

# SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO

England & Wales · Charity number 1184253

## Details

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**Other names** SPARK(BURNTWOOD) C.I.C, SPARK

**Status** Registered

**Legal form** CIO

**Registered** 2019-07-04

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

## Contact

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**Address** Spark Springhill  
Burntwood  
WS7 4UN

**Phone** 01543471047

**Email** [info@sparkburntwood.co.uk](mailto:info@sparkburntwood.co.uk)

**Website** [www.sparkburntwood.co.uk](http://www.sparkburntwood.co.uk)

## Activities

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**Objects:** THE OBJECTS OF THE CIO ARE:1. TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN BURNTWOOD AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, (HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE 'AREA OF BENEFIT') BY THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE AND PLAY FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES.2. TO ADVANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS, CARERS AND RESIDENTS WITHIN THE AREA OF BENEFIT WITH A PARTICULAR VIEW TO PROMOTIG VOLUNTEERING AND RELIEVING UNEMPLOYMENT.3. TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF PARENTS, FAMILIES, LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE AREA TO BENEFIT IN RELATION TO CHILDCARE, PLAY, EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES.

**Activities:** We operate a community hub on the site of a former childrens' centre, offering a range of groups and activities to benefit the local community in particular pre-school age children and their families.

## Classification

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- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, Disability, Recreation
- **Who:** Children/young People, The General Public/mankind

## Geography

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- Birmingham City
- Staffordshire
- Walsall
- Wolverhampton

## Finances

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Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-08-31	£163,696	£185,910	-	-
2024-08-31	£212,763	£191,957	-	-
2023-08-31	£241,405	£217,319	-	-
2022-08-31	£221,202	£202,448	-	-
2021-08-31	£125,461	£125,724	-	-
2020-08-31	£72,427	£45,298	-	-

## Trustees

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Name	Role	Appointed
Andrew Twyman		2022-01-18
Frances McCallum		2025-11-12
Rev LINDA HOOD		2019-07-04
Sarah Lucas		2019-11-26
Suzanne Kirk		2019-11-26

**SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO**

England & Wales - Charity number 1184253

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# Accounts

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# Spark (Burntwood) CIO

## Annual report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

### Reference and Administration Details:

**Spark (Burntwood)** is a CIO established in July 2019, charity registration number 1184253. Previous to this Spark (Burntwood) was a CIC established in 2015.

Its address is Spark Springhill, Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, WS7 4UN.

### Structure, Governance, and Management:

It has a **Board of Trustees** who are its only members:

Linda Hood (Chair)

Sarah Lucas (Treasurer)

Suzanne Kirk

Andrew Twyman

Spark has a **Senior Management Team** comprising a

-Chief Executive Officer

- Chief Operating Officer

-a Chief Financial Officer

all employed on a part-time basis

Staffing team include

-a Volunteer Co-ordinator

-Family support workers

-Administrator

And others employed to do specific session leading tasks. Spark also has a fantastic team of volunteer helpers who provide support with leading groups, administrative tasks and whatever needs doing.

## Objectives and Activities:

Spark's **charitable purposes** are:

- To enhance the development and education of children in Burntwood and the surrounding areas
- To advance education and training for children, carers and residents, to promote volunteering and to relieve unemployment
- To advance education of parents, families and local organisations in relation to childcare, play, education and early learning services and activities
- 

In order to achieve these purposes, Spark sets its **objectives**, and for the year ending August 2025 these objectives were *to provide a setting and staffing (paid or voluntary) for groups aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at families with pre-school children:*

- Baby group sessions
- 0-5 playgroups and support groups
- Midday Mayhem (young parents' support)
- Breastfeeding Support
- Single Parents support
- Dads sessions
- Buggy walk
- Twins and Multiples group
- Outdoor groups
- School holiday sessions
- Pregnancy Events
- Book club and Sign language group
- Sparky's Den (after-school tea club)
- World Wide Women International Women's Group
- Mini Spark Crew social action project
- Grandparents' Group (for grandparents caring for pre-school children)
- Art Groups (for children and adults)
- Baby Bank (supporting families and children of all ages with donated clothing and equipment)
- Toy library borrowing service
- Provision of a Community fridge and freezer for access by those using Spark

Spark also provides a setting for **external providers** to run activities and support services for families:

- Health Visitor clinics
- County Council Parenting Classes
- Pregnancy and new baby courses
- Nursery run play sessions
- District Council young women sessions
- Advice on energy, money, employment, health and wellbeing issues and more

During the school summer holidays in August 2025, Spark partnered with Burntwood Town Council in providing play activities and refreshments for a Play in the Park session, attended by around 800 people. Food for this was donated by a local company.

Spark continues to grow and strengthen its support. Spark's services have expanded across family support, wellbeing, cost-of-living and community activities, reflecting both rising local need and the accessibility of our peer-led approach. We now facilitate more groups and our timetable is busier than ever.

### **Bright Beginnings -Grow and Thrive Project 2025-2030**

In March 2025 Spark was awarded a grant from the National Lottery to run the **Bright Beginnings -Grow and Thrive Project**, for 5 years to March 2030, which extended the reach of activities through family support.

Spark's Vision for Bright Beginnings-Grow&Thrive

Spark sought to build on the achievements of the previous BB and G&T Projects, ensuring that every child and family could experience a Bright Beginning and continue to Grow & Thrive:

- Respond swiftly and dynamically to address the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable families within our communities.
- Coordinate teams of 50 volunteers to assist in running activities that catered to local families, while also benefitting themselves through training, skill development, and increased community engagement.
- Employ session leaders to conduct targeted peer-support sessions for 1,000 attendees annually.
- Establish parent champion roles to offer 1-on-1 support and referrals for approximately 100 individuals in need each year.

Facilitate a community hub in Burntwood to unite a diverse range of partners in providing services to broader communities facing challenges.

### **Lichfield District Council Community Connections - project 2024-2027**

Spark project Community Connections exists to:

- -address the inequalities which exist within the district
- -provide local & accessible places and services
- -provide ongoing contact with vulnerable service users
- -continue the collaboration and strong partnership working locally
- -enable routes to volunteering and improved employability
- -evolve to meet the changing needs of the community

### **Children in Need Funding - 2025-2028**

In March 2025 Spark received Children in Need funding for the first time for a project focussing primarily on the primary age range. This includes after school and school holiday sessions to improve children's confidence and self-esteem. In the project:

- Children are encouraged to try new things and learn new skills
- The activities will include a focus on self-care, promoting healthy eating and lifestyles and encouraging relaxation and positive self-talk, learning to take care of their bodies and emotions.
- Confidence also comes from building new relationships/friendships, spending time with others in a positive and encouraging environment. Feeling part of a community and helping others.

## **Achievements and Performance:**

### **Key Developments and Highlights (August 2024 – August 2025):**

Between August 2024 and August 2025, Spark continued to grow as it marked its 10th anniversary.

- 10th Anniversary Celebrations: In 2025, Spark launched a special 10 year celebratory logo designed by children from the Art Group to commemorate a decade of service since Spark's initial opening in 2015 .
- Expansion of Family Sessions:
  - Twins & Multiples Sessions: New dedicated weekly playgroups were introduced for families with multiple births.
  - Pregnancy & Baby Events: The centre hosted free roadshows and social events for expectant parents, including talks on birth and postnatal planning. New pregnancy socials and pregnancy events provide another partnership working opportunity with roadshow like stalls.
- Ongoing Community Services: The period also saw the continued operation and strengthening of core services, including the Community Fridge, which offers free fresh produce to reduce waste, and the Spark Baby & Children's Bank, which distributes vital items to families in need
- Spark also attended
  - -Local Markets and Forums
  - -Lichfield Fuse Festival
  - -Burntwood Wakes
  - -Support Staffordshire Volunteer Fair
- During the year Spark have expanded our offer including greater partnership work other providers including:
  - -A Nurses clinic for ages 5-19
  - -We hosted a Lichfield Arts Family Arts day and a Housing Register roadshow.
  - -We have partnered with Climate Action, Active Lichfield, Citizen's Advice, Food Partnerships, Health Partners and many more initiatives.
- Where Spark were doing special events inviting signposting services into the centre, these are now mostly incorporated into sessions Spark are already running as it provides a better footfall and is more joined up.
- Developed a garden room to create a private space to talk with families.



