

## Sensations Nest Annual Trustee's Report 2025

**Name of charity:** Sensations – NEST Limited

**NI charity no:** NIC107615

**Company registration no:** NI666632

**Address:** 1 Clontonacally Road, BT8 8AG

**Names of Trustee's:** Dr Clare Caughey  
Mr. Nicholas McKee

The trustee's listed above are the trustee's that have approved the contents of this report and all the individual's that have served as trustee's during the year. The stated trustees can appoint new trustees to the governing body when both parties agree over the proposed trustee.

### **Constitution details:**

Sensations Nest constitution is detailed in our Articles of Association, which was written and co-opted in December of 2019. This acts as our governing document and supports the trustees in the operation of the charity.

The charity's purposes/objects are laid out in Section 1 of the Articles of Association for Sensations Nest Limited. The articles also outline the powers, benefits and conflicts, roles and powers of the trustees, as well as information pertaining to liabilities, membership and reporting/accounting practices.

The objects of Sensations Nest Ltd are:

- 1.1 Advance the education of children and young people with learning disabilities in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 Relieve the need of children and young people with learning disabilities and mental health problems and their families in Northern Ireland

The public benefit of the objects are to young people with learning disabilities living in Northern Ireland. We have a wide catchment area with pupils coming from Belfast, Newry and Armagh. We provide education to young people with learning disabilities including Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Downs Syndrome and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. We provide support to their families through updates on progress in school, therapies (including relaxation, Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy) and parent training sessions on a wide range of strategies including behaviour management, sensory processing, communication and play skills. The pupils enrolled at the Nest and their families are the charities beneficiaries.

Parents pay a monthly fee and these funds are used to further the objects of the charity namely the advancement of education for children with learning disabilities. Additionally, the Education Authority of Northern Ireland funds pupil placements at The Nest and these fees are paid on a termly basis.

## **Financial Report to December 2024**

Our accounts for the stated year have been completed by DTNC Accounting by Michelle Staerke and Clare McQuillan, who is taking over from Michelle. This report is being written prior to accounts being submitted to Companies House. This section will include more accurate accounting figures when the report has been completed. However, the Trustees are anticipating losses greater than the previous financial year.

The Nest is using online provider Tide for banking. We continue to explore and apply for other bank accounts, however, many of the larger banks have rejected our applications, including HSBC, Ulster Bank and Virgin Bank. In August 2025, it was decided that paying for Tide's premium account with a monthly fee was a better option while trying to create an account with a high street bank. This is because the Premium account came with no fee for three months and will give both Mr McKee and Dr Caughey access to the account, whereas previously this was only possible for one trustee.

Amendments of this report will be made for the submission of Accounts to the NI charity Commission when we will have the full accounts report. Sensations Nest has had a reduction in income due to a fall in the number of pupils paying privately. In the academic year of 2024/25 we only had two privately paying families, one part time and one full time. One family encountered significant financial difficulties during the year, and fees were missed, delayed and eventually suspended with a repayment agreement for the future. With this in mind, Dr Caughey and Mr McKee felt it would be financially prudent to pursue funded placements through the local authority. We now have eight pupils, and all those pupils are funded by the Education Authority. These funds are currently being transferred to Sensations Learning Support to pay for staffing costs. We are trying to increase the number of pupils funded by the Education Authority to ten and are meeting with representatives of the Minister for Education in November 2025, in the hopes of doing so.

Sensations Nest operational Headquarters at 1 Clontonacally Road and the trustees are exploring ways to release equity from the property or mortgage it to improve the finances of the charity.

## **Summary of the Charities Activities & purposes**

The main activities of the charity are education of children and young people with learning disabilities. The purpose of this education is to improve the lives of young people with learning disabilities and their families.

We aim to provide an outstanding standard of education using a variety of educational practices that benefit young people with learning disabilities. In our team at Sensations Nest we have number of professionals to provide a multi-disciplinary approach. We have a Psychology lead team which includes specialist teachers, classroom assistants, behaviour therapists, and speech & language therapists. With a range of professionals working

collaboratively we aim to provide a holistic and nurturing education to all our young people that will enable them to learn, grow and thrive in school, at home, and in the community.

Our main activities include those activities that could be found in an Education Authority controlled special school including learning activities such as learning through play, communication sessions, for example, circle time, functional literacy & numeracy, outdoor & physical education, animal therapies & care, and personal development & mutual understanding. We used an adapted version of the NI Primary Curriculum.

We use a range of teaching & learning strategies/programs. Our pupils engage in several different activities including:

- Nurture. The overarching principle of The Nest is to nurture our pupils and provide them with a safe and secure environment in which they can develop at their own pace.
- Attention Autism. This program is designed to build pupils concentration and attention skills, so they can learn to focus on less preferred tasks or follow a schedule that is more adult led.
- Animal care. We have a companion Horse named Billy and our pupils often visit him and learn to groom and care for him.
- Circle time. The purpose of circle time is primarily a communication and personal development task. They engage in different tasks and activities that incorporate cross curricular skills.
- Outdoor education. We are fortunate to have a large outdoor space for our pupils to explore and engage in. Outside we have a jungle gym, swing set, trampoline and sand and water play areas, we also utilise our Barn when the weather is particularly wet and windy. We also use this space for physical development by incorporating nature and with specific movement programs such as balancability.
- Music, the arts & relaxation. As our pupils follow an adapted version of the NI curriculum, we plan artistic activities throughout our week including art and music. Often our pupils need time to destress so that they are ready to learn, so throughout the week we use relaxation therapies to encourage calm. These include use of sensory oils, massage and aromatherapy and yoga.
- Sensory integration. Often our pupils can be under or over sensitive to different stimuli so we use our sensory room to engage the senses and as a means to calm, awaken or energise our pupils for their day.

