

# SHARED PARENTING SCOTLAND

## Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021



Cover photos by [Bermix Studio](#), [Valeria Zoncoll](#),  
[Alexander Dummer](#) and [Derek Owens](#), on [Unsplash](#)

Supporting separated parents to share parenting  
Because children need both parents

# AIM

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Shared Parenting Scotland is a national charity supporting parents to both remain fully involved with their children after separation or divorce. We believe in most cases 'shared parenting' is beneficial for the wellbeing of children in the short and long term. We work with parents and other family members to deal with contact problems and other related issues. Through our helpline, support group meetings, WhatsApp networking, training and publications we encourage people to move on from past difficulties and seek ways to resolve issues about shared parenting through discussion and mediation, only going to court if absolutely necessary.

## FUNDING

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Shared Parenting Scotland is very grateful for all the support we have received in the past year from the Tudor Trust, the Scottish Government Children, Young People and Parents Early Intervention Fund, the Volunteer Support Fund, the Robertson Trust, the Wellbeing Fund, the Debt Levy Fund, the Shift the Power Coronavirus Fund, Foundation Scotland Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund, Hugh Fraser Foundation, Isabella Memorial Trust, JTH Charitable Trust, Kintore Charitable Trust, Leng Charitable Trust, W.M. Mann Foundation, Nancie Massey Charitable Trust, Scott Davidson Charitable Trust, and Tillyloss Trust. Supporters of the charity raised sponsor money by taking part in the virtual Kiltwalk, which was doubled by the Hunter Foundation.



## BACKGROUND

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The charity was established as Families Need Fathers Scotland in 2011 and changed its name to Shared Parenting Scotland in January 2020.

We have one full-time and four part-time staff and eight trustees, operating from rented office space in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Our thanks are due to the many volunteers who assist with group meetings, the WhatsApp networks and as Lay Support volunteers. We are also extremely grateful to the 42 family lawyers across Scotland who take turns to attend pro bono at our local group meetings and also to the lawyers and advocates who help us on legal topics.

Thank you so much. It was great talking to you. For your support and information and good to know I am not alone in this situation and journey. Deeply appreciated.

*Mum, Glasgow*



# STAFF CHANGES

Our staff team of National Manager Ian Maxwell, Policy Manager John Forsyth and Outreach Manager Alastair Williamson was strengthened during the year by two new members. Mark Downie joined us in December 2020 to strengthen our helpline team. This new post is supported by Scottish Government Family Justice Department to help us deal with the significant increase in helpline enquiries since the start of the COVID pandemic. Mark has his own experience of family separation and has been a volunteer with the Edinburgh group and a Trustee. Claire Ross joined our staff team in March 2021 to work on our training programme and helpline. Her previous experience includes work with Citizens Advice Scotland and as a mediator and counsellor.

# STUDENT PLACEMENT

Grant Mackay spent part of the year working with us on placement from the HNC Working With Communities Course at Kelvin College. As well as helping with the group meetings and WhatsApp support, he ran a lively training session about how to communicate with young children online which has been recorded for our online training site.

*Mum, Edinburgh*

Thank you so much for talking with me on Tuesday afternoon. That was absolute gold and far more helpful than 8 sessions of counselling could ever be



*Grant MacKay*

# IMPACT OF COVID-19

The work of Shared Parenting Scotland continued uninterrupted when the country went into lockdown at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. All our support group sessions transferred immediately from local meetings across Scotland to online meetings on Zoom. We had previously run online meetings for people who couldn't attend our six local meeting places, so this change was not as hard as it might have been.

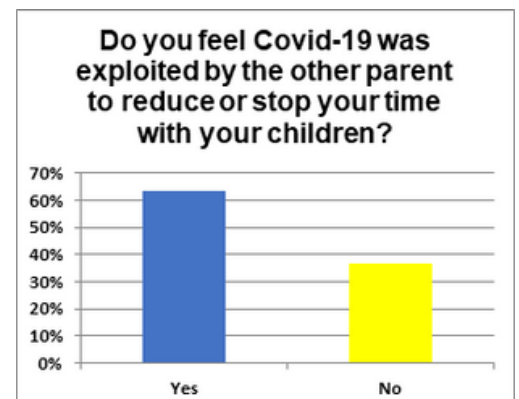
Our staff stayed in contact through short online meetings every morning. This brought about a significant improvement to our internal communication – daily Zoom meetings allow us to discuss issues straightaway and keep our staff team in close contact despite them being located across Scotland.

