

**ACTION DEAF YOUTH
THE TRUSTEES REPORT (including Directors Report)
Year Ended 31 March 2024**

The Trustees are pleased to present their financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024, which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Action Deaf Youth is a charitable company limited by guarantee (NI619842). It is a charitable company registered with the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland (102041).

The registered office is 385a Holywood Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT4 2LS.

The directors of the company are its trustees for the purpose of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the directors. The present directors and any past directors who served during the year are given below. The external advisors are set out on page 1.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 14 August 2013 and accepted as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 8 June 2015. 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. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1. The number of members as at 31 March 2024 was 7.

The Board is responsible for the overall governance of the company. All directors retire at the Annual General Meeting and are eligible for appointment to the Board of Directors for the incoming year to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

Directors and their interests

The directors shown below have held office during the whole period from 1 April 2024 to the date of this report:

Rosemary Magee

Richard Dougherty

Graham Chalmers (resigned 23 May 2023)

Pauline Walker (resigned 1 July 2023)

Roslyn Dougherty (resigned 4 May 2023)

Holly Greer

Lauren Millar (resigned 1 July 2023)

Grainne Murphy (appointed 1 July 2023)

Solene Nugent (appointed 1 July 2023)

Jolene Jess (appointed 21 June 2023)

Hannah Paulin

Recruitment and Appointment of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law. All directors retire at the Annual General Meeting and are eligible for appointment to the Board of Directors for the incoming year to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

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Organisational Structure

The board of directors meet on a regular basis and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. During the financial year, there were significant changes within senior management. The senior post became vacant in August following the departure of the previous post-holder (C Doherty) and a restructure took place, splitting the post into executive and service. The executive role was filled in November by S Doyle. Meanwhile, the service-focused senior post was established in September, with a new internal appointment made to oversee specific operational responsibilities, J Graham. These transitions have strengthened the senior management team, ensuring effective leadership across both executive and service functions.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Action Deaf Youth, formally Northern Ireland Deaf Youth Association, was founded in 1988 in order to improve the quality of life for young deaf people in Northern Ireland. It was established to alleviate the isolation perceived to be affecting larger numbers of deaf young people who experience difficulty in meeting other young people similar to them. The Association has worked to meet the social, educational and psychological needs of Northern Ireland's young deaf people and to enhance the quality of life and choices open to young deaf people in a youth work context.

Our 2023 impact summary shows that we successfully delivered 482 sessions with 487 direct beneficiaries. Sessions included group play sessions, youth sessions, a youth summer scheme, play therapy, British Sign Language (BSL) classes for deaf children and their hearing peers, and accredited BSL courses for parents and professionals who work with deaf children and young people.

Our sustained Early Years Service delivers key outcomes for children from birth upwards. Currently in its third year of funding from The Henry Smith Charity and previously funded for five years via Big Lottery Fund, this service has been independently evaluated by expert researchers concluding a demonstrated impact of improved self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of belonging, language development, resilience for every deaf child. Parents are supported to navigate the world of deafness and develop the tools to support their children's holistic development at home in playful ways.

We are proud to deliver accredited British Sign Language (BSL) classes, taught by a highly qualified teacher who is a native BSL user. This program serves families and professionals, our teaching is designed to ensure that children within our service receive the appropriate support they need from both their families and the professionals in their lives. By providing high-quality BSL training, we create a foundation of understanding and communication that empowers children to thrive in inclusive environments. Funded by the Department of Communities, this initiative has successfully trained individuals across levels 1 to 6.

This runs parallel with our school's programme where our qualified BSL teacher will regularly visit schools attended by deaf children to support their hearing peers to develop knowledge, awareness and acceptance of deafness and BSL allowing us to embed community relations, equality and diversity for a cohesive and shared education.

Continual delivery of this crucial Early Years service has:

- Enhanced the quality of parent-deaf child communication thus strengthening attachment which is proven to be one of the most significant factors determining future outcomes for all children
- Exposed deaf children to BSL and enhanced their language and literacy development through an extended repertoire of communication channels

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

- Enabled deaf children to be provided with learning opportunities alongside deaf peers in a linguistically rich deaf-on-deaf environment specially curated for them
- Equipped deaf children with alternative communication tools to alleviate frustration and improve their emotional wellbeing thus preventing potential future mental health issues
- Increased parents' confidence and self-esteem in using BSL with their deaf children
- Connected families of young deaf children with each other, creating a protective peer support network
- Contributed to a more inclusive society by presenting opportunities which have expanded BSL awareness across society

The company's objects and principal activities are to:

Our Vision

To be the leading deaf youth organisation in Northern Ireland, providing quality services to meet the needs of deaf children and young people.

"Transforming the lives of deaf children and young people, unlocking boundless possibilities."

Our Mission

To support deaf children and young people in reaching their full potential by delivering a continuum of youth work, employability, training, intervention and transition support services.

At the heart of our mission lies an unwavering passion—to empower deaf children and young people, fostering social inclusion, language advancement, independence, confidence and opportunity.