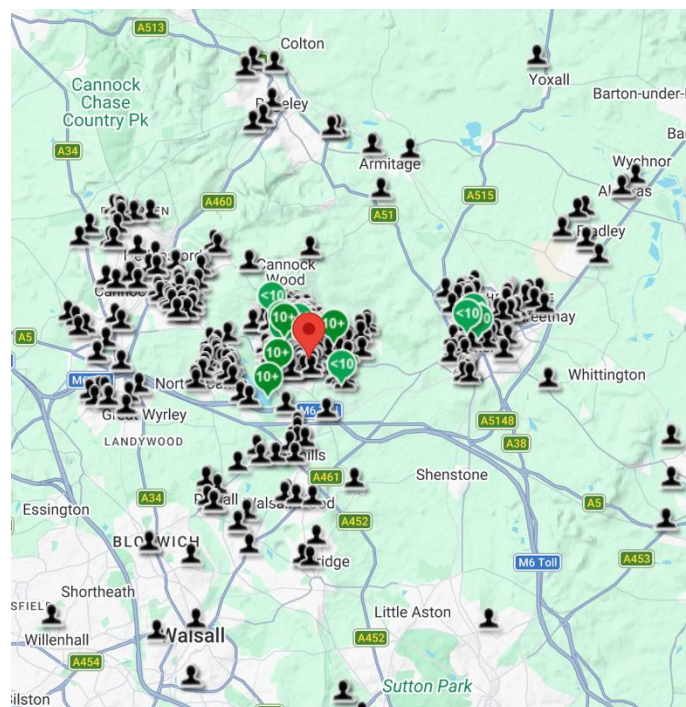
## CHANGES

- 💬 Greater feedback from service users and question of the month in the centre and online for families.
- ✉️ Regular monthly newsletters to families and a new professionals newsletter to organisations signposting to Spark.
- 🟢 @A new whatsapp channel of communication and using tik tok to engage younger families.
- 🏠 Expanding our offer in school holidays for older children.
- 📖 Better leaflet communication such as 'Welcome to Spark' leaflets.
- ⚠️ Improved safeguarding provision and arrangements for older children.
- ★ Strengthening our Trustee Board.

During this period there were:

- -1830 attendees
- -11,475 attendances
- -1091 sessions delivered
- -359 new people joined Spark's services

Map of beneficiaries:



Spark took part in surveying and data collection during this financial year:

- 97.4% feel more connected and supported by others
- 79.2% say "I feel more supported because of attending Spark activities."

- 85.7% of parents/carers say Spark supports them in their parenting journey.
- 95.1% said they found other things locally because of attending Spark.
- 82.1% of parents selected "I feel I could ask Spark for help if my children or family had a problem."



# SUPPORT IN PARENTING JOURNEY

Family Feedback

## Emotional and practical support

Parents gained reassurance, useful advice, and day-to-day help managing new demands.

## Confidence and capability

Attending sessions increased confidence, reduced isolation, and strengthened parenting skills.

## Guidance and service access

Staff, volunteers, and peers connected families to schools, health, and developmental resources.

## Inclusive, consistent community

Welcoming, non-judgmental support for parents, grandparents, and carers strengthened family cohesion.

# ENGAGING SELDOM-HEARD COMMUNITIES

Family Feedback

## Who We're Reaching

Strong representation from single parents, twins' parents, grandparents, dads, migrant women, new-to-area families, and those facing financial strain.

## Why It Works

A welcoming, non-judgmental space with universal access plus targeted support fosters safety, respect, and belonging for all backgrounds.

## Barriers to Address

Main gap is awareness; some face transport and timing limits. Improve outreach and logistics to broaden access further.

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# CHILD DEVELOPMENT, SOCIALISATION AND CONFIDENCE

Family Feedback

## Positive development outcomes

Children were happier, more engaged, and increasingly confident through Spark's activities.

## Social skills and friendship

Playful, structured sessions built sharing, communication, and peer relationships.

## Inclusive, nurturing environments

Age-tailored support, including babies, toddlers, and neurodivergent children; cost barriers reduced.

## Bridging post-pandemic gaps

Early socialisation eased anxiety and supported transitions into nursery and school.



# IMPROVED WELLBEING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Family Feedback

## Consistent wellbeing gains

Parents reported better mood, lower stress, and renewed motivation from attending Spark activities.

## Emotional safety and support

Structured social contact and compassionate groups enabled openness, empathy, and supportive friendships.

## Stronger family dynamics

Shared activities strengthened bonding, reduced household stress, and improved daily coping.

## Confidence, recovery, and belonging

Participants cited support in recovering from anxiety or postnatal difficulties and feeling part of the community.

"Helped my anxiety and depression, and helped my kids socialise."

"My mental health is so much better thanks to the work you do."



## SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS

### Targeted Crisis Assistance

Families most used the Baby & Children's Bank, Community Fridge, and cost-of-living support during acute need.

### Gateway to Engagement

Families who accessed crisis help later joined at least one regular group, building peer support and stability.

### Practical and Coordinated Support

Essentials like clothing, baby equipment, and food were provided; staff also coordinated housing, childcare, and welfare.

### Dignity and Emotional Relief

Parents felt welcomed without judgement, gaining confidence, resilience, and pathways to ongoing community support.

### Family Feedback

"Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the Children's Bank. Your support really helped ease our financial stress, especially as we didn't expect our baby to have unexpected medical needs. Thanks to you, we can focus on caring for our baby. Really appreciate all the supplies you've arranged for us — it means a lot."

## ECONOMIC RELIEF & ESSENTIALS PROVISION

### Family Feedback

#### Cost savings on essentials

Baby & Children's Bank, Community Fridge, and low-cost activities reduced spend on clothing, equipment, food, and enrichment.

#### Preventing crisis, preserving dignity

Support eased shocks, avoided debt, and offered kind, non-stigmatising help within a circular give-and-receive model.

#### Filling gaps and enabling stability

Spark bridged formal system gaps, helping for example single parents and families in difficulty which also improves wellbeing and family life.

"Baby bank... helped with so much when we had nothing... saved us a fortune."  
 "The community fridge was a huge help... keeping my family fed when times were tough."

**£6,452.50**

Average monthly amount of items passed on to children and families through the Baby and Children's Bank.



## SUPPORT EXAMPLES

Children in Need Funding Referrals for families in financial crisis situations

Nominating families for local business support

Bringing in support agencies for drop ins

Sourcing help for families being rehoused or homeless

Setting up new referral pathways with other agencies

Sourcing help for families being rehoused or homeless

Emergency food support and referrals for longer term support

Support with accessing childcare and employment opportunities

Loaning toys and equipment i.e. toy library

Referrals for household support fund for individual families

Emergency food support and referrals to longer term support

## Volunteering:

During the year Spark's regular volunteer numbers have dipped slightly:



## Volunteering Survey:

- 100% of volunteers said that volunteering improves confidence and self-esteem.
- Over 85% directly described personal increases in confidence or self-esteem in open responses.
- 100% would recommend volunteering with Spark.
- 100% plan to continue volunteering next year





## **Financial Review**

During the year we received funding from various sources. Some was fees paid by people attending groups and rent for use of the premises; some was donations from local councils; some through being a nominated charity for local businesses which held collections or fundraising events. The largest amount was from the National Lottery Community Fund for the Bright Beginnings-Grow and Thrive Project, Children in Need and Lichfield District Council for the Community Connections Project.

In addition, Spark runs a variety of fundraising events, including an annual Pamper Evening and a Fashion Show, plus the Christmas Appeal to provide toys and gifts for nominated families who use Spark.

The major expenditure was for staff salaries and associated costs (for the Senior Management Team, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Baby Bank Co-ordinator, Family Support & Session leaders, Administrator); Spark's core costs, the provision of resource materials and costs of running the various groups and activities.

This period also saw a focus on building business and philanthropic support and fundraising to diversify income streams.

