

snowflakes

Belfast

CHARITY NUMBER: 109020

Annual Report

1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Introduction

Snowflakes Belfast is a volunteer led, parent attended, peer-to-peer support network that is a cross-community, and not-for-profit organisation. We provide support and services for families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the greater Shankill area of Belfast. Typically, the group will meet each Saturday from 2-4pm.

Snowflakes Belfast was formed by a group of parents who felt that there was a lack of provision of support services for parents and carers of children diagnosed, or awaiting diagnosis, with autism or related conditions in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast. We provide a meeting place where the entire family, including non-ASD siblings, can attend to promote their inclusion as a family and increase awareness of this spectrum disorder.

Snowflakes Belfast became a charity in August 2022 and our governing document is our constitution.

We work with numerous other groups to collaborate on activities and projects, and access training to bring to Snowflakes members, its committee and volunteers.

We seek to raise awareness of ASD and lobby regularly with local government agencies to identify gaps and improve service and support provision.

The Snowflakes management committee believes, through the activities and achievements described in this report, that we continue to meet the public benefit requirement and confirm that we have due regard to the guidance produced by the charity commission in the preparation of this report.

Achievements

Snowflakes has had the privilege of supporting many families over the years. For the period of this report, we are proud to have provided weekly support to 22 families, totalling 34 children and an increase of 9 children on the previous year, in the local community.

We are extremely grateful to have the support of Malvern Assembly Church, who provided us with weekly access to their facilities, enabling us a meeting place for our group. In addition to this we have the support of the 1st Shankill Somme Society and the Mountainview tavern, Woodvale road, who put on events to fundraise for our group.

With the support from the above groups, we have been able to create a safe and welcoming group, that allows our young people and their families to meet each week, and enjoy a wide range of group activities that includes table top play, dedicated sensory area, free play, and visits from outside organisations, ensuring that our attendees have the same opportunities and experiences as their peers, but have struggled to access appropriately in a mainstream setting.

Snowflakes has funded 'exclusive access' excursions to soft play areas, a local farm, and other spaces to remove those barriers that our families face when in spaces open to the general population, giving their ASD child the same experiences as their peers, without fear of becoming overwhelmed. We have also been able to bring activities in-house, such as Jude's Clay, Wee Critters, Blackberry Farm and Jumping Jacks Entertainment hire, giving our attendees access to fun and creative activities within the safe space of our weekly group. We have engaged with our local PSNI Community Officers who remain welcome visitors to our group. They have assisted in support of our children through informal talks on topics such as road safety, stranger dangers and safe people, and enforcing the safe person approach if our young people were ever to find themselves in danger.

Snowflakes also supports the parents that attend our group through arranging social events that are parent only. All about Mums, All about Dads and The Big Dander were thought up as a way to get parents out and about with

their peers, get active and get a well-deserved break. Events were scheduled for every other month, any costs incurred were paid for by attendees. There was also a fortnightly parents group run in association with Jude Create's, our Au-Some arts parents group.

In July of 2023 Snowflakes became affiliated with Assistance Dogs NI and now as a group we are delighted to have fostered for our own therapy dog. Our beautiful girl Kyra is available to families of our group for home visits, assistance at medical appointments and school visits. She is cared for by one of Snowflakes founding members, however her veterinary needs and insurance costs are covered by Snowflakes, and this is reflected on our financial statement.

And lastly in a bid to spread awareness Snowflakes has been active on social media platforms X and Facebook promoting our group and its activities to the wider community.

Report against the Purposes of snowflakes Belfast

The purpose of Snowflakes Belfast is to relieve the need of individuals and their families/carers in the greater Belfast area who are affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This purpose is classified under 'the relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage' as described in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

We aim to achieve this through the following five strategies, and report on these in the text below each.

1. Providing opportunities to learn from each other through sharing experiences and creating management strategies that will help the children with ASD.

Snowflakes provides support to members through weekly group meetings throughout the year, where parents can engage and share advice and give support to one another, create friendships based on mutual understanding of the shared challenges faced as parents of ASD children.

2. Providing recreational facilities including sensory play, art and music, and building bonds between siblings and others with and without ASD.

