

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland
Company Limited by Guarantee
Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)
Year ended 30 March 2024

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 30 March 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Dreamscheme Northern Ireland
Charity registration number	NIC100033
Company registration number	NI618264
Principal office and registered office	77a Saintfield Road Belfast Northern Ireland
The trustees	Mr D Currie Mr W K McClean Mr D A Nicholl Mr D J Wilson Ms H E Grills (Appointed 19 May 2023) Mr J A McVicker
Independent examiner	Michael Flannigan FCA Linenhall Exchange 26 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BG

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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 2023/24. 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.

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:

Provide young people in disadvantaged areas with attractive alternatives to risk taking behaviours, anti-social activity, civil unrest and crime

Connect young people with their local communities and encourage active, positive citizenship on the part of young people

Challenge racist and sectarian behaviours, combat prejudice and create a safe space for young people to explore ideas

Affirm young people, encourage ambition, build potential and encourage a sense of self-worth

Develop young people with skills and abilities to become future leaders in their communities

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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.

Objectives and activities

Overall progress

In our Annual Report last year, we set out our main priorities for the three year period from 2023/24 to 2025/26 as follows:

- 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

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

Expanding our operations

During 2023/24, we continued to develop our new work in Antrim town, reaching a group of teenagers in Ballycraigy estate on a weekly basis.

We also launched a pilot programme in Lower North Belfast, an area of social deprivation where young people have serious issues - there is a particular need to support young girls in the area

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.

Developing our mentoring service in schools

We are now working with 47 pupils in three schools. In the past year, we provided 357 mentoring sessions

Who did we reach?

During 2023/24, Dreamscheme supported 170 young people in our weekly programme across five hubs (Breda, Belvoir, Braniel, Antrim and Lower North Belfast), with an additional 300 young people reached through one-off events such as year group assemblies, summer schemes and street outreach.

What did we do?

We delivered 651 youth work activities including 294 group activities and 357 mentoring sessions. We currently have 25 committed volunteers who delivered 4000+ voluntary hours in the past year.

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What difference did we make?

Survey evidence

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 young people involved in our mentoring and Centre-based programmes:

- 92% of young people would recommend Dreamscheme to a friend
- 92% of respondents believe that Dreamscheme has made a positive difference in their personal growth
- 99% of Dreamscheme young people aged 16+ are in education, training or employment (compared to 90% normal rate in local areas)
- 935 hours of community work were undertaken through 445 acts of community service e.g. serving a dinner to the elderly, designing a community mural
- 95% of young people built good relationships in Dreamscheme
- 94% of mentees found the 1:1 support helpful, either in building resilience or dealing with pressure
- 22 young people are now serving in positions of leadership
- 19 young people explored or developed Christian faith through attending an Alpha Course or Camp Sunshine Portugal

Feedback from parents

"A wonderful place full of amazing leaders who have time for the young people 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"

"One of the best youth organisations that any young person could get involved in. The programmes benefit the local youth as they get the opportunity to meet and engage with other young people in the area and the wider community, it provides them with workshops on drugs/alcohol abuse, gives them the opportunity to improve their life skills, not to mention providing them with super opportunities and experiences through residentials and team building exercises helping to build their confidence and steering them through the teenage years with guidance and positivity"

"A very positive experience. Such an amazing bunch of leaders. It helps by keeping the kids off the streets, its gives them somewhere to hang out and reduces antisocial behaviour"

"My daughter loves going to Dreamcheme. She wouldn't miss a week. It really benefits the age group and builds confidence"

"Young people are valued at Dreamscheme, the Hub at Saintfield Road is bright and modern and is a very pleasant space to engage with young people. Excellent. Kids are at the centre of all Dreamscheme do"

"I've seen our kids grow and really come out of themselves. Dreamscheme helps them grow as a person, make new friends and build relationships with peers. Intergenerational nights and tidy ups etc give the whole community a buzz"

Feedback from schools

"Dreamscheme has made a difference in this year's pupils, helping to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour & attendance at school. We have had great feedback from pupils and we can notice a difference" **(D Collins, Vice Principal, Lagan College)**

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"In this academic year, Dreamscheme has supported 26 pupils. They have helped pupils struggling with anxiety, low self-esteem, behavioural issues and poor attendance as well as other mental health issues. The team has developed supportive relationships and formed strong bonds with the pupils with the recent questionnaire response showing excellent success and progress. The mentoring programme is invaluable to a diverse school like Breda Academy, and we feel very fortunate to be working with Dreamscheme. We would like to have Dreamscheme in more often in our school working with our students" (**G Scott, Vice Principal, Breda Academy**)

