

N.I. ALTERNATIVES LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts 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)" (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2016)

Objectives and activities

The company's objectives and principal activities are to promote a non-violent restorative community response to justice issues in Northern Ireland. N.I. Alternatives Ltd will identify needs, often in partnership with local communities and other voluntary and statutory bodies, relating to safety and conflict within communities, and will attempt to heal relationships in a restorative way. At the same time, it hopes to raise community awareness on the issues affecting young people and adults who are deemed to be at risk and vulnerable.

The main objectives and activities of the company are:

- To organise within the community to devise non-violent alternatives to issues of community justice.
- To help and work with young people in order to resolve the problems affecting their lives.
- To direct young people away from destructive and dangerous practices towards healthy and constructive activities.
- To enable young people to personally reflect on the potentially damaging consequences of risky and criminal behaviour.
- To address areas of weakness and failure within the formal criminal justice system.
- To heal relationships within the community and to promote better relationships between the community and statutory agencies.
- To work towards a sustainable model of delivery for as much of the company's services as possible.

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

Achievements and performance

NIA has offices across Northern Ireland - North Belfast, Greater Shankill, East Belfast, South Belfast, North Down, Magherafelt (Mid Ulster Alternatives), Portadown (ABC Alternatives) and Carrick/Larne (East Antrim Alternatives).

NIA has provided restorative support to over 2,000 victims of crime and anti-social behaviour, involved 3,500 young people in diversionary programmes including schools work; delivered over 3,000 restorative interventions; delivered 300 trainings and intervened in over 500 neighbourhood disputes to find a peaceful and non-adversarial resolution.

NIA also enhanced its wraparound counselling mechanism to ensure clients were receiving a holistic service including restorative support, activities, mentoring and therapeutic interventions. This growth was able to happen as a result of funding from the Community Foundation N.I and the Housing Executive through sustaining tenancies funding.

NIA received new funding from the Belfast Trust to help support Tier 3 vulnerable young people due to a lack of social work personnel as well as support to young people with addiction and mental health issues.

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NIA continued delivering on the Communities in Transition Programme through The Executive Office to tackle paramilitarism. NIA delivered projects for or along with support from Community Restorative Justice Ireland,

Belfast City Council, NIHE and Big Lottery Fund (others listed in Note 3).

During this financial period, NIA also received funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs for the Young Futures Programme in North Belfast which is serving to act as 'bridge' funding until Peace Plus becomes operational in January 2024 under the Strive Programme.

Financial review

The charity generated a net increase in funds of £48,140. This has resulted in the company's reserves increasing from £1,351,040 to £1,399,180.

Principal Funding Sources

The funding sources for the company are varied and are made up by the Departments for Community (DfC), The Executive Office and Department of Justice (DOJ), as well as some smaller grants. As a result of increasing constraints on government expenditure, as well as expansion of its activity base, the charity has to seek funding from a much broader group of agencies. The involvement of the charity with a grouping of statutory agencies interested in issues of community justice is proving particularly useful in identifying possible opportunities for a much wider and strategically orientated range of funding for the future. There is a government-approved Protocol in place that promotes better working between the charity as a community-based restorative justice scheme and statutory organisations within the formal justice sector. This Protocol is currently under review, and the charity hopes that this process will lead to the social impact of its services being reflected more within funding contracts.

Reserves Policy

The charity aims to maintain at least three month's operational costs. In recent times the charity undertook some additional projects with the aim of increasing the reserves to provide a level of reserves to enable the charity to continue its activities should temporary funding gaps arise in the future.

Going Concern

The company is reliant on funding bodies to provide its primary income. Much of this funding is not recurring. The company is dependent on obtaining future funds to allow its programs to continue. Post year end the company has been able to continue to attract funds from its current funders and also additional funds from Peace Plus.

Services

NI Alternatives Ltd delivers a wide range of services for the public benefit, but all of them are underpinned by the principles of restorative practice. In essence this involves the healing or fixing of the fragmented individual, family and community relationships that lead to crime, anti-social behaviour and community conflict. Services available include the Intensive Youth Support Programme (for individuals), Wrap Around Youth Support Programme (holistic support), Family Support, Victim Support, Counselling, Preventative Group Work (for young people 'at risk'), mediation services (including work on behalf of Northern Ireland Housing Executive, housing associations and PSNI) restorative work with adult offenders, employability and good relations training for NEET (Not in education, employment or training) young people, schools outreach work, and detached street engagement. The company can also deliver training in restorative practice, principles and awareness to a wide client base.

The charity delivers contracts on behalf of the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust/Belfast Outcomes Group in terms of Family Support and Family Hub services and plays a major role in implementing local community

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safety strategies as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal process. Much of its work is delivered on a collaborative basis, and the agency has partnerships in place with a great many statutory, community and voluntary bodies. It is the lead body in two major partnerships that are funded by Peace IV. Much of the work relied upon the contribution of around 300 volunteers and was delivered in marginalised communities.

Plans for Future Periods

The company has developed a strategic business plan to facilitate the marketing of some of its services along a social economy model. This will help to generate additional revenue that will enhance sustainability. The government-related Adult Restorative Strategy which became operational in 22/23 also means to promote a more strategically-focused model of service delivery for restorative practice. New opportunities are being explored to incorporate restorative practice into institutionalised settings, and to allow more ready access to a statutory referral process under the terms of the Protocol that was established to increase co-operation with the state agencies that hold membership of the formal justice system.

NIA has developed a University qualification on restorative practice/justice in partnership with Ulster University and it is anticipated that this new development will help to generate a small income stream.

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

Governing Document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 21st July 2000 and registered as a charity by HMRC on 1st July 2000. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association and is governed under its Articles of Association. On 14th November 2014 the company was officially registered by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland with the charity number NIC 101039.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year were:

Peter Bunting

Rev Gary Mason

Gary McKay

Grainne McVeigh

Jackie Redpath

Bobby Hunniford (resigned 2nd December 2024)

Recruitment and Appointment of Management Committee

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Board. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Board are elected to serve for a period of one year after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

Trustee Induction and Training

Upon their appointment all new trustees are required to undergo training on the governance arrangements for the company, their roles and responsibilities as trustees, the principles of restorative justice, and the operations and services carried out by the company.

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Risk Management

The Board has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which will allow for the diversification of funding and activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

Organisational Structure

NI Alternatives Ltd has a Board of up to eleven members who meet quarterly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. At present the Board has nine members from a variety of professional backgrounds relevant to the work of the charity. The Secretary also sits on the Board but has no voting rights.

A scheme of delegation is in place and day to day responsibility for the provision of the services rest with the Chief Executive, along with the Services, Operations and Finance and Administration Managers. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the charity delivers the services specified and that key performance indicators are met.

Related Parties

The company acts as an umbrella body for five local-based restorative justice organisations, and these organisations are represented on the Board.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of N.I. Alternatives Limited for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare accounts 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 accounts, 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;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts; and
- prepare the accounts 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 accounts comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. 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.

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Statement of disclosure of information to auditors

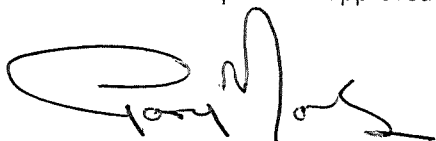
In so far as the Trustees are aware:

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

Independent Auditors

The auditors, HMCI Ltd T/A Hamill McIlwaine, have indicated their willingness to remain in office and a resolution for their re-election will be proposed at a forthcoming General Meeting.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees and signed on their behalf.



Rev G Mason

Trustee

Date: 5th December 2024