



Angels Support Group Hitchin

Charity No: 1117059

Trustees' Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

Trustees

Clare Slater
Oluwakemi Adejare
Hilary Forrester
Rowena Crabtree
Nicola Ager
Tammy Smith
Helen Osment
Kyle Webster

May 2025

Trustees' Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity

for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	Charitable Objects.....	3
1.2	Overview (Executive Summary)	3
2.	Activities & Achievements	4
2.1	Outputs & Outcomes	4
2.2	The Roles & Contributions of Volunteers	7
2.3	Looking Ahead.....	8
3.	Financial Review.....	8
3.1	Financial Position	8
3.2	Details of Any Funds Materially in Deficit.....	8
3.3	Policy on Reserves.....	8
3.3	Principal Sources of Funding.....	9
3.4	Remuneration of Trustees	11
4.	Reference and Administration Details.....	11
4.1	Charity Name & Registration	11
4.2	Charity's Principal Address.....	11
4.3	Names of the Trustees Who Manage the Charity.....	11
4.4	Names of Advisors & Senior Members of Staff.....	12
4.5	Bank.....	12
4.6	Independent Examiner	12
5.	Structure, Governance & Management.....	12
5.1	Type of Governing Document	12
5.2	Statutory Declaration	12
5.3	Trustee Selection Methods	12

Trustees' Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 Charitable Objects

- Provide support and guidance to parents/carers/siblings of children who are diagnosed with (or are being assessed for) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Autism and their associated conditions.
- Provide relief for the above children and their parents/carers by providing facilities in the interest of social welfare and for recreation and other leisure time occupation.
- Advance the education of the public and statutory bodies in matters related to ADHD and Autism.
- Promote other such charitable purpose as determined by the charity.

1.2 Overview (Executive Summary)

During the year from 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2024 the membership of the charity has increased by 466 families. On 31st Aug 2024 we had 3,292 families in our membership with at least 6,575 children including siblings. 3,667 of the children have a diagnosis of (or are being assessed for) ADHD and/or Autism (2,055 have a diagnosis of ADHD, 2,914 of Autism, 1,302 have a dual diagnosis of Autism and ADHD).

Throughout the year 320 parents/carers attended one or more of the support groups (a mixture of virtual and in-person meetings). Some members attended very regularly (over 30 times during the year) and some for just one or two meetings. On average they attended 2.8 meetings each this year with 70% of attendances at virtual meetings and 30% at in-person meetings.

In addition to our regular support groups, we have also run several workshops on the topic of EHCP application forms. These workshops provide more in-depth information in smaller groups. 68 parents/carers have accessed support through these smaller groups this year. We also ran an evening workshop on the topic of Autism and Anxiety which 52 parents/carers attended.

422 families used the one-to-one service during the year. They accessed support in a variety of ways with the service providing: 283 hours of face-to-face (or video call) meetings, 210 hours of support at meetings with other professionals (school, Health Visitor, multi-agency meetings etc.), 204 hours of support via phone/email and 29 hours of support through text/Facebook Messenger.

We also jointly delivered, with Letchworth Family Support Team, another small group course for 6 parents from Letchworth who were at the start of the process of having their child assessed for Autism or ADHD or whose children have had a recent diagnosis. We are planning to continue these courses in the year ahead.

2. Activities & Achievements

2.1 Outputs & Outcomes

More detail about our main outputs

Access to our services

All our services are available to anyone who is a member of the charity. Membership is subject to only one criterion and that is that the member must be a parent/carer of a child who has been diagnosed with (or is being assessed for) Autism/ADHD.

There is no membership fee and no charge for attending any of our services. We give attendees the opportunity to make a small voluntary donation if they would like to but there is no pressure to do so. This ensures that all members can benefit regardless of income levels.

There is no geographical restriction imposed by the charity. The virtual meetings via Zoom have made it easier for members to attend regardless of their location. During the pandemic we saw an increase in the number of new members who are from a wider geographic area than the North Herts and Stevenage community, as our services became more accessible online, and this has continued with our hybrid way of delivering services. We now have members throughout Hertfordshire and also in Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Greater London.

