

STEPPING STONES COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

England & Wales · Charity number 1145346

Details

Other names SSCO

Status Registered

Legal form Other

Registered 2012-01-10

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address 75-77 Raymond Street
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Activities

Objects: FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC IN STOKE-ON-TRENT, IN PARTICULAR, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY MEMBERS OF THE BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, BY:A) THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING;B) TO ADVANCE IN LIFE AND HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BY THE PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL AND LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES PROVIDED IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIAL WELFARE, DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THEIR CONDITIONS OF LIFE AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS, CAPACITIES AND CAPABILITIES TO ENABLE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY AS MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS.

Activities: Stepping Stones provides educational support for children, young people and women in GCSE, SATs and language. We have also established a nursery that provides 10.5 additional free placement.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Economic/community Development/employment, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** LOCAL
- Stoke-on-trent City

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£780,365	£748,282	£43,697	0
2024-03-31	£398,502	£387,170	-	-
2023-03-31	£236,326	£197,824	-	-
2022-03-31	£227,891	£185,371	-	-
2021-03-31	£198,501	£180,073	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
F RAHMAN	Chair	2011-10-20
Omnia Salah		2025-02-01
Zynab Moheuddin		2025-02-01

Accounts

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2025

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Charity Number: 1145346

75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP

Introduction

The Trustees of Stepping Stones Community Organisation are pleased to present the Annual Report for the financial year ending 31 March 2025. This year has been characterised by consolidation, growth and responsive community leadership. Building on the strong foundations established in previous years, the organisation has continued to expand its reach, deepen its impact and respond swiftly to emerging community needs.

The charity's work during 2024–2025 has focused on education, early years provision, community cohesion, safeguarding vulnerable communities, advocacy and systems leadership. Particular emphasis has been placed on violence reduction, community reassurance following periods of unrest, and collaborative place-based working through city-wide partnerships.

Aims, Objectives and Public Benefit

Stepping Stones Community Organisation was established to address persistent inequalities experienced by individuals and families, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The charity's aims are rooted in advancing education, reducing social isolation, improving wellbeing and enabling communities to thrive.

The organisation's objectives during 2024–2025 focused on:

- Advancing education through early years provision, accredited learning and skills development
- Supporting children, young people and families to reduce risk, harm and exclusion
- Strengthening community cohesion and resilience
- Amplifying community voice within decision-making systems
- Working collaboratively to tackle structural inequality

In delivering these objectives, Stepping Stones has provided clear public benefit by improving access to services, increasing participation, and supporting individuals who may otherwise face multiple barriers to engagement. Trustees have had due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that the charity's activities during the year were carried out for the benefit of the public.

Strategic Overview and Growth

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones Community Organisation further consolidated its position as a trusted community anchor and system leader. The organisation’s credibility was reflected not only in inspection outcomes and delivery, but also in external recognition, civic responsibility and strategic representation.

In **March 2025**, Stepping Stones was formally **recognised by the High Sheriff of Staffordshire** for the valuable and sustained contribution it makes to communities across Stoke-on-Trent. This recognition acknowledged the organisation’s leadership, community trust and impact during periods of challenge and change.

The organisation was also formally identified as an **Emergency Hub for the City**, reflecting confidence from partners in Stepping Stones’ ability to respond rapidly, safely and effectively in emergency situations. This designation recognised existing strengths in safeguarding, coordination, communication and community reach, and reinforced the organisation’s role as a stabilising presence during crises.

Alongside this, Stepping Stones continued to strengthen its strategic influence through active participation on a range of **local and regional boards and forums**, where it represents:

- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities**
- **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector voices**

Through this work, the organisation ensured that lived experience, inclusion and equity remained central to decision-making. Trustees note that this combination of recognition, responsibility and representation reflects a high level of trust in Stepping Stones’ leadership and governance.

Key Activities and Achievements

This section summarises the charity’s principal activities undertaken between **1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**, reflecting delivery, leadership and impact across education, safeguarding, violence reduction, youth development and community cohesion.

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Development of Birmingham-Based Projects

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones undertook preparatory and developmental work to expand its reach beyond Stoke-on-Trent, with a particular focus on establishing future projects at the **Birmingham site**. This work was exploratory and strategic, aimed at ensuring that any expansion is sustainable, values-led and responsive to local need.

Activity during the year included:

- Early-stage needs analysis and community scoping
- Relationship-building with local partners and stakeholders

- Exploration of governance, safeguarding and delivery models suitable for the Birmingham context
- Identifying opportunities to replicate Stepping Stones' strengths in education, inclusion and community voice

Trustees closely monitored this work to ensure that development activity complemented, rather than detracted from, core delivery in Stoke-on-Trent. This measured approach reflects the organisation's commitment to responsible growth and quality assurance.

Youth Offer in Stoke-on-Trent

Stepping Stones continued to invest in its **youth offer in Stoke-on-Trent**, recognising young people as critical contributors to community resilience, leadership and future change. Work during 2024–2025 focused on creating safe, inclusive spaces where young people could develop confidence, voice and leadership skills.

Youth activity was closely aligned with the organisation's wider priorities around safeguarding, violence reduction and inclusion. Young people were supported to engage in dialogue around community safety, identity, belonging and civic participation.

Youth Leadership and Civic Representation

A significant highlight of the year was the election of a **young person from Stepping Stones' membership as the Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Youth Council**. This achievement reflects both the individual's leadership capability and the organisation's long-term investment in youth development and empowerment.

The young person's election represents:

- Meaningful youth voice within civic decision-making structures
- Positive representation of diverse communities at city level
- Evidence that Stepping Stones' youth work supports pathways into leadership and influence

Trustees regard this outcome as a powerful indicator of impact, demonstrating how sustained, inclusive youth engagement can translate into real civic participation and system influence.

Quality, Inspection Outcomes and Assurance

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones Community Organisation achieved a significant quality milestone when its early years provision was judged **Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted** following inspection on 16 July 2024.

The inspection resulted in **Outstanding** judgements for:

- Overall effectiveness
- Quality of education

- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

Inspectors described the provision as “*outstanding*” and highlighted that “*children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment*” and that “*staff greet them warmly and children settle very quickly.*” The report emphasised the strength of relationships, noting that “*children and staff develop close, caring relationships*” and that leaders and staff “*share the highest expectations and aspirations for all children.*”

The curriculum was praised as “*exceptionally well-designed*”, enabling all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to “*continuously acquire knowledge and skills*” and “*make rapid progress from their individual starting points.*” Inspectors observed that learning activities were “*planned at precisely the right level for children’s age and stage of development*” and that children showed “*high levels of concentration and resilience.*”

Leadership and management were identified as a key strength. Inspectors noted that leaders “*live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve*” and that staff are “*extremely well supported and valued.*” The inspection further confirmed that safeguarding arrangements are effective, supported by “*an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.*”

Parents’ views were overwhelmingly positive, with inspectors recording feedback that “*the staff go above and beyond to provide a nurturing home from home.*”

Trustees regard this Outstanding judgement as independent confirmation of the organisation’s commitment to excellence, inclusive practice and strong leadership. It provides assurance to families, commissioners and partners that Stepping Stones delivers services of the highest quality and operates with robust governance and safeguarding arrangements.

Early Years, Education and Skills

Education has remained a cornerstone of Stepping Stones’ work throughout 2024–2025. A major achievement during the year was the organisation’s early years provision being judged **Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted** following inspection in July 2024.

The inspection confirmed **Outstanding** judgements for:

- Overall effectiveness
- Quality of education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

Inspectors described the provision as “*outstanding*”, noting that “*children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment*” and that staff and children “*develop close, caring relationships*”. The curriculum was recognised as “*exceptionally well-designed*”,

enabling all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to *“make rapid progress from their individual starting points.”*

The report highlighted that activities are *“planned at precisely the right level for children’s age and stage of development”*, with children becoming *“incredibly absorbed in their learning and sustain their concentration for prolonged periods.”* Inspectors also praised children’s behaviour, stating that *“the way children conduct themselves is exemplary”* and that children demonstrate *“high levels of resilience.”*

Leadership was identified as a key strength. Inspectors noted that the dedicated manager and leadership team *“live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve”* and that staff feel *“extremely well supported and valued.”* Parents were described as *“overwhelmingly positive”*, with one commenting that *“the staff go above and beyond to provide a nurturing home from home.”*

Communication and language development was recognised as exceptional, with children *“immersed in literacy at every opportunity”* and staff consistently using *“ambitious vocabulary”*. The inspection also commended the setting’s inclusive practice, cultural awareness and strong safeguarding culture, confirming that *“arrangements for safeguarding are effective”* and that there is *“an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.”*

This Outstanding judgement represents a significant milestone for Stepping Stones Community Organisation and reflects sustained investment in quality, leadership, workforce development and inclusive practice. It further strengthens the organisation’s reputation as a provider of excellence in early years education and community-based services.

Accredited Examination Centre and Inclusive Education Pathways

Alongside its early years provision, Stepping Stones has continued to operate as an **approved examination centre**, providing access to recognised qualifications for young people who face barriers within mainstream education.

During 2024–2025, the exam centre supported young people to gain qualifications in core subjects such as English and mathematics, as well as other accredited courses aligned to individual learning pathways. This provision has been particularly important for learners who have experienced exclusion, disrupted education, school refusal, anxiety or other vulnerabilities that make traditional exam settings inaccessible.

The exam centre provided:

- A calm, smaller and supportive assessment environment
- A strong focus on emotional wellbeing and safeguarding
- Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements tailored to individual need

Partnership Working with Schools, Alternative Provision and SEND Services

Stepping Stones worked in close partnership with schools, alternative provision providers and other education institutions to support **vulnerable learners and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)** to access and complete qualifications.

This collaborative approach included:

- Coordinating exam access for learners unable to sit assessments within their home institutions
- Supporting professionals and families to navigate access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Reducing anxiety through familiar environments and trusted relationships

For many learners, the exam centre provided a critical route to achieving qualifications that may otherwise have been out of reach. Trustees recognise this work as central to reducing educational inequality, improving life chances and supporting progression into further education, training or employment.

This inclusive assessment provision complements the organisation's Outstanding early years practice and wider education offer, reinforcing Stepping Stones' commitment to inclusive education across the life course.

Violence Reduction and Community Safety – Women's Voices Collective (WVC)

Between April 2024 and March 2025, Stepping Stones significantly expanded the scope, depth and influence of the **Women's Voices Collective (WVC)**. Supported by Staffordshire Police, this work moved beyond engagement into **evidence-led consultation, systems influence and policy-shaping activity**.

Consultation and Evidence Gathering

During this period, Stepping Stones facilitated multiple structured consultations, focus groups and public engagement events with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women. These consultations were undertaken in direct response to rising social tensions, community unrest and increased incidents of hostility following national and local riots.

Women shared detailed lived experiences relating to:

- **Personal safety and visibility**, particularly for visibly Muslim women wearing hijab
- **Fear and anxiety in public spaces**, including public transport and community venues
- **Impact on children**, including fear of racism, restricted mobility and internalised discrimination
- **Decline in participation** in long-standing community activities due to safety concerns

These insights provided critical qualitative evidence of how social unrest disproportionately affected CALD women and families.

Key Themes Identified Through WVC Work

The WVC consultations identified consistent systemic barriers:

- **Digital exclusion**, including digital poverty and inaccessible online public sector platforms
- **Cultural competence gaps** within public services, leading to misinterpretation of parenting practices and family structures

- **Underrepresentation of women's voices**, with male-dominated institutions often speaking on behalf of communities
- **Erosion of trust** due to experiences of racism, lack of follow-up and fear of reporting incidents
- **Safety concerns**, particularly around harassment, transport and public visibility

Women reported modifying daily behaviour for safety, limiting independence and community participation.

Influence, Recommendations and System Impact

The findings from the WVC were formally documented and shared with partners, contributing to:

- Clear, community-led **recommendations for violence reduction and safeguarding practice**
- Calls for **female-only safe spaces**, culturally sensitive mental health support and improved reporting mechanisms
- Advocacy for **direct engagement with women**, rather than reliance on male-dominated representative structures
- Promotion of early education, youth mentoring and cross-community dialogue to rebuild cohesion

Stepping Stones also delivered **Inclusive Community Engagement workshops and presentations** for public sector and VCSE professionals, translating community insight into practical, actionable learning. These sessions challenged assumptions about engagement, highlighted structural barriers and promoted co-production as best practice.

Strategic Significance

Trustees recognise the WVC as a defining strand of the organisation's work in 2024–2025. The Collective strengthened safeguarding practice, informed violence reduction strategy and positioned Stepping Stones as a **trusted conduit between marginalised women and decision-makers**. This work directly informed wider responses to unrest, place-based partnership working and system reform.

Response to Community Unrest and Riots

During 2024–2025, national and local events contributed to periods of heightened community tension and unrest. Stepping Stones played an active role in supporting stability, reassurance and cohesion within affected communities.

The organisation's work during this period included:

- **Rapid community engagement:** Working directly with residents, families and community leaders to provide reassurance and trusted communication.
- **Countering misinformation:** Supporting partners to understand community concerns and address fear and speculation.

- **Trauma-informed support:** Providing space for individuals and families affected by anxiety, fear or distress linked to unrest.
- **De-escalation and dialogue:** Engaging young people and community members to reduce escalation and promote understanding.

Stepping Stones' established trust enabled it to respond quickly and sensitively, supporting both communities and statutory partners. Trustees view this work as a demonstration of the organisation's role as a stabilising presence during periods of heightened risk.

One Stoke Partnership and Place-Based Working

Throughout 2024–2025, Stepping Stones' place-based work through **One Stoke** was strengthened by evidence generated through the Women's Voices Collective and inclusive engagement activity.

The organisation contributed insight drawn directly from community consultations, ensuring that:

- CALD women's lived experiences informed strategic discussions
- Safety, trust and access were recognised as central to service design
- Engagement models moved beyond consultation towards co-production

Stepping Stones also supported professionals to reflect critically on engagement practice, challenging over-reliance on quantitative data, digital-only approaches and faith-based gatekeeping. This strengthened collective understanding of how systems can unintentionally exclude marginalised voices.

The Trustees note that this work reinforced Stepping Stones' role not only as a delivery partner, but as a **knowledge-holder and system influencer** within place-based working.

Governance and Management

Stepping Stones Community Organisation is governed by a committed Board of Trustees with collective expertise across education, safeguarding, community leadership, finance and governance. Trustees are responsible for setting strategic direction, ensuring compliance with charity law and regulatory frameworks, and safeguarding the charity's reputation and resources.

During 2024–2025, trustees placed a strong emphasis on **quality assurance and accountability**. The Ofsted Outstanding inspection provided independent assurance that governance arrangements, leadership oversight and safeguarding systems were operating effectively. Trustees reviewed inspection findings in detail and ensured that learning was embedded across the organisation.

Trustees met regularly to review performance, finance, risk and safeguarding. Clear reporting mechanisms enabled trustees to maintain oversight of delivery, staff wellbeing and external risk factors, including periods of community unrest.

Operational leadership remained strong, supported by clear accountability structures and investment in workforce development. Inspectors recognised that staff feel “*extremely well supported and valued*”, reinforcing trustees’ commitment to reflective supervision, professional learning and staff wellbeing as core components of effective governance.

Financial Review

The Trustees have reviewed the financial performance of the organisation for the year ending 31 March 2025 and are satisfied that Stepping Stones remains financially stable and well managed.

The year built upon the significant capital investment and infrastructure development achieved in the previous financial period. As a result, 2024–2025 focused on maximising the value of existing assets, embedding sustainable delivery models and ensuring resources were directed towards areas of highest impact.

Income continued to be drawn from a mix of grants, commissioned activity and service-related income, reducing reliance on any single funding source. Expenditure was closely monitored, with strong financial controls in place.

The Trustees are mindful of the ongoing financial pressures facing the voluntary and community sector and have taken steps to strengthen reserves planning, diversify income streams and maintain prudent oversight.

Detailed accounts and the independent examiner’s report are presented separately.

Risk Management

The Trustees maintained active oversight of organisational risk throughout the year. Key risks identified included safeguarding responsibilities, financial sustainability, workforce capacity and the impact of social and political instability within local communities.

The Ofsted Outstanding judgement provided external confirmation that safeguarding arrangements are effective and embedded within a positive organisational culture that “*puts children’s interests first*.” Trustees take assurance from this finding and continue to prioritise safeguarding as a standing agenda item.