### **Potential risks and uncertainties**

#### **Financial:**

It is possible that grant-making bodies may re-assess their priorities, and local-authority bodies may face cutbacks in the availability of funds. However, because Spark draws on a mix of funding sources, statutory, charity, local and national, it is not anticipated that there will be a long-term cut in income even when one grant period finishes. The Trustee board regularly checks exposure to different funding streams to ensure that there is not over-reliance on any individual source. We have a Reserves Policy which addresses various potential scenarios and provides for a 3-6 month cushion in case of short-term decreases in funding.

#### **Operational:**

- Spark works closely with its landlord, Springhill Academy, to ensure that there are no issues over use of the premises.
- There are staff employed by Spark on part-time contracts, and also staff who provide services as freelancers; there is a policy of recruiting internally when possible, perhaps turning volunteers into paid staff, so there is continuity and it is not anticipated that future staffing changes will cause operational issues.
- Because Spark works closely with other local groups and charities, it has good standing in the local community and there is little likelihood of its activities being curtailed, because it is clearly meeting local needs.

## **Future plans**

- Continue to increase communication and visibility, ensuring families and professionals know what Spark offers.
- Expand session times and formats, pilot a new session in north Burntwood.
- Strengthen the Parent Champion programme
- Improve volunteer pathways, introducing new mentor roles and developing structured learning opportunities.
- Co-produce new peer-led sessions
- Progress the courtyard redevelopment to create safe, accessible outdoor space.
- Focus outreach efforts, especially in neighbourhoods and groups that remain under-represented.
- Increase Spark's data collection and monitoring, ensuring we continue to evidence impact effectively.
- Standardise and formalise the 1 to 1 offer i.e signposting, working with partners etc
- Ensure families are aware of the support on offer through all sessions

# Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Spark (Burntwood) CIO ('the CIO')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the CIO for the year ended 31 August 2025.

## Responsibilities and basis of report

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 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

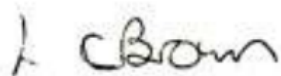
## Independent examiner's statement- matters of concern identified

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I confirm that there are no other matters to which your attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name: Lucy Brown

Address: 179 Queen Street, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4TN

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**For the year ended 31 August 2025**

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total	2024
<b>Income</b>				
Activites Coordination	427	0	427	1,570
Business Room Hire	238	1,013	1,250	498
Donation	8,620	27,456	36,075	42,657
Fundraising Events	0	549	549	1,022
Gift Aid	0	306	306	13
Grant	121,200	0	121,200	159,524
Interest Income	0	688	688	200
Other Revenue	0	0	0	887
Party Hire	0	1,853	1,853	1,165
Sales	0	1,348	1,348	5,228
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>130,484</b>	<b>33,212</b>	<b>163,696</b>	<b>212,763</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Activities	2,581	855	3,436	2,885
Advertising & Marketing	751	20	771	792
Audit & Accountancy fees	0	0	0	150
BBAF Balance	0	0	0	550
Charitable and Political Donations		30	30	100
Cleaning	6,242	1,408	7,650	655
Consulting	0	385	385	195
Equipment - Centre	3,086	0	3,086	8,324
Equipment - Computer	0	0	0	3,047
Equipment - Office	0	0	0	334
Financial Crisis Support	2,385	250	2,635	1,554
Fundraising	0	0	0	-
General Expenses	1,244	519	1,762	3,873
Insurance	0	0	0	1,198
IT Software and Consumab	2,016	45	2,062	1,833
Entertainment		281	281	-
Printing & Stationery	2,803	84	2,887	3,498
Process Payroll	531	260	791	688
Rates	0	181	181	46
Refreshments	1,008	491	1,499	2,033
Rent	5,653	1,007	6,660	5,400
Repairs & Maintenance	456	196	652	688
Resources	2,338	345	2,683	2,973
Small Tools & Equipment	327	0	327	(0)
Salaries	105,586	37,381	142,967	146,502
Staff Training	400	0	400	710
Subscriptions	2,170	594	2,764	2,381
Telephone & Internet	1,292	247	1,539	1,029
Travel - National	120	0	120	326
Volunteers' Costs	343	0	343	192
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>141,331</b>	<b>44,579</b>	<b>185,910</b>	<b>191,957</b>
Surplus (Deficit)	-10,847	-11,366	-22,213	20,806
<b>Net Income / (Payments)</b>	<b>-10,847</b>	<b>-11,366</b>	<b>-22,213</b>	<b>20,806</b>
Balance brought forward	38,621	51,891	90,512	69,706
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>27,774</b>	<b>40,525</b>	<b>68,299</b>	<b>90,512</b>

**Made up of:**

Current Account	16,928
Savings Account	50,972
Petty cash	399
	<b>68,299</b>

This Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to CIOs. This report has been approved by the Trustees on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Hood". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Linda" and the last name "Hood" clearly legible.

Linda Hood, Chair of Trustees

**SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO**

England & Wales - Charity number 1184253

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# Accounts

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## Spark (Burntwood) CIO

### Annual report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

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Linda Hood (Chair)

Stephanie Edwards (Vice Chair) Passed away in December 2024

Sarah Lucas (Treasurer)

Suzanne Kirk

Andrew Twyman

Spark has a **Senior Management Team** comprising a

-Chief Executive Officer

- Chief Operating Officer

- Chief Financial Officer

all employed on a part-time basis

Staffing team include

-Volunteer Co-ordinator

-Family support workers

-Administrator

And others employed to do specific session leading tasks. Spark also has a fantastic team of volunteer helpers who provide support with leading groups, administrative tasks and whatever needs doing. There are approximately 48 regular volunteer helpers as at August 31<sup>st</sup> 2024. Volunteers provide on average approximately 127.5 hours a week of volunteer time which equates to around 2.7 hours per volunteer.

Spark's **charitable purposes** are:

- To enhance the development and education of children in Burntwood and the surrounding areas
- To advance education and training for children, carers and residents, to promote volunteering and to relieve unemployment
- To advance education of parents, families and local organisations in relation to childcare, play, education and early learning services and activities

In order to achieve these purposes, Spark sets its **objectives**, and for the year ending August 2024 these objectives were *to provide a setting and staffing (paid or voluntary) for groups aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at families with pre-school children:*

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- Toy library borrowing service
- Provision of a Community fridge and freezer for access by those using Spark



Spark also provides a setting for external providers to run activities and support services for families:

- Health Visitor clinics

- County Council Parenting Classes
- Pregnancy and new baby courses
- Nursery run play sessions
- District Council young women sessions
- Advice on energy, money, employment, health and wellbeing issues

During the school summer holidays in August 2024, Spark partnered with Burntwood Town Council in providing play activities and refreshments for a Play in the Park session, attended by around 800 people. Food for this was donated by a local company.

In October 2021 Spark was awarded a grant from the National Lottery to run the **Grow and Thrive Project**, for 3 years to September 2024, which extended the reach of activities through wellbeing, financial resilience, volunteering and community connections support.

The aims of Grow and Thrive were:

**People Aims**

To enable those in greatest need in our community to both grow and thrive in their lives despite the difficulties which they may be facing, through:

- establishing routes to help service users grow in independence
- improving accessibility and removing barriers
- enabling peer support relationships, enabling people to help themselves and others
- improving wellbeing and enabling people to live healthy and active lives

**Organisational aims :**

- continue to facilitate joined-up working between charities locally to strengthen our community offer and organisational resilience
- secure and strengthen delivery from Spark
- build capacity to strengthen long term volunteering to have greatest impact

This allowed Spark to:

- Link up with local organisations to visit the Spark centre and provide drop ins to help the local community
- Expand and develop forms of family support
- Develop our volunteering offer
- Expand and develop new sessions
- Signpost, advocate and join up services more effectively to support families

Spark also received funding from Lichfield District Council for the Community Connections Project.

**Community Connections - project 2024-2027**

Spark project Community Connections is needed to

- address the inequalities which exist within the district
- provide local & accessible places and services
- provide ongoing contact with vulnerable service users
- continue the collaboration and strong partnership working locally
- enable routes to volunteering and improved employability
- evolve to meet the changing needs of the community

**In 2024 Spark also received 6 months of funding for a RISE pilot project:**

The infographic features the word 'RISE' in large yellow letters on a purple background. Below it, the text 'Resilience, Inspiration, Support, Empowerment' is written in yellow. A central purple box contains the text: 'This project puts those with the greatest potential barriers and need at the centre. An integrated and family centred approach works best when sessions are designed and developed by families.' To the right, four numbered boxes describe the project's goals: 1. Increase emotional and physical health and wellbeing of families with long term health conditions and disabilities through increased access to community support, provision and peer support. 2. Reduce health inequalities and enable more families to access services who may have additional barriers to provision due to their health or disabilities. 3. Support families to manage long term health conditions and disabilities through a variety of groups and services tailored to families' needs. 4. Reduce loneliness and isolation within families.

