

Autonomie

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

For the year ending 31st March 2024



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1. Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 2024

The trustees of Autonomie are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

1.1 Introduction from the Chair of our Management Committee

This year has seen some major changes for Autonomie with a new strategic plan being developed to guide our work of the next 3 to 5 years and a major revamp of the SAIL project (which resulted in very favourable feedback from both the SAIL participants and their parents/carers).

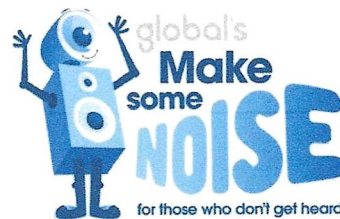
We have experienced a number of significant challenges during the year, and we have very reluctantly concluded that we will have to discontinue our Family Voice Hub project due to a lack of ongoing funding. However, we have continued to deliver much needed services for young people with a physical disability and/or mild to moderate learning difficulties and the feedback from our participants and their families/carers indicates that they greatly value the services which we provide.

This would not have been possible without the hard work of our young people, staff, volunteers, funders and supporters. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who is part of our Autonomie Family for everything they have done over the last year, and we look forward to continuing to work towards our vision where all young people with disabilities can have lives full of fun, friendship and real opportunities for improving both their social lives and independent-living skills.

Chairperson, Janice English

1.2 Our Supporters

We are indebted to a number of organisations who have supported us during the year and, in particular, the National Lottery Community Fund, Global's Make Some Noise initiative, Danske Bank and the St James's Place Foundation who have provided invaluable financial support to Autonomie during the year.

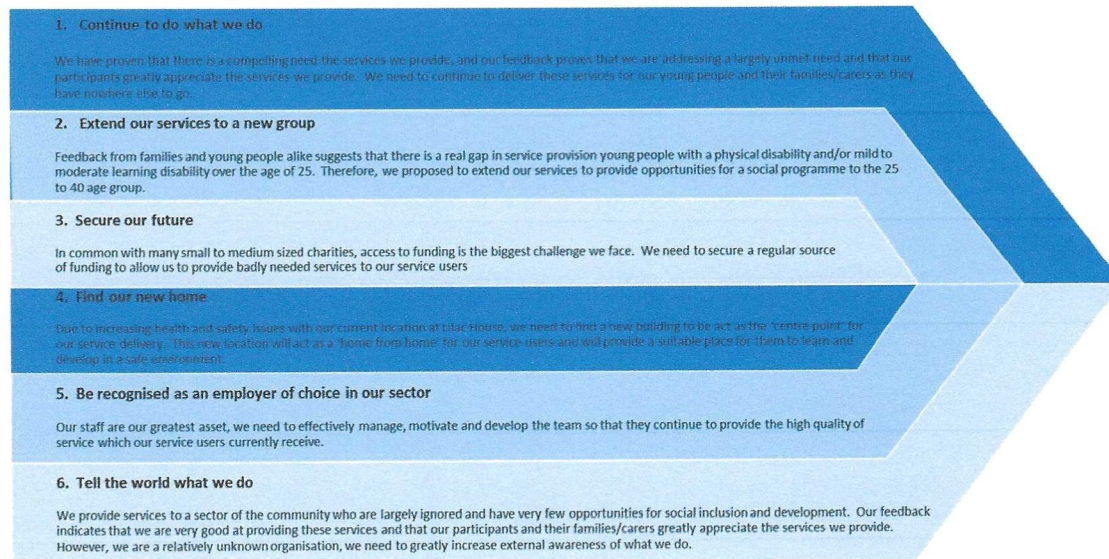


1.3 The Year in Overview

We started the year with a new Chair and Secretary of the Autonomie Management Committee following the elections held at our EGM held on 30 March 2023. We also carried a major revamp of the SAIL project which resulted in very favourable feedback from both the SAIL participants and their parents/carers.