Guided by our commitment, we intertwine social, therapeutic, language and educational support, crafting a nurturing ecosystem where each child and young person discovers their strengths, connects with their community, and achieves their fullest potential.

Our Values

We believe deaf children and young people are equal citizens and should be provided with opportunities to maximise their full potential and to develop holistically as positive citizens living in Northern Ireland. We aim for the core values in the Northern Ireland Youth Work Curriculum to be intrinsic to the lives of deaf children and young people.

- **Equity**
We believe deaf children and young people should be treated fairly and with respect in all walks of life. We will treat every deaf child or young person with respect and seek to promote their well-being and development.
- **Diversity**
We recognise that deaf children and young people will have cultural and language differences. We will continuously provide opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion to enable deaf children and young people to participate and integrate fully in society.
- **Interdependence**
We believe deaf children and young people will unlock their full potential by working with others and developing new life skills in a supportive learning environment. We will continuously provide opportunities for deaf children and young people to connect and to have a say in matters they face as a result of their deafness.

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Our Values (continued)

The board of Trustees and Manager supervise the work of the following departments:

Youth Support Service; 1 x Youth Support Worker in charge (P/T) and 1 x Youth Assistant Support Worker (P/T)
Early Years' Service; 1x Active Play Coordinator, 9 x Sessional Workers

Who used and benefited from our services?

At the heart of our service are the children and young people who engage with us on a weekly basis from across Northern Ireland. All additional services we provide, including BSL teaching, are designed to support and empower these children. By focusing our efforts on their needs, we ensure that the families and professionals involved in their lives are equipped with the skills and understanding necessary to foster a supportive, inclusive environment where they can thrive.

Our Staff

We operate a specialist Deaf service and have a predominantly Deaf staff team. Having lived experience, Deaf staff are uniquely placed to model a positive representation of deafness. Our staff team have experience, specialist training and qualifications in teaching, play work, youth work, play therapy, BSL, and social work. All staff team members use BSL including hearing staff who have had access to specialist BSL training and support. Our in-house Play Therapist is registered with the Professional Standards Authority thus demonstrating our good governance practices and our commitment to continuous improvement.

The staff work tirelessly, with unwavering commitment and passion, to ensure the delivery of high-quality services that directly benefit the children, young people, and families we support.

Through continuous training and professional development, our staff remain equipped to meet the evolving needs of our community. Their efforts not only enhance the lives of those we serve but also contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all of our employees for their continuing hard work and commitment to Action Deaf Youth. Their dedication, commitment and loyalty has enabled our core services to grow providing a much-needed service in Northern Ireland. The Board is committed to their continuing professional development to build their capacities within our organisation for new and expanding opportunities.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Trustees confirm that they had due regard for the guidance produced on Public Benefit by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, it has continued to be difficult to plan or develop services. Incoming resources during the year were £231,116 (2023: £279,702). The charity had a deficit for the year £11,865 (2023: surplus £22,564) and the total funds as at 31 March 2024 was £155,733 (2023: £167,598), of which £141,711 related to restricted reserves and £14,022 related to unrestricted reserves.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW (continued)

While the financial accounts indicate ongoing challenges, we are encouraged by the significant progress made in our recovery efforts into year 24/25. Targeted initiatives and a steadfast commitment to our mission have yielded measurable improvements in our current position. These advancements demonstrate resilience and a clear trajectory toward sustainable growth. We remain focused on building momentum and ensuring long-term clear trajectory toward sustainable growth. We remain focused on building momentum and ensuring long-term stability for the benefit of all beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Reserves Policy

The Directors have established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should be 6 months of total costs.

Total unrestricted expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024 was £66,180 and therefore the target is £33,090 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 while negotiating continuation funding.

At present the unrestricted reserves are in surplus of £14,022 which equals to 2.5 months of unrestricted expenditure.

Investment Policy

Any surplus funds and grants received in advance are placed on deposit until such time as they are required for the day-to-day expenditure.

Corporate Planning and plans for the future

The Boards view that significant progress has been made to further the objects of the Charity, improve its finances and that the internal processes implemented during this period have significantly strengthened the organisation going forward. The clarity of vision provided by the Corporate Plan and its extensive planning processes ensures that the Board is able to highlight the important issues faced by our young Deaf Children and youths today.

There are no significant changes planned for the forthcoming financial year. The Directors will continue to govern the company in line with its constitution in order to achieve the objectives noted above.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In the immediate term, our focus remains on ensuring the sustainability of vital services for deaf children. By maintaining a commitment to high-quality delivery and optimising the impact of our current offerings, we aim to build upon our successes. This will enable us to generate additional support and resources to enhance and grow our services in the years ahead.

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STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors) are responsible for preparing the annual 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). The financial statements are required by law to 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 period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:


- Select suitable accounting practices and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- 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 proper accounting records that 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 or other irregularities.

Small company exemptions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

By order of the board of trustees


[Rosemary Magee \(Dec 16, 2024 14:22 GMT\)](#)

Rosemary Magee (Chairperson)

Approved by the directors on **16/12/2024**.....