



Annual Report

2022 - 2023

Charity number 1182787

Board of Trustees



We strive to have approximately half of our Board of Trustees comprised of Stepping Stones DS family members. This ensures that our board possesses first-hand experience of the challenges Stepping Stones DS seeks to address. Equally important is the direction and input we receive from individuals outside our immediate community.

Our board members contribute a diverse range of skills and experiences from various backgrounds. However, we are continuously seeking additional trustees to further enhance our diversity and ensure we fully represent the communities we serve.

The 2022/23 Stepping Stones DS Board of Trustees

Chair Josh McCormack

Vice-Chair Irene Arthur

Treasurer Rebecca Hitch

Secretary Laura Bryant

Others
Despina Papadimitriou
Jacky McKenzie
Sarahjane MacAlinden
Liz Phillipou
Mike Wainhouse



Address: SSDS, 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



@Stepping_Stones_DS



@steppingstonesds



@steppingstonesds



@Steppingstoneds

Report summary



Continuing our mission to support children and young adults with Down Syndrome to achieve their goals.

The support and services provided boost their confidence by providing a space to have fun and learn.

Our community of families and carers is integral to our mission; we are a family of families.



“Thanks for everything you do to provide amazing opportunities for our young people, ourselves, and our families.”

SSDS parent

Our Key Values

- Community
- Opportunity
- Independence
- Inclusion

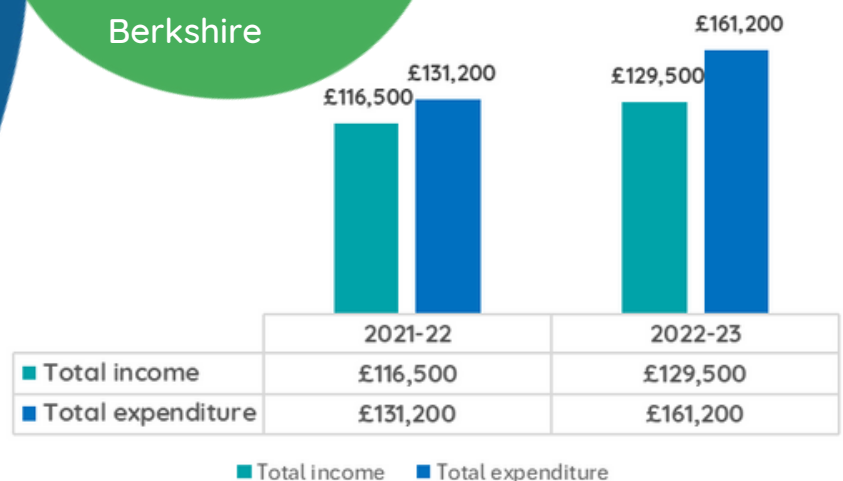
Stepping Stones DS tries to live by the example we set.

By supporting families and their children who have Down Syndrome we try to model how offering a supporting hand can help exceed expectations.

We remain politically neutral and are not a campaigning organisation.

SSDS works in:

- North Hampshire
- West Surrey
- South West Berkshire



@Stepping_Stones_DS



@steppingstonesds



@steppingstonesds



@Steppingstonesds

Report



Report from our Chair and CEO

This year, we were Flying and Soaring!

We have so many new families joining us and our services are in such demand, that this year, we added a third class to our dance, tennis and young adult communications groups.

Stopgap Dance, which runs our secondary+ dance programme, has named our three groups Steps and Strides, Leaps and Bounds and now... Flying and Soaring. And it feels like this is an apt metaphor for our journey as a charity.

On average, we have one family joining us every month and this year saw exactly that. Stay and Play has been packed out every month with so many new pre-schoolers and babies enjoying a play while parents have chance to relax with a cuppa and have a chat.

And our young adults have been honing their social communication skills and making friends in their groups, while their parents have been hearing about independent living from local supported living provider Care Opportunities.

Our families tell us that one of the most valued aspects of the service that Stepping Stones DS provides is the family of families, the peer support networks that are developed, starting at Stay and Play and continuing throughout the lives of our young people. We know that lifelong friendships are formed.

