

ACTION MENTAL HEALTH
(LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

The Directors present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024. The Directors have adopted the provisions of 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) in preparing these accounts.

CONSTITUTION

Action Mental Health (AMH) is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered under NI005568, governed by the Articles of Association. The company is recognised as a charity and is registered under NIC100753 and is recognised as a charity by HM Revenue & Customs under reference number XN 47959.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The AMH board is comprised of up to 15 Directors as set out in the charity's Articles of Association. Directors may serve for a maximum of three terms of 4 years, save for Serving Directors who, having served 15 years, must be re-appointed on an annual basis. The Governance Manual guides the work of the Board, which includes an induction programme for Directors, Terms of Reference for Committees and roles and responsibilities of office bearers. Directors are recruited to the Board through an open recruitment and selection process, although four Directors may be co-opted annually; in this reporting period there was a significant renewal process with three long serving Directors resigning and five new Directors recruited.

AMH decisions on strategy, policy and material capital expenditure are taken by the full Board and it ensures the Strategic Plan guides the Executive, usually over a three year time span. Day to day decision making is under the supervision of the Chief Executive Officer, Mr D Babington, with regular reporting to the Board. Over the year, the effectiveness of the Committees was reviewed and it was agreed to reduce them from five to four and they are now the Finance, Audit and Risk, Nominations and Remuneration and Service Delivery and Development Committees (the latter committee was mainly an amalgamation of the Therapeutic Services and Innovation and Strategy Committees). The Chief Executive Officer of AMH manages the Senior Management Team and together they ensure targets in the annual Operational Plan are achieved.

In line with corporate good practice AMH has an Audit and Risk Committee with two independent and three Board members and it meets at least three times a year; the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Business Support also attend, with the external auditors present when appropriate. Usually, each year a Directors' Conference is held in October to enable the Board and all managers to assess progress and consider the future, although this did not happen in this reporting period due to significant challenges posed by the loss of ESF funding and exceptional pressures on public sector funding bodies.

The Board and Finance Committee met six times, the Audit and Risk Committee, Nominations and Remuneration Committee, Therapeutic Services Committee and the Innovation and Strategy Committee each met on four occasions. Experience from Covid resulted in Board and Committee meetings being conducted in a variety of ways: in person, hybrid or remotely and this has continued to facilitate attendance and engagement. Due to significant uncertainties about the future of ESF funding ending on 31 March 2023 the Board did not hold a Directors' Conference until there was greater clarity about the future and Directors were reassured that that there was a Strategy already in place for the period 2022-2025.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (Continued)

In order to support the response to the loss of ESF funding and subsequent uncertainties the Board established a Property Sub Committee and a Digital Transformation Committee to work closely with the SMT on plans for the future.

The Nominations and Remuneration Committee consider pay levels for all staff, and possible Cost of Living increases on an annual basis and the annual accounts are available on the website; the Committee seeks approval from the full Board for any increases in staff salaries. In 2013 the Committee commissioned an extensive independent review of all staff salaries which benchmarked them against locally based charities, sectors and National Joint Council (NJC) scales and the recommendations were implemented in full. A further independent salary review to ensure rates properly reflected market trends due to the impact of Covid was implemented in January 2022. The Pay Policy Statement sets out the Board's approach to salaries and is on the AMH website. In respect of the Chief Executive Officer and SMT the Committee commissions independent advice which includes benchmarking against comparable roles in the sector.

In order to provide effective services AMH is involved in a number of partnerships with other charities in Northern Ireland such as the Supported Employment Services (SES) consortium, co-led by AMH and the Cedar Foundation delivering the Workable employment programme commissioned by the Department for Communities. AMH also leads the SkillSET partnership in delivering a UKSPF programme with six other partners, which ends on 31 March 2025. AMH contributed to a range of other committees and partnerships such as the Mental Health Strategic Reform Board, Belfast City Council VCSE Advisory Panel, with the Chief Executive Officer holding appointments on these Committees. AMH also provides the secretariat for the All Party Group on Suicide at the Assembly.