Risk mitigation measures include:

- Regular financial monitoring and reserves planning
- Comprehensive safeguarding policies, training and reporting procedures
- Strong multi-agency partnerships to support early intervention
- Flexible delivery models capable of responding to crisis and unrest

The organisation’s effective response to community tensions and unrest during the year further demonstrated the strength of its leadership, decision-making and risk management processes.

Plans for the Future

Looking ahead, Stepping Stones Community Organisation will build on learning and evidence generated between April 2024 and March 2025. Trustees have identified the following priorities:

- Embedding learning from the Women's Voices Collective across safeguarding, violence reduction and engagement practice
- Supporting partners to implement inclusive, culturally competent engagement models
- Continuing to amplify CALD women's voices within decision-making systems
- Sustaining Ofsted Outstanding practice and applying quality assurance principles organisation-wide
- Strengthening community cohesion and resilience during periods of social tension
- Ensuring long-term organisational sustainability through strategic partnerships and income diversification

Trustees are committed to ensuring that future growth is informed by lived experience, evidence and co-production, maintaining the organisation's values-led approach.

Inspection Highlights (Ofsted, July 2024)

"Children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment."

"The curriculum is exceptionally well designed."

"Children make rapid progress from their individual starting points."

"Leaders live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve."

"There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first."

Trustees' Statement

The Trustees would like to thank the staff team, volunteers, partners and community members whose commitment and trust have made this work possible. The organisation enters the next year with confidence, clarity and a continued commitment to social justice and community empowerment.

This report is submitted on behalf of the Trustees.

Signed:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

F. Rahman

R. Hossein

O. Salah

Z. Moheuddin

Date: 31st March 2025

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Head Quarters, 75 Raymond Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP
For the Year Ending 31 March 2025

Charity No: 1145346

Income

Total Income: £780,365.00

Income during the financial year was derived from grants and commissioned contracts, education and examination services, training and consultation activity, and other service-related income aligned to the charity's objectives.

Description	Amount (£)
SLC	£629,658.00
Nursery Education Grant	£56,258.00
Service, assessment and administrative charges	£94,449.00
Total Income	£780,365.00

Expenditure

Total Expenditure: £748,282.00

Premises, Utilities and Infrastructure

Description	Amount (£)
Rent & Utilities (3 properties)	£109,150.00
Building Improvements	£82,000.00
Construction Costs	£24,000.00
Braithwaite Road Project	£23,200.00
Total Premises & Infrastructure	£238,350.00

The charity operated from three properties supporting early years provision, education, community engagement and partnership work. Capital investment ensured premises were safe, accessible and fit for purpose.

Staffing – Salaries and Wages

Description	Amount (£)
Total Salaries & Wages	£289,740.00

Programme-Level Staffing Breakdown

Programme Area	Amount (£)
Two Nurseries (Sessional Staff)	£107,000.00
Youth Mentoring Programme	£25,000.00
Women's Empowerment Workshops	£15,000.00

ESOL & Language Support Classes	£17,500.00
Cultural & Heritage Engagement	£18,500.00
Sports & Wellbeing Initiatives	£24,500.00
Community Advocacy & Support Services	£17,400.00
Parenting & Family Support Sessions	£15,500.00
Employment & Skills Training	£10,000.00
Arts, Crafts & Creative Engagement	£24,340.00
Community Health & Mental Wellbeing	£15,000.00

Staffing costs reflect employment of sessional staff delivering frontline services across education, youth, women's and community programmes.

Education and Examination Costs

Description	Amount (£)
Examination & Assessment Costs	£58,392.00

Operational and Administrative Costs

Description	Amount (£)
Operational Expenses	£67,800.00
Administration & Core Office Costs	£43,000.00
Insurance	£8,320.00
Professional Services	£18,000.00
Miscellaneous	£24,680.00
Total Operational & Professional Costs	£161,800.00

Surplus for the Year

Description	Amount (£)
Surplus	£43,697.00

Financial Position

Description	Amount (£)
Opening Balance (1 April 2024)	£11,614.00
Total Income	£780,365.00
Total Expenditure	£748,282.00
Closing Balance (31 March 2025)	£43,697.00

Description

Premises, Utilities and Infrastructure

Total: £238,350.00

Rent & Utilities (3 properties) - £109,150.00

This expenditure covered rent, utilities and essential services across **three properties**, which supported:

- Outstanding-rated early years provision
- Education and examination delivery

- Youth, women's and community programmes
- Partnership meetings and system leadership activity

The properties provided **safe, accessible and culturally appropriate spaces** for children, young people, women and families, many of whom face barriers to accessing mainstream services.

Building Improvements – £82,000.00

Building improvement costs related to planned capital works to ensure premises were:

- Fully compliant with health and safety requirements
- Accessible for children, families and individuals with SEND
- Fit for purpose for multi-use delivery, including education, safeguarding and community engagement

This investment reflects a **long-term commitment to community infrastructure**, ensuring sustainability and safe delivery environments.

Construction Costs – £24,000.00

Construction expenditure supported structural and compliance-related works required to adapt premises for expanded service delivery. This included works necessary to meet regulatory standards and accommodate increased demand for services.

Braithwaite Road Project – £23,200.00

This expenditure related specifically to development works at the **Braithwaite Road site**, enabling it to function as a dedicated community and education space. The project supported the organisation's growth and its ability to respond to local need.

Staffing – Salaries and Wages

Total: £289,740.00

Staffing costs reflect the organisation's **people-centred delivery model**, with sessional staff employed to deliver frontline services across education, youth, women's and community programmes.

Two Nurseries (Sessional Staff) – £107,000.00

This supported early years staffing to deliver high-quality provision, which was independently validated through an **Outstanding Ofsted judgement**. Staffing ensured safe ratios, strong safeguarding practice and high-quality learning experiences.

Youth Mentoring Programme – £25,000.00

Funding supported youth workers delivering mentoring, leadership development and engagement activities, contributing to positive outcomes including **youth civic participation and leadership pathways**.

Women's Empowerment Workshops – £15,000.00

This supported facilitation of women-led spaces addressing safety, wellbeing, confidence and voice, including work linked to violence reduction and safeguarding.

ESOL & Language Support Classes – £17,500.00

Staffing enabled delivery of language and communication support for adults, reducing isolation and improving access to services, education and employment.

Cultural & Heritage Engagement – £18,500.00

This funded staff delivering culturally responsive activities that strengthened identity, belonging and intergenerational engagement within communities.

Sports & Wellbeing Initiatives – £24,500.00

Staffing supported inclusive wellbeing activities that promoted physical health, confidence and social connection, particularly for groups underrepresented in mainstream provision.

Community Advocacy & Support Services – £17,400.00

This enabled staff to provide advocacy, guidance and signposting, supporting individuals and families to navigate complex systems safely.

Parenting & Family Support Sessions – £15,500.00

Staff delivered family-focused sessions supporting parenting skills, safeguarding awareness and early intervention.

Employment & Skills Training – £10,000.00

This supported staff delivering employability and skills development activity, contributing to improved life chances and progression.

Arts, Crafts & Creative Engagement – £24,340.00

Staffing enabled creative programmes supporting emotional wellbeing, expression and inclusion across age groups.

Community Health & Mental Wellbeing – £15,000.00

This funded delivery of wellbeing-focused activity addressing stress, anxiety and mental health, particularly during periods of social tension.

Education and Examination Costs

Total: £58,392.00

This expenditure supported Stepping Stones' role as an **approved examination centre**, enabling vulnerable and SEND learners to access recognised qualifications.

Costs included:

- Examination entry and awarding body charges
- Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Assessment administration and delivery costs

This investment removed barriers for learners unable to access traditional exam environments.

Operational and Administrative Costs

Total: £161,800.00

Operational Expenses – £67,800.00

Covered day-to-day delivery costs including materials, resources, IT, travel and programme-related operational support.

Administration & Core Office Costs – £43,000.00

Supported governance, coordination, record keeping, reporting and compliance, ensuring safe and effective organisational operation.

Insurance – £8,320.00

Provided appropriate cover for premises, staff, volunteers and service users, reflecting risk management responsibilities.

Professional Services – £18,000.00

Included accountancy, independent examination, garden maintenance, catering, events management and other professional services.

Miscellaneous – £24,680.00

Covered essential but variable costs linked to service delivery, community engagement and operational needs.

Electronically Signed:

Name	Date
F Rahman	20/01/25
Z Moheuddin	20/01/25

O Salah

20/01/25

R Hossein

20/01/25

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name: Stepping Stones Community
Organisation

On accounts for the year
ended

March 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1145346



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Set out on pages 3 to 7

Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent
examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent
examiner's statement

- In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention
1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

30/01/2025

Name:

Mr Almoize Ahmed

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

AAT (Association of Accounting)

AA Accountancy

Accountant & Tax Adviser
Unit 14, 66 - 68 Stratford Road,
Birmingham, B11 1AN

Address: 66-68 Stratford Road, Birmingham, B11 1AN

e: info@aaaccountancy.co.uk
t: 0121 238 0194

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Head Quarters, 75 Raymond Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP
For the Year Ending 31 March 2025

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Total Income	£780,365.00

Expenditure

Total Expenditure: £748,282.00

Premises, Utilities and Infrastructure

Description	Amount (£)
Rent & Utilities (3 properties)	£109,150.00
Building Improvements	£82,000.00
Construction Costs	£24,000.00
Braithwaite Road Project	£23,200.00
Total Premises & Infrastructure	£238,350.00

The charity operated from three properties supporting early years provision, education, community engagement and partnership work. Capital investment ensured premises were safe, accessible and fit for purpose.

Staffing – Salaries and Wages

Description	Amount (£)
Total Salaries & Wages	£289,740.00

Programme-Level Staffing Breakdown

Programme Area	Amount (£)
Two Nurseries (Sessional Staff)	£107,000.00
Youth Mentoring Programme	£25,000.00
Women's Empowerment Workshops	£15,000.00
ESOL & Language Support Classes	£17,500.00
Cultural & Heritage Engagement	£18,500.00
Sports & Wellbeing Initiatives	£24,500.00
Community Advocacy & Support Services	£17,400.00

Parenting & Family Support Sessions	£15,500.00
Employment & Skills Training	£10,000.00
Arts, Crafts & Creative Engagement	£24,340.00
Community Health & Mental Wellbeing	£15,000.00

Staffing costs reflect employment of sessional staff delivering frontline services across education, youth, women's and community programmes.

Education and Examination Costs

Description	Amount (£)
Examination & Assessment Costs	£58,392.00

Operational and Administrative Costs

Description	Amount (£)
Operational Expenses	£67,800.00
Administration & Core Office Costs	£43,000.00
Insurance	£8,320.00
Professional Services	£18,000.00
Miscellaneous	£24,680.00
Total Operational & Professional Costs	£161,800.00

Surplus for the Year

Description	Amount (£)
Surplus	£43,697.00

Financial Position

Description	Amount (£)
Opening Balance (1 April 2024)	£11,614.00
Total Income	£780,365.00
Total Expenditure	£748,282.00
Closing Balance (31 March 2025)	£43,697.00

Description

Premises, Utilities and Infrastructure

Total: £238,350.00

Rent & Utilities (3 properties) – £109,150.00

This expenditure covered rent, utilities and essential services across **three properties**, which supported:

- Outstanding-rated early years provision
- Education and examination delivery
- Youth, women's and community programmes
- Partnership meetings and system leadership activity

The properties provided **safe, accessible and culturally appropriate spaces** for children, young people, women and families, many of whom face barriers to accessing mainstream services.

Building Improvements – £82,000.00

Building improvement costs related to planned capital works to ensure premises were:

- Fully compliant with health and safety requirements
- Accessible for children, families and individuals with SEND
- Fit for purpose for multi-use delivery, including education, safeguarding and community engagement

This investment reflects a **long-term commitment to community infrastructure**, ensuring sustainability and safe delivery environments.

Construction Costs – £24,000.00

Construction expenditure supported structural and compliance-related works required to adapt premises for expanded service delivery. This included works necessary to meet regulatory standards and accommodate increased demand for services.

Braithwaite Road Project – £23,200.00

This expenditure related specifically to development works at the **Braithwaite Road site**, enabling it to function as a dedicated community and education space. The project supported the organisation's growth and its ability to respond to local need.

Staffing – Salaries and Wages

Total: £289,740.00

Staffing costs reflect the organisation's **people-centred delivery model**, with sessional staff employed to deliver frontline services across education, youth, women's and community programmes.

Two Nurseries (Sessional Staff) – £107,000.00

This supported early years staffing to deliver high-quality provision, which was independently validated through an **Outstanding Ofsted judgement**. Staffing ensured safe ratios, strong safeguarding practice and high-quality learning experiences.

Youth Mentoring Programme – £25,000.00

Funding supported youth workers delivering mentoring, leadership development and engagement activities, contributing to positive outcomes including **youth civic participation and leadership pathways**.

Women's Empowerment Workshops – £15,000.00

This supported facilitation of women-led spaces addressing safety, wellbeing, confidence and voice, including work linked to violence reduction and safeguarding.

ESOL & Language Support Classes – £17,500.00

Staffing enabled delivery of language and communication support for adults, reducing isolation and improving access to services, education and employment.

Cultural & Heritage Engagement – £18,500.00

This funded staff delivering culturally responsive activities that strengthened identity, belonging and intergenerational engagement within communities.

Sports & Wellbeing Initiatives – £24,500.00

Staffing supported inclusive wellbeing activities that promoted physical health, confidence and social connection, particularly for groups underrepresented in mainstream provision.

Community Advocacy & Support Services – £17,400.00

This enabled staff to provide advocacy, guidance and signposting, supporting individuals and families to navigate complex systems safely.

Parenting & Family Support Sessions – £15,500.00

Staff delivered family-focused sessions supporting parenting skills, safeguarding awareness and early intervention.

Employment & Skills Training – £10,000.00

This supported staff delivering employability and skills development activity, contributing to improved life chances and progression.

Arts, Crafts & Creative Engagement – £24,340.00

Staffing enabled creative programmes supporting emotional wellbeing, expression and inclusion across age groups.

Community Health & Mental Wellbeing – £15,000.00

This funded delivery of wellbeing-focused activity addressing stress, anxiety and mental health, particularly during periods of social tension.

Education and Examination Costs

Total: £58,392.00

This expenditure supported Stepping Stones' role as an **approved examination centre**, enabling vulnerable and SEND learners to access recognised qualifications.

Costs included:

- Examination entry and awarding body charges
- Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Assessment administration and delivery costs

This investment removed barriers for learners unable to access traditional exam environments.

Operational and Administrative Costs

Total: £161,800.00

Operational Expenses – £67,800.00

Covered day-to-day delivery costs including materials, resources, IT, travel and programme-related operational support.

Administration & Core Office Costs – £43,000.00

Supported governance, coordination, record keeping, reporting and compliance, ensuring safe and effective organisational operation.

Insurance – £8,320.00

Provided appropriate cover for premises, staff, volunteers and service users, reflecting risk management responsibilities.

Professional Services – £18,000.00

Included accountancy, independent examination, garden maintenance, catering, events management and other professional services.

Miscellaneous – £24,680.00

Covered essential but variable costs linked to service delivery, community engagement and operational needs.

Electronically Signed:

Name	Date
F Rahman	20/01/25
Z Moheuddin	20/01/25
O Salah	20/01/25
R Hossein	20/01/25

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2025

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Charity Number: 1145346

75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP

Introduction

The Trustees of Stepping Stones Community Organisation are pleased to present the Annual Report for the financial year ending 31 March 2025. This year has been characterised by consolidation, growth and responsive community leadership. Building on the strong foundations established in previous years, the organisation has continued to expand its reach, deepen its impact and respond swiftly to emerging community needs.

The charity's work during 2024–2025 has focused on education, early years provision, community cohesion, safeguarding vulnerable communities, advocacy and systems leadership. Particular emphasis has been placed on violence reduction, community reassurance following periods of unrest, and collaborative place-based working through city-wide partnerships.

Aims, Objectives and Public Benefit

Stepping Stones Community Organisation was established to address persistent inequalities experienced by individuals and families, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The charity's aims are rooted in advancing education, reducing social isolation, improving wellbeing and enabling communities to thrive.

