



Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023
for
FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Mitchell Gordon LLP
Accountants and
Statutory Auditors

Tel: 01325 368000

43 Coniscliffe Road, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 7EH

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

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TRUSTEES' REPORT

MARCH 2023

32 Houndgate, Darlington, DL1 1PD

Tel: 01325 254463 Registered Charity Number 1073822

Company Limited by Guarantee 3647391

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Trustees' Annual report for the year ended 31 March 2023

The Trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (FRS 102) in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in the notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland published on 16 July 2014 (as amended by Update Bulletin 1 published on 2 February 2016).

The trustees are directors of the Company for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006.

Reference and Administration Information

Charity Name:	First Stop Darlington
Charity Registration number:	1073822
Company registration number:	03647391
Registered office and operational address:	32 Houndgate, Darlington, DL1 5RH
Governing document:	Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 21 September 1998 and amended by special resolution(s) dated 20/10/2011 and amended further by special resolution(s) dated 9 th February 2021

Board of Trustees

William John Kilgour	Chair
Maire Kennan	
Alan Coultas	
James Fenny	Retired 17 th March 2023
Bernadette Mary Chapman	
Debra Irving	
James Stephen McGill	Appointed 17 th January 2023

Company Secretary

Vacancy

Independent Examiner

Lee Harris Bsc (Hons), FCCA
Mitchell Gordon LLP
43 Coniscliffe Rd
Darlington
DL3 7EH

Solicitors

Close Thornton
2 Duke Street
Darlington
DL3 7AB

Bankers

Unity Trust Bank plc, Nine Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Trustees' Annual report for the year ended 31 March 2023

Who are we?

First Stop Darlington (FSD) is a charity in Darlington, which helps people who are at risk of losing their homes and is an open-door organisation which supports anyone who is vulnerable through poverty, or struggling with mental health and other issues that impede their access to benefits and other support systems.

Nobody is turned away; it is literally a person's first stop to getting help in a time of crisis.

The charity was founded in 1999 to support people 'in need and distress within Darlington'. Unfortunately, that need is still there, and we have adapted our services to help meet historic and emerging demands, increasing support to families and all on a low income. We continue to find ways to adapt ensuring we provide a high-quality service to as many people who need us as possible.

The extent of inequality in one of the poorest regions of the country is stark – re (County Durham Community Foundation: Health, Wealth and (Unequal) Opportunities to Thrive report July 2023). The report paints a bleak picture of the wide-ranging health challenges faced within the area, covering social and economic inequalities, COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, health and wellbeing, historic factors, and the impact of national policies. Some of the stark facts are: child poverty rates are 38.7% compared to 27% nationally, the rate of emergency admissions for children is 74.4% higher in Darlington than nationally, people live shorter lives in the region, the COVID-19 mortality rate was 18% higher in the region than the national average, wages are 10% below the English average, there are higher than average rates of Universal Credit Claims, worse health accounts for 27% of lost productivity at a value of £4bn per year. This is the crisis that First Stop works in the middle of every day, helping people to survive. The case examples set out in our Trustees Report below give a glimpse of this.

FSD is situated in Houndgate, in Darlington's Town Centre, where we operate a centre with an appointment service, with crisis access available every day on the ground floor and have offices and a training/activity room/meeting room on the first floor. We offer an in-depth advice service with the use of phones and laptops so that clients can be supported to solve their problems and increase their access to benefits, housing, mental health support, employment support and other services.

Since we began in July 1999, we have supported over 9,650 vulnerable people to help them work on their issues and move forwards towards an independent life. We have provided, in total, a range of support services to over 11,920 people over the years, with the addition of various outreach events.

How are we constituted?

First Stop Darlington is a company limited by guarantee, No. 03647391, governed by its Articles and Memorandum of Association. It is registered charity No 1073822 with a core membership of 12 people.

The directors of FSD are the Board of Trustees and are elected by the membership. In 2022-2023, the board had 7 members serving on the Board, none of whom are related to each other.

The Board has an appointed Chair with a vacant Vice Chair position at present. The Articles of Association require that one third of the directors/ trustees retire each year by rotation; retiring trustees are eligible for re-election.

We do not have a treasurer, but all trustees have undergone training in the field of financial management of charities and all trustees are expected to oversee all financial reporting by our financial officer, the CEO and our financial advisors.

The role of the trustees is to further the objectives of FSD through taking part in formulating and regularly reviewing strategic aims, ensuring that policy and practice are in keeping with its aims and that FSD functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable company and strives to achieve best practice.

As we came out of Covid restrictions, the decision was made to hold hybrid meetings for trustees, with some trustees gathering in person, and others joining by Zoom. This has proven to be a popular move and we will continue to take this more flexible approach.

The Board has updated the Risk Register, taking account of the increased risks posed by the growing financial pressure caused by inflation and increasing energy prices on all aspects of public life. As our clients' needs increase, so also does the pressure on our staff and donors. Having sought to identify these increasing risks, we then revisited our development of strategies.

With advice from Pilotlight, the board has sought to clarify a simpler strategy model. The Board and staff have met to identify any gaps in service, changes to need etc., ensuring we provide the best possible service for our beneficiaries. The staff were able to advise the Board using case studies and describing their own experiences with clients.