DIRECTORS

The Directors of AMH are its trustees for the purposes of charity law. The Directors who served the charity during the year are as noted on Page 1.

Mrs A Craigan, Ms S E Cooke, Ms L V Fleck, Ms R Kelly, Ms N Kerr and Messrs. E Fee, H W R Kohner, D P McAuley, W A McKeown, J L C Thompson DL, D M McKeown, S W Robinson, J McAdams and Prof G Lynch, P F Corr, K M McParland, R J Pannell and J M F O'Brien all served.

A register of Directors' interests is maintained, with regular review and update, in order for the Board to be aware of any potential conflicts of interest; the issue of potential conflicts is a standing agenda item at the start of all Board and Committee meetings. None of the Directors had any material interest in contracts with the charity during the year.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

Directors' Attendance at Board Meetings over the period up to 31st March 2024 was:

AMH Directors	Meetings Attended	Out of a Possible
Susan Cooke	0	6
Angela Craigan	6	6
Eugene Fee (resigned Dec 23)	5	5
Roisin Kelly	6	6
Nuala Kerr (resigned Jun 23)	1	1
Billy Kohner	5	6
Gerry Lynch	4	6
Jonathan McAdams	5	6
Damian McAuley	5	6
Billy Mckeown	6	6
Diarmuid McKeown	6	6
Stephen Robinson	2	6
Courtenay Thompson (resigned Dec 23)	3	3
Paul Corr (joined Dec 23)	2	2
Leeanne Fleck (joined Dec 23)	2	2
Roger Pannell (joined Dec 23)	2	2
Kevin McParland (joined Dec 23)	2	2
Jonny O'Brien (joined Dec 23)	2	2

RISK STRATEGY

A risk register is maintained in relation to all material risks posing a threat to AMH. The register is reviewed regularly by the Audit and Risk Committee and at all Board meetings to ensure systems and procedures are established to mitigate those risks identified and to minimise any potential impact on the charity.

In managing the reserves, the Board is guided by their Investment Policy and its objective is to generate a return in excess of inflation over the long term whilst generating an income which could be available to support existing services and new projects. The Reserves Policy of AMH is to hold six months of planned expenditure to ensure continued financial security and to provide for contingencies. A diversified spread of investments is maintained and the Board agreed this year to consolidate the portfolios held by two separate providers into one and the investment provider is required to meet with the Finance Committee once a year to discuss performance, risk and adherence to the Investment Policy's ethical criteria.

PRINCIPAL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Key risks and uncertainties currently affecting AMH are set out below:

- **Resources**

Last year the exceptional financial pressures across the region coincided with the loss of ESF funding on 31 March 2023 and whilst new UKSPF funding helped to offset some of the lost EU funding there was still a significant deficit so that clients and providers such as AMH were substantially impacted. Also the Department of Health's Core Grant ended, annual enhancements from the Public Health Agency were not passed on and the Education Authority's Healthy Happy Minds pilot programme for counselling in primary schools was not extended, all against the backdrop of political uncertainty without an NI Executive in place.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

PRINCIPAL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES (Continued)

As a result, AMH has implemented contingency plans to put AMH on a more financially sustainable footing which has resulted in fewer clients being supported and growing waiting lists, including a redundancy process with the loss of 17 staff as a result of the loss of ESF funding. Regrettably AMH's only Learning Disability service was handed back to the commissioner to be delivered by another provider and another 9 staff left AMH as part of the transfer. AMH's owned properties were also reviewed and the Board agreed to sell three sites. Alongside steps to consolidate or reduce existing services there is a shift to new funding models, use new digital technologies and fundraise more to generate income.

