



Fixing the Big Issues for Disabled People in Buckinghamshire

Charity No 1102511

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Trustees' Annual Report for 2022-23

Chair's Introduction

1. Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS) is the county's leading disability charity and its only independent pan-disability organisation. Our visionary aim is to *abolish disability* by building a world which is *Fair4All*, free of the barriers which disable people. We are led by disabled people and committed to the social model of disability.
2. Uniquely, BuDS is a working community of over 100 volunteers who work together, supported by staff, to achieve our goals. Our 19 projects, many of which are unique to the county, empower thousands of disabled adults, young people and children across Buckinghamshire and permanently remove the barriers facing disabled people so that they can live and work independently.
3. BuDS is a highly diverse and inclusive charity both in terms of disability and intersectionality, and diversity and inclusion are core values. BuDS is also a significant youth charity in and around Buckinghamshire, with around 25 disabled young people (18-25) as volunteers in 2022-23 and a strong project focus on children and young people.
4. We tackle the issues which most affect disabled people in and around Buckinghamshire by whatever means necessary. Our Disability Services help disabled people directly, while our Fair4All projects bring about permanent change to the built environment, structures, systems and infrastructure so that disabled people do not face barriers to living independently. Our Reach4Work projects help disabled jobseekers into work and education. All our work is evidence-based, project-led and responds to the real needs of disabled people. The expertise of our professional volunteers mean we can often punch above our weight.
5. Because Covid-19 remains a real risk and huge barrier to inclusion for millions of disabled and clinically vulnerable people, BuDS is one of the few UK charities which continues to provide information, guidance and support around Covid issues. We have a deserved national reputation as a highly respected and reliable source of Covid-19 information used by tens of thousands of people.
6. 2022-23 saw a welcome return to growth after the financial shock of 2021-22, with the abrupt ending of Covid-related contingency funding on which we had previously depended. All our projects saw growth and development, funding increased, and we maintained our large number of loyal volunteers who make BuDS such a unique and rewarding community. Exciting times lie ahead, with several projects in a development phase.

7. Huge thanks are due to our Trustees, staff and volunteers who have given so much of their time and talents, and to our funders who have shown such confidence in our work.
8. I hope you enjoy reading more about the unique working community that is BuDS in this Annual Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Clark', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Andrew Clark
Chair of Trustees

Introduction

9. This is the Annual Report for Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS), charity registration number 1102511, for the financial year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, and includes the audited accounts for that period.
10. As BuDS' income is below £500,000 and it does not have assets worth more than £3.26 million, Trustees are not required to produce a full Annual Report according to the guidelines set out in the Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102).

What is BuDS?

11. BuDS is Buckinghamshire's leading disability charity and the county's only independent pan-disability organisation. Our visionary aim is to abolish disability by building a world which is Fair4All, free of the barriers which disable people. To achieve this, we have built a working community of over 100 local volunteers who work together, supported by staff, to achieve our goals. Our 19 projects both support and empower disabled individuals and work to permanently remove the barriers facing disabled people.

User Led

12. BuDS is committed to being user-led, that is a charity which is led primarily by disabled Trustees and which seeks, as far as possible, to include disabled people as staff and volunteers. We see being user-led as vital to our authenticity and mission. In practice, we aim to have 75% of Trustees who identify as disabled people and, as a minimum, 51%. In 2022-23, 75% of those holding office as Trustees identified as disabled people; while 46% of those volunteers who provided information and 75% of staff identified as disabled.

Social Model of Disability

13. BuDS follows and advocates for the social model of disability, which is at the core of our beliefs and work. The social model of disability states that disability is caused by the barriers which society puts in the way of people who have an impairment or medical condition, not by those impairments or conditions. Thus, for example, a wheelchair-user is 'disabled' by the lack of a ramp, not by their lack of mobility, or an autistic person is 'disabled' by a lack of quiet places rather than by their neurodivergence. When we use the phrase 'disabled person', we mean a person with an impairment or medical condition impacted by a barrier which disables them – we are not referring to any physical, sensory or mental health condition they may have.

A Voluntary Charity

14. BuDS aims to be an inclusive working community of mainly disabled volunteers organised around the key principle that disabled people themselves should tackle the issues and barriers that they face. Our disabled volunteers are also our members and part of our unique grassroots community of disabled people. We remain a large working community of nearly 120 volunteers, equivalent to a charity with 19 full-time employees.
15. In 2022-23, some key trends in volunteering have become apparent:
 - a. BuDS has broadly maintained our number of active volunteers and significantly increased the average number of voluntary hours worked per volunteer, bucking national and local trends, which show a marked decline in volunteering.

