

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales · Charity number 1177955

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2018-04-16

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

Contact

Address Stepping Forward UK
12a Southview Park
Caversham
Reading
RG4 5AF

Phone 01183751432

Email info@stepping-forward.org.uk

Website www.stepping-forward.org.uk

Activities

Objects: FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT THE RELIEF OF PEOPLE WITH LONG-TERM PHYSICAL, MENTAL, INTELLECTUAL OR SENSORY IMPAIRMENT DISABILITIES IN THE UK AND WORLDWIDE THROUGH:(1) THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY THE PROVISION OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION TO PROFESSIONALS IN AREAS RELATED TO DISABILITY ISSUES AND DELIVERING WORKSHOPS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.(2) THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY BY:(A) THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUNDS OF DISABILITY;(B) ADVANCING EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS IN EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY;(C) PROMOTING ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISABILITY;(D) CULTIVATING A SENTIMENT IN FAVOUR OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.(3) TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION BY PREVENTING INDIVIDUALS WITH LONG-TERM PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL DISABILITIES FROM BECOMING SOCIALLY EXCLUDED, RELIEVING THE NEEDS OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED AND ASSISTING THEM TO INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY:(A) EMPOWERING FAMILIES FACING LONG-TERM MENTAL AND/OR HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL BARRIERS;(B) PROVIDING EDUCATION AND INFORMATIVE SUPPORT TO ENABLE MAXIMUM EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES;(C) RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES AFFECTING INDIVIDUALS WITH LONG-TERM PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION;(D) ADMINISTRATING WORKSHOPS, FORUMS, ADVOCACY AND GENERAL SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH LONG-TERM MENTAL AND/OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS; AND(E) ADMINISTRATING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH LONG-TERM PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS.

Activities: Stepping Forward facilitates & accelerates access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all people affected by disability can live a full life. We run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training & support people to access essential support. We support a range of initiatives globally to promote the rights of disabled people.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Disability, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** People With Disabilities, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- Sierra Leone
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-07-31	£67,635	£63,211	-	-
2024-07-31	£87,206	£77,447	-	-
2023-07-31	£58,647	£52,627	-	-
2022-07-31	£48,193	£60,113	-	-
2021-07-31	£145,315	£170,266	-	-
2020-07-31	£66,658	£48,520	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
ROD LEITH	Chair	2017-10-01
David Soper		2019-06-02
SARAH SNOW		2017-12-01

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2024-2025



A Full Life for
Disabled People
and Carers

INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to promote access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all disabled people and carers can live a full life.

In the UK we run disability awareness sessions and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. For disabled people in the UK, a steep rise in the cost of living and ongoing cuts to government support continue to push many into extreme hardship. Our Disability Advice Service is

extremely busy as people come to us for support with benefits, equipment and resources. This year we have supported many people from the refugee community with essential support, including mobility equipment. Our Disability Advice Service was nominated for a Pride of Reading Award by a client who we have successfully supported with benefits advice a number of times over the years.

Multiple conflicts are taking place across the world as we write the introduction to this report and research shows that disabled people are always the worst affected in conflict situations. We continue to raise awareness of the issues faced by disabled people during war, adding our voice to forums and petitions.

Stepping Forward is committed to working with partners on raising the profile of the rights of disabled people and offering practical assistance wherever possible.

Stepping Forward UK

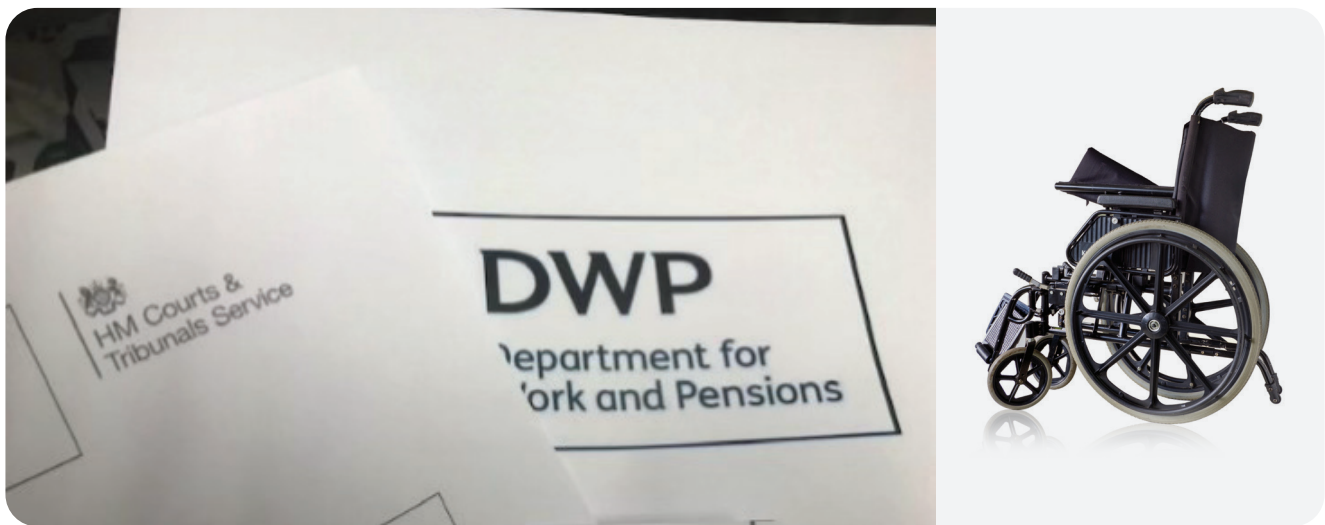
12A Southview Park, Marsack Street,
Reading, RG4 5AF

Registered Charity No. 1177955
info@stepping-forward.org.uk
www.stepping-forward.org.uk

UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.

DISABILITY ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE



Our Disability Advice and Support Service continued to deliver sessions and support this year. Funding from The National Lottery Community Fund's Awards for All, Berkshire Community Foundation, and other trusts and foundations enabled us to support individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties accessing essential resources and support. Our part-time Benefits Adviser has supported increasing numbers of people with applications, appeals and tribunals. We are seeing many disabled people and carers facing a reduction in income and changes to their benefits, and there is significant concern about the proposed changes to the support available for disabled people.

We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools, refugee groups and from individuals. Community members continue to recommend us via social media groups related to disability.

The other dimension of our Advice service is the one-to-one sessions where we identify the resource

needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. As well as holding face to face meetings in our office, when invited we take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities. This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. If requested, we accompany people to doctor/paediatrician appointments, to school meetings and elsewhere to ensure that our clients' needs are heard, documented and responded to appropriately. We have been present in the community at Reading Family Forum events where our stall attracted many visitors.

The practical support that we manage to secure for clients includes specialist furniture, mobility aids, waterproof mattresses, and IT and communication equipment.

DISABILITY AWARENESS

Why do young people go through 14 years of schooling and yet receive no education about disability issues? How can we develop the necessary understanding, acceptance, accommodation and infrastructure to ensure the rights of disabled people are met if we do not create the opportunities to learn about disability?

Disability awareness is a neglected issue which receives little priority and few resources. However failure to invest in this area has multiple impacts on the rights of people with disabilities.

Our disability awareness training is developed and delivered by disabled people. This work plays an important role in creating a better future for us all; disability awareness promotes inclusion, understanding and acceptance and benefits everyone. A third of people become disabled in their working life. We believe that disability awareness is an essential part of quality education and life-long learning; disability is part of the human experience, affecting friends, family and community. In the current funding climate we have found it increasingly difficult to secure grants for these sessions and will be making this area of work a greater priority over the next 12-18 months. Without education and awareness-raising on the rights of disabled people we will not see the changes that are urgently needed in our societies.

THE DISABILITY HUB

The Hub continues to be a vital resource for the community. Local organisation, Autangel, led by autistic adults, shares the space which is used for training and support groups.

The Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services, move out of offices or threatened with closure. The Disability Hub is available free of charge to all local groups working on disability issues, and at reduced costs to other voluntary sector groups. The Hub contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities. There is plenty of free parking outside.

We are a building and a resource offering support and advice on a range of issues related to disability, as well as a place for people to connect and create community. We have supported other organisations to access space in the business park and a new community of interest with shared goals for social justice is developing in this corner of Reading.

