible, while meeting their support needs. We do this through the work of our Choices supported living service, Grace Eyre Shared Lives and Grace Eyre Housing.

Grace Eyre Housing acts as the landlord for people with a learning disability, autistic people and people with mental health needs living in their own accommodation. They support individuals, couples and friendship groups, to choose where, with who and how they want to live.

During this year, they have grown by 41 bedspaces, with 19 of these being stepping stone accommodation for people coming from hospital discharge services via the NHS. They have worked in partnership with many care and support providers including Venture People, Arundel Care and, of course, Grace Eyre's own Choices service. Housing have also expanded their team due to the demand for their service.

This year, Grace Eyre Housing was also proud to launch and run a peer-to-peer project, funded by Nationwide, with the aim of enabling Grace Eyre tenants to meet other tenants and providing opportunities to build skills, develop friendships and participate in activities to support mental wellbeing and confidence.

Led by a Peer-to-Peer Tenancy Support Co-ordinator and supported by two Peer Mentors with a learning disability and/or autism along with experience of managing their own tenancies, the project has helped Grace Eyre tenants to manage their tenancies, reduce isolation and feel more able to have their say. The project hosted opportunities for tenants to engage through meetings, drop-ins, workshops and social events and has been such a success that it has now been made a permanent and intrinsic part of the Grace Eyre Housing service.





Sue's story

Sue was living in one of our supported living homes when her mum passed away and left her family home to her. Sue decided that she would like to try and live in the family home independently and Grace Eyre supported her to do so.

There was a complicated legal process to resolve before this could happen. Sue also needed some upskilling to be able to live independently, having previously lived in supported living and the house needed substantial amounts of refurbishment work, as well as some risk assessment.

Sue spent many test nights in her new home with staff guidance. Her house was assessed for risks and support strategies were drawn up for outreach support. Funding was secured for outreach support, specialist Grace Eyre Housing support was agreed and legal affairs, benefits and utilities were changed over. A move date was selected and transport arranged. Sue was given lots of emotional support for the move, as well as practical help such as improving her cooking skills.

Sue appears to now be living her 'best life' and is incredibly happy in her new home. Her mental health is very stable and her independent living seems to be a total success. She has taken to her new staff team, and created a new routine that keeps her active, social, and within her budget. Her house is always well kept and in good order and she has put all the skills she has learnt to excellent use.

Wendy and Lily the dog

Lily is a favourite with our tenants. She is the family dog of Amy, one of our peer-to-peer mentors, and comes along to a few tenant events.

This year, Amy did some great one-to-one work with Wendy, one of our tenants, who is specifically interested in getting a job at the Dogs' Trust or working with dogs in general. Wendy was helped by Amy to look for volunteering opportunities and also regularly walked Lily, which she really enjoyed.



We want jobs

- 100% of learners on Learning for Work and Learning for Life courses in West Sussex increased their ambition
- 48 people successfully achieved numeracy training in Brighton and Hove
- 77% of learners on Learning for Work courses felt confident following completion

Only 5% of people with a learning disability in the UK are employed. But we know many more could be and would like to be. To address this disparity and increase the number of people with disabilities into work, we have developed an Employment Strategy to guide our work.

As part of this, our Employability and Skills team, part of our Active Lives service, supports people with a learning disability and/or autistic people on their journey to paid work, further training and/or volunteering. All learners from our West Sussex 'Learning for Work' courses, delivered in partnership with West Sussex County Council over the year, said they had increased their understanding of setting personal goals and felt more confident about answering interview questions, with many also reporting improvement in communication skills and confidence.

Several of our attendees from these courses have gone on to take up volunteer positions to gain further experience as the next step towards paid work. This includes placements at John Lewis, a nursery, Worthing Hospital gardens and in the café and charity shop of Worthing Soup Kitchen.

Within Grace Eyre, we are also working to increase the number of people employed who have a learning disability and/or autism. Nearly all members of our Purple Productions events team (paid and volunteer) have a learning disability and/or autism, and the team benefits greatly from the skills and insight this lived experience brings. Meanwhile, through planning and running all elements of events, team members gain valuable work experience and skills they can use to further their ongoing professional development.