- b. However, the number of volunteers able to be active on any particular day has fallen sharply, reflecting the much higher pressure on our volunteers of the cost-of-living crisis and increased caring responsibilities as SEND education, the NHS, and care services continue to decline.
 - c. The proportion of disabled BuDS volunteers who identify as disabled has also fallen. This is not surprising: 2022-23 has seen unprecedented economic pressure and an accelerating cost-of-living crisis, affecting disabled people most of all. Many of our disabled volunteers have had to give up volunteering in order to work extra hours or to enter employment, and the same pressures prevent many disabled people from starting to volunteer.
 - d. The number of 'inactive' BuDS volunteers - who were taking a break from volunteering but who hoped to return later – has also fallen sharply, and so we have decided to exclude these inactive individuals from our volunteer statistics.
16. Around three quarters of BuDS volunteers in 2021-22 identified as disabled (Equality Act definition) but that proportion has fallen to around half in 2022-23. Our disabled volunteers remain an extremely diverse community, with every significant impairment group represented. This gives us continued unparalleled insight into the lives of disabled people. We still include a wide age range, with over a fifth of our volunteers in 2022-23 being young people under 25. Our volunteers are also at diverse points on their life journey: we still include people who are starting out in their adult life, working people, parents, retirees, professionals, jobseekers, and people who are looking to acquire more skills or experience.
 17. In 2022-23, we recruited 64 new volunteers and maintained our overall active volunteer number at 117 over the year. This was a very small (2.5%) decrease on 2022-23, when our overall active volunteer number was 120 people. We are proud to have been able to maintain the size of our active volunteer team in defiance of national and local trends. This is due in large part to our excellent and active volunteer support. We have a part-time volunteer coordinator responsible for recruitment and induction, and every project includes either a member of staff or volunteer whose specific role is to support volunteers in their volunteering. Training is available in every team and many volunteers also have a mentor for 1:1 support. We have a dedicated in-house welfare team, Help for Helpers. Many of our volunteers are job seekers and we support them towards work through our Reach4Work project (details below).
 18. Usage data from our IT system (Microsoft Office 365), shows that, over 2022-23, BuDS had an average of 25-35 active volunteers working on any particular day, from a pool of active volunteers of around 117 individuals. This represents a significant decrease of around a third from 2021-22, when BuDS had an average of 48-50 active volunteers working on any particular day, from a pool of active volunteers of around 120 individuals.
 19. We calculate that our 117 volunteers worked a total of 40,820 hours in 2022-23, an average of roughly 6.7 hours/week per volunteer. In 2021-22, 120 volunteers worked 48,100 hours, an average of 5.1 hours/week each. The total number of voluntary hours worked has increased by a third. It appears that volunteers are working longer hours per week but on fewer occasions in the week, perhaps reflecting their busy and pressured lifestyles.
 20. Collectively, BuDS volunteers in 2022-23 worked the same hours as 19 full time staff, representing a financial contribution in kind of around £511,000 per annum.

A Youth Charity

21. BuDS remains a significant youth charity in and around Buckinghamshire, with around 25 disabled young people (18-25) as volunteers in 2022-23. We are one of the few charities to have had a Trustee aged under 21. 12% of our staff are young adults under 25. Of BuDS' 16 projects, 12 have young people as a significant focus, and 6 of those projects offer unique benefits for local young people not offered by any other organisation. Around 70% of BUDS' work benefits young people.

Independent & Party Politically Neutral

22. BuDS is an independent charity which can speak up for the interests of disabled people without fear or favour, untrammelled by ties arising from contracts, funding or unequal partnerships. Our strategy specifically requires all funding to be examined to ensure that it does not place unacceptable constraints on our independence and freedom to act. Often, BuDS acts as the spokesperson for other organisations that cannot speak out without fear of jeopardising contracts or financial relationships on which their charity depends.
23. As required by charity law, BuDS is scrupulously party-politically neutral. In accordance with Charity Commission guidance, whilst BuDS reserves the right to be critical of public bodies or the Government, we take great care never to express any party-political views or to create in the mind of a reasonable onlooker the idea that the charity is biased in favour of any particular political party.

Charity Objects

24. The objects of BuDS, as set out in the Constitution, are: "To relieve the needs of disabled people, their families, and carers, principally within the County of Buckinghamshire excluding Milton Keynes, by any charitable means and in particular, but not exclusively by (1) providing education services, and (2) providing advisory and support services".
25. The Trustees review the charity objects annually, having regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance, and remain of the view that the objects of the charity continue to meet the public benefit requirement set out in the Charities Acts 2005 and 2011.
26. The 2023 AGM will be asked to approve significant changes to the objects of the charity which, if approved by the Charity Commission, will take effect in 2023-24. These changes are explained below.

Public Benefit of the Charity

27. In accordance with the Charities Acts, the BuDS' trustees can confirm that they are aware of the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance, have had regard to it when exercising any relevant powers or duties, and have complied with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 by including this statement in this annual report. The Trustees do not feel they have departed from the guidance to any extent.
28. The BuDS Trustees, having had regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance, can confirm that they have operated BuDS in a way that carries out its charitable purposes for the public benefit. Further details can be found in the following sections of this annual report.

BuDS Strategy & Strategic Planning

29. BuDS has a clear strategic planning process as follows:
- A formal written Strategy and Strategic Plan document is produced annually by the charity's executive trustees and agreed by the Full Board including non-executive Trustees.
 - The Strategy and Plan include formal reporting mechanisms by which Trustees can monitor progress and ensure the charity remains true to its core values.
 - Progress towards achieving the Strategy and Plan is reviewed formally biannually by a full Trustee meeting, which includes non-executive Trustees. The same meeting also reviews formally whether the charity has remained true to its values.
 - Amendments to the Strategy and Plan are made and agreed by the full Trustee Board as necessary, alongside any actions needed to address departures from core values.
30. The Full Trustee Board met on 23 April 2022 to agree a revised strategy for the period 2022-2024. This was reviewed without change at Trustee meetings in 2023. A significantly revised Strategy for 2024-2026 was subsequently agreed on 6 January 2024. The Strategy for 2022-24 and the current strategy for 2024-26 can be found on our website at <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>. Further information on our strategic goals for 2022-23 can be found below.

Charity Structure, Governance and Management

31. BuDS is an unincorporated association in the form of a membership charity. Members elect the officers and Trustees, and key decisions are taken by a General Meeting. The governing document is a written constitution. The current constitution can be seen at <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>.
32. The 2023 AGM will be asked to approve significant changes to the charity constitution which, if approved by the Charity Commission, will take effect in 2023-24. These changes are explained below.

Constitution

33. The BuDS constitution was adopted on 11 March 2003 and amended by the Annual General Meeting in 2010, 2012 and 2021.
34. The Annual General Meeting in 2012 agreed that the Trustee Board could take steps to change the legal form of the charity to a charitable company and made constitutional amendments to that effect. Trustees agreed in April 2022 to start this process and significant preliminary steps forward have been taken, including drafting the new Articles of Association. The move to a charitable company is expected to be complete within 2 years, subject to Companies House and Charity Commission approvals.