Currently four local disability organisations use the Hub as their registered address; others use the space for pop-up sessions, and meeting people for advice sessions. We also store items for a number of local charities in our store room where we have installed rack shelving.

In response to many small and micro-organisations now facing closure due to funding difficulties, Stepping Forward continued to offer support with

funding applications in the reporting year, assisting organisations to maintain essential support and services.

Last year the office unit above us became unexpectedly available for sale, at a very reasonable price, and Trustees decided to explore ways in which we could take on this space to expand our offer to the community. With a loan from Charity Bank we were able to secure the unit and we are now renting this space out to a local disability organisation who deliver recreational activities for children and adults. One year on this charity is now fundraising to buy the unit from us, having launched a capital campaign for this purpose.

We are delighted to have been able to secure a resource for an organisation supporting disabled people at a time when the voluntary sector is being priced out of Reading and the surrounding areas. Without affordable spaces to meet for advice, support and recreational activities the voluntary sector will become weaker and provision for disabled people will be negatively impacted. We are also pleased to 'pay it forward' as Stepping Forward also benefited from the generosity of a local benefactor who initially bought our unit and gave us time to run a successful capital campaign to buy the unit back from him. Reading is being transformed with new buildings and development but such initiatives must include services and facilities that meet the needs of all community members.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries.

We work internationally with Disabled People's Organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (eg transport, essential medication, university fees) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.



Protective sunscreen reduces skin cancer and saves lives.

SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

People with albinism in Sierra Leone face disabling stigma and are not expected to live beyond their thirties due to skin cancer. There is much that can be done to increase the life expectancy of people with albinism and we are working with the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) to provide support such as sunscreen, umbrellas, protective clothing, hats and sunglasses. We are collaborating with local environmental NGO Green Ways to source quality protective clothing items and have been able to secure free shipping from a generous supporter. We bought and shipped a variety of recommended skin care products, and some protective hats, much of it secured at substantially reduced costs from InKind Direct. We are grateful for this support.

AUTISM AND EPILEPSY INITIATIVES

We continue to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society, and shipped appropriate play resources to the autism school in Freetown this year, as well as period products for pupils.

We collaborated with partner organisations who support people with epilepsy, sending a variety of resources (toiletries, period products, books, school shoes and bags) that were distributed to beneficiaries.

Our bra collection initiative enabled us to send hundreds of quality second-hand bras to mothers of disabled children through our networks - who then sold them on, generating an essential income. There are few income-generating opportunities for carers of children with disabilities in Sierra Leone, and lack of income is the key obstacle that disabled people and carers share with us in our work. Evidence shows that people with disabilities are often poorer than their non-disabled peers in terms of access to education, healthcare, employment, income, social support, and civic involvement. We continue to explore opportunities for increasing the household income of those with whom we work, and are looking closely at Universal Basic Income (UBI) models with colleagues in our network. We hope to report more on this soon.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this year. This includes Visa Reading who collected bras at their offices on Earth Day again in April 2025. These bras were sent to mothers of disabled children in Sierra Leone to sell as part of an income generating initiative.

Our Trustees continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support, and volunteers help us with raffles, eBay sales and stalls in the community. We will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds. Supporters who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, can contact us for help with publicity and materials.

Some of our supporters this year:



Prepared by Stepping Forward UK Trustees

Images used in the report are taken by Stepping Forward or used with thanks and permission from Pixabay.

9 MAY 2026


Financial Summary 2024 to 2025

1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	1 Aug 2023-31 July 2024
Income				
Consultancy		2000	2000	998
Grants				
Coop Community Fund				1787.98
Awards for All	19448		19448	9900
Berks Community Fdn	2500		2500	0
Reading Borough Council	7900		7900	0
Postcode Society Trust				18200
Met Film Production				8000
Hub rental income		22380	22380	23140.9
Misc donations	980	12427.61	13407.61	25179.14
Total income	30828	36807.61	67635.61	87206
Expenditure				
Albinism Project		807.71	807.71	418.5
Autism Sierra Leone		134.57	134.57	8028.5
Charitable Activities		2487.45	2487.45	7062.59
Disability Advice service	37517.6		37517.6	25166.76
Epilepsy Sierra Leone		257.55	257.55	1562.9
Legal & professional fees				3580.78
Unit Purchase				10000
Fundraising costs		921.13	921.13	448.88
Gen Office expenses		1215.97	1215.97	239.07
Hub running costs	1294.86	6960.87	8255.73	8190.71
Loan interest		11524.09	11524.09	11718.9
Raffle				1000
Volunteer costs		90	90	30
other costs				618
Total expenditure	38812.46	24399.34	63211.8	52627
Surplus of income over expenditure	-7984.46	12408.27	4423.81	6,020
Opening bank balance	17487	5918	23405	18,278
CBILS Loan/capital repayment		-5346.32	5346.32	-4631.6
Surplus/ (loss)	-7,984	12408.27	9,758	9758
Closing bank balance	9503	12980	22483	23405

Balance Sheet as 31 July 2025

		1 Aug 2023-31 July 2024
Fixed asset = leasehold property Unit 1 and 2	290000	290,000
Debtor		0
Current asset - cash at bank	22483	23,405
Total assets	312483	313,405
Liability - Co-Op CBILS loan	-4,601	-8,236
Charity Bank loan for Unit 12B	-136,800	-138,362
Net balance sheet	171,082	166,537

Signed.....  R. Leith, Trustee 29.5.26

Independent Examiner:.....  Maria Baker MSc 29th May 2026

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Stepping Forward UK

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above CIO, Registered Charity number 1177955, for the year ended 31st July 2025.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity trustees of the CIO, 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 CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5)(b) of the Act.

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:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or;
- The accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

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

Signed



Maria Baker MSc, Independent Examiner

29 May 2026

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts



ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2023-2024

A FULL LIFE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AND CARERS

INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to facilitate and accelerate access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all disabled people and carers can live a full life.

In the UK we run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. For disabled people in the UK, a steep rise in the cost of living and ongoing cuts to government support continue to push many into extreme hardship. Our Disability Advice Service is extremely busy as people come to us for support with benefits, equipment and resources.

In the year 2023-2024, we cannot talk about disability internationally without mentioning Gaza, which is now 'home to the largest number of amputee children in modern history' (UN 2024). An average of 30 children a day undergo amputations, many without anaesthetic. We know that disabled people are always the worst affected in conflict situations and doctors in Gaza say that the deaths related to disease and non-battle injuries are many, and largely unrecorded. These deaths will be due to the lack of medication and ongoing supervision for diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, hypertension, and antibiotics for all types of infections. These additional deaths are estimated to number around 200,000 people (Dr Amer Shoaib 2024).

Stepping Forward is committed to working with partners on raising the profile of the rights of disabled people and offering practical assistance wherever possible.



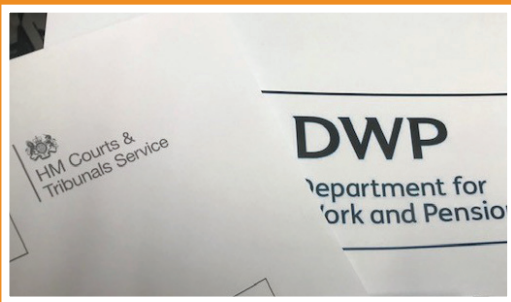
Stepping Forward UK

Registered Charity No. 1177955

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UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.



Our Benefits Adviser attends court most weeks, supporting people with tribunals.



Our Advice Service is helping people to access essential equipment.

DISABILITY ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Our Disability Advice and Support Service continued to deliver sessions and support this year. Funding from Awards for All, The Postcode Society Trust and other trusts and foundations enabled us to support individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties accessing essential resources and support. Our part-time Benefits Adviser has supported increasing numbers of people with applications, appeals and tribunals. We are seeing many disabled people and carers facing a reduction in income and changes to their benefits, and there is significant concern about the proposed changes to the support available for disabled people. Initial projections indicate that millions of disabled people will be negatively impacted.

We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools, refugee groups and from individuals. Community members continue to recommend us via social media groups related to disability.

The other dimension of our Advice service is the one-to-one sessions where we identify the resource needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. As well as holding face to face meetings in our office, when invited we take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities. This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. If requested, we accompany people to doctor/paediatrician appointments, to school meetings and elsewhere to ensure that our clients' needs are heard, documented and responded to appropriately.

