



Annual Report

2007-2008

Chairman's report 2008

This is my first report as Chairman of Birthlink. I took over as Chairman in April 2008 as successor to Sheriff A B Wilkinson. Tribute has already been paid to Sandy Wilkinson for his contribution to Birthlink, but I think I can say here that it is sad that Birthlink has lost the services of so able a Chairman, and a pity that Sandy felt unable to continue the excellent work he had done in presiding over the re-organisation and modernisation of Birthlink.

Over the time that I have been associated with Birthlink there has been good news and bad. There is some good news, even in these difficult times, and I think that it is important that I put the good news first. Birthlink continues to do excellent work in giving help and support to people who have been separated by adoption or as a result of having to be looked after by local authorities. Birthlink is a Scottish charity but it can and does deal with enquiries from all around the world.

Birthlink continues to attract praise and support for its work from its clients, whose views it values. Birthlink were inspected recently by the Care Commission. We have been informed that once again there has been very positive feedback from service users. The fact that our core activity is so much appreciated is a huge compliment to the professional skill and dedication of Kate McDougall and her team of social workers.

On the administrative side, Birthlink has continued to do all that it can to improve its procedures and to fulfil all that is expected of a modern charity. In the course of the last year, we have adopted a number of policies, including policies relating to vulnerable people, children, confidentiality and appraisal. We have spent money given to us by Lloyds TSB on improving our computer systems. Our Executive Officer, Linda Hay, continues to do work conscientiously and effectively, in relation to both on long terms changes and improvements and also to dealing with a host of day to day problems. She is ably supported by her administrative staff.

The bad news is that Birthlink has not escaped the increasing difficulties faced by all charities these days. This is reflected in the annual accounts for the year to 31 March 2008 which show a deficit for the year of some £25,000. Our forecasts for the current year suggest that a further deficit may be anticipated in the accounts to 31 March 2009. Clearly, such deficits cannot be sustained.

A number of factors have combined to produce the present, difficult situation. The sums of money paid to us by local authorities have decreased and may decrease further. Shortfalls in local authority funding began to be apparent last year. More recently, more obvious economic troubles have been such that it is likely to be increasingly difficult, for some time at least, to obtain generous institutional funding.

Birthlink relies not just on funding from central and local government, and private generosity, but also on the profits of its thrift shops. The two thrift shops have done well over the past year, but the furniture warehouse has not. The move to better premises did not, unfortunately, result in profitable trading. Not only did this mean having to attract a new clientele, but it also coincided with a general decline in the fortunes of charity shops in Edinburgh selling second hand furniture. In the result, it became necessary for Birthlink to cut its losses and close the warehouse. This has resulted in some savings, although the full benefit of the closure will only be apparent when a new tenant for the building is found.

The main challenge for Birthlink is therefore the need to seek and obtain more and better funding arrangements, to enable its work to continue at its present level and then expand in the way that was contemplated when the Business Plan was made last year.

In the meantime, there is much to be thankful for. I have already mentioned Kate and her team and Linda. I am grateful to all staff for their hard work and support, along with the volunteers in the shops and the volunteer searchers. All are indispensable. I am particularly grateful to friends of Birthlink who are untiring in their efforts to make our work known to as many people as possible and to help out in all sorts of quiet and unsung ways. I am grateful to my colleagues on the Executive Committee, all of whom have been helpful and supportive.

Richard J D Scott
Chairperson
Birthlink

Social Work Round-Up of 2007/2008

Lorraine Kelly becomes patron

"I am delighted to help support and raise the profile of 'Birthlink' who provide an excellent service to individuals and families affected by adoption.

"The quality and sensitivity of the care they provide is in no way diminished by their lack of funding. If they could increase their funding they would be in a position to employ more staff allowing them to provide a speedier service to more people and reduce waiting times."

"I hope by raising their profile I can bring in some much needed funds to help run this worthwhile service."



'See Hear'

The BBC programme series See Hear is filming 'Daryl's story with our help. See hear is a dedicated programme for people who are deaf. Readers of the Bulletin may have seen the first stage when we met with Daryl to tell him what our search had uncovered about his birth family background. The next stage for filming will be the intermediary phase of work and is to be done next month when Daryl will be asked to consider which of the possible birth relatives we've found he would like us to approach.

It should be noted that Daryl is to be commended in allowing his search and contact efforts to be filmed. He is 100% in favour of this believing others who have hitherto been reluctant will be encouraged to seek support and help.

