

NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FORUM

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

The trustees present their report, together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out on page 12.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Youth Forum is established to **promote the voice and benefit of young people in Northern Ireland (hereinafter called the "area of benefit")** and to educating and assisting such young people through their leisure time activities, so as to develop their physical, mental and spiritual capacities, that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society and that their conditions of life may be improved.

In furtherance of the above objects the Youth Forum may:

- provide or secure the provision of educational and recreational facilities and practical assistance for young people within the area of benefit.
- promote and carry out, or assist in promoting and carrying out research, surveys and investigations and publish the useful results.
- organise or assist in organising meetings, training and debates and publish or assist in publishing reports, periodicals, recordings, books or other documents.
- procure to be written and printed, published, issued, distributed and circulated reports, periodicals, books, pamphlets, leaflets or other documents or communications in furtherance of the above objects.
- obtain, collect and receive money by way of grants, donations, bequests, legacies or other lawful method, provided that the Forum may not engage in any form of permanent trading.
- invest the monies of the Forum 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.
- recruit and train volunteers with relevant skills to carry out the objects of the Forum.
- employ or pay any person to supervise, organise and carry on the work of the Youth Forum and make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of remuneration to employees.
- promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the above objects and to that end to work in association with local authorities and voluntary organisations engaged in the furtherance of the above objects in the area of benefit.
- do all such other lawful things as may be necessary for the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

MEMBERSHIP

Individual members

All young people aged 11 – 25, whose residence is in Northern Ireland are entitled to become individual members of the Youth Forum providing they fulfil the following criteria:

- a) They should be aged 11-25.
- b) They should actively support the values, priorities, aims and objectives of the Youth Forum.
- c) Complete relevant membership registration.

Individual members have the opportunity to participate in all NIYF programmes and will be informed about these via a range of communications mechanisms.

Individual members are not required to attend AGMs, but are invited to do so, they are not entitled to voting rights but those who wish to have voting entitlement in organisational matters will be directed to the 'active membership' tier,

Organisational Members

Organisational Membership is open to local Youth Councils, Youth Forums, Youth Clubs, School, Community Groups, Regional Voluntary organisations or other relevant young people's organisations in Northern Ireland, so long as they promote the participation of young people and that:

- a) They actively support the values, priorities, aims and objectives of the Youth Forum.
- b) They actively promote the participation of young people in decision making within their organisation.

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- i. Each organisation must apply in writing to the Youth Forum by completing the necessary application process.
- ii. Each organisation is entitled to nominate 2 representatives who will participate in the (NIYF) Active Membership group.
- iii. Organisational members will be entitled to a range of benefits based on the Youth Forum's programme of work at any particular time.
- iv. It is an expectation of the Youth Forum that each member organisation would attend the AGM unless apologies are received. If a member organisation does not attend 3 consecutive AGM's and does not provide apologies, the Executive Committee may review their membership.

Active members

The active membership tier is a group of Youth Forum members who regularly engage in centrally organised Youth Forum activities. Active members have voting rights on matters of strategic importance to the Youth Forum. Each active member will have one vote.

The Active membership tier will act as the Youth Forum's representative body of young people and this is where the organisation will seek direction on the needs of young people and issues, which the organisation should address. Active members will be heavily involved in setting the strategic direction of the Youth Forum.

To become an active member young people can:

- a) Be nominated by a member organisation
- b) Self-nominate following engagement in Youth Forum work at a local level

Active members must:

- a) Be aged 11- 25
- b) Actively support the values, priorities, aims and objectives of the Youth Forum
- c) Be actively involved in a locally based participative practice
- d) Be available to participate in regular centrally organised Youth Forum activities
- e) Endeavour to attend AGMs and EGMs.

Active members will be appointed on a bi-annual basis following the AGM. If active members are regularly absent from centrally organised Youth Forum activities without apology or reasonable explanation, their position will be reviewed. In the event that a young person can no longer participate in the active tier, they can remain an Individual Member of the Youth Forum providing they still meet the eligibility criteria. There will be a minimum of two Active Membership group meetings per year.

Executive Committee

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum is managed by an Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee is made up of no fewer than 12 and no more than 20 young people (aged 11 – 25) who are drawn from the active membership tier. Executive Committee members will be elected on a bi-annual basis following a vote at AGM by the active membership. The number of seats available on the Executive Committee will be agreed by the outgoing Committee based on numbers of nominations received, representation and strategic direction as set by the active tier at that time.

The Executive Committee are responsible for the overseeing the day-to-day management of NIYF. Whilst it is not a prerequisite that the Executive Committee is a fully representative group; the Youth Forum will be mindful of the makeup of the committee in terms of equality legislation.

The Executive committee shall appoint up to 3 adults to the committee; (usually defined as someone aged over 25 and therefore does not qualify to be a member of the Youth Forum)

The role of these individuals will be to support the young people in their roles. It is proposed that each of these representatives will have experience in one of the following areas:

- Community/Youth/Voluntary Sector
- Financial management
- Human Resource management
- Law

These adults cannot act in the Chairperson, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary or Treasurer capacity. They do not have a vote on organisational or strategic matters, as with other Executive Committee members, but should provide input and advice. The adult Executive members will be co-opted onto the Executive Committee by the Executive Committee when in place. This approach will allow the NIYF to maintain its youth led status but will also provide mechanisms whereby young people are supported in their roles as Executive Committee members.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

An Annual General Meeting of the Youth Forum 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.

