

COS FOR AUTISM FAMILIES LIMITED

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Reference and administrative details

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| Registered charity name | COS FOR AUTISM FAMILIES |
| Charity registration number | NIC100511 |
| Company registration number | NI611939 |
| Principal office and registered office | 8E Springtown Industrial Estate Springtown Road Derry/Londonderry BT48 0LY |

The trustees

Mrs L Brown
Mrs A Sims
Ms C Campbell
Ms A Campbell
Mr E McLaughlin

Independent Examiner

Structure, governance and management

The company is limited by guarantee and does not have any share capital. The company is governed and managed by the board of directors. The directors who served the company throughout the period are shown on page 1. The registered office and details of other professional advisors are also listed on page 1.

The board of directors carry out their governance role throughout the year by way of meetings on a monthly basis to review the performance of the company and to make decisions regarding the company's financial and operational matters. The directors govern the activities of the company in line with the objectives set out in the governing documents of the charity, namely the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the charity's constitution.

Objectives and activities

COS for Autism Families Limited is a support group for families going through assessment for ASD and those with a diagnosis with ASD. We currently offer support to families from Derry/Londonderry, Limavady, Strabane, Letterkenny and Buncrana. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

Achievements and performance

COS continue to support families and children through a varied programme. This past year was an exciting and pivotal year for COS as we were able to host our activities in our new purpose-built building. This has provided us with the ability to offer a more expansive programme and gives our families a base to feel cared for and supported. It has been invaluable in facilitating our activities, coffee mornings and training. At our new centre we continue to offer a resource bank of visual aids that include communication and behavioural aids, but now includes the use of sensory rooms, art room, great hall and kitchen. Work continues on the upper floor of the centre where we plan to create a computer suite and activity zone for our older members. We were also able to recruit a new Play therapist and support worker which was grant funded and opened up more doors for our services.

For our children we continue to offer a weekly swimming programme to both provide swimming lessons and also encourage those afraid of the water to splash and relax, in a controlled environment, with qualified instructors. This private sensory swimming session in Foyle Arena is highly in demand so we have somewhat amended our swimming blocks so that our families are allocated a 12-week block and these are rotated to ensure that those on our ever-growing waiting list were all able to get a turn to participate. This was extremely important to us to be inclusive of new families joining our group so that they get the benefit of all our resources. The response has been very positive. Our Autism Adjusted cinema showings remain very popular. Short programmes in music therapy, drama and sporting activities are run according to funding availability and all activities can be booked through our app on a first come first served basis which gives fair opportunity to everyone.

In addition to this May 2022 launched our new 'Be Ausome' programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. We were able to hire a host of professional therapists and facilitators to provide workshops and therapies such as Yoga, Teen Fitness, Play therapy, Art Therapy and Parent ASD Training.

May also brought another very successful Fashion Show where our families experienced a heartwarming and fun night of celebration where our kids walked the catwalk wearing outfits provided by local businesses.

We continued throughout the year to support our parents with afternoon tea, craft sessions, pamper nights and information sessions. There was also a well-attended first aid training course facilitated by Red Cross which was very well received.

This 2022 summer scheme kicked off on July 25th with a trip to W5 and continued for 3 weeks with a wide variety of activities to appeal to a broad range of age and ability. This included horse riding, driving

lessons, movies, play sessions and go-karting. Most importantly, we were able to offer stay and play sessions in our centre with our sensory rooms. The feedback we received from the summer scheme was incredible for our committee as our families reported that for many, it was the highlight of their summer.

We also, as a group strive in raising Autism Awareness within our community, and beyond with our outreach programme in Limavady (COS Roe Valley) we hope to continue to offer our services and more to the growing Autism community.

September meant back to school but it also brought about a jam-packed schedule including a new 'I am Me' programme funded by the Danny Quigley Fund. The purpose of the programme was to nurture the mental health and well being of our kids and was included this month amongst play therapy, rugby, fitness classes, swim sessions, music therapy, jo jingles, and of course training and enrichment also for the parents focusing on E-PATS, a benefits talk and a menopause talk.

The activities continued through October and included sleep, behaviour, and sensory training for parents and a media programme for our teens.

November offered on top of our usual activities, circus skills and dance classes, as well as an amazing daytrip to Galgorm for 16 of our parents, selected by lucky dip, and funded by the Community Fund.

We were once again this year delighted to offer our own Santas Grotto for our families. This took place over 3 busy nights where assigned time blocks on our booking app allowed parents to book a suitable time. This included siblings and with numbers restricted in each session this gave an amazing relaxed Santa experience for each child.

We launched more new programmes in January including Music and Me, Carers yoga and kids Jiu Jitsu, also LGBT and Advanced Low Arousal training for parents. The first quarter of 2023 was extremely busy and on top of our usual activities we offered mid-term programme in February to assist families during the school holidays.

Plans for future periods

COS are committed to providing an invaluable service to families and children of ASD.

The main focus for 2023/24 is to continue using the new centre for our families to avail of a safe, non-judgemental environment, develop our family's knowledge and understanding to enable a brighter future for all our families.

We will again be hosting a Santas Grotto in December at the COS centre, where families will be able to attend small group sessions to see Santa; have their picture taken and take part in activities. This will appeal to children of all ages, and the social area for older children will be an incredible addition to the services we can offer as a charity.

Over the coming year COS will be providing the following and more:

An amazing Summer Programme, Group Projects for the children consisting of play therapy sessions, music therapy, art therapy, play therapy, balance ability bike riding lessons, IT skills course, Yoga and Gym sessions; and of course, will continue our very popular sensory cinema outings and sensory swimming sessions.

We also have more mental health wellness courses, spa days and treatment sessions hosted in the centre, plus other social outings planned for the coming year and additional support for our parents through training.

We would like to thank all those who have donated to COS for Autism Families over the past number of years for your continued support.

We would also like to thank our grant providers who have enabled us to finish our new centre and develop a planned programme of works for the coming years. In particular we would like to thank The Lottery Foundation, The Community Foundation, The Education authority, Halifax, and Derry City Council, The Danny Quigley Fund, Percy Bilton Fund, Gosling Fund.