The organisation's objectives during 2024–2025 focused on:

- Advancing education through early years provision, accredited learning and skills development
- Supporting children, young people and families to reduce risk, harm and exclusion
- Strengthening community cohesion and resilience
- Amplifying community voice within decision-making systems
- Working collaboratively to tackle structural inequality

In delivering these objectives, Stepping Stones has provided clear public benefit by improving access to services, increasing participation, and supporting individuals who may otherwise face multiple barriers to engagement. Trustees have had due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and are satisfied that the charity's activities during the year were carried out for the benefit of the public.

Strategic Overview and Growth

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones Community Organisation further consolidated its position as a trusted community anchor and system leader. The organisation's credibility was reflected not only in inspection outcomes and delivery, but also in external recognition, civic responsibility and strategic representation.

In **March 2025**, Stepping Stones was formally **recognised by the High Sheriff of Staffordshire** for the valuable and sustained contribution it makes to communities across Stoke-on-Trent. This recognition acknowledged the organisation's leadership, community trust and impact during periods of challenge and change.

The organisation was also formally identified as an **Emergency Hub for the City**, reflecting confidence from partners in Stepping Stones' ability to respond rapidly, safely and effectively in emergency situations. This designation recognised existing strengths in safeguarding, coordination, communication and community reach, and reinforced the organisation's role as a stabilising presence during crises.

Alongside this, Stepping Stones continued to strengthen its strategic influence through active participation on a range of **local and regional boards and forums**, where it represents:

- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities**
- **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector voices**

Through this work, the organisation ensured that lived experience, inclusion and equity remained central to decision-making. Trustees note that this combination of recognition, responsibility and representation reflects a high level of trust in Stepping Stones' leadership and governance.

Key Activities and Achievements

This section summarises the charity's principal activities undertaken between **1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**, reflecting delivery, leadership and impact across education, safeguarding, violence reduction, youth development and community cohesion.

This section summarises the charity's principal activities undertaken between **1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**, reflecting delivery, leadership and impact across education, safeguarding, violence reduction and community cohesion.

Development of Birmingham-Based Projects

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones undertook preparatory and developmental work to expand its reach beyond Stoke-on-Trent, with a particular focus on establishing future projects at the **Birmingham site**. This work was exploratory and strategic, aimed at ensuring that any expansion is sustainable, values-led and responsive to local need.

Activity during the year included:

- Early-stage needs analysis and community scoping
- Relationship-building with local partners and stakeholders
- Exploration of governance, safeguarding and delivery models suitable for the Birmingham context

- Identifying opportunities to replicate Stepping Stones’ strengths in education, inclusion and community voice

Trustees closely monitored this work to ensure that development activity complemented, rather than detracted from, core delivery in Stoke-on-Trent. This measured approach reflects the organisation’s commitment to responsible growth and quality assurance.

Youth Offer in Stoke-on-Trent

Stepping Stones continued to invest in its **youth offer in Stoke-on-Trent**, recognising young people as critical contributors to community resilience, leadership and future change. Work during 2024–2025 focused on creating safe, inclusive spaces where young people could develop confidence, voice and leadership skills.

Youth activity was closely aligned with the organisation’s wider priorities around safeguarding, violence reduction and inclusion. Young people were supported to engage in dialogue around community safety, identity, belonging and civic participation.

Youth Leadership and Civic Representation

A significant highlight of the year was the election of a **young person from Stepping Stones’ membership as the Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Youth Council**. This achievement reflects both the individual’s leadership capability and the organisation’s long-term investment in youth development and empowerment.

The young person’s election represents:

- Meaningful youth voice within civic decision-making structures
- Positive representation of diverse communities at city level
- Evidence that Stepping Stones’ youth work supports pathways into leadership and influence

Trustees regard this outcome as a powerful indicator of impact, demonstrating how sustained, inclusive youth engagement can translate into real civic participation and system influence.

Quality, Inspection Outcomes and Assurance

During 2024–2025, Stepping Stones Community Organisation achieved a significant quality milestone when its early years provision was judged **Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted** following inspection on 16 July 2024.

The inspection resulted in **Outstanding** judgements for:

- Overall effectiveness
- Quality of education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

Inspectors described the provision as “*outstanding*” and highlighted that “*children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment*” and that “*staff greet them warmly and children settle very quickly.*” The report emphasised the strength of relationships, noting that “*children and staff develop close, caring relationships*” and that leaders and staff “*share the highest expectations and aspirations for all children.*”

The curriculum was praised as “*exceptionally well-designed*”, enabling all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to “*continuously acquire knowledge and skills*” and “*make rapid progress from their individual starting points.*” Inspectors observed that learning activities were “*planned at precisely the right level for children’s age and stage of development*” and that children showed “*high levels of concentration and resilience.*”

Leadership and management were identified as a key strength. Inspectors noted that leaders “*live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve*” and that staff are “*extremely well supported and valued.*” The inspection further confirmed that safeguarding arrangements are effective, supported by “*an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.*”

Parents’ views were overwhelmingly positive, with inspectors recording feedback that “*the staff go above and beyond to provide a nurturing home from home.*”

Trustees regard this Outstanding judgement as independent confirmation of the organisation’s commitment to excellence, inclusive practice and strong leadership. It provides assurance to families, commissioners and partners that Stepping Stones delivers services of the highest quality and operates with robust governance and safeguarding arrangements.

Early Years, Education and Skills

Education has remained a cornerstone of Stepping Stones’ work throughout 2024–2025. A major achievement during the year was the organisation’s early years provision being judged **Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted** following inspection in July 2024.

The inspection confirmed **Outstanding** judgements for:

- Overall effectiveness
- Quality of education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

Inspectors described the provision as “*outstanding*”, noting that “*children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment*” and that staff and children “*develop close, caring relationships*”. The curriculum was recognised as “*exceptionally well-designed*”, enabling all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to “*make rapid progress from their individual starting points.*”

The report highlighted that activities are “*planned at precisely the right level for children’s age and stage of development*”, with children becoming “*incredibly absorbed in their learning and sustain their concentration for prolonged periods.*” Inspectors also praised children’s behaviour, stating that “*the way children conduct themselves is exemplary*” and that children demonstrate “*high levels of resilience.*”

Leadership was identified as a key strength. Inspectors noted that the dedicated manager and leadership team “*live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve*” and that staff feel “*extremely well supported and valued.*” Parents were described as “*overwhelmingly positive*”, with one commenting that “*the staff go above and beyond to provide a nurturing home from home.*”

Communication and language development was recognised as exceptional, with children “*immersed in literacy at every opportunity*” and staff consistently using “*ambitious vocabulary*”. The inspection also commended the setting’s inclusive practice, cultural awareness and strong safeguarding culture, confirming that “*arrangements for safeguarding are effective*” and that there is “*an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.*”

This Outstanding judgement represents a significant milestone for Stepping Stones Community Organisation and reflects sustained investment in quality, leadership, workforce development and inclusive practice. It further strengthens the organisation’s reputation as a provider of excellence in early years education and community-based services.

Accredited Examination Centre and Inclusive Education Pathways

Alongside its early years provision, Stepping Stones has continued to operate as an **approved examination centre**, providing access to recognised qualifications for young people who face barriers within mainstream education.

During 2024–2025, the exam centre supported young people to gain qualifications in core subjects such as English and mathematics, as well as other accredited courses aligned to individual learning pathways. This provision has been particularly important for learners who have experienced exclusion, disrupted education, school refusal, anxiety or other vulnerabilities that make traditional exam settings inaccessible.

The exam centre provided:

- A calm, smaller and supportive assessment environment
- A strong focus on emotional wellbeing and safeguarding
- Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements tailored to individual need

Partnership Working with Schools, Alternative Provision and SEND Services

Stepping Stones worked in close partnership with schools, alternative provision providers and other education institutions to support **vulnerable learners and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)** to access and complete qualifications.

This collaborative approach included:

- Coordinating exam access for learners unable to sit assessments within their home institutions
- Supporting professionals and families to navigate access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- Reducing anxiety through familiar environments and trusted relationships

For many learners, the exam centre provided a critical route to achieving qualifications that may otherwise have been out of reach. Trustees recognise this work as central to reducing educational inequality, improving life chances and supporting progression into further education, training or employment.

This inclusive assessment provision complements the organisation's Outstanding early years practice and wider education offer, reinforcing Stepping Stones' commitment to inclusive education across the life course.

Violence Reduction and Community Safety – Women's Voices Collective (WVC)

Between April 2024 and March 2025, Stepping Stones significantly expanded the scope, depth and influence of the **Women's Voices Collective (WVC)**. Supported by Staffordshire Police, this work moved beyond engagement into **evidence-led consultation, systems influence and policy-shaping activity**.

Consultation and Evidence Gathering

During this period, Stepping Stones facilitated multiple structured consultations, focus groups and public engagement events with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women. These consultations were undertaken in direct response to rising social tensions, community unrest and increased incidents of hostility following national and local riots.

Women shared detailed lived experiences relating to:

- **Personal safety and visibility**, particularly for visibly Muslim women wearing hijab
- **Fear and anxiety in public spaces**, including public transport and community venues
- **Impact on children**, including fear of racism, restricted mobility and internalised discrimination
- **Decline in participation** in long-standing community activities due to safety concerns

These insights provided critical qualitative evidence of how social unrest disproportionately affected CALD women and families.

Key Themes Identified Through WVC Work

The WVC consultations identified consistent systemic barriers:

- **Digital exclusion**, including digital poverty and inaccessible online public sector platforms
- **Cultural competence gaps** within public services, leading to misinterpretation of parenting practices and family structures
- **Underrepresentation of women's voices**, with male-dominated institutions often speaking on behalf of communities
- **Erosion of trust** due to experiences of racism, lack of follow-up and fear of reporting incidents
- **Safety concerns**, particularly around harassment, transport and public visibility

Women reported modifying daily behaviour for safety, limiting independence and community participation.

Influence, Recommendations and System Impact

The findings from the WVC were formally documented and shared with partners, contributing to:

- Clear, community-led **recommendations for violence reduction and safeguarding practice**
- Calls for **female-only safe spaces**, culturally sensitive mental health support and improved reporting mechanisms
- Advocacy for **direct engagement with women**, rather than reliance on male-dominated representative structures
- Promotion of early education, youth mentoring and cross-community dialogue to rebuild cohesion

Stepping Stones also delivered **Inclusive Community Engagement workshops and presentations** for public sector and VCSE professionals, translating community insight into practical, actionable learning. These sessions challenged assumptions about engagement, highlighted structural barriers and promoted co-production as best practice.

Strategic Significance

Trustees recognise the WVC as a defining strand of the organisation's work in 2024–2025. The Collective strengthened safeguarding practice, informed violence reduction strategy and positioned Stepping Stones as a **trusted conduit between marginalised women and decision-makers**. This work directly informed wider responses to unrest, place-based partnership working and system reform.

Response to Community Unrest and Riots

During 2024–2025, national and local events contributed to periods of heightened community tension and unrest. Stepping Stones played an active role in supporting stability, reassurance and cohesion within affected communities.

The organisation's work during this period included:

- **Rapid community engagement:** Working directly with residents, families and community leaders to provide reassurance and trusted communication.
- **Countering misinformation:** Supporting partners to understand community concerns and address fear and speculation.
- **Trauma-informed support:** Providing space for individuals and families affected by anxiety, fear or distress linked to unrest.
- **De-escalation and dialogue:** Engaging young people and community members to reduce escalation and promote understanding.

Stepping Stones' established trust enabled it to respond quickly and sensitively, supporting both communities and statutory partners. Trustees view this work as a demonstration of the organisation's role as a stabilising presence during periods of heightened risk.

One Stoke Partnership and Place-Based Working

Throughout 2024–2025, Stepping Stones' place-based work through **One Stoke** was strengthened by evidence generated through the Women's Voices Collective and inclusive engagement activity.

The organisation contributed insight drawn directly from community consultations, ensuring that:

- CALD women's lived experiences informed strategic discussions
- Safety, trust and access were recognised as central to service design
- Engagement models moved beyond consultation towards co-production

Stepping Stones also supported professionals to reflect critically on engagement practice, challenging over-reliance on quantitative data, digital-only approaches and faith-based gatekeeping. This strengthened collective understanding of how systems can unintentionally exclude marginalised voices.

The Trustees note that this work reinforced Stepping Stones' role not only as a delivery partner, but as a **knowledge-holder and system influencer** within place-based working.

Governance and Management

Stepping Stones Community Organisation is governed by a committed Board of Trustees with collective expertise across education, safeguarding, community leadership, finance and governance. Trustees are responsible for setting strategic direction, ensuring compliance with charity law and regulatory frameworks, and safeguarding the charity's reputation and resources.

During 2024–2025, trustees placed a strong emphasis on **quality assurance and accountability**. The Ofsted Outstanding inspection provided independent assurance that governance arrangements, leadership oversight and safeguarding systems were operating effectively. Trustees reviewed inspection findings in detail and ensured that learning was embedded across the organisation.

Trustees met regularly to review performance, finance, risk and safeguarding. Clear reporting mechanisms enabled trustees to maintain oversight of delivery, staff wellbeing and external risk factors, including periods of community unrest.

Operational leadership remained strong, supported by clear accountability structures and investment in workforce development. Inspectors recognised that staff feel *“extremely well supported and valued”*, reinforcing trustees' commitment to reflective supervision, professional learning and staff wellbeing as core components of effective governance.

Financial Review

The Trustees have reviewed the financial performance of the organisation for the year ending 31 March 2025 and are satisfied that Stepping Stones remains financially stable and well managed.

The year built upon the significant capital investment and infrastructure development achieved in the previous financial period. As a result, 2024–2025 focused on maximising the value of existing assets, embedding sustainable delivery models and ensuring resources were directed towards areas of highest impact.

Income continued to be drawn from a mix of grants, commissioned activity and service-related income, reducing reliance on any single funding source. Expenditure was closely monitored, with strong financial controls in place.

The Trustees are mindful of the ongoing financial pressures facing the voluntary and community sector and have taken steps to strengthen reserves planning, diversify income streams and maintain prudent oversight.

Detailed accounts and the independent examiner's report are presented separately.

Risk Management

The Trustees maintained active oversight of organisational risk throughout the year. Key risks identified included safeguarding responsibilities, financial sustainability, workforce capacity and the impact of social and political instability within local communities.

The Ofsted Outstanding judgement provided external confirmation that safeguarding arrangements are effective and embedded within a positive organisational culture that *"puts children's interests first."* Trustees take assurance from this finding and continue to prioritise safeguarding as a standing agenda item.

Risk mitigation measures include:

- Regular financial monitoring and reserves planning
- Comprehensive safeguarding policies, training and reporting procedures
- Strong multi-agency partnerships to support early intervention
- Flexible delivery models capable of responding to crisis and unrest

The organisation's effective response to community tensions and unrest during the year further demonstrated the strength of its leadership, decision-making and risk management processes.

Plans for the Future

Looking ahead, Stepping Stones Community Organisation will build on learning and evidence generated between April 2024 and March 2025. Trustees have identified the following priorities:

- Embedding learning from the Women's Voices Collective across safeguarding, violence reduction and engagement practice
- Supporting partners to implement inclusive, culturally competent engagement models
- Continuing to amplify CALD women's voices within decision-making systems
- Sustaining Ofsted Outstanding practice and applying quality assurance principles organisation-wide
- Strengthening community cohesion and resilience during periods of social tension
- Ensuring long-term organisational sustainability through strategic partnerships and income diversification

Trustees are committed to ensuring that future growth is informed by lived experience, evidence and co-production, maintaining the organisation's values-led approach.

Inspection Highlights (Ofsted, July 2024)

"Children are exceptionally well cared for in this safe and stimulating environment."

“The curriculum is exceptionally well designed.”

“Children make rapid progress from their individual starting points.”

“Leaders live out their vision of being at the heart of the community they serve.”

“There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children’s interests first.”

Trustees’ Statement

The Trustees would like to thank the staff team, volunteers, partners and community members whose commitment and trust have made this work possible. The organisation enters the next year with confidence, clarity and a continued commitment to social justice and community empowerment.

This report is submitted on behalf of the Trustees.

Signed:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

F. Rahman

R. Hossein

O. Salah

Z. Moheuddin

Date: 31st March 2025

Accounts

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31st March 2024

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP

Introduction

The trustees of Stepping Stones Community Organisation are pleased to present the annual report for the year ending 31st March 2024. This year has been one of profound impact, strategic growth, and resilience, as we have expanded our programmes to meet the ever-evolving needs of our communities. Our work continues to focus on advancing education, training, social welfare, and well-being, with a commitment to supporting those most in need.

