

## Compass Advocacy Network Limited

### Company information

Committee of Management	Alison Grundle	
- Trustees	Robert Irvine	Chairperson until 12.06.2024
	Ciara McLaughlin	Treasurer until 11.09.2024
	Alan McVicker	
	Esther Barnes	
	Scott Brown	Appointed 10.11.2023
	Joanne McDowell	Chairperson from 12.06.2024
	Heather Philips	Resigned 10.11.2023
	Jayne Taggart	
	Caroline Rowlands	Appointed 10.11.2023
	Carolyn Moffatt	Resigned 17.07.2023
Company Secretary	Mrs J Schofield	Resigned 20.07.2023
	Ms D McKee	Appointed 20.07.2023
Senior Management	Mrs J Schofield	Chief Executive Officer
	Mrs L McKendry	Director of Services
	Mr K Duffy	Director of Social Enterprise
	Ms D McKee	Finance Manager
Company Number	NI032676	
Principal and Registered office Until 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	20 Seymour Street Ballymoney Co Antrim BT53 6JR	
Principal and Registered office From 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	32 Lislagan Road Ballymoney Co Antrim BT53 7DD	
Auditors	EM Accountants 42A-44A New Row Coleraine BT52 1AF	
Bankers	Unity Trust Bank 9 Brindley Place Birmingham B1 2HB	
	Danske Bank 22 The Diamond Coleraine	
Solicitors	Macauley Wray 35 New Row Coleraine Co Londonderry BT52 1AH	

**Trustee's Report (including Directors' Report)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

The Trustees who are also directors of the company for the purposes of the Companies Act, present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The information with respect to trustees, directors, officers and advisers set out on the information page, forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their annual accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), The Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Practice.

**Principal activities and business review**

**Our Aims and Objectives:**

Our charity's purposes are as set out in the objects clauses in the Company's Memorandum of Association.

The Company's objects are specifically restricted to the promotion, preservation, protection and safeguarding of mental and physical health and wellbeing, the promotion of social inclusion, the relief of poverty and unemployment, the advancement of education and the promotion of the benefit and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and associated problems (hereinafter called the "beneficiaries") resident in Northern Ireland and the surrounding area and in particular but not exclusively the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area, the Causeway area ("hereinafter called the "area of benefit") without distinction of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic identity, political or religious opinion by associating service users, the statutory and local authorities, community and voluntary organisation, healthcare providers and the inhabitants in a common effort to promote social inclusion and advance education with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the said beneficiaries and in particular:

- a) to advance the education of the beneficiaries and to relieve unemployment through the promotion, facilitation, management, organisation and support of vocational and educational training and supported employment schemes for people with learning disabilities, difficulties and associated problems to assist the beneficiaries in obtaining new skills, qualifications, employment or practical work experience and thereby assisting in developing independent living skills.
- b) to advance education and promote and protect the physical and mental health of people with learning disabilities and associated problems through the provision of advocacy services, advise, support and facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure-time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the said beneficiaries ss as to develop their physical, mental and emotional capacities and self-confidence;
- c) to promote or assist in the promotion, facilitation and organisation of capacity building programmes and projects for the beneficiaries within the area of benefit who have need of such assistance as a result of their youth, age, ill health, disability or infirmity, or social and economic circumstances, by the provision of information and training, advice, mentoring, classes, workshops, support and instruction in an effort to increase the abilities, skills and self-confidence of the beneficiaries;
- d) to promote social inclusion and integration for the public benefit by association together volunteers and organisations in a common effort to raise public awareness of the issues affecting those suffering from learning disabilities, difficulties and associated problems and their families and carers and to promote the participation of the beneficiaries in all aspects of society.
- e) to provide programmes of social, recreational, and educational activities for young people with learning disabilities ages 12-17 in the area of benefit in an effort to promote their physical, mental and personal capacities.

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For, the purposes of this clause the expression “learning disability” shall include any learning disability, difficulties and associated problem or those who appear on the autistic spectrum, developmental disability of the mind, sensory impairment, acquired brain injury or mental health problem.

For the purposes of this article ‘socially excluded’ means people who are excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of one or more of the following factors: unemployment; poor educational or skills attainment; youth, age, disability or infirmity and social and economic circumstances.

**Ensuring our work delivers our aims**

Our aims, objectives and activities are reviewed, monitored and assessed through our on-going programme of Directors Meetings. The Board assures adherence to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit in assessing compliance with stated aims and objectives and in programming future activities. The Board of Directors is made up of the legal Directors of the Company who are individuals within the statutory, business, voluntary and community sectors. The Board of Directors meet and assume overall responsibility for all decisions made by the Management Board.

**The focus of our work**

The core focus of our work at CAN is centred around people. As a user-led entity, our objective is to empower individuals utilising our services, fostering their strengths while remaining adaptable to evolving user requirements. Our pride stems from maintaining an independent, user-driven, progressive, and proactive organisation.

