

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Period from 1 April 2022 to 30 March 2023

Structure, governance and management

Our governance

Dreamscheme was set up as a company limited by guarantee in May 2013 (NI 618264) and registered as a charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in March 2014 (NIC 100033).

Dreamscheme is governed by a Board of six Trustees, two of whom are qualified accountants, two are successful entrepreneurs with extensive business experience at senior management (MD) level and the other two Trustees have many years' experience at Director and senior management level in the voluntary sector. The Board is supported by a Board Administrator.

The Chairman is a recognised expert in corporate governance. The Treasurer (a qualified accountant) is responsible for ensuring that sound financial systems and controls are in place. Supported by our accountants, the Treasurer ensures compliance with all charity and company law requirements.

None of the Trustees are members of the company and no Trustee has any beneficial interest in the company.

The Trustees met seven times during 2022/23. The Trustees have appointed a Chief Executive to manage the day-to-day operations of Dreamscheme Northern Ireland within a Framework of Control established by the Trustees.

All of our Trustees, staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure & Barring Service (Access NI) checks and receive regular training on our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and child protection matters. Our Safeguarding Policy is refreshed annually, and safeguarding is an item on the agenda of every Board meeting.

Reserves Policy

Reserves are the part of a charity's unrestricted funds that are freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. The definition excludes restricted income funds and endowment funds, although holding such funds influences our reserve policy. The Board has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the restricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be 3 months of the expenditure. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Board are confident that at the level agreed they would be between 3 months of the expenditure. The restricted fund is currently in deficit, but the charity's policy will be to transfer funds from the unrestricted reserves to return the restricted funds to a surplus position.

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Objectives and activities

Our purpose and ethos

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland was established in June 2004 and, since then, we have been working with at-risk young people between the ages of 11 and 18 in Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh and more recently Antrim.

We are a youth development organisation seeking to bring about positive transformation in young people and communities. We do this through delivering targeted interventions, including detached youth work, drop-in sessions, diversionary programmes, mentoring, developmental activities and community work.

The five core aims of Dreamscheme Northern Ireland are to:

1. Provide young people in disadvantaged areas with attractive alternatives to risk taking behaviours, anti-social activity, civil unrest and crime
2. Connect young people with their local communities and encourage active, positive citizenship on the part of young people
3. Challenge racist and sectarian behaviours, combat prejudice and create a safe space for young people to explore ideas
4. Affirm young people, encourage ambition, build potential and encourage a sense of self-worth
5. Develop young people with skills and abilities to become future leaders in their communities

At the core of our existence is our desire to transform the lives of at-risk young people in disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland. Motivated by Christian compassion, we believe in the worth of every young person regardless of their background and have a deep commitment to making a difference. We aim to provide hope, long-term practical support and positive role models.

Overall progress

In our Annual Report last year, we set out three main priorities for 2022/23:

1. Delivering our full Dreamscheme programme to the young people across our five current areas of operation
2. Expanding Dreamscheme Northern Ireland's operations into one major centre outside Greater Belfast where there is a significant and unmet need
3. Expanding our mentoring programme in schools

I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress on all three fronts.

1. Delivering our full Dreamscheme programme

Dreamscheme continues to deliver excellent work in our core hubs and we have made a real difference in the lives of our young people - this is evidenced by the positive feedback received from the young people themselves, their parents, community leaders etc.

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2. Expanding our operations outside Greater Belfast

In January 2023, we launched a new Dreamscheme operation in the Ballycraigy Estate in Antrim - an area of serious deprivation and unmet social need. This followed a very successful pilot scheme undertaken in the Summer of 2022.

3. Expanding our mentoring service in schools

We expanded our mentoring work in schools and are now working with 42 pupils in four schools. In the past year, we provided 270 mentoring sessions.

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Achievements and performance

Who did we reach?

During 2022/23, Dreamscheme Northern Ireland supported 340 young people across our five Centres and our new Antrim operation.

What did we do?

We delivered 587 youth work activities including 41 evenings of street work (East Belfast, Botanic, Castlereagh), 276 Centre-based group activities provided with our core programmes and 270 mentoring sessions.

We currently have 33 volunteers who delivered 3800+ voluntary hours in the past year.