Nancy Verrier Conference

On 24 September 2007, we hosted a training day attended by more than fifty people. The well-known US writer on adoption, Nancy Verrier, led the day. Nancy is famous for Primal Wound which looks at the ties and connections between adopted people and their birth mothers and the consequences when those are sundered by adoption. This and accounts of developing practice with all those affected by adoption, formed the basis of her presentations and the discussion throughout a highly engaging event. Feedback we have since received has been extremely positive.

New Staff were welcomed

Hazel Dorey has joined us on a part-time basis. Thank you to all of the Team for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

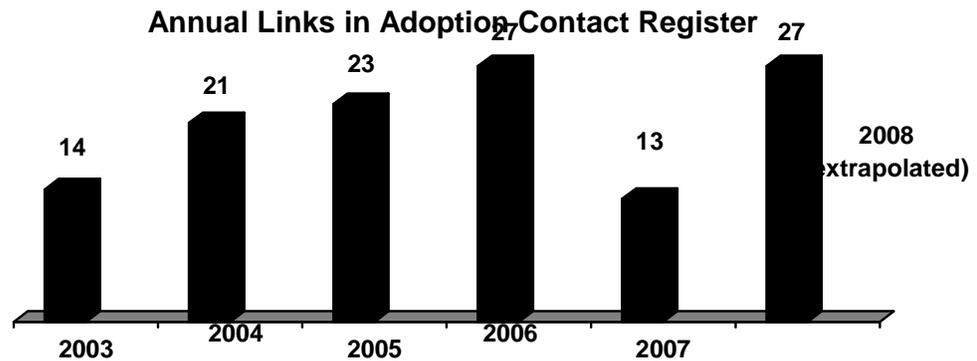
Name Change

From October 2007 *Family Care* is now known as Birthlink. This is in keeping with a long-tradition of the agency amending its title to reflect the actual services it provides.

City of Edinburgh Backs Care Connect

The October 2007 Staff Newsletter of Edinburgh's Children and Families Department prominently featured our Care Connect service for people who have grown up in care. A beautifully produced leaflet has also been made available for download at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Attachments/Internet/Social_care/Adult_social_care_services/Care-Connect-Leaflet.pdf In 2008 we hope to expand our Care Connect work throughout Scotland and will be approaching grant-making bodies to help us do this.

Growth in ACR links



Except for a blip in 2007, links on the contact register have almost doubled in five years. Whilst we don't know exactly how we will finish 2008, the frequency of links so far means that this year could be our most successful yet.

Care Commission approval

Birthlink has passed its annual Care Commission inspection with flying colours:

...the overwhelming majority of service users, both adopted adults and birth relatives were very positive with regard to the service provided...Comments included the following: "Birthlink were brilliant!", "everyone I spoke to was incredibly sensitive and empathetic and made me feel at ease".

Recommendations from the Commission are that we develop our child and adult protection policies and that that we establish group support for birth relatives.

Local Authorities

Birthlink continues to work in partnership with the following local authorities to provide a range of after adoption services to adults affected by adoption with a Scottish connection.

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Angus Council
Clackmannanshire Council
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Dundee City Council
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Edinburgh City Council
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Highland Council
North Ayrshire Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Renfrewshire Council
Scottish Borders Council
Shetland Islands Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Stirling Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
Western Isles Council

Congratulations go to Birthlink's Searchers who recently won an "Inspiring Volunteering Achievement Award".

Special thanks to the Birthlink Search Volunteers and Friends of Birthlink for their continuing specialised help and support throughout the year.

Kate McDougall
Social Work Manager

Birthlink 2007-2008

This has been another busy year for all the staff at Birthlink with lots of change to contend with but as usual everyone gets on with the job in hand.

There have been various changes to the Executive Board members over the year but the most significant change is our new chairperson Richard Scott who replaced Alexander (Sandy) Wilkinson. I worked closely with Sandy since joining Birthlink and appreciated the time, effort and support he gave to myself and the agency over the period of his leadership. Richard has already shown a great deal of interest and support and his attention to detail will I am sure prove to be very beneficial to our charity.

This past year has allowed us to buy a server with a grant obtained from Lloyds TSB which has made a huge difference to our IT systems. Having proper processes in place will help us to be more time and cost efficient going forward. We have also been able to buy a database to log all new contacts and make it easier to access information more readily therefore providing a quicker response time when clients make enquiries about their status. The finer details of installing this database have proved slightly trickier than anticipated but we are heading in the right direction.

The staff pension scheme has required time and effort spent on it to determine which staff members belong to the scheme and to make sure everyone is aware of their rights.

