

Sparkles: Supporting Children with Down's Syndrome: Annual Report 2024

Charity number: 1168036

16th January 2026

The trustees are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the period ending March 2025.

Chair of Trustees report

Between March 2024 and March 2025, Sparkles assisted more than 35 children with Down's Syndrome in Buckinghamshire and the surrounding areas.

- 29 children benefited from weekly specialised speech and language therapy,
- 34 received termly physiotherapy,
- 24 received termly occupational therapy.
- 1 child had access to our EHCP support with Emma Hopkins Consultancy, and 10 families received group EHCP from trained Trustees in SEND Law.

Fundraising:

An immense thank you from the trustees for the committee and the families who have been involved in fundraising this past year. As well as all those who have sponsored events, given donations and to the companies who have provided grants.

Thomley and the Big Step Forward

The Big Step Forward event took place during our annual meet up at Thomley, where over 50 families attended, and raised over £7,000!

Annual Christmas Party

In December 2024, we hosted the Sparkles traditional Christmas Party. The event featured interactive storytelling, games from Story Box, and Soft Play. In total, £1,400 was raised.

World Down syndrome Day

For World Down Syndrome Day 2025 we arranged for Hartbeeps Watford to come and do a session for our Sparklers. It was a lovely afternoon full of sensory play and music and dancing and really enjoyed by all those that attended.

We also held an online auction which raised £700.

Other Donations

Thanks to the hard work of Kate and Bushra we managed to receive a grant from Children in Need which made a significant difference to our accounts.

EHCP support package

The Sparkles Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) package aims to provide financial support and assistance to families of children with Down's syndrome. Sparkles has worked closely with Emma Hopkins Consultancy and their support ensures that children receive the high-quality EHCPs they need for a successful transition to school, helping families navigate the stressful EHCP process. The program also aims to reduce the need for families to go to tribunals and provides reports and evidence that can be used in tribunals, reducing costs for families. As a result of the EHCP support, families have been able to obtain much better EHCPs for their children. The final plans include clear provisions for therapy hours, specialized support, staff training, and specific techniques for children with special needs. The support offered by Sparkles has led to amazing outcomes for children with Down's syndrome. It ensures they start their school life with high-quality, specialist therapy at the recommended amount. The plans are legally binding and reflect the appropriate provision of therapy as agreed upon by the local authority when challenged.

With a lot of hard work behind the scenes we have managed to bring back the EHCP support package for those eligible families in this year's co-hort. Families eligible will need to agree to what Sparkles is able to offer them with Emma Hopkins and sign a formal agreement before support is put in place. This is to ensure that we do not get our selves into financial distress again. This support package is now going to be fully reviewed annually before the support package is offered to families and will only be available if we have the secure funds in place. Unfortunately, this means that the support offered to families may differ year to year, depending on funding. To make this more secure going forward we now have a separate bank account just for EHCP support, to ensure there is no risk going forward with our core therapies offered.

Our Vision

Our vision is that all children with Down's syndrome in Buckinghamshire and the surrounding areas throughout their early years, have the opportunity to reach their full potential speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide children with Down's syndrome with responsive, high quality therapeutic support that enriches their lives and supports their families.

Our Plan

What we achieved 24-25

We managed to achieve an immense amount of action points during this year, which I am very proud of as a lot of hard work went into achieving them.

Some things we achieved include:

- Ensuring local professionals are aware of Sparkles and how to contact us – Kate is in regular contact with local health visitors and has made several talks about Sparkles. Kirsty is Neonatal lead for Wexham Park hospital. Wexham has our leaflets in their welcome packs for families with Down Syndrome and is now in contact with the Bucks Neonatal lead to extend this.
- Review children's progress with therapists annually to ensure there is anonymised data to use for evaluation with potential funders – This now happens regularly with all our therapists. Mel also now provides targets for families.
- A regular newsletter is now sent out to families.

These can be seen in more detail in appendix A alongside the rest of our achievements in the past year, in our business plan which will be sent out with the minutes.

Our plan for this year

Reintroduction of our EHCP support package for school aged children, once Sparkles is back in a sustainable financial environment.

When we are in a financial position to do so, Sparkles will re hire a speech and language assistant for Mel, so that we are not over reliant on just the one therapist to cover both sites.

We will prioritise increasing our contacts amongst other groups and professionals to ensure that the parents of every child born with Down's Syndrome in our target area, knows of our existence and the support we can offer.

Plan for the following two years:

By May 2027 Sparkles will have fostered new links with outside groups and professionals, to ensure the parents of every child born with Down's Syndrome in Buckinghamshire and surrounding areas, is aware of our services. We will be receiving 50% of our funding from external sources and will have regular 6 monthly evaluations of our services. Our services will be reliable and sustainable with good succession planning for the board and Trustees. During this three-year period, we will reestablish our EHCP support package, and introduce a yearly speech and language summer camp for our Sparkles families.

By the end of year three we will have a firm succession plan in place for the following three years.

We will look at introducing a yearly speech and language summer camp for current Sparkles families.

