



Annual report 2022/23

Little Sunbeams Pre School & Playgroup
27 Old Grand Jury Road,
Saintfield,
Co Down,
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DE Number: 4BB0470

Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101595



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<u>Background.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Little Sunbeam's: Purpose and Benefits.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Little Sunbeams Management Committee.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Constitution of Little Sunbeams.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>1. Name.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>2. Administration.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>3. Objects.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u> 3.1.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u> 3.2 Powers.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Management Committee.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u> 4.1.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u> 4.2.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u> 4.3.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u> 4.4.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u> 4.5.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u> 4.6.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u> 4.7.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u> 4.8.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>5 Functions of the Committee.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>6 Charing Meetings.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>7 Finance.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.1.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.2.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.3.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.4.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.5.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u> 7.6.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>8 Trust Property.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>9 Annual General Meeting.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u> 9.1.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u> 9.2.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>10. Special General Meetings.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 10.1.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 10.2.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>11. Rules of Procedure at all Meetings.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 11.1 Voting.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 11.2 Minutes.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 11.3 Quorum.....</u>	<u>14</u>
<u> 11.4 Standing Orders.....</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>12. Alterations to the Constitution.....</u>	<u>15</u>

12.1.....	15
12.2.....	15
13. Dissolution.....	15
13.1.....	15
13.2.....	15
13.3.....	16
14. Indemnity.....	16
Staffing.....	17
Structure.....	18
Annual reporting.....	19
Activities and achievements during the year 2021/22.....	20
Management Committee activity 2021/22.....	21
Accounts 2022/23.....	22
Independent Accountants Report.....	22

Background

Early Years

Early Years' work has always been underpinned by a strong community development ethos focused on helping communities to assess the need for, develop and manage their own Early Years setting.

Early years provide training, support and resources to simplify what is required to help Management Committees make decisions and create excellence in leadership and management within the voluntary and independent sector.

Early Years Vision is that Children are:

- Strong, competent and visible in their communities
- Physically and emotionally healthy
- Eager and able to learn
- Respectful of difference

Early Years Mission Statement

“To promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities.”

Is preschool in Northern Ireland free?

In Northern Ireland, all three and four-year-olds are entitled to 12.5 hours per week of free pre-school education. The 12.5 hours per week totals 475 hours a year.

This is provided by the Department of Education's Pre-school Education Programme. The available pre-school places are fully funded by the government, meaning they are completely free for parents.

Although not compulsory, parents can only use the funded hours to secure a pre-school place for 2.5 hours per day, five days per week during term time (38 weeks).

The funded Pre-School Education Programme places can be used in the following early years settings:

- Nursery schools
- Primary schools with nursery units
- Voluntary and private pre-school providers (such as Little Sunbeams)

Although the funded pre-school places are available for every child, parents must apply via the [Education Authority](#). The application process opens well in advance and each setting has its own admission criteria, so your first choice is not guaranteed. The admission criteria is reviewed annually by the Little Sunbeams management committee.

Little Sunbeam's: Purpose and Benefits

Little Sunbeams is a Cross Community Pre-school Centre & Playgroup in Saintfield established to provide play based learning environments for all children under statutory school age, out of school care, of the Saintfield/Darragh Cross/Ballygowan and its surrounding areas in County Down .

This advances the education of the children through the provision of safe and satisfying group play, with the right of parents/carers to take responsibility for and to become involved in the activities of the group; and to promote the preservation of health of the beneficiaries; and to support the values and principles of Early Years.

We cover the six areas of the preschool curriculum which are Personal, Social and Emotional Development, The Arts, Physical Development, Early Mathematical Experiences, Language Development and The World Around Us.

The benefits are demonstrated through feedback from parents and regular inspections by the Department of Education and Social Services. No harm or private benefit comes from our purposes.

Little Sunbeams Management Committee

A management committee is essential in order for Little Sunbeams to operate. The committee effectively acts as an employer as well as charity trustees. The committee members have multiple roles and responsibilities.

Little Sunbeam's and its property is administered and managed in accordance with a constitution by the members of the management Committee.

For more information see:

[Early years: Committee roles and responsibilities](#)

[Charity commission NI: Trusteeship](#)

The role of a committee member is rewarding with opportunities to learn and develop new skills, meet people including other parents who share your passion for raising children, and know that you are making a difference in the greater Saintfield community through the support of Little Sunbeams. The skills and experience are highly relevant and can open up new opportunities, for example in employment, as they have done for our previous committee members.

Constitution of Little Sunbeams

This constitution was formally adopted on the 28th day of November 2011 by the members of the Group in an Special General Meeting.

