



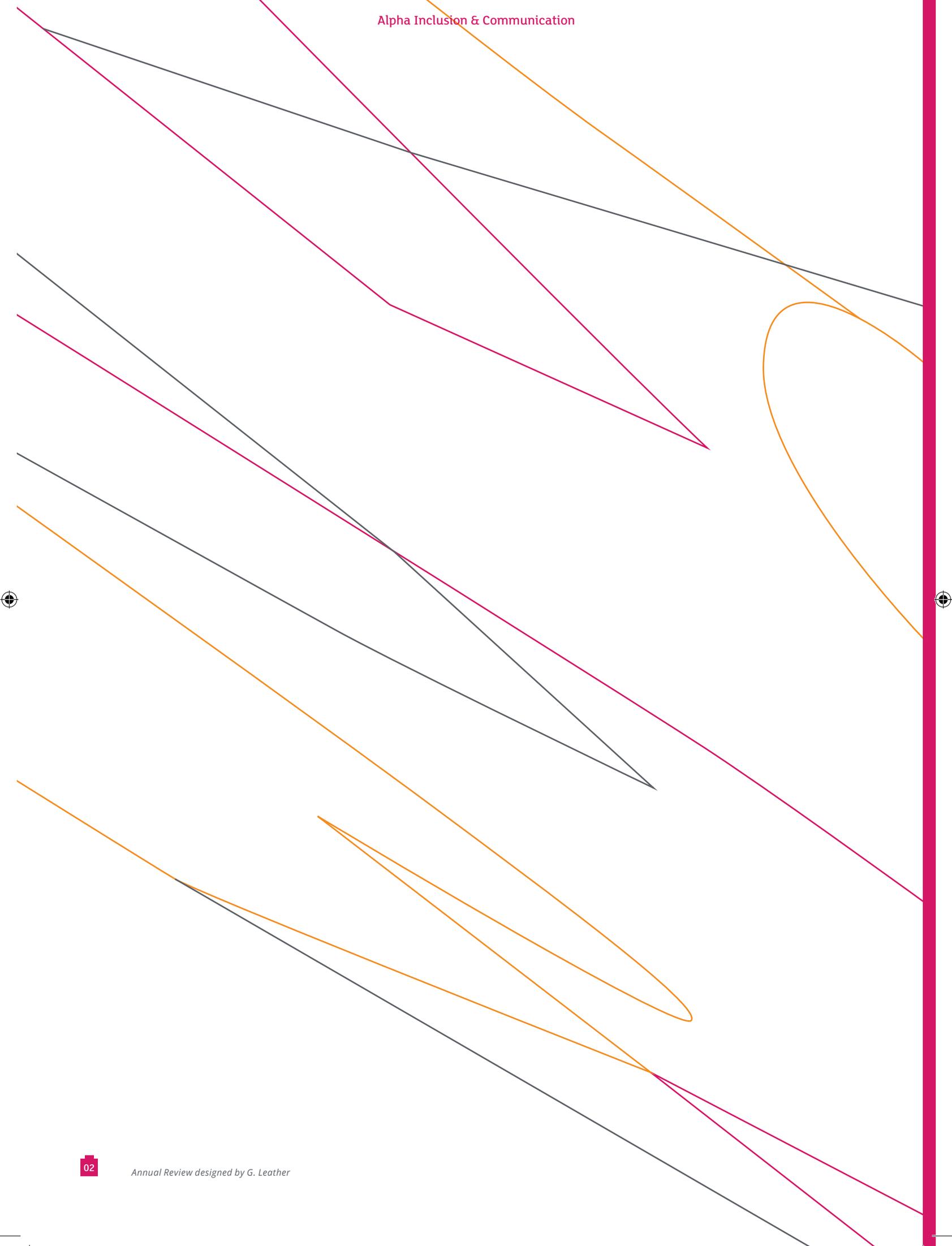
Alpha Inclusion
& Communication

ANNUAL REVIEW

2020/21

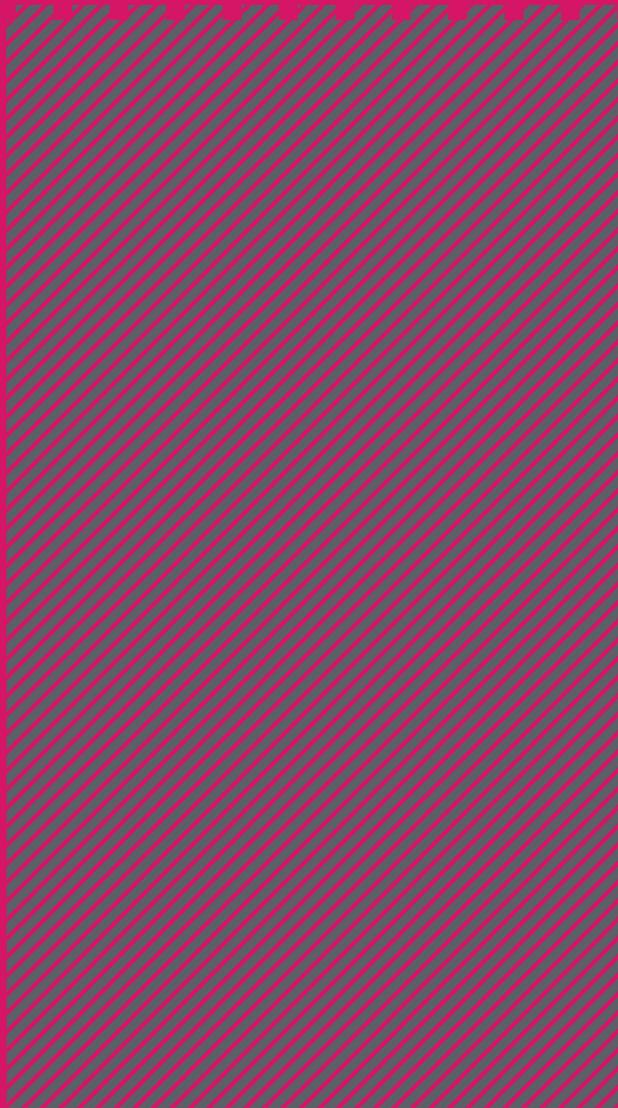


Alpha Inclusion & Communication



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Who we are

Alpha Inclusion and Communication (**AlphaIC**) is a Social Enterprise based in Norfolk, UK.

Founded by Amy Eleftheriades in May 2012, initially with Amy working as a Sole Trader. **AlphaIC** became a company in November 2014 through an organic growth, based on the needs and demands of the clients. In November 2020 we made the decision to officially become a Social Enterprise; to reflect the ethos, practice and values that had underpinned the organisation from its outset.

Alpha Inclusion and Communication is dedicated to improving the lives of neurodivergent individuals through education, support and advice.

Working alongside schools, families and businesses, at **AlphaIC** we are committed to supporting individuals reach their potential, educate others on neurodiversity and research, explore and develop innovative practice to support inclusion and accessibility.

At the beginning of the 2020/21 Academic Year we were a team of 3.5 FTE staff. We finished the year as a team of 6.5 FTE staff and a with a new Board of Directors.