Most of the meetings are during the day as this enables parents/carers to attend while their children are at school. We have continued to offer some virtual meetings as these are accessible for those parents who have young children at home or older children that are currently out of school. Evening meetings (all virtual) are held every half term to enable those who work during the day to attend.

Regular support group meetings

Throughout the year we held two daytime meetings for parents/carers each week during term time and two evening drop-in sessions every half term. Some of the meetings provided advice from external professionals or Angels staff on a range of topics related to Autism and ADHD. The other sessions were self-help groups with a qualified facilitator present. We continued with the model of one face-to-face meeting each week in Stevenage and one virtual meeting each week with the evening meetings also remaining virtual to enable a greater range of parents to access our support. In addition, this year we also ran a monthly face-to-face support group in Letchworth providing continuing support for those who had accessed the small group courses.

These meetings benefit the members of the charity in several ways:

- They provide the opportunity to find out about new strategies and ideas which attendees can use to support their children. This can help parents/carers to adapt their parenting skills to ease the stress and anxiety of children with Autism/ADHD.
- Having the opportunity to discuss issues in self-help groups with people with similar concerns helps to relieve parents/carers from some of the stresses and feelings of isolation that can result.
- They help parents/carers to feel confident in supporting their child in the education system which in turn helps the child to reach their potential.
- They help parents/carers and their children to have a more positive self-image following diagnosis.

One-to-One Clinic meetings

Angels provided several clinic appointments each week during the school terms. These offered members the opportunity to access more targeted, specific support where needed. The appointments allowed members the time to discuss particular issues related to their child on a one-to-one basis with a trained Specialist Support Practitioner (SSP). They also provided the facility for a SSP to attend a school meeting or other appointment to provide support for the parent/carer. This year we have continued to offer remote appointments using a variety of applications e.g. Zoom, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp alongside in-person meetings to support at meetings with professionals or if it was essential due to the specific needs of the parent. We have also continued to offer shorter one-to-one appointments via a 15-minute phone consultation to help meet the increased demand for the service.

The clinic appointments provide the same benefits to the members as the support group meetings but are just more flexible. They allow members, who do not feel comfortable discussing issues in a group setting, access to support and provide a more suitable time for issues which are too complex and would take up too much time in a group meeting.

The service has been popular, and the number of appointments limited because of funding restrictions so there has often been a waiting list in place.

Parent Support via phone, email and Facebook

In addition to the one-to-one clinic appointments, members have also accessed advice and support from the SSP's remotely via phone, email or Facebook Messenger. This support was available during term time and a limited service was also available over the school holidays. There was also a "secret" Facebook group which was available only to members and allowed them to discuss issues and get advice from other parents as well as the SSPs. This online group was fully moderated by the SSPs and enabled parents to access support at a time that suits them.

This support provides the same benefits to the members as the support group meetings but just in a more flexible, virtual way. It allows members, who do not feel comfortable discussing issues in a group setting or face-to-face, access to support and provides support to parents who can not attend the support groups due to their location or timing.

Letchworth small group courses

We continued working in partnership with Letchworth Family Support Team to deliver small group courses for parents from Letchworth who are at the start of the process of having their child assessed for Autism or ADHD or whose children have had a recent diagnosis. The project took the form of a set of five workshop sessions for small groups of parents (maximum 5-6) who had previously found it very hard to attend larger groups. The workshops covered basic understanding of the conditions and how they impact the child, understanding of the child's rights and how to work positively with professionals to secure access to services for the children, including education and health. Due to the small groups the content could be tailored to meet the needs of the parents present, including adjusting for their own learning needs. The idea was to give families a good understanding of how to support their children at the beginning of their journey. Following on from the four sets of workshops we ran during 2023, we continued with a further set of workshops during 2024. During the 2024 workshops the feedback was very positive; All the parent/carers made progress against at least 2 of our measured outcomes and 33% made progress against all 4 outcomes. The project has been funded by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

Holiday Activity Sessions

We ran a limited number of holiday activities this year during the October 2023 half term which included:

Trampolining sessions.