We experienced an immediate increase in helpline enquiries by phone and email, which were handled by staff working mainly from home. One of the most frequent enquiries concerned whether children could still move between the households of their parents. The usual answer to this question was “Yes, unless one household has an infection”. This was thanks to the exemption from the restrictions intended to ensure that children could still see both parents. At the start of the lockdown this issue was confused when UK cabinet minister Michael Gove wrongly said on Breakfast TV that children should not be travelling between different houses during the restrictions. The error caused difficulties for several months. It was explicit in the regulations from Day One that travel for shared parenting was an exception to general restrictions

Every time new lockdown arrangements were announced we received a flood of enquiries relating to how the changes would affect court appearances, child contact and related issues. This meant we had to stay in close contact with Scottish Government, the Court Service, Relationships Scotland local services and other agencies to learn how their services were affected. Early guidance was published by the Lord President that court-ordered contact was expected to continue. Sheriffs Principal across Scotland made arrangements to move some court hearings to teleconferences and then to online hearings on Webex. Arrangements were made to prioritise urgent applications about contact and residence.

Despite all these efforts there were delays in court processes and limited availability of family mediation and child contact centres. Many family lawyers were on furlough during part of the year.

We heard from many separated parents about contact being refused due to fears about Covid, although some separated parents reacted more positively to the pandemic and worked together to deal with home learning and other new issues, as our survey showed.



At the close of an exceptional year, a short [YouTube roundup of 2020](#) was produced for us by Ahmad Chukri Mourad who had been supported by Shared Parenting Scotland.

# PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In a year when school pupils spent a lot of time working at home, we were aware that sometimes only one parent in a separated family was provided with the information and links to assist with homeschooling.

While it is understandable that schools were reacting to a completely unexpected situation, this meant that some parents were unable to help their children's learning when they were in their home. The Covid-related changes will probably lead to longer-term alteration in the way schools interact with parents, and it is very important that they maintain full links with both separated parents in future.

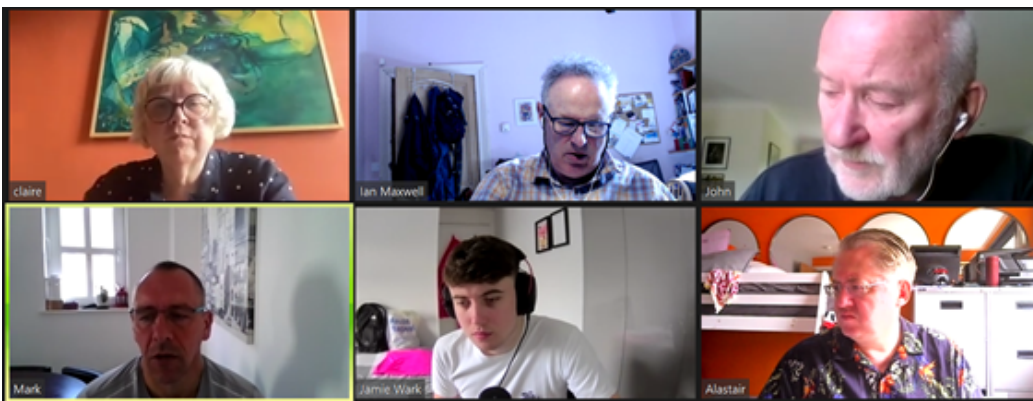
We continued our interest in helping parents and schools resolve issues that arise in making the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act work for them. It was apparent that equal involvement was a casualty for many separated parents when schools were making arrangements for homeschooling in the first part of the COVID emergency. We brought the issue to the attention of the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee and gave a presentation to an online meeting of SPION - the Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network. We were grateful for a helpful counsel's opinion from Kay Springham QC, arranged through the Faculty of

Advocates Free Legal Services Unit, on a number of issues concerning schools' obligations to give equal treatment to parents who do not live together.



