

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL)

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER NI 031411

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER NIC 100727

O'HARA SHEARER
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS AND STATUTORY AUDITORS
547 FALLS ROAD
BELFAST
BT11 9AB

STEPPING STONES NI
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

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STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025
OFFICERS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Directors	Michael Scott (Chair) Michael Drayne Cormac O'Donnell Lisa Beers Sarah Johnston Shirley Smylie
Secretary	Paula Jennings
Registered Office	Stepping Stones NI 39 Seymour Street Lisburn County Antrim BT27 4SY
Auditors	O'Hara Shearer Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors 547 Falls Road Belfast BT11 9AB
Solicitors	Donaldson McConnell & Co Solicitors 8-10 Graham Gardens Lisburn County Antrim BT28 1YS
Bankers	Danske Bank 62-66 Bow Street Lisburn BT28 1YS
Company Registration Number	NI 031411
Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Registration Number	NIC 100727

Section 1: The organisation

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SECTION 1- The Organisation

Reference and Administrative Details

Registered Company number NI031411 (Northern Ireland)

Registered Charity Number

100727

VAT Number

701 428570

Date of Incorporation

October 1996

Registered Office

39 Seymour St

Lisburn

Co Antrim

BT27 4SY

Trustees

Michael Drayne

Michael Scott Chair

Cormac O Donnell (resigned July 2024)

Sarah Johnston (resigned June 2025)

Shirley Ann Smylie

Lisa Beers

Jenna Gardiner (joined September 2024)

Company Secretary and Chief Officer

Paula Jennings

Independent Auditors

Laurance Shearer: O'Hara Shearer
547 Falls Road, Belfast BT11 9AB

Solicitor

Donaldson Mc Connell & Co
8-10 Graham Gardens
Lisburn Co Antrim BT28 1XE

Bankers

Danske Bank
62-66 Bow St
Lisburn BT28 1YS

Website

<https://www.stepsstonesni.com/>

SECTION 2- Who we are

Stepping Stones NI is an award-winning charitable organisation and company limited by guarantee that has provided training and employment services for people with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and Autism who often are furthest away from the labour market, for over 27 years. We do this in conjunction with social enterprise activity. The company was first established in 1996 to fill the gap in service provision for people with learning disabilities who had no access to training to advance their skills towards employment, education and volunteering. Stepping Stones NI opened its doors in January 1998 providing training and supported opportunities for people with severe learning disabilities.

In the reporting period from **1st April 2024- 31st March 2025** we continued to deliver our range of services providing opportunities for people with disabilities to advance their personal and employability skills and overall health and wellbeing, towards a life more fulfilled.

The services and social enterprises at Stepping Stones NI during the reporting period included:

- **Youth Service:** engaging with young people aged 16-24 who were not in any form of training or employment through a range of employability and personal development activities.
- **Training:** offering training and outreach training to people in various courses leading to the attainment of accredited qualifications including customer service, health and safety, work appropriate behaviour, catering, financial literacy, and mental health etc.
- **Employment Service and Academies:** providing employment support to people with learning difficulties and learning disabilities. This included help with writing CVs, application form preparation, interviews preparation and support in the workplace with employers.
- **The Courtyard Cafe:** Social enterprise Café in Lisburn delivering quality training for people with learning disabilities in hospitality, customer service and food preparation.
- **Pink Elephant Cards:** Social enterprise specialising in bespoke wedding stationery and greeting cards made by people with learning disabilities.
- **2nd Avenue Cafe:** social enterprise providing volunteering opportunities to adults with learning disability as well as an outside catering service.
- **Stepping Stones NI Picture Framing:** Social Enterprise offering training in picture framing and customer service to people with learning disabilities. Recognised by the Fine Art Trade Guild as quality provider of framing services and staff trained to Guild Commended Framer standard.

- **The Gatelodge Café:** Social enterprise Café in Newtownards delivering quality training for people with learning disabilities in hospitality, customer service and food preparation.
- **Navigation House:** programme for young people to advance their skills in horticulture and to engage health and wellbeing activities
- **Delivering social impact at Lisburn Island Centre delivering contracted catering provision for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council .**

Stepping Stones NI ensures that people with a learning disability, autism, and barriers to learning have the support and opportunity to develop their skills, realise their talents, try new things, attain accredited qualifications, and live as active citizens in their community.

We develop quality training and employment services for people with a variety of learning abilities who require the support they need to advance their training and gain the support to gain employment. The work during the delivery period was supported by UK Shared Prosperity Fund, contracts including Health Trust Contracts and Department for Communities funding to deliver local labour market partnerships, as well as income generated through our social enterprises which is reinvested back into the organisation to creating social impact.

Stepping Stones NI continued work successfully through PROSPER funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund in collaboration with Triangle Housing Association Limited, AEL Ltd, CAN Ltd and Appleby Trust . The PROSPER programme commenced delivery on 1st April 2023 for a period of two years. (an extension of one year was granted from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026)

SECTION 3- Our Vision, Values and Objectives

Stepping Stones NI is a Limited Company with charitable status that has been delivering services since January 1998. It provides quality training and employment services for people with a range of disabilities who often are furthest removed from the labour market, helping those people to find a job if it is their ambition.

Our Vision

A socially enriched world where every individual can take proud steps towards a life fulfilled

Our Purpose

To nurture the potential of people with a disability to thrive in a socially inclusive society.

Our Values

Respect: We respect everyone's right to a life more fulfilled and respect each other in the process

Inspire: We inspire employers and the wider community to see disability differently

Empowering: We empower each other to make a positive impact on the world and in the organisation, we work

Our Values drive our behaviours and govern our actions. They are at the heart of our culture and define who we are, and how we present ourselves every day.

Our Behaviours

Driven: We are driven, seizing every opportunity to create better lives

Honest: We are honest and always do the right thing

Positively Charged: We are positively charged and passionate about making things possible.

Nurturing: We Nurture all our People to be their best

Quality focused: We are quality focused, to always ensure the highest standard.

