



annual review

APRIL 2020 - MARCH 2021

MESSAGE FROM **our chair**



As chair of the Board of Trustees I continue to be humbled by the passion and commitment of the SensationALL Trustees and staff who ensure the success of, a charity which is a lifeline for so many local families.

This was particularly evident during the Covid pandemic and during this challenging year we have kept the wellbeing and safety of our staff, service users, families, and volunteers at the heart of our operations.

While the pandemic initially posed significant financial challenges and steep learning curves it has been through the dedication of our staff, our families, and fundraisers that we have succeeded in remaining financially stable. Our thanks go to the trusts and funders who so generously supported us and recognised the vital work of the charity in supporting communities and families.

Despite challenges, our ambitions have not been dampened!

We have strengthened our Board, appointing three new members – all who bring skill sets pertinent to ensuring the ongoing success of the charity and complementing those of long-standing Trustees.

The regeneration of our car park and the adjoining public play park is imminent as, we have successfully secured the necessary funding. We look forward to seeing this exciting project come to life and we plan to formally open the play park later in 2021.

We are committed to resuming face-to-face activities in our building as soon as it is safe to do so as, we are eager to restart our in-person sessions. Meanwhile, we aim to build on our school support, maintaining and enhancing our contracts with local authorities. Our expertise and experience in this area will see us grow this provision and support more pupils across the North East.

This has been a challenging year, but we move forward with determination, renewed vigour and ideas which will stand the charity in good stead for progression and development.



janine chalmers
CHAIR OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

virtual

DELIVERY

2020 was certainly not the year we expected it to be!

In March 2020, the world was coming to terms with the Covid pandemic and the UK-wide 'stay at home' rule. The SensationALL team immediately recognised our families would need ongoing support throughout lockdown as, this was a time when anxieties and emotions would be heightened.

The prospect of not having some kind of direct contact with service users for a prolonged period was unthinkable as the pause in consistent therapeutic support would inevitably lead to significant declines in behaviour and mental health for many of our individuals.

Continuing support

Our team worked at speed to make sessions available via digital platforms including **1:1 Sessions, Self-regulation Programmes, Virtual Social Groups** and vital **Advisory Consultations** for parents/carers.

"Vital support
in lockdown!"

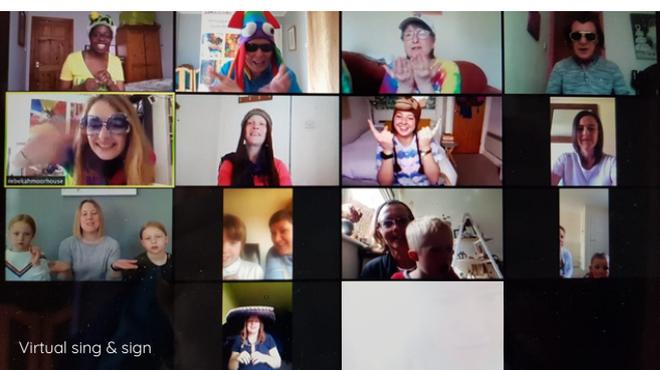
Lockdown presented massive changes to routine but restrictions were particularly disruptive for those with support needs who depend on structure to help them feel balanced and in control. We knew that many families would be struggling to control growing anxieties and upset caused by constant changes which could lead to difficult behaviour and declining mental health for the whole family.

In particular, our 'Chill-oot!' self-regulation programme was crucial for addressing the distress caused by lockdown. The need for our intervention was evident with youngsters stating they had difficulty **"coping with everything"**, **"staying calm"** and **"lockdown is doing my head in"**. The tailored coping techniques that Chill-oot! teaches were invaluable to overcome difficult situations and the so-called 'corona-coaster' of emotions.

Tackling anxieties

One youngster with Autism, a Learning Disability and language processing difficulties was particularly struggling with positive affirmations and self-reflection in lockdown. During 1:1 sessions staff encouraged her to use an emotional rating scale to identify and communicate how she was feeling, then use tailored, fun activities to regulate her behaviour. A few sessions later and she was able to use positive words and now releases her anxieties with a 'worry monster' (named after a staff member because **'he takes away worries'**.)

