



Stepping Stones DS Annual Report 2016/17

ONE STEP AT A TIME

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Chair's Report

At the conclusion of my report last year, my first year of being Chair, I said that “the year ahead promises to be one of challenge and transition”.

I could not have been more right; the end results have been an amazing year for Stepping Stones DS. We have been given the opportunity of a new office, rent free, which is big enough to double as a training centre. We have launched our wonderful new website and published our fantastic updated “Our Stories” booklet. We completed a member survey and as the year drew to a close, we took over the keys to The Acorn Centre, a former children’s centre, which we are letting as a permanent home for some of our services.



We have also had a very successful year for fundraising. Proactive grant applications have been granted, competitions won and some excellent relationships built with partner organisations. The efforts of a huge number of individuals has seen our income significantly exceed our outgoings.

We have continued to grow at all age groups across our membership and it is wonderful to see many of our new families playing a very active part in the group. Our families make up an amazing local support network, with irreplaceable knowledge and experience to share and we all have a part to play in supporting one another. It is our members who truly make Stepping Stones DS what it is. The ability to share your concerns, thoughts, dreams with someone who is travelling the same road as you is invaluable.

I continue to believe that we need to adapt to survive as our membership grows both in the number of families, and in age, keeping us on our toes, demanding reassessment of support, services and infrastructure. In the next 12 months we will be working hard to ensure we are supporting all our families, with an extended range of services to support all members whatever their age, ability or stage of development.

Additionally, we will be reassessing our infrastructure to ensure we have a sustainable Stepping Stones DS which can continue to survive, and thrive, into the future. As we continue to grow it is vital that our management structure is resilient, protecting both our charitable activities and our trustees.

In our survey you told us that Stepping Stones DS provides you with friendship, support, information, advice, a feeling of belonging, a lifeline. It is incredibly humbling to understand that Stepping Stones DS means so much to our members and it is a privilege to be a part of it. Finally, I would like to thank you all, members, supporters, trustees, volunteers for your continuing support, for you make Stepping Stones DS what it is.

Sarah.

Treasurer's Report

This report covers the financial year 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017. The total available funds at 31 August 2017 were £195,940. The balances in each bank / savings account were:

- Current account £100,923
- Virgin money instant access savings account £80,000
- Shawbrook 100 day notice account £5,000
- CCLA Investment Fund £10,017

Income in the year: During the year we received £122,060 in income. General donations - encompassing donations from individuals (family, friends and fundraising), community groups and companies - showed an overall increase. There were a couple of significant donations, the first for £23,500 from O2E and the other from Guildford Institute of Insurance Golf Society whose fundraising reached almost £20,000. These two donations represented 35% of overall income.

Expenditure in the year: Our expenditure for the year totalled £78,807, an increase of 15% on the previous year. This represents Stepping Stones DS aim to increase the already large range of services and activities that we provide for our members, whilst continuing to hold healthy reserves in case of unexpected reductions in donations or changes in circumstances.

Accounts Summary

Receipts and payments for the period 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017:

	This Year £	Last Year £
Receipts	122,060	61,582
Payments	(78,807)	(68,413)
Profit/Deficit for the year	43,253	(6,831)
Surplus b/forward	152,687	159,518
Surplus c/forward	195,940	152,687
<u>Represented by</u>		
Current account	100,923	58,558
Virgin instant access	80,000	80,000
Shawbrook notice a/c	5,000	5,000
CCLA Investment fund	10,017	9,129
	195,940	152,687

Note: we have restated last year's accounts with an increase in revenue of £1,185 due to up to date information received regarding investment amounts.

Sam Taylor, Treasurer

Fundraising, Communication and PR

Fundraising: At Stepping Stones DS we continue to have amazing support from our members, their families and friends, and the local community when it comes to fundraising. We are very lucky to be supported by a number of businesses, organisations and community groups. Some of these relationships are long term, others for a finite period or a particular event. All are extremely valuable to us and we are grateful to all involved in creating and maintaining these relationships. We would like to give a special thank you to the phenomenal charity O2e (Ordinary 2 Extraordinary) who chose to support SSDS for the second year running in 2017.