Our Culture

People and Purpose are at the centre of everything that we do. Through our culture our values will be instilled throughout the organisation, making a positive difference to people's lives

Our team will work with purpose and passion to go the extra mile for our people.

Our Objectives

- To develop services and social enterprises which will provide appropriate training opportunities leading to employment for adults with learning difficulties.
- To equip individuals participating in projects and services with knowledge, skills, attitudes and qualifications to enable progression to supported employment.
- To increase disability awareness amongst society.
- To promote independence, wellbeing and social inclusion amongst adults with learning difficulties participating in projects.
- To provide a quality service to stakeholders accessing Stepping Stones NI services and social enterprises.
- To promote cooperation and develop links with other relevant agencies to maximise opportunities for people with learning difficulties.

For the purposes of this report the expression "learning difficulty" shall include any learning disability, difficulties, and associated problem or those who appear on the autistic spectrum, a developmental disability of the mind, sensory impairment, acquired brain injury or mental health problem. Neurodiverse refers to is a term that has gained traction in recent years to describe people with disability/difficulties as having a brain that works differently from the average or "neurotypical" person.

SECTION 4- Strategy for Delivery

Our strategic focus for the next 4 years (2024 -2028) is to channel a more holistic approach to the delivery of our services and to seize every opportunity for our participants and trainees. We passionately believe that people with disabilities should have access to every opportunity that leads to a life more fulfilled. We will sustainably grow our services and social enterprises for purpose for people with a learning disability and barriers to learning



Our Strategic Priorities

- 1. Quality:** Striving for excellence and the highest standard in all that we do
- 2. Team:** Attracting and developing a team of well skilled, confident, and professional people
- 3. Social Enterprise:** Building on and expanding social enterprises to grow our income always with a balance on our people and mindful of our Stepping Stones NI purpose.
- 4. Employment, Training and Youth Services and wellbeing:** Developing and delivering employment and training services to find jobs for people to prosper and live well.
- 5. Technology:** Embracing technology to drive quality, performance and innovation.

6. Sustainability: Developing a more sustainable and responsible business model and financial sustainability with purpose at this core.

Stepping Stones NI was incorporated in 1996 and is established under Articles of Association which sets out the objects and powers of the company, and the company is governed under its Articles of Association. These articles were revised and updated during the reporting period by the board of Trustees and passed to the Charities Commission of Northern Ireland for review.

Our Public Benefit

In shaping the strategy and objectives of Stepping Stones NI the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission NI guidance on public benefit including the commissions Public Benefit Reporting Document and confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 4 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

The direct benefits which flow from our purposes to advance education, relieve unemployment and develop the capacity and skills of individuals aged 16 and over with learning disabilities and learning difficulties, are:

- to provide or assist in the provision of, programmes of education, including accredited and vocational training designed to assist the beneficiaries to lead to employment and volunteering opportunities and to enhance their personal development.
- to provide support and guidance to the beneficiaries in the transition towards employment.
- to establish and manage community-owned-business projects promoted by the company to create training and employment opportunities for the beneficiaries in benefit.
- to advance any other exclusively charitable purpose as the directors may, from time to time, decide in accordance with the law of charity.

Our Benefits

The organisation is committed to delivering services to people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties that assist in their development and personal progression leading to employment we do this through:

- The provision of a range of services and social enterprises that provide the opportunity for people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties to gain qualifications leading to employment.
- The increased personal development and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties.
- Attainment of qualifications and skills development of people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties.
- Youth service, training and employment service provide job support and delivery employer lead academies for people to gain volunteering and employment in the community.
- Social enterprises that provide a realistic working environment in which people can develop their work skills, gain qualifications and engage with customers thus increasing their self-esteem, confidence and independence.
- The development of programmes and services that will support people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties fulfil their full potential in society.

SECTION 5- Achievements and Performance 2024/2025

Our Services

During 2024/2025 Stepping Stones NI our services continued to thrive with continued support from new funders, employers and stakeholders. We continued to deliver and build on our quality services that support people with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and Autism to develop their employability skills and achieve qualifications leading to employment. We did this across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Newry Mourne and Down District Council and in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Belfast City Council areas.

We continued to deliver the **provision of catering services at Lisburn Civic Centre, for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council**, putting social enterprise at the heart of a community and civic space whilst generating income for the organisation.

Employment Service

The Employment Service supports participants to gain employment/jobs and/or voluntary placements of their choice.

The employment service provided people with opportunities to avail of:

- Innovative pre-employment “**BE IN WORK**” academy training courses with industry specific companies that led to a paid job for participants. We embedded our newly branded “**BE IN WORK**” Academies into the Stepping Stones to Employment delivery model within the new PROSPER consortium, to address local labour market skills shortages, as well as meeting individual employer training requirements.
- Since **1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025** there were:
 - 531 referrals from participants who were economically inactive/ with long term complex health needs /disability
 - 201 jobs secured for people accessing our services.
 - 79 people with a learning disability engaging with Stepping Stones NI
 - 19 referrals to our Youth Service
 - 307 accredited qualifications
- **32** industry led **employment academies**, in partnership with a number of employers including:
 - OCS
 - EE

- Peacocks
 - Decora
 - Haldane Fisher
 - Hendersons Retail Group
 - Premier Inn
 - Popeyes
 - McDonalds
 - Foot Antsey McKees
 - HCL
 - Poundstretcher
- The academies were aimed at labour market employment gaps where we worked with premier employees in the following industries: construction, manufacturing, retail, hospitality and catering, IT and customer service.
 - Access to a range of training courses to help people prepare for work, including CV building, job search, customer services skills, effective communication skills and essential skills
 - Tailored career guidance to help people find a new job and career.
 - A broadened curriculum to embed wider societal inclusion topics such as, LGBTQIA+, Mental Health First Aid to promote equality and provide a safe space for participants.

The Employment Service delivered its services across council areas noted below under the UK Shared Prosperity funded, PROSPER programme.