Membership

35. Constitutionally, membership of BuDS is open to all disabled people living in Buckinghamshire or who have a direct interest in Buckinghamshire (e.g. by working in the county). A disabled person for the purposes of membership means being disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010 or otherwise having direct personal experience of disability. Until 20 November 2021, carers of disabled people were also entitled to become members of BuDS although in practice none did so.

36. In practice, BuDS deems all circa 40,000 disabled people in Buckinghamshire to be de facto members of the charity and seeks through its normal activities to remain in close contact with their views and opinions. The charity does not maintain a formal membership register or have a formal membership process except in relation to Trustees (see below) and for attendees at the AGM. Attendees at the AGM are required to certify that they are eligible for membership before their voting rights are recognised.
37. The 2023 AGM will be asked to approve significant changes to the membership clauses of charity constitution which, if approved by the Charity Commission, will take effect in 2023-24. These changes are explained below.

Trustees

38. The BuDS constitution provides that there shall be a minimum of four and a maximum of 15 Trustees, co-opted or appointed by the AGM from the membership of the charity. These are the three officers of the charity (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) plus up to twelve others. The constitution requires Trustees to step down after three years in office (although they may be re-elected), but BuDS' practice is to elect or re-elect Trustees every year. No organisation has the right to nominate a Trustee.
39. During 2022-23, 13 individuals have held office as Trustees, with the average size of the Trustee Board being 10 people. A full list of all Trustees can be found at <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>.
40. During periods of 2022-23, two pairs of Trustees were related. The quorum for decision-making accordingly was increased from 3 to 5 to prevent any conflict of interest and a conflict-of-interest policy was introduced to increase transparency. This policy can be found on the BuDS website at: <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>.
41. As a user-led activist charity, the role of BuDS Trustees is different from that in many other charities. As a charity, we are by policy strongly Trustee-led. It is inherent in our status as a user-led organisation that the BuDS Trustee Board is the clear leadership and direction setting body for the charity. Accordingly, we expect and require all Trustees to have a strong commitment to our values and objectives, and for Trustees to play an active role in the life of the charity.
42. The BuDS Trustee Board is clearly structured. Trustees have two main roles:
 - **Officers & Executive Trustees** – these play an active day-to-day leadership role in the charity as decision-makers and through contributing their skills and experience. During 2022-23, six individuals held office as officers or executive Trustees (five disabled).
 - **Non-Executive Trustees** – these Trustees are chosen for their wider experience and skills, including lived experience as a disabled person. They do not play a day-to-day role in the charity but contribute their wisdom at Full Board meetings at which strategy and progress are reviewed, and as needed when key decisions are being taken. During 2022-23, seven individuals held office as non-executive Trustees (four disabled).
43. Reflecting their active role, Executive and Lead Trustees met online at least monthly during 2022-2023. Trustees met formally eight times in 2022-2023. There was one formal Full Board

meetings with the attendance of non-executive Trustees. There was also a busy virtual Trustee team for discussions between meetings.

44. Trustees are identified by open advertisement, by canvassing existing volunteers, or direct approaches by the Trustee Board. In 2022-2023, nine potential new Trustees were identified of which four were appointed. The selection procedure is as follows:
 - i. Membership eligibility is confirmed
 - ii. Safeguarding, reference and an enhanced DBS check are completed
 - iii. Individuals are invited to attend three Trustee meetings and to become involved in BuDS work and projects over that period
 - iv. The Board then decides whether to second the individual to the Trustee Board until the next AGM
 - v. At the next AGM, the individual is invited to say whether they wish to have their name put forward for election
45. Two Trustees resigned, in January 2023.
46. In January 2023, a Succession Plan was agreed to prepare for the planned stepping-down of the BuDS' longstanding Chair, Andrew Clark. The plan envisaged the recruitment of a new Chair and two Vice-Chairs, to ensure good continuity and to ensure that key skills and experience were not lost. These posts were advertised from January 2023 but, as of March 2023, no applications had been received. [Applications received after March 2023 will be covered in the 2023/24 Annual Report]

Organisation & Management of the Charity

47. BuDS is organised as a working community of volunteers, supported by staff, who collaborate together on projects. Since 2020, BuDS has been structured according to Agile project management principles, to maximise output, flexibility and responsiveness whilst enabling best practice project, cost and risk management. A structure chart, representing the position in December 2023, can be found at <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>.
48. The basic building unit of the charity is the project team. This is a group of Trustees and/or volunteers working together around a common theme, goal or idea. The project team is structured and will have members in different defined roles including that of project coordinator. Paid staff may be deployed to support the team, but BuDS does not have enough staff to support all teams.
49. Projects are grouped together into one of 4 departments: Disability Services, Fair4All, Reach4Work or Housekeeping. These departments are explained further below.
50. During 2022-2023, all team members worked from home using Microsoft Teams as a virtual office, including video meetings, messaging, task boards, wikis, forms, etc. Each project has objectives agreed by Trustees and progress is monitored at Trustee meetings through the Project Manager or executive Trustee for that project. The typical working process is that of the 'sprint' – a sustained team effort to achieve a piece of work or outcome, followed by a reflective pause to evaluate success and plan next steps.

51. During 2022-23, BuDS had 19 active project teams (including 3 sub-projects), and 10 teams dealing with 'housekeeping' or corporate issues such as communications, finances, fundraising, HR, etc.
52. Janneke Elford remained the BuDS Projects Manager throughout 2022-23, responsible for the 19 active project teams in the Disability Services, Fair4All, and Reach4Work departments. Housekeeping teams remained under direct Trustee management throughout 2022-23. The ambition remains to appoint paid managers for each group of projects or department as those projects expand.