Thank you for supporting my family through what was a truly nightmarish and harrowing time in our lives with sleepless nights and constant anxiety - and the demons that one has to battle. Thank you for showing my son a glimpse of light in the darkness and for guiding him the way to go. Thank you for having his back - even when he was ungrateful to you. And lastly - thank you for the brilliant work you do and continue to do

*Grandad, Aberdeenshire*



**The staff team on Zoom.**  
**Top row: Claire Ross, Ian Maxwell and John Forsyth**  
**Bottom row: Mark Downie, Jamie Wark and Alastair Williamson.**  
Jamie is with us as a student intern in summer 2021, supported by the Robertson Trust.



# NEW WAYS

## FOR FAMILIES®

Shared Parenting Scotland has been working with the High Conflict Institute to run a pilot of an online training programme for shared parenting that has already been used by 125,000 parents in the USA, Canada and Australia.

It is a method of teaching and reinforcing four simple conflict resolution skills for parents and children going through separation/divorce: managing emotions, flexible thinking, moderating behaviour and checking yourself.

The training helps parents to manage conflicts, negotiate decisions, promote respectful communication, encourage themselves in times of stress and co-parent more effectively. It is delivered through 12 sessions of online learning plus one-to-one coaching to practice the skills. Following fundraising and training of coaches, we hope to run a pilot programme and evaluate the outcomes later in 2021.

# ONLINE TRAINING

Working with our training partner Civicos Training and Communications we transferred our popular training courses on Communication Skills and Stress Management to online versions.



We obtained funding from various sources to develop this training. Josie Deacon started working on our online training site during the year using her digital marketing skills to create and promote our new online courses.

# 4602

## total actions

	2020-21	2019-20
Clients during year	921	823
Clients making first contact	577	486
Enquiries (phone, email etc)	4070	3278
Attendance at meetings	532	794
Male clients	669	678
Female clients	252	145
Mothers	114	40
Fathers	614	626
WhatsApp Message	17,813	11,847

# ICSP CONFERENCE

The International Council on Shared Parenting was going to hold their 5th International Conference in Vancouver in mid 2020, but had to hold the event online in November 2020 instead. Ian Maxwell presented a paper on “Should concern about domestic violence prevent shared parenting laws?”. This described our experience in (unsuccessfully) seeking the inclusion of a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting in the 2020 Children (Scotland) Act. He also chaired a series of workshops during the online event, which was attended by over 1000 participants from 51 countries. The conference arrived at a consensus on recommendations for research in the intersection of shared parenting and family violence on the one hand, and reform of family law, policy and professional practice on the other.



I am highly grateful for this letter. This read much better and to the point and clearer. I will pray for your good health and wealth in my daily prayers in mosque. Apologies for late reply as we were very busy working in the hospital

*Dad, Wishaw*

# INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK

The Routledge International Handbook of Shared Parenting and Best Interest of the Child is billed as essential reading for scholars and graduate students in law, psychology, sociology and economics interested in shared parenting and family law. The 36 articles by specialists from around the world are based on presentations at the conference held in Malaga in 2018. Cutting-edge topics explored include: transnational shared parenting; alternative dispute resolution; breastfeeding parents; religious disputes between parents and the psychological, social and economic factors that affect shared parenting. An article about our recent attempt to put shared parenting into Scottish law by National Manager Ian Maxwell is included in this handbook.



# SCOTTISH LEGAL AWARDS

Shared Parenting Scotland was shortlisted again in the 2020 Scottish Legal Awards for our success in recruiting a panel of family lawyers to assist pro bono at our support group meetings across Scotland. This shortlisting didn't translate into actually winning an award, and we also missed out on the hospitality because the award ceremony took place online.



# CROSS PARTY GROUP

Shared Parenting Scotland has acted as the secretariat for the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Shared Parenting since it was established in 2018. The group brings a wide range of children's and parenting organisations together with interested MSPs.

Recent meetings included a talk by Marie-France Carlier, a Belgian family judge. She described how the joint physical custody law that was introduced in Belgium in 2006 has made a significant contribution to the equality of mothers and fathers in divorce and separation.

Since 2006, there has been a huge reduction of parental conflict in the Belgian courts as parents now know what the law says. After separation, many parents immediately decide to set up joint physical custody before having any court decision.