Through tailored interventions, strong partnerships, and evidence-based strategies, we have seen transformative changes in the lives of individuals and families. The following report reflects our journey, achievements, and the meaningful outcomes we have delivered over the past year.

Key Achievements in 2023-2024

Early Years & Nursery Development

Our nurseries have remained a beacon of early childhood education, providing high-quality care and learning in a nurturing environment. We have extended our reach to families from low-income backgrounds, ensuring their children receive equal opportunities to thrive.

This year, we expanded our early years provision by increasing available spaces in response to growing demand. Our commitment to inclusive education has seen us implement specialised programmes for children with additional learning needs, ensuring **individualised learning plans** tailored to their development. We have also worked closely with families to provide holistic support, including parenting workshops, early language development sessions, and guidance on school transitions.

Case Study: Supporting Language Development

One of our nursery attendees, a child from a recently resettled refugee family, struggled with language barriers and social integration. Through our tailored bilingual learning support and interactive play therapy, this child not only developed confidence but was also able to transition smoothly into primary school, where they are now excelling. The support offered not only benefited the child but also equipped their parents with language skills to engage with educational settings effectively.

We have strengthened partnerships with local primary schools to develop transition strategies that prepare children for formal education. These partnerships have resulted in joint initiatives such as **storytelling exchanges, transition days, and curriculum alignment discussions**, ensuring children from our nursery arrive at school confident and ready to learn.

Community Education and Training

Education is at the heart of empowerment. This year, our education and training programmes have expanded, allowing individuals from all backgrounds to gain skills that will improve their employment prospects and social mobility.

Our **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme** has grown significantly, with more than 200 learners completing different levels of language training. Recognising the need for tailored approaches, we introduced **women-only ESOL sessions**, enabling greater participation for women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who may face additional barriers to education.

- **Vocational Training:** This year, we have introduced vocational training in partnership with local businesses, offering pathways into hospitality, retail, and construction.
- **Digital Literacy & IT Skills:** With the increasing importance of digital accessibility, we have rolled out free training sessions for adults to improve their **computer literacy, online safety awareness, and access to online services**.
- **Accredited Exam Centre:** Our accredited exam centre has provided opportunities for over 150 learners to gain qualifications in core subjects such as **Maths, English, and IGCSE Arabic**.

Case Study: Overcoming Barriers to Education

A single mother who had previously dropped out of education due to domestic abuse was supported through our **Employment and Skills Training Programme**. With tailored mentoring, childcare support, and skills training, she has now secured stable employment, providing a better future for her family. She is now completing a Level 3 Teaching Assistant qualification and aims to work in local schools supporting bilingual children.

Health & Well-being Programmes

Recognising the intrinsic link between health and community well-being, we have significantly expanded our mental and physical health initiatives.

- **Mental Health Support:** We launched culturally appropriate counselling services and well-being workshops, ensuring accessibility for CALD communities.
- **Sports and Physical Activities:** Our badminton and football programmes for young people and adults have provided an outlet for socialisation and mental health support.
- **Women's Health Programmes:** A focus on breast cancer awareness, menopause support, and maternal health education.

Case Study: Breaking the Stigma Around Mental Health

A young male from our community, who was struggling with severe anxiety and social isolation, was referred to our support group by a concerned teacher. Through our structured **well-being and sports programme**, he has developed coping mechanisms, built friendships, and is now advocating for youth mental health awareness in his school.

Family and Social Support Services

In response to rising economic hardship, we have reinforced our **family and social support services**, ensuring no family is left without assistance.

- **Food & Hygiene Pack Distribution:** Over 1,000 food parcels delivered to families in need.
- **Parenting Support Workshops:** Helping parents navigate challenges through structured guidance.
- **Financial Literacy for Women:** Training on budgeting, savings, and economic empowerment.

Case Study: Supporting Families in Crisis

A newly arrived asylum-seeking family faced significant challenges, including financial instability and isolation. Our support team provided immediate relief through **food distribution and housing support** while integrating them into community programmes. Today, the family is engaged in local education and employment initiatives, with the children excelling in school.

Infrastructure and Capital Developments

To accommodate our expanding services, we have undertaken significant infrastructure improvements.

- **Braithwaite Road Project:** This development has transformed a vacant site into a **community hub**, offering childcare facilities, education spaces, and a multi-use hall.
- **Building Renovations:** Upgraded our community centre to enhance accessibility and sustainability.

Case Study: Transforming Spaces for Community Growth

Our investment in infrastructure has already borne fruit. A local grassroots organisation, struggling to find a suitable meeting space, is now using our **community hub** to run vital social support groups, extending their reach and impact.

Looking Ahead

Building on the momentum of 2023-2024, our priorities for the coming year include:

- **Expanding our childcare provision**, particularly for families experiencing crisis.
 - **Broadening our skills development programmes**, focusing on economic sustainability.
 - **Advancing mental health services**, increasing outreach for youth and marginalised women.
 - **Strengthening policy advocacy**, ensuring the voices of CALD communities are represented at decision-making levels.
-

Conclusion

Stepping Stones Community Organisation remains steadfast in its commitment to **empowering individuals and strengthening communities**. Over the past year, we have demonstrated our

ability to adapt, innovate, and create lasting impact through education, advocacy, and direct support.

As we move forward, we will continue to foster **inclusive growth**, ensuring that every person, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team, partners, and volunteers, whose unwavering commitment has made this progress possible.

This report is presented on behalf of the Trustees as a reflection of the achievements and impact of Stepping Stones Community Organisation in 2023-2024.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

- **F. Rahman**
- **R. Hossein**
- **O. Salah**
- **Z. Moheuddin**

Date: March 31, 2024

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Annual Financial Report for the Year Ending March 31, 2024

Charity Name: Stepping Stones Community Organisation

Charity Number: 1145346

Address: 75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP

Financial Summary

Opening Balance

- As of April 1, 2023: **£38,502.00**

Total Income

- **SLC Loan Income:** £292,828.00
- **Stoke City Council Grants:** £89,105.00
- **Exam Fees:** £3,995.00
- **Service Fees:** £8,890.00
- **Other Income:** £3,966.00
- **Total Income:** **£398,784.00**

Total Expenditure

- **Rent & Utilities:** £83,400.00
- **Insurance:** £413.26
- **Salaries & Wages:** £102,328.98
 - **Sessional Staff for Two Nurseries:** £52,000.00
 - **Sessional Staff for Community and Education Projects:**
 - **Youth Mentoring Programme:** £7,500.00
 - **Women's Empowerment Workshops:** £5,200.00
 - **ESOL and Language Support Classes:** £6,800.00
 - **Cultural and Heritage Engagement Projects:** £4,500.00
 - **Sports and Wellbeing Initiatives:** £6,500.00
 - **Community Advocacy and Support Services:** £4,000.00
 - **Parenting and Family Support Sessions:** £5,100.00
 - **Employment and Skills Training Programmes:** £3,900.00
 - **Arts, Crafts, and Creativity Engagements:** £3,828.98
 - **Community Health and Mental Wellbeing Programmes:** £3,000.00

- **Operational Expenses:** £45,782.64
- **Building Improvements:** £25,000.00
- **Construction:** £83,428.00
 - **Braithwaite Road Project:** £83,428.00
- **Professional Services:** £18,942.42
- **Miscellaneous:** £26,875.19
- **Total Expenditure:** **£387,170.49**

Closing Balance

- As of March 31, 2024: **£11,614.00**

Income Breakdown

1. **SLC Loan Income**
 - Total SLC Loan Contributions: **£292,828.00**
2. **Stoke City Council Grants**
 - Council Support: £89,105.00
3. **General Income**
 - Exam Fees: £3,995.00
 - Service Fees: £8,890.00
 - Other Income: £3,966.00

Expenditure Breakdown

1. **Rent & Utilities** (£83,400.00)
 - **Rent Breakdown:**
 - **Stoke-on-Trent Muslim Welfare Association Rent Payment:** £14,400.00
 - **Braithwaite Children's Centre Rent Payment:** £39,000.00
 - **GM Surveyors Rent Payment:** £15,000.00
 - **Utilities:**
 - E.ON NEXT: £13,254.36
 - British Gas: £12,397.00

2. **Insurance** (£413.26)

- General liability insurance for facilities and operations

3. **Salaries & Wages** (£102,328.98)

- **Sessional Staff for Two Nurseries:** £52,000.00
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4. **Operational Expenses** (£45,782.64)

- Tesco, Boots, Pak Foods & Asda (Community Engagement Events & Supplies)
- Amazon, Argos, IKEA (Educational Materials & Equipment)
- H3G, Virgin Media, TalkTalk (Telecommunications & IT)
- Community & Volunteer Meetings
- Timpson Ltd, Nafees Bakers, Primark, Max Spielmann, SportsDirect, Smyths Toys, The Range, ToolStation
- Youth Leisure Activities
- Additional purchases from Superdrug, Premier Electrics, Wickes, United Badminton Academy, and other community-focused expenses.

5. **Building Improvements** (£25,000.00)

- Structural repairs and maintenance
- Security upgrades
- Accessibility enhancements
- General refurbishments

6. **Construction** (£83,428.00)

- **Braithwaite Road Project:** £83,428.00

7. Professional Services (£18,942.42)

- Independent Contractors & Legal Consultancy
- MH Solicitors LLP Services for community legal support
- Green Star Consult project assessments
- BaySide MedSpa Wellbeing Support
- Fly Education Services
- United Badminton Academy Training & Consultancy

8. Miscellaneous (£26,875.19)

- Travel, Catering, Childcare, Project Supplies, and Unplanned Costs
 - Software & Hardware (Google, Currys, Canva, 123-Reg)
 - Community Fundraising Expenses
 - Other community support
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Conclusion

Stepping Stones Community Organisation has successfully managed its finances for the year 2023-24, ensuring sustainability while delivering impactful community programs. The financial reserves at the end of the year position us well for the upcoming period, allowing for continued investment in key initiatives.

This financial report has been prepared in accordance with the **UK Charity Commission's guidelines** and is ready for submission as part of our **Annual Return**.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

- **F. Rahman**
- **R. Hossein**
- **O. Salah**
- **Z. Moheuddin**

Date: March 31, 2024

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name Stepping Stones Community
Organisation

On accounts for the year
ended

March 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1145346



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Set out on pages

3 - 6

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

- In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention
1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date: 31/01/2024

Name:

Khurram Shahzad Minhas

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

AFA , MIPA
Institute of Financial Accountants

Khurram S Minhas AFA MIPA
IFA Membership No. 27146f
Firm No. 28340d

Address:

Unit O Winton House , Stoke Road

Stoke-On-Trent , Staffordshire , ST4 2RW

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

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This financial report has been prepared in accordance with the **UK Charity Commission's guidelines** and is ready for submission as part of our **Annual Return**.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

- **F. Rahman**
- **R. Hossein**
- **O. Salah**
- **Z. Moheuddin**

Date: March 31, 2024

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31st March 2024

Stepping Stones Community Organisation

75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4DP

Introduction

The trustees of Stepping Stones Community Organisation are pleased to present the annual report for the year ending 31st March 2024. This year has been one of profound impact, strategic growth, and resilience, as we have expanded our programmes to meet the ever-evolving needs of our communities. Our work continues to focus on advancing education, training, social welfare, and well-being, with a commitment to supporting those most in need.

Through tailored interventions, strong partnerships, and evidence-based strategies, we have seen transformative changes in the lives of individuals and families. The following report reflects our journey, achievements, and the meaningful outcomes we have delivered over the past year.

Key Achievements in 2023-2024

Early Years & Nursery Development

Our nurseries have remained a beacon of early childhood education, providing high-quality care and learning in a nurturing environment. We have extended our reach to families from low-income backgrounds, ensuring their children receive equal opportunities to thrive.

This year, we expanded our early years provision by increasing available spaces in response to growing demand. Our commitment to inclusive education has seen us implement specialised programmes for children with additional learning needs, ensuring **individualised learning plans** tailored to their development. We have also worked closely with families to provide holistic support, including parenting workshops, early language development sessions, and guidance on school transitions.

Case Study: Supporting Language Development

One of our nursery attendees, a child from a recently resettled refugee family, struggled with language barriers and social integration. Through our tailored bilingual learning support and interactive play therapy, this child not only developed confidence but was also able to transition smoothly into primary school, where they are now excelling. The support offered not only benefited the child but also equipped their parents with language skills to engage with educational settings effectively.

We have strengthened partnerships with local primary schools to develop transition strategies that prepare children for formal education. These partnerships have resulted in joint initiatives such as **storytelling exchanges, transition days, and curriculum alignment discussions**, ensuring children from our nursery arrive at school confident and ready to learn.

Community Education and Training

Education is at the heart of empowerment. This year, our education and training programmes have expanded, allowing individuals from all backgrounds to gain skills that will improve their employment prospects and social mobility.

Our **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme** has grown significantly, with more than 200 learners completing different levels of language training. Recognising the need for tailored approaches, we introduced **women-only ESOL sessions**, enabling greater participation for women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who may face additional barriers to education.

- **Vocational Training:** This year, we have introduced vocational training in partnership with local businesses, offering pathways into hospitality, retail, and construction.
- **Digital Literacy & IT Skills:** With the increasing importance of digital accessibility, we have rolled out free training sessions for adults to improve their **computer literacy, online safety awareness, and access to online services**.
- **Accredited Exam Centre:** Our accredited exam centre has provided opportunities for over 150 learners to gain qualifications in core subjects such as **Maths, English, and IGCSE Arabic**.

Case Study: Overcoming Barriers to Education

A single mother who had previously dropped out of education due to domestic abuse was supported through our **Employment and Skills Training Programme**. With tailored mentoring, childcare support, and skills training, she has now secured stable employment, providing a better future for her family. She is now completing a Level 3 Teaching Assistant qualification and aims to work in local schools supporting bilingual children.

Health & Well-being Programmes

Recognising the intrinsic link between health and community well-being, we have significantly expanded our mental and physical health initiatives.

- **Mental Health Support:** We launched culturally appropriate counselling services and well-being workshops, ensuring accessibility for CALD communities.
- **Sports and Physical Activities:** Our badminton and football programmes for young people and adults have provided an outlet for socialisation and mental health support.
- **Women's Health Programmes:** A focus on breast cancer awareness, menopause support, and maternal health education.

Case Study: Breaking the Stigma Around Mental Health

A young male from our community, who was struggling with severe anxiety and social isolation, was referred to our support group by a concerned teacher. Through our structured **well-being and sports programme**, he has developed coping mechanisms, built friendships, and is now advocating for youth mental health awareness in his school.

Family and Social Support Services

In response to rising economic hardship, we have reinforced our **family and social support services**, ensuring no family is left without assistance.

- **Food & Hygiene Pack Distribution:** Over 1,000 food parcels delivered to families in need.

- **Parenting Support Workshops:** Helping parents navigate challenges through structured guidance.
- **Financial Literacy for Women:** Training on budgeting, savings, and economic empowerment.

Case Study: Supporting Families in Crisis

A newly arrived asylum-seeking family faced significant challenges, including financial instability and isolation. Our support team provided immediate relief through **food distribution and housing support** while integrating them into community programmes. Today, the family is engaged in local education and employment initiatives, with the children excelling in school.

Infrastructure and Capital Developments

To accommodate our expanding services, we have undertaken significant infrastructure improvements.

- **Braithwaite Road Project:** This development has transformed a vacant site into a **community hub**, offering childcare facilities, education spaces, and a multi-use hall.
- **Building Renovations:** Upgraded our community centre to enhance accessibility and sustainability.

Case Study: Transforming Spaces for Community Growth

Our investment in infrastructure has already borne fruit. A local grassroots organisation, struggling to find a suitable meeting space, is now using our **community hub** to run vital social support groups, extending their reach and impact.

Looking Ahead

Building on the momentum of 2023-2024, our priorities for the coming year include:

- **Expanding our childcare provision**, particularly for families experiencing crisis.
 - **Broadening our skills development programmes**, focusing on economic sustainability.
 - **Advancing mental health services**, increasing outreach for youth and marginalised women.
 - **Strengthening policy advocacy**, ensuring the voices of CALD communities are represented at decision-making levels.
-

Conclusion

Stepping Stones Community Organisation remains steadfast in its commitment to **empowering individuals and strengthening communities**. Over the past year, we have demonstrated our ability to adapt, innovate, and create lasting impact through education, advocacy, and direct support.