But we recognised as well, the need for more formal support, especially as the after-effects of the pandemic continue with increased mental health and social communication challenges. In response to this, and following consultation with our families, we launched a 12-month pilot Family Advisory Service, run by one of our DS experts, Vik Ralfs.

Fundraising too has also been in a post-Covid recovery stage, but increasing year-on-year and we continue our strategy of diversifying income streams to ensure protection against unforeseen circumstances.

We still have more families in the younger cohorts, meaning we will continue to grow even without increasing services or our catchment area, for several years yet. Our business planning reflects this as we work to secure our future with a strong community and sufficient funding.

Our particular thanks go to our amazing team of volunteers, to Rich and Donna Paterson for their extremely generous donation, to our grant funders and corporate partners. And, of course, to all our family and community fundraisers, and our team of professionals delivering our services and running our office.

Josh McCormack
Chair

Alex Brewer
CEO

A year in figures

Stones DS parents
rated our services

4.66

out of 5

We were pleased to note that our services remain highly rated, with the average rating of our services being 4.66 this year.

"A big thank you to everyone for helping to support SSDS families. It makes such a positive difference to our lives."
- SSDS parent

We welcomed

12

new families to
Stepping Stones DS

56

families came to our summer
picnic at Camp Mohawk

We supported

74

pupils in both
mainstream and special
schools

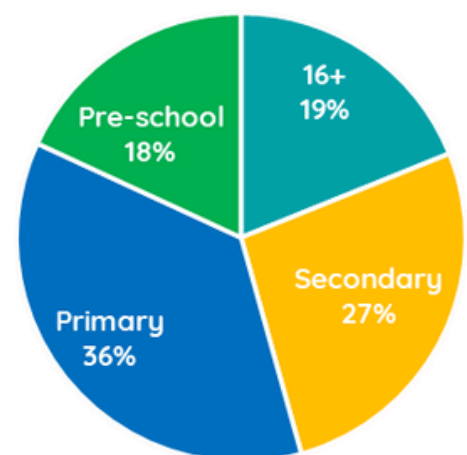
We delivered

6

training courses to
professionals, parents
and carers

"Thank you so much for all you do for our children - SSDS is such an important lifeline and your contribution to our childrens' and their families' quality of life cannot be under-estimated."
- SSDS parent

Percentage in each
age group



In October 2022 we launched a pilot Family Advisory Service. This service received **40** self-referrals in the first 9 months.

Our families



New Families

This year, we welcomed 12 new families to Stepping Stones DS. We are delighted to expand our community, supporting families with individuals under 25 who have Down syndrome in our region.

“Great to hear everyone's story and know that you're not the only one on this journey. Feel safe to talk to everyone without being judged.”



By providing our services free of charge, we strive to ensure that everyone with Down syndrome, along with their siblings, parents, carers, and professionals, can access the necessary support to fulfill their potential. This approach promotes equality within our community, and we are thrilled to witness its ongoing growth.

Stay and Play

With so many new families, our much-loved Stay and Play coffee mornings have been buzzing. This monthly meet-up was where we began and continues to be at the heart of Stepping Stones DS.



“I love these sessions and highly value them. Having a safe space to ask questions and seek validation and advice has been so important for me. I’ve loved meeting other families and little ones too.”

What we do:

Sensory Suite



Sensory Suite

We were pleased to return to the Sensory Suite at Parkside, Mencap, this year.

As well as provide a safe, fun environment for our little ones, the Sensory Suite also offers parents and carers an opportunity to chat and share with each other.

Sensory Suite session relied entirely on parent volunteers, thanks to everyone who organised or ran sessions this year.

Age range	Birth to 4 years
Number supported	23
Frequency	monthly



"Quiet groups which meant plenty of space for everyone on each section. My baby loves all the lights and he is clearly stimulating for his development."
- SSDS parent



What we do:

Early Development Groups



Early Development Groups

This year 20 of our pre-school children attended monthly Early Development Groups.

