

SPARCS End of Year Report

2023-2024

Celebrating Success: Autistic Neurodivergent Support Group

Introduction

As we conclude another fantastic year, we are absolutely thrilled to reflect on the numerous achievements and memorable moments that SPARCS has experienced. This annual report is a joyful celebration of our collective successes, an acknowledgment of the challenges we have bravely faced, and an enthusiastic outline of our hopes for the future.

Our Mission and Vision

Our mission is to passionately provide comprehensive support, advocacy, and resources to autistic or neurodivergent people and their families. We envision a world where neurodiversity is not only embraced but celebrated, where every person is empowered to reach their full potential, and where inclusivity is at the heart of all we do. Our community-based approach ensures that support and resources are accessible to all members, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual aid.

Key Achievements

Expanding Our Reach

This year, we are delighted to report a phenomenal increase in the number of children and families we have had the privilege to support. Our outreach programmes have flourished, allowing us to touch the lives of over 1,000 new members. Through engaging workshops, holiday timetables, youth clubs and vibrant community events such as our SPARCS Mini Convention, and the obtaining of our SPARCS community allotment we have cultivated a strong support network that embodies inclusivity and understanding.

Programs and Initiatives

Our amazing programmes have been the cornerstone of our success. Highlights include:

- Youth clubs and social groups: Designed to empower neurodivergent children with the skills needed for socialising and building friendships in a fun and engaging way.
- Providing a nurturing space to share experiences, make friends, and build connections within the community.
- Day trips and visits: Developing confidence and independence based on hobbies and special interests
- School holiday activities: Offering child led activities both at our centre and in the wider community
- Mental health library: resources to support young people and families to navigate the neurodivergence journey.
- First aid course: as part of a wider first aid project, we offered our members access to a certified first aid course.

Advocacy and Awareness

We have energetically intensified our advocacy efforts, working tirelessly to champion the rights and inclusion of neurodivergent children. This year, we launched several exciting awareness campaigns, including:

- Neurodiversity Celebration day, SPARCS Messtival : A vibrant event featuring inspiring activities, and super fun community activities.
- Educational Outreach: Partnering with schools to provide parents/schools with essential support, training and resources on neurodiversity.

Fundraising and Financial Growth

Our fundraising initiatives have been met with overwhelming success this year. Through generous donations, grants, and cheerful community fundraisers, we have raised vital funds that have been integral in expanding our programmes and ensuring our services remain accessible to all who need them.

Community Engagement

Building a strong, inclusive community remains a cornerstone of our work. This year, we hosted several delightful community events, including:

- Annual Beach Hut picnic and fun day: A joyous day for families to connect, play games, and celebrate our wonderful community.
- Volunteer: Our young adults became volunteers at our youth clubs
- Holiday Celebration Christmas event: Bringing our members together for a festive and heartwarming end-of-year celebration, full

of fun and laughter. Including a forest school Santas grotto with fire pit and toasted marshmallows.

- Hosted a successful open day: showcasing our activities and space, welcoming old and new members.
- Winning the High Sheriffs Award: This was in recognition of great and valuable services to the community

Challenges and Learnings

While we have much to celebrate, we also faced challenges that have provided valuable learning opportunities. Key challenges included:

- Resource Limitations: Balancing the growing demand for our services with available resources.
- Accessibility: Ensuring all programmes are accessible to children with diverse needs.
- Cost of living Impact: Adapting the ongoing activities to identify and subsidise families and young people to remove financial barriers.

Through these challenges, we have learned the profound importance of flexibility, resilience, and continuous improvement.

Future Goals

Looking ahead, we are passionately committed to building on our successes and addressing the challenges we face. Our goals for the coming year include:

- Expanding Outreach: Reaching more young people and families through targeted and innovative outreach programmes.
- Enhancing Programmes: Continuously improving our programmes to meet the evolving needs of our vibrant community.
- Strengthening Advocacy: Amplifying our advocacy efforts to influence positive change at local and national levels.
- Increasing Funding: Securing additional funding to support our initiatives and ensure sustainability.

Conclusion

As we close this extraordinary chapter and prepare to embark on a new year, we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported our mission. Your unwavering contributions, whether through time, resources, or advocacy, have made an indelible impact. Together, we are creating a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

With heartfelt appreciation,

SPARCS

USER TESTIMONIALS

At SPARCS, we are dedicated to touching countless lives through our unwavering commitment and compassion. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, our efforts create lasting change. We are excited to share some testimonials from those supported by our work. These stories of hope and resilience highlight the profound impact of SPARCS and inspire continued support.