Through the course of this year no trustee has received any remuneration or reimbursement of expenses. As well as participating in Board meetings and strategy reviews, individual board members have participated in fund raising activities. Raising money at a local level remains a challenge, but coffee mornings, Santa's Sleigh and Carnival tombola remain on the agenda.

FSD employs a CEO whose responsibility is the general management of all FSD projects, management of staff and volunteers, building management and leading the team in procuring funding. The CEO attends Board meetings and reports to The Board on finance and operational matters.

The CEO is Tracy Freeman and there are 6 other members of staff.

Grant giving funding bodies are our main source of income, supplemented by fund raising efforts by Friends of FSD, and personal donations. This year we have begun to bring fundraising events back into the calendar since Covid rules have been relaxed to their lowest level since Covid emerged.

Our thanks for 2022-23 funding go to, National Lottery Community Fund, Ballinger Trust, Garfield Weston Trust, Watson Hope Foundation, County Durham Community Foundation, and NHS TEWV MH Trust whose grants over the year have made the work of FSD possible.

FSD has a Social Enterprise, Bike Stop Darlington (BSD), set up in 2012 providing training, volunteering opportunities and work experience for the clients of FSD and other vulnerable people within the Borough of Darlington, especially those furthest from the job market. Our CEO provides overall direction and strategic support. BSD has been managed by its own board and produces its own accounts. These are available on request.

Our aims and how we work.

First Stop Darlington provides a Wellbeing and Work Hub in the town centre of Darlington and houses a range of practical, free facilities and activities designed to help people navigate from poverty and all its trappings, through to employment with decent wages that helps lift people out of poverty and achieving long lost goals.

The aims of the organisation are:

- To ensure that confidential, impartial information, advice and support is provided in ways that empower local people to make informed decisions about their life choices and in a way that is sensitive to their needs.
- To support local people to help themselves move forward out of life's difficulties and onwards towards independence.
- To promote positive mental health among service users, including Mindset and Mindfulness work.
- To provide activities around prevention of poor mental health, addiction behaviours and to promote a healthy sense of well-being and increased self-worth.
- To provide IAG services regarding benefit claims, benefit issues, money issues, expenditure, poverty, housing issues, relationships, access to services etc.

- To provide one to one support while people are working through their issues, sharing problem solving skills and increasing self-esteem and self-confidence to make behavioural changes in their lives.
- Support people to broaden their CV, increase skills through volunteering and courses, improving their job opportunities.
- To work in partnership with other likeminded organisations to deliver wrap around services.
- To highlight the problem of poverty and its associated issues.
- To provide accurate statistical information on poverty issues to inform service planning and delivery.

The Centre is open to the public every weekday to provide impartial confidential information, advice, guidance, support, and onward referral to our clients.

There are three Project Support Staff, 1 Mental Health Support Worker, 1 Digital Inclusion Worker, 1 Administrative officer and the CEO. The CEO works directly with clients during holidays and staff illness, ensuring there is full cover for our services.

Strategic Developments During the Year

Pilotlight Project

In June 2022 FSD won a Weston Charity Award after a rigorous selection process. This award provided a service from the Pilotlight Organisation which entails consultation and advice from senior professionals across private and public organisations. The work is a project for a year with a dedicated Project Manager and 4 'Pilotlighters' who attend a series of meetings with the CEO and Trustees. The purpose is to provide a package of leadership mentoring through expert coaching across the range of operational and strategic aspects of the Charity. The project is in progress but has already provided the Charity with valuable advice and development. In addition the Award included a contribution of £6,500 to unrestricted funds.

Darlington Connect

Our commitment to working with other organisations locally dealing with the negative results of poverty has involved us in the development of Darlington Connect, a multi-agency project in Darlington Town Centre. Still in its infancy, this project promises to have a profound effect on how the agencies can cooperate to tackle the increasing negative effects of poverty in Darlington. Further details are given below. The Board recognises that Tracy Freeman has played a significant role supporting Yvonne Beattie from the 700 Club in the development of this initiative which has had a significant benefit to the Town's approach to the 'Cost of Living' crisis.

Who do we help?

We have an instant access policy and offer appointments with support staff on the same day of presentation or within 24 hours. This is a crucial part of the relationship that we build with people, if they are brave enough to reach out for help, then we must be attentive enough to begin helping as fast as we can.

We support vulnerable people and families who are experiencing severe poverty. Issues such as finances, housing or benefit problems are initially presented by clients but they may frequently hide other issues such as debt, hunger, poor hygiene, anxiety & stress and often relationship troubles. Our support workers use various tools in their work, such as Trauma Informed Care approach and Mindfulness and are skilled in taking a holistic approach with clients to help them feel at ease and gain the confidence needed to discuss difficult issues.

Our clients are often

- cash poor
- struggling to manage on their low income

- struggling to compete for work due to digital exclusion
- experiencing anxiety, stress and other related mental health issues
- under threat of eviction due to arrears or no accommodation of their own
- sofa surfing and have no permanent address
- have poor prospects of obtaining paid employment
- unable to escape out of poor living conditions without financial and legal support.