Spark also have smaller projects supporting:

- wider community improvement
- access to food
- climate change

**Highlights from September 2023 to August 2024**

Spark was asked to support a wide range of local events during the period including

- a local Hello Velo cycling event
- local markets



-94% of people involved in activities reporting new social connections increasing social cohesion.  
-98% people reporting increased mental wellbeing from being involved in activities  
-79% users report additional resilience to deal with problems  
-67% of people in crisis referrals engaged in accessing additional ongoing support through Spark

16 new volunteers joined Spark during the 12 month period. Along with many work experience and college placements. Spark undertook a survey of volunteers also and identified opportunities for further growth and support of the volunteer team.

Some Spark team members attended the Lichfield District Voluntary and Community Sector Market Place forum, highlighting local community groups in Burntwood. They nominated long-serving volunteers for a 'Volunteer Recognition' award. Garry Jones of Support Staffordshire presented the award.

Volunteer and Trustee Stephanie Edwards won the Nannie Lin Volunteer of the Year Award in 2024.

In July 2024 a celebration was held to recognise the long service of Jean and John Spraggett who retired from running Grandparents' Group over the last 9 years.

Spark increased it's offer of activities through partnership working with Lichfield District Council Us Girls Project.

Through the RISE project Spark was able to provide

- groups at the Spark centre
- family support on a 1 to 1 basis for any children or families requiring support to access help.
- wider family support and wellbeing groups.
- through the free pass access for families with long term health conditions and disabilities, families could access a wide range of services and facilities to support positive health and wellbeing.
- greater links with statutory health partners

The opportunities to link and collaborate more closely with statutory health partners such as health visitors means greater referral pathways and joined up working, increasing speed and accessibility of the right services at the right time.

Spark was in the news in 2024 with Spark sharing views on the government's free childcare policy with BBC Midlands and other channels. Collaborating with Little Owl Childcare, we filmed parents and volunteers voicing their experiences and opinions on the policy's effectiveness. We were also interviewed on BBC Radio WM Breakfast.

More training took place with teams including online and outside courses in: -food health and hygiene - safeguarding. -sustainability -bid writing -first aid. -manual handling -fire safety. -challenging behaviour -prevent. - suicide prevention -mental health first aid- adverse childhood experiences – de-escalation -health and safety- allergy training -charity finance -courageous conversations- back health -home safety - healthy sleep and weaning- supporting parents/carers who have a child with SEND. -menopause -domestic abuse awareness.

Spark partnered with AccessAble to assess and enhance accessibility to the Spark centre, resulting in a guide for individuals with disabilities and improved listing on their website for further assistance.

Spark has held more Community Connections days for partners/friends to showcase services, demonstrate impact and develop more support.

### **Financial review**

During the year we received funding from various sources. Some was fees paid by people attending groups and rent for use of the premises; some was donations from local councils; some through being a nominated charity for local businesses which held collections or fundraising events. The largest amount was from the National Lottery Community Fund for the Grow and Thrive Project and Lichfield District Council for the Community Connections Project.

In addition, Spark runs a variety of fundraising events, including an annual Pamper Evening and a Fashion Show, plus the Christmas Appeal to provide toys and gifts for nominated families who use Spark.

The major expenditure was for staff salaries and associated costs (for the Senior Management Team, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Baby Bank Co-ordinator, Family Support & Session leaders, Administrator); Spark's core costs, the provision of resource materials and costs of running the various groups and activities.

This period also saw a focus on building business and philanthropic support and fundraising to diversify income streams.

### **Potential risks and uncertainties**

#### **Financial:**

It is possible that grant-making bodies may re-assess their priorities, and local-authority bodies may face cutbacks in the availability of funds. However, because Spark draws on a mix of funding sources, statutory, charity, local and national, it is not anticipated that there will be a long-term cut in income even when one grant period finishes. The Trustee board regularly checks exposure to different funding streams to ensure that there is not over-reliance on any individual source. We have a Reserves Policy which addresses various potential scenarios and provides for a 3-6 month cushion in case of short-term decreases in funding.

#### **Operational:**

- Spark works closely with its landlord, Springhill Academy, to ensure that there are no issues over use of the premises.
- There are staff employed by Spark on part-time contracts, and also staff who provide services as freelancers; there is a policy of recruiting internally when possible, perhaps turning volunteers into paid staff, so there is continuity and it is not anticipated that future staffing changes will cause operational issues.
- Because Spark works closely with other local groups and charities, it has good standing in the local community and there is little likelihood of its activities being curtailed, because it is clearly meeting local needs.

### **Future plans**

- The provision of new groups
- Developing links with more community groups
- Increasing the number of volunteers, offering training and development to build self-confidence and encouraging volunteers to look at paid employment as a future goal.
- Develop a garden room to create a private space to talk with families.
- Follow through on strategy planning with Cranfield Trust.
- Amend focus groups to visit groups at Spark to get a wider range of views and discussion.
- Need for greater capacity especially for leading on areas of delivery, family support work, communications, planning and administration.
- Relaunch website
- More online and paper brochures with more details about services and better communication strategies.

### **Financial Report**

**Spark (Burntwood) CIO**  
**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**For the year ended 31 August 2024**

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total	2023
<b>Income</b>				
Activites Coordination	1,570	-	1,570	-
Business Room Hire	138	360	498	2,622
Donation	16,622	26,035	42,657	10,032
Fundraising Events	-	1,022	1,022	-
Gift Aid	-	13	13	-
Grant	159,524	-	159,524	224,503
Interest Income	-	200	200	74
Other Revenue	847	40	887	-
Party Hire	-	1,165	1,165	1,770
Sales	-	5,228	5,228	2,405
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>178,701</b>	<b>34,063</b>	<b>212,763</b>	<b>241,405</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Activities	2,585	300	2,885	2,777
Advertising & Marketing	776	17	792	293
Audit & Accountancy fees	150	-	150	600
BBAF Balance	550	-	550	-
Charitable and Political Donations	100	-	100	-
Cleaning	655	-	655	6,661
Consulting	195	-	195	-
Equipment - Centre	8,324	-	8,324	-
Equipment - Computer	3,047	-	3,047	-
Equipment - Office	334	-	334	-
Financial Crisis Support	1,554	-	1,554	-
Fundraising	-	-	-	413
General Expenses	3,469	404	3,873	4,775
Insurance	1,198	-	1,198	652
IT Software and Consumables	1,833	-	1,833	2,902
Entertainment	-	-	-	911
Printing & Stationery	3,477	21	3,498	2,646
Process Payroll	688	-	688	701
Rates	-	46	46	47
Refreshments	1,962	71	2,033	-
Rent	5,400	-	5,400	7,853
Repairs & Maintenance	688	-	688	3,121
Resources	2,973	-	2,973	3,333
Rounding	-	(0)	(0)	-
Salaries	146,251	251	146,502	175,030
Staff Training	710	-	710	1,889
Subscriptions	2,236	145	2,381	-
Telephone & Internet	1,029	-	1,029	1,262
Travel - National	326	-	326	1,407
Volunteers' Costs	192	-	192	44
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>190,702</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>191,957</b>	<b>217,319</b>
Surplus (Deficit)	(12,001)	32,808	20,806	24,086
<b>Net Income / (Payments)</b>	<b>(12,001)</b>	<b>32,808</b>	<b>20,806</b>	<b>24,086</b>
Balance brought forward	50,622	19,083	69,706	45,620
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>38,621</b>	<b>51,891</b>	<b>90,512</b>	<b>69,706</b>
<b>Made up of:</b>				
Current Account			50,081	
Savings Account			40,284	
Petty cash			147	
			<u>90,512</u>	

# Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Spark (Burntwood) CIO ('the CIO')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the CIO for the year ended 31 August 2024.

