



IMPACT REPORT 2023/2024

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF OFFICER



As we look back on 2023/2024, I feel an overwhelming sense of pride and gratitude for all we have achieved together at Stepping Stones NI. This year has been one of celebration, collaboration, resilience, and significant progress towards creating a more inclusive society where people with disabilities have access to meaningful opportunities. **This year we celebrated 25 years of Stepping Stones NI and we are so grateful for all the support and love we have received!**

Thanks to our first year of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), we were able to commence our service delivery through Prosper working as a consortium with 4 other organisation's across Northern Ireland. This funding has provided a strong foundation for us to expand our reach, deepen our impact, and work closely with employers to highlight the immense potential of a more inclusive workforce whilst reducing economic inactivity.

Our partnerships with Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) through Councils have been another important focus this year. These collaborations have allowed us to deliver tailored initiatives that connect individuals with disabilities to local employment opportunities while addressing the specific needs of employers. By working together, we've helped to break down barriers and open doors for those who are often furthest removed from the labour market. At a time when businesses are facing challenges in finding talent, we've been proud to showcase the value and contributions that people with disabilities can bring to workplaces across all sectors.

These successes would not have been possible without the trust and commitment of our funders, partners, and the incredible employers who share our vision of inclusion, thank you so much. I want to take a moment to recognise the heart of our organisation: our trainees and clients. Your courage, determination, and achievements inspire us every day and remind us of the importance of our mission. Also to our fantastic staff team for your unwavering passion and belief in the work that we do that changes lives everyday.

Looking ahead, there is still much to do, but we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. With the continued support of UKSPF, our collaborations through LMPs, and the growing recognition of the importance of inclusion, and our love of social enterprise I am confident we are building a brighter future for everyone who engages with us. **WE LOVE WHAT WE DO.** Thank you for being part on our our stones on our Stepping Stones NI path, together, we will continue to create pathways to success for people with disabilities and build a society where everyone has the chance to thrive.

Paula Jennings
Chief Officer



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

Services

During 2023/24 our services continued to thrive with continued support from new funders, employers and stakeholders. We continued to deliver and build on our quality services that support people with barriers to learning and employment to develop new skills, qualifications and employment.

Our 'BE IN Work' employment academies funded through Prosper supported 112 people into employment with participants gaining 293 accredited qualifications. The Employment Service delivered its services under the UK Shared Prosperity funded, PROSPER programme.

This was the first year of funding from UKSPF as we transitioned from European Social Fund working in partnership with 4 other organisation's across Northern Ireland.

We also secured the contracts for two new Labour Market Partnerships with Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council with excellent results.

The Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council LMP supported 24 people with 23 achieving qualifications and 9 gaining paid employment. The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council LMP resulted in 57 people recruited onto the programme with 49 completing and 22 people into paid employment.

Our training service reached 185 participants working with business partners through bespoke academies and community groups throughout Northern Ireland, delivering 359 qualifications in total.

"The employment academy got me back into employment again...and gave me hope again"

Employment Service Participant

Youth Service

Our Youth Service directly supported 17 young people aged 16-24 delivering 39 qualifications with 8 young people progressing to further education and training, 7 supported into work placements and 3 young people achieving paid employment.

Social Enterprises

79 people with a learning disability engaged in training and activities through our six Social Enterprises.

Our first cohort of 5 young people commenced the OCNNI Level 1 in Horticulture at Navigation House. We also started trading activity at Navigation House this year. We opened our garden shop to the public, released horticulture workshops and opened the site for room hire and event bookings.

We also rolled out a well-being programme that included Yoga, exercise classes, mindfulness and outdoor physical activities including walking and cycling groups for people with a disability.

Living Life Loving Life and ASDAN

This programme supported 24 people with learning disabilities to improve their social skills, communication, employability and confidence through fun relevant activities. Participants also had the opportunity to gain accredited qualifications in everyday life topics such as, independent travel, basic money management and the world around us.

Stepping Stones NI Football Team

10 football enthusiasts engage in weekly training that brings together physical activity and essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. The team took part in a number of tournaments including the George Best Community Cup.

"The Youth Service is very supportive and helps guide you to your dreams"

Youth Service Participant





IMPACT

143

People with barriers to learning or employment supported by us into paid employment.

79

People with a learning disability supported through our social enterprises across the organisation.

482

Referrals to our employment service from people seeking support to skill up and gain paid employment through our funded programmes.

359

Accredited qualifications achieved by participants on our employment service.

IMPACT



25

Young people aged 16-24 benefited from mentoring, support and activities on our youth service.

39

Accredited qualifications were achieved by our young people through the youth service.

8

Young people 16-24 were supported to move on to further education and training.

3

Young people 16-24 were supported to gain paid employment.



SATISFACTION RATES

100%

Parent / Carer Satisfaction Rate

95%

Participant Satisfaction Rate

98%

Employee Satisfaction Rate

98%

Staff Satisfaction Rate

“Thank you for the commitment and for getting us good people who want to work!”

Employer Partner

“I feel more comfortable interacting with people which is the greatest skill I learned, it will make my life easier if I know how to effectively communicate with others”

Academy Participant

FINANCE

TOTAL INCOME
GENERATED

£2,074,894

TRADING
ACTIVITIES

£474,735

CHARITABLE
ACTIVITIES

£,1575,312

FUNDERS

With special thanks to our funders, employers, customers ,those who choose to support us, showed us kindness and who believed in our vision and plans to make a positive impact on the lives of people with learning disabilities and barriers to employment and learning.



Funded by
UK Government

**LEVELLING
UP**



South Eastern Health
and Social Care Trust



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council

LCCC
Lisburn &
Castlereagh
City Council

LISBURN AND
CASTLEREAGH
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



ARMAGH BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



Department for
Communities

An Roinn
Pobal

Department for
Communities

The
Rank Foundation
a pebble in the pond

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