We have been so inspired with their fundraising efforts and are incredibly grateful for their support. This year we continue to see a fantastic effort by a number of individuals and teams who go the extra mile to raise money for SSDS by running, cycling, swimming, walking and more. It is incredible to see how much money has been raised through these individual efforts and we are very appreciative of the support. We continue to use Virgin Money Giving which provides an excellent tool to allow people to raise money from remote supporters, it is also very efficient, allowing us to collect Gift Aid where appropriate and therefore make donors' money go further. Our recycling scheme has had an outstanding year through recycling a variety of waste objects including Tassimo discs and baby food pouches. We are thrilled that this scheme has raised almost £3000 in the past twelve months. A huge thank you to all our Wombling team, and to all the local businesses who have become drop off locations.

Communication and PR: As Stepping Stones DS grows we continue to evolve the ways that we are able to communicate successfully with both members and supporters and we have launched a number of new initiatives this year based on feedback from our members. We have set up a members only Facebook group, which mirrors our successful Yahoo email group, sharing vital information between members. This is also backed up by a text message service for emergencies. Our new website launched in November 2016, and we are very proud of its new look and functionality. It has proved immensely popular and is the number 1 search result on google for "Down Syndrome Hampshire". This year we updated our popular publication Our Stories, a booklet filled with beautiful photos of our families and children, sharing many different stories, perspectives, challenges and highlights. This will not only be shared with families, but will also be a resource that we can share with hospitals, GP surgeries and other medical professionals. The SSDS newsletter continues to go out regularly to our supporters, serving as a valuable update on our activities, events and news. Our Facebook page remains an incredibly powerful tool to reach out to our supporters and the wider community. It allows us to talk to a huge audience quickly, cheaply and efficiently, and gives them an opportunity to engage with us. We now have over 1200 followers and the page regularly reaches over 5000 people in a week! With the addition of the members only Facebook group, we are able to ensure our primary Facebook page is aimed at supporters, and focused on increasing our brand awareness and engagement. We have also increased our Twitter profile this year and now have over 870 followers! We use Twitter predominantly for funding competitions, and we share our Facebook posts via Twitter.



Recreational Activities

Stepping Stones DS continues to provide a wide range of activities to help our members develop key skills, these activities provide the opportunity to build friendships and often provide a chance for parents to get to know one another and meet other families. We run our Recreational Activities for children in pre-school and primary school, we also run Secondary Activities which follow in the next report.



As per previous years our recreational activities are very popular and are enjoyed by many of our members. We run Sensory Suite sessions for our youngest pre-school members and these sessions are run by Rachel and Vicki. The sessions have been more popular towards the end of 2016 and through 2017 due to several new younger members joining the group,

where they and their siblings have been enjoying spending time at the centre.

The next activity we run for our pre-school members is Mini and Mega Movers, as we got towards the end of 2017 the average numbers in the two groups became low so we combined the two groups which worked well, however now we are back to running two groups. We then run for our primary members Mighty Movers, last year was the first full year for this activity since we stopped Playball and the activity has been a success and members are continuing to enjoy this activity monthly, we have four groups with an average of 5-6 in each session. Rob continues to oversee the Movers activities.



Another primary activity which we run twice a month is Dance & Drama, we have four groups and the sessions are intended to help develop skills in the performing arts, increase confidence and self-esteem, and help to develop social skills and friendships. We have two instructors who run these sessions with a team of helpers and Rob continues to oversee the activity.



Finally, we run our Horse Riding sessions which we run every Sunday in term time, we have four groups, with 6 in the first group and 4 in the three remaining groups. Our sessions moved last year to Horse-ology in Steventon, near Basingstoke which has proved a good move, and even though for some it's a longer journey, our members enjoy their time there. The sessions are therapeutic riding sessions which look to improve balance, co-ordination and core stability whilst building confidence. Jo continues to co-ordinate these sessions.