To hold an Annual General Meeting, or Extraordinary General Meeting, the Youth Forum needs one quarter of active members represented, including two office bearers.

Any active Members who are not able to attend Annual or Extraordinary General Meetings and who send apologies to the Honorary Secretary are entitled to vote by proxy. Apologies can be received via written or electronic communications.

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

- a) The election of members to serve on the committee. Committee elections normally take place every 2 years.
- b) The appointment of an auditor or auditors.
- c) The consideration of an Annual Report of work done by or under the auspices of the Committee.
- d) The consideration of the audited accounts.
- e) The transaction of such other matters as may from time to time be considered necessary.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICER BEARERS:

The following office bearers shall be elected at the A.G.M. to serve on the Executive Committee.

CHAIRPERSON: The Chairperson shall convene and chair meetings of the Youth Forum and its Executive Committee. In conjunction with the Honorary Secretary, the Chairperson should liaise with staff. Additionally, the Chairperson shall be expected to represent the organisation at external events.

VICE CHAIRPERSON: In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall be expected to carry out the duties of the Chairperson. He/she shall be expected to be in attendance at all meetings of the Youth Forum and its Executive Committee.

HONORARY SECRETARY: The Honorary Secretary shall liaise with the employees to ensure that the general business of the Youth Forum and the Youth Forums office is being carried out properly. In addition, he/she is required to be in attendance at regular staff meetings to ensure the above.

TREASURER: The Treasurer shall be responsible for working with the staff to ensure that the Youth Forum has enough resources to fulfil its objectives. He/she shall produce a balance sheet to be presented at the AGM.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: The Public Relations Officer shall work with the nominated communications staff member in dealing with the local and national media outlets. He/she shall keep in close contact and meet with the local media, issue press releases and deal with other publicity articles.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICER: The External Affairs Officer will be responsible for creating and maintaining links and contacts with organisations, groups and individuals outside of the Youth Forum. They should also support the role of the Chair and the Public Relations Officer in representing the Youth Forum on external bodies and to the media. They should also have priority responsibility for representing the Youth Forum outside of Northern Ireland, particularly in a cross-border, UK and European context.

Further posts will be reserved for other young people.

Where Executive members need additional support to enable them to carry out their duties, the Youth Forum shall, where possible, employ the professional expertise to give guidance and advice.

Three additional seats on the Executive Committee shall be reserved for independent expert representatives who will be co-opted to provide support to the Executive Committee. These individuals should have specific skills, as directed by the Executive. These members may be over 25 and will not have voting rights.

FUNCTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee will meet no less than four times per year. The Chair will be responsible for setting the agenda of these meetings through direct engagement with the Director, staff and active members. The Executive Committee shall:

- meet a minimum of four times per year. To hold a meeting of the Executive Committee there needs to be half of the Executive Committee members in attendance.
- ensure the day to day running of the organisation and make any important decisions necessary.
- support the Director in responsibility for the employment of, supervision of and support for staff, advising the organisation on financial matters and monitoring the programme to ensure the Youth Forum is meeting its aims and objectives.
- actively support and promote the aims of the Youth Forum and the activities, work etc., of the organisation.
- if required, discuss any matter relating to an employee. If the Executive Committee is required to do this and a member of it has been in anyway involved in the incident, he/she shall withdraw from the discussion. The Executive Committee should also refer to the Contracts of Employment relating to each particular post.
- in relation to an individual's absence from two or more consecutive executive meetings without written apology co-opt an alternative into that post to carry out the duties that go with it for up to as long as is deemed necessary.
- Where necessary the Executive Committee shall seek advice from professional experts in relation to financial, legal or strategic matters.
- Each Executive Committee member is expected to serve the duties of their office for a period of two years.
- The Executive Committee may appoint such sub-committees, advisory groups or working parties of their own members and other persons from time to time, necessary for the carrying out of their work and may determine their terms of reference, duration and composition. All such sub-committees shall make regular reports to the Executive Committee. No sub-committee shall make any decisions without this going to the full Executive Committee. Where possible the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson shall chair these sub-committees.
- Members of the Executive committee are expected to act with integrity and within the ethos of the Youth Forum. It is expected that as such Youth Forum strategy and policy comes before any other interest outside of the work of the Youth Forum. Committee members are expected to ensure the organisation remains apolitical. Should any conflict of interest hamper an individual's role as an Executive Committee member they will be expected to reconsider their position.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The organisation had net expenditure for the year of £216,983 (2022: £111,881). When added to the reserves brought forward the total reserves at 31 March 2023 are £441,811 (2022: £658,794).

RESERVES POLICY

It is the policy of the organisation to maintain unrestricted reserves of a minimum of six months running costs of resources expended on general activities. The organisation also has a policy to maintain further unrestricted reserves of the current redundancy costs of the organisation. At 31 March 2023 this would equate to £32,271 (2022: £32,271).