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Newry Mourne and Down District Council
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Belfast City Council

Stepping Stones NI is delighted and proud to report that on our second year under UK Shared Prosperity Fund- PROSPER Programme we delivered:

- **154 people gained paid employment**
- **393 economically inactive people with a disability or health condition participated in employment support: exceeded target by 105%.**
- **192 accredited qualifications were gained by 176 participants**

Stepping Stones NI employment team continued to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes of people with disabilities in our communities. The team were instrumental in assisting employers and business to support our people to achieve employment and volunteering dreams.

Stepping Stones NI “BE IN WORK” Academies



Our Employer partnerships are very extremely important to us, and we are grateful to our employers for the opportunity to be a recruitment partner to ensure increased inclusion and diversity in the workplace. Our employer academies provide accredited training in a group setting to a maximum of 10 people leading to a supported interview, leading to employment for ring fenced jobs.

What our employer partners said (5/5 satisfaction rating)

“Kelly was amazing. She was organised and great at communicating with us. This academy was by far the most successful and I am putting that down to Kelly. It was great being able to go in and chat with the candidates prior to their interview. I also think that Kelly's presence in the store was beneficial for the candidates. We will most definitely be doing more Academy's soon!”

“Bethany was excellent, Made the process very easy, was always on hand for support and was always positive with any queries I had.

Great approach to understanding requirements of roles within Finnebrogue and understanding the opportunity offered”.

“Working in partnership with Stepping Stones supported us delivering a successful warehouse operative recruitment campaign. The candidates were very engaged with the programme and took a lot away from it. We look forward to our next academy later in 2025.”

When asked would they recommend us to other employers

“I have already”

“Yes - professional approach throughout all stages of the academy from pre-planning and preparation, during and after.”

“Yes, as this was a different approach to recruitment within the local community. Seeing candidates complete the 3-day program showed a level of commitment which can transfer to the workplace.”

“Yes - have recommended to another McDonald's in the group”.

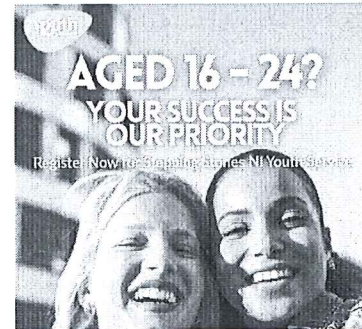
“Yes, I would”

What our participants said (Overall 9.5/10 satisfaction rating)

- “ training team was incredibly supportive, and I learned so much about effective communication, handling different customer needs, and maintaining a positive attitude in every interaction. They really made the learning experience engaging and gave me the information to confidently handle various situations.”
- “I enjoyed the training as it improved my communication, problem-solving, and customer handling skills. The interactive sessions and real-life scenarios boosted my confidence, while learning about company policies and service tools helped me assist customers more efficiently”
- “I really appreciated how Andrew (our instructor) focused on training us for a customer-centric role. His approach made it clear how to understand and address customer needs effectively, which will be valuable in real-world scenarios”
- “On learning--- Yes, before now I believed verbal communication was the most important in communication but yesterday, I learned non-verbal communication is more essential in communication”
- “Yes, I’ve learned a lot from the training. It has helped me develop a deeper understanding of customer-centric approaches, effective communication skills, and problem-solving techniques. I also gained practical insights into handling customer interactions more efficiently”.

- “I learned a lot of things from the training the key takeaways are usually focused on communication, empathy, problem-solving, and maintaining professionalism.”

Youth Service



The Youth Service delivered the following throughout the year:

- **5 people achieved paid employment**
- **13 people progressed to education and training**
- **19 referrals to the service**
- **12 Accredited Qualifications**

During the year the Youth Service had:

- **Educational/Careers talks from:** Belfast Metropolitan College and SERC (local further education colleges), Connected Minds, Resurgam Trust, Tesco, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, PSNI, Lisburn Library, Coca Cola HBC, the young people also attended Belfast and Lisburn Job Fairs
- **Work Tasters:** work experience from Little Wing Pizza, Sonas, Tesco, EE, MB Chicken
- **Advice and Guidance:** Talks from Citizens Advice Bureau (Benefits and Entitlements), Links Counselling (Mental Health), HYPE (Relationships/Personal Safety/LGBTQ+), Relate NI (Relationship and Sexuality Education), Caroline McGrath-Southeastern Trust (Take 5 Mental Health, Chi-Me) Invisible Traffik (Awareness of Human Trafficking and Exploitation)
- **Education/Training Providers for progression:** Belfast Met, SERC, YMCA
- **Participation** with an LGBTQ+ support group. Cara Friend
- **Personal Development** – Mind Out Programme – Promoting the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Young People, Money Matters Programme, Bells Lane Horticultural Programme with LCCC, Compost Workshop LCCC, Belfast City Hall (Local history tour), Archaeological Dig with Queens University Belfast
- **Accredited Training including** Mental Health First Aid

- **Activities/Trips** – The Youth Service took part in the annual Lord Mayors Parade in Lisburn, attended the annual Balmoral Show, visited The Ulster and Ulster Transport Museums. The Youth Service also took part in an outreach programme with **R-Space Gallery**, in partnership with the Halifax Foundation NI. As part of this initiative, a local artist delivered a series of art workshops, giving our young people the opportunity to create their own pieces of artwork — which were later exhibited at R-Space Gallery. This was a fantastic experience that allowed participants to express their creativity, develop new skills, and showcase their individual artistic talents.
- We held a coffee morning to welcome the **Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor Kurtis Dickson**, to introduce our Youth Service and outline the range of programmes and initiatives we deliver. The meeting offered a valuable opportunity to discuss our ongoing work in supporting and empowering young people within the community. Following our coffee morning, we were delighted to be invited to the Mayor’s Office at the Civic Centre for lunch with the mayor and a tour of the impressive facilities. It was a wonderful opportunity to continue our discussions and strengthen our connection with the mayor’s office.

The Youth Service worked with Atlas Counselling Service, MACS - Supporting children and Young People, Links Counselling Service, YMCA Lisburn, Resurgam Trust, Emerge Counselling Services and Lisburn City Council to provide opportunities for employability, horticulture experience and counselling support.