A new Staff Handbook is currently being worked on to make sure everyone is aware of their working terms and conditions and also to keep us up to date with any changes to employment law.

Our website is running well and receiving lots of “hits”, as they say. We are always looking at ways to improve its functionality and update the information on a regular basis.

One of the ways we can raise money for Birthlink is by using www.everyclick.com. You can save it as your home page and as a search engine it raises money for us every time you click on it, so log on today and start raising money for us.

The saddest news is the closure of our Warehouse in Sandport Place. Unfortunately it was unable to make sufficient money to sustain itself and bring in an income for the agency. There are various contributory factors including the changes in Edinburgh traffic schemes and fluctuating population which made this a necessary but regretful decision. We would like to extend our thanks to all who supported the Warehouse including the staff who worked very hard to make it a success.

The Thrift Shops 2007 – 2008

Shop 1 (Bruntsfield Place) 0131 229 4646

Dorothy is still managing the shop with the help of Maureen and their volunteers, Margaret, Rose and Rachel. They continue to receive lots of donations and are fortunate to have their regular customers supporting the charity. This is a very busy shop with a good stock turnover where all the staff work exceedingly hard and their help and support is much appreciated. This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the opening of Shop1 which is the oldest thrift shop in Edinburgh. We hope to be able to celebrate this in some small way.

Shop 2 (Lochrin buildings – Gilmore Place) 0131 229 6939

Leanne has returned from the Warehouse to joint manage the shop with Liz after Nico left to further his dance career. We now have 2 male volunteers Bill and Kevin who with our ladies Anne, Joy, Sandy and Isobel make up our dedicated staff. This shop too has been trading well and still manages to receive lots of donations despite the warehouse closing down and not being in a position to feed either shop with donations.

Stock Flow and Recycling

We are still receiving donations though it is slightly more difficult as we do not have the van to pick things up and deliver them to the shops. If you would like to donate something for us to sell please deliver it to either shop bearing in mind it has to be in a fit state for us to be able to sell it and make money. We also take small electrical items at Shop 2 where Bill our volunteer will PAT test them before we sell them on.

Appeal

Please remember we are always looking for volunteers as well as donations so if you think you can help us in any way check out our website on www.birthlink.org.uk or give us a call on 0131 225 6441

Linda Hay
Executive Officer
October 2008

Birthlink Staff

Executive Officer – Linda Hay

Social Work Manager – Kate McDougall

Social Workers

Jennifer Bryson
Sally Lynch
Hazel Dorey

Administrators

Winnie McGillivray
Heather Hall

Searchers

Ann and Angus Mitchell
Ann Coulson
Jennifer McNiven
Rosemary Hamilton
Vivienne Triseliotis
Jan Dollar

Shop Staff

Dorothy MacAlister
Maureen Brennan
Leanne Johnstone
Liz Lamb

Shop Volunteers

Margaret Rutherford
Rose Martin
Rachel MacAlister
Anne Johnstone
Isabel Sawers
Bill Halliday
Joy Bell
Kevin Harman
Mary Sanderson (Sandy)

Registered Number SC078854

Charity Number SC013007

BIRTHLINK
(a company limited by guarantee)

ABSTRACT OF THE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

BIRTHLINK
(a company limited by guarantee)
ABSTRACT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

Reference and administrative details

Patron

Lorraine Kelly

Executive Committee

Sheriff Richard J D Scott (Chairperson) (Appointed 16.04.08)

Sheriff Alexander B Wilkinson QC (Chairperson) (Resigned 16.04.08)

Mrs Ann Coulson

Mr Alan Gracie (Financial Convenor) (Appointed 22.08.07, Resigned 18.01.08)

Mrs Rosemary Hamilton

Miss Doris Laing

Mrs Jennifer McNiven (Appointed 30.05.07)

Ms Lindsey Neilson (Resigned 28.05.08)

Mrs Christine Russell (Resigned 30.05.07)

Mrs Kathleen Smith

Mr Peter Somerville (Appointed 14.11.07)

Mrs Rosemary Thorburn (Appointed 01.04.07, Resigned 14.11.07)

Mr Norman Walker (Resigned 05.03.08)

Secretary

Miss Doris Laing

Executive Officer

Mrs Linda Hay

Auditors

Chiene + Tait

Chartered Accountants

61 Dublin Street

Edinburgh

EH3 6NL

Bankers

Bank of Scotland

St Andrew Square Branch

38 St Andrew Square

Edinburgh

EH2 2YR

Solicitors

Murray Beith Murray WS

3 Glenfinlas Street

Edinburgh

EH3 6AQ

Registered Office

21 Castle Street

Edinburgh

EH2 3DN

BIRTHLINK
(a company limited by guarantee)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

The Committee has pleasure in presenting its annual report and financial statements for the year to 31 March 2008.

