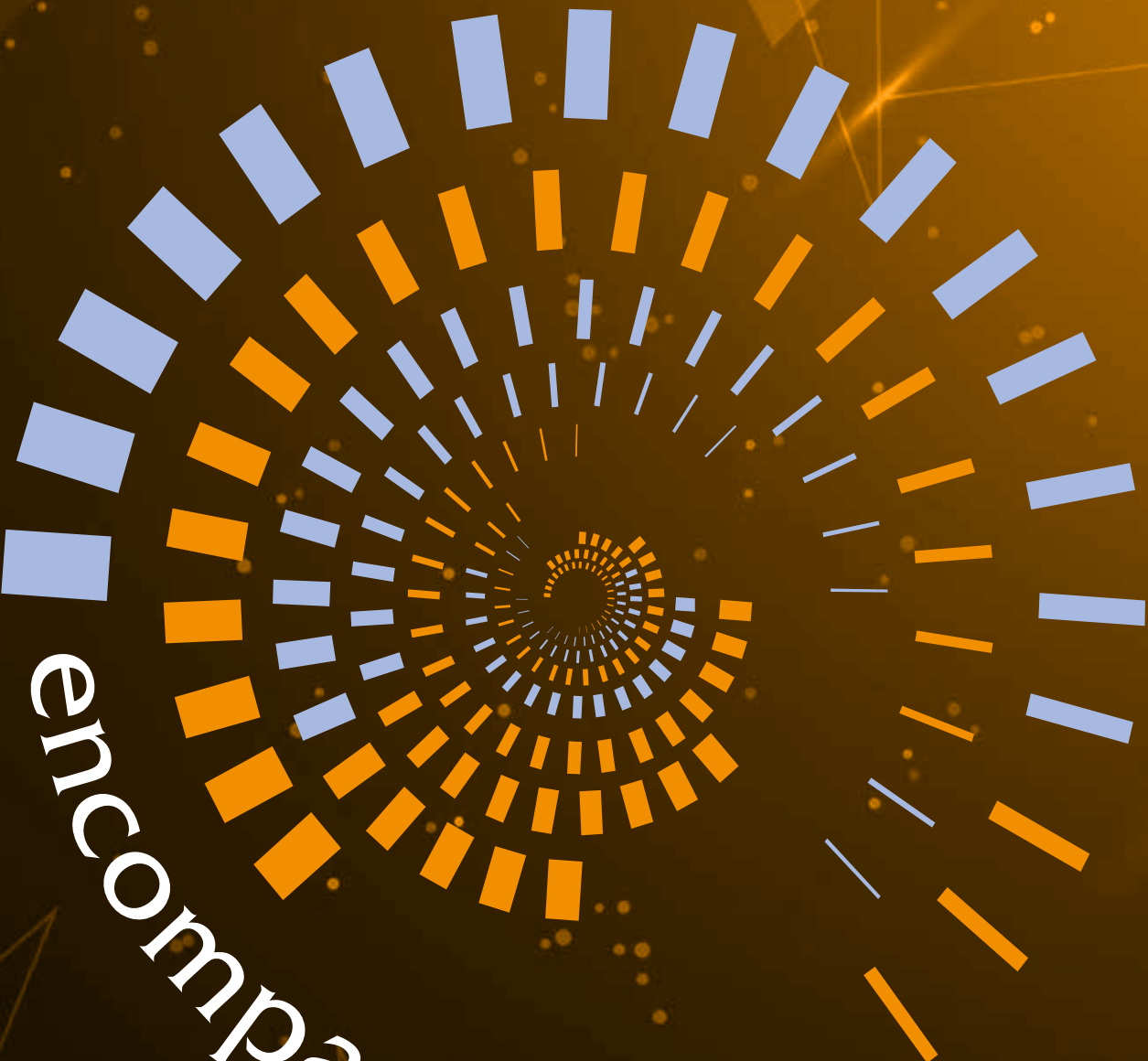




encompass

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

BORDERS DIRECT PAYMENT AGENCY trading as Encompass

Regd. in Scotland Company Number: 340729 Scottish Charity Number: SC039514

Registered Office: Unit 9 Ettrick Riverside, Dunsdale Road, Selkirk TD7 5EB



Welcome to our Annual Report for 2024/2025

Once again it gives me great pleasure to present our Annual Report for the year 2024/2025 and, as always, I must begin by thanking all of our staff team, and our Board of Trustees, for their continued hard work, commitment, and dedication to Encompass throughout the year.

Our shared values and commitment have helped us to maintain high quality services and to ensure the organisation remains on a sound footing as it looks forward.