What difference did we make?

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland is committed to measuring the impact and positive outcomes of our work with young people. According to our end-of-year survey of participants involved in our mentoring and Centre-based programmes:

- 93% of respondents learned something new through Dreamscheme programmes- 84% of respondents had improved their emotional and mental wellbeing- 84% believed Dreamscheme had empowered them to give back to their community- 82% thought that Dreamscheme had helped them improve their relationships- 100% of participants were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the youth services provided by Dreamscheme (with 83% 'very satisfied') - 100% of mentees would recommend our mentoring service to a friend - 7 young leaders completed Dreamscheme's youth leadership programme and are now actively leading in their community

Feedback from parents

"Dreamscheme has been the glue that has kept our family together"

"A wonderful place full of amazing people who have time for the younger generation and see the best in these kids. They encourage the kids to make the best of themselves, give them the drive to be better people and better to each other"

"Both my children have participated in the programmes, and I cannot stress enough how invaluable Dreamscheme is to the local youth during their teenage years"

"They give young people a safe space to be themselves and be honest. They are also a space to grow and learn in a fun way! The programmes are just what they need".

"Dreamscheme is a lifeline for young people in our community providing a safe space and great opportunities".

"Dreamscheme is a great organisation that loves young people and aims to help them thrive in their life through building long lasting relationships as well as impacting communities".

Feedback from schools

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"Dreamscheme is our number one external support partner in Breda, and we're proud to have you as part of our school community. Lizzie and Jonny have built excellent relationships with their students and this has impacted on improved behaviour, increased self-confidence and esteem and improved relationships for our pupils"
Gillian Scott, Vice Principal, Breda Academy

Feedback from young people

"Dreamscheme is so good. It's like my safe place".

"I would recommend Dreamscheme to everyone, I have so much fun every time I go, and it has helped me to become more confident"

"Dreamscheme enables young people to feel valued. That someone is actually interested in them and cares for them. It also gives them opportunities to learn. To learn new skills and also learn something about themselves. And all of this is done with an element of fun and a relaxed atmosphere".

"Dreamscheme engages young people in ways that parents and teachers cannot. Relating to us and supporting us in a vulnerable stage of life and leading us towards positive life choices"

"Dreamscheme is a fun and safe place with leaders who have become like family".

One of the highlights of the year

In May 2022, one of our volunteers (Chloe Chapman), who has come up through Dreamscheme from the age of 12 to becoming a young leader and now a volunteer, accompanied our Chairman, David Nicholl, to a Garden Party in Buckingham Palace in recognition of the award of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to Dreamscheme Northern Ireland in 2021 (the Garden Party was deferred to 2022 due to Covid-19):

QAVS Citation: Making a difference to and bringing hope into the lives of young people in their local communities.

"Her Majesty and the QAVS National Committee have seen the way in which the work of Dreamscheme is delivering for young people in this and other areas across the City, and they have judged this outstanding - outstanding in vision, delivery and in achievement." Lord Lieutenant for Belfast, Fionnuala Jay O'Boyle CBE

Challenges faced during the past year

The significant expansion of our work during the past year both in terms of geographical expansion and the growth of our mentoring service in schools has put significant pressure on our staff team. We recruited two new part time youth workers during the year to address this issue.

However, we have been struggling to cope with the corresponding growth in finance and fundraising activity where we have traditionally been reliant on Trustees to undertake much of this activity. This is no longer a realistic option going forward if we are to deliver our ambitious plans for growth. Unfortunately, Dreamscheme was unsuccessful in recruiting a Fundraising Manager and Finance Officer over the past year despite several attempts to do so.

Equality

Dreamscheme accepts young people from all communities and backgrounds. We work with young

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people:

- With little or no involvement in any other youth groups or organisations- Vulnerable to exploitation by paramilitary organisations
- Hanging around hot spots late at night with potential for anti-social behaviour- Engaged in risk taking activities e.g. drug and alcohol misuse
- From marginalised groups such as migrants and Roma young people

Our mentoring service in schools supports vulnerable pupils, many with mental health issues, serious family problems, behavioural issues (as evidenced by suspensions from school) and many of whom have given up on education and any hope for their future.