Staffing

53. BuDS is an overwhelmingly voluntary charity, and the role of our paid staff is primarily to support volunteers to achieve their project goals, and to preserve continuity in projects. All staff are on short-notice contracts reflecting the funding currently available to BuDS.
54. During 2022-23, BuDS had an average of eight staff in post (three FTE). Although raw staff numbers compared to 2021-22 fell by only one, the full-time equivalent fell from six to just over three, a reduction of 50%. This change reflected the ending of Covid-19 contingency funding and the delay until it was replaced by other funding sources.
55. BuDS aims to be an inclusive employer (see <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/> for full staff diversity statistics) and we are proud that 75% of individuals employed during 2022-23 identified as disabled people. Reflecting our ethos and insight into the barriers preventing disabled people from working, we offer all staff flexible working hours and the opportunity to work from home. We also offer 'disability leave' and shape working patterns and routines around staff needs as disabled people. This policy has been highly successful in motivating and retaining staff, not just those who are disabled.

Safeguarding & Welfare

56. Safeguarding is exceptionally important to BuDS. All Trustees, staff and volunteers, other than short-term temporary roles, are fully safeguarded including the taking up of references and an enhanced DBS check. There is mandatory safeguarding training, delivered inhouse, for all staff and volunteers. As an online organisation, our IT system has been configured to enhance safeguarding. We are linked to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and able to make direct referrals to them if needed.
57. The welfare and safety of the BuDS community is also important. Many of our volunteers and staff are potentially vulnerable and our 'Help for Helpers' welfare team is available to anyone needing a chat or word of advice. During 2022-23, a significant number of welfare concerns relating to volunteers were resolved.
58. Safeguarding and Welfare is managed by a safeguarding sub-committee of the Trustee Board which throughout most of 2022-23 included three professionally trained (Level 3) safeguarding officers.

Diversity & Inclusion

59. The Trustees are committed to intersectional diversity across the charity. We aim to be an inclusive community where everyone can find a place and fulfil their wishes without

discrimination, and we are proud to have many LGBTQ+ people among our number. In 2022-23, we appointed a Trustee with lead responsibility for intersectional diversity across the charity.

60. The BuDS Trustee Board is significantly more intersectionally diverse than most in Buckinghamshire, but we recognise that more needs to be done to maintain and develop the Board's diversity. Full board diversity statistics can be found at <https://buds.org.uk/buds-annual-report-2022-23/>

BuDS Work in 2022-23

Overview

61. 2022-23 saw a welcome return to growth after the financial shock of 2021-22, with the abrupt ending of Covid-related contingency funding on which we had previously depended. All our projects saw growth and development, funding increased, and we maintained our large number of loyal volunteers who make BuDS such a unique and rewarding community. Exciting times lie ahead, with several projects in a development phase.

BuDS Structure

62. BuDS has four departments: Disability Services, Fair4All, Reach4Work, and Housekeeping. Each department contained a number of related projects which were led by staff or volunteers.

Disability Services

63. The Disability Services group of projects were those directly helping and empowering disabled individuals in Buckinghamshire and beyond.

Enquiries Service

64. The BuDS Enquiries Service answered questions and supported disabled adults and young people (plus carers and parents) on any disability-related issue or topic, filling gaps that other services could not provide. Work behind the scenes in 2021-22 to put in place the systems and procedures needed to run a professional enquiries service has enabled the Enquiries Service to greatly expand in 2022-23. With an influx of new volunteers, many with a professional background, the Enquiries project in 2022-23 was able to support an average of 15 people every week, many on a long-term basis.
65. The Enquiries Service does not duplicate services available elsewhere, such as CAB. Rather, it acts as a safety net, picking up clients, questions and issues which other agencies cannot, or do not have resources, to address. Importantly, it can offer long-term support with complex issues and work with disabled people who find it hard to access other services. Typical queries include housing, utilities, benefits (PIP, ESA, DLA and Universal Credit), accessibility, disability law, equality, work and employment, education and schools, and Covid-19.
66. An exciting development in 2022-23 was the opportunity, thanks to funding received, to offer professional training, leading to qualifications for our Enquiry volunteers, to assist them into work. Several volunteers benefited from this opportunity, and we hope to continue it into 2023-24.
67. The Enquiries Service was generously funded in 2022-23 by small grants from B P Collins LLP (via Heart of Bucks), the Matrix Causes Fund and The Rothschild Foundation.

BuDDies

68. BuDDies is a fully safeguarded, professionally managed, small-scale specialist befriending service for disabled people. It is one of only a few voluntary schemes supporting people with complex mental health conditions and able to offer long-term support to people who need it. Set up in 2020 as an emergency response to Covid-19 lockdowns, BuDDies in 2022-23 continued to be a lifeline for lonely or isolated disabled people. BuDS BuDDys (as the befrienders are called) are highly skilled and trained volunteers and the nature of the people supported by BuDDies means that significant welfare, safeguarding and peer-support is needed to keep the service sustainable and safe.
69. Demand for BuDDies is significantly greater than the capacity of the service, with frequent referrals from NHS mental health services and community prescribers, and there is a long waiting list. Expansion is not possible without additional funding, which is being sought. During 2022-23, around 550 hours of support were provided to ten disabled people by seven volunteer 'BuDDy' befrienders, one of whom was inducted during the year.
70. BuDDies was generously part-funded in 2022-23 by small grants from Virgin Money/O2, The Rectory Foundation (via Heart of Bucks) and The Rothschild Foundation.

