

Running Deer C.I.C

Overview

Running Deer is a Devon based Community Interest Company established to provide opportunities for children, young people and adults including those at risk of exclusion; and local people & communities living in rural isolation without easy access to education, employment or training.

We provide access to learning outside the classroom, training, volunteering, life skills opportunities and work experience in traditional and rural skills, bushcraft and survival skills, animal assisted interventions, woodland and land conservation and related activities. The Running Deer group include Running Deer School and Running Deer Intervention Services.

Our ethos is to:

- Be ethical in everything we do.
- Be user led and transparent at all times.
- Promote inclusiveness and support social enterprise.
- Make a positive difference to people's lives.
- Provide opportunities with a difference!
- Campaign on behalf of the environment at a local level.

Running Deer C.I.C is a not-for-profit CIC Limited by Guarantee no: 7605814, incorporated on 15th April 2011.

Running Deer C.I.C is governed by a board of Volunteer Directors and Executive Directors who are an amazing team of neurodiverse individuals, social entrepreneurs and changemakers who bring a unique approach to everything we do.

Running Deer School

Running Deer School is an Independent School for Special Educational Needs providing high support specialist education for young people in Devon.

Running Deer s practical skills and therapeutic education enables young people in Devon to overcome barriers to learning; designed to stimulate and challenge them, supporting their personal development, improving confidence, self-esteem, communication, social and emotional well-being.

Running Deer School is a registered Trauma Informed School.

Running Deer School – 2020 onwards:

- Student numbers have increased due to demand.
- Successfully transitioned students to post 16 training or education with 100% success rate
- **October 2023 – OFSTED inspection with outcome from Good to Inadequate. Action plan including recruiting an English teacher (specialist) and implementing improvements to Management structure.**
- **May 2024 – OFSTED unannounced inspection. Outcome is that Running Deer School now meets independent standards. New proactive action plan in place to ensure that the school continues to improve to enable positive outcome at next inspection.**
- March 2024 - Students completed the Ten Tors Jubilee Challenge for the first time.
- September 2024 – Devon County Council Quality Assurance: Approved.
- October 2024 – Department of Education Material Change inspection to 15 students which has been approved.
- December 2024 – Running Deer School successfully registered with AQA to offer GCSE's directly to our students, and independent candidates.

Case Study TM

Starting Point	Action taken	Outcome
TM at Running Deer in September 2021. He came to use from another special school that could no longer meet his needs. He was persistently absent from school, had very poor mental health and would regularly abscond from home. He had significant trauma related his previous educational experiences. He had only worn short since the age of 3 and was unable to be separate from his mum at all.	We had planned a very careful transition for him which involved him accessing the site an hour a day with a small number of staff and mum being always present. He accepted for health and safety reasons he'd need to wear long trousers. He began to attend sporadically. With persistence he was able to extend his day and mum was able to increase the distance. He was presented with familiar members of staff and was allowed to follow an interest-based curriculum. Teachers soon began taking work into his space and soon he was engaging fully in learning. This was then transferred down in the classrooms. Where he continued to engage fully.	Eventually TM was able to travel into school in a taxi he was able to attend formal lessons without the support of his caseworkers. He was able to sit some exams and gain some qualifications. Including a FAAW certificate and a Chainsaw ticket which were both achieved on public courses. He successfully went to college post 16 and is intending to a go on to do a level 3 arborist course next year.

Email from TM's mum

"I really wanted to make sure you all know how much you have impacted all our lives, not just T. Please share the following with staff.

I honestly believe you have saved Taylor's life and possibly mine.

When he started, he was anxious, mute and terrified by all thing's education, I had been unable to work and sitting in car parks whilst he attended various settings for 6 years and now he is confident, resilient, and a clear direction and knows who he is!!!! This has enabled me to go back to work. His siblings to get more of my time, our whole family is happier, safer, calmer and none of it would have been possible without running deer.