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DISABILITY AWARENESS

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Our disability awareness training is developed and delivered by disabled people. This work plays an important role in creating a better future for us all; disability awareness promotes inclusion, understanding and acceptance and benefits everyone. A third of people become disabled in their working life. We believe that disability awareness is an essential part of quality education and life-long learning; disability is part of the human experience, affecting friends, family and community.

BRINGING ORGANISATIONS TOGETHER

Our annual Winter Draw once again raised more than £5,000 for local charitable organisations and groups working on disability issues. Organisations benefiting this year included Autism Berkshire, The Engine Shed, Rivertime Boat Trust, Reading Mencap, Medical Assistance Sierra Leone and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre (who sold the winning ticket to a supporter!). We are grateful to The David Brownlow Foundation for funding the prize of John Lewis vouchers, enabling us to raise substantial funds for ourselves and other organisations that are experiencing a severe shortage of resources.

We were pleased to be part of the IJAM Festival for young disabled people that took place in Reading in July. We sponsored the fully accessible toilet for this wonderful community event that aimed to create a festival that all young people could enjoy.

THE DISABILITY HUB

The Hub continues to be a vital resource for the community. Local organisation, Autangel, led by autistic adults, shares the space which is used for training and support groups.

The Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services, move out of offices or threatened with closure. The Disability Hub is available free of charge to all local groups working on disability issues, and at reduced costs to other voluntary sector groups. The Hub contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities. There is plenty of free parking outside.

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Currently four local disability organisations use the Hub as their registered address; others use the space for pop-up sessions, and meeting people for advice sessions. We also store items for a number of local charities in our store room where we have installed rack shelving.

In response to many small and micro-organisations now facing closure due to funding difficulties, Stepping Forward continued to offer support with funding applications in the reporting year, assisting organisations to maintain essential support and services.

This year the office unit above us became unexpectedly available for sale, at a very reasonable price, and Trustees decided to explore ways in which we could take on this space to expand our offer to the community. By the end of the financial year we had secured a loan from Charity Bank, enabling us to purchase the unit above, doubling our available space. We are now renting this out to a local disability organisation who deliver recreational activities for children and adults. We are open to disability organisations buying this space from us: our priority was to secure resources for the voluntary sector, and organisations supporting disabled people in particular, as the sector is being priced out of Reading and the surrounding areas. Without affordable spaces to meet for advice, support and recreational activities the voluntary sector will become weaker and provision for disabled people will be negatively impacted. Development initiatives must include the needs of all community members.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries.

We work internationally with Disabled People’s Organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (eg transport, essential medication, university fees) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.



Director Gibrilla Jalloh and Mary Penn-Timity, Chair of the Browne-Penn Autism School, Sierra Leone give a guided tour of the school May 2024.

AUTISM INITIATIVES

We continue to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society, and shipped some resources for the autism school this year. The relationship that was established with Met Film after the release of the award-winning film ‘The Reason I Jump’ (which featured the work of SLAS) has continued. We have been able to work with Met Film to generate more resources for the work of the Sierra Leone Autistic Society. One of our trustees was able to visit SLAS and the school in Sierra Leone in May 2024 and we continue to explore ways to support this important work.



SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

People with albinism in Sierra Leone face disabling stigma and are not expected to live beyond their thirties due to skin cancer. There is much that can be done to increase the life expectancy of people with albinism and we are working with the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) to provide support such as sunscreen, umbrellas, protective clothing, hats and sunglasses. We are collaborating with local environmental NGO Green Ways to source quality protective clothing items and have been able to secure free shipping from a generous supporter. We were able to buy and ship a variety of recommended skin care products, and some protective hats, much of it secured at substantially reduced costs from Inkind Direct. We are grateful for this support.

Protective sunscreen reduces skin cancer and saves lives.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this year. This includes Visa Reading who collected bras at their offices on Earth Day in April. These bras were sent to mothers of disabled children in Sierra Leone to sell as part of an income generating initiative.

Our Trustees continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support, and volunteers help us with raffles, Ebay sales and stalls in the community. We will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds. Supporters who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, can contact us for help with publicity and materials.

Some of our supporters this year:



Prepared by Stepping Forward UK Trustees

26 May 2025

Main photo on front page and two images on page 2 used with thanks & credit to Pixabay; other photos taken by Trustees with permission.

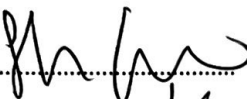
Financial Summary 2023-24

1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	1 Aug 2022-31 July 2023
Income				
Consultancy		998	998	50
Grants				
Coop Community Fund	1787.98		1787.98	
Awards for All	9900		9900	
Souter Charitable Trust			0	3600
Shanly Foundation			0	3000
Screwfix Foundation			0	4500
Postcode Society Trust	18200		18200	
Met Film Production	8000		8000	10000
The Earley Charity			0	4088
Hub rental income		23140.9	23140.90	11945
Misc donations	3200	21979.14	25179.14	21464
Total income	41087.98	46118.04	87206.02	58647
Expenditure				
Albinism Project		418.50	418.50	300
Autism Sierra Leone	8028.50		8028.50	10034
Charitable Activities		7062.59	7062.59	3929
Disability Advice service	25166.76		25166.76	16750
Epilepsy Sierra Leone		1562.90	1562.90	6006
Epilepsy Uganda				277
Legal & professional fees		3580.78	3580.78	4574
Unit Purchase		10000.00	10000.00	
Fundraising costs		448.88	448.88	312
Gen Office expenses	239.07		239.07	519
Hub running costs		8190.71	8190.71	7053
Loan interest		11718.90	11718.90	
Raffle		1000.00	1000.00	1000
Ukraine				922
Volunteer costs		30.00	30.00	333
other costs				618
Total expenditure	33434.33	44013.26	77447.59	52627
Surplus of income over expendi	7653.65	2104.78	5,127	6,020
Opening bank balance	9,833	8,445	18,278	15,427
CBILS Loan/capital repayment		-4631.6	-4631.6	-3170
Surplus/ (loss)	7,654	2,105	9,758	6020
Closing bank balance	17,487	5,918	23,405	18278

Balance Sheet

		1 Aug 2022-31 July 2023
Fixed asset = leasehold property Unit 1 and 2	290,000	140,000
Debtor		2,000
Current asset - cash at bank	<u>23,405</u>	<u>18,278</u>
Total assets	<u>313,405</u>	<u>160,278</u>
Liability - Co-Op CBILS loan	(8,236)	11,514
Charity Bank loan for Unit 12B	(138,632)	
Net balance sheet	<u><u>166,537</u></u>	<u><u>148,764</u></u>

Signed..... Sarah Snow, Trustee

Independent Examiner:.....

A. Graves 30 May 2025

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Stepping Forward UK

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above CIO, Registered Charity number 1177955, for the year ended 31st July 2024.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

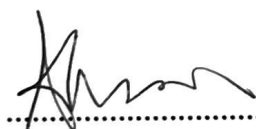
I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or;
- The accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

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

Signed



..... Independent Examiner

30 May 2025

MR ANDREW GRAVES

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

2022-2023

A FULL LIFE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AND CARERS



INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to facilitate and accelerate access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all disabled people and carers can live a full life.

In the UK we run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. For disabled people in the UK, the increase in energy prices, alongside a steep rise in the cost of living and cuts to government support, continues to push many into extreme hardship. Our Disability Advice Service is extremely busy as people come to us for support with benefits, equipment and resources.

Stepping Forward is committed to working with partners on raising the profile of the rights of disabled people and offering practical assistance wherever possible.

Stepping Forward UK

12A Southview Park, Marsack Street, Reading, RG4 5AF

Registered Charity No. 1177955

info@stepping-forward.org.uk

www.stepping-forward.org.uk

UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.



Our Benefits Adviser Kevin Jackson has increased his hours this year as other local support services have closed due to the cost of living crisis.

DISABILITY ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Our Disability Advice and Support Service continued to deliver sessions and support this year. Funding from Awards for All, The Shanly Foundation and other trusts and foundations enabled us to support individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties accessing essential resources and support. Our part-time Benefits Adviser has supported increasing numbers of people with applications, appeals and tribunals. We are seeing many disabled people and carers facing a reduction in income and changes to their benefits, and there is significant concern about the proposed changes to the support available for disabled people.

