

FUSS (Free UniformS for School)

Annual Report and Accounts

For the period June 2022 to 31st August 2023

FUSS (Free UniformS for School)

Annual Report and Accounts

For the period June 2022 to 31st August 2023

Contents	Page
Legal & Administrative Information	3
Trustees' Report	4 - 8
Independent Examiner's Report	9
Statement of Accounts	10 – 11
Notes to the Accounts	12

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Registered Charity Number 1199396

Principal office St Luke's Methodist Church
19 Market Street
Hoylake
Wirral
CH47 2BF

fusshoylake@gmail.com

Website www.wirralfuss.co.uk

Trustees	Rev Helen Jobling	Chair
	Dr John Huthnance	Secretary
	Mrs Pamela Simms	Treasurer
	Mr Andrew Kemp	Development Manager
	Mrs Christine Conway	
	Mrs Margaret Allen	
	Mrs Sheila Fowler	

Bankers Lloyds Bank plc
137 Telegraph Rd, Heswall, Merseyside CH60 0AN

Independent Examiner Mr Andrew Lovelady
Gorsedene, 50 Tollemache Road, Prenton, Merseyside CH43 8SZ

Trustees' Annual Report

For the period June 2022 to 31st August 2023

This is the first annual report since FUSS (Free UniformS for School) became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in June 2022. The FUSS financial year being September to August, the Charity Commission advised that the first Annual Return incorporating this Report should cover the period from becoming a Charity to the end of the first complete financial year.

The Objects of FUSS, as stated in the Constitution, are:

The relief of financial hardship among families in the Wirral and surrounding area by the recycling and provision or funding of clothing and equipment, in particular but not limited to school uniform, which they could not otherwise afford.

FUSS furthers its charitable purposes for the public benefit, by responding to requests to provide good quality, pre-used and new school uniform to families in need; and, through its wider activities, encouraging families, schools and those involved with child welfare in the environmentally positive practice 'reduce, reuse, recycle' in respect of school uniform, without regard to social or economic circumstances.

Introduction – the story of FUSS

The principle

FUSS – known locally as Wirral FUSS – encourages and enables the free distribution of school uniform, for re-use by families, without judgement of circumstances. There is no means-test: 'if you need it, and we've got it, you can have it'. We aim to follow the Christian principles of compassion, integrity, kindness and care – for families and for the environment – demonstrating faith-in-action: God's love for all. We also aim to reduce the amount of textiles entering landfill, by ensuring that any surplus uniform or unusable items are sent for textile reclamation or recycling. For every one tonne of clothing waste-prevented from landfill, seven tonnes of carbon emissions (mainly from replacement textile manufacture) are saved.

The background

Wirral FUSS (Free Uniform for Secondary School) began as a small project in one local church in 2012. It grew and spread, the need was clearly out there, and in 2015 the project was extended to include primary schools, hence Wirral FUPS (Free Uniform for Primary School). In 2017 we began weighing and monitoring our donated uniform and diverting it away from landfill. The project has seen significant growth year-on-year, both in its network of participating schools, its community contacts and the sheer demand from families. The continuing impact of austerity policies and a growing awareness of the environmental and social implications of compulsory school uniform have also played their part in the project's expansion.

The context

The project operates throughout the Borough of Wirral and the area around Neston in West Cheshire; we also look to link up with and mentor similar projects springing up around the UK. (FUSS was particularly instrumental in assisting the Morecambe Bay Foodbank to set up its uniform project, and we have also supplied advice and resources to projects in South and West Yorkshire, Luton and Hull.) Families donate outgrown, surplus and unwanted uniform into our recycled fibre donation drums. These are placed in schools, at our eight local hubs, at two local outfitters supplying new school uniform, the Wirral One-Stop-Shop in Birkenhead (no longer there), the Community Centre in Neston, and a few other community locations. We partner with all 21 secondary schools and well over two-thirds of the 100 or more primary schools in the area.

The method

Our team of around 30 volunteers collect the donated uniforms from the drums, sort them for quality, make minor repairs, wash and iron where necessary, label and store them by school, size and type, and then we literally give them away to families who need them; with no referral process, everything is free for everyone. Outworn clothes that we cannot use are sent for textile reclamation, thus helping to limit the waste of resources and to protect the environment. In the majority of cases families approach us directly. However, we also receive referrals from social workers, children's centres, school welfare workers, teachers, foster carers and other charities.