At every step you have given T a voice but on a personal level you always made sure I felt listened to and that I wasn't alone and for that I'll always be grateful. Having you in the ring with me to fight CAMHS put an end to all the professional gas lighting they were doing. He talks of you all so fondly

The jokes he shares are brilliant and we've had many laughs.

I've shed many tears about him leaving because I've never seen him happier, and the future is scary but I'm hopeful that the skills and resilience he has learnt have empowered him to go forward and conquer everything he sets his mind too.

I will never ever forget the important, life changing impact you have all individually had on our family."

Young people with special educational needs and EHCP's (Education and Health Care Plan) are referred to us from the local authorities. We are, on average receiving 3 enquiries per week. In September 2023 one of our local authorities placed 3 students with our school although only 1 place was available. Partly this is due to referrals coming from different departments within the local authority and they don't always communicate with each other.

If parents take the local authority to tribunal, we are obliged to accept the student even if we do not have a place available.

Our clients are local authorities including Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset Council, Dorset Council, Swindon Council currently.

Our service is very bespoke to every single child. Students have an individualised learning plan and are supported 1:1 making us very specialised.

At our OFSTED inspection in November, we acknowledged that we were over our registered numbers, due to the local authority placing more students with us than we had places for, as mentioned above. Following the successful unannounced inspection in May, the Department for Education instructed us to request a Material Change. In October 2024, OFSTED inspected the site, and the Department for Education approved the Material Change from 10 places to 15 places. Ww currently have 12 students on role.

What makes our school different?

- We provide a bespoke education and learning package to each individual student.
- Our students are supported 1:1 throughout the day

- We adapt to their needs rather than expecting them to fit in with us
- Staff wear the uniform - students don't!
- Our provision at Butterdon Wood is outdoors which reflects the sensory needs of our students
- We have a good reputation based on building a strong and resilient service.

Running Deer Intervention Service (not OFSTED registered)

Running Deer s Intervention Service is tailored to support young people s needs and personal development including improved self-esteem, confidence and communication, social and emotional wellbeing as well as supporting young people to process traumatic events in their lives.

The interventions service accepts referrals from schools and the local authority inclusions teams.

As a non-OFSTED registered provision, the Interventions services is limited to accepting young people for the maximum of 15 hours per week.

We now have contracts with Devon County Council and Torbay Council. We have also recently been successful in securing contracts with Dorset and Cornwall. Our aim is to expand into these two counties in 2025.

Devon County Council Quality Assured.

Torbay District Council Quality Assured.

Dorset Council Quality Assured.

Cornwall Council Quality Assured.

Covid-19

The pandemic has had a profound effect on Running Deer. As a special needs school, we had to remain open during lockdowns of 2020-2021. However, our intervention service was forced to close. Despite students being in school and supported by staff during holiday periods, those who were already struggling with their mental health, we saw a decline and for some, they have not fully recovered.

We continue to see this impact in young people who are referred to our school with significant mental health problems on top of their diagnosis.

Many of our staff also struggled with the impact of Covid-19 and we have worked hard to support them back into work.

Properties

Butterdon Wood

In 2013, with the help of Big Issue Invest RD purchased Butterdon Wood, 16 acres of commercial woodland on the edge of Dartmoor, which became the home to Running Deer. The woodland, grown as a crop of Japanese Larch was in very poor condition, and so a management plan was developed to turn it into a native woodland rich in flora and fauna. In 2014 we thinned an area of Larch under a felling license, and since then we have been thinning periodically within felling license rules to open up the canopy and allow more light to the woodland floor.

In 2015, on advice from Forest England, two of the compartments were clear felled due to an outbreak of *Phytophthora ramorum* which is fatal tree disease to larch, and other species.

The compartments were part of a regeneration project to partially replant with native flora and fauna and allow for a partial natural regeneration. The land was essentially sterile following the stocking of the larch crop in 1986, and poor crop management following planting. No thinning or brashing took place resulting in very little light reaching the woodland floor.

The regeneration process has started producing some amazing results in both compartments 1 and 2, with pioneer trees such as silver birch and rowan starting to grow, alongside hazel, sweet chestnut and oak, plus broom, wild raspberries, and gorse.

