



29 January 2025

Trustee annual report

Reporting period: October 2023 to October 2024.

Overview

Penuel Children's Foundation (<https://www.penuelchildren.com/>) is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (registered charity number 101028). Since 2013 we have been working to relieve poverty and hardship among children by providing education, healthcare, food, and shelter. We also promote the health and wellbeing of those who care for vulnerable children, especially fostering and adoptive families.

We have done this through our support for two projects: **Mihlali Children's Haven in Port Elizabeth, South Africa**, and **Starfish Soul Care**, a project that provides physical, emotional and spiritual rest, support and nurture for foster and adoptive families based in Northern Ireland.

People donating to Penuel Children's Foundation can now choose to give to our general fund or earmark the funds for either Mihlali Children's Haven or Starfish Soul Care. Of course, all funds already donated for Mihlali will continue be used for that purpose.

Below, we set out the work completed by Mihlali Children's Haven and then by Starfish Soul Care.

Mihlali Children's Haven

We continue to support the work of Mihlali Children's Haven in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. This is a family-centred haven for children who have been orphaned, and those from backgrounds of abuse, abandonment or neglect – often with long-term physical or emotional difficulties. Working hand in hand with the South African Department of Social Development (SADSD), and other child protection organisations, the haven welcomes, loves and cares for each child until they are safely established in a family or other place of long-term care. Mihlali have extended their work to support women referred by social services with crisis pregnancies, providing temporary support and accommodation (in 'Sharon's House') until mother and child were able to return to the community. Local oversight is provided by Penuel Children's Foundation South Africa, a registered Nonprofit Organisation (181- 800 NPO) and Public Benefit Organisation (REF: 930050398).

As an example of the work of Mihlali Children's Haven, we report on their activity from October 2023 to October 2024.

Children's work

Mihlali provided 24/7 temporary safe care (emergency care due to children being abused/abandoned/neglected) for 14 children, from new-born up to three-and-a-half years. Of these children:

- Two received antiretroviral drugs as prophylaxis for HIV.
- Fourteen were vaccinated against potentially life-threatening illnesses such as tuberculosis, polio, hepatitis and measles.
- One received speech therapy for delayed speech.
- One was fitted with spectacles after visits & a diagnosis from an ophthalmologist.
- One was monitored and treated for a heart condition
- Several were treated for skin conditions

Over the reporting period nine children were adopted, with two further children now in foster care with a view to adoption.

Staff

Mihlali has provided long-term employment for five local staff members (one reaching ten years with Mihlali in 2024). All staff received in-house training, including a first-aid course tailored to the needs of children in the Haven.

Starfish Soul Care

Starfish Soul Care became an official project of Penuel Children's foundation in December 2022 and had a public launch in Belfast in November 2023. Finance and governance are managed by the Penuel Trustee Board.

Starfish exists to provide physical, emotional and spiritual, rest, support and nurture to foster and adoptive families. Starfish provides 'soul care' retreats including day retreats and residential weekends for families in Northern Ireland. Retreats are bespoke and therapeutic with the hope that all foster and adoptive families feel welcome and included, whatever their make-up and wherever they are on their journey. We operate from an inter-denominational Christian ethos but families from all religious backgrounds (or none) are welcomed. Starfish Soul Care became an official project of Penuel Children's foundation in Dec 2022 and had a public launch in Belfast in November 2023.

As an example of the work of Starfish Soul Care, we report on their activity from October 2023 to October 2024.

Over this period, Starfish provided one full weekend residential, two social events for foster and adoptive families, and two therapeutic family soul care day retreats, with locations in Downpatrick, Ballycastle, North Down, and Belfast.

Staffing/volunteers

Starfish soul care is 100% volunteer-run, with support from a team of more than 20 volunteers throughout the year. Penuel Trustees Alex and Keely Mosley take the lead

facilitator roles. They are both professionally trained and qualified therapists and foster carers and adopters themselves, with over 20 years of experience working with vulnerable children, young people and the families who care for them.

This year, Alex and Keely have formed a small team to provide ongoing support for families between events. This team meet weekly to consider the needs of families and offer support between transitions and times of crisis.

November 2023: Starfish official launch

This public event (kindly hosted by Belfast City Vineyard Church) was attended by 155 people, including adoptive and foster families, health and social care professionals, supporters and those interested in the services offered by Starfish. We also created an exhibition space for a range of fellow providers and charities working with foster and adoptive families in NI.

December 2023: Starfish at Christmas - themed social event

This event, on the campus of the Belfast School of Theology in Dunmurry, was attended by 12 families, comprising 22 adult foster carers/adoptive parents, and 20 children (0-10) and eight youth.

March 2024: Therapeutic soul care retreat

This one-day retreat (kindly hosted by Journey Church Downpatrick) was attended by 16 families, comprising 25 adult foster carers/adoptive parents, 22 children (age 0-10), and 17 youth.

May 2024: Full Weekend Soul Care Residential Retreat

This weekend at the Corrymeela Ballycastle Centre was attended by 13 families comprising 22 adult foster carers/adoptive parents, 21 children (age 0-10), and nine youth.

July 2024: Starfish Summer Social

This event in Crawfordsburn Country Park, County Down, was attended by 12 Families comprising 15 adult foster carers/adoptive parents, 17 children (age 0-10), and six youth.