- **Delivery of Services**

As the year progressed it became increasingly clear that funding for the sector would become more difficult, despite a new NI Executive in place. Funding for the Mental Health Strategy fell well short of agreed plans and the same is likely to happen in coming years yet this is against a backdrop of rising demand for mental health support due to the legacy of Covid, high economic inactivity rates and the Cost of Living crisis.

The Board continues to be concerned about AMH's ability to deliver agreed outcomes with the pace and scale of recent reductions required in services with increasing demand combined with difficult recruitment and retention. The required changes require a shift away from the old Industrial Therapy Organisation buildings based delivery model and will take some time to bed in. Although AMH responded swiftly and effectively to the Covid pandemic the current situation is arguably more serious. The Board has been monitoring progress closely and is pleased that client needs and funders' requirements have been met although numbers of clients receiving support has reduced. In response to the challenging outlook, the Board is focussed on considering different and more creative ways to support clients and will persevere with digital transformation by building on existing experience and collaborative working to embed digital expertise in AMH.

The Board recognises these key risks and uncertainties and operates so as to minimise the threat posed to the charity by adhering to the highest procedures and standards and working closely with independent experts as required to mitigate the risks.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Action Mental Health

AMH's vision is for *a society which actively values and supports people on their journey to positive mental health* and the mission is *to make a positive difference to people's mental health and wellbeing*. The mission is delivered by living and working to our values of *Passion, Empowerment, Excellence and Respect*.

AMH is a voluntary organisation which continues to support people's mental health and well-being across the region through vocational training, supported employment options, personal development, therapeutic interventions, health and well-being programmes and resilience building. The Directors have given due regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit in respect of its objectives and activities. AMH's Objects and activities undertaken in relation to them are below:

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (Continued)

- *To provide assistance for persons affected by mental ill health, learning disability, substance abuse and/or other disabilities including without limitation vocational rehabilitation and training, personal development and guidance and other support services with a view to maintaining and improving the wellbeing of such persons to assist their return to fitness for purposeful activity.*

Training and support programmes for people recovering from mental ill-health has been delivered through UKSPF funding and the 5 Health Trusts by 8 New Horizons services. They provide person-centred well-being programmes to support soft skills development and supports clients to move on to employment and/or more independent lives. There are also three services which cater specifically for younger people and they are delivered along similar lines to the existing New Horizons services. The Promote Learning Disability in Conlig supported clients since 2008 and the service transferred to another provider at the end of March.

The NLC service provides counselling for children, young people, adults and families. A range of therapeutic services are offered depending on need, including counselling, psychotherapy, music, art and play therapies. The diversity of staff skills and the range of modalities available enhances the experience for clients as NLC matches the orientation of the client to an appropriate counsellor; this now includes Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners. There are a variety of modes of therapy offered - telephone, online or face-to-face. Counselling is provided for a range of issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, drug/alcohol misuse, self-harming and suicidal ideation. Interpreters are also provided for clients for whom English is not their first language.

- *To assist such persons whether or not they have completed training programmes on the Company's premises to secure employment in jobs appropriate to their capabilities and to provide, if required, follow-up guidance and support.*

As well as the focus on employment through the New Horizons services AMH delivers the Workable Government employment programme for people with mental health issues, which is focussed on getting people into the workplace and keeping them there. The programme is delivered with six other charity partners as part of Supported Employment Solutions which AMH co-leads. AMH is still also the only provider of the Individual Placement Support service in the Belfast Trust area, which focuses on placing people with mental health issues in the workplace as quickly as possible and then training them.

- *To carry on for the benefit of such persons activities in which the skills of such persons can be developed, which activities shall be carried on wholly or largely by means of the efforts of such persons.*

In line with the Mental Health Strategy's preventative priorities, a growing aspect of AMH's focus has been to build personal resilience within communities including young people in primary/secondary education, further education and higher education. The MensSana project continued to deliver the PHA funded Mindset programme and the Protect Life service which delivers suicide/self harm prevention services. Aside from funding from the Southern Trust, the PHA and corporate donors/foundations a sizeable proportion of this work was funded through grants and AMH's own funds but future resourcing such as this is likely to reduce.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (Continued)

The three Men's Sheds continue to maintain support to older men to help them learn new skills, socialise and connect. The long-term conditions project, Managing the Challenge, in the Western Trust continued to provide people with the tools to self-manage their conditions; AMH Works also continued to provide employers with wellbeing and resilience building support.