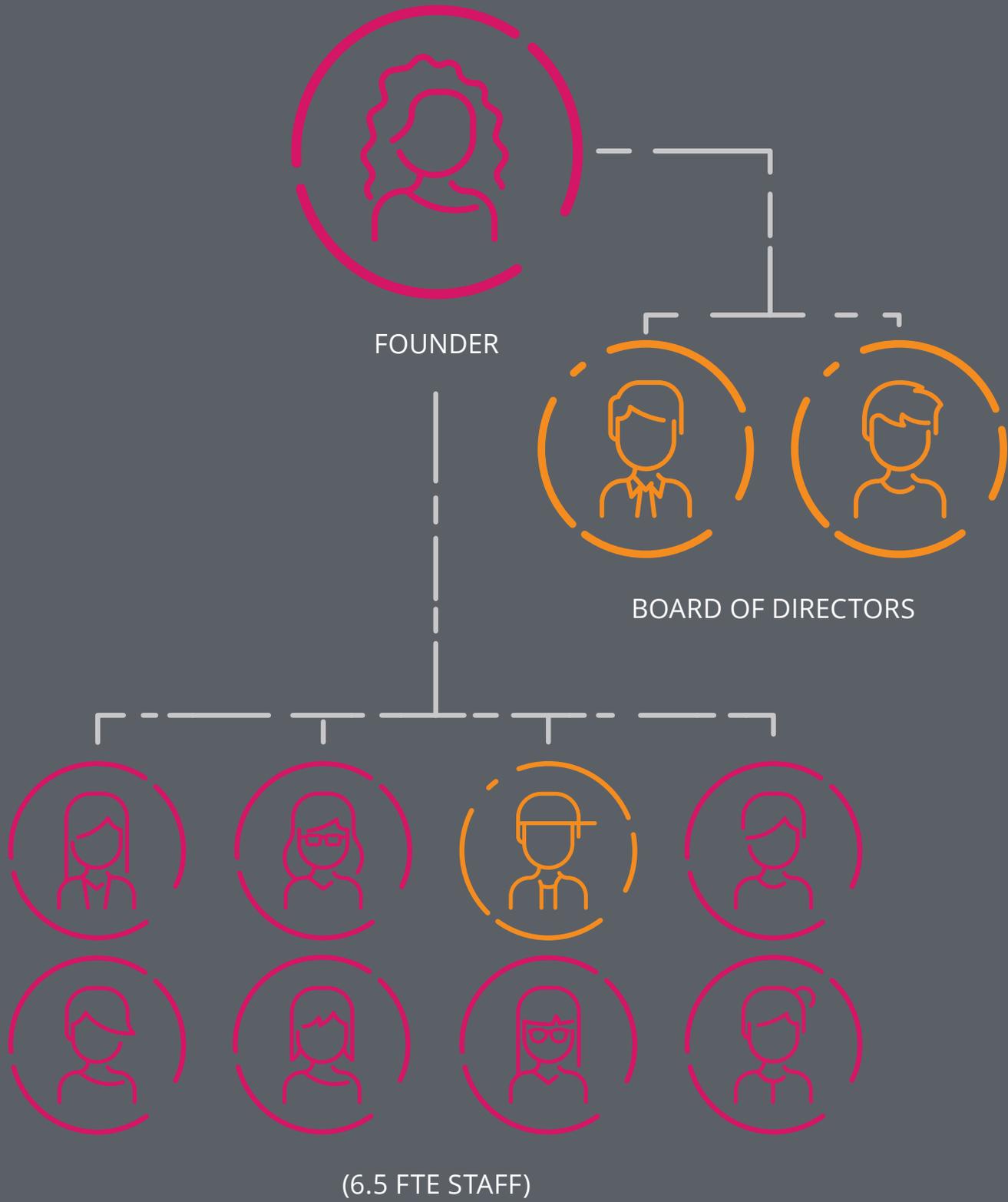
The Team is made up of a fantastic mix of a Specialist Teacher, a Team Lead, Speech and Language Therapist, Senior Outreach Practitioners, Outreach Practitioners and our amazing administrative team.

The Team also includes highly skilled volunteers who generously donate their time and expertise to support the running of the organisation and a number of independent associates who provide support for the staff team through supervision, training and other vital services.

We're due to grow further as we head into 2021/22.

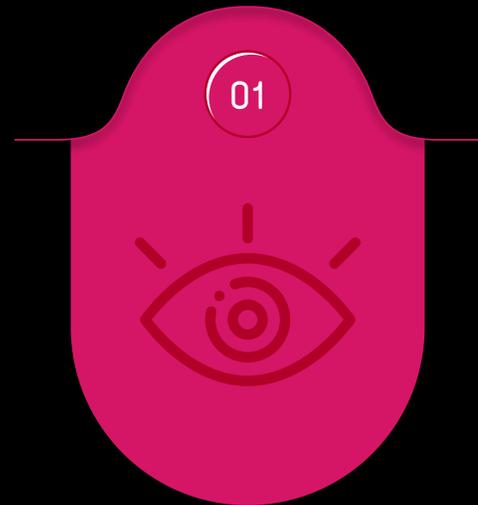


The Team



OUR VISION

We are aiming for a world where differences are acknowledged and understood. We want schools, workplaces and community spaces to actively engage in adapting environments, policies, procedures and user experiences to allow for these differences. We want everyone to be able to engage in learning, thrive alongside their peers and exceed their own expectations.



OUR TARGETS

- To continue to learn about differences in how we process information, communicate with others and experience the social and emotional elements of our lives.
- To promote the Social Model of Disability. In this model a person's activities are limited not simply by the 'attributes' of a condition, but by environment and barriers are a consequence of a lack of social organisation.
- To share information with others in a way that makes sense to them and increases the chance of changes to beliefs and behaviour and influences policy and practice.
- To provide sustainable support that will continue after we have disengaged. We will aim to no longer be needed.



