

## Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project

### Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

#### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

##### **Principle Activities and Future Development**

The Company encompasses the following activities:

To enhance the development and education of children below statutory age and to relieve poverty, sickness and distress among those in necessitous circumstances in Colin Neighbourhood.

Colin Sure Start is a government led programme working with parents and children under the age of four in the Colin area. Our main focus is to value and support all children aged 0-4 and their families by providing free services, activities and programmes that focus on early education, health, family support and play development.

Our vision is to reach out to families with children aged 0-4 years...laying foundations, creating opportunities and working in partnership to give every child the best possible start in life.

The aims of Sure Start are to complement the work of existing local services and provide young families with advice on where to go and who to speak to, if they have more specialised needs or problems.

The ongoing support that Sure Start provides can help to make sure that children flourish both at home and when they go to school.

Sure Start aims to improve the ability to learn, health and social development of the children that use its services.

The Sure Start programme is supported by a number of key principles:

To coordinate, streamline and add value to existing services for young children and their families in local communities

To involve parents

To avoid stigma

To ensure lasting support

To be sensitive to local families' needs

To promote the participation of all local families

Sure Start work is focused on six high outcomes to ensure children are:

Being healthy

Enjoying learning and achieving

Living in safety and with stability

Living in a society which respects their rights

Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing

Contributing positively to community and society

Colin Sure Start broadly delivers two types of service in the local community; Early Years Services and Family Services. Within each of these areas we offer a diverse range of programmes, activities and support that families can avail of.

#### **Project review 2023/24:**

A busy year and high demand in our postnatal groups and programmes and hard work on the part of staff has led to the project exceeding a number of its targets for these group delivery programmes. These included our Baby Massage programme (exceeded annual target) and Baby Time programme (exceeded annual target).

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Another programme that has exceeded expectations has been our Outdoor Explorers programme, which was new for this year. It has received great interest and uptake and has exceeded target for the year, despite increasing the target at Q2. Our Breastfeeding Support group has gone from strength to strength as well, exceeded annual target for unique parents and getting regular attendances of 6-10 parents per week. Some of our play programmes, particularly our Parent and Toddler Groups have seen very positive engagement over the year, exceeding their annual target, and with 4 groups running each week getting regular attendances of 8 or more parents, again a huge effort by staff in promoting these and delivering quality services. Antenatal engagement saw an increase from the previous year and further development of this service took place training and offering new programmes of support to parents.

The project also further developed its new services to families where English is a second language and also Grandparents. The overall engagement by users in these services increased, and the project developed the offer and ran some new initiatives in the year, such as the cultural celebration event as well as regular groups.

Awareness in the community and other services of what we are offering also increased and referrals are now coming in regularly for support with ESL families. Another very positive new development during the year was a partnership with the local womens centre Footprints to expand a social supermarket into a new area, supporting families in the Mount Eagles and Lagmore areas. This is operating as part of one of our speech and language programmes, where all parents who attend the Rhythm, Rhyme and Story time are able to avail of the social supermarket at the end, getting shopping and store cupboard staples for less than cost price.

There are monthly workshops on aspects of healthy diet, nutrition and practical cooking demonstrations making nutritious home cooked and health meals from the ingredients provided in the social supermarket. The interest and engagement in this new initiative surpassed even our highest expectations, with weekly numbers of 12 - 15 families availing of this service.

This accounting year once again presented financial challenges, which at the beginning of the year were well documented in the news, with major cuts to community and voluntary funding feared, and many protest taking place across Belfast and Northern Ireland. As it transpired, Sure Start were saved from any cuts to its budget, but a 'cash flat' year with no uplift to the budget had real terms implications.

The project made efficiency savings where it could, but rising operating costs certainly proved a challenge. Several posts that became vacant during the year were not recruited for with the money saved from these redeployed to programme delivery costs. The Board of Directors and project management were able to navigate these challenges, but keenly aware of the prospect of another year with no budget uplift for 24/25, took some difficult decisions around the projects staffing, with several vacant posts not retained for the coming year. The project has been in regular contact with its funder about the implications - which unfortunately are not unique to Colin Sure Start, but are challenges facing many in the sector, and our Business Plan is reflective of these changes in staffing numbers and hours.

Despite these challenges there were many positives in the year: the project is well on its pathway in getting fully accredited through UNICEF as a Breastfeeding Support centre along with other Sure Start projects in the SE Trust area, having passed the BFI Stage 3 assessment in Feb 2023. The project will now maintain this status with regular audits and training before applying for the Gold standard accreditation in 2025. The project has made some great steps during the year in measuring outcomes.