AMH also runs a number of specialist projects to support clients to develop their own skills, such as the Vision project (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) in the Southern Trust, and the everyBODY Eating Disorder project in the Southern Trust. The Promote Learning Disability project in the South Eastern Trust supported clients throughout the year but it transferred to another provider at the end of the year.

- *To provide outreach services in support of people recovering from mental ill health and/or other disabilities.*

AMH operates from 14 sites and many programmes and services are also delivered in the community, in local facilities such as partner organisations' offices, theatres/cinemas, health centres, sports clubs or schools.

- *To provide mental health and wellbeing support to military veterans, victims and survivors, prisoners/people in the criminal justice system and minority groups e.g. Ethnic Minorities, Travellers, LGBT, Asylum seekers/refugees and other minority groups.*

AMH provides a diverse range of services, mainly funded through public contracts but also self-funded when resources allow and all those services are focussed on identified needs within communities and particular groups are identified through regular engagement. It is AMH policy to ensure all clients, whatever their background, are treated fairly and without any discrimination and as a result there is always a diverse range of clients being supported irrespective of sex, gender reassignment, marital / civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religious or similar philosophical belief, political opinion, disability, racial group, sexual orientation or age.

- *To promote awareness of the issues of mental health and other related issues to the public at large.*

AMH engaged intensively with politicians, particularly about the end of ESF funding in March 2023 and after that date regarding the need for full funding of the Mental Health Strategy, although with no NI Executive or Assembly in place little was achieved. AMH also held numerous client events and appeared on various media to promote mental health issues; the AMH Client Forum committed to co-production by discussing and promoting client issues and corporate partners continued to work with AMH to raise publicity around mental health issues. AMH remains part of the Mental Health Policy Group and Mental Health Collective, which are working to promote the work of the sector and to tackle underlying issues in it.

More information on AMH's work and achievements during 2023/24 is in the Annual Review, which is available from the Company's Registered Office and on its website.

ACTION MENTAL HEALTH
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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE (Continued)

This was the second year of the AMH Board's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the scorecard reflects the fact that many objectives were achieved even with the political and funding challenges. UKSPF and Health Trust funding made a positive difference to client outcomes and AMH met the targets set. Recruitment and retention was an ongoing issue but given very public concerns about future funding after ESF AMH still managed to reach large numbers of the population with a variety of services.

During the year 1,442 clients with mental health needs and/or a learning disability attended services remotely or in person provided by AMH including New Horizons, Promote and Workable. The New Horizons services provided training and employability programmes to 1,388 clients who achieved 1,442 accredited training outcomes and 325 progressed to paid employment, voluntary work, further education/training or other government programmes.

Regarding resilience building programmes delivered by AMH MensSana and AMH Works, there were 21,449 direct beneficiaries. AMH also continued to run the Long Term Conditions Alliance (NI) project 'Managing the Challenge' in the Western Trust area and 25 programmes were successfully provided throughout the year with 250 people participating in the self-management programme; also 130 older men attended the 3 Men's Sheds and 120 clients were supported through the Workable contract.

Regarding the AMH New Life Counselling service, there were 16,825 counselling/group work sessions provided to 2964 individuals and families as follows:

Adult – 12,662 sessions to 2,200 clients
Children & Young People – 4030 sessions to 728 clients
Families – 133 sessions to 28 families

AMH staff turnover in the year 2023-2024 was 41.1%: voluntary redundancy (9.44%), end of contract (7.22%), TUPE (3.89%), the remaining (20.55%) due to retirement, returning to further education, dismissal, ill health or personal/other reasons. AMH recorded a staffing complement of 196 employees as at 31 March 2024 with 44 males and 152 females.