Our objectives

By May 2027 Sparkles will have fostered new links with outside groups and professionals, to ensure the parents of every child born with Down's Syndrome in Buckinghamshire and surrounding areas, is aware of our services. We will be receiving 50% of our funding from external sources and will have regular 6 monthly evaluations of our services. Our services will be reliable and sustainable with good succession planning for the board and Trustees. During this three-year period, we will reestablish our EHCP support package, and introduce a yearly speech and language summer camp for our Sparkles families as well as regular meeting for families without a fundraising objective.

Strategic Objectives 2024-2027

1. To identify the number of families of children with Down's syndrome, in our target area, not currently receiving our services and make them aware of them by working closely with other organizations and professionals.
2. To evaluate our therapeutic services to ensure we are providing appropriate, high-quality services, which make the best use of our resources.
3. To establish external funding streams to create a financially sustainable service with funding from external sources composing 50% of our income by the end of year one.
4. To improve internal communications with parents and families to engage more parents to be more actively involved in Sparkles and enable annual succession planning as children leave Sparkles.
5. To improve our marketing and communication to support our objectives, by continuing with our current social media plan as well as introducing fresh marketing materials targeted at parents and at professionals.

Current Therapies

Currently Sparkles provides families with Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.

Speech and Language Therapy

Our SALT sessions occur at Children's Centres in High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Each session is 45 minutes long, weekly during term time and are held in groups of no more than three children and with their parent/carer. Children with Down's syndrome will usually experience challenges with communication to varying degrees, including receptive (understanding) language and expressive (speaking and composing sentences) language skills. Carried out by specialist speech and language therapists, the sessions are based on Makaton: a system designed to support spoken language where signs and symbols are used alongside speech, in spoken word order.

Sparkles speech and language therapy focuses on helping our children to talk, but also covers the essential skills needed to communicate effectively. The sessions are designed to engage our members from a young age and include: music, songs and games; listening and comprehension; turn taking; picture and word matching; lip seal and tongue control exercises; phonics; and combining words and sequencing sentences.

These sessions are provided at no cost to our families. Due to the lack of speech and language therapy available on the NHS and the inconsistent level of provision and that Sparkles are a lifeline, easing frustration by enabling communication and helping parents feel supported.

Physiotherapy

Sparkles offers 3 to 6 physiotherapy sessions each year with a specialist practitioner, depending on the age and needs of the child. The sessions are 45 minutes long, one-to-one with the child and parent/carer, and based in a children's physiotherapy clinic in High Wycombe.

Children with Down's syndrome can have low muscle tone and hyper-flexibility, which can make mastering gross motor skills harder. Delays in physical development are not uncommon.

Targeted physiotherapy helps our children achieve major milestones such as sitting, crawling and walking. The sessions are individually tailored, fun and child-centred, enabling children to reach their full potential and grow with confidence. Parents are provided with exercises and activities to follow at home to support their children.

These sessions are free to the families, except where late cancellation fees may apply.

Occupational Therapy

Sparkles, offers 3 to 6 occupational therapy sessions with The Pace Centre, each year, depending on the age and needs of the child. The sessions are 45 minutes long, one-to-one with the child and parent/carer.

With Pace we are working with a team of experienced occupational therapists who are highly skilled in assessing and treating children with learning, behavioural, sensory and developmental difficulties. Some children with Down's syndrome may experience sensitivity to certain food textures, sounds, bright lights and unfamiliar situations, resulting in distress and behavioural issues. Sparkles occupational therapy focuses on these and other sensory processing issues, based on a theory known as Sensory Integration: how our brain receives and processes sensory information so that we can do the things we need to do in our everyday lives.

This therapy is currently not offered by the NHS. The sessions give parents a greater understanding of sensory processing issues experienced by their child and strategies to limit their impact on their development and day-to-day life.

These sessions are free to the families, except where late cancellation fees may apply.

Achievements

This year's achievements include:

- The continued provision of speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and Occupational therapy. This is a huge achievement, given the global pandemic and the lockdown restrictions we have all faced and are still recovering from. As well as the worrying financial position we found ourselves in the previous year.
- The continued support for children in their transition to primary school. Children are provided with an intensive block of speech therapy over the summer holidays before starting school. The therapist liaises with schools to create a bespoke therapy package in order to ease the transition. This includes familiarisation with vocabulary relevant to the school environment and teachers, as well as the first topic to be covered at school. This is followed up by two visits to school during the first year. Teachers and teaching assistants have reported this to be a valuable resource that helps them support the child better and better understand their needs and abilities. Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy sessions also continue to be provided in the first year of school to ease the transition and help children settle into their new environment.
- To re-introduce the support for our families through the EHCP process by providing expertise and a representative to liaise with the local authority in the process and by reducing the cost to families by funding private assessments and consultancy fees. This support is now on hold until further notice.
- Securing amazing grants including Children In Need and Tesco's Groundwork.
- Continuing to hold amazing events throughout the year, and raising impressive funding
- Introducing meetings within year groups outside of our fundraising events so families.

