



Accounts and Trustees' Annual Report
(01/10/2022 - 30/09/2023)

UP Community

Charity Number: 1196821

Trustees' Report

About UP Community

Up Community is a small charity based in Hertfordshire. Established in 2021, we are passionate about supporting neurodiverse children and their families. We organise social events from sensory play groups to swimming sessions for children and their families. Our aim is to create a supportive community where children can socialise in a safe and non-judgemental environment and parents or carers can seek support, friendship and advice.

Sensory Play Groups

Up Community's Sensory Play Groups have flourished since their inception, with monthly sessions held at the Maxwell Park Community Centre in Borehamwood. We started organising these sessions following the feedback received from the families we engaged with in the previous year. The first session took place in November 2022, drawing significant interest from the community and attracting 15 families. Since then, these sessions have become a regular and highly anticipated occurrence. We estimate that around 50 children have turned up to these events over the months with a mix of returning families and new participants attending each time. The overwhelming response and positive feedback received from participating families have reinforced the importance of providing such inclusive opportunities. Families consistently communicate to us that these sessions fill a significant gap in the community, as there are limited alternatives available for them to engage with their children in a safe and understanding environment. We affirm our commitment to continuing organising these events.



Second engagement with Borehamwood fire station

Following our successful engagement with the Borehamwood Fire Station last year, we are proud to have been asked to work with the team again this year, assisting them in implementing a "quiet hour" during their annual open day. The quiet hour was specifically designed for inclusivity, and this included families with neurodiverse children. This initiative aims to create a calm and welcoming environment, accommodating individuals with sensory sensitivities and alleviating anxiety, while providing an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the fire station and interact with the incredible firefighters in a supportive setting.



Half term family swim at Aspire Leisure Centre

Building on the success of our previous initiatives, we have organised another private Family Swim session specifically tailored for UP Community families. This event took place at Aspire Leisure Centre in Stanmore in February 2023 providing a fantastic opportunity for families to come together, have fun, and enjoy a fun and inclusive swimming experience. By hosting Family Swim sessions, we aim to provide a space where families can relax, bond, and create lasting memories.



Schopwick Surgery Health and Wellbeing show

UP Community hosted a stall at the Health and Wellbeing event organised by Schopwick Surgery. The event provided us with a platform to engage with a diverse range of attendees. Throughout the day, we had the pleasure of meeting numerous individuals who generously shared their personal stories about how neurodiversity has impacted their lives. Our conversations spanned across a wide spectrum, including parents, carers, aunties, uncles, grandparents, neighbours, friends, and cousins, each connected to someone neurodiverse. This collective experience emphasised the crucial significance of raising awareness and fostering inclusivity within our community. The event served as a reminder that embracing diversity not only enriches our community, but also impacts individuals on a personal level, whether it be within their families, friendships, or professional environments. The vibrant exchanges and heartfelt connections made at the event further reinforced UP Community's dedication to creating a more inclusive society for all.



Online presence

We recognise the importance of building strong connections and effectively communicating with our community. We have leveraged social media to provide updates and engage with families since the inception of the charity. We have now also published the first version of our website created and hosted by a cloud service provider (Epitechnic Ltd) free of charge.

UP on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/upcommunity.herts>

UP on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/upcommunity.herts>

UP on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/up-autism-community>

UP on the Web: <https://upcommunity.org.uk>

Support from the local community.

We are incredibly grateful for the support and assistance of [Councillor Dr Dan Ozarow](#), whose dedication and efforts have greatly benefited Up Community. Councillor Ozarow played a pivotal role in connecting us with funding opportunities and helping navigate the process of applying for funding. Furthermore, his commitment to raising awareness of our charity has played a crucial role in expanding our reach and impact within the



community. Cllr Ozarow also facilitated an affiliation with a local charity, [Gratitude](#), which generously donated toys and materials for our Sensory Play Groups, enhancing the experience for the children and families we serve. We express our heartfelt appreciation to Cllr Ozarow and Gratitude for their contributions and continued support.



We are also grateful for the invaluable contributions of Beata Palinkas to the growth and success of Up Community. Beata played a vital role in assisting the set ups to our Sensory Play Groups, devoting her time and expertise to ensure that these sessions provided a nurturing and inclusive environment for neurodiverse children and their families. Her passion for creating meaningful experiences and fostering connections within the community has been instrumental in the development of our Sensory Play Groups. Additionally, Beata has been a tireless advocate for spreading awareness about Up Community's mission. Her efforts to raise awareness have helped us reach a wider audience, encouraging understanding and support for neurodiverse children. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Beata Palinkas for her exceptional dedication, compassionate spirit, and invaluable contributions.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to [Paul Walker](#) from [Epitech Ltd](#) for creating, hosting and maintaining our charity's WordPress website free of charge. Paul's expertise and dedication have been instrumental in bringing our vision to life and establishing an online platform that effectively communicates our mission and initiatives. The website will serve as a vital tool in reaching a wider audience, sharing information, and fostering a sense of community.