As we move forward, we will continue to foster **inclusive growth**, ensuring that every person, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive. We extend our heartfelt gratitude

to our dedicated team, partners, and volunteers, whose unwavering commitment has made this progress possible.

This report is presented on behalf of the Trustees as a reflection of the achievements and impact of Stepping Stones Community Organisation in 2023-2024.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

- **F. Rahman**
- **R. Hossein**
- **O. Salah**
- **Z. Moheuddin**

Date: March 31, 2024

Accounts

THE TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31.03.23 FOR STEPPING STONES COMMUNITY ORGANISATION, 75 RAYMOND STREET, HANLEY, STOKE ON TRENT, ST1 4DP. PLEASE SEE THE CHARITIES DATA BASE UPDATE 2011 FOR THE NAMES OF TRUSTEES.

The constitution for the charity was adopted on 10/10/2011 and amended on 01/12/2011.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARITY

For the benefit of the public in Stoke on Trent, in particular but not exclusively members of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities by:

- a. The advancement of education and training
- b. To advance in life and help young people by the provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, desire to improve their conditions of life and develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held on April 2022. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity. The nursery demonstrated consistent growth and development, providing an environment where new children had the opportunity to make substantial progress across all seven domains of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In order to facilitate effective communication and engagement with families, the nursery implemented a robust progress-reporting system accessible via the Tapestry platform. Furthermore, both staff and volunteers underwent specialized training programs tailored to enhance their proficiency in delivering the EYFS curriculum. The effectiveness of these training initiatives was consistently monitored and supervised by the management team, ensuring continuous improvement.

The senior leadership team also actively engaged in leadership development programs, resulting in a notable enhancement of their leadership skills. These investments in leadership capacity yielded positive outcomes for the organization, contributing to a more effective and impactful operation.

In addition to the educational aspects, the nursery was committed to providing comprehensive support to families. This support included the provision of homework packs, short courses, and regular accessibility to the nursery's resources. To further enhance the

learning environment, the nursery's library underwent refurbishment and reorganization, making it more accessible and conducive to learning for both children and families.

The commitment to fostering continued learning at home was maintained by consistently providing weekly home activity packs. These packs were carefully curated and included not only previously identified resources but also new and diverse educational materials.

Additionally, the nursery remained a crucial hub of communication for countless families seeking support in various areas, including mental health, domestic abuse, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. The outdoor spaces proved invaluable in providing safe environments for individuals to engage in open and confidential discussions, facilitating the sharing of experiences and the seeking of necessary support.

Partnerships with feeder schools not only flourished but also paved the way for a more seamless transition for children moving from the nursery to their respective schools. This collaborative effort not only strengthened educational pathways but also enriched the overall learning experience for these young learners. Furthermore, our unwavering dedication in partnership with the NHS teams in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire has yielded significant recognition. We are delighted to share that our contributions were formally acknowledged in the NHS White Paper.

In addition to those accomplishments, our team played a pivotal role in raising awareness about breast and bowel cancer, effectively engaging with the community within a safe and supportive environment.

Moreover, our commitment to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families remained unwavering. We distributed food packs, 300 hygiene packs, and continued to organize 6 community meals and 6 cook-and-eat sessions. Building upon this success, we continued to provide 400 food packs and hygiene packs, ensuring a sustained lifeline for those in need.

Of particular concern within this context was the predicament faced by women and pubescent young girls who found themselves struggling to meet their basic personal hygiene needs. The economic impact of the pandemic exacerbated this issue, making the cost of essential items like sanitary pads and underwear prohibitively high for many. Stepping Stones observed a stark increase in the demand for assistance in this area since the onset of

the pandemic, and this need continued to grow. It was imperative that we continued to address this critical issue to ensure that these vulnerable individuals could maintain their dignity and health.

In parallel, we noted a concerning trend of an increasing number of children presenting with speech and language delays. This trend persisted and required sustained attention and action. In response, our dedicated team diligently worked to devise innovative approaches that empowered our staff to implement early intervention strategies in close collaboration with parents and other relevant professionals. Our commitment extended beyond academic development, as we worked closely with partners and parents to ensure that no child was left behind in their education. We also focused on addressing the specific needs of children displaying symptoms of autism, providing them with tailored support to foster inclusive and comprehensive educational opportunities. Stepping Stones remained resolute in its mission to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, had access to the tools and support they needed to thrive and succeed.

We also focused on addressing the specific needs of children displaying symptoms of autism, providing them with tailored support to foster inclusive and comprehensive educational opportunities. Stepping Stones remained resolute in its mission to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, had access to the tools and support they needed to thrive and succeed.

After conducting extensive consultations with the community, with a special focus on empowering disadvantaged women, several impactful projects and skill development initiatives were identified. These initiatives were aimed at addressing community needs and fostering inclusivity. As a result, we introduced new services such as:

1. **Women's Empowerment Workshops:** We organized workshops tailored to women's specific needs, covering topics like financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. These workshops aimed to equip women with essential skills and knowledge to enhance their economic and social well-being.
2. **Community Skill-building Programs:** To empower disadvantaged communities, we initiated skill-building programs that offered training in areas such as vocational skills, digital literacy, and job readiness. These programs provided community members,

including women, with valuable skills to improve their employability and overall quality of life.

3. **Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening Projects:** We launched community gardens and sustainable agriculture initiatives, where women played a central role. These projects not only promoted self-sufficiency in food production but also provided opportunities for women to learn about sustainable farming practices and generate income through selling surplus produce.
4. **Women's Networking and Support Groups:** To create a supportive environment, we established women's networking and support groups. These gatherings provided a platform for women to share experiences, offer mentorship, and build social connections, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.
5. **Entrepreneurship Incubator:** We introduced an entrepreneurship incubator program specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. This program offered training, mentorship, and access to resources to help women start and grow their own businesses, contributing to economic empowerment.
6. **Community Social Events:** In addition to skill development, we organized community-wide social events, including coffee mornings and social gatherings. These events aimed to strengthen community bonds, encourage social interaction, and provide a platform for individuals, particularly women, to engage and connect.

By implementing these initiatives, we sought to empower disadvantaged communities and elevate the skills and opportunities available to women, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and thriving community for all.

Our commitment to the well-being of our community has been exemplified by the continued success of our sports programs. We have consistently offered badminton sessions tailored for men and young people, leading to significant positive impacts on their mental health.

1. **Mental Health Benefits for Men:** The regular badminton sessions have provided a vital outlet for men to relieve stress, improve mood, and enhance their mental well-being. Engaging in physical activity has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression, promoting a more positive outlook on life.

2. **Empowering Young People:** Our dedication to young people's development is reflected in our badminton program. By actively participating in these sessions, young individuals have gained confidence, improved their self-esteem, and developed valuable life skills. These positive experiences have had a profound impact on their mental health and overall sense of well-being.
3. **Sporting Achievements:** Our commitment to sports excellence has yielded remarkable results. Our badminton team not only secured victory in the Division 2 league but also actively participated in prestigious nationwide tournaments, showcasing our dedication to athletic success.
4. **Coach Development:** To further support the growth of our badminton community, we have successfully nurtured two Badminton England Level 1 coaches. Our future goals include facilitating the development of Level 2 coaches, ensuring that the expertise and mentorship available to our members continue to expand.

By fostering a thriving badminton community, we have not only achieved sporting success but have also made a substantial positive impact on the mental health and well-being of men and young people within our organization. Our commitment to their holistic development remains unwavering, ensuring that they continue to benefit from the physical, emotional, and social advantages of our programs.

Our thriving mother and toddler group has emerged as a vibrant and essential hub for families with young children. It has not only attracted a consistent attendance of families but has also emphasized the significance of mothers socializing while engaging in meaningful activities with their toddlers.

- **Building Strong Connections:** This gathering of mothers and toddlers has not only facilitated new friendships but has also nurtured a robust support network. Mothers have found camaraderie and shared experiences, creating a sense of belonging within the community.
- **Empowering Child Development:** The activities thoughtfully curated for children have proven instrumental in fostering their holistic development. These engaging

experiences have enabled toddlers to acquire essential skills while having fun and interacting with their peers.

- Trips to Local Gems: Our group has also ventured on exciting trips to local places of interest. These outings have not only provided enriching experiences for both mothers and children but have also significantly enhanced the positive mental health benefits.

By placing a strong emphasis on the importance of socialization and meaningful engagement for mothers and toddlers, our group continues to serve as a valuable resource for our community. It promotes the well-being of both mothers and children while strengthening the bonds within our community.

Collaborating closely with esteemed partners such as the NHS, Local Authority, and other dedicated professionals has translated into a significantly elevated standard of service for our local community. This fruitful alliance has enabled us to make a more profound and meaningful impact on the well-being and welfare of our community members.

Our comprehensive educational program, encompassing a range of academic services such as tutoring, an accredited JCQ exam centre, Arabic language instruction, and culturally enriching sessions, has yielded remarkable success. This success is exemplified by a substantial rise in the number of young individuals attaining two additional qualifications, namely proficiency in the Arabic language at the IGCSE level and achieving success at the GCSE level. This educational attainment underscores the pivotal role that education plays in equipping our youth with valuable qualifications, thereby enhancing their academic and professional prospects.

Every day, our team and organization are evolving, driven by a vision of continuous growth and progress. To turn this vision into reality, we are eager to secure additional funding. This funding will empower us to forge new pathways and create essential roles that will propel our organization to new heights, ensuring that we not only thrive but also inspire positive change and transformation in the days ahead.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation
75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4DP
T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2022-March 2023

Receipts

Stoke on Trent City Council	£44,653.00
Reaching Communities (National Lottery)	£19,142.00
(balance carried forward)	
Childcare Grant Payment Services	£137,464.00
Fees and contributions	£10,185.00
Exam Fees	£3468.00
Unrestricted Funds Carried Over	£21,414.00
Total Receipt	£236,326.00

Expenditure

Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance.	£36,900.00
Resources	£28,600.00
Garden maintenance	£1034.00
Utilities	£10,360.00
Sundries	£6,500.00
Sessional Staff	£36,448.00
Assessment administration	£2050.00
Phone & Broadband	£850.00
Food & Hygiene Packs	£15,000.00
Community Meals	£12,000.00
Refurbishment	£26,200.00
Total	£175,942.00

Multi-Media Project Breakdown:

Magazine Element

Magazines	£7800.00
Stationery	£1200.00
Refreshments	£872.00
Volunteer expenses	£890.00
Project Workers	£11,120.00
Total	£21,882 .00

Total Expenditure**£197,824.00**

Balance carried over to April 2023

£38,502.00

Restricted Funds

£12,400.00

Unrestricted Funds

£26,102.00

Date

Electronically Signed

03/10/2023

F Rahman

03/10/2023

S Jahangir

03/10/2023

A Sajed

03/10/2023

R Hossein

03/10/2023

O Salah

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name Stepping Stones Community
Organisation

On accounts for the year
ended

March 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1145346



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Set out on pages

3 and 4

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

- In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention
1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joynal Abedin'.

Date:

30/11 /2023

Name:

Joynal Abedin

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Business owner with over 15years experience of financial accounting, management accounting, business finance, payroll and understanding markets and marketing.

Address:

31 Station Road, Sheffield, S35 2XE

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation
 75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4DP
 T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2022-March 2023

Receipts	
Stoke on Trent City Council	£44,653.00
Reaching Communities (National Lottery)	£19,142.00
(balance carried forward)	
Childcare Grant Payment Services	£137,464.00
Fees and contributions	£10,185.00
Exam Fees	£3468.00
Unrestricted Funds Carried Over	£21,414.00
Total Receipt	£236,326.00
<u>Expenditure</u>	
Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance.	£36,900.00
Resources	£28,600.00
Garden maintenance	£1034.00
Utilities	£10,360.00
Sundries	£6,500.00
Sessional Staff	£36,448.00
Assessment administration	£2050.00
Phone & Broadband	£850.00
Food & Hygiene Packs	£15,000.00
Community Meals	£12,000.00
Refurbishment	£26,200.00
Total	£175,942.00
Multi-Media Project Breakdown:	
Magazine Element	
Magazines	£7800.00
Stationery	£1200.00
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Project Workers	£11,120.00
Total	£21,882 .00

Total Expenditure	£197,824.00
Balance carried over to April 2023	£38,502.00
Restricted Funds	£12,400.00
Unrestricted Funds	£26,102.00

Date	Electronically Signed
03/10/2023	F Rahman
03/10/2023	S Jahangir
03/10/2023	A Sajed
03/10/2023	R Hossein
03/10/2023	O Salah

The constitution for the charity was adopted on 10/10/2011 and amended on 01/12/2011.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARITY

For the benefit of the public in Stoke on Trent, in particular but not exclusively members of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities by:

- a. The advancement of education and training
- b. To advance in life and help young people by the provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, desire to improve their conditions of life and develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held on April 2022. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity. The nursery demonstrated consistent growth and development, providing an environment where new children had the opportunity to make substantial progress across all seven domains of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In order to facilitate effective communication and engagement with families, the nursery implemented a robust progress-reporting system accessible via the Tapestry platform. Furthermore, both staff and volunteers underwent specialized training programs tailored to enhance their proficiency in delivering the EYFS curriculum. The effectiveness of these training initiatives was consistently monitored and supervised by the management team, ensuring continuous improvement.

The senior leadership team also actively engaged in leadership development programs, resulting in a notable enhancement of their leadership skills. These investments in leadership capacity yielded positive outcomes for the organization, contributing to a more effective and impactful operation.

In addition to the educational aspects, the nursery was committed to providing comprehensive support to families. This support included the provision of homework packs, short courses, and regular accessibility to the nursery's resources. To further enhance the learning environment, the nursery's library underwent refurbishment and reorganization, making it more accessible and conducive to learning for both children and families.

The commitment to fostering continued learning at home was maintained by consistently providing weekly home activity packs. These packs were carefully curated and included not only previously identified resources but also new and diverse educational materials.

Additionally, the nursery remained a crucial hub of communication for countless families seeking support in various areas, including mental health, domestic abuse, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. The outdoor spaces proved invaluable in providing safe environments for individuals to engage in open and confidential discussions, facilitating the sharing of experiences and the seeking of necessary support. Partnerships with feeder schools not only flourished but also paved the way for a more seamless transition for children moving from the nursery to their respective schools. This collaborative effort not only strengthened educational pathways but also enriched the overall learning experience for these young learners. Furthermore, our unwavering dedication in partnership with the NHS teams in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire has yielded significant recognition. We are delighted to share that our contributions were formally acknowledged in the NHS White Paper.

In addition to those accomplishments, our team played a pivotal role in raising awareness about breast and bowel cancer, effectively engaging with the community within a safe and supportive environment. Moreover, our commitment to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families remained unwavering. We distributed food packs, 300 hygiene packs, and continued to organize 6 community meals and 6 cook-and-eat sessions. Building upon this success, we continued to provide 400 food packs and hygiene packs, ensuring a sustained lifeline for those in need.

Of particular concern within this context was the predicament faced by women and pubescent young girls who found themselves struggling to meet their basic personal hygiene needs. The economic impact of the pandemic exacerbated this issue, making the cost of essential items like sanitary pads and underwear prohibitively high for many. Stepping Stones observed a stark increase in the demand for assistance in this area since the onset of the pandemic, and this need continued to grow. It was imperative that we continued to address this critical issue to ensure that these vulnerable individuals could maintain their dignity and health.

In parallel, we noted a concerning trend of an increasing number of children presenting with speech and language delays. This trend persisted and required sustained attention and action. In response, our dedicated team diligently worked to devise innovative approaches that empowered our staff to implement early intervention strategies in close collaboration with parents and other relevant professionals. Our commitment extended beyond academic development, as we worked closely with

partners and parents to ensure that no child was left behind in their education. We also focused on addressing the specific needs of children displaying symptoms of autism, providing them with tailored support to foster inclusive and comprehensive educational opportunities. Stepping Stones remained resolute in its mission to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, had access to the tools and support they needed to thrive and succeed.

We also focused on addressing the specific needs of children displaying symptoms of autism, providing them with tailored support to foster inclusive and comprehensive educational opportunities. Stepping Stones remained resolute in its mission to ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, had access to the tools and support they needed to thrive and succeed.