We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools, refugee groups and from individuals. Community members continue to recommend us via social media groups related to disability.

The other part of our Advice service is the one-to-one sessions where we identify the resource needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. As well as holding face to face meetings in our office, when invited we take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities. This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. If requested, we accompany people to doctor/ paediatrician appointments, to school meetings and elsewhere to ensure that our clients' needs are heard, documented and responded to appropriately. The practical support that we have managed to secure during the year for clients includes extra strong furniture, a mobility scooter, waterproof mattresses, IT equipment and other essentials.



DISABILITY AWARENESS

How can we develop the necessary understanding, acceptance, accommodation and infrastructure to ensure the rights of disabled people are met if we do not create the opportunities to learn about disability?



Disability awareness is a neglected issue which receives little priority and few resources. However failure to invest in this area has multiple impacts on the rights of people with disabilities.

Our training is developed and delivered by disabled people. This work plays an important role in creating a better future for us all; disability awareness promotes inclusion, understanding and acceptance and benefits everyone. A third of people become disabled in their working life. We believe that disability awareness is an essential part of quality education and life-long learning; disability is part of the human experience, affecting friends, family and community.

BRINGING ORGANISATIONS TOGETHER

We held our annual Winter Draw this year, raising nearly £5,000 for local charitable organisations and groups working on disability issues. Benefiting organisations included Autism Berkshire, The Engine Shed, Green Health Thames Valley, Rivertime Boat Trust, Reading Mencap, Medical Assistance Sierra Leone and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. We are grateful to The Brownlow Foundation for funding the John Lewis Vouchers prize, enabling us to raise substantial funds for ourselves and other organisations that are experiencing a severe shortage of resources.

THE DISABILITY HUB

The Hub is developing into a vital resource for the community. Local organisation, Autangel, led by autistic adults, is now sharing the space which is used for training and support groups.

The Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services, move out of offices or threatened with closure. The Disability Hub is available free of charge to all local groups working on disability issues, and at reduced costs to other voluntary sector groups. The

Hub contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities. There is plenty of free parking outside.

We are a building and a resource offering support and advice on a range of issues related to disability, as well as a place for people to connect and create community. We have supported other organisations to access space in the business park and a new community of interest with shared goals for social justice is developing in this corner of Reading.

Currently four local disability organisations use the Hub as their registered address, after budget cuts and new ways of working during the lockdowns caused them to move out of rented office space. Some organisations use the space just for pop-up sessions, and meeting people for advice sessions. We also store items for a number of local charities in our store room where we have installed rack shelving.

In response to many small and micro-organisations now facing closure due to funding difficulties, Stepping Forward continued to offer support with funding applications in the reporting year, assisting organisations to maintain essential support and services.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries.

We work internationally with Disabled People's Organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (eg transport, essential medication, university fees) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.



SUPPORT TO DISABLED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE

In response to the war in Ukraine, we set up a fundraising page to generate funds for the Ukrainian NGO Fight for Right. We have been sending all funds generated to the NGO which is working to support and evacuate disabled people in Ukraine.



The Browne-Penn School, delivering education to autistic children, will soon have a new purpose-built premises in Freetown.

AUTISM INITIATIVES

We continue to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society and their vision to create an Autism Inclusion Centre in Freetown, with two outreach Hubs in the rural districts. We have assisted with the identification of funding sources and shipped resources for the Centre, as well as practical items for children and carers attending the provision. The relationship that was established with Met Film after the release of the award-winning film 'The Reason I Jump' (which featured the work of SLAS) has continued. We have been able to work with Met Film to generate more resources for the work of the Sierra Leone Autistic Society. SLAS have secured further funding support through their networks and the new centre is nearing completion.



Hats and protective sunscreen reduce the risk of skin cancer for people with albinism.

SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

We have been able to provide further support to the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) in the form of sunscreen, period products, and other items such as umbrellas, protective clothing, hats and sunglasses. We are collaborating with local environmental NGO Green Ways to source items and have been able to secure free shipping in this period. We were able to buy and ship other skin care products, and some protective clothing, much of it secured at reduced costs from Inkind Direct. We are grateful for this support.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this year.

Our Trustees continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support, and volunteers help us with raffles, Ebay sales and stalls in the community. We will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds. Supporters who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, can contact us for help with publicity and materials. We always welcome help with sales for the annual raffle which takes place towards the end of the year.

Some of our supporters this year:



Prepared by Stepping Forward UK Trustees

Images used in the report are taken by Stepping Forward or used with thanks and permission from Pixabay.

Finance Summary 2022-23

1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	1 Aug 2021 - 31 July 2022
Income				
Consultancy		50	50	1,592
Grants				26,790
Souter Charitable Trust	3,600		3,600	
Shanly Foundation	3,000		3,000	
Screwfix Foundation	4,500		4,500	
Met Film Production	10,000		10,000	
The Earley Charity	4,088		4,088	
Hub rental income		11,945	11,945	6,455
Misc donations	6,000	15,464	21,464	13,356
Total income	31,188	27,459	58,647	48,193
Expenditure				
Albinism Project		300	300	5,086
Autism Sierra Leone	10,034		10,034	10,416
Charitable Activities		3,929	3,929	
Disability Advice service	16,750		16,750	19,597
Epilepsy Sierra Leone	6,006		6,006	
Epilepsy Uganda		277	277	
Legal & professional fees		4,574	4,574	
Fundraising costs		312	312	182
Gen Office expenses	519		519	937
Hub running costs	1,300	5,753	7,053	7,148
Loan interest		618	618	
Raffle	800	200	1,000	1,000
Ukraine		922	922	
Volunteer costs	333		333	318
other costs		0	0	15,429
Total expenditure	35,742	16,885	52,627	60,113
Surplus of income over expenditure	(4,554)	10,574	6,020	(11,920)
Opening bank balance	14,386	1,040	15,427	29,166
CBILS loan/ capital repayment		(3,170)	(3,170)	(1,819)
Surplus/ (loss)	(4,554)	10,574	6,020	(11,920)
Closing bank balance	9,833	8,445	18,278	15,427

Balance Sheet

Fixed asset = leasehold property	140,000	140,000	122,500
Debtor - Ed for Dev		2,000	
Current asset = cash at bank		18,278	15,427
Total assets	0	140,000	137,927
Liability - Co-Op CBILS loan		11,514	14,684
Net balance sheet	0	140,000	123,243

Signed  Sarah Snow, Trustee

Independent Examiner:

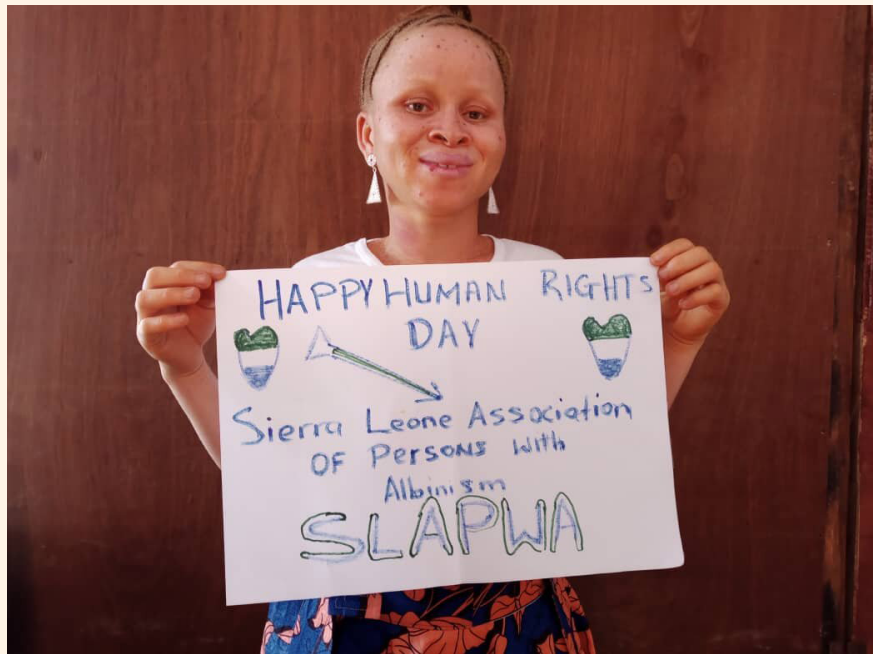
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J Lawrence 26 May 2024

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts



Annual Report and Accounts 2021-2022

A Full Life for Disabled
People and Carers

INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to facilitate and accelerate access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all disabled people and carers can live a full life.