Training

The training services at Stepping Stones NI offers a comprehensive range of courses designed to support individuals with learning disabilities and learning difficulties in achieving paid employment or meaningful placements. Tailored training is designed and delivered to address specific needs of the client and business partners; we equip participants with the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in the workplace.

Our courses cover a variety of essential topics, including food safety & allergens, health and safety, world host principles of customer service. These accredited qualifications not only enhance employability but also provide participants with valuable knowledge and practical skills, build confidence and social skills. Additionally, we actively engage with community groups to deliver our training services, community groups thrive from the accredited and soft skills we deliver on both personal and professional basis.

We delivered to **176 participants** working with business partners through bespoke academies and community groups throughout Northern Ireland, **delivering 192 qualifications** in total through Prosper.

Accredited qualifications delivered included:

- Mental Health first aid Level 1
- Emergency First aid level 3
- Paediatric First aid level 3
- Food Safety level 1
- Food allergens level 2
- Health and safety level 1
- Fire safety level 1
- Manual handling level 2
- World Host Principles of customer care L2

Our soft skills focused on confidence building, communication and interview skills & money matters.

Our training team supported the achievement of 104 qualifications through Labour Market Partnerships.

Living Life Loving Life and ASDAN

A programme of both soft and accredited is delivered on a weekly basis to our Learning disability participants through our Living Life Loving Life programme. Our outcomes for all sessions are directly linked to improving social skills, communication, employability and confidence through fun relevant activities and outings, as well as embedding practice of functional skills, literacy, math and ICT. The introduction of ASDAN qualifications give participants the opportunity to gain accredited qualifications in everyday life topics such as, independent travel and basic money management.

Our Stepping Stones NI Football Team

Football is an extracurricular activity that we offer with a multitude of benefits for the ten football enthusiasts. Beyond the physical aspects of the sport, it fosters essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Engaging in football has significantly improved participant's mental health by providing a positive outlet for stress, boosting self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. The team has participated in local football competitions George Best Cup in Northern Ireland and in doing so participants connected with peers, fostered friendships, learnt valuable social skills and creating lasting memories.



Labour Market Partnerships

Local Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) were established in each of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) in Northern Ireland (NI) to develop a range of new employability provisions that address the specific labour market needs and challenges of the local areas. The Department for Communities funds Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP) in each council area. Labour Market Partnerships develop programmes to help people find employment and training opportunities in their local area. In the period between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 we were successful in tendering for LMP's in both **Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council LMP.**

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Stepping Stones NI was awarded the contract by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to deliver its LMPs:

- Multiply **SPARKS** programme that supporting 45 people with disabilities to gain outcomes in relation to advancement of learning of numeracy through bootcamps .
- Pathways to Employment for individuals with a Disability Programme **Thrive 2** to support and connect 40 people with disabilities / long-term health conditions with accredited qualifications, work placements and employment opportunities.

SPARKS: How did we do?

Outputs	Target	Actual Achieved
Referrals	40	45
Completers	36	40
Gaining accredited OCN entry level numeracy	10	11
Satisfaction Rate – soft skills, numeracy, employability and confidence	100%	Average 9.9 out of 10 satisfaction rating

Thrive 2 : How did we do?

Outputs	Target	Achieved
No of participants in paid employment	9	16
Completers	17	29
Benefit 25 Participants No of participants Recruited	25	40
Satisfaction Rate Evaluations	100%	100% 10/10 satisfaction
Gained qualifications	17	37

Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council LMP Outcomes

Stepping Stones NI was awarded the contract to deliver its Disability Employment Programme to support local people with a disability and health outcomes into employment. Through the programme and we successfully made difference in employability and skills outcomes through its training provision and employment support, working with a range of employers.

Stepping Stones NI supported **56 people** with disabilities into employment in sectors including retail, hospitality, catering, construction, warehousing, education, domestic services, despatch and facilities working in partnership with local employers.

Outputs	Target	Actual
No of participants in paid employment	23/40	26
Completers	40	40
Benefit 54 Participants No of participants Recruited	50	56
Satisfaction Rate Evaluations	100%	100% 10/10 satisfaction
Gained qualifications	35	55

This is what our participants said about the LMP programmes.

“Stepping Stones NI helped me to get my CV ready and I was able to apply for jobs. I am really pleased to have got a job now with the trust doing what I do best. I am very grateful for the Labour Market programme and support from Stepping Stones NI.”

“I have never had a CV before so having that for the first time has really benefited me in being able to see for myself what all I have achieved. I am also very grateful for the accredited training and support I have received. I am so happy to be in employment.”

Social Enterprise

At the year-end 79 people with a learning disability were engaging and participating in training through Social Enterprise activity in:

- Pink Elephant Cards
- The Courtyard Café Lisburn
- 2nd Avenue Café Lisburn
- Stepping Stones Picture Framing Lisburn
- The Gatelodge Café Newtownards
- Navigation House

Our Social Enterprises provide the working environment for people with learning disabilities to learn and develop employability skills in a realistic commercial environment potentially leading to a paid job or experiencing the world of work in the future. All income generated from our social enterprises is reinvested back into the organisation to support service delivery for people who access our services.

Our Day Opportunities Contract with South- Eastern Health and Social Care Trust supports the activities for people with a learning disability across all our social enterprises to promote training and employment.

Pink Elephant Cards

This social enterprise produces a bespoke range of handcrafted wedding stationery and greeting cards and craft projects for people with a learning disability.

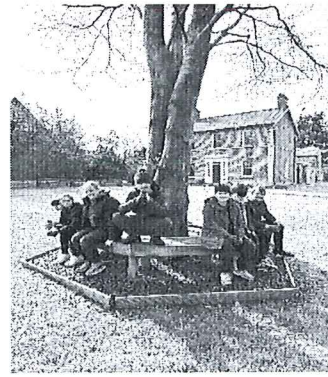
Picture Framing

As a member of the Fine Art Trade Guild our team provided a high-quality framing service offering a wide range of frames and mounts.