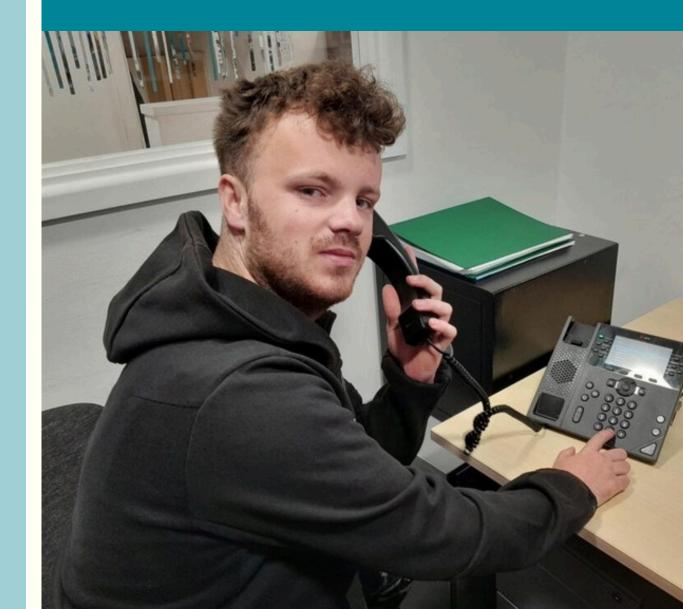
The Reach also employed their first member of staff with a learning disability to support the running of the venue, including organising and supporting activities in the community. Read more about Bradley.

Bradley's story

We wanted to employ someone with lived experience of a learning disability to support the running of The Reach, including organising and supporting activities in the community. Bradley was successful in getting the role after completing employment training with our friends at Team Domenica.

His role involves creating a welcoming environment for the people who receive support at The Reach and helping with its day-to-day running, plus listening and responding to people's views and opinions, as well as managing local trips out for people.

Bradley said: "The job is fun. It's hard to get a job when you have a learning disability, so it feels great to be accepted. The staff are nice and supportive, and I have ongoing training."



We want to travel around

- An exciting new 3-year grant from the Motability Foundation for independent travel training with our Travel Buddy project
- Our independent travel training provided savings of £1,200 on a round-trip journey
- Through the Travel Buddy project a learner was able to travel independently from home to college

The people we support tell us they want to travel around. Our Travel Buddy Project works with the people we support to help them gain the confidence to make journeys around their local community and beyond. This year, we were successful in gaining a grant from the Motability that will fund many more people being able to travel independently over the next three years.

When we moved Grace Eyre's Brighton and Hove base to Telecom House in November, plus some other new nearby venues, the Travel Buddy Team successfully supported several people who had previously travelled independently to our Active Lives service in Montefiore Road to learn a new journey. One of them, Nat, explains how Travel Buddy supported her to travel confidently to the new premises.

Travel Buddy also delivered workshops to local youth groups, to partners including Team Domenica and our own Active Lives service, with some of the attendees then going on to undertake our Independent Travel Training programme.

Whether people are able to travel independently or need someone to accompany them, this year Grace Eyre services have supported hundreds of different journeys made by the people we work with, whether that's attending college or work, heading out on a day trip, or going to see a show or out clubbing.

Nat's story

"When I found out Grace Eyre was moving, I was sad because I could travel there independently, and I was worried because I didn't know how to get to the new day centre. I didn't need to worry because Travel Buddy showed me how to get there! They made me a new Route Planner – I still needed to get two buses, but I changed buses at a quiet place and knew the bus I needed to change to. I kept my independence on the bus and a bit of the journey I already knew. Claire, my Travel Buddy, did the journey with me until I was confident to travel by myself. If someone wants to learn to travel Independently, the Travel Buddy team are good and calming."



We want to try new things

- 88% of Employability and Skills learners gained the right skills for everyday tasks and independence
- 47 people supported by our new service at The Reach
- Over 70 people came to learn more about voting and hear from local candidates at Accessible Hustings hosted by Grace Eyre and Brighton and Hove Speak Out

The people we support tell us they like to try different things, meet new people and build their life skills. Many of our services and events provide opportunities for trying something new and making friends, whether that is making something new in an Active Lives cooking session, visiting a new place with an outreach support worker, or having a night out at the Purple Clubhouse for the first time.