In the UK we run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. For disabled people in the UK, the increase in energy prices, alongside a steep rise in the cost of living and cuts to government support, is pushing many into extreme hardship. Our Disability Advice Service is extremely busy as people come to us for support with benefits, equipment and resources.

Two-thirds of those who died from COVID in the UK were disabled people; now the cost of living crisis is highlighting again how much work needs to be done as a matter of urgency to ensure that the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are met.

Stepping Forward is committed to working with partners on raising the profile of the rights of disabled people and offering practical assistance wherever possible.

Stepping Forward UK, 12A Southview Park, Marsack Street, Reading, RG4 5AF

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UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.

DISABILITY AWARENESS

Disability awareness is a neglected issue which receives little priority and few resources. However failure to invest in this area has multiple impacts on the rights of people with disabilities.

Our training is developed and delivered by disabled people; we have adapted our offer after COVID, offering face to face and bite-size online assemblies and class sessions – allowing us to easily fit into the school day. This work plays an important role in creating a better future for us all; disability awareness promotes inclusion, understanding and acceptance and benefits everyone. A third of people become disabled in their working life. We believe that disability awareness is an essential part of quality education and life-long learning; disability is part of the human experience, affecting friends, family and community.

DISABILITY ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Our Disability Advice and Support Service continued to deliver sessions and support

this year. Funding from Awards for All, Berkshire Community Foundation, The Good Exchange and other supporters enabled us to support individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties accessing essential resources and support. Our part-time Benefits Adviser has supported increasing numbers of people with applications, appeals and tribunals. We are seeing many disabled people and carers facing a reduction in income and changes to their benefits.

We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools and from individuals and community members continue to recommend us via social media groups.

The other part of our Advice service is the one-to-one sessions where we identify the resource needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. When invited we take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities. This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. We accompany people to doctor/paediatrician appointments, to school meetings and elsewhere to ensure that our clients' needs are heard, documented and responded to appropriately.

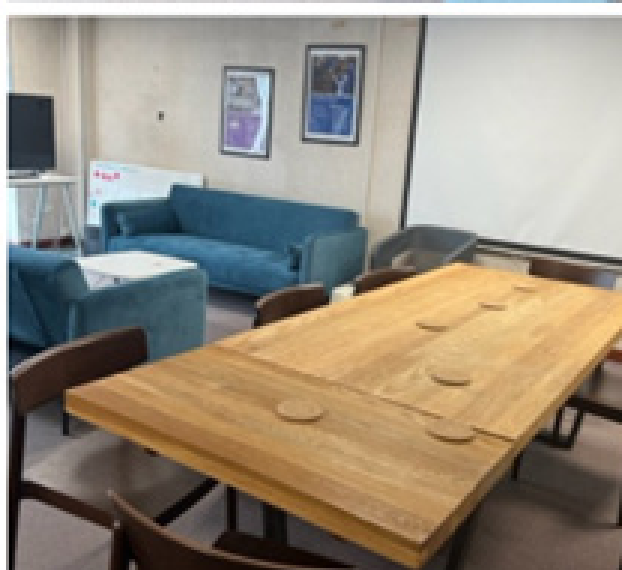
The practical support that we have managed to secure during the year for clients includes epilepsy alarms, washing machines, iPads, a mobility scooter, extra strong furniture, waterproof mattresses and driving lessons.

BRINGING ORGANISATIONS TOGETHER

We held our annual Winter Draw this year, raising nearly £5,000 for local charitable organisations and groups working on disability issues. Benefiting organisations included Autism Berkshire, The Engine Shed, Green Health Thames Valley, Rivertime Boat Trust and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. We are grateful to The Brownlow Foundation and Bennets Commercial for funding the John Lewis Vouchers prize, enabling us to raise substantial funds for ourselves and other organisations that are experiencing a severe shortage of resources.

THE DISABILITY HUB

Last year we purchased our industrial unit after a long campaign, creating the Disability Hub; this year we have been busy turning the unit into a comfortable and accessible space. We secured funding from the Place Called Home Lottery & Ikea grant programme, purchasing sofas and a large table to make the communal space more welcoming, as well as privacy blinds.



We were also pleased to secure a Reading Community Energy Society Community Grant of £2,500 to replace the lights in the Hub with energy-efficient ones. This timely upgrade is helping with our utility bills this year.

The Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services, move out of offices or threatened with closure. The Disability Hub is available free of charge to all local groups working on disability issues, and at reduced costs to other voluntary sector groups. The Hub contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities. There is plenty of free parking outside.

We are a building and a resource offering support and advice on a range of issues related to disability, as well as a place for people to connect and create community. We were delighted to welcome AutAngel, an autistic-led group for adults, back to the Hub after they moved out during Covid. Currently four local disability organisations use the Hub as their registered address, after budget cuts and new ways of working during the lockdowns caused them to move out of rented office space. Some organisations use the space just for pop-up sessions, and meeting people for advice sessions. We also store items for a number of local charities in our store room where we have installed rack shelving.

In response to many small and micro-organisations now facing closure due to funding difficulties, Stepping Forward continued to offer consultancy support with funding applications in the reporting year, assisting organisations to maintain essential support and services.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries.

We work internationally with Disabled People's Organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (eg transport, essential medication, university fees) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.

SUPPORT TO DISABLED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE

'The whole world needs to know that people with disabilities in Ukraine are left behind. We are valuable and we need your support!'

Tanya Herasymova, project coordinator at Fight for Right NGO

In response to the war in Ukraine, we set up a fundraising page to generate funds for the Ukrainian NGO Fight for Right. All funds generated were sent to the NGO which is working to support and evacuate disabled people in Ukraine.

'Fight for Right is working around the clock to evacuate Ukrainians with disabilities and support those who have evacuated to nearby countries following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For people with disabilities who face barriers and inaccessibility at all times, war brings an additional, overwhelming feeling of fear and helplessness; not to mention a direct threat to their lives. Ukrainians with disabilities have far fewer options for evacuation', says Tanya Herasymova, at Fight for Right.



Ukrainian refugees with disabilities are helped by their carers at the Hungarian border town of Zahony on Wednesday.
Christopher Furlong / Getty Images

We have also provided some requested items such as period products and incontinence pads when groups in Reading are driving lorries to Ukraine and neighbouring countries such as Poland.

AUTISM INITIATIVES

We continue to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society and their vision to create an Autism Inclusion Centre in Freetown, with two outreach Hubs in the rural districts. We have assisted with the identification of funding sources and shipped resources for the Centre, as well as practical items for children and carers attending the provision. The relationship that was established with Met Film after the release of the award-winning film 'The Reason I Jump' (which featured the work of SLAS) has continued. We have been able to work with Met Film to generate more resources for the work of the Sierra Leone Autistic Society. SLAS have secured further funding support through their networks and the new centre is nearing completion.



Children playing at the Browne-Penn Special Education school (BPSS) in Freetown, established by the Sierra Leone Autistic Society.

SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

We have been able to provide further support to the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) in the form of sunscreen, period products, and other items such as umbrellas. We also provided support with applications for funding. Through collaborating partner Medical Assistance Sierra Leone we supported the shipment of donated sunscreen to Sierra Leone for SLAPWA. These are given out free of charge to People with Albinism. We were able to buy and ship other skin care products, including Vaseline and lip balm, and some protective clothing, much of it secured at reduced costs from Inkind Direct. We are grateful for this support.



Umbrellas that we secured through Inkind Direct were distributed to members of the Sierra Leone Association of People with Albinism, providing much needed sun protection.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this year. Our Trustees continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support, and volunteers help us with raffles, Ebay sales and stalls in the community. We will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds. Supporters who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, can contact us for help with publicity and materials. We always welcome help with sales for the annual raffle which takes place towards the end of the year.