The website and online service

Our website www.wirralfuss.co.uk has been developed to make information as accessible as possible for families. Much of our uniform can be requested online, using our customised form, which enables families to select for school, age, size, item type, quantity and any additional information we may need, such as house or year colours and choice of collection location; if the family is unable to pick up their items we may be able to offer delivery. Contact information, hub locations, donation points and opening times are updated regularly, along with media clips and news of give-away days or open sessions. The charitable objects of FUSS are furthered through promotional publicity in schools, information on the FUSS website, the local hubs, give-away and other events including local media interviews.

The local hubs

To reduce travel costs for families and the associated impact on the environment it has always been the project's intention to make the accessing uniform as local as possible. We do this through our network of local hubs.

Opening two days per week our Shop Hub in the centre of Birkenhead accounts for around 50% of our activity. We also have well-established local Hubs based in churches around the Wirral:

- St Luke's Methodist in Hoylake
- Lower Bebington Methodist
- Moreton Methodist
- Parkgate & Neston United Reformed Church
- West Wirral Hub above The Beacon Café at Heswall Methodist
- St Hilary's Church of England, Wallasey
- St Barnabas' Church of England, Bromborough

Stock at five of the local Hubs is accessible via the online request system, and seven of the Hubs can be accessed directly by families if they wish to visit in person and receive help in selecting their items. The shop and hubs are run by volunteers. Hubs are open typically once or twice a week for 2 hours, with opening hours posted on the Web. Requests can be made on line at any time.

The hubs on church premises use space provided by the respective churches without charge as part of the church's mission of service to their community. Hitherto the Birkenhead hub has been used under a Tenancy at Will between Wirral Methodist Circuit and the Pyramids Shopping Centre (owned by the Mars Pension Fund). However, in the coming year Wirral Borough Council is taking over the ownership of the Pyramids as part of a redevelopment plan and a new contract between Wirral BC and FUSS (now being a CIO) is under negotiation for a 3-year lease.

The facts and figures (from before the Covid-19 pandemic)

Up to the end of 2021, since its small beginnings in 2012, FUSS had met 12,211 requests; since 2015 had given away 47,025 items; and since 2017 had waste-prevented 25 Tonnes of clothing. The Covid-19 pandemic, with many children out of school for long periods, the closure of hubs to the public, and vulnerable volunteers needing to isolate, all had a significant impact on the work of FUSS. But still the project continued to operate, delivering clothing to people's doors when necessary. For one year there was a small dip in numbers, due to schools not being open, but as the pandemic restrictions eased there were large increases in demand for uniform and of donated clothing. (For 2022-23 figures, see below.)

The funding

FUSS received a series of small grants in its early days, from Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority, the Eleanor Rathbone Foundation, the John Moores Foundation and Wirral Borough Council's community fund. It was also supported financially by St Luke's Methodist Church in Hoylake where the project began, and through small donations from grateful recipients. Since 2019 FUSS has received substantial support from the Wirral Methodist Circuit, and latterly has benefited from three years' (and continuing) part-funding grants from the Liverpool Methodist District advance fund. Now that FUSS has become a CIO, grant funding from a wider range of sources is being sought.

Achievements and Performance – 2022-23

During the 12-month period to the end of September 2023, FUSS:

- responded to 4,754 requests from families, schools and children's workers
- gave away 26,043 items of school uniform and equipment
- prevented over 10.9 Tonnes of clothing entering landfill, either by its reuse, or by recycling it

The figures above represent a 27% increase in requests, a 23% increase in uniform items given away to families, and a 9.3% increase in the amount of clothing waste-prevented, compared with the previous 12-month period. Even though during the year we opened two new local Hubs in Bromborough and Wallasey (while closing the old New Brighton Hub), this massive increase in demand – we think – is predominantly a direct outcome of the cost-of-living crisis: the fact that more and more families are struggling to cover the cost of uniform while budgeting for other essentials, especially food, housing costs and fuel costs. We hear many saddening stories of worry, hardship and distress; we try to do our bit to help.