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The Outcome Star tool is now being used regularly in our home-based family support and other teams who are providing home-based support as a way of measuring outcomes, and numbers of stars being completed are increasing now that face to face delivery of home support has returned which has provided more opportunities for use of this tool. The project is also committed to developing quality and outcomes measures within its own home-grown programmes, and the Project Manager and Project Support Coordinator are involved in a training programme with NICVA and the CES supporting the community and voluntary sector to develop outcome measurement tools themselves.

Training and professional development also forms a central part of the projects quality improvement strategy, with investment this year into a number of Early Years practice development workshops and courses, internal training and development days, and with a number of staff currently being supported to take on further early years qualifications. We have facilitated opportunities for our DP423YO staff to visit other Sure Start settings to gain inspiration, new ideas and share practice which has had positive feedback. Recent Social Services inspections of our Lagmore and Lagan Valley registered settings prompted very positive feedback about the atmosphere, staff interactions observed and positive, interesting and inviting environments that staff have worked hard to develop.

Staffing during the year was affected by 5 different Maternity leaves across a variety of posts with different cover arrangements put in place, but the project has managed this over the past year without disruption to service delivery.

## Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project

### Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

#### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

##### **Public benefit**

Public benefits are: -

(a) The promotion for the public benefit of urban regeneration in the Colin area and the surrounding catchment areas in Belfast and the city of Lisburn (the "area of benefit"), an area of social and economic deprivation, by all or any of the following means:

1. The development and education of children below statutory age
2. Better understanding of the physical, emotional and mental health needs of children and adults in the community with better health and well-being will having an impact from pregnancy to early development
3. The relief of poverty in such ways as may be thought fit
4. The provision of recreational facilities for families or those who by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social and economic circumstances, have need of such facilities;

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose are improvements in the social/economic circumstances of parents/children living in the area of benefit including greater access to training and education programmes/guidance, and stronger participation of all age groups. This promotes neighbourhood renewal, resilience and healthier communities. These, benefits are demonstrated through member's feedback, quarterly/annual activity reports and outcomes-based evaluation. This purpose does not lead to harm.

The beneficiaries of this purpose are all parents and children.

(a) private benefit to trustees may arise if the knowledge they gain as a trustee to good governance and urban regeneration is transferable to another setting. These benefits are incidental and necessary to ensure the benefit is provided to the beneficiaries.

(b) To provide encouragement and practical support services to existing and new parents's groups in the area of benefit so as to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in achieving their charitable aims;

The direct benefit which flows from this purpose is that knowledge and skills are transferred to support parents's groups in the area of benefit, increasing levels of skills and capacity to achieve their charitable aims. Evidence to demonstrate this benefit will be the sustainability of parents's and children's activity within the area of benefit. This purpose does not lead to harm.

The beneficiaries of this purpose are all parents and children.

There is no private benefit arising from this purpose.

(c) To develop the capacity and skills of parents in the area of benefit in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society. The direct benefit which flows from this purpose is that through developing a self-help model, families are supported to build their capacity and skills to identify their needs and to develop services to meet their distinct needs. The evidence to demonstrate this benefit is provided from members' feedback, increased representation on community forums/networks, quarterly/annual monitoring and activity reports. This purpose does not lead to harm.

The beneficiaries of this purpose are all families and children.

There is no private benefit arising from this purpose.

(d) To promote social inclusion, equality of opportunity and good relations across all diversity strands, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion and disability and to encourage diversity. The direct benefit which flows from this purpose is that the project will contribute to the development of a more inclusive, equitable and diverse society through delivery of good relations programmes. This will increase local understanding and acceptance of diversity.

These benefits are demonstrated through greater inclusively and diversity within the membership/community. This purpose does not lead to harm. The beneficiaries of this purpose are all parents and children. There is no private benefit arising from this purpose.

## **Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project**

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#### **STRATEGIC REPORT**

##### **Financial position**

The company had net incoming resources for the year of £2,577 (2023: net outgoing resources of £976), which reflected the completion of a number of projects during the year. Unrestricted funds increased during the year by £1,260 whilst restricted funds increased by £1,317.

##### **Principle funding sources**

Principle funders are:

- Eastern Childcare Partnership
- SEHSCT - Fruit + Vegetables Programme
- Public Health Agency
- Colin Neighbourhood Partnership

##### **Reserves policy**

The Charity is funded by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board through the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust.