*Belgian judge, Marie France Carlier*



# UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

Shared Parenting Scotland often works with parents who struggle to communicate and understand aspects of Scottish Family Law, the Children's Reporter, Social Work and even Housing services.

Nearly a fifth of the parents who contact us are of black or minority ethnic origin. Each case is dealt with on its merits, but the focus has to be on overcoming issues in (re)establishing and/or maintaining contact between children and parents. For example, Alastair Williamson has acted as advocate for an Asylum Seeker in Glasgow. The family has been receiving support from the local Social Work Department. Dad's first language isn't English and he hadn't been understanding what Social work were doing with his family.

Through joint work with the father and Social Work, the father now has the services of a translator and Alastair at relevant meetings where all questions are answered and anything which isn't clear is explained in sufficient detail to allow him to understand what is happening. As a result, he is calmer and able to focus on his physical and mental health and on his role as a parent.

Had it not been for the accurate advice from Shared Parenting Scotland, in particular, together with my own resilience, I would have been in a very, very difficult position. I have been able to turn a seemingly hopeless situation around and now see my youngest daughter, every Wed and Sat plus 3 video calls a week and sleepovers. I can't thank you enough. The pressure has been unrelenting.

*Dad, Kelso*

# CHILDREN SCOTLAND ACT

During the passage of the Children (Scotland) Bill through the Scottish Parliament, Shared Parenting Scotland worked very hard to persuade MSPs to support amendments which we felt would strengthen the legislation. Although we succeeded in getting Liberal Democrat MSP Liam McArthur to put forward amendments including a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting, tighter timescales for court cases and replacing the terms "contact" and "residence" with more neutral terms, none of our amendments were accepted into the legislation. The new Act will make significant changes to the oversight and training of Child Welfare Reporters, and makes other changes to the way family cases are handled in court.

A trial of information meetings about alternative dispute resolution included in the Act has the potential to help some separating parents avoid going to court. The increased emphasis on taking the views of children and informing them about what is decided by the court may also help in resolving disputes.

Shared Parenting Scotland will continue to press for a move away from adversarial processes in child contact cases, alongside better ways of enforcing child contact orders and more use of specialist family sheriffs.

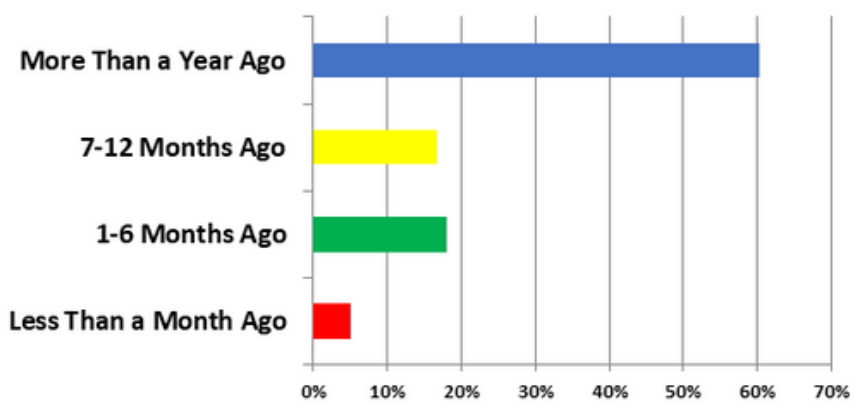


*Liam McArthur MSP*

# 2020 SURVEY RESULTS

Some of our results. Please get in touch to see full survey.