Structure, governance and management

The company is governed by the Executive committee. The Committee Members who are the directors of the company and who served during the year were:-

Sheriff Richard J D Scott (Chairperson) (Appointed 16.04.08)
Sheriff Alexander B Wilkinson QC (Chairperson) (Resigned 16.04.08)
Mrs Ann Coulson
Mr Alan Gracie (Financial Convenor) (Appointed 22.08.07, Resigned 18.01.08)
Mrs Rosemary Hamilton
Miss Doris Laing
Mrs Jennifer McNiven (Appointed 30.05.07)
Ms Lindsey Neilson (Resigned 28.05.08)
Mrs Christine Russell (Resigned 30.05.07)
Mrs Kathleen Smith
Mr Peter Somerville (Appointed 14.11.07)
Mrs Rosemary Thorburn (Appointed 01.04.07, Resigned 14.11.07)
Mr Norman Walker (Resigned 05.03.08)

The outgoing Chairperson Sheriff AB Wilkinson retired on 16 April 2008. The new Chairperson Sheriff Richard J D Scott is elected for five years from 16 April 2008. The Finance Convenor is elected annually and as at 18 January 2008 the office was vacant following the resignation of Alan Gracie. We are currently canvassing for new Executive Committee members with the relevant skills and in particular a Finance Convenor. Members receive induction and training as and when required.

Objectives and activities

Birthlink (formerly Family Care) has been in existence since 1911. The company was incorporated on 26 May 1982 as a company limited by guarantee. Birthlink is a voluntary social work agency whose mission statement aim is to provide excellence and innovation in after adoption support. The company changed its name to Birthlink on 13 August 2007. The key charitable objectives are:-

- To act as a centre of excellence in the provision of after adoption services.
- To provide facilities for the training of social workers.
- To promote community understanding and involvement in all areas of Birthlink's work.

The company has developed and introduced a management structure to ensure that these objectives are met. The Executive Committee has responsibility for finance, administration and voluntary fundraising. Birthlink (formerly Family Care) no longer provides a social work service for families and children in need.

Achievements and performance

The excellence of the service provided by Birthlink and Care Connect continues to be widely recognised, not least by the service users, as has again been attested by the report following the annual inspection carried out by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care. Further developments await a full assessment of trends in demand and the availability of resources.

The benefits of the efficient running of the organisation achieved by the measures introduced consequent on the organisational review have been maintained and the thrift shops continue to make an essential contribution to our financial support. The executive officer continues to oversee a wide range of activities, particularly in financial and business management, in public relations and the oversight of computer technology and planning of our website, in property negotiations and in the management and reorganisation of the thrift shops.

BIRTHLINK
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

Achievements and performance (continued)

We continue to be much indebted to the volunteer searchers whose skill, resourcefulness and untiring work make a major contribution to the success of Birthlink and we are similarly indebted to the unstinting help given by the volunteers in the thrift shops. The help given by the volunteers along with the dedication of our staff are the base on which the service we provide is built.

Developments since the year end and future plans

The warehouse premises in Sandport Place have proved unsuccessful and were closed to business at the end of August 2008. The charity furniture sector has changed somewhat in the last year and has seen a decline in sales which resulted in the closure. The closure cuts our losses but when the lease for the premises is sold it will make a difference to our financial situation.

There have been a number of changes in the composition of the Executive Committee since 31 March 2007. Christine Russell has resigned, Rosemary Thorburn has rejoined and then resigned again, Jennifer McNiven, Alan Gracie and Peter Somerville have become new members. Alan Gracie resigned on 18 January 2008 which means we are without a Finance Convenor once again.

Lorraine Kelly is still in position as Patron of Birthlink and we thank her for her support.

Financial review

The overall deficit for the year is £25,808 (2007: surplus £17,263) as stated in the Statement of Financial Activities. The general unrestricted deficit is £34,852 (2007: surplus £19,667).

Guarantee

Each member of the company has undertaken to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards any deficit arising in the event of Birthlink being placed in liquidation. At 31 March 2008 there were 38 members.

Statement of directors' responsibilities

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the net income and expenditure of the charity in the year. In preparing the financial statements the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements, comply with the Companies Act 1985, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The applicable law also sets out the directors' responsibilities for the preparation and content of the Directors Report.

