

# Trustees Annual Report 2023 - 24

## Reference and Administrative Details

**Company Name:** The Confederation of Community Groups (Newry & District)

**Company Number:** NI22294

**Charity Number:** Registered as a Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC101359)

Accepted as a charity for tax purposes by HMRC under its reference XR40558

**Registered Office:** Ballybot House, 28 Cornmarket, Newry BT35 8BG

**Directors:** Maureen Ruddy (Chairperson)

Colin Hanna (Vice Chairperson)

Rosemarie McDonnell (Treasurer)

Kathleen Lowry

Ewan Morgan

Deirdre Shields

Maureen Ruddy

Anne Woods

Marie-Claire Fitzpatrick (appointed 14/7/23)

Kerrie Havern (appointed 26/10/23)

Moira O'Shea (appointed 26/10/23)

**Co. Secretary and CEO:** Raymond Jackson

**Auditors:** Malone Accountants, 12 New Street, Newry BT35 6JD.

**Bankers :** Bank of Ireland, 12 Trevor Hill, Newry

## **Structure, Governance and Management**

### **Governing Document**

The Confederation of Community Groups is a company limited by guarantee which was incorporated on 12 January 1989. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. The Articles were amended by special resolution on 30 October 2014.

In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding one pound.

### **Management**

The company is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors which is elected from the membership or co-opted by the directors. The Board of Directors are directors of the company under company law and are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law.

The Board of Directors is elected annually from the membership of the company and consists of up to twelve individual members and not less than four. Up to one-third of the directors retire from office at each Annual General Meeting, those longest in office retiring first. Retiring directors are eligible for re-election if nominated however no director shall serve more than twelve consecutive years.

When new directors are appointed to the Board they receive an induction which briefs the members on their roles and responsibilities as members of the board and company directors and outlines the company's strategic planning process; funding arrangements, project selection policy, staffing structure and policy work.

All members of the Board of Directors give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits or remuneration from the company.

### **Directors**

The Directors, who are trustees for the purpose of charity law, who served during the financial year running from April 2023 to March 2024 and up to the date of this report were as follows: Kathleen Lowry, Ewan Morgan, Rosemarie McDonnell, Rosemary Rooney, Deirdre Shields, Anne Woods, Maureen Ruddy, Colin Hanna, Marie-Claire Fitzpatrick (from 14/7/23), and Kerrie Havern and Moira O'Shea (from 26/10/23).

## **Directors' Responsibilities**

The Directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that year. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- 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 financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The Directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company 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 company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

## **Policies and Procedures**

The company has a number of policies and procedures in place to which Directors and staff adhere. These are reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the company and current legislation and include policies and procedures relating to declaring conflicts of interests; levels of company reserves, risk management; disclosure; fraud; quality assurance; equality, health and safety; the environment, financial procedures and staffing matters.

## **Risk Management**

The company regularly undertakes an assessment of risks to which it might become exposed. It has a Risk Management Plan in place which identifies and categorises each potential risk; the likelihood of the risk occurring, causes and implications thereof and the actions to mitigate the risks. The Directors reviewed and approved the company's Risk Management Plan in March 2023.

## **Related Parties**

The company established a 100% wholly owned trading subsidiary – Ballybot Community Projects (BCP) in July 2015. Three directors of the Confederation of Community Groups are also directors of BCP. The trading subsidiary, also a company limited by guarantee, donates its profits to

the charity by way of a gift.

## **Objectives and Activities**

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the company - as defined by its governing document - are:

- (a) To develop programmes and services to advance community development, citizenship and education, promote volunteering, relieve poverty and distress, youth and the aged, and for the promotion of good health, and the promotion of racial harmony and diversity.
- (b) To promote and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of charities and voluntary and community groups by the provision and management for such organisations of office accommodation, daycare facilities, conference, training, information, advice, payroll and other facilities, services or support.

### **Activities**

CCG regularly review all activities as part of a strategic planning cycle – we currently have in place a Strategic Plan 2024 - 28 encompassing our stated aims:

- To support the development of connected and vibrant communities.
- To address issues that give rise to social isolation, deprivation, disadvantage and poverty at a local level.
- To help create inclusive communities which embrace diversity.
- To empower civic society through the development of appropriate physical and community infrastructure.

### **Public Benefit**

In planning and directing the work of the company the Board of Directors has considered and understands both elements of the public benefit requirement—that is that there are direct benefits which are identifiable and are available to the public or a section of the public.

The company has identified the benefits for people and community groups as:

- Increased numbers of volunteers and volunteering opportunities, the empowerment of individuals, an increase in social investment /activities, a more inclusive society, a reduction in the fear of crime and an enhanced quality of life.

- Increased effectiveness of local charities, community groups and associations and their effective use of charitable resources, an increase in community infrastructure and facilities, an increase in partnership work and increased engagement with statutory bodies
- Sustaining and increasing individual and collective knowledge and the development of individual capabilities, competences, skills and understanding through community education and life-long learning.
- Awareness raising of existing and emerging needs within communities, the enabling of people to overcome barriers to services and the identification of new services to meet gaps in provision

The beneficiaries of the company's services are the Community & Voluntary sector and people living in Newry and its environs and the wider region in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Any private benefit is incidental and necessary to ensure the benefit is provided to our beneficiaries.

### **Main Activities, Achievements and Performance**

During the year we provided high quality projects and services and combined this work with our role as a sub-regional network and community development support organisation. We collaborated with a wide range of partners, hosted several seminars and responded to a range of consultations. We continued to advocate on behalf of the Com/Vol sector in relation to economic development, community infrastructure, health & wellbeing and community engagement.

Through our social enterprise (**Ballybot House and An Stóras**) we delivered affordable office accommodation, retail, day-care and venue hire/conference facilities. These revenues together with other generated income in our Resource centre and back-office generated approximately 53% of total "normal" revenues (excluding Hardship / cost of living funding) in the period.

We provided capacity building, advice and support to a wide range of local community groups in areas such as :

Assistance with drafting Constitutions

Guidance on organizational structure and development

Internet access and training

Risk assessments and Insurance,

Financial control and management,

Grant-tracker advice and help with grant applications for project activity,

Access N.I. Enhanced Disclosure Checks.

Through the **Neighbourhood Renewal Programme** the Confederation has been able to offer weekly support to community associations in the most deprived areas of Newry City. This work has seen continued improvement in governance structures within local groups and has facilitated the delivery of a varied range of services and activities in local areas.

Outside Newry City we worked with a wide range of additional community and sporting groups in 2023/24 including; Soul Sisters (Cullyhanna), WALD Centre (Cullyhanna),

Newtown(Hamilton)Together - Women' s group, Derramore Men's shed (Bessbrook), Lislea Men's Shed, Newry Street Unite (Kilkeel), Moneydarragh Community Hub, Clonduff GAC (Hilltown), Brookvale Youth Club (Bessbrook), Derramore Training & Development Association (Bessbrook), Craobh Rua Hurling Club (Bessbrook), Oriel Traditional Music Archive (Armagh / Louth/ Monaghan), Swagath Indian Group (N&M wide), Tinnitus Group (Newry & Mourne wide).

We assisted 16 groups in relation to **Charity Registration**, accounting, reporting and compliance. We provided additional training, operational planning and sourcing of funding with many groups. We continued to take an active role in Community Planning (in particular with the engagement process between the statutory bodies and the com/vol sector) through our membership of local DEA Forums.

We delivered 12 Community Development courses focusing on good governance and compliance issues to 17 groups. We also delivered courses in Safeguarding Training and First Aid. In the period CCG facilitated & delivered training to 280 participants across the Newry and Mourne area in the above courses.

We have been working and delivering on the cross-border **Circle of Learning** project for the past number of years and were delighted to continue this work into the 2023 to 2024 period. This innovative project is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Reconciliation Fund, and project managed by Co-Operation Ireland. CCG are one of four Hubs involved with the project, the other Hubs being County Armagh Community Development, Dundalk Youth Partnership and the Clones Family Resource Centre. Each group received bespoke community development support tailored to their individual needs, and it helped them complete Baseline Skills Audits and Action Plans for the groups. CCG then assisted with the design of individual Social Action Plans to address key development issues in each locality to compliment the thematic pillars of the Reconciliation Fund, enabling groups to address issues of peacebuilding, networking and growing connections.

#### **Older Peoples Community Programme:**

Our **Good Day Good Carer** service came to an end and has been merged into the new Good Morning contract. During the period up to November 2023, when the new service came into being, The Good Day Good Carer Service made a total of 3813 calls to older carers right across the Southern Trust area. The average call time was 15 minutes, and this equated to 953 volunteer hours engaging with and lending support to older isolated carers in the community.

The CCG's Good Morning project in Newry and Mourne has been consolidating our volunteer base which now stands at 75 volunteers, expanding our volunteer network in hubs, and continuing our work engaging with key trust teams. We have been active in engaging with a number of community groups to form as Community Volunteering Hubs as part of the CCG's Good Morning programme. Community Hubs for the Good Morning programme are now developed in the Newry & Mourne area with groups including WALD Centre (Cullyhanna), Lislea Men's Shed, Newry Street Unite,

Kilkeel, and Clonduff GAC. In the ABC Council area we are actively working with ABC Network Portadown and the West Armagh consortium, Armagh men's Shed and The Vibe Armagh.

23573 calls were made in the year by our volunteers devoting 3066 hours to the service.

### **Cost of Living / Hardship Issues:**

We continued to act as com/vol sector representatives on NMDDC's Community Coordination Hub (CCH) and have engaged with statutory departments and others to help coordinate the response to the cost-of-living crisis.

CCG, together with SSF colleagues, helped co-ordinate a DfC "cost of Living" (COL) funding programme (approx. £180k) via our established "EOI" and "Trusteed Partner scheme" and engaged with the com/vol sector in the Newry, S Armagh and S Down area including food banks, SVdP etc.

We completed the distribution of a £25k funding programme for people struggling to pay utility bills (funded by Newry Credit Union). This funding complemented the DfC "COL" funding (which was restricted to Food only).

As lead partner on behalf of the Strategic Stakeholder Forum (SSF) for DfC's "Hardship Fund" programme we were able to co-ordinate a further £383k funding in the period Oct 23 – Mar 24 period.

We helped coordinate Norbrook's "We Care at Christmas" programme (including distribution of cooked food, food hampers and toys) over a six week period up to Christmas and included 3 "older peoples" meals hosted at Norbrook headquarters. We also coordinated Norbrook's Easter Good Friday meal on wheels (150 meals distributed 26/3/24).

### **Civic Policy / Wider engagement**

We attended Community Development Network Forum (CDNF) meetings throughout the period and attended meetings with NICVA and DfC (CSSP) to discuss Cost of Living (COL) crisis, civic infrastructure, and VCD funding issues.

CCG staff attended "People & Place Review" meetings and regional meetings of the 36 NR Partnerships throughout the year as part of the wider review of regional support programmes and met with Colm Boyle (Permanent Secretary DfC) and Jayne Brady (Head of Civil service).

### **Financial Review Principal Funding Sources**

The company secured both core funding and project funding from a number of sources during the period covered by this report. Core Funding was received from: DfC - The Department for Communities, NMDDC - Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, SHSCT - Sothern Health & Social Care Trust

It earned income from Ballybot House & An Stóras (its social enterprise) from the provision of office accommodation, day care facilities and venue Hire and from its resource center, back office support and facilitation.

## Reserves Policy

The Directors have assessed the main risks to the organisation and designated funds needed to meet these. They have established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be between three and six months of the annual expenditure. Expenditure for the year to 31 March 2024 was £909,750 and therefore the target is from £227,437 to £454,875 in general funds.

The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Directors are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity for some time in the event of a significant drop in funding. Whilst unrestricted funds stand at £1,537,575 a designation of £1,265,219 reduces the reserves available to the charity of £272,356 (Free Reserves figure as at 31/3/24 equates to £257,836) which is in line with the target level.

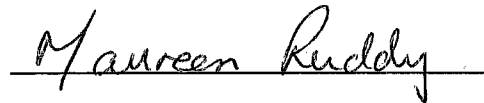
## Plans for Future Periods

The Confederation of Community Groups will continue to provide its community development, community work & education and capacity building and support services to disadvantaged people and communities.

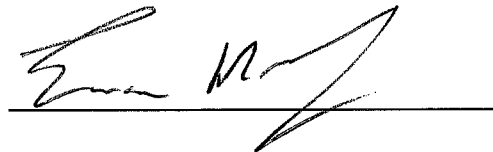
The Company has also secured funding and income from several sources to enable it to develop its older peoples programme and to continue its work to support its Community Planning and community engagement activities.

## Declaration

This report was approved by the Board at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 and thereafter signed on its behalf by:



Maureen Ruddy  
Chairperson



Ewan Morgan  
Director