

# MID & EAST ANTRIM COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICES LTD

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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The trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023.

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) (effective 1 January 2019)".

### **Objectives and activities**

The company's objectives are to promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in Mid and East Antrim by the advancement of education, the protection and preservation of health and the relief of poverty, sickness and distress. To establish and provide and assist in the provision of Mid & East Antrim Community Advice Services and our outlets supplying a free, independent, confidential and impartial service of advice, information and counsel for the public and to assist the implementation of such advice, information, and counsel. To hold meetings and training either alone or with others; to maintain an active link of communication between the public and government, local government, and other public and charitable bodies.

It is our aim to alone or with other organisations seek to influence public opinion and make representations to and seek to influence governmental and other bodies regarding the development and implementation of appropriate policies. To provide evidence for government and other inquiries and to co-operate and enter into arrangement with any authorities (national, local or otherwise) and to obtain from any such authorities any rights, privileges and concessions to trade in the course of carrying out the Objects of the Company (and in particular to enter into contracts to provide services to or on behalf of other bodies) and to carry on any other trade which is not expected to give rise to taxable profits, to accept grants, subscriptions and donations.

Mid & East Antrim Community Advice Services Trustee Board of Directors, led by our chairperson, is responsible for ensuring that our services are delivered and meet the need of local people whilst meeting all contractual and legal obligations in line with charity law.

Staff and volunteers provide practical advice, negotiate on behalf of clients, and represent them formally, such as at tribunal hearings. Our client group consist of, but are not limited to, those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage. We assist clients from the general public, older people, unemployed/low income, addictions (drug/solvent/alcohol abuse), carers, ethnic minorities, homelessness, mental health, physical disabilities and tenants.

Common areas of inquiry for our services include:

- **Benefits** - entitlements, support with applications and appealing decisions
- **Debt and money advice** - how to manage debts, improve your financial situation and maximise your income
- **Consumer issues** - from used cars to difficulties with gas and electricity suppliers
- **Work-related problems** - terms and conditions, dismissal, redundancy, and intimidation
- **Housing** - from renting through to homelessness
- **Relationships** - splitting up, children and bereavement

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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Mid & East Antrim Community Services have specialist Welfare Reform Advisers in each office provided by the Welfare Reform Support Project. We also have Debt Advisors in each office provided by the Debt NI project and Pensionwise appointments are available to offer guidance to empower people to make informed decisions about their pension. From December 2022 we have been funded by Independent Age to host a Cost of Living Crisis telephone help line for older people worried or trying to navigate the grant support system available. We work in partnership with Mid & East Antrim Age Well Partnership to provide our services to their clients across the Borough, including face to face and home appointments, telephone advice and provision of other support.

### **Statement from Trustees**

On Behalf of the board of Directors of Mid & East Antrim Community Advice the Chairperson confirms that the said Board of Directors have implemented the guidance from Charity Commission on public benefit.

### **Contribution of volunteers**

Although our volunteer numbers were greatly impacted due to the pandemic, we were able to grow our volunteer force with an additional two volunteers completing training this year, contributing to 3,600 in hours with a value of £39,240 (based on living wage).

### **Achievements and performance**

#### **Contract**

In addition to meeting our contractual obligations with Mid & East Antrim Borough Council for core funding, namely dealing with 42,000 enquiries and identifying £3.5M in unclaimed benefits.

#### **Distribution of slow cookers**

Mid and East Antrim Community Advice Services identified 300 residents to be offered slow cookers, air fryers and electric blankets. Ukrainian families were identified by MEACAS who would benefit from a slow cooker and cookbook provided by NHSCT in their native language. These were distributed by MEACAS.

#### **MEA Uniform Exchange**

MEACAS introduced a uniform exchange which serves all the schools in Mid & East Antrim. Pre-loved second hand and new school uniforms are donated and redistributed free to those who wish to up cycle and reuse uniforms. During 2022-23 the equivalent in new uniforms of over £40K were distributed to families throughout Mid & East Antrim.

#### **MEA Poverty Action Group**

MEACAS continue to chair the MEA Poverty Action Group. We manage an inter-agency referral system to provide a wraparound service for those clients experiencing difficulties. We provide advice, support, and practical help. Our members include NIHE, NHSCT, CAP, Credit Union, PSNI, MEA Council and local food banks. Some of the items we were able to provide to clients in need were food, electric blankets, oil filled radiators, slow cookers, duvets, and pillows as well as vouchers for electricity and gas.

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**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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### **Financial review**

The Statement of Financial Activities outlines Mid & East Antrim Community Advice Service Limited's income, expenditure and funds for the 2022/2023 year.

Income of £651,849 shows an increase of £62,171 on the previous year mainly due to one-off covid related grants, expenditure increased by £102,651 on the previous year.

### **Reserves policy**

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 months 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 current level of free reserves falls short of this, but the Trustees continue to monitor.

### **Risk assessment**

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.

### **Structure, governance and management**

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and acceptable as charitable by HMRC under reference XR39848. The company was incorporated on 25th June 2003. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company, 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:

Deborah Neill

Rosemary Quinn

Rosemary Simpson

Marilyn Weekes

(Appointed 10 October 2022)

(Appointed 10 October 2022)

The Directors of the company are also charity Trustees for the purpose of charity law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association unless otherwise determined by the company in General Meeting the number of Trustees shall not be less than three and is not subject to any maximum. Trustees are elected to serve only until the next Annual General Meeting, at which they shall then be eligible for re-election. In agreement with the Board one new board member was co-opted on to the board, a further two members will be sought during 2023-24 to ensure that the quota of trustees is maintained. All applications to join the board are advertised in MEA local papers.

None of the trustees has 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.

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## TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Mid & East Antrim Community Advice Services Ltd 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

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that MBS Chartered Accountants be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

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



**Rosemary Quinn**

Trustee & Director

Dated: 19 December 2023