

Charity registration number 105433 (England and Wales)

Company registration number 03172572

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr K Rigby Ms G D Fryer Ms M Livingstone Ms J Privelage Ms H Roche Ms H Thornton
Secretary	Ms C Grant
Charity number	105433
Company number	03172572
Registered office	The Old Schoolhouse St John's Road Huyton Merseyside L36 0UX
Auditor	DSG Audit Castle Chambers 43 Castle Street Liverpool L2 9TL
Bankers	NatWest Bank
Solicitors	MSB Solicitors

THE FIRST STEP LTD

(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

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THE FIRST STEP LTD

(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The Board of Trustees is satisfied with the performance of The First Step Ltd during the year and the position at 31st March 2024 and consider the agency is in a position to continue its activities during the coming year, and that The First Step assets are adequate to fulfil its obligations.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

Objectives and activities

The First Step Vision: "To convert Knowsley's domestic violence & abuse challenges into real solutions by creating new ways of working to stop domestic violence & abuse".

The First Step Values

We at The First Step put survivors at the heart of everything we do and our key values are:

- **Non-judgemental**
We are accepting of all differences and choices
- **Empowerment**
We support survivors to make informed choices
- **Trust**
We build honest and open relationships in a safe space
- **High Quality Service**
We are always improving and embracing positive change

A summary of The First Step as set out in its governing document:

The objectives for which The First Step is established are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association as summarised below:

- To ensure comprehensive support and protection for people experiencing domestic abuse.
- Promote inter agency co-operation and training and awareness of others active in the field.
- Improve and expand the support and protection services available to sufferers of domestic abuse and where necessary promote the development of new services and facilities.
- Encourage initiatives aimed at the prevention of domestic abuse.
- Provide information about current services available through publicity, leaflets, posters, cards and directories.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the service being provided in relation to the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Achievements and performance

The First Step is the only specialist charity in the region supporting anyone affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence. We pride ourselves on delivering high quality advice, support and accommodation to families and individuals.

An explanation of The First Step strategies for achieving its stated objectives

To achieve its objectives a range of services are offered to any resident of the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley (and surrounding areas for some services), who is or has been in an abusive relationship. The First Step also acts as a resource to other organisations, agencies etc. whose clients have domestic abuse as a presenting or underlying issue.

The First Step provides direct service provision and interventions that break the cycle of domestic abuse to victims/survivors. The direct services are varied and include one to one support, group programmes and refuge provision. We raise awareness of domestic abuse amongst the local communities and organisations.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Awareness and Publicity

The First Step is committed to raising awareness of the causes and impacts of domestic abuse and sexual violence as widely as possible and we have featured on radio interviews, local television news programmes, conference and received widespread press coverage.

Through our brilliant survivor network, we were able to reach decision makers and commissioners about what people living in Knowsley find challenging about accessing support and what works and what is needed to benefit our local community which included holding a community day where members of our local community could attend a fund day but access information in relation what constitutes abuse and how to get support.

Achievements and performance

As the Board of Trustees we have many responsibilities including; strategic planning and development, financial security and protecting resources of The First Step. During this year all of these responsibilities have been thoroughly tested for various reasons and by various external factors, which has been both challenging and frustrating in equal measure.

Everyone in the Voluntary Sector is acutely aware that funding dictates and shapes what services we can develop and deliver and for how long. The First Step, like all charities, has to rely, in part, on Local Government for commissioning and Central Government for funding for some of our services. Not knowing what funding we will get from one year to the next and often being told at the last minute makes strategic planning and development, financial security and protecting our most important resource, our staff, incredibly challenging. This year has been particularly arduous due to the cost-of-living crisis affecting our financial planning and security alongside a considerable increase in demand for services and difficulties in recruitment due to short-term contracts and not being able to offer the salary package that competes with the statutory sector for similar roles.

Thankfully, we have the most incredible, hardworking and passionate staff team who are managed by an exceptional CEO, who has weathered every storm and curveball thrown at her this year, and there have been many, but her tenacity and total belief and dedication in what we do, why we do it and who we do it for, has enabled us to keep the lights on and keep moving forward.