Steve Adamson – Trustee / Treasurer



The Organisation

The past year was once again an extremely busy one for the organisation and, as has been the case for a number of years now, we had an increased number of referrals and the highest number of clients on record. Encompass continues to meet the challenges facing any organisation working in the health and social care sector. Our local knowledge and experience, linked to the skills and commitment of our staff, gives us encouragement that we are readily placed to identify and address issues directly.

In addition, our partnership working gives us a voice to speak up on behalf of clients of our services, and we continue to work closely with Scottish Borders Council's Social Work Dept, Finance Dept, Contracts Section, and the Locality SW Teams. In addition we participate on the SDS Forum, have links to the SDS Improvement Group, as well as to the Lead Officer for Self-directed Support at SBC.

“... the
highest
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The Board of Trustees

There were no changes to the composition of our Board of Trustees during 2024/2025 and the Board continued to operate with the following six members: George Turnbull (Chair), Marion Wood (Vice-Chair), Steve Adamson (Treasurer), Carolyn Fahim, Heather Melville-Hume, and Lorraine Anderson.

Together the Board has continued to actively oversee the work of Encompass and remains committed to ensuring effective governance and financial management in all aspects of the organisation's work. In this regard we continue to seek new members to join the Board, particularly from any Encompass members or clients, in order that we can maintain a healthy and robust scrutiny of the organisation's performance.

At the time of our last Annual Report in April 2024 we had approached SBC regarding a proposal to increase the charges for our Payroll service and our Employment Support service (given both had remained unchanged for over 10 years). We were grateful when SBC agreed to these increases and to include them in people's Direct Payments, thus ensuring the extra costs did not have to be met by clients. The price increases were implemented in July 2024.

In August 2024 our external auditor, whom the organisation had used for many years, unexpectedly advised us that she could no longer undertake the auditing of our accounts. With the increase in our referrals and clients, our annual turnover had also increased and now exceeded the levels which she was licensed to audit. The timing of this notification presented quite a challenge for us, but thankfully JRW Hogg & Thorburn, Chartered Accountants agreed to audit our accounts and the Board has appointed them as our auditors on an ongoing basis.

The most significant issue which has concerned the Board throughout 2024/2025 has been in relation to our IT supplier. We previously had a very good service from a local company which unfortunately was taken over by another company based in England. This meant that the contract to supply our IT service also transferred to the new company, Focus Group, in Jan 2024. Unfortunately the resulting service provided by them has been extremely poor, affecting not only the efficiency of our organisation but potentially placing us in a position of risk. After many months of trying to resolve these issues, the Board took the decision in January 2025 to terminate our contract with Focus Group. This remains an ongoing dispute and the Board is prepared to take legal action in this regard if required to do so. Sufficient financial resources have been set aside should this be necessary.

In the meantime we have entered into a new service contract with another local provider, SPG Innovation & Technologies, who are proving to be a much more reliable and effective service provider.

The Staff Team



Kirsty Robson, ESA



Jill Earsman, ESA



Kirsty
Bradshaw-McLeish, ESA



Brandon Brown,
ESA

In October 2024 we were sorry that two of our Employment Support Advisors, Heather Smith (Cheviot) and Angie Keay (Teviot), left the organisation. Heather chose not to return to work following maternity leave, whilst Angie moved to another job elsewhere. Both of them were very valued employees of the organisation and we wish them well in their respective futures.

We were very pleased, however, to be able to offer Brandon Brown the post of ESA for Cheviot in November 2024, moving from his previous Office Administrator role.

Although we were initially successful in appointing to both the Teviot ESA post and the Office Admin post in December 2024, regrettably both the successful applicants decided they did not wish to remain with the organisation and had vacated the posts again by the end of January 2025. Whilst disappointed not to have retained the two members of staff, the Board is satisfied their decisions to leave were not in any way related to the organisation's

conduct as an employer. At the end of the financial year on 31st March 2025, therefore, both positions remained vacant.

Nevertheless we retained a strong team of Employment Support Advisors in Kirsty Robson (Peeblesshire), Jill Earsman (Central), and Kirsty Bradshaw-McLeish (Berwickshire) in addition to Brandon Brown. Operating alongside our Finance and Admin team of Sally Bell (Finance Officer), Sheila Cochrane (Senior Payroll Officer) Sharon Onley & Yvonne Curle (Payroll/Audit Officers) and Jemma Paterson (Office Administrator), we remain confident that we have a strong, reliable, and knowledgeable team working on the organisation's behalf.