Butterdon Wood Compartment 1 in 2014



Butterdon Wood Compartment 1 in spring 2024.



Butterdon Wood compartment 2 in 2015



Butterdon Wood compartment 2, spring 2024



Middlecott Meadows

In 2018, with the help of Big Issue Invest, RD secured the purchase of a further 18 acres at Middlecott, and a new home for our therapy horses. The property includes 4 acres of ancient wet woodland and 14 acres of overworked and very tired pasture.

Over the last 5 years Running Deer have worked to restore the meadows to wildflower meadows, and a field survey showed promising results in the diversity of plants in selected areas. We have restored and created 918m of linear features (hedges) at Middlecott including the creation of a new hedge line.

Given that it was grazed by sheep in the winter and cut for hay in the summer and only rye grass was being grown at the site when we purchased it, we are very pleased with the progress to regenerate this land.

In 2023 we planted 67 fruit trees, creating a new orchard of traditional Devon cider apples. In 2024 we planted a further 60 traditional Devon cider apples.

We have also planted specimen trees including Elm (disease resistant), and a wild service tree. Both are no longer common in the countryside. Other specimen trees include Beech and Willow, also oaks grown from acorns.



3 Court Street

In 2020, Running Deer purchased the old dentist surgery in Moretonhampstead, a derelict Grade 2 listed building, one of the oldest in the town. Renovations to the property were extensive using local materials, such as timber from Fingle Woods a couple of miles away, and traditional methods including lime render and plastering. The restoration of this building took time and a sympathetic approach, but the building has been preserved, retaining its history for future generations to enjoy.



Running Deer Family Centre (Moretonhampstead)

In 2022, Running Deer entered into a leasehold with Teignbridge District Council to convert an old toilet block in Moretonhampstead into a family centre for the Interventions Service.

Running Deer Interventions Centre (Berry Pomeroy, Totnes)

In September 2024 we expanded our service and opened a new centre just outside of Totnes, Devon. The centre is extremely well placed to support young people from Torbay, as well as Devon and Plymouth, and we successfully met the Quality Assurance for both Devon and Torbay.

Impact Report 2021 - 2024

Environmental & Climate Change

We are working hard to do our bit to support our environment. We do this by:

- Encouraging staff to car share.
- Encourage staff and students to take responsibility for their own litter.
- Providing electric cars for the school and interventions service. There are currently 2 electric vehicles at the school, and 2 electric vehicles with the interventions service.
- Limiting number of cars allowed at Butterdon Wood.
- Tree planting including the creation of a traditional orchard at Middlecott.
- Conserving and regenerating wet woodland and pastures.
- Transitioning commercial non-native woodland into native woodland and rich wildlife havens.
- The electricity supplier for the school is a B-Corp company that only provides renewable energy. We also use renewable energy in our other properties.
- We support working from home for staff who are not working directly with young people.

Additionally, we have continued to regenerate 14 acres of pasture, and 16 acres of woodland protecting our grasslands/native habitats and increasing biodiversity.

- **REGENERATION:** 2021 – 2023 We have restored and created 918m of linear features (hedges) sequestered 975 tonnes of CO2 and we planted 1747 trees.
- **TREE PLANTING:** In the last 10 years we have planted in excess of 10,500 native trees.
- **TRADITIONAL ORCHARD:** In 2023 and 2024 we planted 130 trees and created a new traditional cider apple orchard with varieties of Devon apples and pears, plus crab apples.
- **SPECIMEN TREES:** We have planted rare specimen trees including **Wild Service Tree** and **disease resistant Elm**, beech and field maple.
- **WILDLIFE MEADOWS:** Since 2018 we have been restoring 14 acres of meadows including reseeded with wildflowers and grasses suited to the area.
- **BEES:** We have introduced 2 bee colonies so far to our meadows using both Top Bar hives and international hives.
- **ELECTRIC VEHICLES:** In 2023 we moved all our school vehicles to electric. Two of our vehicles for the Interventions Service are also electric.
- **RESTORATION:** 2020-2021 the restoration of the derelict Grade II listed building and former dentist surgery into offices and exams centre using local trades, traditional materials all sourced locally, including timber from Fingle Woods, high grade eco-friendly insulation in the roof.
- **CONVERSION:** 2022 disused toilet block converted into a Family Centre with small garden area to rear. Local trades and suppliers were used, the building was heavily insulated for low

