

# Annual Report and Accounts 2021-2022

A Full Life for Disabled  
People and Carers

# INTRODUCTION

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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

Registered Charity No. 1177955

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# UK WORK

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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.

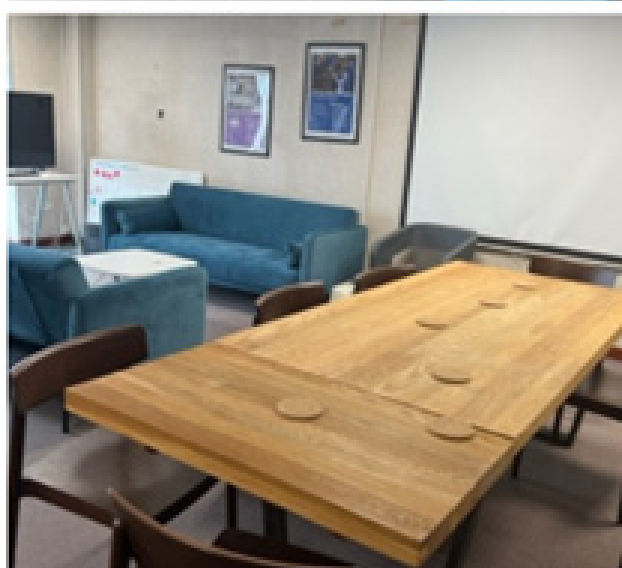
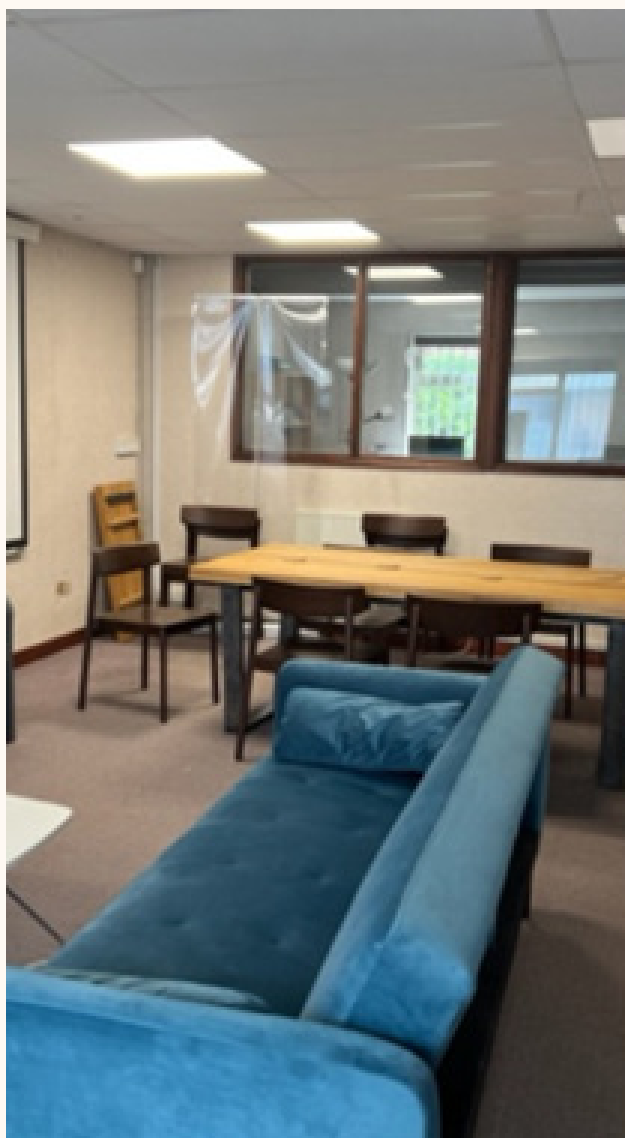
The practical support that we have managed to secure during the year for clients includes epilepsy alarms, washing machines, iPads, a mobility scooter, extra strong furniture, waterproof mattresses and driving lessons.

## 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	<i>Prev yr</i>
<b>Income</b>				
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
<b>Total income</b>	<b>26,944</b>	<b>21,249</b>	<b>48,193</b>	<b>145,315</b>



**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

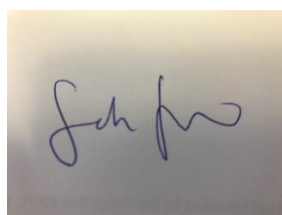
Surplus of income over expenditure

(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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 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

26<sup>th</sup> May 2023