Finally, we could not run our Sensory Play Groups without the selfless dedication of our volunteers: Beata Palinkas, Wai Lan Wan, Karlla Da Silva, Honorata Puciato, Ryan Wan, Tyler Wan, Lewis Wan, Claire Withers, Phillipa Zage Williams, Lizzie Hallas and Dalia Lawrence. Their assistance in setting up the play group hall and supporting the events is truly appreciated and helps create a safe and welcoming space for all.

Fundraising

To cover the expenses of our Sensory Play Groups and sustain our operations, we actively pursue various fundraising avenues. We have raised funds using EasyFundraising (<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk>), a platform that enables our supporters to raise donations at no additional cost to them while they shop online. We also received voluntary donations from participants of our play groups and funds from the Ward Improvement Initiative Scheme. To secure additional funds, we will explore fundraising approaches, such as seeking grants, hosting events, partnering with businesses, and engaging in crowdfunding campaigns. We applied and have now been chosen for the Co-op Local Community Fund that will cover a significant part of the costs of running our Sensory Play Groups in 2024 – 2025.

Charity name change

After careful consideration the charity decided to change its name from Up Autism Community to Up Community. This decision reflects our dedication to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all neurodiverse children and their families, regardless of specific diagnoses. By removing the term "autism" from our name, we aim to ensure that our services are not limited solely to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The resolution was approved by the board on 10/02/2023 and subsequently reported to the Charity Commission.

Future initiatives

Sensory play groups

As we look to the future, Up Community recognises the positive impact of our Sensory Play Groups. These initiatives have resonated deeply within the community, providing invaluable support, connection, and growth for neurodiverse children and their families. Building upon this success, we are committed to sustaining and further developing our Sensory Play Groups as a core focus of our organisation. By continuing to refine and enhance these sessions, we aim to provide an even more inclusive and enriching experience for all.

Engagement with professionals

We will actively engage with professionals who specialise in working with neurodiverse children, with the aim of providing subsidised services such as speech and language, occupational or music therapy. We recognise the value and importance of these interventions in enhancing the well-being and development of neurodiverse children. We have initiated discussions with a speech and language therapist to explore the possibility of organising small group sessions in the near future to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of this support. We also started talking to a music therapist who is interested in working with us in the future.

Website development

With our website now up and running, Up Community is shifting its focus towards creating compelling and informative content. We recognise the significance of providing valuable resources and engaging materials that resonate with our community. Our goal is to ensure that our website becomes a hub of knowledge, support, and inspiration for neurodiverse children and their families.

Public organisations and local events

Following our successful engagement with Borehamwood Fire Station, we will look to extend our support and offer expertise to any organisations seeking to facilitate inclusive events that accommodate neurodiverse children. We are eager to work with other public organisations and the local authorities to implement similar initiatives by providing guidance, resources, and consultancy services to ensure that events are aligned with the needs of neurodiverse children and their families.

Accounts

Statement of financial activities (01/10/2022 to 30/09/2023)

Total incoming resources:	£887.51
Donations via EasyFundraising:	£395.21
Donations from charitable activities:	£217.90
WIIS Funding:	£148.90
Hertsmere Lottery	£89.50
Total resources expended:	£2407.55
Community hall hire:	£672.40
Bouncy castle hire:	£475.00
Sensory toys purchase:	£300.94
Insurance Policy (2021 – 2024)	£460.32
Virtual Office Subscription (2022 -2024)	£223.31
Other:	£275.58
Payments made to or expenses claimed by staff / trustees:	£0.00
Net incoming / outgoing resources:	(£1520.04)

Balance sheet (30/09/2023)

Assets:	£96.23
Cash assets:	£96.23
Liabilities:	(£2100.00)
Loan from trustees (2021 – 2022) (0% interest):	(£500.00)
Loan from trustees (2022 – 2023) (0% interest):	(£1600.00)
Net Assets:	(£2003.77)
Charity funds brought forward	(483.73)
Net incoming / outgoing resources for the year	(1520.04)
Charity funds carried forward:	(2003.77)

Marcin Pajdzik
Chairman
Up Community