Snowflakes has been able to provide a safe space for our group through partnership with Malvern assembly on Agnes Street in Belfast. They allow us weekly use of their building with both floor and storage space, and use of kitchen and quiet room facilities. Snowflakes utilises this and has a dedicated sensory space for our kids to avail of. We also provide table-top sensory play, crafts, music and dance. The families of our group are encouraged to bring siblings of their ASD child to encourage bonding within families.

3. Promoting and encouraging interaction between disabled and non-disabled people through shared activities and group meetings.

As our group is open to the siblings and, on occasion, the wider family of our members we encourage the interaction through group play and activities. We believe it is important for these families to see and understand that they are not alone, that they have a network of support behind them.

4. Raising awareness to the general public, in the area of benefit, of the needs, experiences and abilities of those with a disability.

Through annual fundraising efforts and our celebrations of world autism awareness day and month, and through networking, partnerships and word of mouth, Snowflakes promotes inclusivity and acceptance of those affected by ASD.

5. Ensuring individuals, families and carers affected by ASD, have equal access to recreational events and activities in the local community and beyond.

The activities planned by the volunteers of snowflakes is intended to build friendships between ASD and non-ASD members of the families within our group. In a wider context snowflakes arranges trips to local and regional venues for the enjoyment of all involved in our group.

Funding

As per our constitution, all monies raised by or on behalf of the group shall be applied to further the objectives of the group and for no other purpose. Our regular source of funds are the monthly fees (capped at £10 per family) from the families in our group though we do aim to have at least one fundraising event per year. Funds are used to provide:

- snacks and refreshments for the weekly group meet,
- cover insurance costs,
- new/replacement toys, equipment and crafts,
- occasional travel costs and entry fees
- payment of service providers for group activities
- Veterinary care and insurance for the Snowflakes fostered therapy dog, Kyrá

Snowflakes does not possess any material assets in terms of buildings, vehicles or capital equipment. Our holdings are low value and replaceable (food stocks, toys and electronics). For the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 we received no outside funding.

Statement of Finance

Receipts and payments accounts for Snowflakes Belfast 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024


	Date	Holding Bank account	Paypal	Cash	Total
Opening Balance	01/04/2023	£ 1,866.62	£ 1,780.05	£ 1,786.02	£ 5,432.69
Incomings	Dues	£ 730.00	£ 10.00	£ 460.00	£ 1,200.00
	Donation	£ 100.00	£ -	£ 100.00	£ 200.00
	Fundraising	£ 12.00	£ 179.14	£ 2,148.80	£ 2,339.94
	Total	£ 842.00	£ 189.14	£ 2,708.80	£ 3,739.94
Transfers		£ 3,980.05	-£ 1,790.05	-£ 2,190.00	£ -
Outgoings	Running costs (weekly)	-£ 204.09	£ -	-£ 203.91	-£ 408.00
	Club Insurance	-£ 173.44	£ -	£ -	-£ 173.44
	Assistance dog Insurance	-£ 782.02	£ -	£ -	-£ 782.02
	Services (Jude Creates/Wee Critters/Jumping Jacks Hire)	-£ 1,147.00	£ -	£ -	-£ 1,147.00
	Trips (Wild World Parties/Blackberry Farm)	-£ 620.00	£ -	-£ 75.00	-£ 695.00
	Purchases (Toys, furnishings)	£ -	£ -	-£ 110.00	-£ 110.00
	Total	-£ 2,926.55	£ -	-£ 388.91	-£ 3,315.46
Closing Balance	31/03/2024	£ 3,762.12	£ 179.14	£ 1,915.91	£ 5,857.17

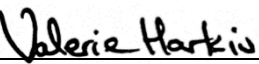
None of Snowflakes income streams are restricted.

Snowflakes does not hold endowment funds.

Snowflakes holds cash funds only and does not have any assets or liabilities.

Report approved on behalf of the Snowflakes Committee by:

Signed	
Print	Ashleigh Spence (Secretary)

Signed	
Print	Valerie Harkin (treasurer)

Report approved date: 31/01/2025

Appendix 1: List of committee members

Jacqueline McGarrity
Ashleigh Spence
Valerie Harkin
Georgina Trickett
Sinead Rosbothum
Lindsay McMullan
Deborah Burns
Lesleyann Worthington
Ken Worthington

Appendix 2: Contact info:

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