The team continues to be ably led by our Manager, Hazel Jack, who works tirelessly at supporting the team, ensuring best practice in relation to the valuable services we provide, and promoting the organisation with partner agencies. In addition Kevin Poulton



has proved to be an invaluable addition in the role of Finance Manager, providing the Board with accurate financial forecasts and monthly budget monitoring to ensure a more robust financial oversight for trustees.



We should also acknowledge the ongoing work undertaken by Niccy Kershaw, Elspeth Critchley, and Kristine Fisher with the SIRD (Support in the Right Direction) project in terms of their pre-assessment service to clients and in ensuring the views of those involved with Self-directed Support are fully represented at both a local and a national level.

Conclusion

In conclusion I remain confident the organisation continues to be in a very healthy position as it moves into 2025/2026 and as we strive to further develop our services, as well as being prepared for any new challenges and opportunities which might come our way.

Steve Adamson – Trustee / Treasurer



Encompass by Numbers – 2024/25

325	We have had a busy year with 325 new referrals.	NEW REFERRALS
919	The average number of Personal Assistants employed in any one month is 919.	PAs
10,217	We answered 10,217 telephone calls and received 15,473 emails (admin only).	15,473
116	Employer Support Advisors made a total of 107 client visits and also a total of 540 clients used our third party banking service.	540
282	There were 282 individual recruitments advertised through our website.	RECRUITMENT ADVERTS
6,141	There were 6,141 visitors to the Encompass website.	WEBSITE VISITORS

Social Work Training on SDS and Option 1 Direct Payments

Encompass had been keen to reinstate training on SDS and in particular Option 1 Direct Payments for social work teams across the Scottish Borders.

Hazel Jack Manager of Encompass, Niccy Kershaw and Elspeth Critchley, consultants, worked closely with the SDS Lead from Scottish Borders Council to put forward a proposal to the SBC Practice Learning and Development Officer for us to deliver in person training sessions for social work staff.

In March 2025 we provided 4 sessions of training - Encompass and Scottish Borders Council jointly funded the training sessions.

The Aim was to ensure social work staff feel confident in their role in relation to SDS when

discussing the four SDS options, how the Direct Payment process works and the Encompass role.

The training covered:

- SDS Act and Legal Duties
- SDS Direct Payments
- Encompass Role
- Outcomes
- SBC - Direct Payment Contract

There were 32 attendees across the 4 sessions, and the feedback was very positive. The plan is to deliver another 4 sessions in February/March 2026.

Thank-you notes...

“ Your support came at a critical time when I was sinking in decision making and I am truly grateful.

“ Thank you for all the help and support you have given me over the years, I will always remember how very understanding and patient you have been.

“ Thank you all at encompass for all your help with my mum. You really were a god send at a very difficult time. I am not sure where we would have been without your help.

“ Thanks to everyone at encompass, we couldn't have managed without your help, you are always there to reassure and point us in the right direction.

Thank You

Together Everyone Achieves More



We have secured further funding for another 3 years to take us up to 2027.

Kristine Fisher is our new pre-assessment worker. We regularly encourage the locality teams and third sector to use the pre-assessment facility. We have had excellent feedback from social workers and people who have had a visit. Kristine attended the SDSS National Conference and completed Mental Health First Aid Training. Kristine and myself were invited to present at the LD team development day. Their day was about Choice and Control. Kristine regularly attends the What Matters Hubs across the Borders.



SDS Forum

Elsbeth is secretary of the SDS forum. Some of our members continue to be part of the SDS Improvement Group chaired by the Council SDS Lead, John Barrow. John has also been a regular to our forum meetings. One of the identified workstreams is the DP Rate group. The DP rate group has discussed PA terms and conditions, travel costs and different rates for complexity of the caring role at length. We have put this information in a report to go to Scottish Borders Council for consideration.

We did a presentation on coproduction to the National SDS Collaboration Group. We attended the Annual PA Programme Board open meeting. We work with SDS Scotland so we can feed back

people's thoughts on Employer and Employee training. Quote "nothing about us without us". We asked a variety of speakers to our Forum meetings, most of which are still via Zoom. Through the SDS Forum meetings we hear about issues in relation to social care raised by our members. The SDS film re the 4 SDS options we made is now being used on other websites and we plan to take it out on talks to groups. We publicised the Forum to all GP surgeries via the Health Board, the Hubs and MPs to also make them aware of funding being granted for another 3 years. We debated how to encourage the LA to use some of the good work done by SW Scotland to encourage local authorities to work towards better outcomes for people. A post legislative scrutiny report on

Together Everyone Achieves More *(continued)*



the SDS Act 2014 was published in September and highlighted the need for improved implementation of the SDS legislation. Elspeth Critchley and John Barrow were asked to do a presentation to the Council Management Team by Chris Myers, who was invited to our SDS Forum event in September 2024. This resulted in agreement to take forward improvement work on the implementation of SDS locally.

