

Spark (Burntwood) CIO

Annual report for year ending 31st August 2024

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.

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

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 31st 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:*

- 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

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:



Spark also have smaller projects supporting:

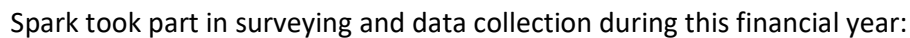
- wider community improvement
- access to food
- climate change

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

- Spark worked with the Cranfield Trust during this period on strategic planning. Through the Journey to Excellent Programme. Spark worked with the Cranfield Trust to develop a strategic plan document. This was the culmination of evidence, feedback and workshops with service users, volunteers, staff and trustees and forms a template for Spark's future areas of work and development.



- Spark provided 272 children with support through the baby and children's bank
- 115 1 to 1 support sessions were given
- 78 families received 1 to 1 support
- 33 families received finance referrals to other agencies

- 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 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Income | | | | |
| 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 |
| Total Receipts | 178,701 | 34,063 | 212,763 | 241,405 |
| Expenditure | | | | |
| 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 |
| Total Payments | 190,702 | 1,255 | 191,957 | 217,319 |
| Surplus (Deficit) | (12,001) | 32,808 | 20,806 | 24,086 |
| Net Income / (Payments) | (12,001) | 32,808 | 20,806 | 24,086 |
| Balance brought forward | 50,622 | 19,083 | 69,706 | 45,620 |
| Balance carried forward | 38,621 | 51,891 | 90,512 | 69,706 |

Made up of:

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 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').

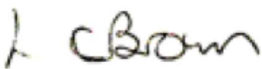
I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

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: 12th May 2025

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

Signed:  Hood.

Linda Hood
Chair of Trustees