Covid-19 Information, Advice, and Guidance

71. The BuDS Covid-19 project continued in 2022-23 to support disabled and clinically-vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire and nationally with information, advice and guidance about Covid-19 and Long Covid. Political and Government attitudes to the Covid pandemic significantly changed in 2022-23, with the impact of the virus minimised and the population encouraged to ignore the risks and live as they had prior to the virus' emergence in 2020. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) stopped publishing and collecting vital data showing the continuing impact of the virus on health and society. The NHS ceased to use infection control measures, such as mask-wearing in patient-facing areas, which had previously been mandatory.
72. Ignoring Covid was not an option for millions of disabled and clinically vulnerable people, and hundreds of thousands of people were incapacitated by the longer-term impact of Covid disease. Supporting these people with reliable information and guidance required a significant effort from this volunteer-led project. Over the year, we maintained our national reputation as a highly respected and reliable source of Covid-19 information used by tens of thousands of people, presenting information in written, video, infographic and easy read formats.
73. The Covid-19 project continued to be led by Trustees according to policies agreed by the entire Trustee Board. While BuDS information and updates regularly were critical of the Government or of individual Government officials or office-holders, great care was taken to never express any party-political views and for BuDS to remain scrupulously party-politically neutral.
74. The following statistics for the Covid-19 project illustrate the huge scale of the information and support provided:
 - i. Published 46 articles on 7 separate topics. When posted on social media, each reached a minimum of a thousand people on average. Topics covered included Covid community risk levels, vaccines, testing, new variants, Government policy, and how to keep yourself safer.
 - ii. 34 Covid weekly risk assessments published – on average, 3000 read each assessment.
 - iii. Received over 300,000 engagements on the 46 main articles across all social media sites.

- iv. Information was shared on Facebook (including 16 local community and 8 disability Facebook groups), and on Twitter/X, Mastodon, Bluesky, Instagram, and Threads.
- 75. BuDS' own Covid-19 Facebook support group has just over 450 members, a small decrease from 470 in 2021-22.
- 76. In 2022-23, the Covid-19 IAG project was funded internally and represented a significant net use of scarce general unrestricted funds. Grant or other funding will be needed to significantly expand the project.

Fair4All

- 77. Fair4All is a BuDS 'brand' for our projects aiming to build an inclusive world which is free of the barriers which disable people: a Fair4All world in which disability is effectively abolished. All of these projects saw a welcome development and expansion in 2022-23.

Fair4All Attitudes and Hate Crime

- 78. Building on our long-standing work opposing disability hate and changing attitudes to disability, BuDS was delighted in 2022-23 to be able to set up a new formal Disability Hate 'Support & Report Service' as a sub-project. The Support & Report Service, developed with Thames Valley Police and the Bucks Safety Partnership, was launched on 20 July 2022 and provides victims of disability hate with friendly, knowledgeable support to report crimes and incidents, and to get long-term compassionate and understanding emotional support. A team of trained volunteers is available to support victims and there is police liaison in place to help victims navigate the criminal justice system. The BuDS Disability Hate Support & Report Service is the referral point for all local disability hate incidents reported through the National Hate Crime Helpline.
- 79. Alongside this practical help, the Fair4All Attitudes & Hate Crime project has an education team of volunteers who work to strike at the roots of hate crime by opposing the ignorance and prejudice that leads people to attack and abuse disabled people. With politicians shamefully fanning the fires of hatred by calling disabled people lazy, work-shy and a burden on taxpayers, this is increasingly vital work.
- 80. The Attitudes & Hate Crime project was generously part-funded in 2022-23 by a small grant from the Heart of Bucks General Fund.

Fair4All Card Scheme

- 81. The Fair4All Card is an innovative photocard which provides disabled people with definitive proof of their legal status as a disabled person and lists the 'reasonable adjustments' the holder is entitled to expect from shops, services and individuals in the community.
- 82. Established in the lockdowns of 2020-21, 2022-23 was a year of continuing live trials and pilot projects for the Fair4All Card scheme to establish proof of concept and scalability. This work culminated in the award in June 2023 of a substantial four-year development grant from The National Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund. The stage is now set for a major development and expansion of the Fair4All Card scheme across England in 2023-24.

Fair4All Education

- 83. Established in 2021-22 in direct response to appeals from disabled children, young people and their families, the Fair4All Education project promotes the interests of disabled children and

young people in the education system. This project significantly grew in 2022-23.

84. An expert working community, including SEND professionals, parents and disabled young people, was assembled, and this identified and began work on a range of issues. A checklist and questionnaire for SEND parents to use when viewing schools was published in October 2022. Plans were also laid for an ambitious SEND school database containing the information most often sought by SEND pupils and parents, to make comparisons easier and save schools' time.
85. In August 2022, a three-year grant of £86,000 was secured to fund a major research project into educational and work transitions for disabled children and young people in Bucks. This SEND Transitions Service, with one FTE member of staff, is made up of workstreams from a number of BuDS projects, principally Fair4All Education and Reach4Work. It has three parts:
 - i. Research & Reporting: collecting information about Buckinghamshire services (both public and voluntary) supporting disabled children & young people through educational transitions to assess their adequacy, scope and fitness for purpose. This includes publishing analysis and commentary, scheduled for early 2024.
 - ii. Polling & Feedback: collecting the authentic views of disabled children and young people, and their parents and carers, about educational transitions and services to support them through transitions. Using this feedback to inform plans and publishing it in anonymised form for use by other interested parties. This work is ongoing, with multiple surveys and polling active.
 - iii. Driving Improvement: identifying areas for development and improvement in relation to SEND transitions including new services.
86. The SEND Transitions Service is very generously funded by The Rothschild Foundation.

Fair4All Events

87. BuDS is committed to making large public events more accessible and inclusive for all disabled people, and has Buckinghamshire's only stock of accessible and inclusive children's games and activities.
88. Our highly successful Fair4All Events project was successfully revived in 2022, with two major public events (Whizzfizzfest in Aylesbury and the Towersey Festival in Buckingham) supported. Alongside assisting the event organisers to make their events more inclusive and accessible, around 40 BuDS volunteers gave direct support to disabled attendees, including staffing our innovative breakout and relaxed space for guests who need to escape from the noise and bustle of the event. We also explored and recorded ways for people to attend events in a much more Covid-safe way. This experience will be carried forward to 2023 events.
89. In 2022-23, Fair4All Events was generously part-funded by small grants from The Clare Foundation, Leeds Building Society and Tesco plc.