Financial Review

A review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period.

A strong financial year for Sparkles Charity in FY 2024-25, with a positive net profit of £44,890. Our income was primarily driven by grant funding, complemented by consistent donations and successful fundraising. The main expenses were therapy costs, which are essential for our operations. Importantly, we have a healthy balance of cash and equivalents, providing a solid foundation for our future activities and ongoing support for our mission. Maintaining firm cash reserves is vital for the charity's stability and to ensure we can consistently provide essential therapies for our members. The trustees' goal was to reserve at least £45,000 by March 31, 2025, covering a year's worth of speech and language, physio, and occupational therapy.

Our cash reserves reaching £72,762 by March 31, 2025. This positive improvement successfully reverses the previous year's trend and exceeds our ideal reserve target of £45,000. Furthermore, the current fiscal year shows a strong positive performance with a net profit of £44,890. With this substantial increase in cash reserves, resuming or increasing EHCP support is now more

feasible, although we haven't yet reached the £80,000 target for full resumption. Grants are crucial in providing substantial funding, often for specific projects or operational needs. The substantial "BBC-Children in Need" grant significantly boosted our income, enabling broader support for our programs.

In conclusion, although the fiscal year 2023-24 presented various financial challenges, the Sparkles Account has demonstrated a notable recovery in the fiscal year 2024-25. The positive net profit and significantly restored cash reserves position the charity in a considerably stronger financial state, providing an optimistic perspective for sustained stability and the capacity to fulfil our future obligations.

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

Sparkles governing document is an association model constitution and the charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than its charity trustees.

Appointment of charity trustees

- (1) At every annual general meeting of the members of the CIO, 1/3rd of the charity trustees shall retire from office. If the number of charity trustees is not 3 or a multiple of 3, then the number nearest to 1/3rd shall retire from office, but if there is only 1 charity trustee, he or she shall retire;
- (2) The charity trustees to retire by rotation shall be those who have been longest in office since their last appointment or reappointment. If any trustees were last appointed or reappointed on the same day those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree among themselves) be determined by lot;
- (3) The vacancies so arising may be filled by the decision of the members at the annual general meeting; any vacancies not filled at the annual general meeting may be filled as provided in sub clause (5) of this clause;
- (4) The members or the charity trustees may at any time decide to appoint a new charity trustee, whether in place of a charity trustee who has retired or been removed in accordance with clause [15] (Retirement and removal of charity trustees), or as an additional charity trustee, provided that the limit specified in clause [12(3)] on the number of charity trustees would not as a result be exceeded;
- (5) A person so appointed by the members of the CIO shall retire in accordance with the provisions of sub-clauses (2) and (3) of this clause. A person so appointed by the charity trustees shall retire at the conclusion of the next annual general meeting after the date of his or her appointment, and shall not be counted for the purpose of determining which of the charity trustees is to retire by rotation at that meeting.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity name: Sparkles: Supporting Children with Down's syndrome

Registered Charity number: 1168036

Charity's principal address: 50 Scholars Walk, Langley, Slough, Berkshire, SL38LY

Trustees:

Kirsty MacCuish

Chair of Trustees

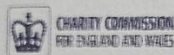
Graham Smith

Kate Broadway

Bushra Maqsood

Eszter Hegedus

Treasurer



Charity Name
Sparkles - Supporting Children with Down Syndrome

No (if any)
1168036

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from 01/04/2024 To 31/03/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Fundraising / Donations	73,642	-	-	73,642	26,511
Grants	-	18,709	-	18,709	-
Sparkles Lottery	2,580	-	-	2,580	-
Interest	549	-	-	549	338
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	76,771	18,709	-	95,480	26,849
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	76,771	18,709	-	95,480	26,849
A3 Payments					
SALT	23,879	-	-	23,879	-
Physiotherapy	11,745	-	-	11,745	-
OT	3,695	-	-	3,695	-
EHCP	4,493	-	-	4,493	-
Lottery Payouts	1,510	-	-	1,510	-
Event Expenses	4,694	-	-	4,694	-
Other Misc	574	-	-	574	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	50,590	-	-	50,590	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	50,590	-	-	50,590	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	26,181	18,709	-	44,890	26,849
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	27,872	-	-	27,872	-
Cash funds this year end	54,053	18,709	-	72,762	26,849

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

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	TSB	44,507	18,709	-
	Metro	9,546	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	54,053	18,709	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

OK

OK

OK

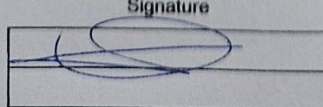
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature


Print Name
Kirsty MacCush

Date of approval
16/1/2025



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Sparkles – Supporting Children with Down Syndrome

On accounts for the year ended

31 st March 2025	Charity no (if any)	1168036
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Set out on pages

1-2
(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2025**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

8 / 1 / 2026

Name:

NIKESH PATEL

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

fca - ICAEW.

Address:

UNIT 4, CORNWALL ROAD
PINNER, MIDDLESEX, HA5 4UH

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

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

~ / A .
