

# SÓLÁS

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

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The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2016).

### Objectives and activities

The charity's objectives are to;

- Advance health and wellbeing, education and development, with particular reference to those children with special needs currently falling outside the statutory provision;
- Provide 'pathways' to services which vulnerable families may not normally be able to access;
- Support families who engage with Solas, and build a strong physical and practice infrastructure which will provide consistent, quality care and support;
- Ensure that the voices of children/young people with mild to severe learning disabilities are heard and that their voices shape and influence the development of government policies and mainstream services; Increase the visibility of children/young people, their parents/carers and siblings and ensuring their full participation in community life;
- Lobby and advocate for increased bespoke services for families through representation on all key committees, steering groups and bodies with the potential to support our work;
- Train highly skilled staff to promote our commitment to excellence; working with academic institutions, voluntary agencies and statutory bodies to ensure that our practice and experience contributes to research and evaluations which work towards improving practice;
- Develop a team of dedicated volunteers who use their skills/experience in schools, ensuring children are supported to have an optimum education experience.

### Current services include:

- (1) Childcare / Youth & Respite Services (including Afterschools / Respite Support, afternoons, evenings and weekends, Saturday Clubs, Sibling Clubs, Youth clubs, Summer & holiday schemes. These interventions primarily focus on ensuring that those with disabilities experience the same opportunities for inclusion in the community as other young people. They also facilitate parents who need childcare, as well as parents who need respite support.
- (2) Home Support & Therapeutic Services - providing Home Support, information and practical support for parents of children in the process of a diagnosis or, with a recent diagnosis; Parent Programs, Parent Advice. Providing Therapeutic Services for children/young people and their parents/carers including play therapy, art therapy, counselling and well-being activities for adult carers / parents as well as young carers. These interventions primarily focus on supporting children and young people with disabilities including autism, and their parents / carers, who feel isolated, alone and are experiencing mental health issues.
- (3) Early Years Programme – Supporting children and families through Play & Stay right up to Pre-school. Sólás is the lead partner in the Special Education Needs, Belfast Wide Early Years (BWEY) Initiative, including the following partners, Glenbrook SureStart, Kids Together Belfast, East Belfast SureStart and Sólás. Our BWEY Seedlings 2-3 year old development program and our BWEY Sunflowers 3-4 year old programme for children with disabilities, supports 30 children each year. In Sept 2023, we were invited by the DE to deliver a SEN pre-school provision for children with disabilities and with a Statement of Educational Need in place.

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

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- (4) Educational Programmes: Programmes targeting children with mild additional needs and not achieving their full learning potential (Back on Track Program), as well as Educational Workshops
- (5) Young Adults Programme SONA - for young adults transitioning / leaving Special School - a day service, that provides opportunities for develop life skills, offer wellbeing and social opportunities and a safe supported space for young people with disabilities to be with their peers.

The policies adopted in furtherance of these objects are.

1. Enhance the physical infrastructure of the organisation ensuring that facilities are fit for purpose and designed to best meet the complex needs of many of the service users supported. In the past year we have developed a new programme SONA, and hired a new space at the YMCA site in Stranmillis, which we developed for young adults transitioning from Special School. This programme supports young people with life skills, cookery, independence skills, healthy eating and wellbeing, exercise, social skills, trips, etc
2. Consolidate and strengthen the organisation's services, expand the capacity of Sólás to deliver vital programmes to children, young people and their families, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation through creating a business model which is robust and reduces their current dependency upon grant funding.
3. Work collaboratively with a diverse range of organisations, all of which contribute to the delivery of effective services, primarily to benefit children and young people with additional needs across Belfast. In particular, Sólás works with 3 key partnerships, South Belfast Surestart (through the Early Years and Urban Village A Place STEP programme; and the Belfast Wide Early Years (BWEY) partnership led by Sólás. We also collaborate on youth programmes with Kids Together, a similar disability service organisation to Sólás operating in West Belfast.
4. Promote excellence in their practice - Sólás works closely with all Belfast based Universities and Teacher Training Colleges. Sólás currently offers placement opportunities to students from QUB, Stranmillis, St Marys & UUJ studying a number of degree programmes (including health & social care, psychology, education, masters in autism, and masters in atypical child development). Many of the students who come to Sólás on placement are retained as staff members/volunteers.
5. Tackle disadvantages experienced by children and young people with moderate to severe learning needs who experience an acute lack of choice or options throughout their lives when trying to access appropriate services; through delivery of early years and daycare services, afterschool provision, youth services and educational support.
6. Grow organically and continue to develop a diverse range of programmes, projects and activities which meet the needs of the whole family; the group currently deliver their services across 8 settings, the majority of which are located in areas of greatest disadvantage.
7. Generate income through Social Enterprise activities delivered through access to Self- Directed Support Packages. Self- Directed support is the provision of tailored individual support packages for children and young people with severe learning difficulties and disabilities. Children and young people in this category are eligible to access direct payments from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and can use it to buy in the support they feel is most needed to improve their quality of life and provides benefit to them personally. Sólás provides self-directed support services and also offers administrative support to families to access the scheme.