People attending The Reach – our venue where people can get the support they need when they need it – have been supported to try new things in the community. For example, we supported people to London who had never been, someone was supported to go to the dentist for the first time, and people have been trying different community groups and then have continued to go without support.

Our accessible Learning for Life training courses provide people with a learning disability and/or autistic people with the skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential. Courses empower participants to lead more independent, fulfilling lives, with modules covering everyday life admin, health and well-being, social skills, digital literacy and greater work-readiness. Many participants then progress to take our 'Learning for Work' course and develop further valuable skills.

We also try to reflect our Pioneering value as an organisation and are always open to trying innovative fresh ideas. The launch of The Reach introduced a new way for people to access our outreach services and for us to deliver support. While our new Grace Eyre Homeshare Sussex service introduced an innovative way for someone with their own larger property to share it with a person at a reduced rent, in return for companionship and light housework.



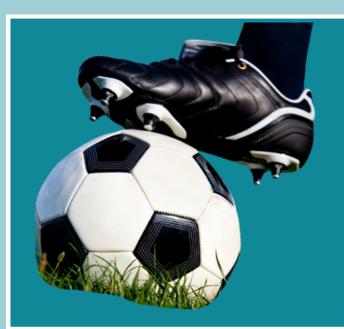
We want to try new things

We also launched Pioneer Arts this year, a new online gallery, which we debuted in person at Brighton's 2024 Artists Open House festival. Initially supported by Brighton and Hove City Council and other smaller grants, the Pioneer Arts online gallery will showcase and sell art from artists with a learning disability and/or autistic artists supported by Grace Eyre.



Lisa* who was part of Grace Eyre Housing's peer-to-peer network, but hadn't engaged very much so far, agreed to being on the interview panel for the recruitment of a peer mentor. She was initially uncertain and nervous but, after being supported by the project lead, her confidence grew and she enjoyed it. She has since agreed to work with the new peer mentor to develop a women's group going forward, which will continue to build her confidence and engagement.

*Name has been changed



Daniel* was supported to attend an Albion in the Community football session on a Saturday morning. He had spoken about wanting to join a football club for a while and, after enjoying the taster session, decided he wanted to become a member so he could access the sessions every week. Our staff supported him to complete the membership forms and then helped him to set up the monthly membership fee payments.

After being supported the first time, he has since travelled there himself by bus.

*Name has been changed



We want to be healthy

- 750 Active Lives sports sessions delivered during the year
- 150 healthy meals cooked in Grace Eyre Active Lives cooking sessions
- 70+ people reached through Healthy Living workshops, talks and sessions

The people we support tell us they want to be healthy so, during this year, Grace Eyre arranged a series of talks, activities and events to support people to keep fit, and have active lives and healthy minds.

This included events and activities focused on the importance of Health and Wellbeing Checks, help on achieving health-related goals, oral health and losing weight through healthy eating. We also had visits from different experts, including The Trust for Developing Communities, who shared information about what cancer is and how to spot its early signs and symptoms.

Many of the activities offered year-round by Active Lives and by our other services in the community involve different elements of healthy living. We offer a range of sports, such as Padel, cricket and swimming, as well as dancing, cooking and sessions at our own allotment in Hove.

To help improve health services in the wider community, the Ambassadors co-produced and co-delivered 'working with patients with a learning disability' training to physician associate students at the Brighton & Sussex Medical School. This included self-advocacy skills, Makaton for healthcare professionals, Easy Read and the Accessible Information, Mental Capacity Act, learning difficulty versus learning disability, etc. The training was a success and will be repeated soon.

As well as physical health, supporting people's mental health – whether that of the people we support or our staff – is also important to us at Grace Eyre. For the people we support, many of the activities and groups on offer and the confidence-building skills and support networks they provide, are a crucial part of maintaining good mental health.



Our people and how we work

- 130 people nominated for Celebrate Greatness Award
- Investors in People Silver accreditation with the assessment finding that our staff are proud to work for Grace Eyre and are aligned to the purpose of the charity
- 11% staff turnover rate, which is significantly below the care sector average of 28%

We employ over 300 staff across the South East of England, plus more volunteers, across several services, including supported living, outreach, day services, shared lives, housing and head office.