Delivered by LETS Go!, Early Development Groups are designed to empower our children with Down syndrome, providing them with the tools and skills they need to thrive.

These groups are one of the first steps in our little ones' educational journeys - covering a range of key areas including communication, speech, language, reading, memory & play.

Groups also provide an opportunity for our parents to form a support network, sharing their experiences, joys and concerns.



"We both love going to the EDG groups. Ellie has made vast improvement since starting and I can ask any questions with no judgment."
- SSDS Parent



"Amazing groups! Gives us activities to do with Lilly that have such a positive outcome on her development & social skills."

- SSDS Parent

Age range	4 months to 4 years
Number supported	20
Frequency	monthly

"Very helpful service, where we feel supported and where we learn how we can best support our daughter. Essential service, particularly as so many of us struggle to get the right services in place."

- SSDS Parent

What we do:

Social Communication Groups



Social Communication Groups

The young adult groups, run by LETS Go! enable our young adults to explore all aspects of social communication in a safe and inclusive environment.

Groups have a speech and language focus and target understanding of what makes a good communicator, how individuals can help the listener to understand, and how to advocate for yourself. We use a range of methods in the group to build confidence and success in fun and motivating activities.

These groups provide an opportunity to extend friendships out of school through activities designed to practise and develop social conversation skills.



Age range	16 to 24 years
Number supported	28
Frequency	fortnightly

"This is Austin's favourite activity. I think it is because he is interacting with young people who are older than him. He is treated like a young person and not a young child."

- SSDS Parent

What we do:

Get Moving



Secondary+ Age Tennis

The ever popular fortnightly tennis club for our young people in Year 7 and above is run by coach Andy Warry. Classes help our children to build strength, coordination and confidence while having a lot of fun.



"It has increased his confidence and skills so much, he now plays at school without any assistance, thank you so much!"

- SSDS parent



Secondary+ Age Dance

35 young people join our fortnightly dance classes for those in Year 7 and above run by Stopgap Dance. Highly popular, these classes encourage creativity and self-expression as well as fitness and coordination.



"Zack thoroughly enjoys these sessions. It gives him a creative outlet and also builds his social skills."



What we do:

School Outreach

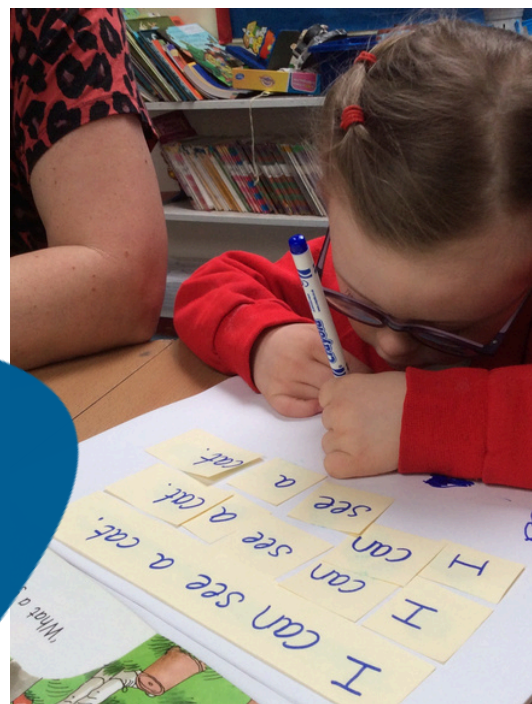


Mainstream Outreach

We provide support, advice, and evidence-based learning strategies to staff and parents, ensuring schools have the tools to create inclusive environments for children with Down syndrome. Outreach, delivered by the LETS Go! team, empowers teachers and pupils. It serves to foster confidence and equip educators to support children with Down syndrome alongside their typically developing peers.

"Absolutely invaluable service. The knowledge these specialists passed on to the school staff has enabled my daughter to make huge leaps in her learning."
- SSDS parent

39 pupils were supported across 32 schools via the mainstream outreach programme.