## Responsibilities and basis of report

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').

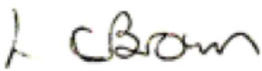
I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

## Independent examiner's statement- matter of concern identified

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I confirm that there are no other matters to which your attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Name: Lucy Brown

Address: 179 Queen Street, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4TN

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025

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This Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to CIOs. This report has been approved by the Trustees on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Signed:  Hood.

Linda Hood  
Chair of Trustees

**SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO**

England & Wales - Charity number 1184253

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# Accounts

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# Spark (Burntwood) CIO

Annual report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023

**Spark (Burntwood)** is a CIO established in July 2019, charity registration number 1184253. Its address is Spark Springhill, Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, WS7 4UN.

It has a **Board of Trustees** who are its only members:

Linda Hood (Chair)

Stephanie Edwards

Suzanne Kirk

Sarah Lucas

Andrew Twyman

Debbie Nash

Spark has a **Senior Management Team** comprising a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Operating Officer, and a Chief Financial Officer, all employed on a part-time basis, plus a small part-time **Staff Team** of Volunteer Co-ordinator and part time Family Support workers and Administrator employed to do specific group-leading and administrative tasks. Spark also has a fantastic large team of **volunteers** who develop and lead activities, administrative tasks, community and fundraising support and much more. There are approximately 60 regular volunteers as at August 31<sup>st</sup> 2023 and 5 regular helpers. Volunteers provide on average approximately 155 hours a week of volunteer time which equates to around 2.6 hours per volunteer.

Through having a dedicated volunteer coordinator role Spark are able to support volunteers with a range of needs to access volunteering opportunities and develop their confidence and skills. This may be students on placement, those who are retired or parents/carers who wish to upskill to return to work.

New volunteers that have joined Spark during this period have taken on roles:

Dads Support Session Support

Administration Support Session

Website development

Cooking after school tea club

Event Support

Garden maintenance

Events and fundraising

Session and admin support

Baby Bank Support

Toy Library Support

Grandparents Group Support

Young Parent Support

Sparks **charitable purposes** are:

- To enhance the development and education of children in Burntwood and the surrounding areas
- To advance education and training for children, carers and residents, to promote volunteering and to relieve unemployment
- To advance education of parents, families and local organisations in relation to childcare, play, education and early learning services and activities

In order to achieve these purposes, Spark set its **objectives** for the year ending August 2023: *to provide a setting and staffing (paid or voluntary) for groups aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at supporting families with pre-school children.*

It has achieved these through:

- Midday Mayhem (Young Parents' Support)
- Breastfeeding Support
- Sparky's Den (After-School Tea Club)
- World Wide Women International Women's Group
- Dads and Male Carers Group
- Chasewater Strollers (Buggy/Sling walk)
- Grandparents' Group (for Grandparents caring for Pre-School Children)
- Art Groups (for Children and Adults)
- Baby Bank (Supporting families and children of all ages with donated clothing and equipment)
- Use of the newly-developed garden area for outdoor play i.e. mud kitchens, physical development, nature sessions
- Provision of a Community fridge and freezer

In partnership with West Chads Moor Family Centre, Spark also ran the **Bright Beginnings Project** (funded by the Big Lottery Fund) which employed two part-time family support workers and an Intervention Worker, together with administration and management staff.

This Project (which ran for three years from September 2020 to August 2023) added more opportunities such as:

- Baby Peep
- Toddler Peep
- Toddle Waddle
- New baby support group
- Supportive play session

- A crèche to allow parents to undertake courses and attend support groups
- Early intervention work with families needing additional support

The aims of the project were to:

1. Strengthen parenting
2. Improve opportunities for children
3. Reduce isolation and increase access to support
4. Improve mental health and wellbeing of families

578 families accessed Bright Beginnings sessions and activities at Spark to improve a child's opportunity to learn and reach their full potential. 108 families accessed parenting support. 82 families engaged in peer-to-peer support to improve mental health, confidence and reduce isolation. 51 families were referred into Family Community Worker/Early Intervention Service.

External evaluation took place with SCVYS Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services. Highlights from this report include:

“The Bright Beginnings project was framed around the delivery of four key outcomes and an ambitious delivery framework derived from comprehensive consultation with parents and local stakeholders, coupled with the centre’s own knowledge and experience of the emerging needs of local families in their surrounding community.”

“Through offering a comprehensive programme of free activities and support, parental demand to access Bright Beginnings has been significant. Both centres have attracted previously unknown families locally, in addition to attracting families from a wider geographical area than seen before. This improved access is inextricably linked to the isolation felt during the pandemic coupled with the withdrawal/reduction of some local statutory services i.e. Health visitors, Children Centre’s. Isolation has been reduced at the different stages of parenthood, comprising activities specifically aimed at parents with new babies (Baby Buddies) through to more structured sessions for parents with toddlers (Toddler PEEP) encouraging regular engagement with other parents over a 10-week period. Through this ongoing engagement friendships are formed, parental confidence and resilience is built and access to additional support can be facilitated.” SCVYS Report Bright Beginnings 2022

The Bright Beginnings Project at Spark will continue to be delivered by two family support workers from Autumn 2023 onwards. To ensure the continuation and lasting legacy of Bright Beginnings Project such as:

- co-ordinating roles to oversee and support volunteers
- continuing to deliver a broad and balanced range of activities that prioritises those most in need of support

- continuing to ensure there are smooth and efficient pathways into and out of services
- breaking down any barriers to attendance
- continue to work in partnership wherever possible with other local agencies, professionals and organisations
- building up volunteers and volunteering opportunities to enable ownership and sustainability
- utilising more skills of the local community to support delivery
- expanding on community venue use and community support through partnership working
- community engagement and ownership of the project
- working through the feedback surveys, suggestions and areas for development
- building up staff development to keep improving and evolving with the changing needs of the community
- continuing to engage with trustees, service users and stakeholder engagement to ensure the project continues to be successful
- identify opportunities and threats for the project moving forward after September with outside mentoring support from professionals
- succession planning and sustainability

### **Grow and Thrive Project**

In October 2021 Spark was awarded a grant from the National Lottery to run the **Grow and Thrive Project**, for 3 years to September 2024, which extends the reach of activities through wellbeing, financial resilience, volunteering and community connections support.

The aims of Grow and Thrive are:

#### **People Aims**

To enable those in greatest need in our community to both grow and thrive in their lives despite the difficulties they may be facing, through:

- establishing routes to help service users grow in independence
- improving accessibility and removing barriers
- enabling peer support relationships, enabling people to help themselves and others
- improving wellbeing and enabling people to live healthy and active lives

#### **Organisational Aims :**

- continue to facilitate joined-up working between charities locally to strengthen our community offer and organisational resilience
- secure and strengthen delivery from Spark
- build capacity to strengthen long term volunteering to have greatest impact

This allowed Spark to:

- Link up with local organisations to visit the Spark centre and provide drop-ins to help the local community
- Expand and develop forms of family support
- Develop our volunteering offer
- Expand and develop new sessions

- Signpost, advocate and join up services more effectively to support families

### **Other Spark Services**

Spark also provides a setting for external providers to run activities and support services for families:

- Health Visitor clinics etc.
- Music and foreign language classes
- Adult evening groups such as sign language
- Advice on energy/money/wellbeing issues through other provider sessions
- In addition, Spark has been a partner with Burntwood Be A Friend (set up in response to Covid), offering practical support to local families and signposting them to other providers
- Throughout Autumn/ Winter 2022, Spark opened the centre each Saturday morning as part of the local Warmer Welcome initiative, in conjunction with Burntwood Town Council, and provided volunteers to staff this as well as running weekly sessions at the local Fire Station and Community Hall. As well as providing a warm and safe space with hot drinks and refreshments this was also recognised as an important social opportunity for isolated members of the community. This was attended by a wide range of people and provided information, advice and guidance about a range of support available to those on a low income.
- During the school summer holidays in July/ August 2023, Spark partnered with Burntwood Town Council in providing play activities and refreshments for two Play in the Park sessions, attended over the two days by around 1400 people.