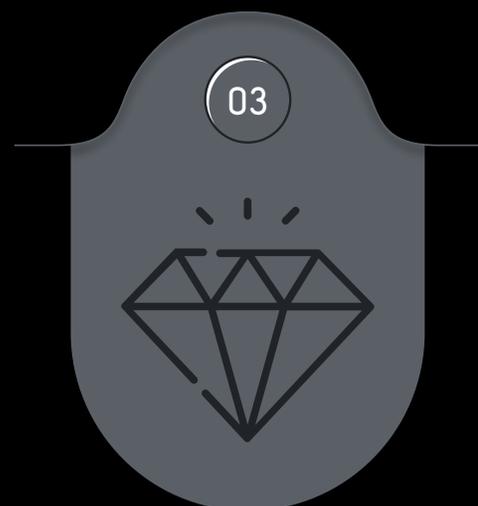
OUR VALUES

Neurodiversity – Celebrating and encouraging differences

Innovation – Achieving excellence through creativity

Professionalism – Demanding integrity and quality in all we do

Compassion – Ensuring care and understanding is underpinned by sustainable support



"One of our
greatest freedoms
is how we
react to
things"



Quote: Charlie Mackesy

The story of our year

What a year

It has been a year where the words 'covid', 'pandemic', 'isolation' and 'lockdown' have been used more than ever before.

'Bubble' has gone from being associated with play and freedom, to taking on a definition of restriction and containment.

We went into the 2020-21 Academic Year knowing that all we could really predict was the strong possibility of change and for us a small organisation, this meant engaging all that we know about emotional regulation, supporting each other and adapting to change.

As a team, we had already put systems in place to respond to the needs of schools, families and businesses. We had moved our services online and created robust Covid risk assessments, policies and procedures to be able to safely provide face-to-face services for our most vulnerable clients. We had made the decision that as Key Workers, we would be there how our clients needed us and we took action to make sure that could happen whilst keeping the team safe.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible resilience from the individuals that make up our team. They not only love what they do, they are also passionate, fearless, knowledgeable and have a drive to continue learning.

The last year we have seen an unprecedented number of referrals for us to work with children and young people with complex needs, in a number of environments. We made the decision to change our focus from introducing new services to the corporate sector (work which had begun in 2019/20) and divert all of our resources into responding to the needs of our clients in the public sector.

We continued to support businesses too. Switching to online platforms, we were able to deliver Emotional Regulation and Communication Skills training for Norfolk Developers - nor(dev) who are our local tech community, and an Emotional Regulation training webinar for the Codebar Festival. Codebar is a charity that facilitates the growth of a diverse tech community by running free regular programming workshops for minority groups in tech.

AlphaIC started the year with five staff members (mostly part-time roles). This year we have increased our capacity to respond to the demand and we ended the 2020/21 year with nine staff members (mostly full time) and a successful recruitment drive which has resulted in another great colleague joining us for 2021/22.

Our other significant addition to the organisation this year is the development of a Board of Directors. Recruiting two brilliant individuals as Non-Executive Directors has brought expertise from both business and social care sectors and the strategic changes and planning that has happened as a result can only mean amazing things to come.

We were extremely grateful this year to have had support from a local company **Production Bureau Ltd**, who generously donated us £1000 to 'up tech' our Lego®. With their donation, we purchased four Coding Lego kits and four tablets which means we can offer more up to date Lego building experiences as we develop social and communication skills.

It's been an overwhelming year for many of us, for many reasons.

We are not underestimating the impact of the pandemic and we are experiencing changes across sectors as our clients adapt.

But I'm optimistic. I know that 2021/22 is going to be a year which remains full of unknowns for many. I am confident that at AlphaC we have the resilience to thrive, the expertise to achieve and a reflective attitude which will result in growth - both individual and organisational.

Amy
Founder

ALPHA



The 'A' Team Selfie

Taken at AlphaC HQ.



Down on the Farm

We worked with a lad who couldn't access school

Lego Kitty

One of our coding lego kits



AlphaC Team Building

Learning to trust each other



Why we are needed?