Special School Outreach

The Special School Outreach Service has quickly become one of our core offerings, even though it is only in its third year. Termly visits by Down syndrome expert, Vik Ralfs, have fostered closer relationships between the schools and our community. This service equips teachers with strategies to enhance the learning outcomes and school experiences for children with Down syndrome.

"An absolutely brilliant service that we have been so thankful to receive. Vik's skills and experience have given us a real insight to how Zoe is REALLY doing at school. She has given us great suggestions for how we can support Zoe and her school setting. She champions Zoe and her progression with gentle honesty, which as her parents, is exactly what we need."

"Vik has been amazing at supporting the school to help them understand our son and also in his transition to his next placement."

33 pupils were supported via the special school service this year.



What we do:

Family Advisory Service



Family Advisory Service

October 2022 saw the launch of our pilot Family Advisory Service, delivered by Vik Ralfs.

The Family Advisory Service is designed to offer practical and emotional support to our parents, grandparents, and adult siblings of children and young adults with DS. This more formal service sits alongside our informal network of families and is designed to complement the peer support networks that Stepping Stones DS has fostered since day one.



This service received **40** self-referrals in the first 9 months. Topics families sought Vik's advice on included:

Behaviour

Emotional advice

Transition to adulthood

EHCPs

Transition to college

Disability Living Allowance

Relationships

Puberty

GCSE options

Bereavement

Feeling overwhelmed

Power of attorney

Occupational therapy

Finding a new nursery



What we do:

Training



Training Courses

This year we ran 5 training courses delivered by our Down syndrome specialists.

Training helps to open doors for our children and young people. We view training as an investment in their future through sharing knowledge, information and support. Our workshops are open to families, schools, medical professionals and anyone with a desire to learn more about Down syndrome.

Thanks to Care Opportunities, parents also attended an information session looking at supported living options for our adults.



Early Number

Behaviour & Friendships

Supported Living Information Session

Supporting students with Down Syndrome in Year 5 and above

Responding to children with Down syndrome

A positive start: Choosing an education setting, getting the transition right & a guide to the EHCP process



“ I came out of the session feeling like a weight had been lifted. I certainly feel miles more confident about supporting my student (and the others in their class) and went in to work for the first time this term with a big GENUINE smile on my face feeling **“I CAN do this!”**.

I also loved how friendly everyone was - I'm not usually one to speak up in training sessions but the 'safe space' was so well established that I found myself contributing a reasonable amount, including my concerns.



Social Activities



“We attended the summer picnic and it was so wonderful. It gave us and our children a chance to socialise in a safe environment.”

Social activities

Over 120 families registered for this year's social events, including our annual trip to the pantomime, our Christmas parties, and our summer picnic. Thank you to all the volunteers who help make these events such a huge success.

Summer Picnic at Camp Mohawk

Mad House Christmas Party

Bowling Christmas Party

Pantomime



“Really well planned and brilliant seeing other parents. Knowing we're not alone is so important when you feel alone.”



“We attended the pantomime in January which was a brilliant event and so nice to do something suitable for the whole family.”

Thank you!

With huge thanks to our Grant and Trust supporters



THE COLEMAN TRUST

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE OBTAIN
THE SKILLS THEY NEED

**Coleman Trust: £2500 towards 16+
Social Communication Groups**

**Shanly Foundation: £3000
towards Special School Outreach**



**Garfield Weston: £15000
towards core costs**

**Berkshire Community Foundation/
Lexicon: £5000 towards school
outreach in Berkshire**



Clay Hill Charitable
Trust

**Clay Hill Charitable Trust: £8000
towards education services**

**Payne-Gallwey Charitable Trust:
£4000 towards the Family
Advisory Service**

PGCT
Payne-Gallwey
Charitable Trust



**The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust:
£1000 towards Tennis classes**

Thank you!

Thank you to our corporate partners and local businesses for supporting Stepping Stones DS.