Our cafes and catering: The Courtyard Café, 2nd Avenue Café and The Gatelodge continued to trade and provide hospitality skills training for people with a learning disability.

Lisburn Civic Centre: During the year our catering team continued to provide catering provision at Lisburn Civic Centre at Lisburn City Council offices in Lisburn, whilst at the same time providing training and skills development for people with disabilities through employment.

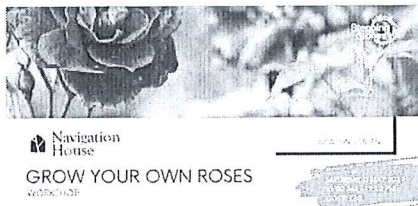
Navigation House



At Navigation House we introduced programmes and activities that enriched the lives of people who are Neurodiverse and those with a learning disability .

Key activities during the year were as follows:

- **We developed a horticultural social enterprise activity** focusing on the growing of organic and pesticide free produce herbs, edible flowers, fruit and vegetables involving people with a range of disabilities from the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. With the addition of a Garden Shop selling baskets and containers of seasonal flowers and plants, grown by the trainees
- **Two “Grow your own Roses” workshops**



- **24 External event bookings and 4 Workshops** included over workshops and external hire events across several public, council and charity organisations.
- **Christmas 2024 events**



Quality Standards During the year we successfully achieved revision of the BSI ISO: 9001:2015 in July 2024

SECTION 6: Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

Stepping Stones NI is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, incorporated in 1996 and commenced delivering services for people with learning disabilities in Jan 1998.

Stepping Stones NI has capacity for a Board of 10 Trustees as per Articles of Association who meet 6 times a year and are responsible for setting the strategic direction and the policies in which the organisation is governed. There organisation has two sub committees of the board a Finance Audit and Risk Committee (FAR) and a Human Resource Governance and Nominations Committee (HRGN).

The Trustees serving from 1st April 2024 – 31 March 2025 were as follows:

1. Michael Drayne (HRGN Committee)
2. Michael Scott (Chair)
3. Cormac O Donnell
4. Sarah Johnston
5. Shirley Ann Smylie
6. Lisa Beers
7. Jenna Gardiner

Company Secretary

A scheme of matters reserved for the Board is in place and the day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of the strategy and the provision of services is that of the Chief Officer Paula Jennings. The Chief Officer works alongside the Senior Team which has operational, service delivery, marketing and finance responsibilities.

The Trustees manage the business of the company unless they are subject to any restrictions imposed by the Companies Act, the articles or any special resolution. Trustees of the Board should include at least one member who is a parent or carer of a person with a learning disability or a learning difficulty.

Stepping Stones NI Chief Officer is Paula Jennings who has the sole responsibility of leading and implementing the strategies set by the board of Trustees.

Recruitment of Trustees

Board Recruitment and Appointment

The recruitment of new board members helps to strengthen the corporate governance of the organisation. Stepping Stones NI conducts a skills and experience analysis of the existing board prior to advertising or liaising in networks i.e. Institute of Directors IOD, Engage Executive Recruitment, business community , to ensure the desired skills and experience are required with a view to attract suitable candidates to apply who meet the requirements of the board and ultimately govern the charity.

Following an initial expression of interest submission and interview the suitability of candidates is assessed on how the candidate meets the criteria, what skills and influence they bring to the board and how their experience and attributes fit with the organisational culture and vision and what they hope to achieve in the role. Following meeting with the Chair and Chief Officer a recommendation for the appointment of new Trustees is placed at HRGN Committee. This Committee will make the recommendation to the full board for approval and appointment as a Trustee of Stepping Stones NI.

The Office Bearers of the Company are appointed at the first meeting of the Board of Trustees after the annual general meeting. All new members are elected to the board at the AGM. A Trustee is on the Board for a period of 3 years were upon such members must retire but may be eligible for re-election. Trustees shall be elected at the annual general meeting AGM by the members present.

Trustee Induction and Training

New Trustees undergo an induction to brief them on their role as a Trustee of the company. New Trustees are provided with information to brief them on their legal obligations under charity and company law i.e. the content of the Articles of Association, the strategy and recent set of end of year accounts. All New Trustees are formally inducted to the organisation with the Chief Officer with visits to all sites of the organisation .

Decision making within Stepping Stones NI

The Board of Trustees comprises a - Chairperson and Trustees who bring a range of skills and experience appropriate to the requirements of the Board. They provide support to the Chief Officer and their purpose is to contribute to the effective governance of Stepping Stones NI promoting the vision, mission, aims and objectives of the

organisation. The full board of Trustees meets bi monthly with sub group meetings and full board meetings.

The Chief Officer provides a report to the Board of Trustees at each board meeting, with updates on key performance indicators of the organisation presented on a Balanced Score Card format. This ensures that the Board of Trustees are fully informed of activities, performance, and achievements of the organisation.

The chair of each subcommittee i.e FAR and HRGN reports to the board at each board meeting.

All members of the Board of Trustees give up their time voluntarily and receive no financial or other benefits from the organisation.

Risk Management

The Finance Audit and Risk (FAR) sub group review corporate risk and financial information with reporting back to the Board of Directors. The corporate risk register details low, medium and high risk in the following areas – People, Operations and Financial which is continuously reviewed. Where appropriate mitigation steps are put in place to protect the organisation against risk.

The organisation has implemented the ISO quality standard 9001:2015 during the reporting period and was awarded reaccreditation following audit inspection.

7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2024/2025

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS		2025	2024
Income increased by:	7.9%	2,253,774	2,074,894
Surplus increased significantly by:	46.6%	96,910	51,703
Reserves have strengthened by:	10.3%	944,657	847,747
Trading income rose by:	11.6%	472,927	417,985
Wages & salaries increased by:	7.9%	1,617,836	1,490,317
Spending on charitable activities up:	10%		
Staff increased by :	20%		
Cash reserves increased by:	3%		

As always, we strive to obtain value for money in all our purchases while trying to remain socially responsible. Consistently we are looking for savings, income generation and the tendering our services into the supply chain.