Signed: Barry McVeigh_ (Chairperson - Retired)

Signed: Rachel McGreevy_ (Secretary - Retired)

Early Years Values and Principles

Early Years Vision

Children are:

- Strong, competent and visible in their communities
- Physically and emotionally healthy
- Eager and able to learn
- Respectful of difference

Early Years Values

We believe in:

- Childhood - in its own right
- Listening to children - and those who care for them
- A strong voice for children
- Play, fun and creativity
- Parenting
- Participation
- Community
- Partnership
- Inclusion and diversity
- Excellence and evidence based innovation
- Effective stewardship and governance
- A professional, committed and recognised workforce
- Valuing staff, members and their commitment

1. Name

The name of the Playgroup is Little Sunbeams (hereinafter called 'the Group') and the Group is a body associated with Early Years.

2. Administration

Subject to the matters set out below the Group and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with this constitution by the members of the management Committee, constituted by clause 4 of this constitution ('the Committee').

3. Objects

3.1

The Group is established to promote play based learning environments for all children under statutory school age, out of school care, (hereinafter referred to as the beneficiaries) of the Saintfield/Darragh Cross/Ballygowan and its surrounding environs in County Down. (hereinafter called the 'area of benefit') without distinction of age, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic identity, political or religious opinion, by associating the statutory authorities, community and voluntary organisations and the inhabitants in a common effort to advance education, and in particular:

a) to advance the education of the beneficiaries by the provision of safe and satisfying group play, with the right of parents/carers to take responsibility for and to become involved in the activities of the group; and to promote the preservation of health of the beneficiaries; and

b) to support the values and principles of Early Years.

3.2 Powers

In furtherance of the above objects, but not further or otherwise, the Group may:

a) Provide, assist in providing or secure the provision of educational and recreational facilities and practical assistance for the beneficiaries, or facilities for the benefit of the general public in the area of benefit;

b) provide, maintain and equip or assist in the provision, maintenance and equipment of premises and facilities designed to carry out the objects of the Group

c) obtain collect and receive money by way of grants, donations, bequests, legacies or other lawful method and shall conform to any relevant requirements of the law;

d) purchase take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire any real or personal property and any rights and privileges necessary for the promotion of the above objects and construct, maintain and alter any buildings or erections which the Group may think necessary for the promotion of its objects;

e) make any regulations for any property which may be so acquired;

f) subject to any consents as may be required by law, sell, let, mortgage, dispose of or turn to account all or any of the property or assets of the Group with a view to the furtherance of its objects;

g) subject to such consents as may be required by law receive money on deposit or loan and borrow or raise money in such a manner as the Group shall think fit and to charge all or any part of the property of the Group with repayment of money so borrowed;

h) invest the moneys of the Group not immediately required for the furtherance of the said objects in or upon such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit, subject nevertheless to such conditions (if any) as may for the time being be imposed or required by law;

i) recruit and train volunteers with relevant skills to carry out the objects of the Group;

j) employ and pay any person or persons, NOT being a member of Committee to supervise, organise and carry on the work of the Group and make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of remuneration to employees;

k) promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the above objects and to that end to work in Group with local authorities and voluntary organisations engaged in the furtherance of the above objects in the area of benefit;

l) establish and support, co-operate with, join or amalgamate with any charitable associations or institutions formed for all or any of the above objects;

m) do all such other lawful things as may be necessary for the attainment of the above objects or any of them;

Management Committee

4.1

The Committee shall not meet less than twice a term and shall consist of not less than six and no more than twelve members, elected at an Annual General Meeting. At least two shall be parents/guardians of children currently attending the playgroup. Membership of the Committee shall be open to anyone elected, irrespective of ethnic identity, disability, age, gender, political party, nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, or religion.

4.2

The following conditions shall apply:

a) Where possible membership of the Committee shall be on a 50/50 basis to equally reflect and represent the interests of St Caolan's PS Darragh Cross and St Mary's Primary School Saintfield.

b) Nominations for members of the committee must preferably be in writing, and must be in the hands of the Honorary Secretary of the Group at least 2 days before the Annual General Meeting hereinafter mentioned.

c) If the numbers of nominations exceeds the number of vacancies, election shall be by secret ballot of the members of the Group present and voting at an Annual General Meeting.

d) If the number of nominations is less than the number of vacancies, further oral nominations may with the approval of the Annual General Meeting be invited from members present and voting at the said Annual General Meeting.

e) Nominees must consent in person or in writing to their nomination prior to election.

4.3

A committee member shall subject to 5.3, hold office until the next AGM following his/her appointment. A retiring committee member shall be eligible for re- election.