After conducting extensive consultations with the community, with a special focus on empowering disadvantaged women, several impactful projects and skill development initiatives were identified. These initiatives were aimed at addressing community needs and fostering inclusivity. As a result, we introduced new services such as:

1. **Women's Empowerment Workshops:** We organized workshops tailored to women's specific needs, covering topics like financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. These workshops aimed to equip women with essential skills and knowledge to enhance their economic and social well-being.
2. **Community Skill-building Programs:** To empower disadvantaged communities, we initiated skill-building programs that offered training in areas such as vocational skills, digital literacy, and job readiness. These programs provided community members, including women, with valuable skills to improve their employability and overall quality of life.
3. **Sustainable Agriculture and Gardening Projects:** We launched community gardens and sustainable agriculture initiatives, where women played a central role. These projects not only promoted self-sufficiency in food production but also provided opportunities for women to learn about sustainable farming practices and generate income through selling surplus produce.
4. **Women's Networking and Support Groups:** To create a supportive environment, we established women's networking and support groups. These gatherings provided a platform for women to share experiences, offer mentorship, and build social connections, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.
5. **Entrepreneurship Incubator:** We introduced an entrepreneurship incubator program specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. This program offered training, mentorship, and access to resources to help women start and grow their own businesses, contributing to economic empowerment.

6. **Community Social Events:** In addition to skill development, we organized community-wide social events, including coffee mornings and social gatherings. These events aimed to strengthen community bonds, encourage social interaction, and provide a platform for individuals, particularly women, to engage and connect.

By implementing these initiatives, we sought to empower disadvantaged communities and elevate the skills and opportunities available to women, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and thriving community for all.

Our commitment to the well-being of our community has been exemplified by the continued success of our sports programs. We have consistently offered badminton sessions tailored for men and young people, leading to significant positive impacts on their mental health.

1. **Mental Health Benefits for Men:** The regular badminton sessions have provided a vital outlet for men to relieve stress, improve mood, and enhance their mental well-being. Engaging in physical activity has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression, promoting a more positive outlook on life.
2. **Empowering Young People:** Our dedication to young people's development is reflected in our badminton program. By actively participating in these sessions, young individuals have gained confidence, improved their self-esteem, and developed valuable life skills. These positive experiences have had a profound impact on their mental health and overall sense of well-being.
3. **Sporting Achievements:** Our commitment to sports excellence has yielded remarkable results. Our badminton team not only secured victory in the Division 2 league but also actively participated in prestigious nationwide tournaments, showcasing our dedication to athletic success.
4. **Coach Development:** To further support the growth of our badminton community, we have successfully nurtured two Badminton England Level 1 coaches. Our future goals include facilitating the development of Level 2 coaches, ensuring that the expertise and mentorship available to our members continue to expand.

By fostering a thriving badminton community, we have not only achieved sporting success but have also made a substantial positive impact on the mental health and well-being of men and young people within our organization. Our commitment to their holistic development remains unwavering, ensuring that they continue to benefit from the physical, emotional, and social advantages of our programs.

Our thriving mother and toddler group has emerged as a vibrant and essential hub for families with young children. It has not only attracted a consistent attendance of families but has also emphasized the significance of mothers socializing while engaging in meaningful activities with their toddlers.

- **Building Strong Connections:** This gathering of mothers and toddlers has not only facilitated new friendships but has also nurtured a robust support network. Mothers have found camaraderie and shared experiences, creating a sense of belonging within the community.
- **Empowering Child Development:** The activities thoughtfully curated for children have proven instrumental in fostering their holistic development. These engaging experiences have enabled toddlers to acquire essential skills while having fun and interacting with their peers.
- **Trips to Local Gems:** Our group has also ventured on exciting trips to local places of interest. These outings have not only provided enriching experiences for both mothers and children but have also significantly enhanced the positive mental health benefits.

By placing a strong emphasis on the importance of socialization and meaningful engagement for mothers and toddlers, our group continues to serve as a valuable resource for our community. It promotes the well-being of both mothers and children while strengthening the bonds within our community.

Collaborating closely with esteemed partners such as the NHS, Local Authority, and other dedicated professionals has translated into a significantly elevated standard of service for our local community. This fruitful alliance has enabled us to make a more profound and meaningful impact on the well-being and welfare of our community members.

Our comprehensive educational program, encompassing a range of academic services such as tutoring, an accredited JCQ exam centre, Arabic language instruction, and culturally enriching sessions, has yielded remarkable success. This success is exemplified by a substantial rise in the number of young individuals attaining two additional qualifications, namely proficiency in the Arabic language at the IGCSE level and achieving success at the GCSE level. This educational attainment underscores the pivotal role that education plays in equipping our youth with valuable qualifications, thereby enhancing their academic and professional prospects.

Every day, our team and organization are evolving, driven by a vision of continuous growth and progress. To turn this vision into reality, we are eager to secure additional funding. This funding will empower us to forge new pathways and create essential roles that will propel our organization to new heights, ensuring that we not only thrive but also inspire positive change and transformation in the days ahead.

Accounts

THE TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31.03.22 FOR STEPPING STONES COMMUNITY ORGANISATION, 75 RAYMOND STREET, HANLEY, STOKE ON TRENT, ST1 4DP. PLEASE SEE THE CHARITIES DATA BASE UPDATE 2011 FOR THE NAMES OF TRUSTEES.

The constitution for the charity was adopted on 10/10/2011 and amended on 01/12/2011.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARITY

For the benefit of the public in Stoke on Trent, in particular but not exclusively members of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities by:

- a. The advancement of education and training
- b. To advance in life and help young people by the provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, desire to improve their conditions of life and develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held on April 2020. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity.

The nursery, despite facing challenges during the lockdown period, was able to slowly but steadily rebuild, welcoming vulnerable families and children back to the setting.

Through highly trained nursery staff and knowledge built up over the years around infection control, minimising the spread of COVID and other illnesses, re-establishing relationships and nurturing children, we were successfully able to instil confidence in families and children up taking our services.

We were able to further support vulnerable and disadvantaged families by providing 420 food packs, 420 hygiene packs and 6 community meals and 6 cook and eat sessions. These were extremely welcomed by the families who felt respected with dignity maintained at the same time.

We continued to provide weekly home activity packs to continue learning at home containing new resources in addition to those previously identified. The nursery remains to be a key point of communication for countless families when seeking support in mental health, domestic abuse and those feeling isolated and lonely. The outdoors proved crucial to providing a variety of safe spaces for people to be able to make disclosures.

The nursery senior leadership team have noticed an alarming rise in the number of children presenting with speech and language delay. The team have developed a new approach to enable staff to implement early intervention strategies in partnership with parents and other professionals. The team continues to work closely with partners and parents to ensure that no child is left behind in education.

Staff and volunteers have regular monitoring and supervision meetings with the manager and professional development targets are agreed as well as training needs identified and implemented.

Stepping Stones supported more than 300 vulnerable families on a regular basis through a variety of projects and services. Through our work, we became aware of the challenges that they were facing in terms of affordability in relation to food, hygiene, clothes and utility costs. Furthermore, families were struggling with their mental health and well-being because of suffering financial loss, the inability to afford basic living essentials and being unable to have quality family time. Children were negatively impacted by this and as a result withdrew from extra curricula activities, social gatherings with friends and became isolated.

Women and pubescent young girls were struggling to meet personal hygiene needs where purchasing sanitary pads, underwear, etc simply became unaffordable. We have seen a dramatic increase in women and young girls requiring assistance with this since the pandemic.

We were able to deliver the following after receiving the Winter Fund from Stoke City Council:

1. Provided food parcels with additional recipe cards containing ideas in how to prepare meals on a budget, to local families with children and the elderly. Packs were also available for families with babies that included formula milk and baby food.
2. Provide personal hygiene packs were provided for women and pubescent young girls to include sanitary pads, underwear, and information about sexual health with help lines that can be accessed.
3. Cook and eat sessions where whole families learn how to make healthy and affordable meals and how to reduce food waste were delivered.
4. We hosted weekly community meals for vulnerable families to enjoy a meal and socialise whilst children engaged in arts and crafts.

Our organisation were delighted to have received funding from Reaching Communities, National Lottery Fund to deliver a Multi-Media Youth Project following the huge success of the Tea N Talks Project.

The project itself would deliver youth work, particularly around issues relevant to young people's lives. Stepping Stones supports vulnerable families, young adults who are NEET, and deals on a regular basis with sensitive issues such as domestic violence and forced marriage.

The project would seek to generate and support a more positive narrative about life in Stoke-on-Trent by empowering up to 40 young 'influencers' to play their part in promoting this, and by engaging Stoke's aspiring creatives (e.g. via Staffordshire University, Keele University and local colleges) to help make these influencers' ideas a reality through our Multi Media Project. The project consisted of three elements: Youth Journalist Project, Film Five Series and Theatre Production.

The youth journalist project engaged with approximately twenty young people who worked on different aspects of the project. Though this project we dealt with issues that young people faced in the city of Stoke on Trent which was identified by young people themselves working on the project but at the same time had a wider impact on the people involved through providing opportunities to upskill their knowledge in literacy communication and networking skills. Young people acquired new skills in the field of journalism and reporting relevant news to the locality and targeted audience as well as building on skills in photography and filming as well as learning how to conduct interviews with relevant parties. The magazine produced publish up to 1200 magazines per month that were distributed amongst schools colleges libraries and similar settings.

The films developed focused on a story or narrative about challenges that young people faced which would be produced to raise awareness of issues. These storylines for the films were identified through the young journalist project and monthly magazines that were produced.

The Theatre Production element of the project where a piece of drama, based upon the findings from the Journalists project was created in order to use it as a mechanism to visit schools and perform the piece in order to raise awareness and reach out to those who may be suffering from issues portrayed through this piece.

The last part of the multimedia project has continued to build upon the success of the COVID-19 funded project by yourselves. There have been 15 episodes that have taken place with an additional 3 as practice sessions and training before going live. We can confidently say that we were able to engage with almost 2000 people with each episode via various social media platforms. We also used Zoom to enable those who do not have social media to engage. This was on average around 30 participants. An added benefit to the project was that we were able to engage with people beyond Stoke-on-Trent which resulted in young people in other areas wanting to replicate the project in their areas. This has been earmarked by our organisation as a potential extension of the project as part of our future plans.

Following the small references that has been made to existing work and the proposed project, it can be seen how the vast majority, if not all of the work we do, fits in with the three priorities of:

The project brought predominantly young people together in multiple ways. A key group of young people, who would essentially be influencers, came together and developed ideas, consultations, development plans and delivery by including their broader networks, community networks and social media platforms. They were able to ensure their voices were heard within their neighbourhoods, locality and the city by utilising the various strands to the project. This project proved to have a positive effect on how young people were perceived by their community and also provided key information to other organisations such as Stoke City Council, local colleges, universities and so on, that ultimately assisted them in tailoring their services in order to cater for young people more effectively. In turn, this strengthened relationships between generations, authorities and families, alongside empowering young people within their respective communities.

The work previously undertaken by Stepping Stones brought people together through youth clubs, coffee mornings, mother and toddler groups, study support sessions and most of the projects that has previously been mentioned. In addition, it brought people from all backgrounds together through the community events that we host as well as community lunches. Eating together always provides a platform that will enable discussions to take place thereby breaking down barriers. Before COVID-19, we hosted annual large scale theatre performances with additional family based fun activities that saw up to 400 people attend at the community centre, which is the heart of the community.

In addition to all the projects mentioned, it is important to note how Stepping Stones continues to bring organisations together through specific projects. For example, our involvement in the “Wider World Project” lead to us being asked to become a trainer after which we delivered training to over 50 early years settings and shared best practice. Being part of the Community First Panel enabled us to share our knowledge of groups who were doing fantastic work in the area and should be financially supported with grants. Working alongside numerous organisations on the Building a Better Britain Together enabled us to work alongside over 500 organisations across the country and help each other to provide key services to the community that we serve. These few examples will indicate the scope of this priority and how it is a fundamental key strength of our organisation.

Stepping Stones is seen as the heart of the community and is very well accessed by local people, families, communities and is now being used by other organisations and groups.

We were extremely successful in securing over £100K through the Community Investment Fund over 2 years that has been used in its entirety to improve the building and surrounding areas. For example, there used to be concerning levels of anti-social behaviour on Raymond Street, which is where we are located, during evening hours. This would include drug abuse and petty crime. Through the grant, we were able to install CCTV cameras that were clearly positioned to make people aware of their presence. The anti-social behaviour almost immediately stopped whereby the surrounding neighbours benefitted from the relief of having to deal with these issues. As a result, we have seen more people using the route to go on walks etc which was not the case before the cameras were installed.

Through the grant, we were able to fully refurbish the kitchen on the first floor which now enables healthy and nutritious food to be prepared for our nursery children, etc, but we have also created a brand new kitchen space on the ground floor. This new facility together with the brand new hall space created on the ground floor has enabled us to bring the community, professionals and families together in a beautiful, secure and welcoming space. The new kitchen on the ground floor has enabled community events to be run with the added value of being able to serve food and access refreshments more efficiently, whilst maintaining the security of the nursery on the first floor.

Prior to the funding, our main entrance was tucked away around the back of the building, resulting in reduced visibility, missed opportunities and lack of presence. The building resembled a row of houses rather than an organisation, where signage was also an issue. Following the grant, we were able to create a brand new, eye catching, modern and sleek fully secure entrance, to the front of the property. The wider door has enabled disability

access and security has been maximised whereby people can only enter the building if they are permitted access by a member of staff. This has ensured that children, young people and families are safe from intruders etc.

The funds have also allowed us to create a more attractive front with raised flower beds, alongside getting the community involved in planting flowers and plants to ensure that they feel involved in the local environment. The back garden space has also been improved upon and is a beautiful space for our children, young people and families to access.

Stepping Stones works closely with the community police officers, whereby we are regularly asked about recommendations in how to deal with certain community issues. We have been involved with developing plans in how to improve the locality and work with local people and are seen as a pinnacle presence. In addition to this, we have also worked with Shelton Environmental Awareness Campaign to assist them to undertake environmental projects. This has been through providing a meeting space and volunteering wherever possible too. Our young people have undertaken community litter picks and have carried out projects around environmental issues.

The project was able to impact on places and spaces through raising awareness of local issues through the journalism and film production. Through group research, interviews and collaborative work, young people, with the support of mentors, highlighted positive things happening in the locality as well as raising awareness of issues of concern. Through the existing improvements already made at Stepping Stones, young people proved to benefit from the beautiful and safe environment already created together with the recording studio that was developed with the support of the Community Investment Fund from Stoke City Council.

The Multi-Media Project will continue to run for a few more months in the new financial year, after which it is our intention to reapply in order to continue the amazing work that we have been able to achieve through the support of Reaching Communities.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation
75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4DP
T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2021-March 2022

Receipts

Stoke on Trent City Council	£53,302.10
Reaching Communities (National Lottery)	£117,533.00
Childcare Grant Payment Services	£51,806.24
Exam Fees	£5250.00

Total Receipt **£227,891.34**

Expenditure

Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance.	£19,800.00
Resources	£15,380.00
Garden maintenance	£2300.00
Utilities	£10,250.00
Sundries	£7,500.00
Sessional Staff	£19,700.00
Assessment administration	£1450.00
Phone & Broadband	£600.00
Food & Hygiene Packs	£10,000.00
Total	£86,980.00

Multi-Media Project Breakdown (Upto March 2022):

Magazine Element

Magazines	£4200.00
Stationery	£700.00
Refreshments	£280.00
Volunteer expenses	£500.00
Website	£2000.00
Project Workers	£14,880.00
Total	£22,560.00

Film & Show

Stationery	£700.00
Refreshments	£280.00

Volunteer expenses	£500.00
Film Developer & Producer	£7440.00
Broadcasting Technician	£7440.00
Hosts	£22,320.00
Social Media & Marketing Support Worker	£7440.00
Props and Costumes	£3000.00
Total	£58,560.00

Capital Costs

Black Magic Hyperdeck Studio	£900.00
Canon Camcorder 4K	£5600.00
Professional Camcorder Tripod	£290.00
Professional Camera Slider Motorised	£1050.00
4K Drone	£2400.00
Storage Cases	£150.00
Lights	£340.00
HDMI & SDI Cables	£24.00
HDMI to SDI Converters	£170.00
Set Stage	£5000.00
Antibacterial Hand Sanitiser	£150.00
Training	£1200.00
Total	£17,270.97

Total Expenditure	£185,370.97
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Balance carried over to April 2020	£42,520.37
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Restricted Funds £19,142.03 remaining for Multi-Media Project

Unrestricted funds remaining of £23,378.34

Date	Electronically Signed
18/01/2023	F Rahman
18/01/2023	S Jahangir
18/01/2023	A Sajed

18/01/2023

R Hossein

18/01/2023

F Noor

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name Stepping Stones Community
Organisation

On accounts for the year
ended

March 2022

Charity no
(if any)

1145346



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Set out on pages

3 and 4

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

- In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention
1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joynal Abedin".