We learned more about Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) as we are now a recognised 'lived experience' consultation group within the Borders.

We held a Forum review and planning day at the end of February 2025 supported by Mark from SDS Scotland, more work will be done on the outcomes later in the year.

We have representatives on national groups e.g.

PA Programme board, National SDS Collaboration and continue to contribute to the work of Social Work Scotland SDS team. It has been another busy year which has flown by. Thank you to my colleagues and the members of the forum for their input and support.

Niccy Kershaw
Manager SiRD Project

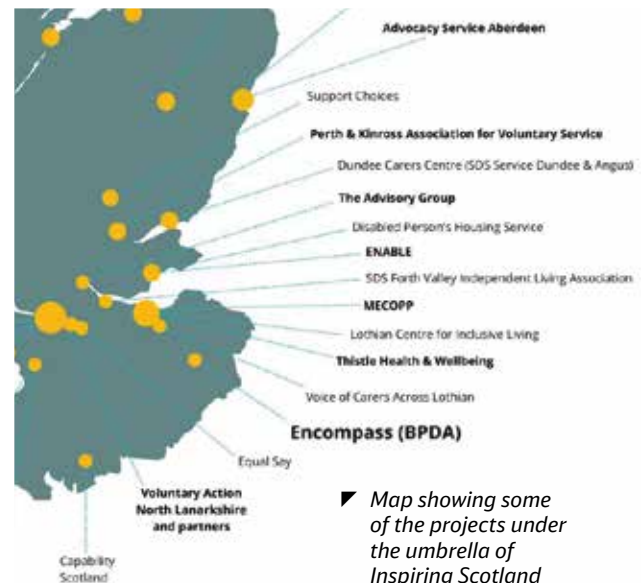


The Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) Project is funded by the Scottish Government and monitored by Inspiring Scotland. The project is now funded until 2027.

Did you know...?

★ We are always looking for new Encompass Board members, so if anyone is interested in helping us to ensure that Encompass clients continue to receive an excellent service please get in touch with the office for more information.

★ The Borders SDS Forum are always looking for people to join them, so if anyone is interested please contact Encompass



➤ Map showing some of the projects under the umbrella of Inspiring Scotland

Personal Assistants (PAs) Experiences

“Having worked in Care on and off for 48 years both in Residential and Home Care I’m ending my employment working and being paid by Direct Payments as a Personal Assistant. This has been most enjoyable as my clients have chosen myself and I’ve chosen them as Employer and Employee. Having been with some of my clients for nearly six years having continuity is important and an advantage. Having regular hours flexibility and mostly having more time for one-to-one care. It’s become more than just a job - you become friends, confidant and supporter both mentally and physically”

“After meeting with this new client and the family it gave me inspiration to write this short piece about why I like my job: Choosing this line of work has given me the opportunity to meet new people and build long lasting relationships. Although, some situations are very challenging emotionally physically and mentally. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing those individuals smile at you on greeting and laughing when you are about to leave.”

“One of the biggest reasons I enjoy being a PA, is seeing growth in People I support. I have worked within care organisations for over 30 years. It’s worlds apart. Clients have full say in what they want and how they want to be supported. They are in control of their own lives, and I believe they feel more valued as they have a voice, choice in what they want in life.”

“I would like to tell you the positives of being a carer for DP. PA... I myself would never go back to work under a care company since I felt I was just a number and now my life is completely different... Same Job / NO STRESS! I’m in control of my life and workplace as it’s my ability to choose the hours that I actually work . There can sometimes be issues as in most workplaces i.e. needing social work involvement, but we are not alone as we can call encompass at any time during their working day who are very pleasant & friendly, they will help with most issues we may have also it’s good for the client to feel reassured that the continuity is there and they are not going to be visited by a large number of carers. They can have a small team that they can trust, this I feel is very important. Also, one gets to know the clients better and their needs, likes, dislikes and so on... So, I’m very happy to work this way.”

The Services Encompass Provide

- Comprehensive payroll service including workplace pensions
- Admin and employer service including support with safe recruitment
- Third party banking service

Our payroll and administration services continue to grow and are appreciated by people who have a direct payment and clients who are self-funders.

Our regularly up-dated leaflets outlining each of our chargeable services in detail.

Helpful information about all our services and more is also available on our website at

www.encompassborders.com



Keep in Touch...

To ensure we continue to understand our clients' specific needs, we need to hear from you! Your feedback is important to us. It helps us develop our services.