Pottery Painting at Greenside Studios.

The benefits of these sessions were as follows:

- It allowed children with Autism/ADHD to take part in a holiday social and learning activity. Often children with these conditions find it difficult to access these sorts of activities through universal services.
- The siblings (without the conditions) could also take part. As well as enabling them to take part in a fun activity this also provided them with an opportunity to see other families and gain a better understanding of their brother/sister's condition and the fact that there are many other families like theirs.
- It provided an opportunity for informal support to parents/carers who have not been able to attend the regular support group meetings.

The activities were open to any children of the members. There were age restrictions for some of the activities, but these were varied to ensure that all children could access something. Spaces were limited to ensure that the sessions were not crowded but places were allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Networking with various organisations

The Parent Support Manager and other team members regularly meet with local statutory agencies such as health professionals (GP's, Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists, CAMHS workers and Community Paediatricians and their teams) working with children with ADHD and Autism, the Herts County Council Communication and Autism Specialist Advisory service, Herts Children Services social workers, Family Support Worker teams, Family Centre Managers, local school SENCO's and Outreach workers, the Herts Parent Carer Forum and other agencies supporting parents and representatives from other similar support groups supporting parents/carers of children with ADHD and/or Autism from across Hertfordshire, as a way of pooling resources and avoiding duplication of effort. The Parent Support Manager has also been involved in work to develop the Autism and ADHD diagnostic pathway in Hertfordshire, in partnership with NHS and County Council colleagues, and also to develop a county-wide support offer for all families and young people diagnosed with the conditions. We are starting to build working relationships with services in Central Bedfordshire as well.

The benefits of this are as follows:

- It enables the Parent Support Manager and other team members to keep up to date with the available support for children/families and ways of accessing it. They can then pass this information on to members as required.
- It ensures that local statutory services are kept aware of the needs of children with Autism/ADHD and their families.
- It ensures that health professionals in the area are aware of the charity and the support provided and so will pass on the details of the charity to families with a newly diagnosed child.
- It enables them to talk directly to teaching professionals which helps improve understanding of the conditions within local schools.

The beneficiaries include our member families as they can access the information through support group meetings. The benefit of this activity also extends beyond our membership as consultation with local teaching professionals/ statutory services can help to improve services for all children with Autism/ADHD in the local area not just those who are members of the charity.

Outcomes

In order to be able to measure the benefits to our members, of accessing Angels services, we have implemented a ladder scale for 4 outcomes that we have identified as important to our members. The four outcomes are:

- Parents will have a greater understanding of their child's conditions and how they impact on their child's learning and behaviour.
- Parents will have improved confidence in their parenting skills having gained a wider range of strategies to support their child.
- Parents feel less isolated, with a network of local parents to talk to who understand the issues they are facing.
- Parents are working more effectively with their child's school, services and community resulting in a positive experience for their child.

Since October 2016, on joining Angels, we have asked members to complete an initial questionnaire to find out how they rated themselves on the scales for each of the four outcomes. 6 months later we asked them to redo the questionnaire and have captured the improvements they have made.

In recent years, for members joining after October 2019, we have gathered initial and follow-up questionnaires for 739 members. Parents join us for a wide range of differing reasons and have differing needs, therefore some of the outcomes we measure may not be relevant to all, but when looking at the outcome data overall; 84% of members made progress against at least one target outcome, 65% made progress against more than one outcome and 14% made progress across all the outcomes. Improvements for individual outcomes have been as follows:

- 56% have improved their understanding of their child's conditions.
- 57% have improved confidence in their parenting skills.
- 46% have reported feeling less isolated.
- 40% have reported that they are working more effectively with their child's school and other services.

2.2 The Roles & Contributions of Volunteers

Although the charity employs several staff it is still very dependent on the contribution made by volunteers. There is a loyal team of volunteer members working hard in all the following areas:

Completing various administrative tasks.