Fair4All Public Spaces

90. BuDS has a long history of successfully supporting councils, developers and others to make public spaces more accessible and inclusive for disabled people. Alongside continuing involvement in major public realm projects like Aylesbury Garden Town, this project in 2022-23 significantly developed with the launch of two sub-projects, Fair4All Visitor and Fair4All Access &

Inclusion Surveys.

91. Fair4All Visitor was a new project in 2022-23 in collaboration with and funded by Buckinghamshire Business First. Led by leading national accessibility expert, Mik Scarlet, the project offered free-to-user advice, guidance, and specialist input to over 40 local visitor attractions and destinations, ranging from small B&Bs to major tourist attractions like Waddesdon Manor. This proved highly successful, with a number of venues also joining the Fair4All Card scheme. As part of the work, BuDDy Tours (an informal quality control check by a mixed group of disabled people and access specialists) were made to three destinations.
92. Fair4All Access & Inclusion Surveys were spun out from the Fair4All Visitor project in 2022-23. These are a comprehensive, holistic, assessment of how accessible and inclusive a business, site or service is for all disabled people. These assessments are offered on a chargeable basis to businesses and free-of-charge to organisations which cannot afford a fee. In 2022-23, four surveys were carried out for three Chiltern Society open green spaces and one for Amersham Museum.

Fair4All Services

93. BuDS has always worked to improve council, NHS and private-sector services for disabled people in Buckinghamshire. Fair4All Services is the only independent disabled-led monitoring and campaigning group in Buckinghamshire. However, recruiting volunteers and accessing funding for this vital work proved difficult in 2022-23 and only limited project work was possible.
94. A sub-project focusing on the needs of Learning Disabled and Neurodivergent People, the LDND project, was launched in 2022-23 and has successfully started to build a working community of disabled people and professionals.
95. In 2022-23, Fair4All Services was funded internally and represented a significant net use of scarce general unrestricted funds. Grant or other funding will be needed to significantly expand the project.

Reach4Work

BucksWorkability

96. The BucksWorkability Partnership brings together local disability employment schemes in the public, voluntary and private sectors. In 2022-23, the partnership grew from 30 to 39 members and was represented at several trade shows and career fairs. The project website continued to develop and expand, providing much useful information for disabled jobseekers. However, despite planning and discussion, it was not possible to secure enough resources to launch any collaborative projects or joint working to increase the employment opportunities for local disabled people.

Reach4Work

97. Since 2010, BuDS has helped its volunteers towards work. Our Reach4Work project, created in 2018, codified and developed that help, creating a professional wrap-around service for our disabled volunteers who want to move into or closer to work.
98. The key elements of Reach4Work are:
 - BuDS is a supportive, inclusive and caring community which provides exceptional emotional and peer support to disabled jobseekers. When a disabled jobseeker joins BuDS, they are

not merely a client or service-user but a member of the charity, a full participant in our wider working community.

- The volunteer role which job seekers have within a BuDS project is bespoke and structured to provide the experience, skills and networking which the individual jobseeker needs – it is a ‘real unpaid job’ created for the benefit of both the charity and the jobseeker, with highly supportive staff and volunteer support.
- Reach4Work provides disabled jobseekers with professional employment support elements such as training, mentoring, interview and CV skills, job placements, etc
- Jobseekers are brought into contact with local employers who are already being helped to create inclusive workplaces and opportunities for disabled workers.

99. Unsurprisingly, BuDS is exceptionally successful at moving disabled jobseeker volunteers into or closer to work. Typically, 95% of participants report positive progress towards work and around a third of our disabled job seeker volunteers move into work or vocational training within a year of starting with BuDS.
100. With the ending of pandemic contingency support in early 2022, funding for the Reach4Work project came to an end in 2022-23 and Reach4Work paid staff support reduced accordingly, although good levels of support continued to be provided by other BuDS staff and volunteers. 23 disabled jobseekers were supported by Reach4Work in 2022-23, down from 35 in 2021-22.
101. The Reach4Work project was generously part-funded in 2022-23 by small grants from The Shanly Foundation and The Rothschild Foundation.

Reach4Work Digital

102. This project is unique to BuDS and helps disabled young people gain key skills and experience to get jobs in the digital sector. The team employs Agile methodology, which is widely used in the digital sector. The project has built close links with local technology and IT employers. It is run entirely by disabled young people, with some staff support, and has delivered high quality products to industry standards, including phone apps, online databases, and websites, including creating the BucksWorkability website, and working on a development version of the Reach4Work website.
103. While Reach4Work Digital continued successfully in 2022-23, it was not possible to secure sufficient funding, as we had hoped, to launch a second Digital Team. The Reach4Work Digital project was generously part-funded in 2022-23 by small grants from The Shanly Foundation and The Rothschild Foundation.

Reach4Work Work Experience

104. This project provides disabled students with high quality work experience. In 2022-23, funding changes meant it was not possible to run so large a project as in 2021-22. However, in collaboration with leading law firm B P Collins LLP, four law undergraduate law students produced high quality work which was published on our website. All participating students gave great feedback.

Comms, Website and Creative

105. In 2022-23, BuDS maintained four websites and eleven social media channels to communicate with the public, its supporters and disabled people across Buckinghamshire and the UK. These were all maintained and developed by disabled staff and volunteer members of the very busy Communications, Websites and Creative teams.
106. BuDS has a long-standing policy of protecting the identity of its volunteers and staff. This policy is in place for a number of reasons, sadly including DWP surveillance and the unacceptable number of abusive and threatening messages received. During 2022-23, anti-vaccine and Covid minimisation groups and individuals were responsible for most abusive and threatening messages. Where possible, follow-up action was taken, but it is rarely possible to identify the individuals concerned.
107. Social media activity is posted on behalf of the charity by several people on an unattributable basis. The charity Chair, Andrew Clark, remained the charity's only authorised attributable media spokesperson during 2022-23.