Financial review

Our financial performance in 2022/23

Dreamscheme generated an overall deficit of £14,098 for 2022/23 with income of £198,365 and expenditure of £212,463. This deficit compares to a budgeted surplus of £314. Our total unrestricted reserves were £43,633 at 31 March 2023 compared to £62,731 at 31 March 2022.

The results for the financial year are set out in more detail in the Statement of Financial Activities at page 11.

The principal reason for the deficit in 2022/23 was a shortfall of £25,000 in statutory income received against the budgeted figure. This was largely caused by the decision of a large local authority to cut back significantly on the funding that it provides to the voluntary sector.

The Trustees have revised the statutory income target for 2023/24 downwards to reflect this ongoing situation and have refocused our fundraising efforts on Trust Funds and corporate & individual donors to compensate. This revised strategy has already bore fruit in the first quarter of 2023/24.

The Trustees are satisfied that our financial reporting systems are extremely robust and generate high quality financial information for Trustees and staff. The Trustees consider a detailed financial report and a fundraising report at every meeting.

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Plans for future periods

Our plans and priorities over the next three years include the following:

- Expanding Dreamscheme's operations into three new areas of serious deprivation across Northern Ireland where there is an unmet need
- Delivering our full Dreamscheme programme to 160 young people across our five existing areas of operation
- Expanding our mentoring programme in schools - there is a huge unmet need for this service and we have been approached by several schools who want to work in partnership with us.

Public Benefit Statement

Purpose 1: the advancement of education specifically to provide education, training and support to any groups establishing projects calculated to develop the physical, spiritual and mental capacities of young persons under the age of 25 that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society and their conditions of life may improve.

What benefit flows from this purpose?

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland:

- Provides young people in disadvantaged areas with attractive alternatives to risk taking behaviours, anti-social activity, civil unrest and crime
- Connects young people with their local communities and encourage active, positive citizenship on the part of young people (e.g. through providing community volunteering opportunities)
- Provides the statutory authorities (e.g. police, health and emergency services) with opportunities to connect with at risk young people in a positive manner
- Challenges racist and sectarian behaviour, combats prejudice and creates a safe space for young people to explore ideas

• Affirms young people, encourages ambition, builds potential and encourages a sense of self-worth

Can we demonstrate benefit? "The work that Dreamscheme does is having a real positive impact in engaging young people most at risk and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour in the area. I wish that there could be more projects like Dreamscheme NI operating across other neighbourhoods of Castlereagh". Derek Martin, Commander Castlereagh, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) We undertake surveys of the young people who attend Dreamscheme and regularly obtain feedback from the PSNI and other funders/partners on the benefits delivered as a result of our activities (mostly through independent evaluations). A recent evaluation report (commissioned by Castlereagh Borough Council Leisure Services) found that: young people on our restorative justice placements had experienced a positive shift in attitudes toward offending; community work by young people had resulted in better community relations and a greater sense of 'community safety'; the scheme had improved the general outlook and self-esteem of young participants; workshops had helped to change attitudes to harmful attitudes and activities; the outings 'Reward Points' programme had been highly valued by young people many of whom would not otherwise have been able to participate in the activities on offer. Is there any harm or possibility of harm and, if so, is it outweighed by the benefit? The only harm that we have identified through our risk assessment is the possibility of harm to our staff and volunteers at the hands of one or more young people but this is a moderate to low risk and is outweighed by the substantial and demonstrable benefits delivered through our projects and activities.

Who is the benefit for?

The young people that Dreamscheme serves are aged 13 - 18 years and include:

- Young people with little or no involvement in any other youth groups or organisations
 - Young people who are vulnerable to exploitation by paramilitary organisations
 - Those who have been involved in previous political unrest and / or violence
 - Those hanging around hot spots late at night with potential for anti-social behaviour
 - Young people engaged in risk taking activities e.g. drug and alcohol misuse.
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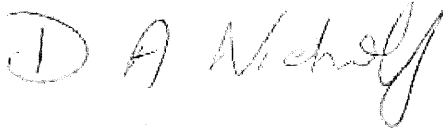
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Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 18 August 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Mr D A Nicholl
Trustee