



Supporting children & young
people with Down Syndrome to
fulfil their potential.

Annual Report

2020 - 2021



Charity number 1182787

Board of Trustees



The 2020/21 Stepping Stones DS Board of Trustees

Chair	Josh McCormack
Vice-Chair	Rob Barton (resigned Oct 2020) Irene Arthur
Treasurer	Rebecca Hitch
Secretary	Mike Wainhouse (joined Sept 2020)
Others	Despina Papadimitriou Jacky McKenzie Sarahjane MacAlinden Nick Bourne (resigned Apr 2021) Liz Phillipou Laura Bryant (joined Jan 2021)

The Board of Trustees is broadly 50% members of Stepping Stones DS and 50% non-members. It is important that our board has lived experience of the challenges that Stepping Stones DS seeks to address, but equally important that we have direction and input from outside our community.

Our board members bring a range of skills and experience from diverse of backgrounds. However, we are always looking for more board members and to increase that diversity to ensure that we are fully representative of the communities we serve.

"During the last 18 months, the Stepping Stones DS team has been a huge source of support to our local DS community."
- SSDS parent

Address: Sentinel House, Ancells Business Park,
Harvest Crescent, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 2UZ

Website: www.steppingstonesds.co.uk
Email: enquiries@steppingstonesds.co.uk
Bank: Cooperative Bank

Charity number 1182787

Report summary



Our **mission** is to help children and young adults with Down syndrome fulfil their potential.

We do this by providing a range of services that help them to be social, have fun and learn.

We support families, carers and professionals with social events and training.

"I can't thank this charity enough. You are all those guardian angels we were so desperately praying for in first diagnosis conversations with the doctor, worrying what the future will bring for our precious baby girl. So, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you do."

- Chantel, SSDS parent

SSDS Values

Community
Opportunity
Independence
Inclusion



SSDS works in:

North Hampshire
West Surrey
South West Berkshire

At Stepping Stones DS, we try to lead by example. We aim to be kind, show compassion and not under-estimate others' skills. We provide specialist support to families so that their children with down syndrome can thrive.

We remain politically neutral and are not a campaigning organisation.

	2021	2020
Total income	56,904	55,713
Total expenditure	90,466	92,041

Charity number 1182787



www.facebook.com/steppingstonesds



[@Stepping_Stones_DS](https://www.instagram.com/Stepping_Stones_DS)



[@Steppingstones](https://twitter.com/Steppingstones)



[linkedin.com/company/steppingstonesds](https://www.linkedin.com/company/steppingstonesds)

Reports



Chair's Report

Stepping Stones DS has faced many challenges over the past year and I am so proud of the way we have weathered them, continuing to provide services and support for our families both online and in person.

We continue to provide almost everything without charge, ensuring that all of our families can access the support they need regardless of their financial position.

We have lived under the shadow of COVID-19 again this year; although we have maintained online services, the impact of not having face-to-face services was keenly felt. I have to pay tribute to our team who worked tirelessly to ensure that we could reopen our services in the safest way possible.

As well as adapting to our ever-changing external environment, we have this year re-focussed on our mission, ensuring that we are meeting the needs of our families. We are very grateful to the pro-bono support of NICE Thinking Strategy whose excellent workshops started us on the path to our rebrand.

Our end of year survey showed us that we are on the right track, with families rating our services an average of 4.37 out of 5. The vast majority also agree that we live our values - an endeavour we are committed to continuing and improving.

It has been a very challenging year for fundraising, but an absolute pleasure to see our community come together for the #321 March for World Down Syndrome Day and finally be able to hold our Singing Hands event after a year's delay.

I would like to extend a great number of thank yous to the team of staff, service providers, supporters, volunteers and the board who give their time, effort and most importantly their passion to supporting our families.

Josh McCormack
Chair

Reports



CEO's Report

As I watched the children during our first Stay and Play of the year in May 2021, I realised that something was different. Our wonderfully interactive, energetic children were on their own, not playing with each other; instead upset by the noise of the room and nervous about the numbers of people.

One year in, this was Covid damage.

The effect was the same across all of our services. A parent of a young adult in our Communication groups voiced their concern that their son probably can't go to college now because he has lost the ability to communicate.