Prepared by David Soper, Trustee
23 May 2023

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2021 – 2022

1 Aug 2021 - 31 July 2022

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Prev yr
Income				
Misc donations		13,202	13,202	9,384
Restricted donations			0	
Grants			0	
The Cooperative Bank	1,000		1,000	
Place Called Home Lottery & Ikea	4,390		4,390	
Magic Little Grant	500		500	
Awards For All	9,900		9,900	
Souter Charitable Trust	3,200		3,200	3,200
Berkshire Community Foundation	2,500		2,500	4,000
The David Brownlow Foundation	800		800	
The Good Exchange	1,000		1,000	
Reading Community Energy Society	2,500		2,500	
Greenham Trust	1,000		1,000	
other grants				100,899
			0	
Hub rental income		6,455	6,455	14,020
Consultancy		1,592	1,592	8,571
Disability Advice income	154		154	
Transfer from SLAS	0		0	5,100
other income	0		0	141
Total income	26,944	21,249	48,193	145,315

Expenditure

Employee costs	4,215		4,215	
Hub running costs	6,054	1,094	7,148	13,457
Fundraising costs		182	182	
Hub improvement	4,324		4,324	
Hub purchase	0			122,500
Subscription	370		370	
Raffle	1,000		1,000	
General office exps	937		937	4244
Autism Sierra Leone		10,416	10,416	
Ukraine		1,061	1,061	
Disability Awareness	1,044		1,044	
volunteer costs	318		318	
Charitable activities	685		685	17,117
Epilepsy Sierra Leone		3,500	3,500	
Albinism Project		5,086	5,086	
Loan interest		231	231	349
Disability Advice Service	19,597		19,597	12,601
other expenditure	1		1	(1)

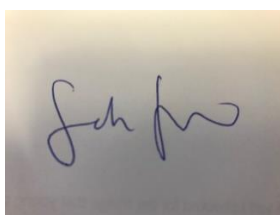
Total expenditure	38,544	21,570	60,113	170,267
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Surplus of income over expenditure	(11,600)	(321)	(11,920)	(24,952)
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Opening bank balance	25,986	3,180	29,166	37,618
CBILS loan/ capital repayment		(1,819)	(1,819)	16,500
Surplus/(loss)	(11,600)	(321)	(11,920)	(24,952)
Closing bank balance	14,386	1,040	15,426	29,166

Balance sheet

Fixed asset = leasehold property			122,500	122,500
Current asset - cash at bank			15,426	29,165
Total assets	0	0	137,926	151,665
Liability - Co-Op CBILS loan			14,684	16,500
Net balance sheet			123,242	135,165

Signed

Sarah Snow, Trustee

28 May 2023

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of 'Stepping Forward UK'

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above CIO for the year ended 31st July 2022.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

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:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or;
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which 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 'Tim D Miller', with a horizontal line underneath.

Name: Tim D Miller MA ACMA CGMA

Relevant professional qualification or body: Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

Address: 105 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading, RG6 5QN

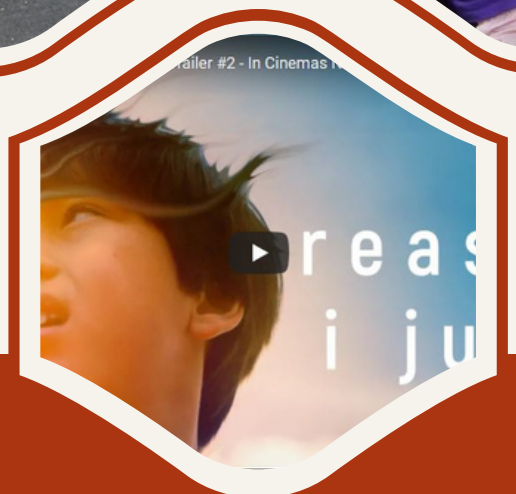
26th May 2023

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2020 -2021



A FULL LIFE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AND CARERS



INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to facilitate and accelerate access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all people affected by disability can live a full life. In the UK we run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. The coronavirus has exposed horrific inequalities and further underlined the need for urgent change.

Disabled people make up two-thirds of coronavirus deaths in the UK, according to figures by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The ONS estimates that disabled people are up to 11 times more likely to die of the virus. ONS analysis suggests deprivation and housing are key factors – disabled people are more likely to live in poverty than others – as well as medical failings that mean doctors often overlook disabled people’s health concerns. As an article in The Lancet in 2021 outlined:

‘People with disabilities have been differentially affected by COVID-19 because of three factors: the increased risk of poor outcomes from the disease itself, reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation, and the adverse social impacts of efforts to mitigate the pandemic.’

(‘Triple jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic’;
Shakespeare, Ndagire and Seketi, April 2021)

For disabled people in the UK, the impending rise to energy prices, alongside a rise in the cost of living and cuts to government support, is expected to push many into extreme hardship. In March 2022, UK charity Carers UK reported ‘In our latest survey of 3,300 carers, 42% thought that in the coming months they would not be able to heat their home to a safe level and 32% are worried they will have to use a food bank’.

COVID-19 and the costs of living crisis has highlighted once again how much work needs to be done as a matter of urgency to ensure that the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are met. Stepping Forward is committed to working with partners on raising the profile of these urgent issues and offering practical assistance wherever possible.

UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.

DISABILITY AWARENESS

Disability awareness is a neglected issue which receives little priority and few resources. However failure to invest in this area has multiple impacts on the rights of people with disabilities. In April 2017 the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published its 'list of issues' for the UK and has asked the UK government to report on multiple issues of concern, including how it is addressing disability-related harassment and bullying of disabled children in schools and how the UK is tackling negative attitudes, in particular towards people with dementia or learning disabilities. Our training is developed and delivered by disabled people and though Covid stopped us delivering sessions in this reporting year, we are now delivering bite-size online assemblies and class sessions – allowing us to easily fit into the school day.

This work plays an important role in creating a better future for us all; disability awareness promotes inclusion, understanding and acceptance and benefits everyone. We know that in the UK 6% of children are disabled, 16% of working age adults and 45% of adults over State Pension age. Yet two thirds of the British public say that they feel uncomfortable talking to disabled people. A third of people become disabled in their working life. We believe that disability awareness is an essential part of quality education and life-long learning; it is part of the human experience, affecting friends, family and community.

Image: Mik Scarlet delivers a disability awareness session online with a primary school



ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Our Disability Advice and Support Service developed further this year. Funding from Awards for All, People's Postcode Trust and the Berkshire Community Foundation enabled us to support individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties to access essential resources and support. Our part-time DLA/PIP Adviser assists in the application process for disability-related benefits. With so many disabled people and carers facing changed circumstances due to COVID-19, including a reduction in income, it is very hard for people to know what support is available. Many people do not know that they can claim carers allowance for instance. We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools and from individuals and community members are recommending us via social media groups. We also ran one-to-one Advice Clinics where we identify the resource needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. We have been able to take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities.

This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. The support that we have managed to secure this year has included the costs of special needs buggies, extra strong furniture, iPads and sensory equipment.

BRINGING ORGANISATIONS TOGETHER

We were not able to hold the Winter Ball this year but we went ahead with the raffle as usual, raising nearly £5,000 for local organisations working on disability issues. Benefiting organisations included Autism Berkshire, The Engine Shed, Green Health Thames Valley and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. We are grateful to The Brownlow Foundation and Bennetts Commercial for funding the £1,000 John Lewis Vouchers prize, enabling us to raise substantial funds for organisations that are experiencing a severe shortage of resources. The Mayor of Reading, Rachel Eden, drew the winning tickets at the Hub in Reading.



THE CREATION OF A DISABILITY HUB IN READING

Much of the year has been spent raising funds for the purchase and creation of a Disability Hub for use by organisations and disabled individuals and carers. After eighteen months of intense fundraising we were able to complete the purchase in December 2020, after our landlord kindly extended the deadline due to the pandemic. We are delighted to secure this building which is an asset for the voluntary sector in an area where property developers are dominating the discourse and cherished community and public spaces are disappearing year on year.

The building is a resource that has become increasingly relevant – the Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services, move out of offices or threatened with closure. The Disability Hub is available free of charge to all local groups working on disability issues, and at reduced costs to other voluntary sector groups. The Hub contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities.

We are a building and a resource offering support and advice on a range of issues related to disability, as well as a place for people to connect and create community. Whilst online information is vital and can be accessible, our experience is that a physical community of shared interest remains a vital source of information and support and can play a transformative role in the lives of people living with disabilities.