Contact us by

email:

admin@encompassborders.com

or telephone:

01896 759700

For information and news visit our

website:

www.encompassborders.com

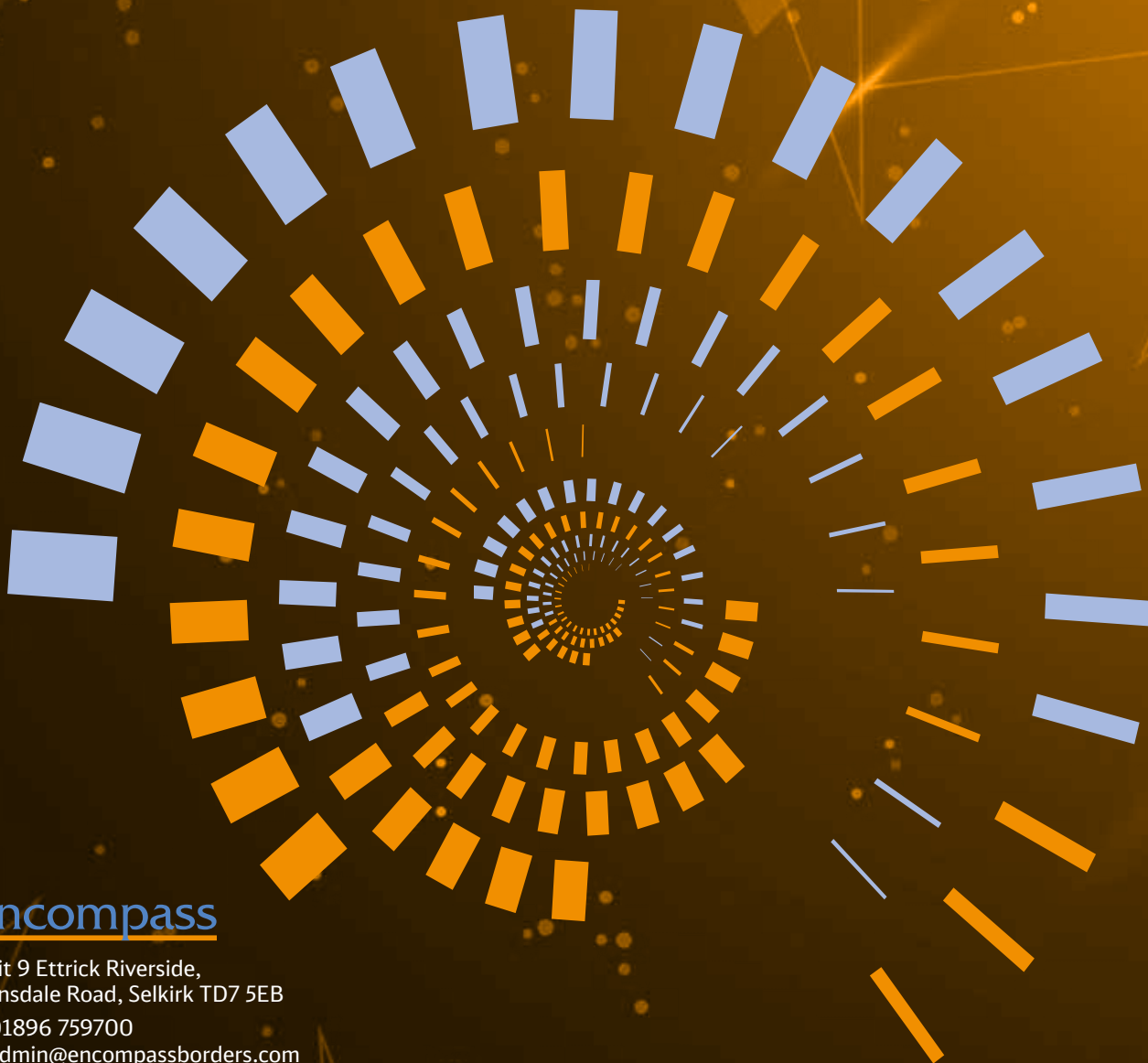
or write and post to our
address:

Encompass

Unit 9 Ettrick Riverside

Dunsdale Road, Selkirk TD7 5EB





encompass

Unit 9 Ettrick Riverside,
Dunsdale Road, Selkirk TD7 5EB

T 01896 759700

E admin@encompassborders.com

Email SIRD Project at: sird@encompassborders.com

www.encompassborders.com

Office open: Monday-Friday, 9.00am-4.30pm

Borders Direct Payment Agency trading as Encompass

Registered office as above Registered in Scotland Company Number: 340729

Scottish Charity Number: SC039514 VAT Reg.No. 232994094