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024*

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8. Childcare / Youth and Respite Services - these services focuses upon children aged 5 to 18 years old and as per core mission, targets those children with the most complex and challenging needs. It provides a valuable childcare service for working parents, and respite for those parents who desperately need support. These services are tailored and based upon the needs of each individual child / young person with suitable staffing support in place as per organisational policies and experience.
9. Engage with Parents/Carers to enhance services: Sólás engages with parents and carers on a daily basis in relation to the needs of both their children and themselves. The feedback and information they provide is vital to the ongoing success of the organisation. Parents/Carers inform the development and enhancement of core programmes and activities. Parents/Carers readily support evaluations, research and frequently represent the needs of their child(ren)/organisation to funders, politicians and statutory authorities.
10. Engage with Staff - Engagement with our staff team is critical. The feedback and input they make to ensure delivery of high-quality service and provision is vital to the day to day running of the organisation.
11. Engage the Local Community/Businesses to provide support to the organisation; this helps us create an extended welcoming and safe environment for the children/young people and parents/carers who use our facilities.
12. Community Organisations - Sólás works extensively and engages with a diverse range of community organisations. We are part of the Ulidia Campus Plans, which includes Sólás, Rosario Football Club as well as Scoil an Droichid (primary school moving to the newly refurbished Ulidia School site adjoining Sólás and the Ulidia Playing Fields). The campus partners have been working together for several years to deliver services to the community and to maximise the use of the community resources that we collectively hold.
13. We also work closely with Forward South Partnership and South Belfast Surestart, with whom we have service delivery partnerships. In addition we hire rooms from, YMCA, Mornington, Rosario Youth Club, Village Church Haypark and Scoil an Droichid to support the delivery of some of our community services.
14. Local Schools - Sólás and local schools engage on a daily basis in the best interests of the children/young people attending the organisation. Their services are interdependent and necessary to create the best possible development and educational opportunities for the children who attend their facilities. Schools understand the challenges of providing safe and consistent care for children who need stability in order to thrive. Schools support and understand the need for this project.
15. Belfast Trust and DE - Sólás has engaged from the outset with key statutory agencies in developing the services which are so important to so many families. Positive engagement is essential to the ongoing and continued work of Sólás. The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the Charity should undertake.

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024*

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### **Achievements and performance**

Sólás has experienced another year of growth, responding to the increasing demand for care / respite, educational support, developmental programmes, therapeutic services and home support, across Belfast and further afield. The establishment of our young adults transition programme, SONA, has been further developed in the year, and is supporting a growing number of young people coming through from children's services. Many of these young people have experienced our children's services and are now at the point of leaving special school and need a bespoke support programme. SONA endeavours to help young adults to reach their full potential, by encouraging new skills and further developing existing skills in a holistic and individual way. It includes independent living skills, such as cookery, self-care, laundry, money management etc. It also promotes health & wellbeing, such as physical exercise, healthy eating, art therapy, yoga, mindfulness, and offers all participants social opportunities to enjoy a range of leisure and recreations, such as bowling, swimming, day trips etc with peers.

Contracts with the BHSCT demonstrate the growing confidence that the Disability Services at the trust place on services offered at Sólás. Cash balances have improved, net assets have been maintained and the charity is able to maintain a healthy operating surplus. Sólás received a significant boost in the year with securing £250,000 from the Goodman Foundation towards the new £2.5m building development project. A further £250,000 from Goodman Foundation has been guaranteed once the construction starts.

### **Financial Review**

The results for the year are set out on the Statement of Financial Activities. The Trustees consider the financial results satisfactory.

Sólás has a risk management policy in place under which risks are identified and reviewed by management on a regular basis. Procedures are in place to manage the risks.

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three- and six-month's expenditure. The Trustees consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

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### Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The Company was established under a Memorandum of Association and is governed by its Articles of Association.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Fionnguala McCotter – Director Chair

Tom Doran (resigned 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2024)

Emily Gallagher

Caitriona Nic Sheáin

Lorraine McErlain appointed 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Elaine Holmes

Ross Reid resigned 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024

Steven Egan appointed 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Mairead McCartan

Jean McGann

Joanne Mercer

None of the Trustees have any beneficial interest in the company. All of the Trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

The directors of the company are also charity Trustees for the purposes of Charity Law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association directors are elected at an Annual General Meeting by the members (in person, or through an authorised representative or by proxy).

All new directors receive in-house induction and training appropriate to their roles.

Sólás has a Management Committee, made up of Trustees. The Committee meets regularly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. The day-to-day responsibility for the provision of the services rests with the manager and the senior management team.

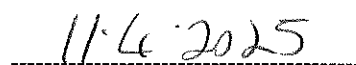
### Auditor

The Board of Sólás approved appointment of Kearney & Co as their auditor for the year.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Fionnguala McCotter  
Trustee



Dated:

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024*

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### Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Sólás for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### Auditor

Each of the persons who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that;

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all relevant steps that they ought to have taken as trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

### Small company provisions

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

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

### TO THE TRUSTEES OF SÓLÁS

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#### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Sólás (the 'charity') for the year ended 30 June 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, and the notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 30 June 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the year then ended.
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

#### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Conclusions relating to going concern.

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

#### Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

#### Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the Trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.