Our clients may have experienced at least 3 of the following:

at risk of homelessness; low income and/or zero hour contracts; fuel poverty; hunger; socially excluded; poverty; debt; unemployment; mental ill health; mental illness; low self-esteem; lack self-confidence; low or no self-worth; young parents; leaving care as young adults; domestic abuse victims; domestic violence perpetrators; relationship breakdown; self-harm; sexual abuse; survival sex; bereavement; removal of child/children from family home; coping with bereavement; widowed; widower; isolated;

Our services were available in the following formats:

- Pre-booked appointments between 9.30am – 12.30pm – (minimum 6 appointments per day)
- Daily accessed appointments between 1.30pm – 4.30pm – (minimum 6 appointments per day)
- Quarterly 7 week Mindset Mentor Course
- Weekly Gardening Club
- Weekly Walk & Talk sessions
- Daily Digital Inclusion sessions
- Differing activity sessions, such as art, meditation etc.
- Outreach sessions for appointments in the community x 2 sessions per week.

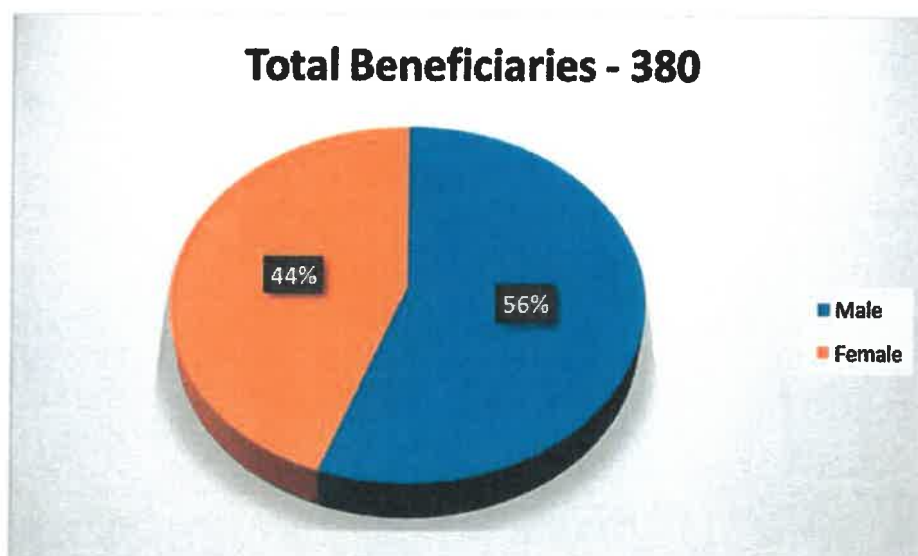
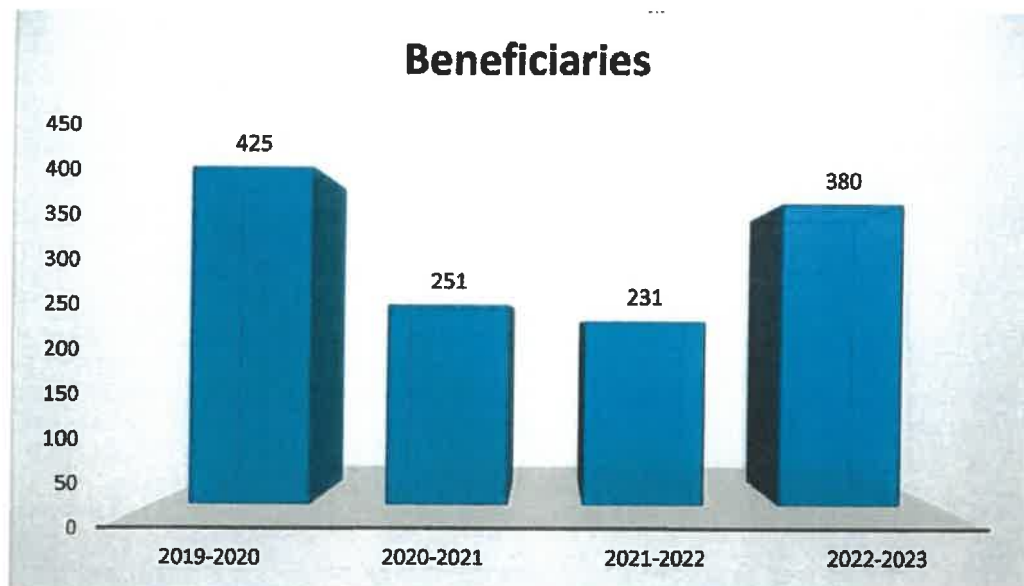
Outputs

In 2022 – 2023 we were privileged to work with and support 380 people:

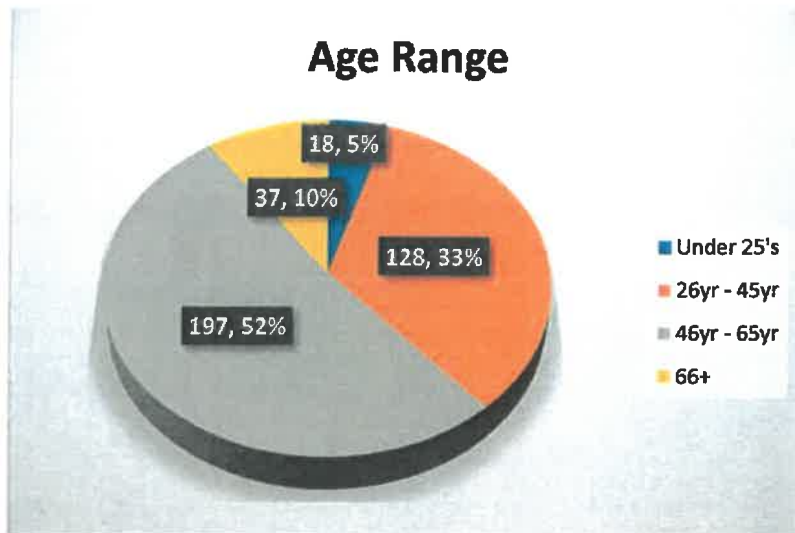
This is a significant increase on 2022 figures. We are seeing a lot more people who are struggling to make ends meet and to pay their bills etc.