The way we work at Grace Eyre is grounded in our values which run through everything we do, and are highlighted through our Celebrate Greatness Award, where staff nominate each other to recognise great work.

Diversity and inclusion are an essential part of our work and this year we have explored how we can increase the diversity of our workforce and better support everyone who works at Grace Eyre, including through workshops and a new EDI group.

We also launched staff forums, run by and for neurodivergent staff, to provide a safe space where members can share experiences, support one another, and support the work of inclusion, within the workplace.

We are proud to be a Disability Confident Leader and are now keen to become the go-to organisation in the area to provide support to other organisations on how to become a Disability Confident Leader organisation.

We are a people-first organisation where the voice and experiences of both the people we support and our colleagues guide our decisions. As part of our aim to be a user-led organisation, we have made a number of commitments to ensure that people with a learning disability and/or autistic people are leading the way, including a commitment to employing more people with a learning disability and/or autism, as well as more neurodivergent people.





A big thank you to all our partners, funders and donors, as well as to everyone else who has provided raffle prizes or supported us in any other way!



Travel Buddy:

Brighton & Hove City Council Motability Foundation

Purple Productions:

Brighton, Hove & District Mencap Society Brighton & Hove City Council

Preston Park Station Adoption:

Govia Thameslink Railway

Pioneer Arts:

Chalk Cliff Trust
Enjoolata Foundation
Brighton & Hove City Council
Cameron Contemporary Art Gallery
The Paint Club
Brighton Black Market

Health & Well-being Programme:

Co-operative Local Community Fund

Pride:

Zurich Community Trust

Employment and Skills Courses:

West Sussex County Council

Business Transformation:

Sussex Health and Care ICS

Allotment:

Co-operative Local Community Fund

Multiply:

Brighton & Hove City Council West Sussex County Council

Peer-to-Peer Tenancy Support: Nationwide Community Trust



Finances to March 2025

Income from:

Donations and legacies	290,558
Charitable activities	12,347,491
Other trading activities	26,375
Investments	9,222
Total income	12,673,646
Expenditure on:	
Expenditure on: Raising funds	141,878
	141,878 12,418,481

The organisation achieved a surplus of £113,287.

Get involved

Grace Eyre is a charity, and we can't support people who depend on our services without your help. We know our services and activities are a lifeline for our community. To continue to make a real impact on the lives of hundreds of people with a learning disability and/or autism and others, we need you.

Your action matters. It will help build communities where people with a learning disability and/or autistic people feel respected, valued and able to contribute.

Get involved today by visiting our website at grace-eyre.org.

You can:

- Donate
- Raise money
- Volunteer
- Be a corporate partner
- Leave a gift in your will

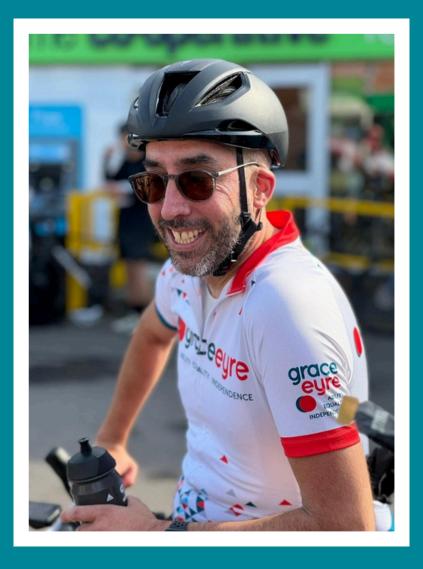












Grace Eyre

Future plans

There have been many changes since we last published a full strategic plan, including the pandemic, a new government and a changed political and economic landscape; and we are no longer continuing with our Big Build project.

However, we are excited about the future of Grace Eyre and are looking forward to continuing to work collaboratively to deliver Our Charter and to support people with a learning disability and/or autistic people to live the lives they want in a range of creative and bespoke ways.



We are currently updating our plans to do this over the next few years and will share a new, ambitious strategy for 2026-29 next year. Meanwhile, now and always, we will carry on providing innovative services and pioneering projects that transform the lives of people with a learning disability and/or autistic people.





Grace Eyre
Ground Floor West, Telecom House
125-135 Preston Road
Brighton BN1 6AF
www.grace-eyre.org

Registered Charity in England & Wales no. 1020192