

SOS N.I.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023, which also comprises the Directors' Report required by the Companies Act 2006.

Reference and administrative details

The charity name

The legal name of the charity is:- SOS N.I.

The charity is also known by its operating name, SOS Bus N.I.

The charity's areas operation and UK charitable registration

The charity is registered in Northern Ireland with the Charity Commission in Northern Ireland (CCNI) with charity number NIC100247

Legal structure of the charity

The charity is constituted as a a company limited by guarantee, registered under the Companies Act. The governing document of the charity is the Memorandum and Articles of Association establishing the company under company legislation.

There are no restrictions in the governing documents on the operation of the Charity or on its investment powers other than those imposed by Charity Law.

By operation of law, all trustees are directors under the Companies Act 2006 and all directors are trustees under Charities legislation and have responsibilities, as such, under both company and charity legislation.

The trustees are all individuals.

The principal operating address, telephone number, email and web addresses of the charity are:-

Weavers Court Business Park
Belfast
BT12 5GH

Telephone	028 9066 4505
Email address	info@sosbusni.com
Web address	www.sosbusni.com

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The registered office of the charity for Companies Act purposes is:-

25 Shore Road
Holywood
Northern Ireland, BT18 9HX

The Trustees in office on the date the report was approved were:-

Mr M J Brooks
Mr P Loughins
Mrs S C Henderson
Miss M Dunne
Mr D J Maguire
Mr D G Mark

The following persons served as Trustees during the year ended 31 December 2023 :-

The trustees who served as a trustee in the reporting period, and, if applicable, their dates of appointment or resignation during the year were:-

<i>Name</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Resigned/Retired</i>
Mr M J Brooks		
Mrs F Douglas		29 November 2023
Mr J P Hughes		29 November 2023
Mr P Loughins		
Mrs S C Henderson		
Miss M Dunne	15 May 2023	
Mr D J Maguire	15 May 2023	
Mr D G Mark	15 May 2023	

All the trustees are also members of the charity.

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Objects and activities of the charity

The purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document

The Charity's objects are specifically restricted to the following:

- advancement of health or saving of lives by providing emergency medical treatment and care;
- relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage through the provision of non emergency medical care, treatment, advice, emotional support and sustenance;
- advancement of education of children and young people up to the age of 25 years old including vocational training and training in life skills;
- advancement of citizenship and community development by provision of advice, information and process of referral to professional agencies;
- advancement of education of volunteers including training in health and safety and life skills.

The main activities undertaken in relation to those purposes during the year

The main activities undertaken during the year to further those purposes are detailed below.

Night Time Services: Creating Safer Streets. Volunteers provided compassionate, non-judgemental support to anyone who in need or feeling vulnerable, ensuring their safety and well-being.

Day Time Response Team: Street-based therapy and crisis intervention. Launched in 2021, this service continued to grow in 2023 following a pilot programme in partnership with PSNI. It offers essential mental health support and crisis intervention for individuals with complex lives who face barriers in accessing services.

Event Welfare Services: As part of a multi-agency health and safety team at concerts and major events, SOS provided safe spaces for mental health interventions, substance use recovery, and assistance in getting people home safely.

Signposting Project: Led by volunteers, this initiative ensures that individuals with long-term, complex needs receive the appropriate care. Volunteers are trained to connect clients to partner organisations for sustained support.

Volunteer Training & Development: Volunteers are equipped with skills necessary for delivering effective street-based interventions. They are encouraged to contribute to the design and development of SOS services, ensuring a community-driven approach.

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Overview of SOS Bus NI

SOS Bus NI is committed to creating safe spaces across Belfast. As a volunteer-centred organisation, our services are co-designed, developed, and evaluated in collaboration with volunteers, clients, and multi-agency partners.

Our volunteers are trained to provide:

- First Aid
- Harm Reduction
- Mental Health Intervention
- Naloxone Administration
- Suicide De-escalation
- Safe transport to A&E or other safe spaces

We also collaborate with agencies supporting refugee families, providing vital transport and resettlement assistance for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland.

Collaboration with Partners

SOS Bus NI works closely with emergency services, statutory bodies, other charities, universities, and community groups to tackle serious social issues. Our collaboration with the Police and Ambulance services has reduced crime rates and unnecessary hospital admissions, making Belfast safer for everyone.