There has also been a significant shift in how many women have used the services this year, this bears up the evidence of poverty and bill paying etc. as it is still mainly females who are responsible for organising the household income.

The graph below demonstrates that we are back to the levels of beneficiaries we were seeing prior to Covid, however the needs have changed. In 2019 we were still seeing quite a few people who used us as a care of address and regularly came in to check their post. This number has reduced significantly as we encouraged people to find a safer Covid-19 way to access their post. Our 2023 figures demonstrate an increase in the cost of living work that we have completed on behalf of so many families struggling to pay their basic bills.



We have also experienced a change in the age range of people accessing the services. We have seen more people in the higher age brackets, as shown in the graph below. The largest increase has been in the 46-65 age group, we have supported many people in this age group who have lost their employment and are struggling to find further work due to the changes in the accepted ways of job searching and applications. This is mostly due to the Covid-19 legacy of most applications now being done online. The people who come to us have not had any regular use of digital equipment or know how to apply for work in what is classed as current day expectations. They are also severely struggling to live on benefits when they have been used to wages and living within their means.



Case study – Male, 28

Summary of presenting issues and client's background

The client initially accessed our service due to being issued with an eviction notice from his rented property. The client had lost his job and not told his landlord. He did not know he could claim benefit straight away so is now in arrears and this was why the landlord is evicting him.

Intervention

We completed a holistic assessment to ensure we understood the various issues happening for this client and to agree a course of action that was in his best interest and that the client was comfortable with.

We completed a Darlington Borough Council housing application and have supported him to bid on properties, alongside contacting his landlord to see if we could prevent the eviction if we can put a payment plan in place.

We set him a budget plan to manage his finances and clear some of the debt he had obtained.

We supported the client to complete a CV and helped him to look and apply for jobs.

We supported the client in his engagement with his landlord, explaining the difficulties he had gotten himself into with the arrears. The landlord agreed to a payment plan to clear the arrears over a period of time. We were able to confirm that benefits were now in place and that the client was actively seeking employment.

Outcomes

Landlord removed the eviction notice.

Client successfully obtained a new job, which improved his financial situation.

He also managed to clear all rent arrears that had built up.

Client's self-confidence has improved immensely along with his understanding and skill set regarding personal finances, budgets and tenancy legislation.

Case study – Female 56

Summary of presenting issues and client's background

Client was working at a care home however she was having an operation at James Cook Hospital the following day (to have a brain tumour removed). This meant that her only income would be Statutory Sick

Pay (SSP). Client lived in a property that was still mortgaged and her partner had passed away 9 months before. She had gone from two incomes going into the household to one income of SSP of £99.35 per week alongside grieving for her partner and dealing with her on going health conditions.

Intervention and engagement

We started with a basic benefit check which showed that she was also intitled to £23.08 Bereavements support and spoke about making a Personal Independent Payment (PIP) application due to her current health condition. We contacted and made an appointment with her mortgage provider about a possible mortgage holiday or maybe going interest only for a limited period. She was also getting home assessed by Occupational therapist for grab rails ramps etc but was unsure when they were coming so chased this appointment up and were able to move this forward as her operation had been brought forward due to growth of tumour. We also rang PIP and requested forms to be sent out to the client. I explained to client to gather all medical evidence together so we could complete forms as soon as they arrived.

Outcomes

The requested PIP forms arrived and we supported her in completing them. We also supported the client when she had a telephone assessment with a PIP assessor. The PIP application was successful and she was granted an enhanced amount for daily living and a standard rate for mobility. This meant we could now apply for a blue badge and a mobility bus pass, both of which she was granted. We also ensured that council tax rebate was in place. During this time her SSP had stopped so we made an Employment Support Allowance (ESA) contribution-based benefit and have asked for them to consider the severe disability element (this is still in assessment stage). Alongside all the practical support, we made the client feel safe and welcomed in our project and she was able to talk freely about how her life had changed in the last year. She still must undergo more operations however these cannot be completed until she has healed following her previous operation.

In conclusion we have secured benefits and rebates of £9,549.64 which may rise to £11,660.84 if the severe disability element of ESA is added. As well as emotional and wellbeing support during this difficult phase of her life. This is not taking into account how much her blue badge and bus pass are saving her in parking and journey costs etc.

In what ways have our 380 beneficiaries benefited from our support?

Benefits and Income

217 people gained support with their financial income. All reported an improvement in their household situation through accessing different solutions such as; an increase of, or new benefits; additional support through increments available through our charity and other organisations e.g. utility vouchers, food vouchers, discretionary payments to assist with temporary situations etc.

During 2022-2023 we raised over £800,000 in unclaimed annual benefit for our beneficiaries.