We work with children and young people and adults with complex needs. Most are Autistic or have a related condition and many have SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) needs.

A neurodivergent person's experiences of school and social environments is different to that of neurotypical people.

They can find the nature of the environment difficult, with many being overwhelmed by sensory stimuli which is at best, uncomfortable and distracting and at worst, painful and exhausting.

The expectations around processing and learning for neurodivergent individuals in many settings is not attuned to their natural styles. They often struggle to focus, concentrate, attend to and process information in the way others do.

Social environments demand an understanding of social norms, behaviour, communication and interaction. For Autistic people, and those with SEMH, these are skills that need to be learned explicitly and taught in a compassionate way. The social demands of schools, social settings and workplaces mean that navigating daily life can be fraught with difficulties for neurodivergent individuals.



National Data

Employment

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published new data that shows just 22% of autistic adults are in any kind of employment.

Education

In 2020/21 Academic Year, 8,911,887 children identified as needing additional or specialist support in schools.

The most common type of need among pupils with an EHC plan is Autistic spectrum disorder, with 92,600 pupils (30% of pupils with an EHC plan).

The most common type of need among pupils with SEN support are Speech, Language and Communication needs, with 245,200 pupils. This is followed by Moderate Learning Difficulty (203,400 pupils) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (195,300 pupils).

(January 2021, Government Statistics)

The permanent exclusion rate for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is 0.10, and for pupils with SEN with no EHC plan (SEN support) is 0.20, compared to 0.04 for those without SEN.

The suspension rate is also higher: 11.70 for EHC pupils and 10.98 for SEN support pupils, compared to 2.43 for those without SEN.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england/2019-20>

Local Data

Data covering 2019/20 academic year shows that the primary school suspension rates stand at 2.2% for Suffolk and 2.02% for Norfolk. This means that for every 50 primary school children in Suffolk and Norfolk, more than one suspension is carried out. No other authority in the country has a primary school suspension rate above 2%.

The numbers reveal that children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and children eligible for Free School Meals (FSMs) are disproportionately affected.

The 2019 Timpson Review of School Exclusion said: 'New analysis of those reaching the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015/16 shows just 7% of children who were permanently excluded and 18% of children who received multiple fixed period exclusions went on to achieve good passes in English and Maths GCSEs, qualifications that are essential to succeeding in adult life.'

Our Approach

We are a values-led organisation. This means that all aspects of the social enterprise are underpinned by our four values; neurodiversity, innovation, professionalism and compassion.

These four elements are used in all strategic and organisational decision making and very much like the writing running through a stick of rock, we like to see our values as running through AlphaIC as an organisation.

Working in the area of differences helps us recognise that like individuals; families, schools and businesses will have their own unique needs. This means that we take a flexible, personalised approach to all of the services we provide in order to meet the needs of those we support.

That said, we are not afraid to compassionately challenge. We recognise that changes to restricting beliefs are needed and to do this we need to present alternative ways of thinking and behaving.