Date:

12/12 /2022

Name:

Joynal Abedin

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Business owner with over 15years experience of financial accounting, management accounting, business finance, payroll and understanding markets and marketing.

Address:

31 Station Road, Sheffield, S35 2XE

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation
 75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4DP
 T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2021-March 2022

Receipts

Stoke on Trent City Council	£53,302.10
Reaching Communities (National Lottery)	£117,533.00
Childcare Grant Payment Services	£51,806.24
Exam Fees	£5250.00
Total Receipt	£227,891.34

Expenditure

Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance.	£19,800.00
Resources	£15,380.00
Garden maintenance	£2300.00
Utilities	£10,250.00
Sundries	£7,500.00
Sessional Staff	£19,700.00
Assessment administration	£1450.00
Phone & Broadband	£600.00
Food & Hygiene Packs	£10,000.00
Total	£86,980.00

Multi-Media Project Breakdown (Upto March 2022):

Magazine Element

Magazines	£4200.00
Stationery	£700.00
Refreshments	£280.00
Volunteer expenses	£500.00
Website	£2000.00
Project Workers	£14,880.00
Total	£22,560.00

Film & Show

Stationery	£700.00
Refreshments	£280.00
Volunteer expenses	£500.00
Film Developer & Producer	£7440.00

Broadcasting Technician	£7440.00
Hosts	£22,320.00
Social Media & Marketing Support Worker	£7440.00
Props and Costumes	£3000.00
Total	£58,560.00

Capital Costs

Black Magic ~~Hyperdeck~~ Studio	£900.00
Canon Camcorder 4K	£5600.00
Professional Camcorder Tripod	£290.00
Professional Camera Slider Motorised	£1050.00
4K Drone	£2400.00
Storage Cases	£150.00
Lights	£340.00
HDMI & SDI Cables	£24.00
HDMI to SDI Converters	£170.00
Set Stage	£5000.00
Antibacterial Hand Sanitiser	£150.00
Training	£1200.00
Total	£17,270.97

Total Expenditure **£185,370.97**

Balance carried over to April 2020 £42,520.37

Restricted Funds £19,142.03 remaining for [Multi-Media Project](#)

Unrestricted funds remaining of £23,378.34

Date	Electronically Signed
18/01/2023	F Rahman
18/01/2023	S Jahangir
18/01/2023	A Sajed
18/01/2023	R Hossein
18/01/2023	F Noor

THE TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31.03.22 FOR STEPPING STONES COMMUNITY ORGANISATION, 75 RAYMOND STREET, HANLEY, STOKE ON TRENT, ST1 4DP. PLEASE SEE THE CHARITIES DATA BASE UPDATE 2011 FOR THE NAMES OF TRUSTEES.

The constitution for the charity was adopted on 10/10/2011 and amended on 01/12/2011.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARITY

For the benefit of the public in Stoke on Trent, in particular but not exclusively members of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities by:

- a. The advancement of education and training
- b. To advance in life and help young people by the provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, desire to improve their conditions of life and develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held on April 2020. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity.

The nursery, despite facing challenges during the lockdown period, was able to slowly but steadily rebuild, welcoming vulnerable families and children back to the setting.

Through highly trained nursery staff and knowledge built up over the years around infection control, minimising the spread of COVID and other illnesses, re-establishing relationships and nurturing children, we were successfully able to instil confidence in families and children up taking our services.

We were able to further support vulnerable and disadvantaged families by providing 420 food packs, 420 hygiene packs and 6 community meals and 6 cook and eat sessions. These were extremely welcomed by the families who felt respected with dignity maintained at the same time.

We continued to provide weekly home activity packs to continue learning at home containing new resources in addition to those previously identified. The nursery remains to be a key point of communication for countless families when seeking support in mental health, domestic abuse and those feeling isolated and lonely. The outdoors proved crucial to providing a variety of safe spaces for people to be able to make disclosures.

The nursery senior leadership team have noticed an alarming rise in the number of children presenting with speech and language delay. The team have developed a new approach to enable staff to implement early intervention strategies in partnership with parents and other professionals. The team continues to work closely with partners and parents to ensure that no child is left behind in education.

Staff and volunteers have regular monitoring and supervision meetings with the manager and professional development targets are agreed as well as training needs identified and implemented.

Stepping Stones supported more than 300 vulnerable families on a regular basis through a variety of projects and services. Through our work, we became aware of the challenges that they were facing in terms of affordability in relation to food, hygiene, clothes and utility costs. Furthermore, families were struggling with their mental health and well-being because of suffering financial loss, the inability to afford basic living

essentials and being unable to have quality family time. Children were negatively impacted by this and as a result withdrew from extra curricula activities, social gatherings with friends and became isolated.

Women and pubescent young girls were struggling to meet personal hygiene needs where purchasing sanitary pads, underwear, etc simply became unaffordable. We have seen a dramatic increase in women and young girls requiring assistance with this since the pandemic.

We were able to deliver the following after receiving the Winter Fund from Stoke City Council:

1. Provided food parcels with additional recipe cards containing ideas in how to prepare meals on a budget, to local families with children and the elderly. Packs were also available for families with babies that included formula milk and baby food.
2. Provide personal hygiene packs were provided for women and pubescent young girls to include sanitary pads, underwear, and information about sexual health with help lines that can be accessed.
3. Cook and eat sessions where whole families learn how to make healthy and affordable meals and how to reduce food waste were delivered.
4. We hosted weekly community meals for vulnerable families to enjoy a meal and socialise whilst children engaged in arts and crafts.

Our organisation were delighted to have received funding from Reaching Communities, National Lottery Fund to deliver a Multi-Media Youth Project following the huge success of the Tea N Talks Project.

The project itself would deliver youth work, particularly around issues relevant to young people's lives. Stepping Stones supports vulnerable families, young adults who are NEET, and deals on a regular basis with sensitive issues such as domestic violence and forced marriage.

The project would seek to generate and support a more positive narrative about life in Stoke-on-Trent by empowering up to 40 young 'influencers' to play their part in promoting this, and by engaging Stoke's aspiring creatives (e.g. via Staffordshire University, Keele University and local colleges) to help make these influencers' ideas a reality through our Multi Media Project. The project consisted of three elements: Youth Journalist Project, Film Five Series and Theatre Production.

The youth journalist project engaged with approximately twenty young people who worked on different aspects of the project. Though this project we dealt with issues that young people faced in the city of Stoke on Trent which was identified by young people themselves working on the project but at the same time had a wider impact on the people involved through providing opportunities to upskill their knowledge in literacy communication and networking skills. Young people acquired new skills in the field of journalism and reporting relevant news to the locality and targeted audience as well as building on skills in photography and filming as well as learning how to conduct interviews with relevant parties. The magazine produced publish up to 1200 magazines per month that were distributed amongst schools colleges libraries and similar settings.

The films developed focused on a story or narrative about challenges that young people faced which would be produced to raise awareness of issues. These storylines for the films were identified through the young journalist project and monthly magazines that were produced.

The Theatre Production element of the project where a piece of drama, based upon the findings from the Journalists project was created in order to use it as a mechanism to visit schools and perform the piece in order to raise awareness and reach out to those who may be suffering from issues portrayed through this piece.

The last part of the multimedia project has continued to build upon the success of the COVID-19 funded project by yourselves. There have been 15 episodes that have taken place with an additional 3 as practice sessions and training before going live. We can confidently say that we were able to engage with almost 2000

people with each episode via various social media platforms. We also used Zoom to enable those who do not have social media to engage. This was on average around 30 participants. An added benefit to the project was that we were able to engage with people beyond Stoke-on-Trent which resulted in young people in other areas wanting to replicate the project in their areas. This has been ear-marked by our organisation as a potential extension of the project as part of our future plans.

Following the small references that has been made to existing work and the proposed project, it can be seen how the vast majority, if not all of the work we do, fits in with the three priorities of:

The project brought predominantly young people together in multiple ways. A key group of young people, who would essentially be influencers, came together and developed ideas, consultations, development plans and delivery by including their broader networks, community networks and social media platforms. They were able to ensure their voices were heard within their neighbourhoods, locality and the city by utilising the various strands to the project. This project proved to have a positive effect on how young people were perceived by their community and also provided key information to other organisations such as Stoke City Council, local colleges, universities and so on, that ultimately assisted them in tailoring their services in order to cater for young people more effectively. In turn, this strengthened relationships between generations, authorities and families, alongside empowering young people within their respective communities.

The work previously undertaken by Stepping Stones brought people together through youth clubs, coffee mornings, mother and toddler groups, study support sessions and most of the projects that has previously been mentioned. In addition, it brought people from all backgrounds together through the community events that we host as well as community lunches. Eating together always provides a platform that will enable discussions to take place thereby breaking down barriers. Before COVID-19, we hosted annual large scale theatre performances with additional family based fun activities that saw up to 400 people attend at the community centre, which is the heart of the community.

In addition to all the projects mentioned, it is important to note how Stepping Stones continues to bring organisations together through specific projects. For example, our involvement in the “Wider World Project” lead to us being asked to become a trainer after which we delivered training to over 50 early years settings and shared best practice. Being part of the Community First Panel enabled us to share our knowledge of groups who were doing fantastic work in the area and should be financially supported with grants. Working alongside numerous organisations on the Building a Better Britain Together enabled us to work alongside over 500 organisations across the country and help each other to provide key services to the community that we serve. These few examples will indicate the scope of this priority and how it is a fundamental key strength of our organisation.

Stepping Stones is seen as the heart of the community and is very well accessed by local people, families, communities and is now being used by other organisations and groups.

We were extremely successful in securing over £100K through the Community Investment Fund over 2 years that has been used in its entirety to improve the building and surrounding areas. For example, there used to be concerning levels of anti-social behaviour on Raymond Street, which is where we are located, during evening hours. This would include drug abuse and petty crime. Through the grant, we were able to install CCTV cameras that were clearly positioned to make people aware of their presence. The anti-social behaviour almost immediately stopped whereby the surrounding neighbours benefitted from the relief of having to deal with these issues. As a result, we have seen more people using the route to go on walks etc which was not the case before the cameras were installed.

Through the grant, we were able to fully refurbish the kitchen on the first floor which now enables healthy and nutritious food to be prepared for our nursery children, etc, but we have also created a brand new kitchen space on the ground floor. This new facility together with the brand new hall space created on the ground floor

has enabled us to bring the community, professionals and families together in a beautiful, secure and welcoming space. The new kitchen on the ground floor has enabled community events to be run with the added value of being able to serve food and access refreshments more efficiently, whilst maintaining the security of the nursery on the first floor.

Prior to the funding, our main entrance was tucked away around the back of the building, resulting in reduced visibility, missed opportunities and lack of presence. The building resembled a row of houses rather than an organisation, where signage was also an issue. Following the grant, we were able to create a brand new, eye catching, modern and sleek fully secure entrance, to the front of the property. The wider door has enabled disability access and security has been maximised whereby people can only enter the building if they are permitted access by a member of staff. This has ensured that children, young people and families are safe from intruders etc.

The funds have also allowed us to create a more attractive front with raised flower beds, alongside getting the community involved in planting flowers and plants to ensure that they feel involved in the local environment. The back garden space has also been improved upon and is a beautiful space for our children, young people and families to access.

Stepping Stones works closely with the community police officers, whereby we are regularly asked about recommendations in how to deal with certain community issues. We have been involved with developing plans in how to improve the locality and work with local people and are seen as a pinnacle presence. In addition to this, we have also worked with Shelton Environmental Awareness Campaign to assist them to undertake environmental projects. This has been through providing a meeting space and volunteering wherever possible too. Our young people have undertaken community litter picks and have carried out projects around environmental issues.

The project was able to impact on places and spaces through raising awareness of local issues through the journalism and film production. Through group research, interviews and collaborative work, young people, with the support of mentors, highlighted positive things happening in the locality as well as raising awareness of issues of concern. Through the existing improvements already made at Stepping Stones, young people proved to benefit from the beautiful and safe environment already created together with the recording studio that was developed with the support of the Community Investment Fund from Stoke City Council.

The Multi-Media Project will continue to run for a few more months in the new financial year, after which it is our intention to reapply in order to continue the amazing work that we have been able to achieve through the support of Reaching Communities.

Accounts

THE TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31.03.21 FOR STEPPING STONES COMMUNITY ORGANISATION, 75 RAYMOND STREET, HANLEY, STOKE ON TRENT, ST1 4DP. PLEASE SEE THE CHARITIES DATA BASE UPDATE 2011 FOR THE NAMES OF TRUSTEES.

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The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held in April 2020. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity.

This year has proven to be one that has involved many challenges, obstacles and embedding the need to identify new ways of working due to the national and international pandemic that was Covid-19. As a result of this we had to overcome overwhelming issues that needed to be addressed and as an organisation, we had to follow national government guidelines in terms of what projects could legally continue and those that would have to stop during lockdown.

Our nursery provision, although initially closed for a short period during the first lockdown, opened its doors to keyworkers and vulnerable families, including to children with special needs. Before this could take place, a robust training and awareness program was implemented for all staff and volunteers in terms of the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 and what to do should they or family members present with any of these symptoms. As a result of this, we were able to manage the spreading of the virus well. Parents and families of children in the nursery were educated about the virus through regular contact with the manager and deputy manager who held live questions and answers sessions through "Zoom" and were always reachable to assist and provide advice and support wherever necessary.

As we opened up for all families, we had to implement a process of re-establishing confidence in the families that had not yet returned out of fear of the virus by focusing on the measures that we had put in place to reduce the spread of the disease. We invested in several contactless hand sanitizer dispensers that were mounted around the building, lavatories and entrances, having clear signs on the need to use hand sanitizers on entry into the building and after using the washroom facilities, social distancing tape where appropriate was used, contactless thermometers were purchased and new policies were developed and published for all parents and guests to become aware of. However, as we

were aware of some families who have English as a second language or do not understand English, some of our multi-lingual team spent time with families to explain the new procedures in their first language.

This led onto developing an informative film, where we approached a local paramedic, who had also featured on BBC's "Ambulance" to work with us. Together we produced a short documentary style film that explained what the virus was, and the steps required to stop the spread. This film was circulated across social media and went viral.

In addition to the above, home activity packs were created on a weekly basis to enable our nursery children to continue learning at home in some way, shape or form. The packs included sound boxes, phonics building blocks designed by our team, reading books, small arts and crafts activities and worksheets. Parents were regularly informed about how to use them and extended learning ideas. We also supported families who were economically deprived with food parcels and clothing through networking with other charitable organisations and also teamed up by volunteering with them to enhance their offer to the local community. The nursery became a key point of communication for countless families when seeking help. This help included but was not limited to support in mental health, domestic abuse and those feeling isolated and lonely. Children continued to develop and progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and we used this time to identify more ways to improve the nursery and outdoor areas.

We were recognised for all the work that we were doing for the community in terms of raising awareness about the virus, after which we were contacted by the NHS and Councillor to help facilitate a local community testing service next door to Stepping Stones. We collaborated in providing this offer and utilised the power of social media to give a virtual tour of the what to expect. Live sessions were conducted where the Chair of Stepping Stones interviewed staff who were undertaking testing to explain the process where we also had a volunteer to undertake the lateral flow test to inform people in what to expect. This process resulted in the local uptake of testing increasing dramatically. We also provided broadband for 3 months of the testing process as there was no internet connection prior to the current arrangements.

A third successful bid to the Community Investment Fund has meant that we have been able to plan and begin to implement further improvements to the building. We will be creating a new, fully accessible and secure door to the garden areas from a new point of entry, allowing better flow and pleasing aesthetics. The new entrance to the garden will mean that when we use the hall for the nursery children during the summer period in particular, we can implement free flow in terms of teaching, learning, pedagogy and facilitating the children to be able to lead on their own learning by following their individual points of interest. We invested funds into developing more resources in the outdoor area which would enable children to explore more through outdoor learning opportunities as well as developing the area of physical development. The outdoor surface at the front of the property was also resurfaced.