We would like to thank who invested in us during the year: Councils (LMP and catering provision), Westminster (UKSPF), South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SETRUST), companies, employers and individuals who generously supported us during this reporting period providing the financial support we need to deliver our services and programmes.

Thank you also to our staff team and volunteers who continuously go the extra mile and our customers who buy from our social business.

Objectives and policies

Stepping Stones NI activities expose it to several financial risks including credit risk, cash flow risk and liquidity risk. The use of financial derivatives is governed by the charity's policies approved by the board of Trustees, which provide written principles on the use of financial derivatives to manage these risks. The charity does not use derivative financial instruments for speculative purposes.

Reserves Policy

An extensive reserves base is essential for Stepping Stones NI to continue to manage risk and deliver its services and social enterprises. The Trustees of Stepping Stones NI wish to continue to build a general level of reserves (excluding tangible fixed assets) that has a target of six months of unrestricted expenditure.

Stepping Stones NI needs to maintain this level of reserve for the following:

- Cash flow to ensure amounts due to creditors and fulfilment of contracts and leases.
- Gaps and loss in funding provision
- Organisational wind up and redundancy pay
- New development plans for service delivery in the future.

Stepping Stones NI reserves can be understood under the following areas:

- Protected Funds: to sustain and support at least 6 months organisational costs.
- Designated Funds: to prepare for potential redundancy costs at the end of a funding cycle.
- Infrastructure Funds: to support the refurbishment and renewals of Stepping Stones NI social enterprises and assets.
- Opportunity Funds: to explore future opportunities and projects that benefit people with disabilities.

Cashflow

Core funding activities are secured until March 2026 through Shared Prosperity Fund. Stepping Stones NI must ensure that adequate reserves are available to bridge any potential shortfall in funds and to allow enough time for replacement or additional funds to be found. Legally, Stepping Stones NI must be able to meet its debts as they fall due. Since restricted funds can only be used for the purpose for which they are given, Stepping Stones NI must always ensure that it can support at any given time (from its reserves cash or otherwise) viable and contracted programmes should it ever encounter difficulties. The cash reserves protected funds enables the organisation to meet its obligations for six months if no funding becomes available. Stepping Stones NI must also ensure that it is able to respond to any cashflow problems as a result in delays from either funders or debtors.

Plans for future periods

The implementation of the organisation's strategy will support the growth and development of the charity and as such enhance the lives of and create a better future for people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties.

Stepping Stones NI will work to ensure that we continuously have opportunities to ensure continuation of service provision and opportunities for people with disabilities and through with barriers to learning into the future.

Cash flow risk

Stepping Stones NI activities expose it primarily to regular payments from funders. This is carefully managed and monitored by the FAR committee.

Credit risk

Stepping Stones NI principal financial assets are bank balances and cash, trade and other receivables, and investments. Stepping Stones NI credit risk is primarily attributable to its trade receivables.

Stepping Stones NI has no significant concentration of credit risk, with exposure spread over many counterparties and customers.

Liquidity risk

To maintain liquidity to ensure that sufficient funds are available for ongoing operations and future developments.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a Trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Charity's auditor is aware of that information. The Trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Statement of Trustees Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are the Directors of Stepping Stones NI for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom generally accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Report Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare a financial statement for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and the apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is

inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statement comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Valuing our Volunteers and donations.

Stepping Stones NI values, the contribution that our volunteers bring to the organisation and the donations that we receive each year. We are grateful and thank them for their support which allow us to fulfil our charity objectives.

Awards received during the period

Chief Officer Paula Jennings Leader of the Year at Social Enterprise Awards NI and Highly commended at the Social Enterprise Uk Awards

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES

The directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company Law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2025. The Trustees confirm that they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which applies to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware; and
- the directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

By order of the board:



MICHAEL SCOTT
DIRECTOR



SHIRLEY ANN SMYLIE
DIRECTOR

DATE 4th December 2025

DATE 4th December 2025

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR TO THE MEMBERS'

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Stepping Stones NI (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102);
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the accounts section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the accounts in the UK, including the FRC'S Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charity's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR TO THE MEMBERS'

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Trustees and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purpose of company law, 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 directors 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 charity's ability 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 either intend to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud, are to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud, through designing and implementing appropriate responses to those assessed risks; and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both management and those charged with governance of the Charity.

Our approach was as follows:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the charity and considered that the most significant are the Companies Act 2006 and the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102).
- Enquiry of management, those charged with governance and the entity's solicitors around actual and potential litigation and claims.
- Enquiry of entity staff in compliance functions to identify any instances of any non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR TO THE MEMBERS'

- Auditing the risk of management override of controls, including through testing journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, and evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions outside the normal course of business.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK) we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purposes of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: <http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and regulations made under that Act. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



LAWRENCE SHEARER F.C.A., Senior Statutory Auditor
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF O'HARA SHEARER, Statutory Auditor
O'HARA SHEARER
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
AND STATUTORY AUDITORS
547 Falls Road
Belfast
BT11 9AB

Dated: 4th December 2025

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Accounting Convention and Basis of Accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard which applies in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Going Concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees' have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees' continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

Income Recognition

Income is recognised when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the item(s) of income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Interest Receivable

Interest on funds held is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

Resources Expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category.

Fundraising costs include the costs of advertising, producing publications, printing and mailing fundraising material, and staff costs in these areas.

Costs of charitable activities include direct expenditure incurred through operational activities.

Governance costs represent the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity which relate to the general running of the charity as opposed to those costs associated with fundraising or charitable activity.

Fixed Assets

All tangible fixed assets are recorded at cost.

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

Depreciation

Depreciation is calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets over their estimated useful lives at the following rates:

Freehold Property	2% straight line
Improvements to property	10% straight line
Fixtures and fittings	20% straight line
Computer equipment	25% straight line

Investments

Unlisted equity investments are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently measured at fair value. If fair value cannot be reliably measured, assets are measured at cost less impairment.