Currently four local disability organisations use the Hub as their registered address, after budget cuts and new ways of working during lockdowns caused them to move out of rented office space. Some organisations use the space just for pop-up sessions, meeting people for advice sessions.

In response to many small and micro-organisations now facing closure due to funding difficulties, Stepping Forward offered consultancy support with funding applications in the reporting year, assisting organisations to maintain essential support and services. In 2020/21 we helped 3 organisations secure grants of various sizes for essential services for disabled people.





INTERNATIONAL WORK



SLAS's school for autistic children, Sierra Leone

Disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries. We work internationally with Disabled People's Organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (eg transport, essential medication, university fees) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.

AUTISM INITIATIVES



Still from 'The Reason I Jump' film which features partner NGO SLAS

We continue to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society with their vision to create an Autism Inclusion Centre in Freetown, with two outreach Hubs in the rural districts. We have assisted with the identification of funding sources and shipped resources for the nursery at the Centre. This year also saw the UK launch of the award-winning film 'The Reason I Jump' which featured the work of SLAS. We attended the premier of the London screening for the film and have been able to raise further funds for SLAS, building on the raised profile that the film has created.

This has brought further awareness of SLAS's vital work and the urgent need for greater awareness-raising and support for services.

SUPPORT TO PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM



Sunscreen distribution in Freetown with the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism

We provided further support to the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) in the form of sunscreen, as well as support with applications for funding. We shipped two pallets of sunscreen this reporting year which has been given out free of charge to People with Albinism. We were also able to buy and ship other skin care products and some protective clothing, much of it secured at reduced costs from Inkind Direct. We are grateful for this support.

Stepping Forward and our partners welcomed the news in July 2021 that the United Nations Human Rights Council passed the first ever resolution on Harmful Practices: Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (HPAWR). We had submitted some evidence to this process based on the lived experience of disabled people with whom we work in Sierra Leone. Huge thanks to the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network for leading on this important work.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this very difficult year.

We will work on improving the Hub building so that it is a comfortable and accessible space for all. Our Trustees continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support. Where possible, we will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds. Supporters who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, can contact us for help with publicity and materials. We always welcome help with sales for the annual raffle which takes place towards the end of the year.



The image shows a ticket for the Stepping Forward UK Winter Draw. The ticket is divided into two main sections by a vertical dashed line. The left section contains the number '00001', the text 'Stepping Forward UK WINTER DRAW', and a logo of three stylized figures. Below this is a form with fields for 'Name:', 'Address:', and 'Tel:'. At the bottom of this section, it says 'Please hand in counterfoils, monies and unsold tickets to the promoter by Thursday 5th November 2020.' The right section features the 'Stepping Forward UK' logo and 'Registered Charity No. 1177955'. Below this is the text 'WINTER DRAW' in large, bold letters, followed by 'Benefiting local charities & groups including: Berkshire MS Therapy Centre, Parenting Special Children, Autangel, Green Health TV, Berkshire Phab, Engine Shed, Autism Berkshire, Berkshire Vision, Rivertime Boat Trust and Innwalk Appeal for Avenue School'. The prizes are listed as: '1st Prize: £1,000 of John Lewis Vouchers', '2nd Prize: Afternoon tea for 2 at The Hilton', and '3rd Prize: 1 month's free gym use at The Hilton'. The draw date and location are 'To be drawn on Saturday 7th November 2020 at The Hilton Reading'. At the bottom, it says 'Promoter: Sarah Snow, Stepping Forward UK, 12a Southview Park, Reading RG4 5AF', 'Registered under the Gambling Act 2005 with Reading Borough Council. Licence No: L07000173', 'Printed by www.raffleticketsdirect.co.uk', and 'TICKETS £1 EACH'.

We would like to acknowledge the support of Justine and Tim Braili who bought the office unit (our 'Hub') with the express purpose of allowing us to fundraise to purchase it from them at the cost price plus bank interest. This exceptionally generous offer allowed us to compete in a very competitive property market and secure an asset for the sector that we hope will benefit many people throughout the 965 years of the lease.

Our sincere thanks to Justine and Tim and everyone who has supported our work this year.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2020-21

1st Aug 2020- 31st July 2021	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Prev yr
Income				
Event income	0	0	0	7,066
Misc donations	0	9,384	9,384	7,106
Restricted donations	0	0	0	0
Grants:				
Arnold Clark	500		500	
Awards for All	9,850	0	9,850	9,970
B and Q Foundation	4,000	0	4,000	
Berkshire Community Foundation	4,000	0	4,000	6,211
Brownless Trust	300	0	300	
Clothworkers Foundation	0	0	0	1,597
Cooperative Local Community Fund	1,718		1,718	
Earley Charity	25,000	0	25,000	
Met Film Production	5,000		5,000	
Mobbs Memorial trust	3,800	0	3,800	
National Lottery Community Fund	14,740		14,740	
Postcode Neighbourhood Trust	14,400	0	14,400	
RBC	0	0	0	8,000
RBC (Gov COVID grant)	0	14,591	14,591	
Screwfix	0	0	0	4,000
Shanly Foundation	3,000	0	3,000	
Souter Charitable Trust	3,200	0	3,200	
The Rank Foundation	4,000	0	4,000	
other grants	0	0	0	3,052
Hub rental income	0	14,020	14,020	12,735
Consultancy	0	8,571	8,571	6,895
Transfer from SLAS	1,500	3,600	5,100	
Good Exchange	90	0	90	
refund of claim for domain name	0	50	50	
other income	0	0	0	25
Total income	95,098	50,217	145,315	66,658

Expenditure	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Prev yr
Event costs	0	0	0	9,752
Disability Advice Service	10,190	2,411	12,601	7,719
SLAPWA	0	0	0	88
Charitable activities	17,117		17,117	1,215
Fundraising costs	0	0	0	42
Hub costs:				
Hub accessibility improvements	0	0	0	7,500
Other hub costs	2,915	10,542	13,457	19,466
General office Costs	0	4,244	4,244	2,560
to be refunded	0		0	47
Raffle ticket printing	0	0	0	131
Loan repayment interest	0	349	349	
Hub purchase	49,172	73,328	122,500	0
other exp	0	(1)	(1)	(1)
Total expenditure	79,394	90,873	170,267	48,519
Surplus of income over expenditure	15,704	(40,656)	(24,952)	18,139
Opening bank balance	10,282	27,336	37,618	19,479
Co-Op CBILS loan	0	16,500	16,500	
Surplus/ (loss)	15,704	(40,656)	(24,952)	18,139
Closing bank balance	25,986	3,180	29,165	37,618
<i>check</i>			29,165	37,618
Balance Sheet				
Fixed asset - leasehold property			122,500	
Current asset - cash at bank			29,165	37,618
Total assets			151,665	37,618
Liability: Co-Op CBILS loan			16,500	
Net balance sheet			135,165	37,618

Signed..........Sarah Snow, Trustee 31.5.22

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of 'Stepping Forward UK'

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above CIO for the year ended 31st July 2021.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

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:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or;
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed



Name: Tim D Miller MA ACMA CGMA

Relevant professional qualification or body: Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

Address: 105 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading, RG6 5QN

31st May 2022

STEPPING FORWARD UK

England & Wales - Charity number 1177955

Accounts

Stepping Forward

A full life for everyone affected by disability



ANNUAL REPORT 2019 to 2020



12A Southview Park, off Marsack St,
Reading RG4 5AF

www.stepping-forward.org.uk
info@stepping-forward.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

Stepping Forward works to facilitate and accelerate access to essential services, information, resources and life opportunities so that all people affected by disability can live a full life. In the UK we run disability awareness sessions in schools, disability confident training and support individuals and families to access essential support and equipment. Our international work aims to provide a catalyst for change. We support practical initiatives that are having an impact on the lives of people with disabilities and support their replication and sustainability. We support changemakers with the resources to increase their effectiveness and provide opportunities for networking and influencing policy locally and internationally. We facilitate access to relevant training opportunities for disabled people and those working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

One billion people, or 15% of the global population, experience some form of disability, but the rights of disabled people are being inadequately protected and promoted. The coronavirus has exposed horrific inequalities and further underlined the need for urgent change.