The directors are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

BIRTHLINK
(a company limited by guarantee)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

The directors confirm that:-

- as far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware; and
- each director has taken all the steps he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of the directors to maintain unrestricted general funds, which are the free reserves of the charity, at a level, which equates to approximately three months unrestricted expenditure. The unrestricted general funds currently stand at £1,083. The nature and purpose of the various funds of the charity are set out in note 1 to the financial statements.

Risk management

The Executive have assessed the major risks to which Birthlink might be exposed in particular to the operation and finances of the charity. The current systems and structure have been reviewed to ensure that systems are in place to mitigate our exposure to any unexpected major risk.

Investment policy

In previous years the directors have considered the most appropriate policy for investing funds were Government Stocks, to generate both income and capital growth. The directors decided to deposit money with Standard Life Bank to get a better rate of interest while considering the best way forward.

Auditors

A resolution to appoint Chiene + Tait, Chartered Accountants, as auditors will be put to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

DORIS LAING
Director

1 October 2008



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' STATEMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF BIRTHLINK (a company limited by guarantee)

We have examined the summarised financial statements of Birthlink set out on pages 6 and 7.

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of directors and auditors

The directors are responsible for preparing the Abstract of the Financial Statements in accordance with the recommendations of the charities SORP.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statement within the Abstract of the Financial Statements with the full financial statements and Executive Committees' Report. We also read the other information contained in the Abstract of the Financial Statements and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statement.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 1996/6 "The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement" issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the Executive Committees' Report of Birthlink for the year ended 31 March 2008.

CHIENE + TAIT

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
61 Dublin Street

Edinburgh EH3 6NL

1 October 2008

BIRTHLINK

(a company limited by guarantee)

STATEMENT of FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCORPORATING INCOME and EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the Year Ended 31 March 2008

	Designated Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2008 £	Total 2007 £
Incoming resources					
Incoming resources from generated funds					
Voluntary income	-	6,038	17,419	23,457	17,871
Activities for generating funds	-	98,389	176	98,565	141,930
Investment income	-	2,897	-	2,897	3,513
Incoming resources from charitable activities	-	-	139,094	139,094	143,596
Total incoming resources	-	107,324	156,689	264,013	306,910
Resources expended					
Costs of generating funds					
Fundraising trading: costs of goods sold and other costs	-	101,860	-	101,860	101,254
Costs of generating voluntary income	-	-	1,351	1,351	5,629
Charitable activities	-	12,580	162,137	174,717	171,573
Governance costs	-	10,194	1,699	11,893	10,491
Total resources expended	-	124,634	165,187	289,821	288,947
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers	-	(17,310)	(8,498)	(25,808)	17,963
Transfers	-	(17,542)	17,542	-	-
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before other recognised gains and losses	-	(34,852)	9,044	(25,808)	17,963
Other recognised gains/(losses)					
Realised loss on investment	-	-	-	-	(700)
Net movement in funds	-	(34,852)	9,044	(25,808)	17,263
Total funds brought forward	649,430	35,935	8,154	693,519	676,256
Total funds carried forward	649,430	1,083	17,198	667,711	693,519

All results of the company relate to continuing activities.

BIRTHLINK

(a company limited by guarantee)

BALANCE SHEET

As at 31 March 2008

	£	2008 £	£	2007 £
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		489,637		489,176
Investment properties		160,000		160,000
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		649,637		649,176
Current assets				
Debtors	14,542		6,351	
Cash at bank and in hand	52,650		57,764	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	67,192		64,115	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(49,118)		(19,772)	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
Net current assets		18,074		44,343
Total assets less current liabilities		667,711		693,519
		<hr/> <hr/>		<hr/> <hr/>
Reserves				
Restricted funds		17,198		8,154
Unrestricted funds		1,083		35,935
Designated funds		649,430		649,430
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		667,711		693,519
		<hr/> <hr/>		<hr/> <hr/>

The abstract of the financial statements set out on pages 6 to 7 have been extracted from the full financial statements which were approved on 1 October 2008 and do not constitute the charity's statutory financial statements. The full financial statements have been audited and the auditors' opinion was unqualified. The financial statements for the years ended 31 March 2007 and 31 March 2008 have been delivered to the Registrar of Companies.

This abstract of the financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information, the full financial

statements, the auditors report on these financial statements and the Executive Committee's Report should be consulted. Copies of the full financial statements can be obtained from:- Birthlink, 21 Castle Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3DN.

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee:

The financial statements have been approved by the Executive Committee on 1 October 2008.

_____ R Scott, Chair