energy costs. 10-year lease agreement with Teignbridge District Council. *"Running Deer C.I.C. are a clean and considerate tenant, and I would be willing to recommend leasing to them again"* Chris Smith, Teignbridge District Council.

Diversity and Inclusion

Running Deer is committed to promoting a positive and diverse culture in which all staff and young people are valued and supported to fulfil their potential irrespective of their age, disability, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation. We recognise our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to promoting the equality and diversity of all those we work with especially our employees, pupils' young people and visitors. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, bullying and harassment and will make every effort to comply with the requirements of the Act and its subsequent provisions.

<https://out.rdcic.org.uk/equality-and-diversity-policy.pdf>

Social/Cultural

By our very nature we support people who are at risk of exclusion from society. Our projects support people with mental health difficulties, PTSD, long term unemployed and we have provided training and qualifications to enable them to find jobs, feel better about themselves, become healthier.

In 2022 Running Deer set up Peninsula Log Bank, providing free logs to those in financial and fuel crisis. Working with landowners who have donated the wood, we collect, process and distribute to food banks so that people can keep warm during the winter.

In the last year we have provided training and qualifications to 30 vulnerable adults through our Countryside Skills project. Our Creative Intervention project supported 95 young people and their families and also launched our new Interventions Service. We work with the Armed Forces Community Hub in Exeter providing regular volunteering opportunities, mindfulness and experience days.

Our school and interventions services support children with special educational needs in particular autism, ADHD and trauma. We are seeing a lot of mental health difficulties and trauma because of COVID-19 through our Interventions service.

Community Projects

Courses for Forces 2021-2022

Partnership with the Armed Forces Community Support Hub (lead partner) to deliver our Courses for Forces project 2021 to 2022, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund.

Providing therapeutic opportunities for veterans including working with heavy horses, mindfulness and rural skills including coppicing and green woodworking, and bushcraft.



Rural Skills Project 2021-2023

Nature Capital Challenge Fund project funded by Devon County Council. Training in traditional and rural skills. November 2021 to March 2023:

- Supporting 30 adults
- Providing 1 FT tutor role
- Providing 1 x Apprenticeship role
- Providing 1 x Trainee role

- Providing qualifications in:
 - Level 3 First Aid in the Workplace
 - Chainsaw License to Practice 974 and 976
 - Health and Safety



Creative Interventions 2022-2023

Creative Interventions funded by SESF (Social Enterprise Support Fund) 2022-2023

- Created 1.5FTE jobs
- Supported 95 young people and their families over 12 months
- Launched the new Family and Intervention Services

Outdoor Kitchen at Running Deer School 2023-24

- Funds raised through the Co-op Community grant scheme to help create an outdoor kitchen for the school.
- This enabled us to purchase an outdoor oven plus prep areas so that the young people can learn about outdoor cooking.
- Supporting our students with special educational needs at Running Deer School.