The lowest low this year and the biggest challenge was having to make the agonising decision, after 17 years, to stop accepting referrals to the IDSV Service for a short period of time. After approx. 12 months of telling KMBC and the OPCC that we didn't have capacity to meet the increased demand to the service, the risk the IDSVs were holding was excessive, the caseloads for each individual IDSV were unsafe and unsustainable and as a trauma informed organisation the impact on our staff was not an impact we were prepared to ignore. In August 2023 the situation surpassed manageable and emergency meetings were held, agreements made, and an action plan developed between The First Step and KMBC to manage the immediate situation and find solutions to ensure we didn't end up back where we started. Due to the ever-increasing demand for service this is an ongoing situation that is constantly reviewed and managed. Emma and all the IDSVs worked incredibly hard to turn the situation around in very difficult circumstances and after a few months were able to accept referrals again. The IDSVs were all exceptional in how they continued to work to the highest standard when there was so much uncertainty around them. The trustees would like to acknowledge Emma and all the IDSVs for keeping on going every day and always putting the service users needs first and foremost, we really appreciate it.

One of the highest highs this year was the conception, production and delivery of "Shadows" by the service users. This play was heartfelt, impactful and provoked a range of emotions including tears, not just tears of sadness but those of realisation and ultimately joy. This wouldn't have happened without Jenny and her community team who supported the woman and this project from start to finish, it was such an incredible achievement. This was only one project the community team achieved this year, there were many others alongside delivering an impressive number of group programmes, 1:1 support and all whilst knowing the waiting list gets longer by the day, which is a very difficult situation to manage, but they do, and we really appreciate it.

Another high was seeing month in, month out the refuge staff supporting women and their children when they are at their lowest, most scared with a very unknown future. Knowing how much support and care our staff have for everyone that stays in our refuge helping them get stronger until they feel ready to move on to an independent life, free from abuse, is something all the trustees are extremely appreciative of, and we want to acknowledge Debi and all the refuge staff for all that they do in very difficult circumstances.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
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TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

How our activities provide public benefit

The charity has referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. The main activities and services have been described in this report including the number and range of people who have benefited from our work. All of the charitable activities focus on the prevention, support and empowerment of any member of the public residing in the area which First Step works whom has been affected by domestic abuse. All the work is undertaken to further the charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Financial review

Income for the year was £1,515,806 (2023: £1,095,043) and expenditure was £1,303,349 (2023: £998,411). This resulted in a surplus for the year of £212,457 (2023: £96,632).

Unrestricted reserves as at 31 March 2024 stood at £544,025 (2023: £331,538). The charity had no restricted reserves as at 31 March 2024 (2023: £nil).

Reserves policy

The trustees have given appropriate consideration to The First Step's requirement for reserves having regard to the principal risks to which the charity is exposed. The reserves policy has been reviewed, agreed and adopted and states that general funds, not committed to or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity, should equate to a minimum of 3 months' expenditure.

The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements and the trustees believe that at this level they would have sufficient resources to continue operating in the event of a significant loss of funding while seeking alternative sources.

Reserves of general and designated funds stand at £544,025. The objective remains to maintain a minimum of 3 months' reserves and to build on this figure when the opportunity arises.

Principal funding sources

Principal funding sources this year were by way of contract and grant agreements with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council together with grants from the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, Ministry of Justice, Henry Smith Charity, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children In Need and the Ten Percent Foundation. Housing Benefit is claimed for women when they are a resident within Ross House. As an agency we always seek to diversify our income streams, in these difficult fiscal times with constraints on public sector expenditure we continue to seek income from a variety of sources including charitable trusts.

Investment policy

Other than the modest amount retained as reserves, almost all the charity's income is intended to be spent within the year of receipt. In consequence, sourcing long term investment vehicles is not an issue for the Trustees. Funds surplus to immediate requirements are invested in deposit accounts. Current rates of return are highly unattractive, but the security of the funds is the primary concern of the Trustees.

Availability and adequacy of each of the funds

The board of trustees is satisfied that The First Step assets in each fund are available and adequate to fulfil its obligations in respect of each fund.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Major risks

The trustees confirm that the major risk to which the agency may be exposed is primarily a decrease in income including contracts, grants and/or donations. Systems have been established and are reviewed to mitigate these risks as far as is reasonably possible, this includes a Business Continuity Plan which identifies vulnerabilities and makes recommendations where appropriate to prevent extended disruption.

