

# 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.

00001	<b>Stepping Forward UK</b>	00001
<b>WINTER DRAW</b>		
Name:		
Address:	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	
Tel:	★ <b>1st Prize: ★</b> <b>£1,000 of John Lewis Vouchers</b>	
2nd Prize: Afternoon tea for 2 at The Hilton		
3rd Prize: 1 month's free gym use at The Hilton		
To be drawn on Saturday 7th November 2020 at The Hilton Reading		
Promoter: Sarah Snow, Stepping Forward UK, 12a Southview Park, Reading RG4 5AF Registered under the Gambling Act 2005 with Reading Borough Council. Licence No: L07300173 Printed by www.raffleticketdirect.co.uk		
<b>TICKETS £1 EACH</b>		

Please hand in counterfoils, monies and unsold tickets to the promoter by Thursday 5th November 2020.

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
<b>Income</b>				
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



<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Restricted</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Prev yr</b>
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
<b>Surplus of income over expenditure</b>	<b>15,704</b>	<b>(40,656)</b>	<b>(24,952)</b>	<b>18,139</b>
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
check			29,165	37,618
<b>Balance Sheet</b>				
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 31<sup>st</sup> 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim D Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

31<sup>st</sup> May 2022