Community Grants



- **Inigo** for their incredible £8000 donation towards our #DoubleThePotential match giving fundraiser.
- **Day Lewis Pharmacy** for their community donations
- **Living Stones Bookshop** who donated £1000
- **The Masonic Charitable Trust** for their continued donations
- **Rosemount Financial Services** for their substantial support of our 16+ Groups
- **PH Water staff** for running the Farnborough Winter Half Marathon and the Rushmoor Half Marathon raising £1646
- **Redfields Home of Garden & Living** for their £164 donation from their Christmas jumper day
- **Groundworks, Tesco, and Tesco shoppers** for their votes and donations towards our school outreach services.
- **Turtle Tots Surrey** for their donations.
- **Terracycle** for their donations.
- **Pabulum** for their donation of £1171
- **Surrey County Councillors** for awarding grants totaling £5416 towards School Outreach, Early Development Groups & the Family Advisory Service.
- **Hampshire County Councillors** for awarding grants totaling £2800 towards Early Development Groups & the Family Advisory Service.

Thanks to those who supported us via local and national purchasing schemes including **Amazon, EasyFundraising, Rushmoor Community Lottery, & Give as you Live.**

Thank you!

The Stepping Stones DS community went above and beyond this year in their fundraising events. Thank you so much to everyone who took part in an event, and to all of your generous supporters



Sarah & Scott Brealey ran the Fleet Half-Marathon. Scott then also ran the London marathon! Together they raised £3,874



Tim and Robin cycled from London to Brighton raising £385



Frankie raised £2,137 by completing his Bronze DofE



James ran the New Forest Marathon and raised £1,285



Eight year-old Cerys organised a bake sale for World DS Day raising £638

We would like to extend enormous thanks to Rich and Donna Paterson who supported us this year with a tremendous donation of £10,000.



Kian donated £100 of his 7th birthday money



David, Lilly, & Kevin cycled 315km raising £5,500

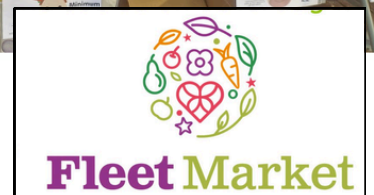


Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who helped at our community events, and to those who took part or donated.



This we attended the Fleet Jubilee Celebrations, the Fleet Christmas Market, and the Rushmoor Park Run. Thanks to everyone who helped at these events and came to support us.



Rushmoor Reindeer Parkrun



Thank you!



We would also like to thank all the local community groups who fundraised for us this year:



BRADFIELD COLLEGE

Thank You to Bradfield College for supporting us at their summer Jazz Concert, raising more than £4,000 for our services.

Thank You to St Mary's Church Coffee Shop in Send, Woking for raising **£333.70** at their coffee morning.



Thank You to Hook Fun Run & Road Races for donating £100 to Stepping Stones DS from the proceeds of this year's event.



Thank You to the **W.I. Farnborough** for inviting Stepping Stones DS to talk at one of their recent meetings and for holding an auction to raise funds for us.



TILLY WIDGETS
theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN
FARNBOROUGH



Thank you to the many **schools and nurseries** who have fundraised for us.

Finally, there are many **individuals who give regularly, make one-off donations or hold fundraising challenges.**

Throughout the year you gave generously, and in the summer you went above and beyond in our

#DoubleThePotential match giving fund resulting in an incredible total of **£25,118**. Your involvement is what makes all this possible. Your generosity is creating brighter futures for children and young adults with Down Syndrome, enabling them to fulfil their true potential.



Thanks to Church Crookham and Fleet Men's Shed for their fundraising support.

£25,118

THANK YOU!



#DoubleThePotential

Thank you!



Gifts In Kind



A huge thank you to UBC for the provision of our Fleet office space worth £60,000 in the past year.

Thank you to Water Babies for offering free of charge swimming lessons to some of our toddlers.



Thank you to our volunteers who have:

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



We have been members for nearly 15 years and the services have been invaluable. Thank you.

SSDS parent

Thank you! The groups and activities make a huge difference to my daughter's life, progress, health and well-being.