RELATED PARTIES

The Charity has no related parties.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

Over the coming year the NIYF will work to consolidate as well as continue to develop our organisation. We will work to secure resources and essential core funding to support NIYF through as we move towards independence.

NIYF is equipped well to deal with a changing policy and funding landscape, and we will continue to sustain and develop collaborations and partnerships; create space for innovation and development; and continue to diversify funding streams.

Through a growth and development of innovative youth work programmes, increasing international networks and funding opportunities, as well as maintaining our profile enables the ongoing sustainability of the NI Youth Forum.

Up to date financial systems and planning, alongside strong governance are key properties as reflected in our strategic plan.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The main risk which faces NIYF is the uncertainty of funding. The Executive Committee continually monitor the financial position of the Youth Forum and have examined the major risks which the organisation faces and confirm that policies and procedures have been established so that the necessary steps can be taken to lessen these risks.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Chairperson's Report

As the newly elected Chairperson of the NI Youth Forum Executive Committee, I am so proud of all that our organisation achieved over the 2022-23 financial year. Despite ongoing external challenges such as the rising cost of living and lack of a power sharing government at Stormont, the NI Youth Forum has continued to deliver high quality youth provision that meets the evolving needs of our membership.

Our membership are at the heart of everything we do. This year, our phenomenal housing and homelessness team supported 158 young people as they navigated the cost-of-living crisis. Moreover, as we have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have supported 247 young people to access therapeutic support and counselling provision. It should be noted that any fund or subsidiary that was in deficit at the end of the last financial year has been received after year end, eliminating the deficit.

Young people across our organisation have had incredible impact in terms of participation and speaking truth to power. Young people from our Executive Committee and the 'Elephant coming out of the dark' programme travelled to Geneva, Switzerland to speak at the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. In addition, young people engaged with Local Councillors, MLAs, MPs, Lords, TDs and Senators from across the political spectrum. For us, participation takes place at local, regional, national and international levels and our broad political engagement reflects this.

The 2021-23 Executive Committee enacted several long-term strategic changes to our organisation with the publication of our youth-led Quality Assurance Framework, 'NI Youth Forum Defined', alongside our 'Youth Manifesto for Change'. In addition, the Committee led on a transformational rebrand with a new brand identity, a new logo and digital communications strategy which included the redesigning of our website. The membership also approved important changes to our Constitution in December 2022 to facilitate the implementation of new Standing Orders, delivery of new Election Documentation and the creation of the Policy Officer role within the Committee. In order to be able to do this all trustees must commit to a thorough induction and training programme in line with our governing documents, NIYF Constitution and Standing Orders.

Our staff team work tirelessly to meet the ever-evolving needs of our membership as best they can, and it is my privilege to work alongside them. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of our staff team for everything that they do to live out our vision and values. Pay and remuneration of all personnel is set by the Trustees in line with National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

This was a year of many achievements and so much joy across our organisation, however, it was also a year marked by profound sadness and loss for many young people and staff. Lucy Grainger, who served as Chairperson from 2018 until 2021, passed away in October 2022. Lucy had an immeasurable impact on our organisation and every individual she met. Lucy's inspirational leadership, care for others and deep kindness will be remembered and cherished by all of us at the NI Youth Forum and beyond. Her legacy will continue to live on in all that we do.

Cohen Taylor
Chairperson

Hon. Secretary's Report

The 2022/23 financial year has been hugely successful for NIYF, we are privileged to be working with so many young people throughout the region whilst promoting youth voice. The out workings of the Covid – 19 pandemic has offered many learning opportunities for staff who continued to implement positive change to creatively meet the needs of young people in all elements of our work.

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Throughout this year NIYF have worked hard to diversify funding streams and are continuing to build upon positive relationships locally, nationally, and internationally. The youth service funding climate continues to be competitive, and we look forward to identifying new funding streams.

Some of our key highlights and achievements this year have been the launch of NIYF's Youth Manifesto for Change, presenting at the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, attending the global youth homelessness conference in New York City and the establishment of NI's first cross-party working group on youth participation. 500 individually young people have been supported through programmes and training with a wide network of young activists trained and supported demonstrating impact on skills, knowledge, and confidence.

One of NIYF's key priorities is the investment in our staff. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their passion, dedication, and hard work. Thank you to NIYF's executive committee for fulfilling their roles over and above as trustees.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Executive Committee is required to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs and of its income and expenditure for the year. In preparing the financial statement the executive committee are required to select suitable accounting policies, to apply them consistently and to make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.

The executive committee are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the charity. To ensure that proper books and records are kept the charity has employed appropriately qualified personnel and has maintained appropriate computerised accounting systems. It is 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.

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE TO AUDITORS

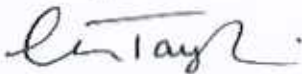
So far as the members of the Executive Committee are aware there, is no relevant audit information of which the Charity's auditors are unaware and they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Approved by the committee and signed on their behalf on by:

Name: COHEN TAYLOR

Date: 30/1/24

Title: Chairperson



Name: EÓIN MILLAR

Date: 30/1/24

Title: Treasurer