AMH has achieved Investors in People (IiP) 'We invest in people' PLATINUM accreditation: only 3% of IiP accredited organisations hold this level of recognition and IiP confirm Action Mental Health is within the top 20 Platinum organisations in United Kingdom.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

As with many Third Sector providers AMH had a challenging financial year with ongoing Cost of Living pressures but this was over-shadowed by the end of ESF funding. The UKSPF programme funded by Westminster failed to replace the lost ESF funding and although very creditable outcomes were achieved for AMH clients there was a sizeable deficit for the year. Despite it being a demanding year, due to the careful supervision by the Board and senior management, AMH finished it in a relatively stable financial position but with a considerable way to go before achieving a sustainable financial future.

The new UKSPF programme and the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts supported the recovery services whilst a range of PHA, VSS and various grants supported all the other counselling and wellbeing and resilience building programmes. Unrestricted income continued through corporate partnerships and there is an expectation that it will increase to pre pandemic levels soon.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

RESULTS

Unrealised gains on investments were £230,070 (2023 - unrealised losses amounted to £93,118).

The overall net movement on funds for the year was a deficit of £333,006 (2023 - £726,660). The charity spends all restricted monies that it receives and makes good any deficit on restricted funds from its general unrestricted reserves.

The closing balance on unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024 was £5,946,306 (2023 - £6,279,312). No restricted reserves were held.

RESERVES POLICY

Due to the uncertain nature of AMH's funding, it is the Board's policy to maintain a designated risk reserve equal to six months' budgeted expenditure (see note 24). The level of free reserves at the year-end (excluding designated reserves) was £1,085,235 (2023 - £206,066).

INVESTMENT POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

The Finance Committee, a Board sub-committee, oversees, monitors and advises the Board on investment decisions and they are guided by the Investment Policy.

In managing the Reserves of AMH and hence its investments, the Board's objective is to generate a return in excess of inflation over the long term whilst generating an income and capital growth which could be available to support existing group services and new projects whilst a diversified spread of investments is maintained.

Reports on performance are provided to the Board at each meeting and Directors understand they are ultimately responsible for the overall management of the investments.

The Finance Committee are content that overall investment performance was acceptable and in line with investment objectives. Performance is assessed by benchmarking against accepted industry comparators and by using two separate investment advisors.

FUTURE PLANS

As disclosed at note 1 to the financial statements, due to funding constraints and uncertainty surrounding future funding sources, AMH has undertaken a review of its service delivery across Northern Ireland. As a result of this review the Directors have put plans in place that include the reshaping of service provision and of the assets held and utilised by the charity. The directors acknowledge the uncertainty and challenges this brings but remain committed to AMH's fundamental objective of supporting people's mental health and well-being across the region.

ACTION MENTAL HEALTH
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REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Continued)

DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

The Directors (who are also trustees of Action Mental Health for the purposes of Charity Law), are responsible for preparing the Report of the Directors and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments 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 charitable company will continue in business.

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO AUDITOR

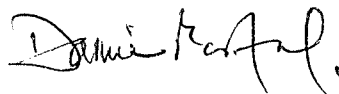
In so far as the Directors, who held office at the date of approval of the financial statements, are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the Directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

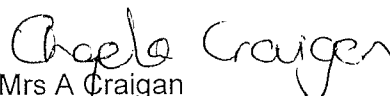
In approving the Report of the Directors the Directors also approve the Strategic Report.

Registered office:
AMH Central Office
27 Jubilee Road
NEWTOWNARDS
BT23 4YH

On behalf of the Board of Directors



Mr D P McAuley
Director and Chairman



Mrs A Craigan
Director and Honorary Treasurer

Date: 26 July 2024

Registered in Northern Ireland
No. NI005568

Charity Registration No: NIC100753