Disabled people make up two-thirds of coronavirus deaths in the UK, according to figures by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The ONS estimates that disabled people are up to 11 times more likely to die of the virus. ONS analysis suggests deprivation and housing are key factors – disabled people are more likely to live in poverty than others – as well as medical failings that mean doctors often overlook disabled people's health concerns. Chris Hatton, Professor of Social Care at Manchester Metropolitan University, said reviews into the deaths of people with learning disabilities from Covid-19 identified "systemic failure from services designed to help them". Hatton said: "People with learning disabilities who died of Covid-19 experienced systemic failure from services designed to help them, including failures of infection control, PPE, testing, identifying when people's health was deteriorating, and a range of discriminatory practices including Do Not Resuscitate notices being used on grounds of 'frailty' or 'learning disabilities'."

Throughout lockdown, social care was stripped back 'to the point of danger and indignity' (Ryan 2020), and services for disabled children in many areas all but disappeared. Research by Carers UK found that 81% of carers have been taking on more responsibilities since the beginning of the pandemic. And as the economy is hit and cuts are made, disabled people are being hard hit: Citizens Advice reports that 27% of disabled workers are facing redundancy due to COVID. This rises to 48% of those in the "shielded" category.

We have been responding during the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering our benefits advice service by telephone; offering support with funding applications for families needing equipment and other resources; dropping activity and support packs off to families who are struggling during lockdown (with items secured from In-Kind Direct); doing shopping and prescription collection for disabled people who are shielding. We receive referrals from local authorities, the voluntary sector and local community-established COVID-groups.

COVID-19 has clearly highlighted that much work needs to be done as a matter of urgency to ensure that the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are met.

UK WORK

We provide practical support to disabled people and their families and carers. We undertake sensitisation and awareness work in the community that contributes towards social change. Despite progress in equality legislation and improved access to public spaces, negative public attitudes and awkwardness towards disability remain commonplace.

Disability Awareness

Disability awareness is a neglected issue which receives little priority and few resources. However failure to invest in this area has multiple impacts on the rights of people with disabilities. In April 2017 the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published its 'list of issues' for the UK and has asked the UK government to report on multiple issues of concern, including how it is addressing disability-related harassment and bullying of disabled children in schools and how the UK is tackling negative attitudes, in particular towards people with dementia or learning disabilities.

Our training is run by disabled people and is delivered by independent trainers or through collaboration with partner organisations such as JustDifferent. We have worked with Disability Rights UK to deliver 'disability confident' training courses, targeted at anyone wanting to increase their awareness of disability issues or gain more confidence working with and supporting disabled colleagues or customers. This year our booked sessions were cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Advice & Support

Our Disability Advice and Support Service developed further this year. Funding from Awards for All and the Berkshire Community Foundation enabled us to support to individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties to access essential resources and support. Our part-time DLA/PIP Adviser assists in the application process for disability-related benefits. With so many disabled people and carers facing changed circumstances due to COVID-19, including a reduction in income, it is very hard for people to know what support is available. Many people do not know that they can claim carers allowance for instance. We are receiving referrals from agencies, schools and from individuals and community members are recommending us via social media groups:

We also ran one-to-one Advice Clinics where we identify the resource needs that are preventing individuals and families from living a full life. We have been able to take this service into special schools and secure significant practical support for children with disabilities. This direct support to individuals and families addresses the impact of disability on social isolation, increased living costs, the need for specialist equipment and provides access to supported breaks. The support that we have managed to secure this year has included the costs of special needs buggies, extra strong furniture, iPads and sensory equipment.

Bringing Organisations Together

The 2019 Winter Ball raised over £11,000 for organisations working on disability issues. Stepping Forward coordinates this annual fundraising and networking ball for organisations working on disability issues in Reading, involving seven local charities including Autism Berkshire, Parenting Special Children, The Engine Shed, Green Health Thames Valley and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre. Individually most local disability charities do not have the capacity to put on a large-scale event such as a Ball. By coming together, with the generous support of local companies and Foundations, we are able to hold an enjoyable event that raises substantial funds for organisations that are experiencing a severe shortage of resources.



Creating A Disability Hub in Reading

Much of the year has been spent raising funds for the creation of a Disability Hub for use by organisations and individuals affected by disability in Reading and the wider Berkshire area where we are based. We were delighted to start the year with a pledge of £25,000 towards The Hub from The Earley Charity. We continued to fundraise throughout the year, though support for capital projects became more difficult to access once lockdown started in March 2020.

Whilst online information is vital and accessible, our experience is that a community of shared interest is also an essential source of information and support and can play a transformative role the lives of people living with disabilities. The building is a resource that has become increasingly relevant – with many predicting that the voluntary sector will suffer greatly from COVID-19, the Hub adds capacity and support to the sector at very difficult time, with many charities forced to reduce services or threatened with closure.

The Disability Hub will be accessible to all local groups working on disability. It contains a meeting room, two/three small offices and a space for hot-desking along with disabled toilet facilities. Services will include our Disability Advice & Support Service and other organisations have asked to have pop-up services there. Prior to COVID-19, many organisations were using the building for support groups, trustee meetings and training sessions. Our landlord has kindly extended the option to buy agreement and we expect to complete the purchase in the next financial year.

International Work

Disability prevalence is higher for developing countries; globally an estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries. We work internationally with Disabled People's organisations and NGOs to promote the rights of people with disabilities, supporting practical initiatives (such as a bus for a special needs school in Sierra Leone) whilst also supporting strategic work which can lead to transformative change.

Autism Initiatives

Building on the outcomes of the Pan-African Experiences of Autism Conference in 2017, we have continued to support the Sierra Leone Autistic Society (SLAS) with their autism awareness-raising activities as well as with developing further their support to children and families. This year SLAS began to create an Autism Inclusion Centre in Freetown, with two outreach Hubs in the rural districts. We have provided technical support to this important work as well as shipped practical equipment, large quantities of hand sanitiser, period products and educational materials for use in the new Centre. As a result of the 2017 Autism Conference, SLAS Director Mary Penn-Timothy featured in an award-winning film named after - and based on - the bestselling book 'The Reason I Jump'. This has brought further awareness of SLAS's vital work and the urgent need for greater awareness-raising and support for services.

Stepping Forward and the Sierra Leone Autistic Society continue to work with the Witchcraft & Human Rights Network which is developing a coordinated response to the widespread violations of human rights that take place around the world due to beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession, including the development of a UN Resolution.

Support to People With Albinism

We have been able to provide support to the Sierra Leone Association of People With Albinism (SLAPWA) in the form of skin cream, protective clothing as well as hand sanitisers this year. Most items were secured from Inkind Direct and we are grateful for this support.

Supporting Our Work

Thank you to those people and companies who have supported us during this very difficult year. We hope to conclude the Disability Hub purchase in the forthcoming financial year and continue to apply to Trusts and Foundations for ongoing support. Where possible, we will be having a programme of events over the coming year to generate further funds.

If anyone would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Stepping Forward, we would be very grateful and can help with publicity and materials.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported our work this year.

Signed:.....Rod Leith, Chair

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2019 - 2020

Income

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Prev yr
Event income	0	7,066	7,066	9,405
Misc donations	0	7,131	7,131	10,886
Grants:				
Awards for All	9,970	0	9,970	9,900
Clothworkers Foundation	1,597	0	1,597	
Berkshire Community Foundation	6,211	0	6,211	6,400
Screwfix	4,000	0	4,000	
Other grants	3,052	8,000	11,052	18,276
Hub rental income	0	12,735	12,735	800
Consultancy	0	6,895	6,895	
Total income	24,830	41,827	66,658	55,667



Expenditure

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Prev yr
Event costs	0	9,752	9,752	11,316
Disability Advice Service	8,667	2,510	11,177	16,977
Charitable activities	0	892	892	
Fundraising costs	0	173	173	
Hub costs:	0	0		3,475
Hub accessibility improvements	0	7,500	7,500	
Other Hub costs	0	18,239	18,239	
General Office Costs	0	787	787	2,609
Other costs			0	8,370
Total expenditure	8,667	39,853	48,520	42,748
Surplus of income over expenditure	16,163	1,974	18,138	12,919

Balance Sheet

Opening bank balance	10,282	9,197	19,479	6,560
Movement	16,163	1,974	18,138	12,919
Closing bank balance	26,445	11,172	37,617	19,479
<i>check</i>			37,617	19,479

Signed by



Andrew K C Graves,
Independent Examiner
28th Nov 2020



Rod Leith
Chair