The progress she made was evident as her reliance on her mum's participation in the sessions gradually reduced and she now engages in activities with staff independently – giving a much appreciated 30 minutes of respite to her family.



ADAPTING TO THE **pandemic**

The covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and social restrictions had detrimental impacts on the mental wellbeing of many people as, families struggled to access practical help while their usual support services were closed or reduced.

SensationALL was committed to offering consistent support for our families.

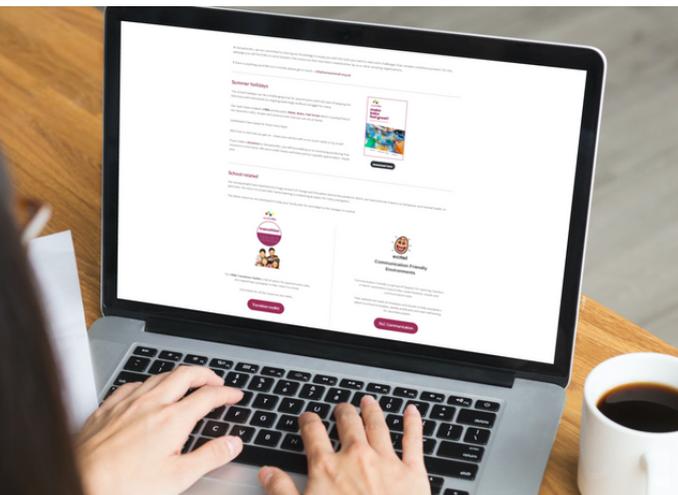
Digital resources

We were acutely aware many families were unable to utilise virtual services either due to ability levels or home circumstances which made digital interaction impossible. Therefore, we created a range of digital content including activities to do at home, on-demand.

We also issued monthly e-newsletters full of advice on lockdown related topics with best practice suggestions and signposting to the 'best out there' free resources.

"[Having] 3 children with different support needs, means virtual sessions are difficult... [SensationAll] gives us easy-to-follow activities during this challenging time"

Parent, Feb 2021



Free resources included:

- **Social Stories** and visuals to explain the pandemic and lockdown restrictions
- **Video Tutorials** on yoga, baking and sensory crafts
- **Make, Bake, Feel Great activity book**
- **Transition Pack** for returning to school
- **Downloadable Templates** such as routine planners, emotional rating scales and strategy cards
- **Links** to other organisation's resources

Advisory support

During lockdown we continued to offer on demand advisory consultations to parents/carers who are unsure how to help their loved one with anxieties, challenging behaviour, declining mental health and even crisis situations.

While we were unable to meet in person, all consultations were held via video or phone call.

We also made sure to continue running our monthly information sessions for families or professionals new to us to ask any questions about our services and be signposted to appropriate sessions.

"Staff are phenomenal! They have supported me as a parent/carer and really take on board what you need as an individual"

Parent, Feb 2021

DEVELOPING services

The SensationALL mission is to provide lifelong support for individuals with disabilities and support needs throughout all stages of their lives. We aim to do that by listening to our families and responding to their changing needs and ensuring our service provision is needed at all times which, in the last year has been crucial in order to continue to supporting our families during the ever-changing pandemic.

Responding to demand

In 2019, it became apparent we had a gap in existing services for school leavers and young adults so the **Young Adult Project** (YAP for short) was created to accommodate older teens ready to progress from our **SociALLise** group. The new group was created to continue the social opportunities for those with support needs but with an additional focus on developing life experiences and skills.

Later, in 2020, we once again responded to demand from new families by establishing **SociALLise+**, a group tailored to teens with more complex conditions and learning disabilities.

We also adapted our weekly social group for primary school ages, into a 'Show & Tell' format, in response to feedback from the attendees who were relishing the chance to share their interests with each other on their video calls.

Chill-oot! has become a flagship group for SensationALL and is widely credited by parent/carers as being instrumental in improving the emotional and behavioural regulation of young people with support needs. During lockdown Chill-oot! was needed more than ever!

"My son is improving vastly in understanding himself and his place in our world. He is moving towards the light and out of the darkness of anxiety, fear, doubt, negativity and anger."

Parent, 2020

Therefore, we developed 5 different stages of the four-week programme, each focusing and building self awareness, regulation and wellbeing activities and techniques in order to offer a more prolonged and comprehensive level of support.