Throughout the year we provide free training sessions to families of our young people and hope to expand the range of topics we deliver to include the Statementing Process, Behaviour management and sensory integration. We are in the process of expanding our Outreach Services at Sensations Nest by offering training packages to local primary schools and SPIM's to support staff, parents and schools.

The purpose of the charity is to improve and enrich the lives of young people with learning disabilities and help them enjoy school by providing them with a safe, secure learning environment and give them access to materials and resources to enable them to learn, thrive and grow.

## Achievements & Areas for Improvement

This section outlines the main achievements of the charity

Some of our achievements this year include the following:

- We have successfully tendered for a contract to open a pre-school provision through the Education Authority. We will be opening a pre-school provision for pupils with complex needs. The contract details the provision will support eight pupils at £10,700 per year, per pupil. This is on top of the eight pupils already receiving education at The Nest.
- During the year, we ran online training sessions for parents on a number of topics including behaviour basics, sensory processing & communication. We hope to expand the range of topics this year and offer them to other professionals and the wider community.
- Following on from a successful pupil placement funded by the Education Authority, we have increased the number of pupil places which are funded by the Authority. This has increased from two pupils in the 21/22 academic year to eight for the academic year 2024/25. Additionally, following Annual Review meetings with these families, the eight funded pupil places will continue at Sensations Nest for the 2025/26 academic year. We are aiming to secure two more funded placements for the 2025/26 academic year.
- At the end of the 2024/25 school year we supported the transition of three pupils to other educational establishments in collaboration with parents, the Education Authority and Educational Psychology.
- Plans have been drawn up about a potential expansion to Sensations Nest that would involve turning two unoccupied outbuildings into classrooms so we could increase pupil capacity. We have also explored additional rental premises.
- In 2025 we have begun working with a Highly Specialist Speech & Language Therapists to support our children and this has increased the capacity of staff and standard of practice as a whole.

Areas for development include:

- Continuing to improve the practice of special education for the benefit of our pupils and their families. Specifically, extending communication strategies with support from SLT. Additionally, we will strengthen the assessment procedures to ensure we are reflecting on practice to help improve outcomes for children.
- Developing a comprehensive staff development program to enable staff to become the best practitioners they can be.
- Developing Outreach Services, ASD and other diagnostic assessments delivered by The Nest as a new source of revenue. These need to be expanded in the 2025/26 academic year to increase revenue and cash flow.
- Divesting from Sensations Learning Support. The strain of the financial situation at Sensations CIC is impacting the running of the Nest.



- The development of grant applications to expand on the number of programs we can offer to our pupils and the wider community. Mr McKee will explore the possibility of taking part in a course to develop knowledge related to successful grant applications.

### **Statement regarding to the Commission's Public benefit requirement**

This section is written following guidance issued by the Commission under section 4(b)' of the Charities Act (the public benefit requirement statutory guidance). This report has referred to our purposes/objects, beneficiaries, the activities we engage in, our achievements.

We currently have no private beneficiaries benefitting from our purposes or activities, nor are we aware of any harm stemming from our purposes.

As our families are fee paying, we understand that this will restrict some families from accessing our services. However, these fees enable us to cover some of the costs involved and are necessary for our operation. Additionally, there are other educational facilities that are funded by the Education Authority.

### **Financial Position**

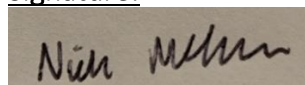
In September 2025 the Nest's main source of income comes from Education Authority placements at a cost of £23,500 per pupil, per annum. We will explore the possibility of securing funding from the EA for more pupils this school year if the opportunity arises and it may happen because of numbers of pupils that have not received a placement in a suitable school as of September 2025, and pupils that have been placed in unsuitable placements. We will also receive an additional £10,700 per pupil for each pre-school pupil. This coupled with planned increase in Outreach Services and Assessment income, Sensations Nest has a road map for a more positive financial future with decisive action being taken in the remainder of the calendar year.

Any funds that the Nest generates are used for the running of the school. This includes payment of utility bills including internet connection, resources to improve teaching and learning outcomes, maintenance and upkeep of the school grounds and buildings.

The charity has no fund that is materially in deficit and is currently developing a reserves policy that will stipulate how funds held over are used. In the future the Nest hopes to create it's own payroll and pay the staff members that work daily at the school on the Clontonacally Road. This maybe possible at some point in the 2025/26 school year depending on the final number of pupils we have.

**Report Author:** Nicholas McKee

**Signature:** Nicholas McKee

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to be 'Nik McKee' written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.