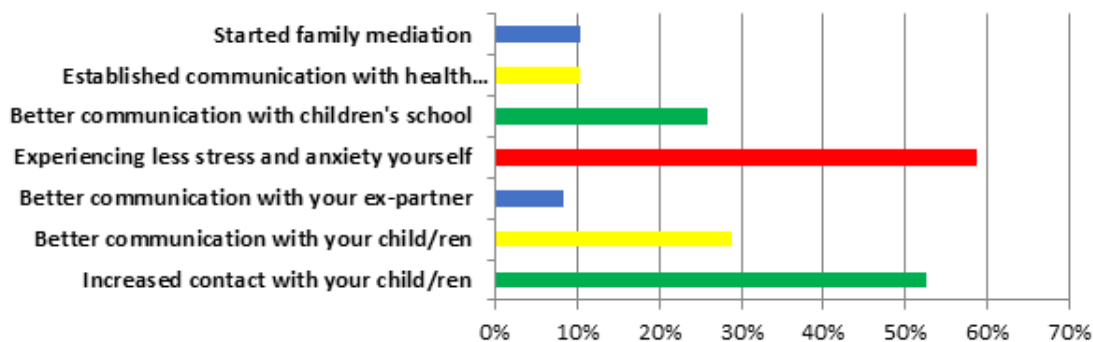
## How long since you first contacted Shared Parenting Scotland (SPS)?



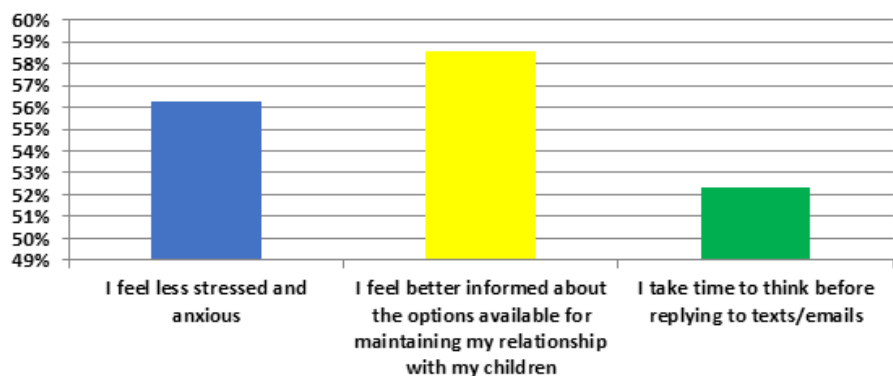
You gave me a great deal of comfort by first of all listening and also by advising on the legality of the court order and information I have received. My appreciation cannot really be expressed in an email. I hope you will continue to give incredible support to those who need to access you

*Mum, Scottish Borders*

## What progress have you made since you first contacted SPS/FNFS? (tick all that apply)



## How has your own wellbeing changed since you first contacted us? (tick all that apply)



I wanted to say a sincere thank you to both of you for all of the support and advice that you have given me. Without it, I am certain I would not have had the same result.

*Dad, Glasgow*

# Accounts for period ending 31 March 2021

Charity no. SC 042817

## **Principal Place of Business:**

10 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh, EH12 5AA

Tel: 0131 557 2440

Email: [info@sharedparenting.scot](mailto:info@sharedparenting.scot)

## **Board members:**

Margaret Ashman (secretary)

Sumit Ghosh (chair)

Mark Downie (resigned 1/11/2020)

Jane Cooper

Gavin Watson

Guy Holloway

Julie Bills

Amee Hood

Joe Mandava (appointed 19/11/2020)

## **Banker:**

TSB

## **Independent Examiner:**

A.W. Scotland CA

10 Craighall Crescent

Edinburgh

EH6 4RY



The board presents the accounts for the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The comparative figures cover the year ended 31st March 2020. The accounts show a surplus of £33,293. The policy of the charity is to have reserves of 3 months expenditure and we seek to maintain this reserve in 2021-22.

## **STATEMENT ON RISK**

The board continues to assess the major risks to which the charity is exposed and will continue to establish procedures and policies to mitigate those that are identified as a result.

## **STATEMENT OF BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Board will prepare financial statements for each financial year and give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and the surplus or deficit of the charity for the period. In preparing these financial statements, the Board is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Accounts (Scotland) regulations 1992. It is responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking responsible steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective 2015).

## **Independent Examiner**

The management committee have appointed A.W. Scotland CA as Independent Examiner of the charity. A resolution to continue this appointment will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

**BY THE ORDER OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

# Independent Examiner's Report to the members of Shared Parenting Scotland SCIO for the period ended 31st March 2021 set out in pages 14-16.

## Respective Responsibilities of the Board and Examiner

The Charity's Board are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The Board considers that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

## Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts represented with these records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seek explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an opinion on the accounts.