Ongoing Project - Running Deer Log Bank

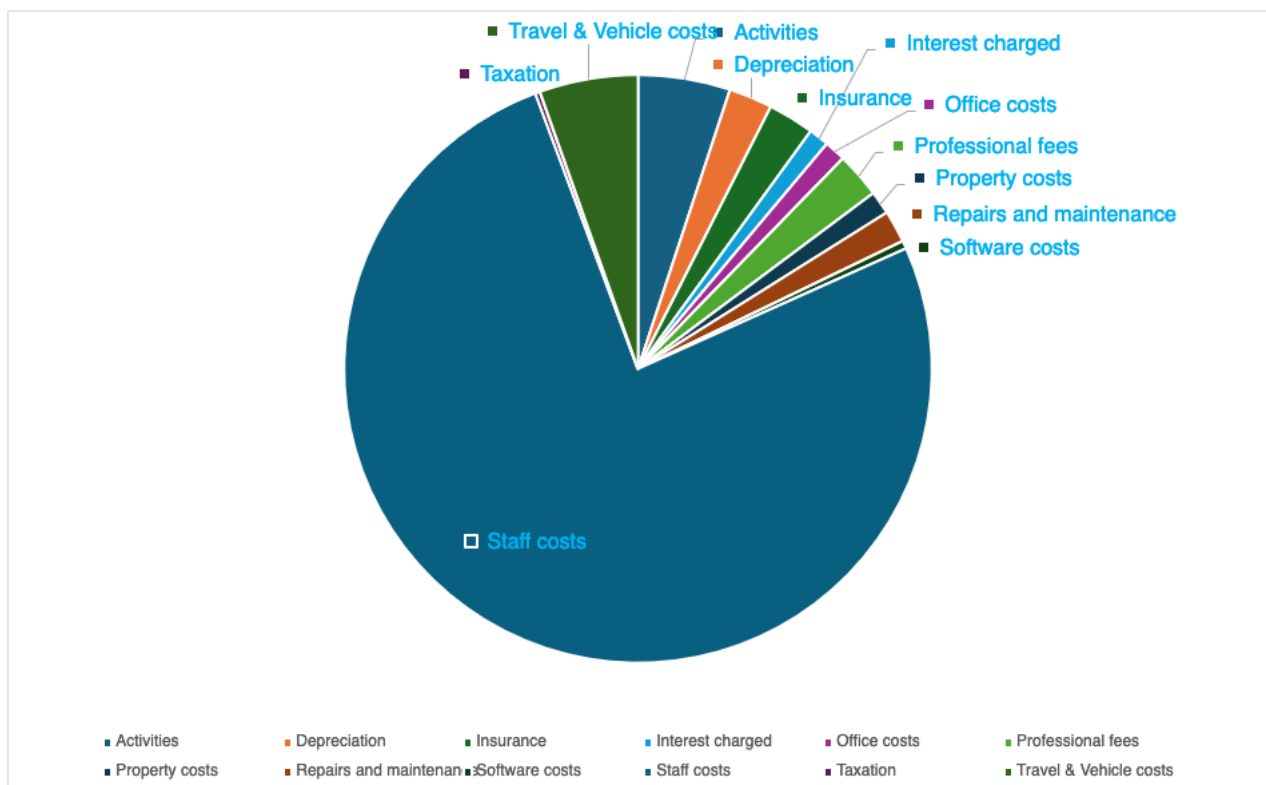
- Live project providing free firewood to people experience acute financial difficulty in the Dartmoor and Tamar Valley area.
- Self-funded.
- Creating good partnerships with landowners who donate wood to the log bank.
- Creating partnerships with food banks who refer into the service.
- Provided several families over the last 2 winters with firewood.