We will also be able to host community events where the gardens can also be used and have more choice for local people. Furthermore, a recording studio is being developed to create facilities for a future radio station for young people, recording podcasts, recording music, poetry and short stories. The intention is also to network with other organisations who may want to use the facilities too.

A series of shows were developed through DCMS funding, administered by the National Lottery Fund, to keep young people including young vulnerable adults, connected whilst in the Covid-19 pandemic through online “live shows” that were streamed via Facebook, Instagram and Zoom. The show was hosted by young people aged between 16 and 24, addressing key factors that young people may be suffering from through the pandemic such as depression, unhealthy eating, cyber bullying, feeling isolated and so on. Questions were asked via direct live calls and comments made on social media.

Local young people, mainly aged between 14 and 24 benefitted with an added focus on the Black and Minority Ethnic communities, residing in Stoke-on-Trent. The project provided a platform for people who were feeling disconnected, isolated, depressed and those are suffering emotionally, mentally and physically to connect with others and feel like there are people out there who care, are concerned, can help and are there for them. It ensured that young people who may have suffered some kind of abuse such as emotional, physical or domestic abuse could be identified and provided with the support that they required. As our Chair person, Fahmida Rahman, is now part of the “Early Help and Prevention Board” we have a wider scope of support to services than we have previously had. Stepping Stones was identified as a key organisation that can help shape the plans around Early Help for vulnerable families and was asked to join the board by Stoke City Local Authority. This places us in a key position both at strategic level and grassroots level to really make a difference in the city and be a voice for BAME communities.

Stepping Stones has a proven track record of successful engagement with the local community, young people and children. It has also been recognised by other organisations in the City, including the Local Authority and in particular the Community Cohesion Manager as well as the Education Department for being instrumental in engagement with BAME communities and families. We have developed over a decade of experience and our skills, knowledge and experience is being used by mainstream and other organisations to inform their planning and delivery of services. Our team of staff and volunteers reflect the ethnic make-up of the locality and have a diverse range of people behind our projects. Over the years, we have been able to build a strong relationship of trust with the community and have been very effective when delivering projects.

Our work has complimented the Local Authorities’ and national strategy to support vulnerable people and provide the essential services needed.

We have remained connected with the community via social media, our whatsapp group, zoom conference calls, phone calls, etc. Our young people, parents and people who have contacted us via social media, who have been mainly from BAME backgrounds, have expressed how disconnected they felt and the impact of being isolated from those whom they are friends with, family and their social circles has affected them. We have had to

support young people who have fallen into depression, having frequent fall-outs with their parents, feeling trapped at home and having a sense of hopelessness. We have also had to support young people who have a bereavement. All of these factors resulted in a discussion around what we can do as an organisation that will provide a safe, effective and consistent platform to support. This would also need to be culturally appropriate and consider any issues that would require a more sensitive approach. Young people informed us that social media is the way that they will feel connected due to all the restrictions and fear of contracting the virus. It was then suggested that we run a “live” talk show style project that will empower, give young people the opportunity to feel connected, ask questions and feel part of something.

As a result we engaged with over 1000 young people every week through the pandemic offering support, help and advice. Added value to the project was that several jobs were created, young people directly involved in the project were given training, new skills acquired, access to professional consultancy, experience in media, widening networks and so much more was achieved.

In addition to the live shows, we also created a series of children’s shows that was delivered and hosted by younger children, throughout the lockdown. Fun arts and crafts activities were shared, short stories, and small Covid-19 awareness messages were shared. As a result, young people from all across the UK engaged with the show which resulted in our children’s show being aired in national television.

Adult health and social care had to take alternative forms given the situation. Sports sessions had to temporarily cease following national guidelines, which resulted in people feeling isolated and becoming unfit. Our sports team decided to try and support people at home to continue to remain fit utilising Zoom sessions as a way to keep in contact with one another and share badminton drills, circuit training using resources available at home and sharing healthy eating ideas. As restrictions began to lift, we organised socially distanced walks and outdoor activities.

As an organisation, we continued to grow our networks, partner with other organisations to enhance services, become involved with boards and represent BAME communities, improve our building and undertake further improvements, train our staff and volunteers, helped to raise awareness of Covid-19, benefits of testing and continued to provide support for vulnerable families, children and young people.

Stepping Stones Community Organisation
75 Raymond Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, ST1 4DP
T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2020-March 2021

Receipts

Stoke on Trent City Council	£73,775.00
Donations	£9500.00
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport(Managed by National Lottery)	£81,810.00
Community Investment Fund	£25,000.00
Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£3000.00
Staffs Community Foundation	£3000.00
Tutor Assessment Centre Fees	£2416.00
Total Receipt	£198,501.00

Expenditure

Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance. £10,800 budget used from DCMS rent allocation)	£19,960.00
Resurfacing front	£8,500.00
Resources	£9,640.00
Repainting Interior, maintenance and repair	£12,500.00
Garden equipment	£9,960.00
Utilities	£9,980.00
Sundries	£5,000.00
Restreaming fees	£660.00
Sessional Staff	£19,700.00
Project workers	£7,200.00
Website	£1500.00
Secure Intercom Supply & Installation	£1680.00
Assessment administration	£1450.00
DCMS Covid-19 Project Breakdown:	
3 Professional Cameras	£6000.00
Switch Board	£2500.00
Graphics Enabled Desktop	£1670.00
Laptops	£6600.00
Lighting	£600.00
Cables	£270.00
Condenser Mics and Stands	£1044.00

Scene Set Props	£1000.00
Stationery	£600.00
Interactive Screen	£1999.00
Hosts	£10,800.00
Project Manager	£7200.00
Set Technicians	£7200.00
Project Workers	£4800.00
Guest Speakers and Consultancy	£2400.00
Social Media Support Workers	£4800.00
Social Media Platforms Production	£1100.00
Marketing & Promotion	£3600.00
Phone, Mobile and Broadband	£660.00
Project Staff Resources	£7500.00

Total Expenditure	£180,073.00
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Balance carried over to April 2020	£18,428.00
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Restricted Funds £18,000 remaining for CIF project

Unrestricted funds remaining of £428.00.

Date	Electronically Signed
21/05/2021	F Rahman
21/05/2021	S Jahangir
21/05/2021	A Sajed
21/05/2021	R Hossein
21/05/2021	F Noor

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name Stepping Stones Community
Organisation

On accounts for the year
ended

March 2021

Charity no
(if any)

1145346



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Set out on pages

3 and 4

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

- In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention
1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joynal Abedin".

Date:

08/06 /2021

Name:

Joynal Abedin

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Business owner with over 15years experience of financial accounting, management accounting, business finance, payroll and understanding markets and marketing.

Address:

31 Station Road, Sheffield, S35 2XE

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

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 T: 01782 499430 E: info@steppingstones.uk.com

Receipts and Payments Account April 2020-March 2021

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Donations	£9500.00
DCMS	£81,810.00
Community Investment Fund	£25,000.00
Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£3000.00
Staffs Community Foundation	£3000.00
Tutor Assessment Centre Fees	£2416.00

Total Receipt **£198,501.00**

Expenditure

Rent (Inclusive of water rates, business rates and insurance. £10,800 budget used from DCMS rent allocation)	£19,960.00
Resurfacing front	£8,500.00
Resources	£9,640.00
Repainting Interior, maintenance and repair	£12,500.00
Garden equipment	£9,960.00
Utilities	£9,980.00
Sundries	£5,000.00
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Project workers	£7,200.00
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DCMS Covid-19 Project Breakdown:	
3 Professional Cameras	£6000.00
Switch Board	£2500.00
Graphics Enabled Desktop	£1670.00
Laptops	£6600.00
Lighting	£600.00
Cables	£270.00
Condenser Mics and Stands	£1044.00
Scene Set Props	£1000.00

Stationery	£600.00
Interactive Screen	£1999.00
Hosts	£10,800.00
Project Manager	£7200.00
Set Technicians	£7200.00
Project Workers	£4800.00
Guest Speakers and Consultancy	£2400.00
Social Media Support Workers	£4800.00
Social Media Platforms Production	£1100.00
Marketing & Promotion	£3600.00
Phone, Mobile and Broadband	£660.00
Project Staff Resources	£7500.00

Total Expenditure	£180,073.00
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Balance carried over to April 2020	£18,428.00
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Restricted Funds £18,000 remaining for CIF project

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OBJECTIVES OF THE CHARITY

For the benefit of the public in Stoke on Trent, in particular but not exclusively members of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities by:

- a. The advancement of education and training
- b. To advance in life and help young people by the provision of recreational and leisure time activities provided in the interest of social welfare, desire to improve their conditions of life and develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

The charity is managed by three holding trustees and two to four elected trustees elected every three years by AGM. The next elections were held in April 2020. The committee meets on the 28th of every month to discuss business of the charity.

This year has proven to be one that has involved many challenges, obstacles and embedding the need to identify new ways of working due to the national and international pandemic that was Covid-19. As a result of this we had to overcome overwhelming issues that needed to be addressed and as an organisation, we had to follow national government guidelines in terms of what projects could legally continue and those that would have to stop during lockdown.

Our nursery provision, although initially closed for a short period during the first lockdown, opened its doors to keyworkers and vulnerable families, including to children with special needs. Before this could take place, a robust training and awareness program was implemented for all staff and volunteers in terms of the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 and what to do should they or family members present with any of these symptoms. As a result of this, we were able to manage the spreading of the virus well. Parents and families of children in the nursery were educated about the virus through regular contact with the manager and deputy manager who held live questions and answers sessions through “Zoom” and were always reachable to assist and provide advice and support wherever necessary.

As we opened up for all families, we had to implement a process of re-establishing confidence in the families that had not yet returned out of fear of the virus by focusing on the measures that we had put in place to reduce the spread of the disease. We invested in several contactless hand sanitizer dispensers that were mounted around the building, lavatories and entrances, having clear signs on the need to use hand sanitizers on entry into the building and after using the washroom facilities, social distancing tape where appropriate was used, contactless thermometers were purchased and new policies were developed and published for all parents and guests to become aware of. However, as we were aware of some families who have English as a second language or do not understand English, some of our multi-lingual team spent time with families to explain the new procedures in their first language.

This led onto developing an informative film, where we approached a local paramedic, who had also featured on BBC’s “Ambulance” to work with us. Together we produced a short documentary style film that explained what the virus was, and the steps required to stop the spread. This film was circulated across social media and went viral.

In addition to the above, home activity packs were created on a weekly basis to enable our nursery children to continue learning at home in some way, shape or form. The packs included sound boxes, phonics building blocks designed by our team, reading books, small arts and crafts activities and worksheets. Parents were

regularly informed about how to use them and extended learning ideas. We also supported families who were economically deprived with food parcels and clothing through networking with other charitable organisations and also teamed up by volunteering with them to enhance their offer to the local community. The nursery became a key point of communication for countless families when seeking help. This help included but was not limited to support in mental health, domestic abuse and those feeling isolated and lonely. Children continued to develop and progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and we used this time to identify more ways to improve the nursery and outdoor areas.

We were recognised for all the work that we were doing for the community in terms of raising awareness about the virus, after which we were contacted by the NHS and Councillor to help facilitate a local community testing service next door to Stepping Stones. We collaborated in providing this offer and utilised the power of social media to give a virtual tour of the what to expect. Live sessions were conducted where the Chair of Stepping Stones interviewed staff who were undertaking testing to explain the process where we also had a volunteer to undertake the lateral flow test to inform people in what to expect. This process resulted in the local uptake of testing increasing dramatically. We also provided broadband for 3 months of the testing process as there was no internet connection prior to the current arrangements.

A third successful bid to the Community Investment Fund has meant that we have been able to plan and begin to implement further improvements to the building. We will be creating a new, fully accessible and secure door to the garden areas from a new point of entry, allowing better flow and pleasing aesthetics. The new entrance to the garden will mean that when we use the hall for the nursery children during the summer period in particular, we can implement free flow in terms of teaching, learning, pedagogy and facilitating the children to be able to lead on their own learning by following their individual points of interest. We invested funds into developing more resources in the outdoor area which would enable children to explore more through outdoor learning opportunities as well as developing the area of physical development. The outdoor surface at the front of the property was also resurfaced.

We will also be able to host community events where the gardens can also be used and have more choice for local people. Furthermore, a recording studio is being developed to create facilities for a future radio station for young people, recording podcasts, recording music, poetry and short stories. The intention is also to network with other organisations who may want to use the facilities too.

A series of shows were developed through DCMS funding, administered by the National Lottery Fund, to keep young people including young vulnerable adults, connected whilst in the Covid-19 pandemic through online “live shows” that were streamed via Facebook, Instagram and Zoom. The show was hosted by young people aged between 16 and 24, addressing key factors that young people may be suffering from through the pandemic such as depression, unhealthy eating, cyber bullying, feeling isolated and so on. Questions were asked via direct live calls and comments made on social media.

Local young people, mainly aged between 14 and 24 benefitted with an added focus on the Black and Minority Ethnic communities, residing in Stoke-on-Trent. The project provided a platform for people who were feeling disconnected, isolated, depressed and those are suffering emotionally, mentally and physically to connect with others and feel like there are people out there who care, are concerned, can help and are there for them. It ensured that young people who may have suffered some kind of abuse such as emotional, physical or domestic abuse could be identified and provided with the support that they required. As our Chair person, Fahmida Rahman, is now part of the “Early Help and Prevention Board” we have a wider scope of support to services than we have previously had. Stepping Stones was identified as a key organisation that can help shape the plans around Early Help for vulnerable families and was asked to join the board by Stoke City Local Authority. This places us in a key position both at strategic level and grassroots level to really make a difference in the city and be a voice for BAME communities.

Stepping Stones has a proven track record of successful engagement with the local community, young people and children. It has also been recognised by other organisations in the City, including the Local Authority and in particular the Community Cohesion Manager as well as the Education Department for being instrumental in engagement with BAME communities and families. We have developed over a decade of experience and our

skills, knowledge and experience is being used by mainstream and other organisations to inform their planning and delivery of services. Our team of staff and volunteers reflect the ethnic make-up of the locality and have a diverse range of people behind our projects. Over the years, we have been able to build a strong relationship of trust with the community and have been very effective when delivering projects.

Our work has complimented the Local Authorities' and national strategy to support vulnerable people and provide the essential services needed.

We have remained connected with the community via social media, our whatsapp group, zoom conference calls, phone calls, etc. Our young people, parents and people who have contacted us via social media, who have been mainly from BAME backgrounds, have expressed how disconnected they felt and the impact of being isolated from those whom they are friends with, family and their social circles has affected them. We have had to support young people who have fallen into depression, having frequent fall-outs with their parents, feeling trapped at home and having a sense of hopelessness. We have also had to support young people who have a bereavement. All of these factors resulted in a discussion around what we can do as an organisation that will provide a safe, effective and consistent platform to support. This would also need to be culturally appropriate and consider any issues that would require a more sensitive approach. Young people informed us that social media is the way that they will feel connected due to all the restrictions and fear of contracting the virus. It was then suggested that we run a "live" talk show style project that will empower, give young people the opportunity to feel connected, ask questions and feel part of something.

As a result we engaged with over 1000 young people every week through the pandemic offering support, help and advice. Added value to the project was that several jobs were created, young people directly involved in the project were given training, new skills acquired, access to professional consultancy, experience in media, widening networks and so much more was achieved.

In addition to the live shows, we also created a series of children's shows that was delivered and hosted by younger children, throughout the lockdown. Fun arts and crafts activities were shared, short stories, and small Covid-19 awareness messages were shared. As a result, young people from all across the UK engaged with the show which resulted in our children's show being aired in national television.

Adult health and social care had to take alternative forms given the situation. Sports sessions had to temporarily cease following national guidelines, which resulted in people feeling isolated and becoming unfit. Our sports team decided to try and support people at home to continue to remain fit utilising Zoom sessions as a way to keep in contact with one another and share badminton drills, circuit training using resources available at home and sharing healthy eating ideas. As restrictions began to lift, we organised socially distanced walks and outdoor activities.

As an organisation, we continued to grow our networks, partner with other organisations to enhance services, become involved with boards and represent BAME communities, improve our building and undertake further improvements, train our staff and volunteers, helped to raise awareness of Covid-19, benefits of testing and continued to provide support for vulnerable families, children and young people.