Fundraising and Funding Applications.

Promoting our services within the local community.

Planning and overseeing services through being on our Board of Trustees.

The Trustees would like to thank all our volunteers for their hard work without which we would not be able to provide the same level of service.

2.3 Looking Ahead

As we have continued to grow our membership and adapt our services in the aftermath of the pandemic, we have found more effective ways of working to enable us to support more parents.

We have continued with our weekly online meetings on Zoom, but have added in more face-to-face meetings, including a new monthly group in Letchworth and a new venue for our weekly meeting in Stevenage. We have seen numbers of parents attending all our meetings increase.

Our one-to-one service has seen increased demand and by supporting parents mainly via Zoom or phone we have been able to support higher numbers of parents. We have worked with different models for our service, offering one-hour, or 15-minute appointments and then regular contact through Zoom or phone for those parents who need ongoing support. We are developing a localised model where a member of staff is based in one particular area, supporting families from that area, and are trialling this in Letchworth with a grant from the LGCHF. We hope that having one dedicated member of staff will give greater consistency for parents and offer the chance to build strong relationships with local parents and other stakeholders such as schools. If this proves successful, we will investigate funding to do this in other areas.

We have developed a suite of podcasts – short 20–30-minute information chats on issues of interest to parents of neurodivergent children, that aim to provide key information on a given topic that is accessible and can be listened to by parents at any time. These are available free for the general public through our website and on Apple and Spotify under the name Neurodiversity Chats.

We have begun working with ADD-Vance to trial delivering one-to-one support for parents who call the Herts Neurodiversity Helpline, that they run, and are looking to develop this partnership working in future.

3. Financial Review

3.1 Financial Position

The charity is in a good financial position at the end of August 2024 with actual reserves of £74,703 which is above our planned reserve level of £52,368.

Our main funding from The National Lottery Community Fund will stop in November 2024 so we are currently applying to several funding streams to replace this core funding as well as continuing with project-specific funding applications. Our Marketing and Fundraising Assistant has continued to grow the income from community, corporate and individual donations which was up to £30,593 in this financial year. We plan to use the surplus reserves (the £22,335 we are holding above our planned reserve level) to cover any gaps in funding next year while we work to secure alternative grants.

We are incredibly grateful to all the funders, community organisations, companies and individuals including our members, their families and friends who have supported us during the year and allowed us to adapt and continue the services we provide to our members. Thank you.

3.2 Details of Any Funds Materially in Deficit

The Charity has no funds which are materially in deficit.

3.3 Policy on Reserves

The Trustees have decided that the charity needs to hold reserves to cover the possibility of a grant being cut short or not renewed. Holding reserves will allow the Trustees time to find alternative sources of funding without having to make immediate redundancies. It was agreed that holding 6 months of payroll and 6 months of rent costs would allow enough time for alternative funding to be found or cutbacks in expenditure to be planned and implemented.

This gives a planned reserve of £52,368 based on 6 months of budgeted salary and 6 months of budgeted rent costs (as of December 2024).

The actual reserves held at the end of this financial year were £74,703. This is higher than the planned reserve due to the large legacy gift of £36,000 which was received in July 2021. When the National Lottery Community funding ceases in November 2024 this will mean a drop in grant income of £47,105. Until we have secured replacement core cost funding the additional reserves will be held as a contingency to cover any gaps in funding and enable the services to continue at the current level.

3.3 Principal Sources of Funding

Grants

The main grant funding we received this year was £47,105 from The National Lottery Community Fund, the fifth year of the five-year continuation funding which started in November 2019. This covered most of the main staff costs related to our support groups, some of our one-to-one staff time and most of our overheads.