Listed investments are measured at fair value with changes in fair value being recognised in income or expenditure.

Repairs and Renewals

All repairs and renewals are written off as incurred

Pension Costs

The charity does currently operate a defined contribution pension scheme.

Debtors and Prepayments

Trade debtors and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any discount offered.

Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Creditors and Provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

Financial Instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Foreign Currencies

Monetary assets and liabilities in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rates of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date. Transactions in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of the transaction. Exchange differences are taken into account in arriving at the net movement in funds.

STEPPING STONES NI
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

Fund Accounting

Unrestricted funds are general funds that are available for use at the Trustees' discretion in furtherance of the charitable objectives of the charity unless the funds have been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes.

Restricted funds are those given for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

Endowment funds are subject to specific conditions by donors that the capital must be maintained by the charity.

The income received from funders depends on the charity meeting detailed criteria on expenses plans.

Grants given under such conditions are also given subject to them being obtained for in connection with the furtherance of the charity's aims and objectives.

Such income can be repayable to the funder if such expenses plans and criteria are not met.

Such income is only deferred when the donor specifies that the grant/donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or the donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Income from charitable activities includes income received under contract or where entitlement to grant funding is subject to specific performance conditions is recognised as earned as the related goods/services are provided.

Grant income included in this category provides funding to support performance activities and is recognised where there is entitlement, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Income is deferred when: fees/performance related grants are received in advance of the performance/event to which they relate.

Reserves Policy

Stepping Stones NI reserves policy is to maintain a sufficient level of reserves to enable operating activities to be maintained for a period of at least 3 to 6 months in the event of major funding streams ending. The reserves policy also takes account of covering costs in the event of closure, to cover redundancies, rents, and fees that are due including statutory audit fees. It also takes account of potential risks and contingencies that may arise from time to time.

Stepping Stones NI maintain unrestricted reserves if accrued should be used for the purposes which meet the aims and objectives of Stepping Stones NI. The board should monitor and review the amount of unrestricted reserves monthly in addition to the level of any restricted reserves.

STEPPING STONES NI
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating the income and expenditure account)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

	NOTES	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	TOTAL 2025 £	TOTAL 2024 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:						
Donations and legacies	1	12,752	-	-	12,752	14,975
Income from investments	2	15,431	-	-	15,431	9,872
Income from charitable activities	3	485,262	1,235,744	-	1,721,006	1,575,312
Income from other trading activities	4	489,585	15,000	-	504,585	474,735
TOTAL INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		1,003,030	1,250,744	-	2,253,774	2,074,894
EXPENDITURE ON:						
Expenditure on raising funds	5	155,208	-	-	155,208	166,762
Expenditure on charitable activities	6	681,659	1,319,997	-	2,001,656	1,856,429
Other expenditure		-	-	-	-	-
Net gains/(losses) on investments		-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		836,867	1,319,997	-	2,156,864	2,023,191
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		166,163	(69,253)	-	96,910	51,703
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		166,163	(69,253)	-	96,910	51,703
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS						
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD		707,963	139,784	-	847,747	796,044
Prior year adjustment		-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		874,126	70,531	-	944,657	847,747

**The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a
Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses has not been prepared**

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities

The accompanying accounting policies and the notes form part of these financial statements

STEPPING STONES NI
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31ST MARCH 2025

	NOTES	2025 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	9	323,759	342,933
Investments	10	-	-
		323,759	342,933
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stocks		12,125	11,424
Debtors and prepayments	12	193,344	79,028
Cash at bank	11	709,701	690,882
Cash in hand		3,459	1,074
		918,629	782,408
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(144,607)	(98,948)
		774,022	683,460
NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		774,022	683,460
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		1,097,781	1,026,393
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	14	(153,124)	(178,646)
		944,657	847,747
NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		944,657	847,747
FUNDS:			
ENDOWMENT FUNDS			
		-	-
UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS	15/16/17/18/19/20	874,126	707,963
RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS	15/16/17/18/19/20	70,531	139,784
		944,657	847,747
		944,657	847,747

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS :



MICHAEL SCOTT
 DIRECTOR



SHIRLEY ANN SMYLIE
 DIRECTOR

DATE 4th December 2025

DATE 4th December 2025

The accompanying accounting policies and notes form part of these financial statements

STEPPING STONES NI
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

	NOTES	2025 £	2024 £
CASHFLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash generated from operations	16	38,156	168,666
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		38,156	168,666
Investing activities			
Investment income		-	-
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	9	(17,212)	(11,590)
Acquisition of investments	10	-	-
Amounts owed between funds		-	-
Disposal of investments		-	-
Disposal of tangible fixed assets		260	-
Net cash from investing activities		(16,952)	(11,590)
Increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		21,204	157,076
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		691,956	534,880
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	11	713,160	691,956
Relating to:			
Cash at bank and in hand	11	713,160	691,956

The accompanying accounting policies and notes form part of these financial statements

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

1. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
Donations	12,752	-	12,752	14,975	-	14,975
Legacies	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<u>12,752</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>12,752</u>	<u>14,975</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>14,975</u>

2. INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
Income from UK listed investments	-	-	-	-	-	-
Income from cash	15,431	-	15,431	9,872	-	9,872
	<u>15,431</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,431</u>	<u>9,872</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,872</u>

3. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	322,817	-	322,817	302,789	-	302,789
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	-	1,155,000	1,155,000	-	1,100,000	1,100,000
Baily Thomas Charitable Fund	-	10,000	10,000	-	-	-
The Rank Foundation	-	30,222	30,222	-	-	-
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	152,835	15,000	167,835	-	26,920	26,920
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council	9,460	-	9,460	-	104,033	104,033
Capital Grant Released	-	25,522	25,522	-	25,522	25,522
Sundry income	150	-	150	16,048	-	16,048
Less: Deferred Income (See Note 12)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<u>485,262</u>	<u>1,235,744</u>	<u>1,721,006</u>	<u>318,837</u>	<u>1,256,475</u>	<u>1,575,312</u>

4. INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
Trading Income	472,927	-	472,927	417,985	-	417,985
Fundraising	3,653	15,000	18,653	27,375	19,961	47,336
Training Fees	4,080	-	4,080	3,458	-	3,458
Other Income	8,925	-	8,925	5,956	-	5,956
	<u>489,585</u>	<u>15,000</u>	<u>504,585</u>	<u>454,774</u>	<u>19,961</u>	<u>474,735</u>

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

5. EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
Direct expenditure	155,208	-	155,208	165,501	1,261	166,762

6. EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 £
Direct expenditure	609,422	1,199,687	1,809,109	542,687	1,098,697	1,641,384
Support Costs and Governance costs	72,237	120,310	192,547	124,898	90,147	215,045
TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	681,659	1,319,997	2,001,656	667,585	1,188,844	1,856,429

7. NET GAINS/(LOSSES) ON INVESTMENTS

Net (gains)/losses on investments			-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

7. NET (OUTGOING)/ INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	2025	2024
This is stated after charging/(crediting)	£	£
Auditors remuneration	3,996	4,062
Depreciation	36,386	42,510
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

8. SALARY COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS	2025	2024
	£	£
Total staff costs were as follows:		
Wages and salaries - key management personnel	245,102	232,934
Wages and salaries - other staff	1,143,731	1,056,414
Employer social security costs - key management personnel	61,874	56,500
Employer social security costs - other staff	167,129	150,470
Employer social security costs - SMP & SPP Recoverable	-	(6,001)
Employer social security costs - Employment Allowance	-	-
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	1,617,836	1,490,317

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:	2025	2024
	Number	Number
	105	87
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Trustees' remuneration and benefits

There was no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31st March 2025. (2024: £Nil)

Trustees' Expenses

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31st March 2025. (2024: £Nil)

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Freehold Property £	Improvements to Property £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Computer Equipment £	Total £
COST					
As at 1st April 2024	563,028	42,335	190,470	60,006	855,839
Additions	-	-	8,113	9,099	17,212
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31st March 2025	<u>563,028</u>	<u>42,335</u>	<u>198,583</u>	<u>69,105</u>	<u>873,051</u>
DEPRECIATION					
As at 1st April 2024	285,407	17,679	157,455	52,365	512,906
Charge for year	11,261	4,233	14,725	6,167	36,386
Eliminated on disposal					-
As at 31st March 2025	<u>296,668</u>	<u>21,912</u>	<u>172,180</u>	<u>58,532</u>	<u>549,292</u>
Net book value 2025	<u>266,360</u>	<u>20,423</u>	<u>26,403</u>	<u>10,573</u>	<u>323,759</u>
Net book value 2024	<u>277,621</u>	<u>24,656</u>	<u>33,015</u>	<u>7,641</u>	<u>342,933</u>

11. CASH AT BANK

	2025 £	2024 £
Danske Bank - Current Accounts	95,370	126,784
Danske Bank - Investment Accounts	614,331	564,098
	<u>709,701</u>	<u>690,882</u>

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

12. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024
	£	£
Trade debtors	199,556	57,684
Other debtors	-	14,191
Prepayments	(6,212)	7,153
	193,344	79,028

13. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024
	£	£
Bank loans and overdrafts (<i>See Note 17</i>)	-	-
Trade creditors	54,299	34,093
Value Added Tax	-	-
Social security costs and other taxes	-	-
Other creditors	-	-
Deferred income	-	-
Sundry creditors and accrued expenses	90,308	64,855
	144,607	98,948

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	2025	2024
	£	£
Bank loans	-	-
Deferred capital funding	153,124	178,646
	153,124	178,646

15. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Tangible Fixed Assets	Investments	Debtors and Prepayments	Cash at Bank and in Hand	Creditors and Accruals	Transfers between Funds	2025	2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted Funds	323,759	-	205,469	489,505	(144,607)	-	874,126	707,963
Restricted Funds	-	-	-	223,655	(153,124)	-	70,531	139,784
Total Funds	323,759	-	205,469	713,160	(297,731)	-	944,657	847,747

16. RECONCILIATION OF OPERATING PROFIT TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2025	2024
	£	£
Operating Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	96,910	51,703
Depreciation	36,386	42,510
Movement in stocks	(701)	(843)
Movement in debtors	(114,316)	116,698
Movement in creditors	20,137	(41,402)
(Gain)/Loss on investments	-	-
(Profit)/Loss on disposal of Fixed Assets	(260)	-
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	38,156	168,666

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	Opening Balance £	Income £	Expenditure £	Net Movement in Funds 2025 £	Transfers between Funds £	Prior year Adjustment £	2025 £	2024 £
Unrestricted Funds	707,963	1,003,030	(836,867)	166,163	-	-	874,126	707,963
Restricted Funds	139,784	1,250,744	(1,319,997)	(69,253)	-	-	70,531	139,784
	847,747	2,253,774	(2,156,864)	96,910	-	-	944,657	847,747

STEPPING STONES NI
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

18. UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS	2025	2024
	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2024	707,963	789,025
Incoming resources for the year	1,003,030	798,458
Resources expended for the year	(836,867)	(833,086)
Transfer between funds	-	(46,434)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31st March 2025	<u>874,126</u>	<u>707,963</u>

19. RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS	2025	2024
	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2024	139,784	7,019
Incoming resources for the year	1,250,744	1,276,436
Resources expended for the year	(1,319,997)	(1,190,105)
Transfer between funds	-	46,434
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31st March 2025	<u>70,531</u>	<u>139,784</u>

20. DESIGNATED FUNDS

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted funds for specific future purposes.

21. LEGAL STATUS

Stepping Stones NI is a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Each member has agreed to contribute £1 in the event of a compulsory winding up.

Stepping Stones NI is registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, Charity Number 100727. Date of registration 9th December 2014.

Stepping Stones NI is a recognised Charity within the definition of Section 360(3) Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 by the Commissioners of the HM Revenue & Customs.