We want people with learning disabilities to be the best they can be, to have aspirations, to have choice and take control of their lives, be responsible citizens and speak up for and be good role models for their peers. We are about “Enhancing Lives and Creating Change” for individuals through a range of projects and social enterprises, all focused on enabling people to become self-advocates, to improve their employability, self-esteem and confidence.

The beneficiaries of Compass Advocacy Network are all people living in Northern Ireland (and mainly, but not exclusively, the Causeway Area) and, in particular but not exclusive of others, people with learning disabilities, difficulties and associated problems (including those on the autistic spectrum, acquired brain injury or mental health problem). There are no harms resulting from any of the purposes. No person connected with the organisation gains a private benefit which is more than incidental to carrying out the purposes.

The main areas of charitable activity are carried out through providing vocational/educational training and supported employment schemes to enable their beneficiaries to gain work and life skills, through the provision of advocacy services, advice, support and facilities to support social, leisure and recreational activities, information services and training courses, workshops etc. In addition, CAN brings together volunteers, parents and carers in a common effort to raise public awareness of learning disability, difficulty and associated problems.

**CAN Social Enterprises**

CAN's Social Enterprises, encompassing CAN Can Recycling and CAN Can Bazaar (3 x shops in Ballymena, Ballymoney and Coleraine), remained operational throughout this period. The recycling of cardboard, aluminium, and plastics and CAN Can Upcycling was halted in March 2023 in preparation for the relocation of social enterprises to Lislagan Farm.

**WE CAN**

WE CAN received funding from the European Social Fund, the Department for the Economy, and was supplemented by matched funds sourced from CAN's generated income and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; notably, all set targets were achieved. ESF funding came to an end in March 2023 but CAN was successful in the acquisition of funding in March 2023 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for a forthcoming two-year term.

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**UKSPF**

CAN's UKSPF-funded Prosper project offers training and support for people who are unemployed and want to build their skills. CAN works in partnership with Triangle Progression to Employment, AEL, Appleby Trust, and Stepping Stones. Participants can work towards an ASDAN-accredited qualification while improving their communication, confidence, social, and work skills, helping them move closer to employment.

Prosper provides a flexible training programme tailored to each person's needs, whether through on-the-job training or group learning. This year, we've worked with 36 participants since April, with 28 achieving their goals. Prosper is unique because it helps people who are interested in work but aren't yet ready or confident enough for supported employment. When they are ready, we can refer them to one of our partner organisations for further opportunities

**The BASE Programme (Ballymoney, Ballymena and Coleraine)**

CAN BASE is a vibrant social and leisure service designed for adults with learning disabilities, Autism, and mental health needs. It operates in partnership with the NHSC Day Opportunities Programme and runs across three locations: Ballymena, Ballymoney, and Coleraine.

The service provides a warm and supportive environment, emphasizing skill-building, fostering independence, developing friendships, and enhancing overall emotional well-being.

Members of CAN BASE are empowered to shape their own experiences. Alongside a team of dedicated staff and volunteers, they actively contribute to decision-making, planning, and organizing the wide variety of activities available.

**The Hub**

The Hub is a weekly drop-in service for young people with learning disabilities, Autism, and mental health issues. Funded by Children In Need, the project provides a safe, supportive, informal, and inclusive environment for young participants to meet up and make friends.

**Blast**

The "Building Lives through Activity, Support, and Therapy" (BLAST) initiative commenced its journey in January 2023. BLAST (Building Lives through Activity, Support, and Therapy) is a programme designed for young people aged 8-18 in the Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid & East Antrim areas. It provides support for individuals with learning disabilities, autism, neurodiversities, and mental health challenges.

Now well-established, BLAST offers a range of therapies, including Play Therapy, Art Therapy, Animal Therapy, Gaming Therapy, and Equine-Assisted Therapy. These therapies aim to enhance emotional well-being, mental health, sensory skills, and social skills, helping participants lead happier and more balanced lives.

**Best Buddies Citizens**

Best Buddies NI had a very successful year, with over 150 participants taking part in the project. We delivered 38 weekly activities ranging from cultural Cuisine, Cinema outings, Wrestling, Musical nights to Bingo, Magic and Drama performances, 3 seasonal events and 6 residential breaks.

**Josephine & Jack**

Josephine and Jack, life-sized anatomically correct puppets, have proven to be effective in the areas of awareness and education. They play a pivotal role in shedding light on Mental Health, Self-Care, Relationship, and Sexual Health topics. This reporting period saw the utilisation of Josephine and Jack in both group and one-on-one sessions, most recently they were used for Men's Health Awareness Sessions.

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**Lislagan Farm**

In October 2022, a significant milestone was achieved as CAN successfully relocated all offices to the Lislagan Farm site, following comprehensive renovations. This strategic move further solidified Lislagan Farm's role in catering to children and adults facing learning disabilities, autism, and mental health issues.

Lislagan Farm continues to stand as an all-encompassing haven, offering a space enriched with social and leisure opportunities, fostering friendships, well-being, and therapeutic interventions. Nestled within a mature landscape, the farm boasts nature trails, an orchard, polytunnels nurturing flowers and vegetables, as well as an array of poultry and small animals.