Secondary Activities

What another fun year we've had! We've ended the year with 44 young people ranging in age from 11 to 20. We now have young people going to college and even living away from home. We have two regular activities, dance and tennis, which both run every week on a Saturday in Farnham. Our dance continues to be run by Nicky Norton and her fabulous team,



their skill and patience brings out the best in our young people helping them to express themselves through dance. Our continued relationship with the Stopgap Dance Company gives our young people a platform from which to perform...something they love! Stepping Stones DS also performed at the Winter Platform in December at the Farnham

Maltings to a packed audience and got the biggest applause! And once again performed at Farnham in Bloom. Thanks to Angela for organising our dance activity on behalf of Stepping Stones DS.

Our tennis is run by Andy Warry and his small team of young helpers who are very popular with our youngsters! We now run two sessions each week to accommodate those wanting to play. They are fun sessions where our young people have not only improved their tennis skills but also their ability to take turns, listen and take instruction and to help each other. Thanks to Juana for organising our tennis activity on behalf of Stepping Stones DS.

We have also arranged a couple of activities through the year during the school holidays. This gave an opportunity for those who cannot attend our regular activities to take part and keep a connection with the group.

We went horse riding at Horse-Ology and had an Alpaca



Experience at Pennybridge Alpacas, where we met, fed and walked with Alpacas! We held our Christmas Party at Frenchies American Diner in Camberley which involved much dancing and singing.



We have exciting plans for the year ahead for our Secondary Aged group particularly now that we have a base at The Acorn Centre that we can utilise. We also recognise that our young people are getting older so we will be looking at the requirements of our 16+ age group and will start to provide activities specifically for them, as an example, we have just started a Social Communications Group run by Symbol UK..... but more about that in next year's review!

Educational and Therapies

Therapy Groups:

Stepping Stones DS offers monthly Therapy Groups to all our children under school age. The groups are led by Rebecca Baxter, from Let's Go, a speech and language therapist who specialises in working with children with Down Syndrome. The groups last an hour and provide activities tailored to the age of the group and designed to support all elements of early speech and language development, including embryonic numeracy and literacy skills. During the year 20 members attended the group.



Outreach:

Our Stepping Stones Outreach Service has continued to grow and develop. The service is provided by Rebecca Baxter and Sue Jones from Let's Go Ltd and includes;

- Half day visit per child per term to include observation of the child working within the class room.
- One-to-one session to look at current level of development and targets.
- Bullet point summary and recommendations.
- Support, information and advice for SENCO's, teachers and assistants.

During 2016/17 this service was offered to 40 children, including 4 in secondary school.

Training:

We had a busy year for training holding 11 courses, with over 100 attendees, from a variety of suppliers including DSA, Symbol, Makaton, the Sensory Integration Network and Let's Go. Subjects covered included adult life, behaviour, differentiation, sensory processing and



Makaton. We were able to use our new office at Sentinel House to hold our training from the summer term providing us with increased flexibility. Additionally, we provided some tailored secondary training in the schools that we support. Our training sessions enable our members, and the professionals who support our children, to attend highly subsidised, hard to access training, at a local venue.

Family Support

Stay and Play:

Our Stay and Play sessions have continued to be our monthly opportunity for members to come together, with preschool aged children, to share knowledge and experiences, and to get to know each other. The sessions continued to be held at the Turners Wood Children's Centre and we saw changes to the facilities we were able to access with the closure of children's centres across the area and we started to consider alternatives. It's lovely to see new parents coming to enjoy a cuppa and chat.



Hospital Support:



The three local hospitals to Stepping Stones, Frimley Park, Basingstoke, and The Royal Surrey in Guildford all have our new literature packs in their possession. These leaflets and literature have our up to date contact details, and are in a colourful, eye catching format. The latest version of Our Stories is also included in the pack. Steps are afoot to place these packs into other hospitals, including St Peters in Chertsey.

New Parents:

Another busy year for the group, with another influx of new member families joining this year. The full number of member families now totals at 140. We advise the new members of the activities run by the group, and signpost to our website for all the most up to date information and contact details.



SSDS Increase in Membership by Year