Finances

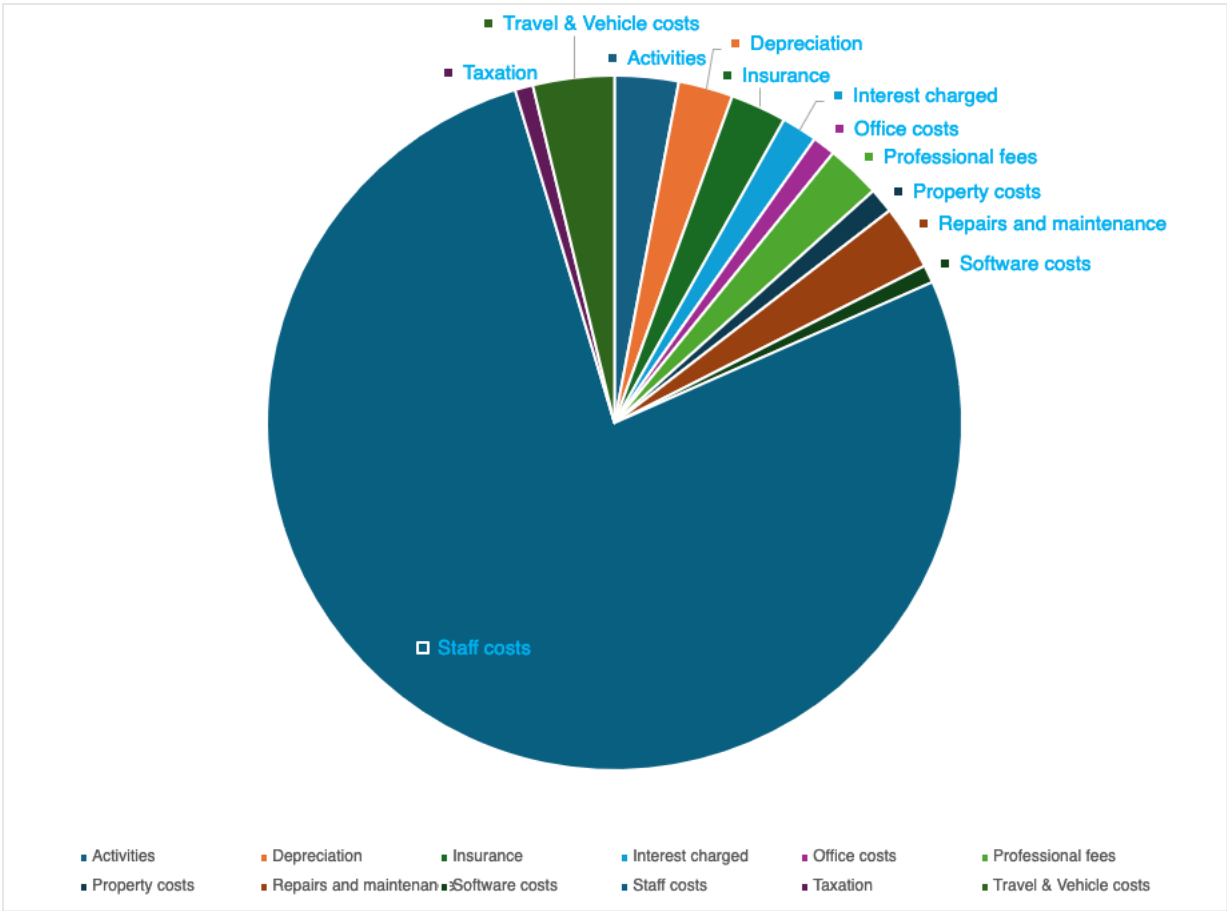
Income for 2022 – 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
TURNOVER		1,064,058	1,004,903
Cost of sales		(30,906)	(49,217)
GROSS SURPLUS		1,033,152	955,686
Administrative expenses		(984,135)	(908,753)
OPERATING SURPLUS		49,017	46,933
Interest payable and similar charges		(17,229)	(10,753)
SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION		31,788	36,180
Tax on Surplus		(8,721)	(2,512)
SURPLUS AFTER TAXATION BEING SURPLUS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR		23,067	33,668

Expenditure 2022 – 2023



Expenditure 2023 – 2024



Key individuals

Tristan Denman **Volunteer Director**

Tristan has been a Volunteer Director with Running Deer since May 2021. Tristan has run his own successful electrical business since 2016. Tristan is also a qualified First Responder.

In 2023 Tristan has decided to change career path and is now training to be a paramedic, whilst maintaining his electrical business part time.

Tristan is a shrewd and levelheaded businessman, and his skills and understanding are a huge bonus to the Board of Directors and the team.

Joanna Winterburn **Managing Director**

Joanna is the Founder and Managing Director of Running Deer C.I.C.

Joanna has been working in the voluntary and community sector for 35 years helping to develop and deliver community projects across the Southwest.

