



Trustees' Annual Report

for the period 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020

The Trustees have pleasure in presenting their report and the Independent Financial Examiner's Report for the above-mentioned period.

Reference & Administrative Information

Charity Name: Upstart Scotland

Charity No: SC047775

Address of Principal Office: The Old Police Station, Isleornsay, Isle of Skye
IV43 8QR

Current Trustees:	Trustees who served in the period:
David Ashford (Treasurer)	David Ashford
Tam Ballie	Tam Baillie
Carol Craig	Carol Craig
Dawn Ewan	Dawn Ewan
John Frank	John Frank
Willie French	Willie French
Sarah Latto	Sarah Latto
Kathleen Margaret Johnston (Vice-Chair)	Kathleen Margaret Johnston (Vice-Chair)
Sue Palmer (Chair)	Sue Palmer (Chair)

Structure Governance & Management

Constitution:

The Charity became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 26th September 2017. It is governed by its SCIO Constitution which was adopted on 13th September 2017.

Appointment of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, which normally meets at least thrice annually, consists of the charity's Trustees. They are elected at Annual General Meetings. Under the constitution, there must be a minimum of three and not more than nine elected Trustees. The Trustees may co-opt a further three Trustees if they consider it would be in the interests of the charity to do so. Membership of the Board is open to all Members of the charity.

Management:

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction and governance of the charity, whilst day-to-day running is delegated to the Secretary and the Chair's Assistant.

Board meetings were held in 2020 on 21st May, 21st September and 7th December.

Objectives & Activities

Charitable purposes:

The advancement of children's education, health and well-being. In furtherance of the same are the following intentions:

- a) to advance awareness of the need for Scottish children - up to and including the age of seven - to benefit from a statutory play-based 'kindergarten stage' before beginning formal schooling.
- b) to promote the role of Early Years education in 'levelling the educational playing field' by ensuring all children have secure foundations for school-based learning underpinned by play - especially outdoors - as being vital for all aspects of children's physical, emotional and cognitive development including health and well-being and, where practicable, outdoor play in the natural environment.
- c) to disseminate information about the importance of supporting children's social, emotional and spoken language development as the foundation for successful educational achievement, having regard to the need for a well-qualified, highly-respected, child-centric workforce, well-informed about the principles of child development in the Early Years.
- d) to relieve stress engendered by premature schoolification and testing, which research now suggests is counterproductive to children's long-term well-being and educational success and therefore more likely to increase than decrease the achievement gap between rich and poor.

Activities:

International evidence shows that children under the age of seven benefit from an educational approach that supports their all-round physical, emotional, social and cognitive development, rather than pushing them towards early academic achievement. Therefore Upstart Scotland campaigns for a kindergarten stage for children aged three to seven believing that through play (especially outdoors and in natural environments), their inborn learning drive will flourish.

Despite the pandemic, Upstart Scotland continued to provide nationally recognised speakers explaining our aims and the underpinning rationale via online Zoom conferences and meetings, starting with the AGM in June. During autumn 2020, we ran a series of short evening conference sessions - 'In the Footsteps of Giants'- about the pioneers of early years education, which helped raise funds for the campaign.

We also made use of the lockdown to compile a book, 'Play Is The Way', with fourteen chapters written by experts from a variety of professional backgrounds (e.g. psychology, playwork, children's rights, public health, education, early learning and care, economics and environmental sustainability). Each explained the significance and importance of a kindergarten stage from their specialist viewpoint. The book was published at the end of October 2020 and sold so well that we were forced to send it for reprint after the first week of sales. Reprint followed reprint, and in January 2021 we took the opportunity to add another chapter (on Equality and Diversity), thus going into a second edition within three months of publication.

Our Vice Chair launched a crowd-funding campaign to give a copy of 'Play is the Way' to every MSP and Director of Education and raised the funds within a few weeks, so the books were packaged and distributed in time for Christmas. A couple of months later, we were alerted to a Member's Debate in the Scottish Parliament on the introduction of a kindergarten stage - it was clear from the debate that the speakers concerned had read the book. All four opposition parties were full of praise for the idea, but unfortunately it is still not consistent with government policy.

The government's problems relate mainly to the Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA) of children in Primary One continued. Upstart has consistently opposed the assessment of specific literacy and numeracy skills in this age group because it significantly interferes with the process of enhancing children's all-round development of foundational capacities through self-regulation and genuine engagement. The subject became newsworthy again during the 2021 election campaign, with the Scottish Greens vowing to scrap the tests and both Greens and LibDems putting a kindergarten stage into their manifestos. As a result, Upstart has achieved a fair degree of media coverage during the last few months.

The online launch of 'Play is the Way' having been extremely successful, in January 2021, we began organising online Book Group discussions, which are free to attend. These are ongoing: hundreds of people attend them and hundreds more watch the professionally-edited recordings. These have proved a very successful

way of spreading our message more widely. We have also organised an online Upstart Election Hustings, to take place on April 20th.

Monthly newsletters from the Chair have continued to be a valuable resource for keeping the membership informed about developments in the care and education of three- to seven-year-old children. These are also circulated via Facebook and Twitter and have attracted many more people to the website. By the end of the year we had a following of 10,500 on Twitter and 10,000+ on our main Facebook page. These, and our two closed Facebook pages ('Play in P1/2' and 'Outdoor Play') have continued to circulate our message around the country.

Upstart Scotland continues to win respect and praise from parents/guardians, early years practitioners, teachers, playworkers and health & social work professionals throughout the country (and, increasingly, worldwide). We also have many dedicated supporters from the arts, environmental sustainability and mental health, since children's experiences during their early years have long-term implications for their disciplines. The Upstart blog continues to attract articles from experts in these varied fields and is another way in which the word can be spread. Many supporters have also contributed generously with donations which kept the charity achievable.

Approved by the Trustees prior to the 30th day of May 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Ashford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

David Ashford
Treasurer