### **Highlights from September 22 to August 23**

- Spark provided 68 summer holiday sessions in 2023.
- Groups of volunteers came together during this period to form sub-groups i.e. planning events.
- A range of fundraising events were held which were possible again after covid. Spark also developed platforms for raising more funds internally such as Give a Little and a donation station in the centre.
- Greater partnerships were made with local businesses who have been able to support Spark with professional expertise, storage and fundraising.
- Spark started a weekly newsletter to keep service users better informed, share good news and important information which was available in paper and online.
- Increased partnership working with a range of venues and VCSE groups.
- Spark were on BBC Midlands today on an article with how Fareshare and Spark supports families through the summer holidays with food provision.

- Spark were accredited with being dementia friendly and a member of the Safe Space Alliance.
- Greater partnerships with local organisations and venues including Burntwood Library where Spark set up a toy bank facility.

### **Service User Feedback included:**

“An organisation like Spark should be available in every community because it has been such a great, welcoming, non-judgmental and wise source of support to both me and my baby.”

“Supportive, friendly, informative.”

“Spark is a big part of Burntwood community.”

“Spark meets the needs of lots of local families, in a warm and friendly way.”

“Really friendly, helpful safe space.”

“It's a vital service for Burntwood's community. It was and still is a huge help for my family. I hope other towns will manage to create something as excellent as this.”

“Nurturing, informative, inspiring, together.”

“Spark gives & keeps giving, thinks of everyone by listening & creating groups to accommodate all needs.”

“Lovely supportive people helping the community and their children in many ways.”

“Amazing service that benefits so many people on a range of things.”

### **Volunteers**

Spark thanked and recognised volunteers through a range of activities during the year including family fun events, volunteers week thank you event and social evenings. Spark volunteers were also recognised by Support Staffordshire awards.

### **Financial review**

During the year we received funding from various sources. Some was fees paid by people attending groups and rent for use of the premises; some was donations from local councils; some through being a nominated charity for local stores/businesses which held collections. The largest amount was from the National Lottery Community Fund for the Bright Beginnings Project, and also the initial stages of the Grow and Thrive Project. These projects required the appointment of more staff, and this means that the largest demand on funds is for staff salaries and associated costs, paid through the grant funding, with some support from Lichfield District Council.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Spark acted as a support and holding account to emerging local charity Burntwood be a Friend which has now registered as a charity in its own right (fully completed in September 2023).

The main areas of expenditure were staff salaries (for the Senior Management Team, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Family Support & Session leaders, Administrator); the development of outdoor play areas; the provision of resource materials and costs of running the various groups.

### **Potential risks and uncertainties**

#### **Financial:**

It is likely that grant-making bodies may re-assess their priorities, and local-authority bodies may face cutbacks in the availability of funds. However, because Spark draws on a mix of funding sources, statutory, charity, local and national. The Trustee board regularly checks exposure to different funding streams to ensure that there is not over-reliance on any individual source. We have a Reserves Policy which addresses various potential scenarios and in line with the policy we are building 3-6 months of unrestricted reserves.

#### **Operational:**

- Spark works closely with its landlord, Springhill Academy, to ensure that there are no issues over use of the premises.
- There are staff employed by Spark on part-time contracts, and also staff who provide services as freelancers; volunteers often apply for roles as paid staff, so there is continuity and it is not anticipated that future staffing changes will cause operational issues.
- The group leaders have worked extremely hard during covid to create new ways of working, taking sessions out of doors for example and using local parks and other community facilities. This means that even if the building should be unavailable for a time, we can continue to provide services.
- Because Spark works closely with other local groups and charities, it has good standing in the local community and there is little likelihood of its activities being curtailed, because it is clearly meeting local needs.

#### **Future plans**

- Bright Beginnings and Grow and Thrive Project, reaching more families each year
- The provision of new groups and services
- Developing links with more community groups and using local amenities
- Increasing the number of volunteers, offering training and development to build self-confidence and encourage volunteers to look at paid employment as a future goal

## **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Spark (Burntwood) CIO ('the CIO')**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the CIO for the year ended 31 August 2023.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

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 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement- matter of concern identified**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

In carrying out my examination I noted that the balance brought forward from 2022 was incorrect by £2,936. In response to this the finance officer explained that there had been an issue with recording transactions related to Burntwood Be A Friend in the 2020-21 accounts when the two organisations were working side by side, and that the previous independent examiner was aware of this and had factored in into their workings. This issue has now been corrected within the 2022-23 accounts.

I confirm that there are no other matters to which your attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name: Lucy Brown

Address: 179 Queen Street, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4TN

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Spark (Burntwood) CIO**  
**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**For the year ended 31 August 2023**

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	2022
<b>Income</b>				
Sales	2,405	-	2,405	3,837
Business Room Hire	2,622	-	2,622	2,061
Party Hire	1,770	-	1,770	440
Interest Received	74	-	74	66
Donation	10,032	-	10,032	4,687
Grants	1,708	222,794	224,503	207,955
Sundry income	-	-	-	2,156
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>18,610</b>	<b>222,794</b>	<b>241,405</b>	<b>221,202</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Accountancy costs	600	-	600	-
Business Rates	47	-	47	440
Centre Resources	274	3,059	3,333	4,530
Cleaning	1,757	4,904	6,661	4,381
Entertainment	141	770	911	3,148
Fundraising	413	-	413	-
Goods & Materials	4,242	-	4,242	3,142
Insurance	-	652	652	658
IT Costs	334	-	334	1,848
Marketing & Publicity	-	293	293	-
Payroll Service	-	701	701	488
Telephone Costs	230	1,033	1,262	1,619
Rent	-	7,853	7,853	7,988
Repairs & Renewals	2,973	149	3,121	2,904
Salary Costs, inc NI & pensions	3,900	171,131	175,030	150,627
Session Leader Payments	2,190	587	2,777	1,640
Staff Expenses	394	1,012	1,407	4,316
Stationery	-	2,646	2,646	1,524
Sundry Expenses	272	261	534	403
Training	-	1,889	1,889	3,158
Volunteer Co-ordinator	-	-	-	2,705
Volunteer Expenses	-	44	44	5,701
Website & Software	269	2,299	2,568	1,228
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>18,036</b>	<b>199,283</b>	<b>217,319</b>	<b>202,448</b>
<b>Net Income / (Payments)</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>23,511</b>	<b>24,086</b>	<b>18,754</b>
Balance brought forward	18,509	27,111	45,620	26,866
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>19,083</b>	<b>50,622</b>	<b>69,706</b>	<b>45,620</b>

**Made up of:**

Current Account	56,596
Savings Account	13,083
Petty cash	27

**69,706**

This Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to CIOs. This report has been approved by the Trustees on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

Signed:  Hood.

**SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO**

England & Wales - Charity number 1184253

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# Accounts

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# Spark (Burntwood) CIO

Annual report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022

**Spark (Burntwood)** is a CIO established in July 2019, charity registration number 1184253. Its address is Spark Springhill, Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, WS7 4UN.

It has a **Board of Trustees** who are its only members:

Linda Hood (Chair)

Roderick Campbell

Stephanie Edwards (since September 2021)

Suzanne Kirk

Sarah Lucas

Andrew Twyman (since January 2022)

Spark has a **Senior Management Team** comprising a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Operating Officer, and a Chief Financial Officer, all employed on a part-time basis, plus a Volunteer Co-ordinator and others employed to do specific administrative and group-leading tasks. It also has a fantastic team of volunteer helpers who provide support with leading groups, administrative tasks and whatever needs doing. There are approximately 50 regular volunteer helpers as at August 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. Volunteers provide on average approximately 120 hours a week of volunteer time which equates to around 2.4 hours per volunteer.