During the first part of the year, we developed a new strategic plan for Autonomie and this was approved and formally adopted at September's Management Committee meeting. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the new strategic plan which we believe provides a solid platform to allow us to provide services well into the future.

Figure 1 – Overview of new Strategic Plan



During the year we experienced significant challenges in 3 key areas:

- Our main location (Lilac House) is no longer fit for purpose and changes in the surrounding area have caused problems for both our young people and Autonomie staff. Therefore, we have begun to look at options for relocation.
- We recognise that we need to take steps to strengthen the make-up of our Management Committee. We launched an exercise to target and recruit new members of the Management Committee. However, for a variety of reasons, this has proved unsuccessful to date and this exercise will continue into 2024-25.
- In common with many other charities at this time, securing ongoing funding has been a major issue in what is now an extremely challenging environment. We have reviewed a number of options and submitted formal applications to a number of potential funders. However, securing ongoing funding remains our number one challenge going into the year 2024-25.

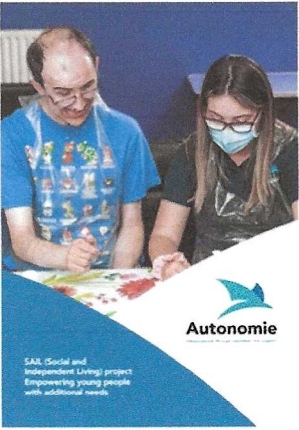
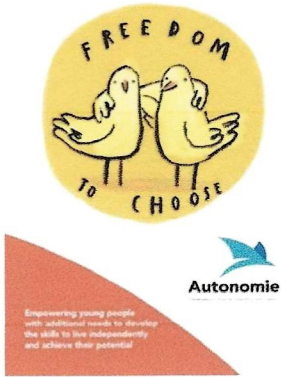
Towards the end of the year 2023-24 we received notification that our application to the National Lottery Community Fund for new funding for the Family Voice Hub had been unsuccessful. Therefore, we ended the year on a sad note as we had to make plans to close the project by the end of April 2024 as project funding would run out by this date.

1.4 Achievements & Performance

Despite the challenges we faced during the year, we remain convinced that there is still a compelling need for the services which Autonomie provides. We continue to address an area of unmet need for young people with disabilities and/or mild to moderate learning disabilities and their families/carers.

During 2023-24 we continued to make a positive impact on the lives of our young people and their parents/carers, with Figure 2 below demonstrating some of the positive impacts we made during the year via our 3 flagship projects.

Figure 2 – Our 3 Flagship Projects

 <p>SAIL (Social and Independent Living) project Empowering young people with additional needs.</p>	<p>As further funding for the SAIL (Social And Independent Living) was being applied for, we evaluated the content and relevance of the current project. A full overhaul was undertaken and with the help of the young people and others who had completed the project, areas of need were identified, and practical, interactive and fun sessions were developed to cover the following modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Daily Living Skills • Social & Life Skills • Developing self confidence and esteem • Goal setting and achievements • Basic Cookery & food storage • Using Money on a daily basis • Personal Hygiene & Self presentation • Developing Hobbies • Looking after your mental health • Coping and managing emotions & feelings. <p><i>“Everything SAIL offers to my son has helped with his confidence, independence and day to day living.” (Feedback from the parent of a SAIL participant)</i></p>
 <p>Empowering young people with additional needs to develop the skills to live independently and achieve their potential.</p>	<p>Freedom2Choose grew in numbers through the year, more emphasis was given to the young people ‘choosing’ what activities they wanted to do and for how long. This empowered the young people to make informed decisions about how they spent their time at the programme.</p> <p>A high number of enjoyed physical activities e.g., obstacle courses, dodgeball and Bocca. These activities promoted team building and healthy competition, while also encouraging communication and socialization.</p> <p>Visits out to Crumlin Road Gaol during their Halloween programme was a great success, the group met with Halloween characters, petted some animals and also enjoyed carving pumpkins.</p> <p>Our Christmas Event was planned and organized by all 3 projects (SAIL, Freedom2Choose & Family Voice Hub) this was a family event where every member of the families attended, young people and their siblings met with Santa and received presents. Mums and Dads also received ‘self-care’ gifts.</p> <p><i>“For the help and support they give the young people, they always go the extra mile. Nothing is too much trouble, Freedom2Choose Saturdays are always looked forward to in our house”. (Feedback from parent of Freedom2Choose participant)</i></p>