4.4

The committee members elected at an Annual General Meeting shall have the power to co-opt further members (subject to paragraph 4.2a) to fill any casual vacancy arising on the committee, who shall serve until the conclusion of the next following Annual General Meeting PROVIDED that the number of co-opted members shall not exceed one third of the total membership of the committee. Co-opted members shall have the right to vote.

4.5

The Officers shall be elected annually by and from the members of the committee at their first meeting following the Annual General Meeting, The office of Chairperson shall not be held by any one person for more than three consecutive years.

4.6

The Committee shall consist of;

a) 6 Officers (Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary, Vice Secretary, Treasurer and Vice Treasurer); and

b) Additionally not more than six elected members; and

c) If the committee so decides, not more than two members co-opted by the committee; and

d) No husband/wife, partner or close relative of a paid member of staff can be on the management committee.

e) No husband /wife or partner of another committee member can be on the management committee.

f) The Committee may nominate Committee members to carry out the functions of Staff Liaison lead, Child Protection Issues Lead, and Fundraising Lead.

4.7

Any member of the committee who fails to attend two consecutive committee meetings without reasonable excuse shall lose his/her place on the committee which may be filled by co-option in accordance with clause 5.3 above.

4.8

The trustees (if appointed for the purpose of holding property in their own names on behalf of the group) shall be notified of and shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the committee but without the power to vote.

5 Functions of the Committee

5.1

The Committee may make such regulations as they consider appropriate for the efficient conduct of the business of the Committee and the Group.

5.2

The Committee may appoint such staff NOT being members of the Committee as they consider necessary on such terms and conditions as they may determine.

5.3

The Committee may appoint such sub-committees, advisory groups or working parties of their own members and other persons as they may from time to time decide necessary for the carrying out of their work, and may determine their terms of reference, duration and composition. All such sub-committees shall report back fully and promptly.

5.4

The proceedings of the Committee shall not be invalidated by any failure to elect or any defect in the election, appointment, co-options or qualification of any member.

6 Chairing Meetings

All meetings of the Group or of the Committee or of any of its subcommittees shall be presided over by its Chairperson failing whom its Vice-Chairperson, if one has been appointed. If neither the Chairperson nor Vice-Chairperson is present, those present may elect one of their number to take the Chair. The Chairperson of any meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

7 Finance

7.1

All moneys raised by or on behalf of the Group shall be applied to further the objects of the Group and for no other purpose PROVIDED THAT nothing herein contained shall prevent the payment of legitimate out-of-pocket expenses to members of the Group engaged upon the approved business of the Group.

7.2

The Honorary Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the finances of the Group.

7.3

The financial year of the Group shall run from 1 April to 31 March.

7.4

The accounts shall be independently certified by an accountant or auditor appointed by the Annual General Meeting OR examined by any independent person who shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

7.5

An annual statement of accounts for the last financial year shall be submitted by the Committee to the Annual General Meeting.

7.6

A bank account shall be opened in the name of the Group with Northern Bank, Saintfield or with such other bank as the Committee shall from time to time decide. The Committee shall authorise in writing 3 Office Bearers and 1 member of the Committee to sign cheques on behalf of the Group. All cheques must be signed by not less than 2 of the 4 authorised signatories.

8 Trust Property

The Group may appoint and may terminate the appointment of not less than 3 people to act as Trustees for the purpose of holding any moneys or property belonging to the Group. The title to all or any such real and/or personal property which may be required by or for the purposes of the Group shall be vested in the Trustees who shall hold such property in trust for the Group.

The Trustees shall act under the instructions of the Committee who shall, subject to the approval and consent of the Group as determined by a General Meeting, have power to fill vacancies among the Trustees.

Any property not directly belonging to but used by the group will be clearly identified with appropriate agreements in place which set out the legal roles and responsibilities of the Committee and the owners of such property.

9 Annual General Meeting

9.1

The first Annual General Meeting of the Group shall be held not later than the 27 June 2011 and in each year thereafter an Annual General Meeting of the Group shall be held at such place and time (not being more than 15 months after the holding of the preceding Annual General Meeting) as the Committee shall determine.

9.2

At such Annual General Meeting the business shall include the following:

- a) the election of members to serve on the Committee;
- b) the appointment of an auditor or auditors OR an independent person to examine the annual accounts;
- c) the consideration of an Annual Report of the work done by or under the auspices of the Committee;
- d) the consideration of the annual accounts;
- e) the transaction of such other matters as may from time to time be considered necessary.

10. Special General Meetings

The Committee may at any time at its discretion and shall upon a requisition signed by not less than 4 members having the power to vote and giving reasons for the request, call a Special General Meeting of the Group for the purpose of altering the constitution in accordance with Clause 13 hereof or of considering any matter which may be referred to them by the Committee or for any other purpose.