Internal control risks are minimised by ensuring the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures. The Trustees have appropriate procedures in place to ensure compliance with Health & Safety requirements which includes an annual review undertaken by an external third party professional.

Working in the field of domestic abuse can be demanding for staff therefore a 24/7 confidential Employee Assistance Programme has been commissioned from an external provider which staff can access at any time for both work related and personal concerns, this service includes up to six 1-1 counselling sessions. In addition, the charity provide monthly on-site face to face practice management from a qualified external provider – during this year due to the pandemic practice management was increased to fortnightly for staff who wanted to access it.

Plans for future periods

The First Step has 3 main objectives it will be working to achieve:

- Robust recruitment process for an agency Chief Executive Officer
- Review the strategic plan in conjunction with ensuring our values are embedded across the agency
- Ongoing funding opportunities remain a major focus of the work in the coming year.

Structure, governance and management

The First Step is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated 14th March 1996 and registered as a charity on 11th April 1996. The company was established under a Memorandum & Articles of Association which provide the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr J D Fagan (Resigned 5 December 2023)

Mr K Rigby

Mrs N J Harris (Resigned 20 October 2024)

Ms G D Fryer

Ms M Livingstone

Ms J Privelage

Ms H Roche

Ms H Thornton

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the charity. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association at each Annual General Meeting one third of trustees shall retire by rotation. The trustees to retire by rotation shall be those who have been longest serving in office since their last appointment or reappointment.

New Trustees are recruited in accordance with the governing document and by the existing trustees. Trustees appointed during the year must present themselves for re-appointment at the next general meeting.

Organisational structure

The Trustees hold quarterly meetings to deal with the routine business, finance and governance of the agency, an annual financial meeting for budget setting and an annual general meeting. Day to day decisions are delegated to the Chief Executive Officer. Strategic developments are put before trustees for discussion, amendment and approval. Draft policies/procedures are circulated to the senior management team and then to trustees for comment and approval. Trustees are involved in annual planning days, development and implementation of the agencies strategic and operational plans.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Induction and training of trustees

Trustee recruitment has been reviewed; the charity now have an approved process for all new trustees. Trustees are made aware of the training offered by various organisations based both locally and nationally. For example: Directory of Social Change (DSC), National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) and Civil Society.

Relationship with related parties

In so far as it is complementary to the charity's objectives, the charity is guided by both local and national policy.

National - at a national level the Government via the Home Office produced it's Strategic Vision in the document "A Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls" launched on the 25th November 2010. A VAWG action plan is produced annually which reviews progress to date and lays out their actions for the coming period including the roll out of domestic violence protection orders and the domestic violence disclosure scheme (Clare's Law).

Local – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council will review and update its Domestic Abuse Strategy which will inform Knowsley's partnership response to domestic abuse across the borough.

The charity is aware that KMBC has established a commissioning framework through which they tender for services. The First Step worked hard to ensure it is in a position to participate in the tendering process by successfully being accepted on to three frameworks relevant to the services we provide.

Going forward we welcome the passing of the Domestic Abuse Bill in parliament and receiving Royal Assent on 29th April 2021. We now look forward to working with our partners on the implementation of the Bill..

Auditor

DSG resigned as auditor on 11 September 2024. DSG Audit were appointed on 11 September 2024 as auditor to the charitable company and in accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that they be re-appointed will be put at a General Meeting.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Ms J Privelage
Trustee

31 January 2025

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees, who are also the directors of The First Step Ltd for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that 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 2006. They 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.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST STEP LTD

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The First Step Ltd (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST STEP LTD

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Discussions with and enquiries of management and those charged with governance were held with a view to identifying those laws and regulations that could be expected to have a material impact on the financial statements. During the engagement team briefing, the outcomes of these discussions and enquiries were shared with the team, as well as consideration as to where and how fraud may occur in the entity.

The following laws and regulations were identified as being of significance to the entity:

- Those laws and regulations considered to have a direct effect on the financial statements include UK financial reporting standards, Company Law, Tax and Pensions legislation, and Charity Law.
- Those laws and regulations for which non-compliance may be fundamental to the operating aspects of the charity and therefore may have a material effect on the financial statements include compliance with charitable objectives, public benefit, fundraising regulations, safeguarding and health and safety legislation.

**THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST STEP LTD**

Audit procedures undertaken in response to the potential risks relating to irregularities (which include fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations) comprised of: inquiries of management and the Trustees as to whether the entity complies with such laws and regulations; enquiries with the same concerning any actual or potential litigation or claims; inspection of relevant legal correspondence; review of Trustee meeting minutes; testing the appropriateness of journal entries; and the performance of analytical review to identify unexpected movements in account balances which may be indicative of fraud.

No instances of material non-compliance were identified. However, the likelihood of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is limited by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the entity's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed. Irregularities that result from fraud might be inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error. As explained above, there is an unavoidable risk that material misstatements may not be detected, even though the audit has been planned and performed in accordance with ISAs (UK).

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's 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 charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Jean Ellis BA FCA CTA (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of DSG Audit, Statutory Auditor

Chartered Accountants

Castle Chambers

43 Castle Street

Liverpool

L2 9TL

31 January 2025

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

		Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
	Notes						
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	7,238	-	7,238	9,382	-	9,382
Charitable activities	4	1,054,818	451,150	1,505,968	636,352	449,309	1,085,661
Investments	5	2,600	-	2,600	-	-	-
Total income		1,064,656	451,150	1,515,806	645,734	449,309	1,095,043
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	6	852,199	451,150	1,303,349	549,102	449,309	998,411
Total expenditure		852,199	451,150	1,303,349	549,102	449,309	998,411
Net income and movement in funds							
		212,457	-	212,457	96,632	-	96,632
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 April 2023		331,568	-	331,568	234,936	-	234,936
Fund balances at 31 March 2024		544,025	-	544,025	331,568	-	331,568

The notes on pages 13 to 21 form part of these financial statements.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11		4,539		5,107
Current assets					
Debtors	12	106,648		70,149	
Investments	13	250,000		-	
Cash at bank and in hand		549,066		676,219	
		<u>905,714</u>		<u>746,368</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	<u>(366,228)</u>		<u>(419,907)</u>	
Net current assets			539,486		326,461
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>544,025</u>		<u>331,568</u>
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	17		544,025		331,568
			<u>544,025</u>		<u>331,568</u>

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 31 January 2025



Ms J Privelage
Trustee

Company registration number 03172572 (England and Wales)

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash generated from operations	21		120,247		171,928
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		-		(5,675)	
Proceeds from disposal of investments		(250,000)		-	
Investment income received		2,600		-	
Net cash used in investing activities			(247,400)		(5,675)
Net cash generated from financing activities			-		-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents			(127,153)		166,253
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			676,219		509,966
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			549,066		676,219

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

The First Step Ltd is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is The Old Schoolhouse, St John's Road, Huyton, Merseyside, L36 0UX.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

1.5 Expenditure

Charitable activities comprise those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both the costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs relate to the governance of the charitable company and are primarily associated with constitutional, statutory and legal in nature.

All resources expended are classified under activity headings that aggregate all costs related to that category. Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resources expended for which it was incurred.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings	25% on cost
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The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Investments

Investments are cash balances held on deposit for a minimum period of 90 days. Interest on these balances is paid on the date of maturity.

1.8 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.9 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.10 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including #tErm7, are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies (Continued)

1.11 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.12 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Donations and gifts	7,238	9,382

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Performance related grants	201,965	451,150	653,115	201,574	449,309	650,883
Charitable rental income	852,853	-	852,853	434,778	-	434,778
	<u>1,054,818</u>	<u>451,150</u>	<u>1,505,968</u>	<u>636,352</u>	<u>449,309</u>	<u>1,085,661</u>

THE FIRST STEP LTD
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Interest receivable	2,600	-

6 Expenditure on charitable activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Direct costs		
Staff costs	804,012	739,712
Depreciation and impairment	568	568
Building costs	132,566	80,520
Insurance	3,770	5,487
Office costs	21,359	28,359
Repairs and renewals	1,998	2,695
Cleaning	3,823	4,121
Management charges	159,237	-
Service user costs	31,022	20,461
Miscellaneous expenses	20,626	35,672
Furniture and white goods	3,049	6,498
Bank charges	495	421
Professional fees	114,499	71,359
	1,297,024	995,873
Share of support and governance costs (see note 7)		
Governance	6,325	2,538
	1,303,349	998,411
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	852,199	549,102
Restricted funds	451,150	449,309
	1,303,349	998,411

7 Support costs allocated to activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Governance costs	6,325	2,538
Analysed between:		
Audit fees	6,325	2,538

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

8	Net movement in funds	2024	2023
		£	£
	The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
	Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	568	568
		<u> </u>	<u> </u>

9 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year.

