



*Making the difference*

# Chairman's Report

November 2017

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT to the 2017 AGM

I am truly delighted to be able to report on another remarkable year. Graeme will give us his usual analysis of the finances but the headline is that, despite paying the largest part of the two-year construction program for the new Hydrotherapy Pool, the charity made a cash surplus of £165,278 in the audited Financial Year. This strong financial performance is all the more remarkable when there has been no inflation at all in the amount we are paid by the NHS but inflation in the economy is averaging 2.6% every year.

Throughout the year we have maintained high levels of activity in our clinical and educational services, as our two service Heads will report, whilst streamlining our methods of working to make everything we do cost efficient. Our therapists work as a united team with remarkable flexibility and willingness to meet the many challenges that medical practice and a growing population in Devon present. In Education, the Management Team made an application to the Department for Education for a license to operate a Secondary School Unit for up to 12 pupils aged from 12 to 18. The license was granted, suitable accommodation in the Honeylands Building was set aside for the purpose and converted and the first secondary class was up and running in September. This remarkable achievement – something we have always wanted – now enables the charity to provide schooling for children and young people from the age of 2 to 18. It will reinforce our reputation for high quality services at a very low cost and should ring-fence the school against contract changes for a good many years.

As always my thanks, and I am sure yours too, are directed at our simply outstanding staff. Vbranch House is a service charity; it exists not to provide grants of money or gifts of equipment but to help children with physical difficulties meet and even extend their potential. As a result, and despite the delightful buildings and magnificent grounds on the Vbranch House site, the preponderance of our income is spent on the staff (77% in the last financial year). They earn every single penny. Without them our reputation for excellence and our ability to carry out our work would be impossible.

Finally, I should not end this brief report without a word about these very special children. Our motivation – and I say “our” because our paid staff are supported by a network of volunteers, Governors and Trustees, is the children. Their cheerfulness, their willingness, their courage in adversity, their trust in us and their delight in the world around them is inspiring. It is a privilege for all of us to spend our working lives with them.

Julia Tolman-May  
Chairman