## Independent Examiner's Statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention.

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

Have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



A.W. Scotland CA  
10 Craighall Crescent  
Edinburgh

17/05/21

# Income and Expenditure Accounts and Statement of Financial Affairs

for the year ended 31st March 2021

2019-20	<b>Incoming Resources</b>		2020 - 21	
	From Charitable Activities	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	TOTAL
	Grants			
30,000	The Tudor Trust	£32,000	-	£32,000
33,000	CYPEIF	£33,000	-	£33,000
9,902	Voluntary Action Fund	£9,844	-	£9,844
10,000	Robertson Trust	-	-	-
-	Scottish Govt - Justice	£11,560	-	£11,560
-	Online Training	£23,250	-	£23,250
-	City of Edinburgh Council	£10,000	-	£10,000
<u>82,902</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>£119,654</u>	<u>£0</u>	<u>£119,654</u>
271	Other Income - Bank Interest	£268	-	£268
	From Generated Funds			
9,100	Donations - trusts	£9,672	-	£9,672
10,478	Donations - general	£9,955	-	£9,955
<u>102,751</u>	<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<u>£139,549</u>	<u>£0</u>	<u>£139,549</u>

<b>Resources Expended</b>				
Charitable Expenditure				
82,552	Staff costs	£84,347	£3,000	£87,347
4,868	Office rent	£5,286	-	£5,286
1,706	Phone, stationery etc.	£1,367	-	£1,367
377	Insurance	£377	-	£377
15,493	IT and web site	£3,299	-	£3,299
1,874	Staff travel	£97	-	£97
1,173	Travel to groups	-	-	-
1,411	Local group costs	-	-	-
8,648	Events, training, subscriptions	£4,349	-	£4,349
20	Bank Charges	-	-	-
-	Online Training	£7,023	£2,000	£9,023
<u>118,122</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>£106,145</u>	<u>£5,000</u>	<u>£111,145</u>
Fundraising Expenditure				
342	Fund-raising costs	£420		£420
Governance Expenses				
202	Board Expenses	-		-
300	Independent Examiners Fee	£300		£300
<u>118,966</u>	<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<u>£106,865</u>	<u>£5,000</u>	<u>£111,865</u>

-16,215	<b>Surplus for the period and net incoming resources before and after transfers</b>	£32,684	-£5,000	£27,684
	Funds at 1st April 2020	£609	£5,000	£5,609
	Funds at 31st March 2021	£33,293	£0	£33,293



## Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2021

Current Assets	2020	2021
Debtors - Prepayments and other debtors	£377	£0
Cash at Bank	£7,307	£38,443
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year (note 3)	£7,684	£39,443
Accruals:	£2,075	£5,150
Net Current Assets - Net Assets	£5,609	£33,293
Represented by		
Unrestricted Funds	£609	£33,293
Restricted Funds	£5,000	£0
	£5,609	£33,293

The accounts were approved by the Board at their meeting on 24/6/21



Margaret Ashman, Secretary

## Notes to the Accounts for the period ended 31st March 2021

### 1. Accounting Policies

#### Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles FRS 106, the historical cost convention and the guidelines laid down in the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities (2015).

#### Income:

Income is accounted for when received.

#### Expenditure:

Expenditure is accounted for on accruals basis and includes unrecoverable value added tax.

#### Period of accounts:

The accounts cover the year ended 31st March 2021.

The comparative figures cover the year ended 31st March 2020.

### 2. Board Expenses

Board members received no remuneration but the members were reimbursed a total of £nil (2019/20 £202) for travel and other expenses as all board meetings were held online.

### 3. Creditors - amounts failing due within one year.

	2020	2021
Accruals	£300	£2643
Taxation	£1775	£2507
	<u>£2075</u>	<u>£5150</u>

### 4. Restricted Fund

A grant was received from the Robertson Trust during the previous year to pay for training and support activities. This was held in a restricted fund with the balance brought forward, which was fully spent in 2020/21.

### 5. Staff Costs

The charity had an average of three employees during the year. (2020, 3)

	2020	2021
Salaries	£76930	£81994
National Insurance	£3662	£3335
Pension costs	£1672	£1730
Processing costs	£288	£288
	<u>£82552</u>	<u>£87347</u>