Plans for 2023-24

108. BuDS' plans for 2023-24 are set out in its strategy originally agreed in April 2023 and reiterated throughout the year, as follows:

Governance And Housekeeping Functions:

- a. **Restore the effectiveness of the Trustee Board** by recruiting a replacement Chair and Treasurer; two Vice-Chairs; and three Executive Trustees with appropriate lead responsibilities.
- b. **Make significant progress towards changing BuDS' legal form** from an unincorporated membership association to a charitable company limited by guarantee.
- c. **Complete the change from Excel to SAGE** for all accounts and bookkeeping.
- d. Continue to **build and develop our grants & fundraising team**, especially with volunteers, to enable us to take advantage of all the grants and voluntary funds available to us.

Projects

- a. **Develop the role of Project Manager** toward that of a Chief Operations Manager on an appropriate salary. Secure funding to allow the appointment of **two part-time project managers** to improve coordination and delivery of projects and services.
- b. **Maintain all current projects and services, and secure funding** for them so that each has the staff support needed to make them sustainable. No additional projects or sub-projects will be started without specific Trustee approval.
- c. **Continue to recruit volunteers for services and projects** so that each project is adequately staffed to deliver its goals and objectives.

Achievements and Performance

Achievements

109. The following table summarises the difference that each of our projects made to the lives of its beneficiaries:

Project (and if unique in Bucks)	Difference to Beneficiaries
Enquiries (unique)	Answered questions and offered advocacy support to disabled people which they could not obtain elsewhere
BuDDies	Befriended and supported lonely and isolated disabled and clinically vulnerable people
Covid-19 (unique)	Information, advice, guidance and analysis about Covid-19 for disabled and clinically vulnerable people, including a weekly risk assessment
Fair4All Card (unique)	Helped disabled people get the help and support that they are legally entitled to in shops and public places
Fair4All Services	Improved local council and NHS services for disabled people through advocacy and campaigning
Fair4All Attitudes & Hate Crime (unique)	Represented the interests of disabled people to Thames Valley Police and the Crown Prosecution Service and campaigned to oppose disability hate and ignorance
Hate Crime Support & Report Service	Supports victims of disability hate crime and helps them report crimes and incidents to the police
Fair4All Education	Supported disabled children and young people by addressing deficiencies and problems in SEND education
SEND Transitions Service (unique)	Researched and analysed SEND and work transitions for disabled children and young people and captured the authentic voice of disabled children and young people.
Fair4All Events (unique)	Helped make large public events more accessible and inclusive for all disabled and clinically vulnerable people and educated event organisers
Fair4All Public Spaces	Worked with councils and developers to make public spaces, including urban regeneration schemes like Aylesbury Garden Town, more inclusive and accessible for disabled people
Fair4All Visitor (unique)	Supported visitor attractions and destinations to be more inclusive and accessible for disabled people
Fair4All Access & Inclusion Surveys	Offered a unique holistic access and inclusion survey to businesses and organisations to help them be more accessible and inclusive for disabled people
Reach4Work – General	Supported disabled BuDS volunteers who are jobseekers towards or into work
Reach4Work – Digital (unique)	Trains and develops disabled young people for careers in the digital industry
Reach4Work – Work Experience	Offers disabled children and young people meaningful and inspiring work experience opportunities
BucksWorkability	Works with employers to foster more inclusive workplaces
Housekeeping Projects	Allowed disabled people to volunteer in vocational roles which helped move them towards work

Cost Effectiveness

110. BuDS aims to be a highly cost-effective and efficient charity. Gifts in kind and the value of voluntary and pro bono support in 2022-23 amounted to circa £551,000, or £5.56 for every pound raised by BuDS. The principal ways in which this support was obtained are as follows:
- i. 117 volunteers worked a total of 40,820 hours, equivalent to 19 full time staff, representing a financial contribution in kind of around £511,000.
 - ii. IT and software donations, including 124 Microsoft Office 365 licences, representing a financial contribution in kind of £14,000.
 - iii. Inhouse design and media production by volunteers saved an estimated £22,000
 - iv. Pro bono professional legal and accountancy support saved an estimated £4,000
111. BuDS would like to thank all the businesses which have supported us, including Microsoft UK Ltd, CloudyIT Ltd, B P Collins LLP, and Seymour Taylor Limited.

Fundraising Activities

112. BuDS expenditure on fundraising activities in 2022-23, principally the salary of a part-time grants fundraiser, was £11,060.43, and income generated as a result of this activity was £96,105. This represents a return of £8.69 on every pound invested.

Financial Review for FY 2022/23

113. Financial year 2022/2023 saw a 20% increase in BuDS' income compared to 2021-22, mostly because of successful grant fundraising, but also including a small amount of earned income.

Reserves Policy

114. The formal Reserves Policy for financial year 2022-23 remained unchanged from 2020-21, i.e. to hold a balance in reserve adequate to cover all legal or employment liabilities and three month's unavoidable (fixed) running costs. This total was calculated at £1800 and held largely in the charity's legacy Cooperative Bank account. This reserves policy will be reviewed annually.

Charity as a Going Concern

115. Like most charities without a significant standing endowment, BuDS relies on attracting a constant flow of grant and fundraising income to sustain its activities. This exposes the charity to a running risk of future financial deficits which, if unmitigated, could cause the charity to become insolvent or fail as a going concern. Trustees have taken steps to mitigate this risk as follows:
- i. The charity treasurer is a qualified accountant and is charged specifically with warning the Board about any financial risk which may occur.
 - ii. A qualified grants fundraiser is employed to generate a constant flow of grant applications, and a fundraising team is being developed to boost voluntary giving
 - iii. A current budget and cash flow is examined at every monthly Trustee meeting and a forward plan is formulated at each Full Trustee meeting. This transparent planning enables all members of the Board to evaluate future risks and to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity
 - iv. A strategic plan is in place which would allow the charity to contract to a size which would be sustainable long-term *without* major grant funding. All contracts, including employment contracts, can be terminated with short notice if funding was to fall significantly.
 - v. Employment and service contracts are specifically examined so as to minimise longer-term financial liabilities. The charity had no significant longer-term financial liabilities such as pensions or property leases in 2022-23. There is a small redundancy liability for

one employee

116. As a consequence of the mitigations mentioned above, as of April 2022, Trustees had no concerns about the charity's ability to remain financially viable and a going concern for the foreseeable future.