“I cannot thank SPARCS enough for the support they have provided my teenage son. Navigating the world as a neurodivergent teenager, feeling like you don’t belong and all while studying for GCSEs has been a challenging time to say the least. SPARCS have provided a safe space and support at his lowest point. We continue to watch him grow in confidence, develop his sense of self and all while making new friendships. He spends all week waiting for Saturday night to come around. I’m not kidding when I say SPARCS has been a lifeline to our son and our family”

“C’s happiness and confidence have soared, and our family has found immense comfort and support from the SPARCS community. Joining SPARCS has been life-changing for us. We are incredibly grateful for the support SPARCS has provided”

“E has attended the SPARCS group since 2023. E struggled with participating in mainstream sports/groups due to his diagnosis. SPARCS has been a constant social group for E outside of his school socialising, E loves attending and won’t miss a session. It has helped with his confidence and social interactions with people”

“We cannot express enough gratitude for the incredible support SPARCS Club has provided to C. The welcoming environment, tailored sessions, and understanding staff have made a world of difference in his confidence and social skills. He looks forward to each session, where he feels valued and understood. SPARCS Club has not only supported him but also provided us with a community of parents who share similar experiences. We’re truly thankful for everything they’ve done for our family “

“My son has been attending SPARCS for quite some time. SPARCS offers my son a unique safe space to enjoy, engage and grow his confidence with others of similar ages. SPARCS offers free food at these sessions and also a tuck shop which allows my son to engage in conversation with

volunteers and gain money skills. My son attends the sessions with others that he has met at this group and have similar interests. As a parent/carer just knowing that he is in a safe environment and enjoying his time makes all the difference to me. I know that SPARCS offer so much more than just this session and all the volunteers are helpful and supportive. Having SPARCS provide this session is extremely beneficial to my son who looks forward to each session that he attends. We have attended lots of different activities that have been planned by SPARCS in the school holidays as well and we know how lucky we are to have them"

"I am so grateful to SPARCS, the youth club my child is signed up to is so helpful for both my child and me.

I can find some time for myself knowing that they are well taken care of, in an environment that understands their needs and is always positive and supportive.

I have been able to easily book the sessions, pay for it and communicate with the team.

The team is really amazing and understanding. They organise different events following the children's likes, there are different clubs available during the week and I couldn't be happier with it!

Thank you, SPARCS!"

"SPARCS really helped both my children to develop socially and gave some structure at the weekend and during holidays. It really helped to give us some respite and to spend time with each child one in one. It's such an amazing organisation and has given my kids more confidence. The staff have been so kind and helpful, and I always feel they are in safe hands. I feel really lucky that our children have been able to access this service."

"SPARCS has been a lifeline for us, and I'm forever grateful for the kindness, understanding, and practical support they've given. It's not just a place for kids with special needs; it's a community where families can truly belong"



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

SPARCS

No (if any)
1193049

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date
1-Apr-23

To

Period end date
31-Mar-24

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	27,717		-	27,717	14,703
Donations	14,334	-	-	14,334	11,456
	-		-	-	-
	-		-	-	-
	-		-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	42,051	-	-	42,051	26,159
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	42,051	-	-	42,051	26,159
A3 Payments					
Activities with young people	24,311		-	24,311	19,719
Administrative Expenses	7,226		-	7,226	3,973
storage and room hire	13,073	-	-	13,073	6,084
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	44,610	-	-	44,610	29,776
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	44,610	-	-	44,610	29,776
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 2,559	-	-	- 2,559	- 3,617
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,752	-	-	3,752	7,369
Cash funds this year end	1,193	-	-	1,193	3,752

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Balance	1,193	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	1,193	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		Karen McGuinness	Karen McGuinness	29-Jan-25

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
SPARCS

On accounts for the year ended

31 March 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1193049

Set out on pages

1,2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

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

Independent examiner's statement

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

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Nick Brereton

Date:

29 January 2025

Name:

N Brereton

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

MAAT

Address:

17a Northumberland Square

North Shields

NE30 1PX

Section B**Disclosure**

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

NONE