This year, Family Voice Hub has seen an increase in requests for support and advice in relation to SEN Assessment processes. In addition, a high number of their core group of parents seeking advice on Wills & Trusts, as they get older and are concerned about their son/daughter after they are no longer here. Several rural families sought support from the Hub, and the staff travelled out to meet with them and support them with a variety of issues relating to their child or young person. They travelled to Coleraine, Ballymena, Newry and Warrenpoint, as the families said they felt isolated as most services were Belfast based. Family Voice Hub was an integral partner in the development, publishing and launch of Children & Young People Strategic Partnership Resource for parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities. They also represented Autonomie on the All Party Group on Disability within the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In total Family Voice Hub worked with 170 families throughout this year.

“Autonomie is the only organisation I know who see the whole family as important and includes them into every programme and event. All of us love Autonomie events.” **(Feedback from one of our parents)**

2. Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31st March 2023

2.1 Income & Expenditure

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
Lottery Grants	-	180,031	180,031	201,976
Fundraising/Donations	5,465	-	5,465	3,620
Capital Revenue	-	-	0	0
Interest	0	-	0	25
Total Resources	5,465	180,031	185,496	205,621
Total Resources Expended	1,309	169,918	171,227	178,508
Net Income/Net Movement in Funds	4,156	10,113	14,269	27,113
Fund Balance Brought Forward	1,543	49,781	51,324	24,211
Total Funds Carried Forward	5,699	59,894	65,593	51,324

2.2 Statement of comprehensive income

There is no other comprehensive income to report for the financial year.

2.3 Continuing operations

The Statement of Financial Activities has been prepared on the basis that all operations are continuing operations.

2.4 Historical Cost

The results as disclosed in the statement of financial activities and the net incoming resources for the year have been presented on an historical cost basis.

2.5 Balance Sheet as 31st March 2024

Fixed assets	2024	2023
Tangible assets	937	1,200
Current assets		
Debtors	883	0
Cash at bank and in hand	64,473	50,124
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	700	0
Net current assets	64,656	50,124
Total assets less current liabilities	65,593	51,324
Income funds		
Restricted funds	59,894	49,781
Unrestricted funds	5,699	1,543
Total funds	65,593	51,324

3. Reference & Administrative Details

3.1 Charity Name

Autonomie

3.2 NI Charity Number

NIC100421

3.3 Registered Address

Lilac House,
4 Sandhurst Road,
Belfast,
BT7 1PW

3.4 Charity Trustees as of 31st March 2024

Mrs Janice English (Chair)
Mr David Coates (Secretary)
Mrs Mary Bell
Mr Paul Jeffers
Mrs Naomi McAleese

3.5 Other Charity Trustees in the year to 31st March 2024

Mr Douglas Bartlett (Resigned 28 June 2023)

3.6 Patron as of 31st March 2024

Mr Oliver Jeffers MBE

3.7 Advisors

Banking	Danske Bank Donegall Sq. West Belfast BT1 6JS
Insurance	Markel (UK) Limited City Square House 11 Wellington Street Leeds LS1 4DL

3.8 Structure, Governance & Management

Governing Document & Constitution

Autonomie is a company limited by guarantee, governed by its constitution which is available at www.autonomie.org.uk. It has been granted charitable status by The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under registration number NIC100421.