FUSS functions due to the dedication and hard work of its Coordinator and volunteers. Several new volunteers started working with FUSS in 2022-23; in particular the team at the Hoylake Hub has been strengthened. Volunteer teams evolved at the new Hubs in Bromborough and especially in Wallasey, where demand has been great and the Hub church has committed considerable space and energy to the project. There were 27 volunteers in addition to the Trustees.

The FUSS website also evolved further in 2022-23, providing more up-to-date information on Hub opening, improved features for selecting items on the online request forms, and a facility to enable donations to FUSS.

Donation drums were placed in several new school locations, and other links with supportive community groups and venues were developed.

At the West Wirral Hub, where the public do not have access to the premises, a relationship with the management and staff of the Heswall Post Office has been built so that they now host a FUSS pick-up drum. This means that families can pick up their bag of requested items whenever the Post Office is open.

Another innovation introduced in 2023, was an option, when making an online request for uniform, to select from which Hub the family would prefer to pick up their items. This has involved additional coordination by the Coordinator and those volunteers who help to re-locate requests to enable this to happen; but it has been an undoubted benefit to many families who have not had to travel so far to claim their parcels, and it has eased the summer congestion at our busiest Secondary School Hub at Hoylake.

Over recent years, FUSS has mentored similar projects starting in other parts of the country, and we have also learnt from the different ways people tackle the problem. However, in 2023 FUSS 'gave birth' to its first 'daughter project' in Skelmersdale. We have been able to develop 'Skem FUSS' with a grant from the West Lancashire District Council, and so far a Secondary Hub has been set up at Trinity Methodist, and it is hoped that a Primary Hub will form at the nearby Anglican church. The Skelmersdale project is supported by a stand-alone website 'cloned' from the Wirral FUSS website. This has been an immense piece of work, built on planning that the FUSS Coordinator was able to do during the first Covid -19 lockdown – it is now coming to fruition.

Financial Review

In the period covered by this report FUSS has taken full control of its own finances as an independent charity, separating its accounts from those of the Wirral Methodist Circuit. The day-to-day accounting is carried out by the Treasurer, and is reviewed quarterly by the Trustees as part of the Management Group's business. Online transactions are approved in each case by the Treasurer and one other officer. Payroll is sub-contracted to the Wirral Methodist Circuit, and all expenses and expenditure on resources made by the Coordinator are checked and authorised by the Treasurer and the Development Manager.

The Trustees continue to encourage donations and to seek funding from a variety of sources: to maintain the solvency of the charity, its commitments with regard to salary etc. and mindful of its Reserves Policy. Maintaining and expanding the work of the charity will require reliable income going forward and the Trustees are actively engaged in putting this in place.

FUSS continues to be grateful for part funding from the Liverpool District, and to the Circuit for operating payroll for FUSS and for continuing to contribute generously to the cost of the FUSS Free Shop Hub in the Pyramids, Birkenhead.

Reserves Policy

The charity's Reserves Policy is reviewed annually by the Trustees in order that the agreed policy may be reported in the Annual Report and Accounts. Particular regard is made to uncertainties in relation to future levels of grant funding, and the charity's liabilities in terms of its responsibilities as an employer. The trustees' policy is to maintain the free reserve in unrestricted funds at a level which equates to approximately three months of unrestricted expenditure.

Policy Development

For much of its existence FUSS has operated in many of its policy fields under the auspices of the Wirral Methodist Circuit and the church bodies that host its local hubs, especially in relation to Safeguarding and Health and Safety. In 2022-23, since becoming a registered charity, the FUSS Trustees have been actively developing a set of Policy documents tailored to the specific operating context of FUSS. Specifically:

- Governance
- Reserves (see above)
- Risk Management
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Health & Safety at Work
- Staff Conditions of Employment
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Lone Working
- Volunteer Agreements
- Data Privacy (and data mapping)

Most of these have now been completed, are in operation, and are subject to review.

Plans for the Future

FUSS is hoping to continue building links with more schools, and open further local hubs possibly in neighbouring Ellesmere Port.

The development of FUSS in Skelmersdale will be ongoing with the establishing of Primary Hubs alongside the Secondary Hub at Trinity Methodist, linking in schools and building the volunteer teams there. During the year, the restricted reserve received for this work will be transferred to the Skelmersdale churches, and the Coordinator will encourage them in taking responsibility for the project there.

We continue to raise awareness amongst families and schools about reducing, reusing and recycling in relation to school uniform.

