

Spark (Burntwood) CIO

Trustees' Annual Report for year ending 31st 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 31st 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 Chads Moor 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 Toddler 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 Chads Moor 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			
Income				
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
Total Receipts		35,896	89,565	125,461

Expenditure				
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
Total payments		33,451	92,273	125,724
Net Income/(Payments)		2,445	(2708)	(263)
Cash Funds at the Start of this period		25,412	1,717	27,129
Cash Funds at the end of this period		27,857	(991)	26,866

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

Linda Hood

Handwritten signature of Linda Hood in black ink.

Suzanne Kirk

Handwritten signature of Suzanne Kirk in black ink, featuring a stylized 'S' and 'K'.

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