Housing

72 people gained support with their housing issues. 24 of whom moved into new accommodation from their existing home that no longer met their needs. 30 people gained new accommodation with our support, including registering and bidding on Tees Valley Homefinder and other private landlord sites and we guided 18 sofa surfers to access the right pathway into supported accommodation.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

252 people were supported with their mental health and wellbeing, which impacts all areas of our lives. 61% of them report a significant increase in their self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth. They have attended a range of activities and also had support through our information & advice team which has resulted in resolving stressful and difficult situations all of which were causing anxiety and stress.

Additionally, 58 of the group attended our Mindset Mentoring Course and successfully worked on their thoughts, behaviours and actions that have been holding them back from living to their true potential. This group achieved immense milestones and continue to practice self-care and use the tools they were given to continue their progress of change.

Pre-Employment

194 people also used our facilities to gain support to move towards employment or to improve their working options. 111 people improved their communication skill and IT skills through our Digital Inclusion courses and our pre-employment supported job search sessions. All of the people we supported reported an increase in their motivation and aspirations for their futures.

Who do we work alongside?

It is important to acknowledge the work that is undertaken in Darlington by a range of charities who all help to support our work with vulnerable people and provide fantastic services themselves. First Stop works well in partnership, and has links with the following agencies:

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Bike Stop | • Morrison Trust | • 700 Club |
| • Citizens Advice | • DBC Housing Department | • Darlington Credit Union |
| • TV & D YMCA | • DWP | • Human Kind |
| • Darlington Mind | • Darlington Refuge | • Groundwork |
| • Sunday Stop | • St Mary's Food bank | • Kings Church |
| • We Are With You | • Food Banks | |

Outreach in the Community

We support St Mary's Foodbank and Firthmoor Community Centre on a monthly/fortnightly basis depending on staffing compliment.

Darlington Connect

We have been proud to be part of a new connection of charities within the town who came together to look at the Cost of Living Crisis, 700 Club played a lead role in bringing everyone together and this has resulted in a new Sign Posting service that several charities man during the week to ensure the residents of the town know what support is available and can direct / refer people into the varying services.

This began with some Household Fund money from Darlington Borough Council to be distributed to residents during the winter months, which we were collectively able to help over 1,000 people in 6-8weeks. Also highly supportive is the NHS, with funding for mental health support in the community, supporting the rental and refurbishment of a shop in the town centre where we can direct people to the right support in the community they live. This will be fully up and running in the new financial year.

How do we assess outcomes and impacts?

As a board, we strive to monitor the impact our work has on the lives of our clients. Due to the complex nature of the support offered to individuals with very complex problems, this is never easy. Our staff use various techniques to measure how successful their outcomes have been. Outreach clinic sessions and time spent on one to one meetings can be listed but ultimately success will only be measured by the individuals' own stories: those who are able to manage their own finances, those whose self-confidence has grown so that they can look for work, those who are successful in finding and holding down a job, and those who manage to find long term security of housing.

The Board continues to investigate ways of assessing the effectiveness of our methods of delivery and cooperate with the CEO in exploring ways of developing the services offered. All our grant work is collated through our Inform Database and is reported to each funder on the successes and the difficulties that people face in their lives.

We are grateful to our clients for the feedback they supply to the support workers so that we can have an indicator of how the client feels about the support he or she has been offered.

We also value the feedback we receive from our funders and partners, analysis of which helps us improve our offers of support, improve our bid writing skills and ensure we are giving our funders what they need to develop their interaction with the charity and the support they provide.

Staffing Support and Appraisal

Staff are offered regular support and an open-door policy by the CEO; they have opportunities to talk about their work and progress both formally and informally. All staff are able to have input and submit ideas into the running of our services and how they develop. FSD is fortunate to have had minimal staffing restructures for downsizing purposes and we are blessed with a staff team who have been a crucial part of our charity for some years. We do enjoy the energy that new people bring and have welcomed another team member this year to bring Digital Inclusion provision for our clients.

First Stop Thanks

Trustees

Trustee James Fenny has stepped down due to health issues and work commitments. The Board would like to thank James for his dedicated service over the last ten years. His sound advice and practical experience based on his professional and personal attributes has enhanced the Charity over that time which has included many challenges.

We wish James and his family all the best for the future.

Staff

The Trustees of First Stop wish to pay tribute to the dedication and hard work of all members of staff and volunteers who ensured those who need our services and help were able to access support throughout the year. They worked with dedication, professionalism, compassion and their wonderful sense of humour, putting everyone at ease as they worked.

A big welcome to **Paula Prest** who joined us in August as our Digital Inclusion Worker and hit the ground running, setting up lots of different courses for those struggling with IT and its many assorted software suites. We are also excited to have **Elisha McDowell** back with us after leaving to have the beautiful Cena. Elisha is back into the thick of our core services and we are enjoying her return.

Bike Stop Darlington – 2023 Report

Unfortunately, this year marked the end of Bike Stop after 11 years.

A perfect storm meant the shop could no longer remain operational. This included the loss of a contract for supporting cycling/walking from Tees Valley Combined Authority, rising costs, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on retail (particularly the cycling sector) and a total reduction in the income received for supported work placements. The external environment is challenging for any business and especially so for a business that is a not-for-profit social enterprise, trying to train those who are vulnerable in our communities.

The closure of the shop does enable us to reflect on the amazing success we have had over the last eleven years. This is thanks primarily to our brilliant and dedicated staff, volunteers, trainee participants and customers. We also are grateful to our supporters and funders.