10.1

The Secretary or Chair shall send a note of the date, time and place of each special general meeting with a list of items to be discussed to all members at least 2 weeks before the date of the meeting.

10.2

If the Chair or Secretary does not call a special General Meeting within 2 months of a proper request to do so, any member may call that meeting by putting up a notice in a conspicuous place where the group meets at least 2 weeks before the meeting.

11. Rules of Procedure at all Meetings

11.1 Voting

Subject to the provisions of Clause 13 hereof all questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote thereat. In case of an equality of votes the Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote.

11.2 Minutes

Minute books shall be kept by the Committee and all other subcommittees and the appropriate Secretary shall enter therein a record of all proceedings and resolutions.

11.3 Quorum

The quorum at Annual/General/Special Meetings of the Group shall be 15 and at meetings of the Committee shall be 5 or such other number as the Committee may from time to time determine.

11.4 Standing Orders

The Committee shall have power to adopt and issue Standing Orders and/or Rules for the Group. Such Standing Orders and/or Rules shall come into operation immediately PROVIDED ALWAYS THAT they shall be subject to review by the Group in General Meeting and shall not be inconsistent with this constitution.

12. Alterations to the Constitution

12.1

Any alterations to this Constitution shall receive the assent of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Group present and voting at the Annual General Meeting or a meeting specially called for the purpose PROVIDED THAT notice of any such alteration shall have been received by the Honorary Secretary in writing not less than 21 clear days before the meeting at which the alteration is to be brought forward.

12.2

At least 14 clear days notice in writing of the meeting setting forth the terms of the alteration to be proposed shall be sent by the Honorary Secretary to each member of the Group PROVIDED FURTHER THAT no alteration shall be made which would cause the Group to cease to be a charity at law. No amendment may be made to 13.1, 13.2, 13.3 or 7.1.

13. Dissolution

13.1

If the Committee by a simple majority decide at any time that on the grounds of expense or otherwise it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Group they shall call a meeting of all members of the Group who have the power to vote of which meeting not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the Resolution to be proposed thereat) shall be given.

13.2

If such decision shall be confirmed by a simple majority of those present and voting at such meeting the Committee shall have power to dispose of any assets held by or in the name of the Group.

13.3

Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the Group as the Committee may decide.

14. Indemnity

The Group shall indemnify and keep indemnified every officer, member, volunteer and employee of the Group from and against all claims, demands, actions and proceedings (and all costs and expenses in connection therewith or arising therefrom) made or brought against the Group in connection with its activities, the actions of its officers, members, volunteers or employees, or in connection with its property and equipment but this indemnity shall NOT extend to liabilities arising from willful and individual fraud, wrong doing or wrongful omission on the part of the officer, member, volunteer or employee sought to be made liable. The Treasurer shall affect a policy of insurance in respect of this indemnity.

Staffing

Name	Role	Qualification	Start Date	Finish Date
Nicola Burns	Leader	Level 5 Diploma in CCLD*	October 2008	February 2024
Ruth Service	Deputy Leader	Bachelor's in Early Years Education with QTS	November 2022	June 2023
Alison Ward	Assistant	Level 2 NVQ	October 2011	January 2024
Janet McElroy	Assistant Promoted to Leader February 2024	Level 3 in CCLD*	April 2017	current
Catherine Hanna	Assistant	-	January 2024	current
Roisin McGovern	Assistant	-	March 2024	current
Rachel McGreevy	Book keeping	-		

*CCLD: Children's Care Learning & Development

Nicola Burns, who was with Little Sunbeams from 2008 and served as Leader until February 2024 resigned from the role and we wish her the best of luck in her future career.

All early years providers working with children from birth to 5 years old must follow the regulations on early years foundation stage (EYFS) staff:child ratios.

This financial year was extremely difficult with forecast of a deficit particularly if application numbers were reduced. As such it was determined that redundancy consultations were necessary whilst seeking additional sources of funding. Whilst Little Sunbeams Committee were successful in fundraising to avert redundancies we unable to avert the resignation of

our newly appointed and highly qualified deputy leader Ruth Service. This was a great loss to Little Sunbeams and we wish her the best in her future career.

Janet McElroy brings a wealth of experience and acted as deputy leader before being promoted to playgroup leader in 2024.

We have recruited 2 new unqualified assistants with a view to upskilling in job. We seek to recruit a new deputy in 2024.

Annual reporting

We are required to report annually to the Charity Commission on the charity's finances, resources and activities. This is known as "annual reporting" and is a legal requirement.