The main activities undertaken during the year to further the charity's purpose for the public benefit

Beneficiaries

The charity continues to support the general public of Northern Ireland, with a focus on vulnerable populations, including:

- Victims of assault
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Those in fear of violence or crime
- Victims of substance misuse
- Those feeling lonely or isolated
- Individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts

Key Resources Deployed

To facilitate service delivery in 2023, SOS NI utilised:

- A 60-foot Flexi Bus, providing a safe space for anyone in need
- Two response minibuses, allowing volunteer teams to respond to calls from PSNI, bars, and the public to transport vulnerable individuals to our bus for comprehensive care.

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2023 Service Delivery

- Night-Time Response Services were provided each Friday and Saturday as part of the Purple Flag Night-Time Economy initiative. A team of 12 Team Leaders welcomed 27 new welfare volunteers and 1 new driver this year.
- The SOS Bus supported 1299 clients, including 849 people under the influence of drugs or alcohol, 150 individuals experiencing homelessness, 49 mental health interventions, and 32 suicide interventions.
- SOS Welfare Services were delivered at 20 concerts, supporting 697 people all of whom were provided with a safe space for substance recovery. 60 clients were brought home by SOS Response Mini-bus. 240 young people were collected by Parents or Relatives.

Daytime Services

The Daytime Response Team delivered 519 interventions, supporting:

- 49 individuals in need of mental health support
- 370 people experiencing homelessness
- 117 individuals who were referred to partner organisations for long-term care

Partnership and adaptation

In 2023, collaboration remained central to our work. By partnering with organisations such as Belfast City Council, PSNI, The Ambulance Service of NI, the Welcome Organisation, Extern, NEXUS, and Alcoholics Anonymous, we provided more comprehensive support to those in need. These collaborations allowed us to adapt our Safe Spaces and signposting initiatives, ensuring our services remained responsive to the evolving challenges faced by our clients. Whether offering mental health support, addiction recovery assistance, or safe transport, these partnerships helped us deliver a wide range of effective services.

Our involvement in the Purple Flag Initiative further highlights the importance of partnership. The Purple Flag status, an accreditation that recognises safe and well-managed night-time economies, reflects our commitment to making Belfast's city centre a safer place for everyone. Working with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Belfast City Council, Belfast BIDs, local businesses, and other community organisations, we contribute to reducing crime and supporting vulnerable individuals.

These collaborative efforts underscore the power of partnerships in addressing complex social issues. By pooling resources and expertise, we ensure our services are integrated into a broader strategy for public safety and welfare, providing impactful, long-term solutions for the Belfast community. Together, we are building a more connected support system to make the city safer, more inclusive, and better equipped to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in managing the activities of the charity.

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The main achievements and performance of the charity during the year

Results for the financial year ended 31 December 2023 are provided in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 14 of the financial statements.

A summary of the assets and liabilities as at 31 December 2023 are provided in the Balance Sheet on page 17.

The financial statements should be read in conjunction with their related notes, which appear on pages 19 to 30 and have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102).

In summary:

1. Total incoming resources have decreased by 29% to £159,296 (2022: £225,477)
2. Total resources expended have decreased by 37% to £180,722 (2022: £288,140)
3. There was a net deficit of £21,426 in the year (2022:£62,663).

Fundraising activities during the year

Fundraising is critical to the continued success of SOS Bus NI. Our vital services are funded through a combination of grants, donations from individuals and businesses, and the generosity of our supporters.

These contributions enable us to provide essential support to vulnerable individuals in Belfast, including those experiencing mental health crises, homelessness, or substance misuse. Without consistent funding, we would not be able to operate our Safe Spaces or deliver crucial interventions such as suicide de-escalation and overdose prevention.

Donations allow us to train volunteers, maintain our fleet of response vehicles, and ensure our services are available when needed most—whether during the day or night. The support we receive from the community is not just financial but reflects a shared commitment to making Belfast a safer and more caring place. Every donation, large or small, helps us sustain our efforts to create lasting positive change for individuals and the wider community.

The difference the charity's performance during the year has made to the beneficiaries of the charity and the wider society

Throughout the year, SOS Bus NI has made a significant impact on both its beneficiaries and the wider community. By providing critical support through our Nighttime and Day Time Services, we have safeguarded the physical and emotional well-being of vulnerable individuals across Belfast. Our trained volunteers offered non-judgmental, compassionate care to people in crisis, including those experiencing mental health challenges, substance misuse, homelessness, and suicidal thoughts. In 2023 alone, we conducted nearly 3000 interventions, delivering essential services such as crisis counselling, suicide de-escalation, and overdose prevention.

