

Trustees Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

Introduction

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their annual report and unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Charitable objectives and activities

Flourish NI is dedicated to the support of people whose lives have been impacted by modern slavery or other forms of exploitation, including forced labour.

The charity's aim is that every individual affected by human trafficking is supported towards a brighter future.

Public Benefit

In setting the charity objectives and planning activities for the year, the trustees have carefully considered the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries and the educating the wider public on modern slavery and human trafficking.

Review of Activities & Performance

Flourish NI provides long term, tailored, client centred support for survivors of modern slavery.

Our work is focused on reducing vulnerability to re-exploitation by supporting survivors to empower themselves to be able to move on to lead safe, independent and resilient lives.

Our core work focuses on 3 areas:

1. Casework and advocacy;
2. Community activities and skills-based courses; and
3. Therapeutic interventions.

Casework & Advocacy

As with the previous financial year, it has been observed that the complexity of the work is increasing as staff are dealing with areas requiring high levels of skill and professionalism. This is predominantly linked to increased immigration challenges and the associated changing legislative environment and difficulties in finding appropriate housing. For those the charity supports we have witnessed these challenges having negative impacts upon mental health.

The programme of support offered by Flourish is based upon a strengths-based model using a trauma informed approach. Casework is intensive one to one support which aims to provide pathways to practical stability, navigating systems within the UK, understanding rights and setting both short-and-long term goals, working towards independence for survivors.

This year has been challenging for caseworkers as it became clear that many services that clients were entitled to were facing increasing demand, so accessing these services has become more difficult. This has increased caseworkers support time required which has inevitably put more pressures on the charity. We have also seen a sharp increase in referrals which has doubled over the last 3 years.

The charity has continued throughout this financial year to address the gap in support for individuals who are waiting to enter the statutory system[pre-NRM]. While the mission of Flourish is to provide long term recovery and support for survivors, the charity recognised the need for individuals to be able to access specialist care while waiting to enter the NRM.

As the landscape of trafficking within Northern Ireland continues to change, the trustees and management continue to monitor these trends and adapt to meet the needs in the evolving landscape.

Other Policy Activities

Flourish NI is part of both local and national networks. Within Northern Ireland, it is a member of the Belfast City Council Migrant Forum and the Department of Justice Engagement Group on Modern Slavery. As part of the latter, the charity can highlight policy issues and operational difficulties at a governmental level.

Nationally the charity is a member of the Human Trafficking Foundation and also the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group ['ATMG'], which is a small coalition of anti-trafficking charities influencing policy at a national level.

Community activities

As a charity we have witnessed the immense benefits to survivors of community activities and we continue to prioritise ways for survivors to spend time together to build confidence, improve general wellbeing and reduce isolation.

A weekly drop-in service remains a focal point to providing a safe place for survivors to meet and become involved with various activities such as jewellery making, calligraphy, floral workshops, exercise and various crafts.

A number of survivor led activities were hosted during the year giving clients the opportunity to teach a skill to others. This was both an empowering experience for the client teaching and for those participating. The charity will continue to encourage clients to use their skills in a safe supportive environment.

Courses have the additional benefits of providing an opportunity to learn new skills. Some examples of courses that were hosted during the year were beginners sewing classes, an employability course, ESOL English course, feel good with food course, a beginners computer class, and a well-being and resilience course.

The charity also facilitated a nail technician course for a group of survivors wanting to enter the workforce and learn a new skill. The course was fully accredited and those attending became certified nail technicians.

Flourish NI is keen to build upon its activities and courses as the benefits to those attending have been clear.

Therapeutic activities

Whilst counselling continues to be identified as a need, currently this is provided through referrals to third party services/organisations. As with all services, demand is high and clients can often have long waiting times before being able to avail of much needed mental health support.

It is still the desire within the charity to provide counselling as part of the services it offers.

For the full financial year, the charity provided weekly art psychotherapy. The art therapy group at Flourish aims to provide a trauma-informed, supportive and consistent space for clients to come and experience the

benefits of the creative process. The space is held by an art therapist and aims to be inclusive and accommodate clients at different stages of their journey. The art therapy group can be meaningful for clients on multiple levels.

Sewn by Flourish

Flourish NI runs a workshop making Irish linen homeware pieces. The principle behind this is two-fold; to provide a creative outlet for survivors to upskill and to learn employability skills where individuals face barriers to employment. It is also to provide a sustainable income stream for the charity in the future.

The trustees are continuing to monitor the potential for income generated from this source, and will review the legal structure and consider the set-up of a social enterprise if deemed appropriate.

Fundraising and Partnerships

Fundraising remains a key source of income for the charity, whether those events that are facilitated by the charity or individuals/groups engaging in activities to fundraise on behalf of the charity.

Events that were held during this year were : teams/individuals involved in running events, sales of Flourish cookbook, a quiz evening and an afternoon tea.

The charity is also incredibly grateful to partner with some social enterprises and businesses.

Refuge Chocolate made donations to the charity of £8,500 during this financial year.

KIndred of Ireland donate 10% of their profits to the charity each year and EKO make a donation from each backpack that is sold.

Review of financial position

The financial results for the year to 31 March 2023, showed income of £218,259 (2022: £179,949). Of this, £117,483 (2022: £119,302) was restricted income and £100,775 (2021: £60,647) was unrestricted income. All income received was from fundraising, donations or grant income.

Expenditure during the same period totalled £213,770(2022: £172,203) of which £125,106 (2022: £139,830) was from restricted funds and £88,664 (2022: £32,373) from unrestricted.

Total funds carried forward to 1st April 2023 were £109,536 (2022: £105,047), being £Nil (2022: £7,623) restricted and £109,536 (2022: £97,424) unrestricted.

Reserves Policy

A reserves policy is in place that aims to hold between three and six months of unrestricted expenditure, to enable the charity to continue in operation for this time and meet the operational costs of a core team. This is regularly reviewed by the Trustees and has been closely monitored during the ongoing cost of living pressures, which continue to change the landscape of fundraising.

At the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have considered both the level of reserves held and forecasted income anticipated, concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that adequate resources are held to bolster any uncertainties that may arise and to continue in operation for the foreseeable future.

Structure Governance and Management

Flourish NI is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 21st May 2014. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission Northern Ireland [NIC 100423].

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles of Association are known as members of the Board. The Board are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. The Board of appointed trustees run the charity, delegating the day to day running of the organisation to employed members of staff.

New members are appointed to the board by the existing members at the Annual General Meeting, or the charity may from time to time in a General Meeting increase or reduce the number of members of the board.

Members of the board meet quarterly to discuss the strategic direction of the charity, the activities of the charity and the uses of its reserves. All members of the board give of their time and expertise on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration or benefits from the charity. Flourish NI relies heavily on volunteers giving their time to the organisation.

Members of the board are also required to disclose all relevant interests and register same with the board. The board conduct a review of risks to which the charity is exposed and review these risks annually. Where appropriate, systems and procedures are put in place to mitigate these risks.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Number: NIC 100423
Company Number: NI624552

Registered Office:

Room 101
City East Business Centre
68-72 Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 1GW

Trustees'

The trustees who served the charity during the year were:

Mrs Elizabeth McKee
Miss Sharon Pauley
Ms Judith Fox
Miss Liz Griffith

The Board of Trustees declare that they have approved the above report.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees on 29th January 2024 by:



Mrs E McKee - Chair