Its **charitable purposes** are:

- To enhance the development and education of children in Burntwood and the surrounding areas
- To advance education and training for children, carers and residents, to promote volunteering and to relieve unemployment
- To advance education of parents, families and local organisations in relation to childcare, play, education and early learning services and activities

In order to achieve these purposes, Spark set its **objectives** for the year ending August 2022: *to provide a setting and staffing (paid or voluntary) for groups aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at supporting families with pre-school children.*

It has achieved these through:

- Midday Mayhem (young parents' support)
- Breastfeeding Support
- Sparky's Den (after-school tea club)
- World Wide Women International Women's Group
- Dads and male carers group

- Chasewater Strollers (Buggy/Sling walk)
- Grandparents' Group (for grandparents caring for pre-school children)
- Art Groups (for children and adults)
- Baby Bank (supporting families and children of all ages with donated clothing and equipment)
- Use of the newly-developed garden area for outdoor play i.e. mud kitchens, physical development, nature sessions

In partnership with West Chadsmoor Family Centre, Spark also ran the Bright Beginnings Project (funded by the Big Lottery Fund) which employed two part-time family support workers and an Intervention Worker, together with administration and management staff. This Project (running for three years from September 2020 to August 2023) added more opportunities such as:

- Baby Peep
- Toddler Peep
- Toddle Waddle
- New baby support group
- Supportive play session
- A crèche to allow parents to undertake courses and support groups
- Early intervention work with families needing additional support

Spark also provides a setting for external providers to run activities and support services for families:

- Health Visitor clinics etc.
- Music and foreign language classes
- In addition it has been a partner with Burntwood Be A Friend (set up in response to Covid), offering practical support to local families
- During the school summer holidays in July/ August 2022, Spark partnered with Burntwood Town Council in providing play activities and refreshments for two Play in the Park sessions, attended over the two days by around 1300 people.

In October 2021 Spark was awarded a grant from the National Lottery to run the **Grow and Thrive Project**, which extends the reach of activities through wellbeing, financial resilience, volunteering and community connections support.

The aims of Grow and Thrive are:

**People Aims**

To enable those in greatest need in our community to both grow and thrive in their lives despite the difficulties which they may be facing, through:

- establishing routes to help service users grow in independence
- improving accessibility and removing barriers

- enabling peer support relationships, enabling people to help themselves and others
- improving wellbeing and enabling people to live healthy and active lives

#### Organisational aims :

- continue to facilitate joined-up working between charities locally to strengthen our community offer and organisational resilience
- secure and strengthen delivery from Spark
- build capacity to strengthen long term volunteering to have greatest impact

This allowed Spark to:

- o Link up with local organisations to visit the Spark centre to provide drop ins to help the local community
- o Expand and develop forms of family support
- o Develop our volunteering offer
- o Expand and develop new sessions
- o Signpost, advocate and join up services more effectively to support families

#### **Financial review**

During the year we received funding from various sources. Some was fees paid by people attending groups and rent for use of the premises; some was donations from local councils; some through being a nominated charity for local stores which held collections. The largest amount was from the National Lottery Community Fund for the Bright Beginnings Project, and also the initial stages of the Grow and Thrive Project. These projects required the appointment of more staff, and this means that the largest demand on funds is for staff salaries and associated costs, paid through the grant funding, with some support from Lichfield District Council.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Spark acted as a holding account for Burntwood Be A Friend which is in the process of registering as a charity in its own right (completed in September 2022).

The main areas of expenditure were staff salaries (for the Senior Management Team, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Family Support & Session leaders, Admin Time); the development of outdoor play areas; the provision of resource materials and costs of running the various groups.

#### **Potential risks and uncertainties**

##### Financial:

It is likely that grant-making bodies may re-assess their priorities, and local-authority bodies may face cutbacks in the availability of funds. However, because Spark draws on a mix of funding sources, statutory, charity, local and national, it is not anticipated that there will be

a large cut in income. The Trustee board regularly checks exposure to different funding streams to ensure that there is not over-reliance on any individual source. We have a Reserves Policy which addresses various potential scenarios and provides for a 3-6 month cushion in case of short-term decreases in funding.

Operational:

- Spark works closely with its landlord, Springhill Academy, to ensure that there are no issues over use of the premises.
- There are staff employed by Spark on part-time contracts, and also staff who provide services as freelancers; there is a policy of recruiting internally when possible, perhaps turning volunteers into paid staff, so there is continuity and it is not anticipated that future staffing changes will cause operational issues.
- The group leaders have worked extremely hard to create new ways of working, taking sessions out of doors for example and using local parks and other community facilities. This means that even if the building should be unavailable for a time, we can continue to provide services.
- Because Spark works closely with other local groups and charities, it has good standing in the local community and there is little likelihood of its activities being curtailed, because it is clearly meeting local needs.

**Future plans**

- Bright Beginnings activities including parenting courses and support – now on a sub-contract basis to simplify communication and reduce time spent by staff on travelling between the two centres
- Grow and Thrive Project, reaching more families
- The provision of new groups
- Developing links with more community groups (i.e. local Care Homes for inter-generational work), and using local amenities.
- Increasing the number of volunteers, offering training and development to build self-confidence and encourage volunteers to look at paid employment as a future goal.

## **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of SPARK (Burntwood) CIO Trust**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the SPARK (Burntwood) CIO Trust (the Trust) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

Signed: *D Wellecomme*

Name: Deborah Wellecomme

Relevant professional qualification or membership of professional bodies (if any): FMAAT

Address: Support Staffordshire, Stafford Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford ST16 3AQ

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023

## Financial Report

SPARK (Burntwood) CIO

Income and Expenditure Account

For the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total £
	<b>Notes</b>			
<b>Income</b>				
Sales		3,837	-	3,837
Business Room Hire		2061		2061
Party Hire		440		440
Interest Received		66		66
Donation		4,687	-	4,687
Grants		11,844	196,111	207,955
Entertainment for Staff			1,508	1,508
Volunteers Event		100	-	100
General Refunds		118	-	118
Cash Paid In		430		430
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>23,583</b>	<b>197,619</b>	<b>221,202</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>				
Business Rates		220	220	440
Centre Resources		1,870	2,660	4,530
Cleaning		2,836	1,545	4,381
Donations made		129		129
Entertainment		1,300	1,813	3,113
Pension Contributions		409	7,315	7,724
Good & Materials		538	2,475	3,013
Insurance		658		658
IT Costs		1,306	542	1,848
Payroll Service			488	488
Phone Costs		391	1,228	1,619
Refund (Volunteers Socials)		35		35
Rent			7,988	7,988
Repairs & Renewals		1,000	1,904	2,904
Salary Payments		13,638	112,633	126,271
Session Leader Payments		1,049	591	1,640
Staff Expenses		2,810	1,506	4,316
Stationery			1,524	1,524
Sundry Expenses			403	403
Tax & NI to HMRC		2,169	14,463	16,632
Training		262	2,896	3,158
Volunteer Coordinator		31	2,674	2,705
Volunteer Expenses		1,690	4,011	5,701
Website & Software		590	638	1,228
Total payments		32,931	169,517	202,448
<b>Net Income/(Payments)</b>		<b>(9,348)</b>	<b>28,102</b>	<b>18,754</b>
Cash Funds at the Start of this period		27,857	(991)	26,866
<b>Cash Funds at the end of this period</b>		<b>18,509</b>	<b>27,111</b>	<b>45,620</b>

This Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to CIOs. This report was approved by the Trustees of the charity on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and signed on its behalf by

Handwritten signature of Linda Hood in black ink.

Signed.....

Linda Hood                      Chair

**SPARK(BURNTWOOD) CIO**

England & Wales - Charity number 1184253

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# Accounts

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# Spark (Burntwood) CIO

## Trustees' Annual Report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

**Spark (Burntwood)** is a CIO established in July 2019, charity registration number 1184253. Its address is Spark Springhill, Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, WS7 4UN.

It has a **Board of Trustees** who are its only members:

Roderick Campbell (Chair)

Linda Hood (Secretary)

Philippa Davies (Treasurer) - until July 2021

Suzanne Kirk

Sarah Lucas

Spark has a **Senior Management Team** comprising a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Operating Officer, and a Financial Officer, all employed on a part-time basis, plus others employed to do specific administrative and group-leading tasks. It also has a fantastic team of volunteer helpers who provide support with leading groups, administrative tasks and whatever needs doing. There are approximately 56 volunteer helpers as at August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021.