Feedback from young people

"Before I went to Dreamscheme, I was going down the wrong alley. I was getting involved with the police every week. But then Jonny stepped in and helped me. The mentoring really helped. Camp Sunshine Portugal and the residential also made a big difference. Over the years, I've made many new friends and I'm now on a good run"

"Dreamscheme helped me get off the streets and give me a better self image"

"Dreamscheme for me is a safe place. It's like a second home"

"The leaders have really helped me to build confidence, through the way they get alongside you. They give help and advice, and just listen to you, no matter what's been going on"

"Having a space to come and talk about issues that I am facing has helped and made me feel more confident"

"My time in Portugal helped my faith in God and that was a really big moment for me"

Highlights of the year

Quality of youth work provision

During 2023/24, the Education Authority for Northern Ireland undertook a moderation visit to inspect our youth work provision in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. Its overall assessment was that our work was "outstanding in the quality of our youth work provision and the quality of our curriculum".

Furthermore, in January 2023, the Board commissioned Andy Hewitt, Executive Director of Youth Initiatives and a Facilitator for the Youth Work Forum NI, to "undertake an independent review of youth work practice in Dreamscheme Northern Ireland". This was designed to provide the Board with independent assurance that our youth work practice adhered to the very highest standards.

Andy Hewitt's report, presented at a special Board meeting on 6 October 2023, concluded that the standard of youth work practice in Dreamscheme Northern Ireland is extremely high but he identified a few areas where there is scope for improvement and development. The Board subsequently agreed an Action Plan to implement the recommendations arising from his report.

Dreamscheme Youth Council

In October 2023, on foot of a recommendation in the Hewitt report, Dreamscheme Northern Ireland set up a Youth Council with seven members drawn from across our hubs. The stated purpose of the Youth Council is to:

"Create a safe space where young people can have a say on issues that they face as well as providing feedback on Dreamscheme programmes and

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"To ensure that Dreamscheme NI is operating as a Young Person-led organisation and listening to stakeholders"

Other highlights

Some of the other highlights include another excellent year of mentoring in schools, a new THRIVE podcast series featuring Dreamscheme young people, our Big Residential in July and an overseas trip to Camp Sunshine Portugal.

Highlight post - 31 March 2024

Post year-end, in June 2024, Dreamscheme Northern Ireland celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a weekend of events to mark the occasion culminating in a Gala Dinner on Saturday 15 June attended by 90 volunteers and supporters.

Challenges faced during the past year

As Dreamscheme has grown, we have had to build more capacity into our senior team to ensure stability and facilitate sustainable growth. During 2023/24, we restructured our operations and created new roles to take responsibility for operations management, innovation and development, fundraising and community engagement.

As the staff team has grown, our current offices have become inadequate for our needs. We have implemented a short-term solution which provides us with additional office accommodation but, in the longer term, we need to identify and secure a fit-for-purpose headquarters building.

Equality

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

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.

Our financial performance in 2023/24

Dreamscheme generated an overall surplus of £1,149 for 2023/24 compared to a deficit of £14,098 in 2022/23. Our income of £280,306 represented an increase of £81,941 (41%) on the previous year's figure of £198,365 and our expenditure of £279,157 is an increase of £66,694 (31%) on our previous year's figure of £212,463.

During 2023/24, Dreamscheme Northern Ireland recruited additional staff to deliver our youth work programmes at Antrim and undertake fundraising and finance functions. The Board also agreed substantial pay increases for staff to reflect the increased costs of living.

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

Our total restricted reserves were £22,593 at 31 March 2024 compared to £5,000 at 31 March 2023.

The Trustees have kept the income and expenditure targets for 2024/25 at much the same levels as 2023/24 with fundraising efforts focused on increasing income from Trust Funders and individual donors.

The Trustees are satisfied that our financial reporting systems are 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.

Our plans and priorities for the next three-year period

Our plans and priorities for the next three years include:

- Establishing a regional presence in Northern Ireland, with 8-10 hubs benefitting young people in areas of serious deprivation where there is currently an unmet need
- Expanding our mentoring services in schools. There is a huge unmet need for this service but funding constraints are proving difficult to overcome
- Identifying and securing suitable premises
- Developing new sources of income to enable innovation and investment in our programmes and hubs
- Enhancing our reputation in the United Kingdom and Ireland as a valuable source of expertise and ideas in relation to faith-based youth work

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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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?

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).

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.

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 27 September 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

David A Nicholl

David A Nicholl (Oct 1, 2024 17:18 GMT+1)

Mr D A Nicholl
Trustee