The difference the Chill-oot! strategies make is significant e.g., one teen with Downs syndrome who was struggling with not attending college and seeing her friends, joined the online sessions every week and during a positive affirmation exercise confidently shared the statement 'I am confident and I am sassy'. Practices such as positive affirmations helps individuals improves their self-esteem, self-worth and become more resilient to challenges in daily life.



Making a sensory relaxation bottle at home

WHO WE'VE helped

It is our mission to provide therapy-based services and activities for children and adults living with any disability or support need.

We empower families to address the lifelong challenges presented by complex conditions by equipping them with practical techniques, knowledge and advice. Our social groups and sessions are a safe place where they can access specialist facilities, support, and a community where they feel they belong and can be themselves.

The last year has been challenging for both our staff and service users as we all were adapting to and coping with a global pandemic that affected all aspects of life.

Despite many obstacles in 2020-21 and thanks to our team's enthusiasm, creativity and dedication, SensationALL continued to have a positive impact on the lives of individuals with multiple support needs and their families from across Northeast Scotland:

**ALL
AGES**

**ALL
CONDITIONS**

**ALL
FAMILY
MEMBERS**

357

sessions
delivered

1,178

participations
from service
users

103

individuals
directly
impacted

57

new families
made contact

In addition, we had an indirect impact on the lives of the individual's family members, friends/schoolmates and associated professionals as, our intervention results in reduced behavioural issues, increased self-regulation and improved mental wellbeing.

No formal diagnosis is required to access SensationALL's services

We are committed to offering timely intervention without barriers.

It is our aim to help families with concerns about their child's learning, sensory processing, behaviour, communication or general development.

We know how confusing, stressful and often lengthy the diagnostic process can be so our services are designed to support families who are struggling to access appropriate help and advice.



fundraising

AGAINST ALL ODDS

The pandemic presented immediate financial issues as it meant our planned fundraising events had to be cancelled while income generating services (school contracts, consultancy, training and building facility hire) were also reduced. This posed a loss of approximately £50,000 in prospect income.

However, thanks to our existing funders, supporters and emergency grants, we were able to cover these anticipated losses.

£ income

Unrestricted funds	£ 125,298
Restricted funds	£ 117,400
Total Income	£242,698

expenditure

Charitable activities	£196,320
Governance	£ 2,626
Total Expenditure	£198,946

balance sheet

Current Assets	£239,406
Fixed Assets	£166,470
Current Liabilities	£198,821
Net Current Assets	£ 40,554

Virtual fundraising

Fundraising continued in a virtual format and whilst it was much reduced, we were overwhelmed by the generosity of our supporters and volunteers who raised money for us throughout the year. Significant campaigns included the **2.6 Challenge** in April 2020, which raised over £3800 and the virtual **Westhill 10k run** in June which generated a total of £4326 in sponsorship plus entry fees and donations.

A special mention has to go to one of our teenage service users, Euan Gray, who undertook a sponsored walking challenge (2.6 miles a day for 2 months and 6 days!).

Corporate donations were significantly depleted this year, so we are even more grateful for continued support from Architecture Windows & Doors, Fulcrum, RSM and STATS Group who all made unrestricted financial donations to help us cover essential costs such as staffing.



SENSATIONAL L L supporters

Ever since securing the long-term lease of our building and grounds in 2019, we have been working to secure the funds to extend our car park and upgrade the adjoining play area to enhance our onsite facilities.

Despite the challenging climate, we are delighted to announce the project costs of over £140,000 have been secured and the work will take place in 2021!

This project is only possible thanks to contributions from Aberdeenshire Council, the Wooden Spoon Charity and several other private organisations.

We are all very excited to see the transformation of the old play park while the additional onsite car parking will massively improve safety and access to our building for all our visitors, staff and volunteers.

We would also like to express our gratitude to key funders for their ongoing financial contributions towards the cost of service delivery:



We couldn't achieve so much without the assistance of our amazing trustees who volunteer their time to sit on our board:

Janine Chalmers Chair
Susan Kay Co-founder
Tom Pates Treasurer
Theresa Roper
Valery Burnett
Stuart Bews
Nick Pickering
Darren Aggasild
Madelene MacSween



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