Down syndrome is often called a communication disability because of two challenges, both of which have been negatively affected by the pandemic. Firstly, the learning disability means children with DS take longer to learn than their typically developing peers. Secondly, weak muscle tone makes creating the right speech sounds difficult. Both require practice to enable the best outcomes.

Practice, though, has been nearly impossible in a year with so many disruptions.

In November 2020, it was declared that adults with Down syndrome fall into the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable category and we consistently took a covid-cautious approach to our planning. But when we returned all our in-person activities in May this year, we noticed a huge surge in demand. We had parents far more worried about the effect of missing out on our services than about the significant risks of this new virus.

Seeing our value in this new light has been heart-warming. I am so very grateful to our talented service providers, many of whom have enabled us to keep on going, online and offline, throughout all of the disruption. Their dedication is second-to-none and their efforts not nearly rewarded enough.

I am also immensely proud of all that Stepping Stones DS does and determined that we will continue to do everything we can to provide our children and young adults with services that help them fulfil their potential.

Alex Brewer
CEO

10

new families joined
Stepping Stones DS

A year in figures

74

pupils were supported by
our School Outreach
Programmes

In July 2021, we anonymously surveyed our families to find out how we were doing.

Here are some of the results:

In-person services were rated higher than online, although both did well. Online services were rated an average of 4.18 out of 5. In person was 4.37 out of 5.

It became apparent that our sense of community, which has always been such a strong part of our organisation, has suffered enormously under the strain of the past 18 months.

8

online training
courses delivered in
2020-2021

We are still working hard to reinstate recently closed services and repeat the success of our siblings course, demand for all of which was clearly high.

"SSDS is a great support in so many ways from social to academic to advice."
- SSDS parent

Sarah S - Stepping Stones DS parent said:

"My daughter would not be where she is today without the help and support of Stepping Stones DS. The fact that she is going to mainstream secondary school is, in a large part, due to the Mainstream Outreach service she has received all through primary."

4.37

Average rating out of 5 for
our services by Stepping
Stones DS parents

176

hours of early development
groups delivered, during and
despite the lockdowns

This year saw us able to hold our first ever course for siblings, thanks for the wonderful work of another local charity, Swings and Smiles. The course was our first ever 'hybrid' event with some sessions in-person and some online.

Our families



New Families

We welcomed 10 more new families to Stepping Stones DS this year. Anyone with Down syndrome who is under 25 and lives in our catchment, and their family, can become a Stepping Stones DS member.

We do not charge for membership, or for the vast majority of our services, to enable as many people as possible to participate.

We support young people with Down syndrome, their siblings, parents, carers and professionals to help them fulfil their potential.



Stay and Play

Our monthly Stay and Play coffee mornings finally resumed in May 2021 in a new venue. New families who had joined us during lockdown were finally able to come out and meet others in a relaxed setting. The young children were noticeably playing together less than they used to, but quickly got back into the swing of things.

Social activities

We were devastated to have to cancel the vast majority of our social and recreational activities during the year due to the pandemic. Even where restrictions allowed events to take place, logistics were often working against us. But we are optimistic for the year ahead!



A Stepping Stones DS parent said:

“You and your team are lifesavers! My son is thriving thanks to the support, training, help and fun you all provide for us, thank you so much”

Services - Groups



Early Development Groups

These are the first step in our little one's educational journeys and help prepare them for starting school.

As the Covid crisis continued, LETS Go! provided an adapted online service to ensure our member families still received monthly support. The online service was delivered from September 2020 until mid March 2021.

Age range	4 months to 4 years
Number supported	24 children
Frequency	monthly

Groups target a range of development including; communication, speech, receptive vocabulary and language, expressive vocabulary and language, number, memory, reading, play and cognition.

"We have attended early development groups. We have only been twice but it's been amazing and given me lots of ideas!"
- Michelle, new SSDS parent

Groups finally returned to in-person delivery from 30th March 2021.

Services - Groups



16+ Communication Groups

These groups aim to build confidence, friendships and communication skills for a wide variety of settings, such as work, social and community.