During the year, the trustees received a total of £nil (2023: £nil) in expenses from the charity.

10 Employees

The average monthly number employees during the year was:

	2024	2023
	Number	Number
Management and administration	4	5
Projects, activities and sessions	20	21
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Total	24	26
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Employment costs

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	709,917	658,428
Social security costs	55,415	47,804
Other pension costs	38,680	33,480
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	804,012	739,712
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures and fittings £
Cost	
At 1 April 2023	5,675
At 31 March 2024	5,675
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 April 2023	568
Depreciation charged in the year	568
At 31 March 2024	1,136
Carrying amount	
At 31 March 2024	4,539
At 31 March 2023	5,107

12 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade debtors	13,270	-
Other debtors	397	390
Prepayments and accrued income	92,981	69,759
	106,648	70,149

13 Current asset investments

	2024 £	2023 £
Other investments	250,000	-

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income	337,195	293,114
Trade creditors	17,796	92,638
Accruals	11,237	34,155
	366,228	419,907

THE FIRST STEP LTD
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

15 Retirement benefit schemes

	2024	2023
	£	£
Defined contribution schemes		
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	38,680	33,480

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

16 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£
BBC Children in Need	-	44,067	(44,067)	-
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	-	175,760	(175,760)	-
Knowsley MBC - IDSVa	-	210,617	(210,617)	-
Other	-	20,706	(20,706)	-
	-	451,150	(451,150)	-

Previous year:

	At 1 April 2022	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
BBC Children in Need	-	54,580	(54,580)	-
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	-	189,043	(189,043)	-
Knowsley MBC - IDSVa	-	178,802	(178,802)	-
The Henry Smith Charity	-	24,800	(24,800)	-
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	2,084	(2,084)	-
	-	449,309	(449,309)	-

THE FIRST STEP LTD
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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

16 Restricted funds

(Continued)

National Lottery

Funding towards delivering a community-based programme of support to survivors of domestic abuse including groups and coffee mornings.

BBC Children In Need

To deliver support to children impacted by abuse in Refuge, including activities.

MOJ

Funding towards delivering a community-based programme of support to survivors of domestic abuse including groups and coffee mornings.

Safe Accommodation

To deliver support inclusive of resettlement work, complex needs, therapeutic support to children and adults impacted by domestic abuse.

Hardship Fund

To deliver financial support directly to victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

IDSVA funds

To deliver support to high-risk victims of domestic abuse.

17 Unrestricted funds

The unrestricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes.

	At 1 April 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2024 £
Service user fund	15,955	4,636	(934)	19,657
General funds	315,613	1,060,020	(851,265)	524,368
	<u>331,568</u>	<u>1,064,656</u>	<u>(852,199)</u>	<u>544,025</u>
Previous year:	At 1 April 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2023 £
Service user fund	10,182	9,912	(4,139)	15,955
General funds	224,754	635,822	(544,963)	315,613
	<u>234,936</u>	<u>645,734</u>	<u>(549,102)</u>	<u>331,568</u>

Service users fund

The trustees have identified £19,657 (2023: £15,955) of funds that have been allocated to spend on supporting service users in future periods.

THE FIRST STEP LTD
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

18 Members' liability

The company is limited by guarantee and, in the event of the winding up of the company, the liability of each member (including those members who have served during the previous twelve months) is limited to a contribution of £1 towards the cost of dissolution and the liabilities incurred by the charity while the contributor was a member.

19 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2023 - none).

20 Controlling party

The charity is controlled by its Board of Trustees.

21 Cash generated from operations	2024	2023
	£	£
Surplus for the year	212,457	96,632
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(2,600)	-
Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	568	568
Movements in working capital:		
(Increase) in debtors	(36,499)	(16,173)
(Decrease) in creditors	(97,760)	(8,644)
Increase in deferred income	44,081	99,545
Cash generated from operations	120,247	171,928

22 Analysis of changes in net funds

The charity had no material debt during the year.