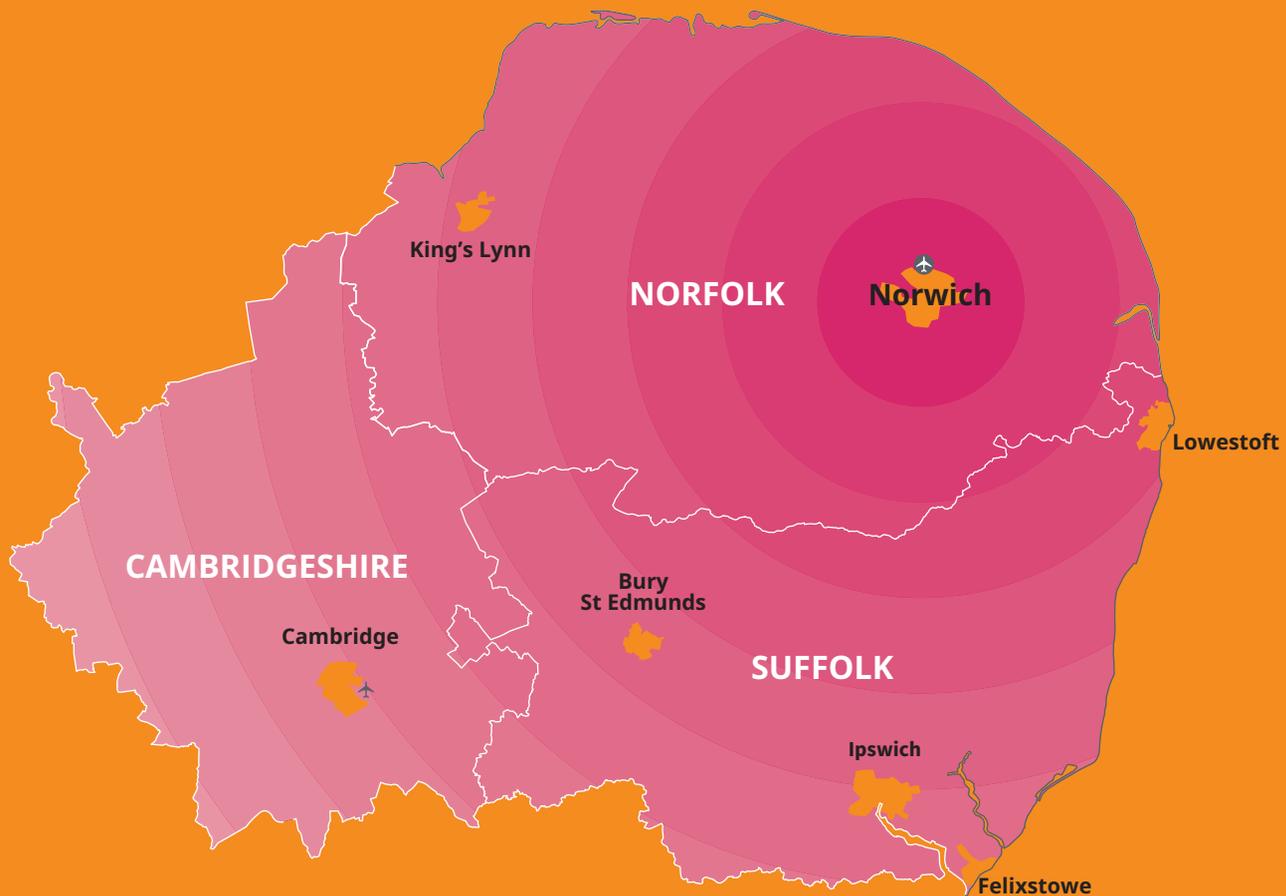
We have an outcomes-based approach to our mentoring and support services, with the needs of the individual at the heart of any decision-making and robust monitoring and reviewing procedures to ensure our services are appropriate and providing impact.



Scope & Reach

In 2021/21 we have provided services across Norfolk and North Suffolk to schools, families, organisations and businesses.

We have carried out training to an international audience for a UK charity and during Covid we provided over 60 free downloads, videos and activity ideas for use by anyone with access to the internet.



Investment in the organisation

As a Social Enterprise, our aim is to re-invest in the organisation to provide improved, sustainable services.

This year we have:

- Created three new roles and increased the hours of two of our current team in order to increase capacity.
- Enrolled our staff on specialist training (in addition to mandatory and induction training) including:

- ~ ELKLAN Tutor Training
- ~ The SCERTS Model: Assessment and Framework
- ~ Attachment Training
- ~ Building Blocks for Communication
- ~ Intervention with Impact: Developing Personalised Programmes
- ~ PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance) Conference
- ~ Mind Your Words: Children and Young People's Mental Health
- ~ Lego – Learning Through Play

- Replaced older tech with new laptops and a new PC and bought more software to support the delivery of our services.