The remaining one-to-one service costs were covered by £1,930 of funding from Herts County Councillors from their Locality Budgets either carried forward from the previous year or granted this year: Fiona Hill, Steve Jarvis, Tina Bhartwas and Graham Lawrance. We also received a grant of £10,000 from Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) in November 2023 which covered £8,710 of one-to-one costs for this year. Throughout the year we also received £9,476 of Tesco Community Grants from Potters Bar, Cheshunt, Cuffley, Hertford, Ware, Baldock, Stotfold, Letchworth, Cheshunt, St Albans and Royston stores which funded £6,525 of one-to-one costs this year.

We also used funding of £1,865 carried forward from the previous year, from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) to continue with a joint project with the Letchworth Family Support Team to develop and deliver a programme of workshops for families in Letchworth who have not yet been able to access our services, to build up their confidence and knowledge, so they can support their children and feel able to access our services going forward. In December 2023 we also received a further grant of £7,621 from LGCHF to continue running the workshops, run a monthly support group and to cover some of the one-to-one costs for Letchworth families.

We carried forward funding of £2,186 from Beds and Luton Community Foundation from a grant made last year which helped to support the costs of running the support groups during the year. In November 2023 we also received a grant of £2,736 from Co-op Local Community fund which also covered support group costs during the year.

In May 2024 we received a grant of £5,000 from the Masonic Charitable Foundation which is the first instalment of a three-year grant of £15,000 to put towards our core cost funding.

At the end of the year, we received £980 from Add-Vance as a first instalment of a secondment fee for one of our Specialist Support Practitioners to provide a one-to-one service for referrals from the Neurodiversity hub phone line that they are running. This is a pilot project running until March 2025 when we will hopefully be able to apply for longer term funding to run this.

We also received funding from Herts County Council - £1,721 to cover the cost of another of our team to do the NHS peer support training which is training to help support Neurodivergent parents/carers using our services.

Donations and Support

In September 2023, Matt Crabtree celebrated 20 years of his business Positive Momentum by cycling 160 miles and raising sponsorship for 20 charities. Angels was one of the charities he chose, and we received £285 (including gift aid) from this.

In November 2023 we received £220.80 from fundraising at a quiz held at The Millstream pub in Hitchin. We also received £33.49 from a collection pot in Cinnabar.

In November we also received a donation from Santander Hitchin branch – this was the first of several fundraising events held by them during the year raising a total of £245 for Angels.

We also received a generous donation of £400 raised as part of one of our member's dad's 80th Birthday celebrations.

Last year Royston Rotary Club chose Angels as the charity to support with their Royston Kite Festival in August 2023. In November we received a donation of £6,000 which they raised at the event.

We also received a donation of £200 from Letchworth Circle.

We had a stall at the Letchworth Christmas Lights fair and raised £48.20.

During December, a number of local businesses supported us either by having a collection pot or running fundraisers. We received £57.23 from Music Train, £24.43 from Esquires, £203.60 from the Best Before Cafe.

Also, during December, we held a Christmas prize draw with prizes generously donated by local businesses, our members and Trustees. This year we raised £1,730 in ticket sales.

In March 2024 we held a fundraising event at Mecca Bingo in Stevenage. Donations from Mecca Bingo and our members who supported the event raised £272.14 for Angels.

In April 2024 Rob Mclaughlin took on the challenge of running the London Marathon and raised £286 in sponsorship and gift aid for Angels.

In May 2024 Shelly Pye completed a challenge to climb Ben Nevis raising £930 of sponsorship and gift aid for Angels. This also led to an additional matching donation of £500 from her employer LV.

Also, in May we had a stall at the Letchworth Food Festival – supported by Belisily - we raised £129.67.

We were also selected to take part in The Funding Network event in St Albans. This gave us the opportunity to pitch what we do as a charity to a group of businesses and individuals who then could pledge money for their preferred charities. We received donations of £4,862 from the event.

In June 2024 we received a donation of £250 from Johnsons Workwear.

In July 2024 Paul Gill, a Trustee's Dad, took part in Ride London, a 100-mile bike ride, and raised £924.72 in sponsorship for Angels.

During the year, the year 7 students from John Henry Newman School held a couple of fundraising events to support Angels and raised £539.84.