On Occasion the charity also receives restricted income from other funders. The Charity has to monitor its compliance with the policy of funding on a regular basis. Principle funding sources are the Department of Education.

##### **Future plans**

The project is keen to support new practitioners starting their journey in early years and family support, and also using our varied work and experience within the community and sector, are keen to exploring an apprenticeship scheme, where unqualified staff could gain the experience and qualifications.

The project is also determined to continue our work on supporting health and early intervention work in supporting good health habits in the early years, and as part of this continuing to develop our outdoor play provision, with a number of new programmes recently started and rolled out offering parents and children outdoor play opportunities and information about the benefits that these can have on childrens health.

The project will continue to develop our services for children with additional needs both as home support and small group-based provision based on the needs of the community. The project hopes that if additional funding or a budget uplift is obtained in the future, to be able to revisit the recruitment of staff to support fathers work in some form.

#### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **Governing document**

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

##### **Governance of the Charity**

During the period under review the directors met monthly. Trustees/directors are appointed by nominations made in writing by any existing director. At the General Meeting nominated directors are appointed by election.

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#### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **Related parties**

Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project has no directly related parties but does have partner organisations.

Colin Sure Start works closely with a number of partner organisations throughout the Colin area. These partnerships help us achieve a cohesive approach to Early Years education and health promotion in Colin and give local residents the best service that we can.

We currently fund a number of organisations and also work closely in partnership with other relevant bodies.

Barnardos Travellers Early Years' Service - Colin Sure Start currently funds Barnardos to help support local travellers in the Colin area with children from 0-4.

Ionad Na Fuisioige - Ionad Na Fuisioige is a local Irish immersion family centre and crèche. Colin Sure Start currently assist the centre to provide one of our Sure Start Developmental Programme for Two Year Olds programmes and a crèche. We also use the centre to deliver a weekly parent and toddlers group and other programmes and activities.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust - Colin Sure Start works in close partnership with the SEHSCT to deliver our Speech and Language support programmes.

St Luke's Family Centre - Cara House - Cara House offers support to families in the community through their parents drop in and programme of activities which are supported by our daily crèche facility for children aged 0-4 years. Their range of programmes aim to improve personal development, provide information on family and personal health, learn new skills and support members of the community to move away from the benefits cycle and back into employment if that is their aim. Colin Sure Start currently provides financial assistance to the centre to run their crèche. We also run several programmes and activities in the facility.

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#### **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **Risk management**

The principles of good governance are embedded within all aspects of Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project Limited operations with management and staff being keenly aware of the Boards responsibility of ensuring that the organisation protects itself from financial exposure and reputational damage. A close working relationship is maintained between the Board and management to ensure that operationally staff are aware of the standards required of them by the Board and the Board are always in a position to provide guidance and support to management in the discharge of their duties. This two way relationship is the key feature of Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project Limited governance arrangements and is a key strength in the company.

A conscientious approach to ensuring that contractual project requirements are achieved has been maintained at all times both in the accounting period being reported on and since Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project Limited establishment. Very tight financial controls on expenditure and all financial commitments are maintained at all times and project staff have been trained and have become experienced in budgetary controls. In both these areas ie Project delivery and financial controls management all staff have established close working relationships with funding organisations to ensure all mandatory standards are consistently achieved. Board representatives also actively engage with funding bodies.

The Board, management and staff are fully aware that the nature of the work in which Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project Limited is involved can bring with it a high level of scrutiny to ensure that all activities are fully compliant with funding requirements and, therefore, beyond reproach. The Board of Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project Limited is, therefore, greatly reassured of the company's compliance with the highest of standards of governance on the basis that all monitoring and evaluation of project delivery demonstrates achievement of all funders objectives and that funders' audits and vouching of financial expenditure and the statutory audit confirm compliance with both probity and regularity in the use of monies received.

#### **EVENTS SINCE THE END OF THE YEAR**

Information relating to events since the end of the year is given in the notes to the financial statements.

#### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The trustees (who are also the directors of Colin Neighbourhood Sure Start Project 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 Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements 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 the 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 then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

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### Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

#### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES - continued**

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 statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They 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.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

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

#### **AUDITORS**

The auditors, Lynn Drake & Co Ltd, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on 3 June 2024 and signed on the board's behalf by:



Miss Carla Leah Fraser - Trustee