SSDS parent

Stepping Stones DS
Sentinel House, Harvest Crescent
Fleet, Hampshire, GU52 7ST
01252 417014
www.steppingstonesds.co.uk
enquiries@steppingstonesds.co.uk
Charity number: 1182787



Financial review

Stepping Stones DS Income was £129.5k (2022: £116.5k). The increase from the previous year was due to an increase in donations. We are very grateful to have received grant funding during the year from Garfield Weston Foundation, Clay Hill Trust, Surrey CC, Berks Community Foundation, Payne-Gallwey Trust, Shanly Foundation, Hampshire CC, Coleman Charitable Trust, and Dan Maskell Tennis Trust.

Total expenditure increased from the prior year to £161.2k (2022: £131.2k). The increase is driven by increased focus on fundraising and increased demand on our charitable activities.

Overall, there was a deficit in the year of £31.7k (2022: deficit £14.6k). The deficit this year is due to our increased focus on fundraising and an increase in demand for our charitable activities.

Principal Risk and uncertainties

Reserves policy

This year Stepping Stones DS was required to use reserves to bridge the gap between spending and the income received to cover increasing expenditure. Stepping Stones DS reserves policy states that, in addition to free reserves for day-to-day expenditure, an emergency reserves fund held by the charity should be at least 3 months of the resources expended based on the next financial year expenditure budget. This equated to £56,459 for the financial year 2022/23.

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 identify the activities that should be changed. The free reserves currently available equate to just over 7 months running costs.

Going Concern

Our consolidated balance sheet remains strong. Covid-19 has significantly hindered our ability to fundraise in recent years and a fourth in-year deficit has reduced our available reserves. While action has been taken to address this issue, which has assisted in reducing the deficit this year, 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, take the view that the charity is a going concern.



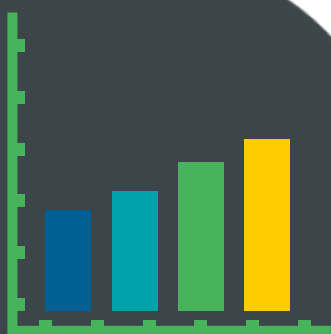
Financial review



Statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2022</i>
		£	£
Income from:			
Donations	2	75,987	46,620
Grants		48,716	64,183
Charitable Activities	3	4,584	5,177
Investments		209	475
Total income		129,496	116,455
Expenditure on:			
Raising funds		24,770	18,819
Charitable activities		101,126	82,682
Support costs		35,334	29,709
Total expenditure		161,230	131,210
Net income / (expenditure)		(31,735)	(14,755)
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward		134,877	149,632
Total funds carried forward		103,142	134,877





Financial review

Balance Sheet

As at 31 August 2023

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2022</i>
		£	£
Current Assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		103,142	134,877
Total Current Assets		103,142	134,877
Net Current Assets		103,142	134,877
Total Net Assets		103,142	134,877
Funds:			
Restricted funds		4,933	41,397
Unrestricted funds		98,210	93,479
Total Funds		103,142	134,877

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	<i>Note</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2022</i>
		£	£
Net Cash used in operating activities		(31,943)	(15,230)
Interest from investments		209	475
Change in cash in the year		(31,735)	(14,755)
Cash at beginning of the year		134,877	149,632
Cash at the end of the year		103,142	134,877



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 Sentinel House, Ancells Business Park, Harvest Cres, Fleet GU51 2UZ.

b) Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Account 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 presented in Pound Stirling 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 charities ability to continue as a going concern.

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 probably that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

SteppingStones DS

On accounts for the year
ended

31 August 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1182787

Set out on pages

21-24

(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 / 2023.

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: vworsfold

Date: 13/06/2024

Name: Vicky Worsfold

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

FCPFA, MAAT, Cert-ITM-PF

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.

Queries raised on the % of cost of raising funds/grant v income received change from previous years

Interest on cash was also low given the high interest rate environment.

Consideration into the level of cash in the current account also raised

All queries were answered thoroughly and with consideration,