Also in July, we held another Mecca Bingo event this time raising £213.27 from Mecca Bingo and our supporters on the night.

Throughout the year we have also received regular income from the North Herts Community Lottery. This is a community lottery that has been set up and allows people to buy tickets in this weekly lottery and choose a charity to donate 50% of the ticket income to. In this financial year we received £4,161.50 in ticket income and donated prizes.

Over the year we have also been supported by many members making one-off and regular donations which we are very grateful for.

3.4 Remuneration of Trustees

All Trustees act in a voluntary capacity and receive no remuneration or other material benefits from their services to the Charity.

Out-of-pocket expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by Trustees in promoting the purposes of the Charity are reimbursed at cost.

4. Reference and Administration Details

4.1 Charity Name & Registration

Name of the Charity: Angels Support Group Hitchin

Any other names by which the charity is known: **Angels Support Group or Angels**

Charity No: 1117059

Registered with HM Revenue & Customs Yes / ~~No~~

4.2 Charity's Principal Address

Unit 19, The Pixmore, Letchworth Business Centre, Letchworth, HERTS, SG6 1JG

e-mail: info@angelssupportgroup.org.uk

website: www.angelssupportgroup.org.uk

4.3 Names of the Trustees Who Manage the Charity

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Resigned</i>	<i>Appointed by</i>
Clare Slater	Chair			Trustees/Members at AGM
Oluwakemi Adejare				Trustees/Members at AGM
Hilary Forrester	Secretary			Trustees/Members at AGM
Justin Richards			22/01/2024	Trustees/Members at AGM
Rowena Crabtree				Trustees/Members at AGM
John Skeeles	Treasurer		13/11/2023	Trustees/Members at AGM
Nicola Ager				Trustees/Members at AGM
Amit Durgaprasad			13/11/2023	Trustees/Members at AGM
Tammy Smith		12/06/2023		Trustees/Members at AGM
Helen Osment	Interim Treasurer	25/09/2023		Trustees/Members at AGM
Mark Temperley		15/07/2024	30/03/2025	Trustees/Members at AGM
Suresh Banarse		15/07/2024	03/02/2025	Trustees/Members at AGM
Sarah Greig		15/07/2024	03/02/2025	Trustees/Members at AGM
Andrew Kyle Webster		04/11/2024		Trustees/Members at AGM

4.4 Names of Advisors & Senior Members of Staff

The charity employed the following senior staff members during the year:

Parent Support Manager: Leise Cooper

Specialist Support Practitioner: Penny Howarth

Financial Manager: Raine Simcox

Meeting Supervisor and Specialist Support Practitioner: Kirsten Bennet

Specialist Support Practitioner: Judith Russell

Administrator and Specialist Support Practitioner: Caroline Upcraft

Fundraising, Marketing and Administration Assistant: Bethan Desai

4.5 Bank

HSBC, 1 Market Place, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1DR

Unity Trust, Four Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2JB

4.6 Independent Examiner

Philip M Jones FCA, 13 Walled Garden Close, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 3GN

5. Structure, Governance & Management

5.1 Type of Governing Document

Constitution adopted on the 19th January 2005. As amended 29th September 2015

5.2 Statutory Declaration

The Trustees confirm that they have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in deciding what activities the charity should undertake. For all the above activities there have been no identified harmful effects associated with providing the benefits. The charity does employ people to provide various services and so does provide private benefits to people other than the beneficiaries. These private benefits are all incidental as they all contribute directly towards achieving the charity's objectives.

5.3 Trustee Selection Methods

There must be at least three charity trustees.

In accordance with the Constitution, Trustees are appointed or re-appointed for a term of one year by a resolution passed at the AGM. New Trustees can be appointed in the interim by agreement of the existing Trustees. In appointing Trustees due consideration is given to ensuring that the Trustees have, between them, the skills and experience necessary to manage the charity effectively and in accordance with charity law.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf.

2nd May 2025



Clare Slater (Chair)



Helen Osment (Treasurer)