Its **charitable purposes** are:

- To enhance the development and education of children in Burntwood and the surrounding areas
- To advance education and training for children, carers and residents, to promote volunteering and to relieve unemployment
- To advance education of parents, families and local organisations in relation to childcare, play, education and early learning services and activities

In order to achieve these purposes, Spark sets its **objectives**, and for the year ending August 2021 these objectives (subject to Covid restrictions) were *to provide a setting and staffing (paid or voluntary) for groups aimed mainly, but not exclusively, at families with pre-school children*. This included the following regular activities:

Midday Mayhem (young parents' support)

Breastfeeding Support

A variety of baby groups

Sparky's Den (after-school tea club)

World Wide Women international group

Spark Dads (Dads and male carers)

A variety of playgroupg

Chasewater Strollers (Buggy Group/Sling walk)

Grandparents Group

Nature Tots sessions in the garden

Spark in the Park – weekly sessions using local parks, with stories, clues to follow, related art/ creative activities)

Occasional activities included:

- Christmas Toy Appeal to provide presents for local children who used the Spark Centre
- Summer Fun Days (in conjunction with Burntwood Town Council) for the local community, with hundreds attending on each of three dates during the school summer holidays)

Spark also provides a setting for external providers to run activities and support services for families, i.e postnatal depression support group, sign language group, language lessons. children's music lessons and baby massage classes along with professionals using the space for meetings such as Health Visitors.

Sadly, of course, coronavirus interrupted the progress of fulfilling all these objectives. Throughout times of lockdown , the staff and volunteers found creative alternative ways to fulfil their objectives, including the use of conferencing groups such as Zoom and facebook live to offer support to group members; moving services outside of buildings (which was deemed less risky regarding the spread of coronavirus); providing activity/ resource packs for families, releasing stories and themed activities online and keeping in touch with vulnerable people through telephone and other means such as social media platforms.

**Significant activities and achievements** during the year included:

The development of a joint scheme with West Chadsmoor Family Centre, which received funding from the Big Lottery Fund to set up the **Bright Beginnings** project. This scheme employs staff to expand the reach of already existing groups, and to set up new initiatives which provide support for families within both communities. Its implementation was delayed by the closure of settings because of coronavirus, but staff began work in September 2020. New activities run by Bright Beginnings included Baby Buddies and Toddle Waddle Sessions.

Setting up and running the Baby Bank – which provides all kinds of items needed by babies and children, including nappies and clothing, beds and buggies, furniture and food, all donated locally and available free of charge. This is run from a Portakabin next to the Spark Centre (and it was beautifully painted by a talented volunteer!)

Working with charitable and other organisations to set up and maintain Burntwood Be A Friend, which was formed in March 2020 to provide support to local residents affected by coronavirus; also being a hub for offering donated food to families in need.

Developing 3 new apprenticeships, offering training and mentoring opportunities for young women not in education or employment, to shadow, learn and be trained in areas of Spark's work such as the Baby Bank Project, Financial administration, Early Years development.

Making the unused outdoor area at the front of the Spark Centre into a valuable resource as a nature garden and playspace. It now provides facilities for outdoor activities for many of the groups, and is well used with physical challenges for children, opportunities for messy play etc.

Of course, many organisations were forced to stop providing services and activities because of Covid-19, but we are proud of how well Spark was able to adapt and continue much of what we do throughout this period. Spark's efforts were rewarded by receiving, in May 2021, the Queen's Award for Volunteers, with Special Recognition for work during the pandemic. Alongside recognition from the High Sherriff of Staffordshire and local volunteering awards during the year.

### **Financial review**

During the year we received funding from various sources. Because of Covid-19 we were unable to hold our normal fundraising events, but applied successfully for grants from various organisations and trust-awarding bodies, including receiving government covid grants. A small amount of income came from fees paid by people attending groups and rent for use of the premises; some was donations from local councils; some through being a nominated charity for local stores which held collections. The Volunteer Co-ordinator's salary was covered by a grant from Staffordshire County Council's Building Resilient Families and Communities Fund (BRFC) and a grant from Lichfield District Council; Bright Beginnings costs came from a Big Lottery grant to West Chadsmoor Family Centre which runs from September 2020 – August 2023.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Spark has acted as a holding account for Burntwood Be A Friend which is in the process of registering as a charity in its own right, and has received grants from multiple sources to provide ongoing help for families and individuals in the local community. BBAF employed part-time staff: Project Co-ordinator, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Finance Officer; it has its own trustees who provide governance for the project.

The main areas of expenditure for Spark were staff salaries (for the Volunteer Co-ordinator, Centre Manager, Finance Officer, group leaders and admin time); the provision of resource materials for activities and costs involved in the setting up of the Bright Beginnings Project.

## **Potential risks and uncertainties**

### Financial:

Spark draws on a mix of funding sources, statutory, charity, local and national, so it is not anticipated that there will be a large cut in income due to one source drying up. It currently holds funding from the National Lottery for a partnership project (Bright Beginnings) which will run until August 2023, giving some certainty that services will continue without risk. The Trustee board regularly checks exposure to different funding streams to ensure that there is not over-reliance on any individual source.

### Operational:

- Spark works closely with its landlord, Springhill Academy, to ensure that there are no issues over use of the premises.
- There are staff employed by Spark on part-time contracts, and also staff who provide services as freelancers; there is a policy of recruiting internally when possible, perhaps turning volunteers into paid staff, so it is not anticipated that future staffing changes will cause operational issues.
- Because Spark has been working closely with other local groups and charities, and has continued to provide services despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19, it has enhanced its standing in the local community and there is little likelihood of its activity being curtailed, even if there are future restrictions because of Covid.

## **Future plans**

- Bright Beginnings activities including Parenting courses
- The provision of new groups including more pregnancy and postnatal sessions, more dads'/male carers' activities and support, with a focus on developing the use of the outdoor area at the front of the centre as a resource for groups/activities
- The development of a further project called Grow and Thrive, with Lottery and Lichfield District Council funding, to enhance the provision of services for local families.

## Financial Report

SPARK (Burntwood) CIO

Income and Expenditure Account

For the period 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total £
	Notes			
<b>Income</b>				
Sales		3,668	-	3,668
Business Room Hire		2,220	-	2,220
Donation		10,203	-	10,203
Grants		19,086	89,565	108,651
HMRC Tax Refund		564	-	564
General Refunds		155	-	155
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>35,896</b>	<b>89,565</b>	<b>125,461</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>				
Accounts Fee		340	-	340
Administration		550	7,670	8,220
Apprenticeships		-	6,444	6,444
Business Rates		225	-	225
Centre Resources		3,995	4,724	8,719
Cleaning		7,501	1,281	8,782
Entertainment		20	316	336
Family Support Worker		-	2,396	2,396
Good & Materials		1,665	9,222	10,887
Insurance		442	876	1,318
IT Costs		86	2,934	3,020
Lottery		76	-	76
Membership & Subscription Fees		123	-	123
Phone Costs		198	833	1,031
Project Coordinator		-	2,936	2,936
Refund (Birthday Party)		75	-	75
Rent		2,600	3,925	6,525
Repairs & Renewals		44	1,038	1,082
Salary Payments		-	900	900
Session Leader Payments		9,228	19,064	28,292
Stationery		610	1,195	1,805
Sundry Expenses		2,516	5,104	7,620
Training		1,372	2,009	3,381
Tutor		-	4,140	4,140
Volunteer Coordinator		-	10,200	10,200
Volunteer Expenses		1,616	3,594	5,210
Website & Software		169	1,472	1,641
<b>Total payments</b>		<b>33,451</b>	<b>92,273</b>	<b>125,724</b>
<b>Net Income/(Payments)</b>		<b>2,445</b>	<b>(2708)</b>	<b>(263)</b>
Cash Funds at the Start of this period		25,412	1,717	27,129
<b>Cash Funds at the end of this period</b>		<b>27,857</b>	<b>(991)</b>	<b>26,866</b>

This Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to CIOs. This report has been approved by the Trustees on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022 and signed on its behalf by-

Linda Hood

Handwritten signature of Linda Hood in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'LH' followed by the name 'Hood'.

Suzanne Kirk

Handwritten signature of Suzanne Kirk in black ink, consisting of the initials 'SK' followed by the name 'Kirk'.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of  
SPARK (Burntwood) CIO

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 August 2021.

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The trustees (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention;

(1) which gives me a reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Signed:** Debbie Wellecomme (FMAAT, ACIE (Affiliate Member))    **Date:** 27/6/22

Support Staffordshire, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford ST16 3AQ