Principal sources of funds

117. In 2021/22, BuDS' principal sources of funding in order of size were as below. This information is from BuDS' management accounts and is not a complete account of all income received. A number of smaller grants (below £3000) were also received.

Source	Type	Amount
The Rothschild Foundation	Restricted grant for Education (3 year)	£28,667
Buckinghamshire Business First	Restricted grant for Visitor	£15,000
Heart of Bucks General Fund	Restricted grant for Hate Crime	£13,870
Shanly Foundation	Restricted grant for Reach4Work	£5000
Rectory Foundation	Restricted grant for BuDDies	£5000
B P Collins LLP	Restricted grant for Enquiries	£3500
The Clare Foundation	Restricted grant for Events (3 year)	£3300
Matrix Causes Fund	Restricted grant for Enquiries (3 year)	£3000

Investment Policy

118. BuDS has no investment funds and therefore no investment policy. One will be adopted if needed in the future.

Principal risks facing the charity

119. The principal risks facing the charity, and the mitigations in place for them, are as follows:

Risk Type	Mitigation	Assessment
Structural Risks	BuDS has an appropriate legal form, registered with the Charity Commission and is in good governance, maintaining membership of NCVO and the Fundraising Regulator. Trustee Liability insurance is in place. Approval is in place for the charity to take the form of a charitable limited company and Trustees are moving ahead with this change in 2023-24.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Trustee-related Risks	The size and composition of the Trustee Board is actively managed to ensure a broad range of appropriate skills, and Trustee training is delivered. Good governance is maintained in the forms of transparent evidence-based decision-making at frequent well-attended meetings.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Conflicts of Interest	The size and composition of the Trustee Board is actively managed to avoid conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are transparently managed by Trustees without a conflict, eg relating to the employment of family members of Trustees.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Safeguarding Risks	Safeguarding policies and practices are in place, and safeguarding is actively managed across the charity by a dedicated Trustee sub-committee which includes trained safeguarding personnel. Safeguarding incidents are managed appropriately and links to the MASH hub used	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated

	as necessary.	
Contractual Risks	The Senior Management Team actively manages all current contracts, and all significant contracts are subject to legal advice and Trustee approval. Professional liability insurance cover is in place for all activities.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Staff-related Risks	A qualified HR professional is in post and appropriate staffing policies are in place. Appropriate employment-related insurance is in place and regularly reviewed. The Senior Management Team manages staffing issues. Staffing decisions which might give rise to liability (e.g. disciplinary actions) are managed by HR professional with external lawyers input as needed.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Financial Risks	See above	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Reputational Risks	The Senior Management Team and Trustee Board actively manages all reputational risks, and appropriate editorial processes and policies are in place including designated spokespeople and restrictions on social media use. Defamation and litigation liability insurance cover is in place for all activities.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Compliance Risks	The charity has few activities which are subject to formal accreditation or compliance regimes, but Senior Management Team actively manages compliance issues, and all significant contracts are subject to legal advice and Trustee approval. Professional liability insurance cover is in place for all activities. Where a new activity raises a compliance risk, this is assessed and mitigated before commencement	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated
Legal Risks	The Senior Management Team and Trustee Board actively manages all legal risks, and appropriate processes and policies are in place to mitigate a legal liability including formal approval processes and staff training. Public and professional insurance cover is in place for all activities. The charity has a retained legal advisor, a leading local practice.	All significant risks are satisfactorily mitigated

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name: Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS)

Other name the charity uses: BuDS

Registered charity number: 1102511

Charity's principal address: Buckinghamshire Disability Service, c/o B P Collins LLP, Collins House, 20 Station Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 8EL

Advisors



Type of advisor	Name	Address
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Accountant	Tearle & Carver	Chandos House, School Lane, Buckingham, MK18 1HD
Solicitor	B P Collins	B P Collins LLP, Collins House, 20 Station Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 8EL

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Andrew Clark	Roberta Silva
Position (e.g. Secretary, Chair, etc)	Chair of Trustees	Trustee
Date	28/01/2024	28/01/2024



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BUDS)		No (if any) (10251)		CC16a
Receipts and payments accounts				
For the period from	1.04.2022	To	31.03.2023	

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants Unrestricted		-	-	-	16,500
Grants Restricted			-	-	55,105
Reach4Work -Restricted		8,000	-	8,000	7,583
Fair4All Projects - Restricted	-	56,508	-	56,508	-
Disability Services - Restricted	-	3,333	-	3,333	-
Donations - Unrestricted	28,264		-	28,264	-
Enquires + Earned Income	3,000		-	3,000	400
Other			-	-	3,100
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	31,264	67,841	-	99,105	82,688
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	31,264	67,841	-	99,105	82,688
A3 Payments					
Reach4Work		9,172		9,172	40,915
Fair4All Projects		35,690		35,690	27,038
Disability Services		17,622		17,622	33,781
Governance	33,708	-		33,708	29,290
Digital & Internet	666		-	666	1,531
			-	-	
		-	-	-	
	-		-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
			-	-	
Sub total	34,375	62,484	-	96,858	132,555
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	34,375	62,484	-	96,858	132,555
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 3,111	5,358	-	2,247	- 49,867
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,922	25,406	-	29,328	79,195
Cash funds this year end	811	30,764	-	31,575	29,328

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted fund to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Accounts	811	30764	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	811	30,764	-