



annual review
APRIL 2021 - MARCH 2022

a note from our

CHARITY MANAGER

The 21/22 period has been the organisations most successful to date, despite the lingering issues and restrictions following the Covid 19 pandemic which caused unprecedented disruption across the previous year.

2021 started with some uncertainty following further lock downs, but the demand to return to in-person support sessions was evident, with mounting requests from parents via email and social media. This was further supported following results of a Covid feedback survey conducted in April 2021, where the majority of responses stated they would feel safe returning to the Old Schoolhouse as soon as possible, but would also welcome a hybrid solution where 1:1's with practitioners and both training and consultation offerings could stay online or over the telephone.

SensationALL had implemented a strict infection control procedure from the previous period, which was regularly reviewed and outdoor play was encouraged as much as possible, eventually culminating in the hire of a large gazebo and our Summer 2021 programme being almost entirely ran out of doors. Masks and face shields were still worn in close contact with users, but by August 2021 almost all of our full programme of activities had returned, except our Adult sessions due to their continued vulnerability.

We also launched both online and in-person Makaton Training levels 1-3, which was an immediate success, attracting interest from parents/carers and local authority and NHS professionals, with a view to expand in 2022.

In May 2021 the charity expanded its staff team by the recruitment of a Service Team Leader and 2 further support workers, allowing the Service Manager to focus on the growing demand for bespoke consultations and professional "Understanding Autism" training.

By the end of this financial year, waiting lists for our school aged emotional regulation and teen social sessions were at the highest in the charities history, with frequent feedback from families that they would like to see us offer outreach for families from both Aberdeen city centre and rural areas, who are unable to travel to us in Westhill.

Looking forward to 2022-23, we are excited to expand our services further and hope that the covid pandemic is behind us so we can continue to reach more families who need our vital intervention and support.

KATIE MCNUTT
Charity Manager



SENSATIONALL statistics



617

sessions delivered



1,246

participations from
service users



263

different individuals
directly impacted



176

new families
registered



30

advisory consultations
for parent/carers



51

self-regulation sessions
for youngsters



7

Makaton sessions



9

training workshops



85

social group sessions
for youngsters

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.

2021 started with more uncertainty due to the ongoing covid pandemic and although many of our young service users were eager to get back to face-to-face interactions, some individuals are medically vulnerable so, we continued to offer virtual interactions until summer 2021 when, we were excited to resume a term time programme of face-to-face activities and it was fantastic to have service users back in the building.

The need for social opportunities

Our range of **SociALLise** groups provide vital social opportunities for youngsters of all ages who need an adapted environment to have fun and make friends.

In August 2021, in response to demand, our newest addition to the SociALLise programme, SociALLise+ (specifically for teens with more complex support needs or learning disabilities) was able to hold it's first face-to-face sessions, after the covid pandemic. This group of youngsters were excited to meet in person and build their friendships further.

“ It's a blessing to have a place where our kids are accepted as they are. To be somewhere we don't have to stress if they have a 'meltdown' is definitely a gift ”

Mac has left hemiplegia of the brain and severe epilepsy, as a result, he has no use of his left hand and limited use of the arm, as well as visual loss in his left visual field. Mac is also diagnosed with autism, sensory impairment and learning delay. This led to Mac struggling in social situations and expression of his emotions and, he was in great need of a place to come and meet people.

Mac was initially quite reserved when attending SociALLise+ and would be more likely to observe than to actively engage with group activities. As he had a few seizures during sessions he seemed embarrassed and would become quiet afterwards.

Over a few months, Mac has become more confident with himself and his place in the group as he knows others will support him. Now when seizures occur, he quickly states he is fine and is eager to return to activities and engaging with his peers. This cements how at ease he is in the environment with people he considers friends.

He contributes ideas and shows willingness to try new things every week. He has brought in his own games a few times, and confidently tells others how to play, making adjustments to ensure everyone gets enjoyment from participating.

He is even confident enough to voice his opinions and let someone know if he does not want to participate or if something is bothering him. Staff have observed his much improved social skills as he will happily chat with new peers, staff or volunteers. He has formed strong relationships within the group.

When he joined the group, Mac (a big Harry Potter fan) told us that he was in the house of Ravenclaw with a side of Hufflepuff as, he had traits of wisdom, loyalty and kindness. Over the summer, Mac decided he is now in Gryffindor as, their main trait is bravery. This change perception of himself highlights his growing confidence and self-assurance.



EXPANDING our reach

The need for SensationALL support increased exponentially in 2021 as we were approached not only by a record number of new families but, schools looking for support.

As an approved supplier with Aberdeenshire Council we work with pupils in mainstream schools who have identified support needs and require flexible learning opportunities.

Working with school pupils

Flexible Learning Pathways Plus (FLPP), is Aberdeenshire Council's name an alternative learning methods for children with identified support needs. Eligible pupils come to SensationALL for a few hours during the school week to build their skills and resilience.

We encourage the development of healthy emotional regulation, to increase their self-awareness, confidence, and self-esteem with the aim of building their resilience so they can cope better in the classroom setting.

D, is one of those pupils and has diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). He was unable to attend school, as the environment was too overwhelming. He was finding it difficult to trust and connect with others resulting in strong feelings of isolation, depressive episodes and extreme anger.

D's low self-esteem and poor mental health was clear when he made statements such as "I get bored of me", "I'm not good at anything", "I feel lonely". He was battling with his negative thoughts on a daily basis... "Why am I here? It would be better if I wasn't here". His body would appear tense with heavy, rounded shoulders and dark eyes. As he was unable to focus his attention on an activity for longer than 6 minutes he was struggling to socialise, unable to hold a conversation with more than one person at a time and therefore could not make friends.