Joanna founded Running Deer C.I.C in April 2011 starting off with grant funding to run specific projects such as bushcraft days for families with children with special needs, and rural skills projects for those who were unemployed, veterans, and those in mental health distress. Keen that Running Deer should not be solely reliant on grants, and responding to demand, Jo started an interventions service in 2012 which ran alongside the grant funded projects.

Since RD was founded, Jo has developed and delivered many funded projects for the benefit of our communities, started the Interventions services and established a new school as well as running this growing organisation and ensuring it continues to meet its aims and objectives, and that the organisation continues to grow and thrive.

Oliver Griffiths **Operations Director**

Oli is Director of Operations and the Facilities manager. Oli volunteered at Running Deer between 2011 and 2015, then began working for the Running Deer Interventions in 2016.

Oli has helped deliver a verity of environmental, infrastructure, and construction projects for Running Deer from forestry and orchards to power and telecommunications.

Oli launched the Log Bank project in 2022 supporting people in fuel crisis on Dartmoor, Devon. Oliver is also the Health and Safety Officer for Running Deer.

David Cook **Financial Director**

David is a Chartered Certified Accountant (ACCA) (31st December 1999) and became a Fellow in June 2005. David ran his own practice between 2003 and 2013 before relocating to Devon. In 2017 David became a Director of Smarter Accounting Services Limited where he helped to grown the practice. His role also included Technical Director, Money Laundering reporting officer and Data

Protection Officer. His role also included working on and overseeing client company forecasts and valuations. During his time with Smarter Accounting David became Running Deer's accountant. David left Smarter Accounting in 2022 to start his own practice once more with a smaller client base.

David became the client partner of Running Deer in February 2018, when we took over the client from another local accountant. At the time the reported turnover of the CIC was £147,000 (30 April 2017 accounts). During the past 5 years David and his team at Smarter Accounting provided bookkeeping, payroll, management accounts, statutory accounts as well as preparing financial projections as and when needed for Running Deer, which for the year ended 31 March 2023, the turnover including Grant income, exceeded £1m. In April 2023 David became a Director for Running Deer C.I.C bringing our accounting in house.

Nicholas Hurst **Director of Education**

Nick has a PGCE in Secondary History and a History and Music Tech degree. He also has a master's level credits as a Trauma Informed Practitioner and Level 3 Safeguarding. I have 15 years SEND teaching experience and have worked alongside Social Care, Health and Educational professionals.

As well as working extensively with the primary curriculum and pre curriculum areas he has taught both English and Math's to GCSE level, alongside alternative equivalents. Nick is head of Running Deer School and acts as the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator and is an English Teacher.

Adam Baxter **Director of Family and Interventions Services**

Adam has spent fifteen years supporting children and adults with neurodivergent needs, working closely with families and young people to support with behaviour, engagement in education, therapeutic support to develop trusting relationships.

As Pastoral Lead at Running Deer School he supported and advocated for families and children at multi-disciplinary meetings including Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs); Personal Education Plans (PEP) and Team Around the Family (TAF) Meetings.

Adam is a qualified Level 4 Child and Family practitioner, Trauma-Informed schools' practitioner, Team Teach trainer, Drawing and Talking practitioner and recognise the importance of a family-centred approach to providing high-quality support.

Adam now runs the Interventions team within Running Deer. He is passionate to provide support to children and families, working hard to reverse and heal the emotional damage caused by early childhood trauma.

Christian Hales **Director of Communications and Data**

Christian is Director of Communications and is the company Data Protection Officer. He has been working full time at Running Deer since 2018 starting as an Administrator. Christian has been a part in all major projects since joining by communicating with other businesses, signing contracts and other executive duties. Christian also provides IT management for both software and hardware, along with the provisioning of hardware and distribution to staff. Christian is currently doing a Data Protection and Information Governance Level 4 qualification, to further his role as DPO.

Contact

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Running Deer C.I.C is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, company number 7605814.

www.runningdeer.org.uk

www.runningdeerschool.org.uk

www.interventions.runningdeer.org.uk