Following the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the annual reporting rules for some charities have changed.

For charities registered before the end of May 2019 (including Little Sunbeam's), the charity trustees (Sunbeam's management committee) have a legal requirement to prepare and submit their annual return, accounts and reports for their first full financial year on or after 01 April 2022 and every year after that, see the table and information below.

Financial year start is	1st financial period that is legally required to be submitted	10 month deadline date after financial period end
01 August	01 August 2022- 31 July 2023	31 May 2024

Each registered charity has ten months from the end of their financial year to submit the required annual monitoring return to the Commission.

Little Sunbeams Preschool & Playgroup

Activities and achievements during the year 2022/23

Taken from AGM and committee meeting leader's Reports.

Visitors & Outings

The children have had many visitors to the pre-school last year to progress their learning and also to promote well-being. Thanks to additional non recurrent funding as part of The Engagement Fund to promote children's well-being, we were able to have mindfulness sessions, jump jiggle & jive, yoga sessions on a regular basis and also a trip to the Ark farm which was a great learning experience for the children and they were able to handle and develop understanding on how to care for animals.

Forest School

The children went to visit Greenleaf Forest School and they absolutely loved being outdoors exploring and investigating their surroundings. The total cost of this trip was covered through the engagement fund that we received.

Fundraising

The Maxol Garage has kindly donated the smarties tubes to the pre-school for fundraising,

We had our annual sponsored cycle and many children brought in their own bikes and completed 4 laps of the playground.

We offered many prizes at our pub quiz in Rowallane Inn including vouchers for the Ice Bowl; Streamvale Farm; and other local businesses

Management Committee activity 2022/23

The names of all charity trustees on the date the report was approved

Trustee board

Current Management Committee Members (at time of report)

Dr Mark Bowman

Mr Ultan Murray

Mrs Laura Mageean

Mr Stephen Brannigan

Mrs Maria O'Loan

Mrs Donna Doherty

Mrs Laura Miskimmin

Mrs Mairead Miskelly

Mrs Suzy Magee

Mrs Clare Dazei

Mrs Heather Milligan

Current Land Trustees

Fr A Mchugh Pp

Mrs Rachel Mcgreevy

Mrs Bernadette Sweeney

All individuals who served as charity trustees during the year 2022/23

Mrs Michelle Rooney - Retired April 2023 (Treasurer and DCPO)

Mr Phil Grace - Retired September 2021 from Secretary role - Remained a committee member

Dr Mark Bowman

Mr Ultan Murray

Mrs Laura Mageean

Mr Stephen Brannigan

Mrs Maria O'Loan

Mrs Donna Doherty

Mrs Laura Miskimmin

Mrs Mairead Miskelly

Mrs Suzy Magee

Mrs Clare Dazei

Mrs Heather Milligan

Mrs Stephanie X

Mr Phil Grace

Mrs Janette Morris

The charity trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

Restrictions on who can benefit: an explanation of how any restrictions, if applicable, were managed for the public benefit. For example: Fee charging for Access to facilities or Restrictions on the basis of personal characteristics.

Whilst preschool age year is fully funded there is a fee charged in order to provide a daily healthy snack. This fee is presented to prospective applicants in the prospectus provided prior to applications. Playgroup applicants (those applying who are younger than preschool age) are not funded and there is a standard fee which is available on request prior to application.

Harm: how the charity has mitigated any harm flowing from its purposes

The charity is subject to annual inspection and actions, where possible, any and all recommendations.

Private benefit: how the charity has ensured that any private benefit has been incidental to the public benefit

There is no private benefit as trustee positions are not remunerated and all income is fed directly into the Little Sunbeam's activities and core running costs.

Finances 2022/23

Summary

Back balance at year beginning 31/07/2021	£21525.09
Total Money In	£44546.24
Payments	£49147.61
Bank balance at year end 31/7/2022	£16923.72

Back balance at year beginning 31/07/2022	£16924
Total Money In	£46431
Payments	£45999
Bank balance at year end 31/7/2023	£17355

There continues to be a gap in PEAGS funding to meet staffing costs in this financial year.

This does not fund any other core running costs, insurances, fees, materials etc

There was significant increased fundraising activity to meet running costs in this financial year. It is unclear at this stage if PEAGS funding will increase in line with rising wage costs and core running costs.

Independent Examiner's Report

Independent examiner's report to the charity trustees of 'Little Sunbeams'

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 30 June 2023.

Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
 2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
 3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act 4.
- That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.



Declan Flynn

Chartered Accountant (Chartered Accountants Ireland)

40 Kilcarn Road, Killinchy, Co. Down, BT23 6LB.

21/02/2024