Age range	16 to 24 years
Number supported	14 young adults
Frequency	fortnightly

This year, much of our social and community work was around social distancing and understanding the new dynamics of living in the pandemic.

All our young adult groups ran in person throughout the year and were delivered by LETS Go!



"They have always been there to guide us throughout Lloyd's life, but it takes a pandemic to really test just how important that help is."
- Ceri; SSDS parent

Services - Outreach



Mainstream Outreach

We had a lot of success with Mainstream Outreach, despite much of it being held remotely.

We were able to help several year 6 pupils transition to secondary schools, some of whom are the first pupil with Down syndrome ever to attend their mainstream secondary school.

Mainstream Outreach helps both pupils and schools to be more confident in their journey together, equipping staff with the knowledge & skills to support our children alongside their typically developing peers.

“The School Outreach service has been an essential part of Sophie’s hugely successful transition and progress in mainstream Reception. We, and the school, are hugely grateful that this termly service is available to us. Thank you.”

- Sarah B; SSDS parent

We supported 40 pupils in 33 Schools through our mainstream outreach programme this year.

Special School Outreach

September 2020 saw the online launch of our new service for pupils in special schools, after introductions in the previous summer term.

The Special School Outreach Service has been designed to be a bespoke service that responds organically through regular termly visits and the development of close partnerships between everyone around each young person with Down syndrome.

Services ran online in the Autumn and Spring terms, with in-person finally beginning in the Summer term of 2021.

34 pupils in 14 schools are participating in this new service.

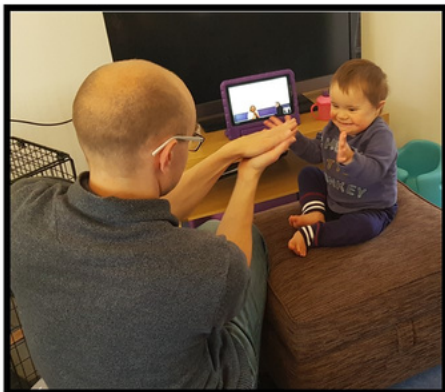


Services - Active



Autumn and Spring terms

Dance and Movers continued to run online during the Autumn and Spring terms, giving our young people the opportunity to see their friends and keep active in the comfort of their own homes.



Summer Term

It was with great relief, however, that our active services could resume in-person in the summer term. Tennis and Drama also resumed.

Our wonderful Movers coach, Jen Hansford, has decided to move on to new projects after 12 years working with Stepping Stones DS families. We will miss her and the service is paused... for now.

"SSDS activities have been vital in encouraging motor skills and social skills and have been a lifeline for us as parents from an early age. Thank you so much."

- SSDS parent

Fundraising



With huge thanks to our Grant and Corporate supporters

We were very fortunate this year to be selected by the Coop Community Fund as one of their local causes to support. This raised £3,395 this year and fundraising continues until October 2021.



The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund helps those affected by learning disability and we are very grateful to them for the £2,000 grant they awarded us this year. This and the funding from the Coop have helped to pay for our Mainstream Outreach programme.

Sport England and Energise Me extended their funding by £1,360 to keep us active in lockdown, ensuring our online Dance and Movers sessions continued even when our in-person activities could not.



Our recycling scheme picked up, with £7,186.17 being raised from waste such as Tassimo discs, baby food pouches and Pringles tubes. A big thank you to our Wombling team who work extremely hard to make this happen.

Fleet Rotary made a generous donation of £600 towards our Dance, Drama and Movers classes.



Staff from InterSystems took part in a Christmas Cake Decorating Competition and raised £1,255

We would also like to extend our thanks to the following for their valuable contributions this year:

- Hampshire and Surrey County Councillors
- White Stuff Foundation
- Rosemount Financial Solutions
- Local and national purchasing schemes: Amazon, EasyFundraising, Give as you Live.