Staff began by creating a calm, safe environment for him to have fun, positive experiences that slowly created a sense of belonging. By using emotional regulation techniques we enabled him get to know his body and his energy levels. This gave him a sense of empowerment and control and lowered his anxieties. We created tailored strategies for him to use including sensory diets, emotional awareness and activities that he can do at home.

D struggled to keep his body still for any period of time so, physical challenges were used to help him regulate his focus, concentration, and arousal levels. By using D's own interests we maintained his motivation and engagement.

**271 sessions for 10
primary schools**



"I feel safe here."



Over time D's mood has visibly improved - his eyes are bright, his body is relaxed, and he regularly has a big smile on his face. He is now attending school more than twice a week and is enjoying being there again. D can now understand what his body needs and communicate this to others.

He recognises the change in himself, and has expressed his gratitude to SensationALL staff, "You have helped me so much". The significant improvement in D is evident as he now initiates games and conversations with other children and he regularly displays kindness, compassion and understanding towards others.

MAKING A difference

During the pandemic it had been difficult to engage with our pre-school families virtually as our youngest service users find it hard to interact or engage via video call.

In summer 2021, we were excited to resume pre-school sessions and bring families back into the Old Schoolhouse for Sensory Play, Family Soft Play and Play & Sign with our Makaton Tutor.

A family's story

"SensationALL was recommended to me by a friend who knew about them and thought their sessions would be good for my boys.

My eldest, Aaron has ADHD and his brother, Jaxson, has delayed speech. To help Jaxson we had already started to use Makaton and when we saw SensationALL's Play & Sign class we were keen to go along - it was just the kind of thing I was looking for!

Staff showed me new/different ways to bring signing into play and Jaxson was able to meet a small group of children. Most importantly, it was a group of people who could understand him when he used Makaton so, he felt very comfortable straight away.

Next we went to sensory play which was very relaxing, there was no pressure for Jaxson to take part and he could do his own thing if he wanted. Over time, attending these groups have helped Jaxson improve his social skills and grow in confidence.

Meanwhile, Aaron has been to Chill-oot! which has helped him learn ways to self-regulate his emotions and feelings. Aaron can be resistant to activities he hasn't chosen himself so I wasn't sure how he would adapt to SensationALL but, over time he's slowly getting there and we are seeing improvements.

“ These groups make me see I'm ok.
I've got this . I'm not alone. I am NOT a bad
mum, I'm just a different kind of mum. ”



SensationALL have helped me support my sons by giving me new ways to play and a different understanding of how they could be feeling when they can't communicate in words.

Plus, going to SensationALL gave me chance to meet other parents that are facing the same obstacles as us. Having a network available to me makes me feel not so alone and isolated. Having a child or children with any kind of additional needs is challenging and I'm grateful for their support."

Sarah

fundraising

AGAINST ALL ODDS

2021 was a record breaking year for SensationALL in terms of both total income and securing new funding. These achievements have given the charity some financial security to recruit new staff members, invest in the current team and expand services with outreach and more training events.

Fundraising highlights

The Kiltwalk in Spring 2021 generated over £12,000 which was amazing! Thanks to all the walkers who chose to take part for us and to The Hunter Foundation for their generous 50% top up!

The charity also continued its partnership with Westhill & District Sports Hub in order to produce the Westhill 10k as a virtual event between June and September 2021, which was well received by the local community and attracted over 100 participants.

We were delighted to receive ongoing corporate support from Architecture Windows & Doors, Fulcrum, RSM, STATS Group and Vinesprings Church.

It was also fantastic to be able to hold our relaxed Santa's Grotto and Christmas Fayre once again at the Old Schoolhouse which enabled over 45 children to visit Santa in a place they feel comfortable, where they wouldn't be overwhelmed.

In March 2022, we launched our 10th anniversary year celebrations with our first fundraising Dinner Dance since the pandemic. Thanks to sponsors and guests we raised £20,000. Special thanks to the JEllie Foundation who were our main sponsor for the event.



income

Unrestricted funds	£173,751
Restricted funds	£265,931
Total Income	£439,682



expenditure

Charitable activities	£266,309
Governance	£1,930
Total Expenditure	£268,239



balance sheet

Current Assets	£277,615
Fixed Assets	£138,006
Current Liabilities	£37,154
Net Current Assets	£240,460



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



play park

P R O J E C T

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

Despite the challenging climate in 2020-21, we were able to secure the £140,000 required to commence work.

In October 2022, we were delighted to open the “SensationALL Space! Inclusive play park” to the public, following construction which started in 2021. The expansion of our car park created 20 further spaces including dedicated disabled bays. This will reduce parking congestion in the neighbouring streets while making a significant improvement in accessibility and safety at the Old Schoolhouse.

Much thought went into selecting the play equipment for the new park as it would be open to the public as well as our families so had to accommodate all ability levels.

The end design was carefully put together, taking into account the various needs users may have. For example, the slide is extra wide to accommodate any supports or medical equipment a child may have, the floor level trampoline enables wheelchair users to experience the feeling of moving up and down and there are swings for all ages and mobility levels. Considerations have been made that would normally be overlooked such as ensuring the park offers a wide range of sensory experiences to stimulate youngsters in a variety of ways. It is so important to have inclusive spaces that cater to youngsters with multiple support needs and we hope it will be enjoyed for many years to come.

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

We couldn't achieve so much without the help of our trustees who volunteer their time 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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