Trustee Selection & Management

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:

- Mrs Janice English (Chair)
- Mr David Coates (Secretary)
- Mrs Mary Bell
- Mr Paul Jeffers
- Mrs Naomi McAleese

If appropriate, new trustees are invited onto the Board when the need arises. There are no specific requirements regarding skills or experience. However, the current trustees recognise the importance of a diverse and competent Board, and this will impact upon any nomination. Those who are invited will be involved with Autonomie and will be held in high regard for their work. New trustees receive appropriate induction procedures and training upon appointment. No trustees receive any remuneration for their services.

Autonomie's work is governed by a Management Committee which usually meets every other month to discuss financial and strategic issues, policy and procedure decisions, and to ratify significant legally binding decisions. The Management Committee is made up of the charity's trustees plus the Chief Officer and a Finance Officer. All meetings of the Autonomie Management Committee are formally documented, with all points of agreement and actions recorded and signed-off by the Chair of the Management Committee.

Miss Lynne Morrison, Autonomie's Chief Officer, is responsible for managing the day-to-day running of the charity.

3.9 Objectives & Activities Charitable Objects

Autonomie's overall objective is to provide practical educational and personal development support to help young people with a physical disability and/or mild to moderate learning difficulties to reach their potential and lead fuller and more independent lives. We also seek to provide support, guidance and a sense of community for their parents/carers and their families.

The main challenges faced by our young people and their families can be summarised as follows:

- There is a lack of age appropriate facilities open to young people with a physical disability and/or mild to moderate learning difficulties in Northern Ireland. Autonomie aims to address a significant gap in service provision for young people who are (or are at risk of) becoming socially isolated resulting in additional mental health issues and low self-value.

- Autonomie provides post educational provision to a number of communities and to families whose young people have limited options after leaving school. The project also helps these young people to develop social networks within their own communities with peers, and with other young people who face similar challenges within their lives.
- Autonomie also seeks to deliver significant benefits to the parents and carers of its participants. Feedback from similar projects demonstrates that parents and carers have formed a community to provide help and support for families with young people with additional needs. Parents and carers of participants in our projects participate in the Autonomie parents' forum through our Family Voice Hub project. This provides parents/carers with an input into the development and delivery of our projects and allows them to avail of help and support from other parents/carers.

The needs of the young people who attend Autonomie change as they get older. Increasingly, they want to have similar opportunities as their siblings have had as part of growing up. As these young people get older their disabilities and mental wellbeing can deteriorate, and both the young people and their parents/carers can face additional challenges. Autonomie provides an environment for the young people to address these challenges alongside peers who are facing similar challenges. We provide essential support for the parents/carers of the young people as many of the development skills they gain can be transferred to the home environment. This provides reassurance for parents as they can see their son/daughter develop skills which will be useful when they move into supported/independent living arrangements.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Autonomie confirm that they have complied with their duty as outlined in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended). We consider that Autonomie has purposes which fall under a number of the 12 descriptions of purposes listed in the Charities Act, in particular:

- 'The advancement of education' as we provide life skills training to young people with a physical disability and/or a mild to moderate learning disability;
- 'The advancement of health or the saving of lives' as we provide counselling services to our young people and their families; and
- 'The advancement of citizenship or community development' as we promote volunteering and the voluntary sector.

Inclusiveness and equality were 2 of the key founding principles for the Autonomie. Therefore, participation in Autonomie projects is open to all sections of the community and we do not provide a private benefit to individuals (unless this benefit is incidental).

Summary of Main Activities

The core activities of Autonomie during the year ending 31st March 2024 were delivering our 3 flagship projects:

- SAIL;
- Freedom2Choose; and
- The Family Voice Hub.

Further details on these projects can be found at section 1.3 above.

Approved and adopted by the Management Committee on 4th February 2025 and signed on their behalf:

pp. David ~~Cates~~

Janice English
Chair of the Autonomie Management Committee



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Patron: Oliver Jeffers, Artist & Illustrator



Company Number is NI698724 (Autonomie Ltd)
Northern Ireland Charity Commission Registration Number 100421