

## 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
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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.



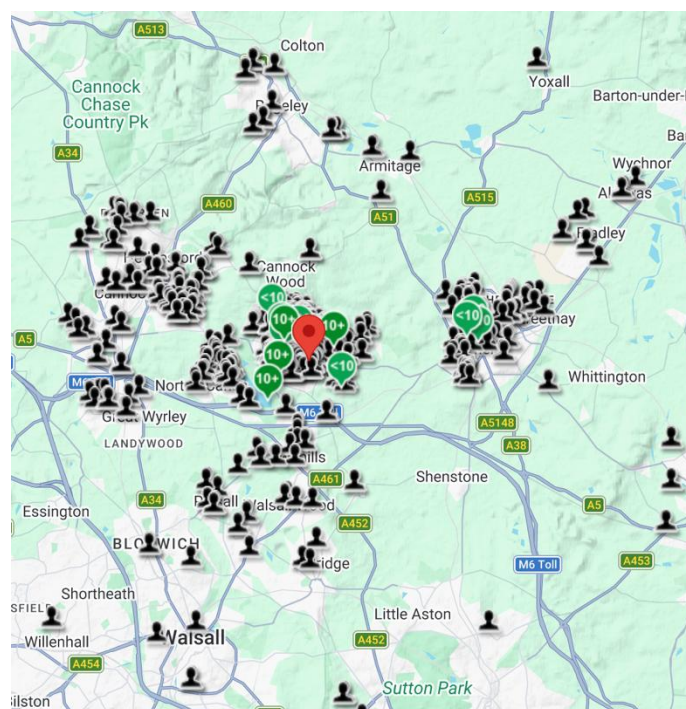
## CHANGES

- 💬 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

### Family Feedback

#### 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.

"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

Support with accessing childcare and employment opportunities

Loaning toys and equipment i.e. toy library

Sourcing help for families being rehoused or homeless

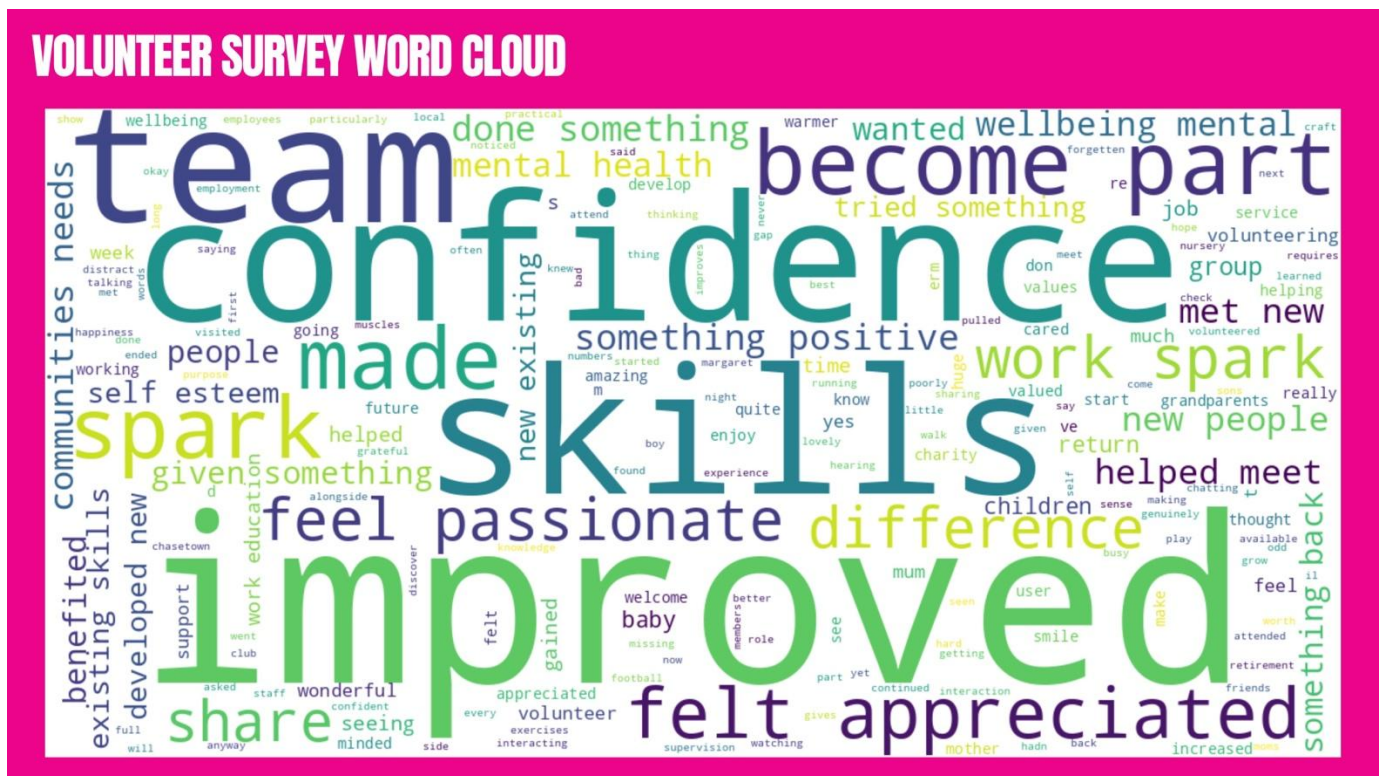
Referrals for household support fund for individual families

Emergency food support and referrals to longer term support

Emergency food support and referrals for longer term support



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



- 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

- ### Summary:

Key successes include:

- These successes demonstrate that Spark is meeting its intended outcomes and providing high-quality, community-led support for families across Burntwood and beyond.



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# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

**Irreplaceable**

**Utterly brilliant**

Spark is a valued part of the community and further afield. The support it provided for babies and families helps them when they need it.

**Welcoming, caring, and compassionate**

It's a great place to seek help, support, friendships, encouragement and motivation

Spark is amazing for new mums and dads. The groups are helpful, friendly, interesting and fun. The people who run the groups are so lovely!

**Best thing I discovered for me and my baby! Don't know what I would do without spark and everyone involved**

Spark is an incredible community organisation - the staff and volunteers make you feel like part of the family.

**Couldn't be without it.**

**Spark are extremely friendly and they are quick to reassure you of you are anxious or nervous.**

We moved and I miss Spark so much. Great people make this place what it is. Thank you for everything

**It's a hub of friendship and support!**

**Spark**  
Bright Beginnings



## **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**

	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2024</b>
<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 dark ink, appearing to read 'Linda Hood', with a stylized, cursive script.

Linda Hood, Chair of Trustees