

Chair's Report for year ending 31st March 2026

Step Out Sheffield (SOS) has now completed ten years as a volunteer-led organization and what's more, we are still the biggest entirely volunteer-led Wellbeing Walks scheme in the country. This achievement would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and unwavering support of our dedicated team of volunteer walk leaders. Thanks to them we continue to provide weekly short, led walks at 22 locations across the city and hope to continue to do so for many years to come.

Over the past two years Step Out Sheffield has undergone the process of becoming a Registered Charity and settled into a more formal Management Committee role.

I promised at the start of the process that very little would change for Volunteer Walk Leaders (VLWs). I hope you agree this is true.

The pedantic amongst you will have spotted that this, the first, Annual General Meeting of Step Out Sheffield CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is taking place in April. This is to comply with Charity Commission rules.

The team of volunteers who administrate the SOS walks programme spent their first term as Trustees focusing on the best way to secure Step Out Sheffield's future and ensure its sustainability. In May 2025 42 of our VLWs learned what goes on behind the scenes to administrate a group as big as ours to ensure that both volunteers and walkers are safe and happy whilst walking. They were then asked for ideas on how this workload could be managed going forward given that currently the entire workload falls to a handful of volunteers. The outcome was that no one wanted to volunteer for an additional role and no one wanted to spend any of Step Out Sheffield's financial reserves. Nevertheless, everyone agreed that 'somebody' had to do it!

Following the May 2025 meeting the Trustees produced a paper identifying the roles they covered already, together with the roles not covered so far due to time constraints or lack of skills (building a new website for example). This information was used, with the help of Sam Carey, a consultant with the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) to develop a 5-year Business Plan for presentation at the 2026 AGM. Producing the business plan and budget to go with it in the 18 months since SOS gained Charitable status was a remarkable achievement on the part of the Trustees. Their time, ideas and input are gratefully acknowledged. This also fulfills the commitment made two years ago that a development plan would be presented to this meeting for VWL approval.

Kath Williams stood down as Secretary early in April 2025 having been critical in preparing the paperwork leading to the Charity registration. Sharon Williams was co-opted to fill her role. Kath Cobley, our treasurer at the start of this accounting period, stood down at the end of July 2025. Kath was responsible for preparing the SOS accounts for scrutiny by the Charity Commission and for drawing up budgets for the same periods. SOS is very grateful for her expertise at this critical stage. Vickie Goddard was co-opted to fill Kath Williams's role. SOS wishes Kath C and Kath W all the best going forward whilst looking forward to working with Sharon and Vickie who have taken over these key roles.

Impressed by the loyalty of our volunteers, we commissioned this year's students (medical and psychology) to look at what it is that our volunteers gain from volunteering with us. We look forward to receiving their reports in due course. Lesley Webster is the Trustee with responsibility for the students we host each year and her input is gratefully acknowledged.

As SOS looks towards the future we can reflect on this year as being the one where futureproofing continued and succession planning began.

A small but very dedicated team of volunteers have now provided SOS with administrative support for 10 years and, having agreed not to go down the route of employing someone to help with the administration, the Trustees need more people to step up to the plate to fill the vacant roles. While it is desirable that these are drawn from VWLs we may have to seek volunteers from outside the current membership.

Overall, the period to 31st March 2026 has been a successful one with a great deal of behind the scenes planning to help safeguard the future of our extremely valuable service.

Francis Feeley

Chair