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The presence of SOS Bus NI has also alleviated pressure on local resources, particularly emergency services such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Health Trusts, and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). By offering a Safe Space where individuals can receive immediate help, our services reduce the need for police and ambulance callouts, hospital admissions, and other statutory interventions. This contributes to a more efficient use of public resources, while creating a safer environment for the broader community.

Through our collaborative partnerships and ongoing dedication, SOS Bus NI continues to play a vital role in building a safer, more supportive Belfast for all.

Structure, governance and management of the charity

The methods used to recruit and appoint new charity trustees

As set out in the charity's Articles of Association, the charity may by ordinary resolution:

- appoint a person who is willing to act to be a Trustee; and
- determine the rotation in which any additional Trustees are to retire.

No person other than a Trustee retiring by rotation may be appointed a Trustee at any general meeting unless:

- he or she is recommended for re-election by the Trustees; or
- not less than fourteen nor more than thirty five clear days before the date of the meeting, the Charity is given a notice that:
 - is signed by a member entitled to vote at the meeting;
 - states the member's intention to propose the appointment of a person as a Trustee;
 - contains the details that, if the person were to be appointed, the Charity would have to file at Companies House; and
 - is signed by the person who is proposed to show his or her willingness to be appointed.

All persons who are entitled to receive notice of a general meeting must be given not less than seven nor more than twenty eight days' notice of any resolution to be put to the meeting to appoint a Trustee other than a Trustee who is to retire by rotation.

The Trustees may appoint a person who is willing to act as a Trustee.

A Trustee appointed by a resolution of the other Trustees must retire at the next annual general meeting and must be taken into account in determining the Trustees who are to retire by rotation.

The appointment of a Trustee, whether by the charity in a general meeting or by the other Trustees, must not cause the number of Trustees to exceed any number fixed as the maximum number of Trustees.

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The charity's organisational structure

The charity is managed by a diverse and experienced board of trustees supported by a team of dedicated employees and volunteers.

The day to day operational activity of SOS N.I. is board led, supported by 4 employees.

The trustees' bankers and advisors

Bankers Danske Bank Limited, Donegall Square West, Belfast, BT1 6JS
Solicitors Edwards & Co, 28 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LA

Financial review

The charity's financial position at the end of the year ended 31 December 2023

The financial position of the charity at 31 December 2023 and comparatives for the prior period, as more fully detailed in the accounts, can be summarised as follows:-

	2023	2022
	£	£
Net expenditure	(21,426)	(62,663)
Unrestricted Revenue Funds available for the general purposes of the charity	198,099	219,525
Total Unrestricted Funds	198,099	219,525
Total Funds	198,099	219,525

Financial review of the position at the reporting date, 31 December 2023 .

The trustees consider the financial performance by the charity during the year to have been satisfactory, especially given the ongoing economic environment and fluctuations in the regional funding landscape resulting from Brexit, and the resulting concentration of charities seeking funding from a smaller pool of funders.

The charity generated a cash deficit of £21,426.

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Policies on reserves.

The Board's objective is to build reserves and hold them at a level equivalent to 6 months operating costs. The Board of Trustees keep this position under constant review.

Details of The Independent Examiner

Mr William Wilson
Member of Chartered Accountants Ireland
25 Shore Road
Holywood
BT18 9HX

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Statement of the Directors' and Trustees' Responsibilities

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities (Northern Ireland) Act 2008, as amended and The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

In particular, the Companies Act 2006 and charity law require the Board of Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity as at the end of the financial year and of the surplus or deficit of the charity. In preparing those financial statements the Board is required to :-

- to prepare the accounts in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law).
- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The law requires that the trustees must not approve the accounts unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for the year.

The Trustees are also responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and which are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006 and comply with regulations made under the Charities Act. 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.

The Trustees are also responsible for the contents of the Trustees' report, and the statutory responsibility of the Independent Examiner in relation to the Trustees' report is limited to examining the report and ensuring that, on the face of the report, there are no material inconsistencies with the figures disclosed in the financial statements.

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Method of preparation of accounts - Small company provisions

The financial statements are set out on pages 14 to 30.

The financial statements have been prepared implementing the FRS 102 SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice for Accounting and Reporting by Charities) 2015, (as amended by the Bulletin issued in February 2016), and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard 102, (effective 1st January 2016).

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006. applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

This report was approved by the board of trustees on 2 October 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Loughins', written in a cursive style.

Mr Peter Loughins
Director and Trustee