Fundraising

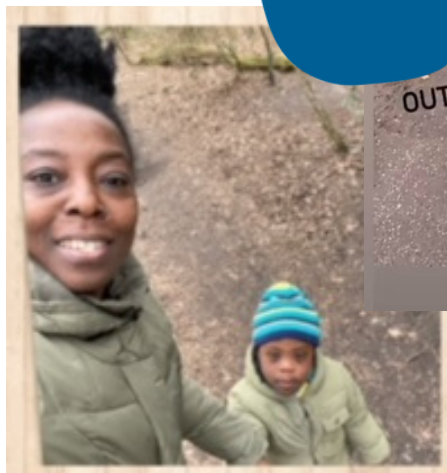


With huge thanks to our community fundraisers

To celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, many of our families took part in our #321March event, where we travelled virtually from Lands End to John O'Groats throughout the month of March. The event was a celebration of what our community can accomplish and raised more than £6,500.

This year we had a number of siblings raising money and awareness for a brother or sister with Down syndrome. In particular, our thanks and admiration go to:

- Charlotte Sutton who ran a marathon in a month in September, raising £2,400.
- Yaz Garcia and 4 friends walked a marathon in November, raising more than £1,500.
- Miles Weston ran 5k a day for the 30 days of the November lockdown, raising more than £1,000.



We love working with local groups and this year in particular were so grateful to these organisations for keeping on keeping on:

- Sandy Lane Primary School
- Hook Fun Run and Road Races
- Overton Black Arrows

Thank you to everyone who attended our Christmas online quiz night and who took part in or donated to our Christmas and #321March appeals.

Finally, there are many individuals who give regularly, make one-off donations or hold fundraising challenges. Without these small but mighty gifts, Stepping Stones DS would not be able to provide the services it does. Thank you.



Over 30 households, with teenies to teens, came together to celebrate WDSD raising almost £1300.

Thank you Singing Hands - it was great!
The event was postponed from May 2020 and held online, finally, in March 2021.

Thank you



Gifts In Kind



A huge thank you to UBC for the provision of our Fleet office space worth £46,800 in the past year.

Our appreciation goes to NICE Thinking Strategy for their pro-bono brand workshops



Thank you to Care Opportunities for sharing their expertise in an online seminar for parents of our young adults

Our siblings had a wonderful time at a course run just for them by Swings and Smiles



Thank you to our volunteers who have:

- Written birthday cards to all our children and young adults
- Collected and sorted recycling
- Coordinated our extra-curricular activities
- Provided specialist services free of charge
- Helped run online events



"The services are excellent and a great help and support to us as a family." -
SSDS Parent

Stepping Stones DS
Sentinel House, Harvest Crescent
Fleet, Hampshire, GU52 7ST
01252 417014
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Charity number: 1182787



Financial review

Stepping Stones DS Income was £56.9k (2020: £55.7k). The small increase from the previous year was due to an increase in Grants received partially offset by reduced donations. We are very grateful to have received grant funding during the year from Hampshire Country Council, Surrey County Council, Fleet Rotary, Sports England and Baily Thomas Foundation.

Total expenditure reduced slightly from the prior year to £90.5k (2020: £92.0k). The small decrease is due to savings in Rent driven by the closure of the Acorn Centre.

Overall, there was a deficit in the year of £33.6k (2020: deficit £36.3k). This deficit is a result of a reduction in income compared to pre-pandemic levels. (By comparison, the financial year 2018/19 saw an income of £89,846.)

Principal Risk and uncertainties

Reserves policy

This year Stepping Stones DS were required to use reserves to bridge the gap between spending and the income received to cover the reduction in income. Stepping Stones DS reserves policy states that an emergency reserves fund held by the charity should be 3 months of the resources expended based on the next financial year expenditure budget. This equates to £41.8k for the financial year 2021/22.

Stepping Stones DS operates a flexible cost model, at this level the trustees feel that they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding while necessary action is considered to replace such funding or reduce expenditure. The unrestricted reserves currently available equate to just over 10 months running costs.

Going Concern

Stepping Stones DS continues to operate with reduced but sufficient reserves. Covid-19 has significantly hindered our ability to fundraise in the normal way and a third in-year deficit has significantly reduced our available reserves. While action is being taken to address the issue, demand for services and the costs of providing those services are both increasing.

The trustees have reviewed the circumstances of Stepping Stones DS and consider that, at the current time, adequate resources continue to be available to fund the activities for the charity for the foreseeable future. The trustees, therefore, cautiously take the view that the charity is a going concern.