Thanks to Bike Stop, in the last 11 years:

- 386 disadvantaged people with mental health and other issues preventing them from gaining employment have gained work experience and training with Bike Stop.
- 15% of these remained with Bike Stop for many months/years, bringing purpose and self-worth, replacing rejection and lack of opportunity in their lives.
- 4 high quality Apprenticeships have been provided - all of which resulted in employment and transformed lives.
- 49 willing and skilled members of the public dedicated over 20,000 voluntary hours to support our trainees and pass on mechanic skills alongside our bicycle mechanic staff. Almost half of those have dedicated many years, with some giving more than 5 years and one amazing volunteer has been with us from the start, his dedication and skills have been exemplary.
- 20 young people have completed their Duke of Edinburgh volunteer hours with us and we have also worked with The Prince's Trust in some of our years.
- 258 members of the public attended maintenance sessions to learn how to look after their own bicycle.
- Over 6,000 people have benefited from a high-quality Maintenance & Repair service - to ensure they are safe on their bike.
- Over 2,600 bicycles have been sold at reasonable prices or given away.
- Over 4,000 bicycles have been saved from landfill.
- We stayed open throughout Covid-19 to continue to support people to exercise and get around safely.
- 32 NHS and key worker staff received free loans of bikes during Covid-19, so they could continue to get to work safely.
- Last year Darlington Roundtable helped us donate 20 bikes to children who might not have got a Christmas present otherwise.

Bike Stop donated a further 11 bicycles through the year to help people reduce their commuting costs and with the help of the Household Fund we were able to support a further 31 people to access a free bicycle for commuting to work and appointments.

In the coming months it is hoped that a legacy project to Bike Stop can be created, focusing on training, workshops and wellbeing. This is because First Stop is committed to providing appropriate and helpful upskilling for those left behind.

The final accounts for Bike Stop will be prepared later this year.

Bike Stop Thanks

Staff & Volunteers

It is difficult to sum up in a few words exactly what Bike Stop staff and volunteers brought to the enterprise. There was no end to their passion, enthusiasm, patience and product knowledge. Many friends were made, and many cyclists supported to be on the road and enjoying the freedom of their bicycle. Most importantly it is their dedication to training and developing all the people, young and old, who came through the doors looking for a place to belong and be understood. The achievements above are a testament to each and every one of them past and present.

The Board and CEO thank you and wish you the very best for your futures.

Financial review

a. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

b. Reserves policy

The Trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy that the Charity's unrestricted funds, not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets and that are cash-backed, should be adequate to cover foreseeable shortfalls in income for a sufficient period to enable the Trustees to take corrective action. At 31 March 2023, the Trustees have calculated the reserves level required to be £96,000 in light of the increased level of project expenditure planned in 2023/24, ensuring we have 6 months reserves. The management committee will continue to keep this policy, and the reserves level under review. At 31 March 2023 the actual level of free reserves is £64,897 equalling 4 months reserves. (2022: £80,000).

c. Financial review

The Statement of Financial Activities on pages 15 - 16 and the Balance Sheet on pages 17 – 18 show a healthy financial position, the main features of which are:

Unrestricted reserves of £232,277 which includes the building, restricted reserves as at 31 March 2023 are £nil.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
First Stop Darlington

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of First Stop Darlington ('the Company')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by Section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



L Harris Bsc (Hons), FCCA

Mitchell Gordon LLP
43 Coniscliffe Road
Darlington
Co. Durham
DL3 7EH

Date: 29 August 2023

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Statement of Financial Activities **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	31/3/23 Total funds £	31/3/22 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies		3,309	-	3,309	7,072
Charitable activities					
Ballinger Trust		-	20,000	20,000	-
Amazon		2,720	-	2,720	2,279
Barratt Charity Foundation		-	-	-	1,000
Big Lottery Wellbeing Fund		-	80,197	80,197	-
County Durham Community Fund		-	5,000	5,000	-
Garfield Weston Foundation		-	16,667	16,667	-
Lloyds Bank Foundation		-	-	-	32,220
Joy Welch fund		-	-	-	5,000
TEWV Resilience fund		-	6,686	6,686	5,773
Watson Hope fund		-	20,001	20,001	6,666
CDCF COL fund		-	2,477	2,477	-
Garfield Weston Pilotlight		-	618	618	-
Harrison Foundation		-	21,049	21,049	-
Health Improvement fund		-	8,560	8,560	-
Hadrian Trust		1,000	-	1,000	-
Other trading activities	3	7,420	-	7,420	18,893
Investment income	4	640	-	640	124
Total		15,089	181,255	196,344	79,027
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		1,064	-	1,064	135
Charitable activities					
Big Lottery		-	-	-	27,448
Ballinger Trust		-	20,000	20,000	20,000
Amazon		2,720	-	2,720	2,279
Big Lottery Wellbeing Fund		-	80,197	80,197	-
County Durham Community Fund		-	5,000	5,000	-
Garfield Weston Foundation		-	16,667	16,667	11,374
Lloyds Bank Foundation		-	-	-	37,959
General activities		34,038	-	34,038	32,953
Joy Welch fund		-	-	-	5,000
TEWV Resilience fund		-	6,686	6,686	5,773
Watson Hope fund		-	20,001	20,001	6,666
CDCF COL fund		-	2,477	2,477	-
Garfield Weston Pilotlight		-	618	618	-
Harrison Foundation		-	21,049	21,049	-
Health Improvement fund		-	8,560	8,560	-
Total		37,822	181,255	219,077	149,587

