

# 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](mailto:info@stepping-forward.org.uk)

[www.stepping-forward.org.uk](http://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:

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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
<b>Income</b>				
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
<b>Expenditure</b>				
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	160,278	137,927
Liability - Co-Op CBILS loan			11,514	14,684
Net balance sheet	0	140,000	148,763	123,243

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

Independent Examiner:

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J Lawrence 26 May 2024