Financial review

Statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2020</i>
		£	£
Income from:			
Donations	2	41,882	39,815
Grants		10,010	8,600
Charitable Activities	3	4,601	5,842
Investments		411	1,456
Total income		56,904	55,713
Expenditure on:			
Raising funds		6,668	1,652
Charitable activities		57,476	62,298
Support costs		26,321	28,090
Total expenditure		90,466	92,041
Net income / (expenditure)		(33,562)	(36,328)
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward		181,098	217,426
Total funds carried forward		147,536	181,098
All of the above results are derived from continuing activities.			



Financial review

Balance Sheet

As at 31 August 2021

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2020</i>
		£	£
Current Assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		147,533	181,098
Total Current Assets		147,533	181,098
Net Current Assets		147,533	181,098
Total Net Assets		147,533	181,098
Funds:			
Restricted funds	4	7,687	1,058
Unrestricted funds		139,846	180,040
Total Funds		147,533	181,098

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2021

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2020</i>
		£	£
Net Cash used in operating activities		(33,973)	(37,784)
Interest from investments		411	1,456
Change in cash in the year		(33,562)	(36,328)
Cash at beginning of the year		181,098	217,426
Cash at the end of the year		147,536	181,098



Financial review

2. Income from fundraising		
	<i>2021</i>	<i>2020</i>
	£	£
Donations (including sponsorships)	27,581	21,689
Corporate Funding	800	17,623
Fund raising schemes (Amazon Smile, EF, GAYL, Lottery)	644	502
Community fundraising	11,570	0
Fundraising activities/events	1,288	0
Total income from donations	41,882	39,815
All income from Donations is unrestricted		

3. Income from charitable activities		
	<i>2021</i>	<i>2020</i>
	£	£
Training	4,546	4,064
Social activities	55	1,778
Total income from charitable activities	4,601	5,842
All income from charitable activities is unrestricted		



Financial review

4. Movement in Restricted Funds				
	<i>At the start of the year</i>	<i>Incoming resources & gains</i>	<i>Outgoing resources and gains</i>	<i>At the End of the year</i>
Restricted Funds:	£	£	£	£
HCC Grant: 16+ Comms Groups	353		(353)	-
Sports England: Movers/Dance/Drama	705		(705)	-
Sport England: Movers/Dance/Drama		1,360	(1,360)	-
Baily Thomas: Mainstream Outreach		2,000	(2,000)	-
Fleet Rotary: Movers/Dance		600	(595)	5
Hampshire CC: Mainstream School Outreach Grants		3,000	-	3,000
Surrey CC: Mainstream School Outreach Grants		750	-	750
Hampshire CC: Special School Outreach Grants		750	-	750
Training		2,200	(2,318)	(118)
Rebranding		4,000	(700)	3,300
Total Restricted Funds	1,058	14,660	(8,031)	7,687



Financial review

Notes to the financial statements

1. Accounting policies

a) Statutory Information

Stepping Stones DS is a charitable company limited by guarantee and incorporated in England. The registered office address and principal place of business is SSDS, Sentinel House, Harvest Crescent, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 2UZ.

b) Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting for Charities; Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements have been present in Pound Sterling as this is the functional and presentational currency of the Charity.

c) Public benefit entity

Stepping Stones DS meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

d) Going Concern

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis and all operations are continuing. The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern and have considered the impact of Covid-19 as part of this assessment.

e) Income and Interest receivable

Income and Interest receivable are recognised when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity.

f) Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal obligation to make payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.



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Restricted Funds:	<i>At the start of the year £</i>	<i>Incoming resources & gains £</i>	<i>Outgoing resources and gains £</i>	<i>At the End of the year £</i>
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Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Steppingstones DS

On accounts for the year
ended

31 August 2021

Charity no
(if any)

1182787

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 /08 /2021**.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

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

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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

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

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

Signed:

Date: 09/04/2022

Name:

Vicky Worsfold

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

FCPFA

Address: 7 Orchard Mews, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2RJ

Section B

Disclosure

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

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