The Trustees and the Coordinator are aware of the ageing profile of our volunteer team, and that there is a need going forward to identify and train new volunteers.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Trustees meet regularly as a Management group which also includes the FUSS Co-ordinator (the one part-time employee) and a volunteer at the Birkenhead shop. The Management group met in person four times in the reporting period. Regular items are: Report from the FUSS Co-ordinator, matters raised by volunteers, Documents and Policies, Finance (Present balance and near-term commitments, Raising funds for the future, Grant Applications), Other planning for the future. Minutes are kept by the Secretary.

There is considerable e-mail correspondence between meetings, especially between the Trustees with named roles (see below) who are also the signatories to the bank account; two signatures are required for any payment. The Development Manager is also the Line Manager for the FUSS Co-ordinator.

No Trustees received any remuneration, payments or benefits from FUSS other than refunds of legitimate Trustee expenses.

Reference and Administrative Information

FUSS (Free Uniforms for School): Registered Charity Number 1199396

Principal office: St Luke's Methodist Church, 19 Market Street, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 2BF

Trustees:	Appointed until
Rev Helen Jobling, Chair	2024
Dr John Huthnance, Secretary	2025
Mrs Pamela Simms, Treasurer	2024
Mr Andrew Kemp, Development Manager	2026
Mrs Christine Conway	2026
Mrs Margaret Allen	2025
Mrs Sheila Fowler	2025

Trustees' Responsibilities in relation to the Accounts

The Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the ability of FUSS to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting, unless the Trustees intend to cease operations or have no realistic alternative but to do so.



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's
report on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Free Uniforms for School (FUSS)

**On accounts for the
period ended**

31 August 2023

**Charity no
(if any)**

1199396

Set out on pages

R1 & R2

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the period ended 31/08/2023.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 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:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed:

Date:

22 November 2023

Name:

Andrew Robert Lovelady

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

Accountant

Address:

Gorsedene, 50 Tollemache Road

Prenton

Merseyside Ch43 8SZ



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Free Uniforms for School (FUSS)

1199396

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

13.06.2022

To

31.08.2023

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					
District Grant 2021/22 Methodist Church GB	17,664	-	-	17,664	-
District Grant 2022/23 Methodist Church GB	9,000	-	-	9,000	-
West Lancs Borough Council	-	20,000	-	20,000	-
Andrew Peter Kemp Charities Fund	6,000	-	-	6,000	-
Grant Local Giving Ltd	500	-	-	500	-
Donations	2,604	-	-	2,604	-
SWD Premier Clothing	1,151	-	-	1,151	-
Other (Banners)	68	-	-	68	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	36,987	20,000	-	56,987	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	36,987	20,000	-	56,987	-
A3 Payments					
Salary	24,727	965	-	25,692	-
Travel	2,719	107	-	2,826	-
Collection drums/storage boxes/rails etc	1,503	881	-	2,384	-
Printing	14	-	-	14	-
IT	170	310	-	480	-
Insurance	403	-	-	403	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	29,536	2,263	-	31,799	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	29,536	2,263	-	31,799	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	7,451	17,737	-	25,188	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	-	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	7,451	17,737	-	25,188	-

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	Current Account	7,451	17,737	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	7,451	17,737	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))			


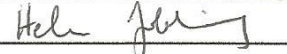
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
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 liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Pamela Margaret Simms	01.12.2023
	Helen Mary Jobling	01.12.2023

Free UniformS for School (FUSS) Charity No. 1199396

Notes to the accounts for the period June 2022 to August 2023

Free UniformS for School (FUSS) was granted Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status in June 2022 (Charity No. 1199396). Prior to this, all financial transactions were included, as a Restricted Fund, within the Wirral Methodist Circuit accounts (Charity No. 1135375).

In September 2022 FUSS secured an independent bank account with Lloyds Bank plc. During the period June to September 2022 the financial transactions continued to be administered through the Wirral Circuit accounts.

In September 2022 the remaining FUSS funds (£10,297) were transferred to the FUSS bank account. All financial transactions between June and September were documented which allows an opening balance of £17,664 to be calculated as at June 2022.

In March 2023 FUSS received a grant of £20,000 from West Lancs Borough Council to facilitate the foundation and ongoing support for Skelmersdale FUSS.