The notes form part of these financial statements

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON**Statement of Financial Activities**
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	31/3/23 Total funds £	31/3/22 Total funds £
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(22,733)	-	(22,733)	(70,560)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		255,010	-	255,010	325,570
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>232,277</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>232,277</u>	<u>255,010</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Balance Sheet **31 March 2023**

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	31/3/23 Total funds £	31/3/22 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	10	168,712	-	168,712	166,916
Investments	11	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
		168,713	-	168,713	166,917
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	12	11,114	-	11,114	2,266
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>134,941</u>	<u>72,866</u>	<u>207,807</u>	<u>196,595</u>
		146,055	72,866	218,921	198,861
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	13	(13,706)	(72,866)	(86,572)	(37,258)
		<u>132,349</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>132,349</u>	<u>161,603</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS					
		301,062	-	301,062	328,520
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES					
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due after more than one year	14	(68,785)	-	(68,785)	(73,510)
		<u>232,277</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>232,277</u>	<u>255,010</u>
NET ASSETS					
FUNDS	17				
Unrestricted funds				<u>232,277</u>	<u>255,010</u>
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>232,277</u>	<u>255,010</u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

The notes form part of these financial statements

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Balance Sheet - continued

31 March 2023

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 29 August 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:

WJ Kilgour
.....
William John Kilgour - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

1. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

Unrestricted Funds:

General - The free funds of the charity which are available for the general work of the charity at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted Funds:

These funds relate to grants and donations received for specific purposes as follows:

The Ballinger Charitable Trust - 1 year funding of £20,000 from April 2022 - March 2023 funding is for Core services.

The National Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities Fund - A 2-year pilot project from April 2022 - March 2024 for the introduction of a Mental Health Support Worker and the delivery of a Mindset Mentor programme to research the benefits of this approach to people who are stuck and unable to move forward in their lives.

Garfield Weston - 1 year core funding to support the charity in supporting those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and those who are marginalised in our community. This fund is for £25,000 and runs from July 2022 to June 2023.

Watson Hope Foundation - This is a new foundation that kindly donated £20,000 per year for 3 years (2021-2024) The grant is for core funding and given due to the work and dedication of the charity in supporting people out of their worst circumstances, with opportunities, a gain of confidence and self-belief.

Tees Esk & Wear Valley NHS Trust - £9,646 for 1 year funding to deliver support and activities to those experiencing anxiety, stress and depression in addition to the cost of living crisis.

County Durham Community Foundation - £5,000 core cost funding March 2022 - February 2023 to support the core work of the charity.

County Durham Community Foundation - Poverty Hurts Fund - £9,906 to provide support to those struggling in the Cost of Living Crisis, providing help and support to maximise the income of the households of the people we are supporting.

NHS - Health Improvement Fund - £17,119 to provide mental health wellbeing services and activities between October 2022 - September 2023 to improve their overall wellbeing and improve their self-confidence and self-worth.

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable 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 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of investments which are included at market value.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the Charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Freehold property	- not provided
Fixtures and fittings	- 33% on cost and 20% on cost
Computer equipment	- 33% on cost

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

3. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Fundraising events	4,480	7,920
Management charges income	-	9,750
Covid job retention scheme	-	1,223
Room hire	<u>2,940</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>7,420</u>	<u>18,893</u>

4. INVESTMENT INCOME

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>640</u>	<u>124</u>

5. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Depreciation - owned assets	<u>1,260</u>	<u>759</u>

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

6. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

During the year, no Trustees received any remuneration or other benefits (2022 - £nil).

Trustees' expenses

During the year, no Trustee expenses were incurred (2022 - £nil).

7. STAFF COSTS

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	31/3/23	31/3/22
Charitable services	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000.

8. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	7,072	-	7,072
Charitable activities			
Amazon	2,279	-	2,279
Barratt Charity Foundation	1,000	-	1,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	32,220	32,220
Joy Welch fund	5,000	-	5,000
TEWV Resilience fund	-	5,773	5,773
Watson Hope fund	-	6,666	6,666
Other trading activities	18,893	-	18,893
Investment income	<u>124</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>124</u>
Total	<u>34,368</u>	<u>44,659</u>	<u>79,027</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds	135	-	135
Charitable activities			
Big Lottery	-	27,448	27,448
Ballinger Trust	-	20,000	20,000
Amazon	2,279	-	2,279
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	11,374	11,374
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	37,959	37,959
General activities	32,953	-	32,953
Joy Welch fund	5,000	-	5,000
TEWV Resilience fund	-	5,773	5,773
Watson Hope fund	<u>-</u>	<u>6,666</u>	<u>6,666</u>
Total	<u>40,367</u>	<u>109,220</u>	<u>149,587</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	(5,999)	(64,561)	(70,560)

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

8. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - continued			
	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	261,009	64,561	325,570
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>255,010</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>255,010</u>

9. INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REMUNERATION

Fees payable to the Charity's independent examination of the Charity's annual accounts £1,440 (2022: £1,440).

10. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Freehold property £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1 April 2022	165,000	10,263	13,535	188,798
Additions	-	150	3,056	3,206
Disposals	-	(187)	-	(187)
At 31 March 2023	<u>165,000</u>	<u>10,226</u>	<u>16,591</u>	<u>191,817</u>
DEPRECIATION				
At 1 April 2022	-	9,274	12,608	21,882
Charge for year	-	242	1,019	1,261
Eliminated on disposal	-	(38)	-	(38)
At 31 March 2023	-	<u>9,478</u>	<u>13,627</u>	<u>23,105</u>
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31 March 2023	<u>165,000</u>	<u>748</u>	<u>2,964</u>	<u>168,712</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u>165,000</u>	<u>989</u>	<u>927</u>	<u>166,916</u>

Included in cost or valuation of land and buildings is freehold land of £165,000 which is not depreciated.

The directors believe that there was no material change in the property value therefore no depreciation has been provided. This is due to the maintenance and upkeep of the building.

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

11. FIXED ASSET INVESTMENTS

	Unlisted investments £
MARKET VALUE	
At 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	<u>1</u>
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2023	<u>1</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u>1</u>

There were no investment assets outside the UK.

12. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Trade debtors	14	-
Other debtors	1,150	800
Prepayments	<u>9,950</u>	<u>1,466</u>
	<u>11,114</u>	<u>2,266</u>

13. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Bank loans and overdrafts (see note 15)	4,711	4,427
Trade creditors	3,771	890
Social security and other taxes	2,569	2,352
Pension creditor	661	535
Other creditors	28	-
Deferred income	72,866	27,342
Accrued expenses	<u>1,966</u>	<u>1,712</u>
	<u>86,572</u>	<u>37,258</u>

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

	31/3/23	31/3/22
	£	£
Bank loans (see note 15)	<u>68,785</u>	<u>73,510</u>

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

15. LOANS

An analysis of the maturity of loans is given below:

	31/3/23 £	31/3/22 £
Amounts falling due within one year on demand:		
Bank loans	<u>4,711</u>	<u>4,427</u>
Amounts falling due between two and five years:		
Bank loans - 1-5 years	<u>22,266</u>	<u>20,864</u>
Amounts falling due in more than five years:		
Repayable by instalments:		
Bank loans more than 5 years	46,519	52,646

16. SECURED DEBTS

The following secured debts are included within creditors:

	31/3/23 £	31/3/22 £
Bank loans	<u>73,496</u>	<u>77,937</u>

The above debt is secured against the building owned by the company.

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1/4/22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/3/23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	255,010	(22,733)	232,277
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>255,010</u>	<u>(22,733)</u>	<u>232,277</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	15,090	(37,823)	(22,733)
Restricted funds			
Restricted	181,254	(181,254)	-
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>196,344</u>	<u>(219,077)</u>	<u>(22,733)</u>

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1/4/21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/3/22 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	261,009	(5,999)	255,010
Restricted funds			
Restricted	64,561	(64,561)	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>325,570</u>	<u>(70,560)</u>	<u>255,010</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	34,368	(40,367)	(5,999)
Restricted funds			
Restricted	44,659	(109,220)	(64,561)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>79,027</u>	<u>(149,587)</u>	<u>(70,560)</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1/4/21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/3/23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	261,009	(28,732)	232,277
Restricted funds			
Restricted	64,561	(64,561)	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>325,570</u>	<u>(93,293)</u>	<u>232,277</u>

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	49,458	(78,190)	(28,732)
Restricted funds			
Restricted	225,913	(290,474)	(64,561)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>275,371</u>	<u>(368,664)</u>	<u>(93,293)</u>

18. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Owing to the nature of the Charity's operations and the composition of the Board of Trustees being drawn from local public and private sector organisations, transactions may take place with organisations in which the Charity has an interest. All transactions involving such organisations are conducted at arm's length.

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON**Detailed Statement of Financial Activities**
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	31/3/23 £	31/3/22 £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS		
Donations and legacies		
Donations	3,309	7,072
Other trading activities		
Fundraising events	4,480	7,920
Management charges income	-	9,750
Covid job retention scheme	-	1,223
Room hire	<u>2,940</u>	<u>-</u>
	7,420	18,893
Investment income		
Deposit account interest	640	124
Charitable activities		
Charitable activities	<u>184,975</u>	<u>52,938</u>
Total incoming resources	196,344	79,027
EXPENDITURE		
Raising donations and legacies		
Fundraising expenses	1,064	135
Charitable activities		
Wages	134,904	104,610
Social security	6,133	4,899
Pensions	2,800	2,305
Insurance	1,525	1,786
Light and heat	2,004	2,292
Advertising	565	486
Other fees	4,508	(511)
IT costs	6,847	7,611
Governance costs	210	278
Premises costs	3,588	4,443
Client Welfare	35,320	3,861
Administration costs	8,573	5,591
Other staff costs	1,245	722
Training costs	3,600	-
Fixtures and fittings	242	191
Computer equipment	1,019	568
Mortgage	<u>4,930</u>	<u>5,243</u>
	218,013	144,375
Support costs		
Other		
Intercompany debt w/off	-	5,077

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

FIRST STOP DARLINGTON

Detailed Statement of Financial Activities
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	<u>31/3/23</u>	<u>31/3/22</u>
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Total resources expended	<u>219,077</u>	<u>149,587</u>
Net expenditure	<u>(22,733)</u>	<u>(70,560)</u>

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements