

RAMS (NI) LTD

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 December 2020

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2020.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	RAMS (NI) LTD
Charity registration number	NI101381
Company registration number	NI22025
Principal office and registered office	94/95 City Business Park The Cutts Dunmurry Belfast BT17 9HU

The trustees

Mrs P Crawford
Mr W J Beck
Mrs M Wilkinson
Mr S Mcerlean
Mrs R Gillis

Company secretary Mrs Penny Crawford

Independent examiner John Magee
631 Lisburn Road
Belfast
BT9 7GT

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Structure, governance and management

Governing Document

Race Against Multiple Sclerosis (RAMS) is a company limited by guarantee (Company No: NI22025) and is a registered charity with the Northern Ireland Charity Commission (NIC 101381). The charity was incorporated on 12th October 1988. It was founded under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed by its Articles of Association, which were amended and approved by Special Resolution on 27th April 2015 to enable individuals with both MS and other debilitating conditions to avail and benefit from its services.

Organisational Structure

The charity is managed by the Trustee Management Committee comprising the company directors and meets at least quarterly. The Committee sets the strategic direction, budgets, policies and practices of the charity and monitors its successes and performance. Day to day management of the charity is delegated to the Centre Manager, including training and supervision of staff.

The Board of Trustees has six legal responsibilities:

- Ensure that our charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit
- Comply with our charity's governing document and the law
- Act in the charity's best interests
- Manage the charity's resources responsibly
- Act with reasonable care and skill
- Ensure that the charity is accountable

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law. The Trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit. The Trustees are confident that RAMS' aims and objectives are in accordance with the regulations on public benefit.

Recruitment and Appointment of Management Committee

A minimum of 3 and maximum of 10 Board Members are appointed by election at each Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the charity. Board Members must retire from office at each AGM and are eligible for re-election. The charity can appoint an employee to the Committee where this is in the best interests of the charity; the advantages of this clearly outweigh the disadvantages; conflicts of interests can be adequately managed; and the employee receives no additional pay or benefits as a direct result of becoming a Trustee.

The officers of the company are appointed by the Board at their first meeting following the AGM.

Trustee Induction and Training

New Trustees are briefed on the objectives and activities of the charity and the environment within which it operates and on their duties and responsibilities to the charity, its supporters and beneficiaries. All Trustees are required to familiarise themselves with the charity's policies and procedures and with The Northern Ireland Charity Commission's 'Running your charity: support for charity Trustees on key aspects of running a charity effectively'.

Risk Management

The Trustees have conducted a review of the risks to which the charity is exposed and assessed their relative significance. Where appropriate, systems and procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, users and visitors of the Centre. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

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Objectives and activities

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

RAMS main purpose as set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association is to aid and improve for the public benefit the health, well-being and quality of life of those living in Northern Ireland with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other debilitating health conditions.

It achieves this by:-

- providing a range of holistic and beneficial complementary medical therapies
- offering specialist support to individuals, carers and families
- providing professional information and advice
- providing a 'walk-in' community therapy centre where individuals and their families can avail of help as and when they need it and meet to socialise and support one another

People affected by chronic, lifelong debilitating illnesses and disabilities still have a meaningful role within society- to family, work, education, spiritual, social and community life.

We believe they should have access to treatment and support services that are:-

- holistic in their approach
- useful & impact positively on health and well-being
- additional & complementary to any existing services
- high quality
- delivered by staff with specialist knowledge & expertise
- affordable
- inclusive
- conveniently located
- easily accessible
- community based

We aim to help those with MS and other chronic debilitating conditions to feel and function better; stay as active and independent as possible; remain living in their own homes; continue in education

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and paid employment; carry on caring for their children and dependants; feel more confident and able to cope and less isolated, stress and depressed; think positively; plan ahead; look forward to the future; and enjoy participating in family, leisure, spiritual and community life.

We support people living across Northern Ireland. However, since the onset of Covid-19, admission to the charity has been largely dependent on the community incidence of the virus and the government's strict travelling and health and safety constraints.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The charity exists to support people with Multiple Sclerosis and other debilitating conditions and to ease the impact of suffering on their, and their loved ones' lives.

MS and other chronic illnesses are unpredictable, incurable and widely variable. Chronic diseases cause a variety of unpleasant and incapacitating symptoms, affecting movement, mood and bodily functions. Their devastating and complex nature means that specialist support is essential to help people cope; manage their symptoms; stay as healthy, active and independent as possible; and experience better quality of life.

Without our Therapy Centre the availability of holistic treatment and support services would be gravely limited in the local and wider area, and in most cases would be non-existent. The core activities of RAMS can be split into three broad elements:

- Holistic treatments including hyperbaric oxygen therapy; physiotherapy & massage therapy; electromagnetic stimulation therapy; vibration therapy; and flowtron therapy
 - Counselling; information; one-to-one & group support; advice; and nutritional guidance
 - A supportive facility & network for individuals and families affected by MS and other chronic illnesses
- Our work complements that provided by the NHS and other voluntary organisations. With the addition of our services, hospital visits and admissions can be avoided and hospital discharges accelerated and supported. Where the focus of other charities is largely financial support, befriending, respite relief, political lobbying or research, ours is fixed exclusively on health and well-being as these underlie every aspect of a person's life.

Holistic Treatments

RAMS offers a range of holistic treatments that are designed to help people feel and function better. These treatments are largely unavailable, inaccessible or unaffordable elsewhere in the province.

A number of medical treatments are available on the NHS, however these are not suitable for everyone and some support services can have lengthy waiting lists and a finite number of appointments. Treatments for advanced, progressive and degenerative conditions are often more limited and many drug therapies are associated with intolerable side effects.

RAMS offers a range of subsidised holistic therapies that are designed to complement and enhance any other medical treatments people are receiving and to assist those for whom NHS treatments are unavailable or unsuitable. People can walk-in and self-refer to our centre and can avail of our services on a daily basis, when and as they need them, particularly at critical times and traumatic events during diagnosis, relapse and disease progression.

Access to the charity's services is available to everyone, subject to treatments being suitable and beneficial to the individuals concerned and the charity's available resources.

Any financial contribution made by those attending for treatment is used towards the costs of running

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the Centre.

Our holistic therapies include:-

- Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) - this treatment involves breathing pure oxygen within a pressurized chamber. It helps to provide symptom relief and assist with the rehabilitation and recovery process. Patients report a number of positive physical and mental health benefits. HBOT can help to relieve pain and inflammation; reduce fatigue, infection and depression; aid sleep and relaxation; improve mood, mobility and concentration; promote tissue regeneration; and boost immunity and energy levels.
- Physiotherapy, Exercise and Massage- individually tailored programmes are provided to improve strength and mobility; promote independence; and prevent deterioration and permanent disability.
- Electromagnetic Stimulation Therapy- has analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, regenerative and relaxant effects and can help to provide some symptom relief for many chronic ailments.
- Whole Body Vibration Therapy- to enhance physical fitness, muscle strength, blood circulation, lymphatic drainage and bone density. It is particularly useful in enabling people with physically debilitating conditions such as MS, Spinal Stenosis, Stroke, Osteoporosis, Arthritis, Parkinson's Disease and back pain to exercise safely and easily.

Counselling, Information & Advice

We help people and their families to live with an incurable and unpredictable condition and the many challenges it causes. Our friendly, professional and understanding staff offer great encouragement and support to everyone. We provide positive and practical expert information that is up to date and readily available; and constructive advice, counselling and group support that help to make everyday life less of a struggle.

Support Network

We offer a welcoming and inclusive walk-in and self-refer community centre, where people in similar circumstances can meet to share experiences; exchange ideas and solutions; make friendships; and support and help one another.

ENSURING OUR WORK DELIVERS THE CHARITY'S AIMS

The Trustees follow the guidance provided by the Charity Commission on public benefit when planning its services and activities to ensure they conform with the charity's purpose and fundamental ethos.

In addition, RAMS has a general policy to bring together persons living with MS and persons interested in MS, and those living with other debilitating conditions, to form a member based community, in which the treatment and support delivered by RAMS benefits the well-being and quality of life for everyone in that community.

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Achievements and performance

The treatment and support services provided by the charity were severely disrupted in 2020 by the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with our duty of care to vulnerable staff we shielded and furloughed 3 employees and constrained our usual volunteer involvement. Prior to Covid-19 we supported people living across Northern Ireland, however, since the pandemic took hold, admission to the charity was largely dependent on the incidence of the virus and the government's strict travelling and health and safety constraints.

Before the onset of Covid-19, the charity's principal activities comprised three broad elements:

- Holistic Therapies
- Counselling, Information & Advice
- Support Network

Aside from telephone consultations, all service and support activities were provided in person, face to face. In accordance with the lockdown measures imposed by the government nationally, the charity took the necessary decision to suspend in-person services and support with effect from 23 March 2020. Our priority then, was to seek ways to continue providing the support and services upon which our membership depended. The focus turned to adapting our support from predominately face to face activities to alternative, safer, options. In a short period of time the charity's team developed alternative support options using a mix of online conferencing tools such as MS Teams and Zoom; improved information sharing via online media; and increased personal contact via telephone and post. In late July certain face to face services were re-commenced at the Centre, however strict shielding and distancing guidelines meant that services provided at the centre were strictly limited. When the second wave of the pandemic took hold in December, in-person support at the centre was again suspended. Coronavirus and the charity's response to national restrictions and clinical guidelines, were major factors impacting on the charity's achievements and performance in 2020. From the Spring of 2020, as the pandemic took hold, the charity's broad priorities were:

- Keeping people safe and as active and independent as possible
- Improving mental health
- Reducing isolation & loneliness

As the impact of covid on health and well-being became apparent, we were inundated with referrals, particularly for our oxygen therapy, given its role in the treatment and recovery of many illnesses including coronavirus. In order to provide continued care and support for our users, meet the growing demand and adapt to exceptional circumstances, we employed a Specialist Support Worker in July to develop and deliver safe services and recruited and trained 10 new volunteers to assist with face to face and online facilities.

During the year, the charity provided 1225 treatments and welcomed 104 new patients. We answered more than 1600 enquiries, made 416 supportive calls and carried out 227 support sessions. We are continually improving our use of digital technology and many of our users and volunteers have improved their online and IT skills too.

Our Impact

Feedback from our members highlights the benefits of our continued support during the pandemic and reflects the impact that the virus was having on their health and well-being:-

89% of users felt the interruption of services at RAMS affected their condition.

83% of those surveyed in August 2020 felt their symptoms had worsened since the closure of RAMS in March; most notably greater fatigue, pain and muscle weakness, mobility and bladder problems, infections, anxiety and depression.

46% felt socially isolated and lonely

64% felt their mental health had worsened- they were more anxious and depressed and worried about the future

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59% reported greater financial strains

However, the majority of our members said the charity had helped them with their mobility, feeling happier and less anxious, having better quality of life, having better physical and mental wellbeing and feeling less lonely. They reported less pain, stress, infections, falls and fatigue; better mood, energy levels, sleep, concentration and better bladder control; and fewer visits to their GP. Users reported being unable to source our range of holistic therapies together elsewhere in the province and 94% said they valued the specialist expertise of the staff. Patients travelled from all 5 counties, demonstrating that comparable services are not available nearby. We received 52 enquiries from people living in the Republic of Ireland as services are largely unavailable and unaffordable there too, signifying that comparable services are generally unavailable throughout the whole of Ireland. At this critical time when health services are under immense pressure and resources are finite our charity is able to both complement and support the work of the NHS.

Committed Team

Our team of staff and volunteers is a holistic multidisciplinary team sharing extensive knowledge, skills and expertise. Our staff have more than 30 years of experience in their dedicated fields of specialist healthcare, management and holistic therapy.

Contribution of Volunteers

Our wonderful volunteers are absolutely vital to the functioning of the charity - we simply wouldn't be able to operate without them and they have continued to be hugely supportive throughout the pandemic. When we restarted face to face appointments after lockdown, our volunteers were there to help us accommodate the spiralling number of referrals and were instrumental in helping us to set up and implement our new online services and in achieving our very favourable outcomes.

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Financial review

Income & Expenditure

Our accounts tell the story of 2020- all the high and lows of a year like no other.

RAMS is a small, independent and completely self-funding charity. It does not receive any statutory funding or financial help from government sources and relies entirely on its own fundraising activities and on donations from both members and external sources for its income.

In March as restrictions were imposed nationwide and most of the charity's normal face to face activities were suspended, the continuity of income was a major concern. Public collections and fundraising events were cancelled and the impact on the wider economy threatened income from trusts and companies. Our income for the year was £139,110, comprising £36,852 from grant giving organisations; £13,889.01 from member and supporter donations; £8557.91 from collections; £6,125.95 from Gift Aid; £41,939 from the Covid Recovery Fund; and £28881.97 from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This money was spent directly on the £89,000 required to run the Centre and deliver its charitable activities throughout the year and any excess income will continue to fund the charity's therapeutic services and covid related costs in 2021. Donations from individuals and companies were a staggering 91% less than in 2019. Funds generated from fundraising events were down 100% from the previous year and collections down 47%. We saw a 46% reduction in member and supporter donations with a consequential fall in Gift Aid support, compared to previous years. However, in a most extraordinary year we received an unexpected £36,852 of Grant Aid in addition to the £41,939 awarded for emergency covid funding and received a further £28,881.97 in furlough contributions. We concluded the year with an income exceeding our expenditure of almost £89,000. Whilst this position appears healthy moving forward into 2021, there are substantial covid costs ahead.

We wish to thank each individual and organisation who supported the charity in 2020. We particularly express our thanks to:

Awards for All
Bobby Morrison Funeral Directors
Covid Recovery Fund
Enkalon Foundation
Garfield Weston
Halifax
John Moore Foundation
McKibbens
Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK
TBF & KL Thompson
Thales
The Dean at St Anne's Cathedral
Ulster Bank
Ulster Garden Villages
Zerohydraulics

We are also immensely grateful to the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for support during periods of furlough.

The support of all those who fundraised, donated and helped us fulfil our work throughout the year makes a real difference to the lives of individuals who might otherwise have difficulty walking, talking, eating, writing and dressing; develop problems with their sight, swallow, speech, continence, memory and concentration; be forced to give up their jobs and relinquish care of their children; engage in

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harmful and antisocial behaviours; require nursing home care; and potentially decide to take their own lives.

Reserves Policy

The charity is authorised within its constitution to set aside funds for special purposes or as reserves against future expenditure. Ideally the Trustees aim to maintain a prudent level of free reserves at between 6 and 12 months of operating expenditure to provide an immediately available resource should the Centre experience a significant adverse event, such as the coronavirus pandemic that we are currently facing. We estimate that due to covid-19, our free reserves are currently sitting at around 4-5 months of running costs.

Investment Policy

The charity is permitted under its constitution to deposit and invest funds for the purposes of furthering its aims and objectives. The charity's year on year annual incoming resources have however been used to meet annual running costs.

FUNDRAISING

RAMS receives no statutory revenue funding and relies entirely on its own fundraising activities and on donations from both members and external sources for its income. Community fundraising is a vital source of unrestricted funding that enables us to operate effectively and raise public awareness of our work. Restrictions on social activities and lockdown during the summer and Christmas months brought community fundraising to a juddering halt at our peak fundraising periods when a number of events were planned to take place.

Self-isolation and lockdown prevented volunteers engaging in street collections and we lost a major source of our income generation. As we continue into 2021 there is continued concern over attracting ongoing funding. Disruption to fundraising events and public collections look to continue for some time and the availability of emergency grants is uncertain. Overall a depressed economy may limit funding available from trusts and companies who will have smaller funding pots available in the medium term and broader public fundraising may now focus on the NHS.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Given that we have had to substantially contract, pause or cease operations altogether during COVID-19, conditions have not been ideal this year for fostering partnership working and community engagement. Throughout the years we have established good relationships with local schools, businesses and other voluntary organisations, however many of these were closed indefinitely this year. Our face to face visits and community engagements were all cancelled so few opportunities arose to make the public aware of our work. As research continues into the affects of covid on health and well-being and the role of oxygen therapy in treating the virus and its complications, we have received greater interest and recognition of our work in the community and our potential for supporting the NHS in times of crisis.

FUTURE PLANS

The pandemic has created a range of new needs. Evidence shows that some people who previously never needed charities are now relying on their services for the first time because of the pandemic. The road ahead is not going to be easy. The pandemic has exacted an immense economic, as well as human, cost on societies and it is inevitable that public finances will remain fragile for many years. As we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic we plan to:-

- Offer activities via new mediums, such as digitally.
- Move services online
- Develop new partnerships
- Develop our sports injuries clinic

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Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on ^{25/09/21}~~31/12/20~~ and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Mr W J Beck
Trustee