Lislagan farm serves as a platform for an expanded training program. This initiative equips participants with essential soft skills, health and safety knowledge, and valuable work experience. It currently spans disciplines such as processing, horticulture, land management, with plans to accommodate training in hospitality, which will be facilitated through the presence of a coffee shop and respite accommodations.

Moreover, Lislagan Farm will address the pressing need for respite by providing two Airbnb-style units within the original farm building. These accommodations include a 4-bed unit designed for individuals with complex needs, in addition to 12 respite pods, enabling individuals to enjoy a truly nature-oriented holiday experience within rural North Antrim.

**Financial Review**

The financial overview for the year is outlined in the financial statements, spanning pages 11 to 14. Throughout 2023-24, CAN confronted persistent limitations and uncertainties in funding, compounded by escalating service demands and an increasingly challenging financial environment.

CAN's Management Team demonstrated adeptness in navigating these challenges. Despite the difficulties, they succeeded in securing essential funding from a variety of sources, including UKSPF, The Northern Health and Social Care Trust, The National Lottery Community Fund, The Rank Foundation, Children in Need, CDHN, LFT Charitable Trust, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, along with other minor grants. Funding promises were also made by Wolfson Foundation, DEARA, Baily Thomas and Ulster Garden Villages for the incoming period. Concurrently, efforts persist to augment income streams through continued development within our social enterprises.

**Principal funding streams**

CAN continues to rely principally on grant funding but the expansion of its retail portfolio and acquisition of Lislagan farm demonstrates the charity actively seeking ways to further develop opportunities for income generation in order to relinquish its reliance on statutory funding.

**Investments policy**

Aside from retaining a prudent amount of reserves each year, most of the charity's funds are to be spent in the short term so there are few funds for long term investment.

**Reserves policy**

In 2021-2022, the Management Committee examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. Prior to this period, it established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets (free reserves) held by the charity should be between 3 and 6 months running costs. However, in preparation for the acquisition of Lislagan Farm, CAN undertook to review the Reserves Policy to enable the use of reserve funds where an argument could be made that this would benefit the organisation in the long term.

Budgeted expenditure for 2024-25 is £1,014,402 therefore the target is £253,601 to £507,201 in general funds.

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Reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Management Committee are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a drop-in funding. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 the Charity held reserves of £620,424 of which £112,242 were restricted funds, however it did not have any free reserves due to the purchase of property at Lislagan, but the long-term strategy is to continue to build reserves through planned operating surpluses.

#### **Plans for the future**

The charity plans to continue with the provision of existing range of facilities and projects, set out above in forthcoming years, subject to maintaining on-going funding arrangements. The charity intends to further develop services for the benefit of its service users in line with strategic objectives.

#### **Governing document**

Compass Advocacy Network Limited is a charitable company limited by guarantee (N132676) incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1997 and registered as a charity with HM Revenue and Customs. The company was further acknowledged as being a Charity by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015. The Charity Commission No. is NIC100988. The trustees and secretary of the charity are listed on the information page. The principal and registered office of the charity is also listed on the information page together with the details of the professional advisors and bankers.

#### **Recruitment and appointment of Board of Directors**

The Directors of the Company are also charity trustees for the purposes of Charity Law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, Directors are elected at an AGM from amongst those persons nominated as Ordinary Members. The Directors have the power at any time to appoint any person, who need not be a member of the company to be a Director, either to fill a casual vacancy or as an addition to the existing Directors. Any Director appointed so serves only until the next AGM at which the Directors are to be elected and are then eligible for re-election.

The Board of Directors sit on the Management Board and have the power to ratify decisions thereof.

#### **Organisational Structure**

CANs Board meets quarterly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the organisation. At the end of March 2024, the Management Board had 9 members from a variety of backgrounds relevant to the work of the charity. All the members of the Management Board hold responsibility as Directors. The Day to Day responsibility for the provision of services lies with the CEO. The CEO works with the Senior Management Team (including the Director of Services, Director of Enterprises and the Resource Manager). A Peoples Forum' (made up of representatives from each of the organisations' projects/services) meets bi-monthly to ensure that the charity best meets the needs of its service users and that this is fed directly into the strategic plan.

#### **Taxation**

As a charity the company is not liable for corporation tax on its other income or on capital gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

#### **Statements of trustees' responsibilities in respect of the annual report and the financial statements**

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 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:-

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- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the UK Accounting Standards have been followed; subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is appropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and that help ensure that the accounts 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.

**Statement of disclosure of information to the auditors**

So far as each of the trustees in office at the date of approval of these financial statements is aware:-

- there is no relevant information of which the charity's auditors are unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as trustees/directors in order to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

**Auditors**

A resolution proposing that EM Accountants be re-appointed as auditors of the charity will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

**Small company provision**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

This report was approved and authorised for issue by the trustees on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and signed on their behalf by

  
[Joanne McDowell \(Dec 11, 2024 16:22 GMT\)](#)

Joanne McDowell  
**Chairperson**