Our Impact

Different types of work undertaken



Number of hours of direct working



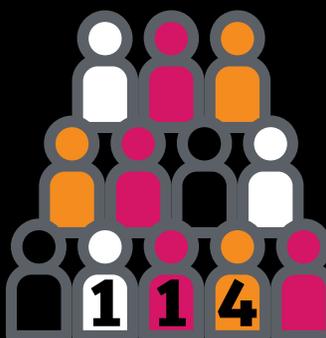
Number of days lost to Covid



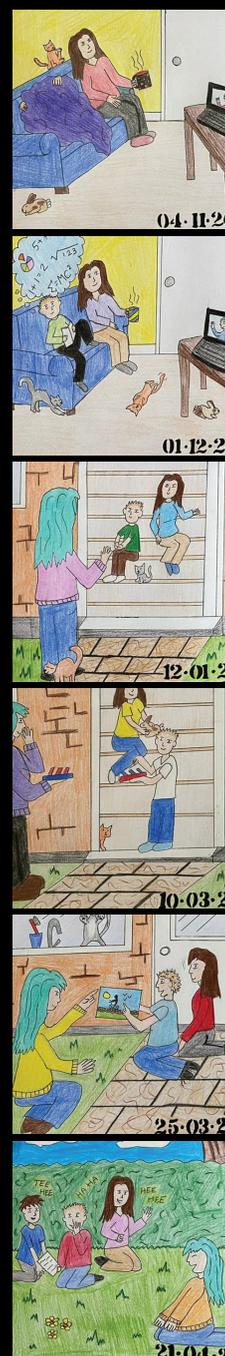
Number of schools and families that have continued with us



Number of young people we have worked with over the last year



Number of families and schools that we have worked with



Influence – Testimonials

From Children

"These times you have spent with me have made a difference you know, and it has made a difference to me in my class as well as I haven't got in trouble so much".

- M** Master
- A** Awesome
- R** Reassuring
- V** Valuable
- E** Excellent
- L** Lovely

(written by a pupil for one of our Senior Outreach Practitioners and given to him on the last session)

"Thank you so much for all of your help, you have helped me lots".

"My best days at school are Tuesdays and Thursdays when you are here"

From Families

"He has made a huge amount of progress, it's so great to see such a positive thing."

"You work wonders, he likes you a lot, the most of everyone, just lovely to have someone to talk too who understands"

"Thank you for making getting him to school on Tuesdays, and Thursdays nice and easy"

"We really appreciated these reports and how accurately the child's personality and needs have been recognised and captured."

From Schools



"She listens, doesn't judge and offers advice when she feels she can."

"She is an absolute pleasure to have in our school and the children love working with her".

"He has been fantastic whilst working within our school. He has provided the right amount of support and challenge for the child that he has been working with."

"Previously and before the intervention he would often not smile and found it hard to access his sessions, it is now unusual to not see him smile."

"We haven't seen a 'meltdown' from him in a long time and he is now comfortable and happy in school."

"From conversations with parents, incidents of difficult and dangerous behaviours are now beginning to reduce at home too."

"In the Autumn term the pupil had received four separate periods of fixed term exclusions (FTE) and was on a temporary reduced timetable and phased reintegration plan. In February he moved to full time following positive and successful times in school and has only received one period of FTE since then."

"The intervention has worked really well and the impact has been amazing."

Our response to

COVID

We had to make difficult decisions when we went into the first Lockdown in early 2020 and we discussed feelings and thoughts about continuing our services in the unprecedented situation we found ourselves in.

When we realised that the team were classed as 'key workers' and school staff were still supporting vulnerable children and young people in schools, we made the decision to adapt and continue our services.

We gave our clients options for online delivery, produced robust risk assessments and purchased equipment to enable us to support face-to-face where online wasn't an option.

One of our schools insisted that they would need us in as they had a particularly large cohort of vulnerable children and online was not a viable option for them. **We were the only outside professional team they agreed to let in the school to work with their children face-to-face during all the lockdowns.**

A few of our young people were not able to access online support, for a number of reasons and as they were particularly vulnerable, we decided to continue visits in a Covid-safe manner.

We moved most of our other services to an online platform and delivered mentoring, training and speech and language support virtually to children, young people, families, school staff and businesses.

Staff were given protective equipment to use and we purchased software and hardware that would enable them to work from home wherever possible. We got them on the priority vaccination list as soon as possible and all staff working for AlphaIC were offered Covid vaccinations early, alongside social care and health professionals.

We had 0 days off due to the pandemic.

We had 0 cases of Covid in our team throughout 2020/21.

Looking ahead to 2021/22

Our future plans

It is going to be an exciting year, with continued growth and a focus on team cohesion and development.

Collaboration with other organisations and agencies will be key in ensuring we can increase our reach and develop our services to support those most in need.

Some targets for the upcoming year:



1. Continue to develop effective partnerships with local businesses, education establishments, organisations and community groups.

2. Increase capacity as a response to the continuing demand. We want to increase the amount of neurodivergent children, young people and employees we support in 2021/22.

3. Develop our systems further to ensure the quality and integrity of our services are maintained as we grow.



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