

## Depaul Northern Ireland

(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)

# TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 December 2023

The Trustees (who are the directors of the company) are pleased to present their Annual Report and audited Financial Statements of Depaul Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 December 2023. Depaul Northern Ireland has prepared its Financial Statements in line with the Companies Acts and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice ("Charities SORP") applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ("FRS 102").

The Trustees have not prepared the strategic report required of medium and large companies under The Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 as the company qualifies as small under section 383.

## OUR HISTORY

Depaul Northern Ireland is part of a group of charities (the "Depaul Group") that works across the world with a mission to end homelessness and change the lives of those affected by it. The ultimate parent company is Depaul International. The Depaul Group of charities came about as a joint response by three organisations to the rise of youth homelessness in the late 1980's in London. These were the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Passage Day Centre. All three owe their vision, mission and values to the life and work of St Vincent de Paul, a great social and spiritual reformer in 17th century France. They are part of a global network of charitable and religious organisations known collectively as the Vincentian Family. St Vincent de Paul believed in action rather than words, in taking risks to help the poor, and in finding new ways to deal with old problems. Although Depaul International is independent of these founding organisations, it continues to work closely with them and other members of the Vincentian Family globally. The Depaul Group is recognised as being part of the Vincentian Family in its own right, working inclusively with homeless and disadvantaged people of all faiths and none, which is reflected in the makeup of its employees, volunteers and Trustees. Depaul International now operates in Ireland, United Kingdom, USA, Ukraine, Slovakia, Croatia and France.

Depaul came to the Republic of Ireland in 2002 on the invitation of both the Irish Government and the Vincentian Family in Ireland. There was an unmet need at the time, in particular for those with very complex needs who found it difficult to access and maintain accommodation service due to their lifestyle. Depaul Ireland developed pragmatic responses to work with these groups and opened many services that were the first of their kind in Ireland. Depaul Northern Ireland was established in 2005 as a subsidiary undertaking of Depaul Ireland. In 2016 Depaul Ireland established a second subsidiary company, Depaul Housing Association ("Depaul Housing") which is an Approved Housing Body. Together these three charities form the Depaul Irish Group

In 2015 the Depaul Group became known simply as "Depaul". At this time 'Homelessness has no place' was adopted as the international expression of the Depaul mission. Depaul International works under a Board and Assembly governance structure, which provides oversight while recognising and respecting the individuality of each subsidiary charity within the Depaul Group.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

### Our Vision, Mission and Values

Depaul works to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

*Our Vision* is of a society in which everyone, across the world, has a place to call home and a stake in their community.

*Our Mission* is to end homelessness and change the lives of those affected by it.

*Our Values* are:

- We celebrate the potential in people.
- We put words into action.
- We take a wider role in civil society.
- We believe in rights and responsibilities.

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### Review of Activities

During the year the Depaul Irish Group provided support for 10,936 (2022: 7,455) people including single people, couples and families across all our services throughout the Depaul Irish Group. The total number of people supported in the Republic of Ireland was 10,153 (2022: 6,454) and in Northern Ireland was 783 (2022: 1,001). In addition, Depaul Housing provided 40 (2022: 32) tenancies during the year.

### Key Achievements in the Year

Depaul Northern Ireland achievements in 2023 included:

- Appointed a Sustainability Manager who began reviewing our service offering across Northern Ireland to identify areas for greater efficiency and improved service delivery.
- Participated in a new partnership initiative, the Complex Lives Project, in Belfast encompassing a number of service providers and statutory agencies to mobilise a whole system approach to supporting people caught in a vicious cycle of homelessness, addiction and mental issues in Belfast.
- Following a competitive process, was awarded a Community Foundation grant to establish a pilot Homeless Health Peer Advocate programme in the western part of Northern Ireland.

### Charitable Activities

The Depaul Irish Group strategic plan, "A Path Home", builds upon the foundations of our traditional **Low Threshold** approach to service provision by engaging in **Specialised Services** centred on meeting unique needs and building permanent solutions in our **Housing-led** approach to services. The plan sets out a strategic direction which builds on Depaul's significant success achieved to date.

Our strategy is centred around five main themes each of which represents an area within the organisation which will drive change during the lifetime of this strategic plan. This plan is accompanied by key performance indicators that will outline actions we will take and how we will monitor our progress.

- Theme 1: our services and housing
- Theme 2: our people
- Theme 3: our organisation
- Theme 4: our service users
- Theme 5: our voice

Depaul's mission is to end homelessness and change the lives of those affected by it. We believe that the experience of homelessness affects people in a myriad of ways and therefore requires different approaches. People who are homeless are not a homogenous group and the manner by which Depaul organise its services reflects this complexity. Our response to service provision is organised into five service pillars: Prevention, High Support Accommodation, Families and Young People, Health and Rehabilitation, and Housing. This approach allows services to be tailored and modelled specifically for the needs of the households served.

#### Prevention

Depaul's prevention services work in communities across Northern Ireland, ensuring families and individuals are able to maintain their tenancies and live independently within their own communities. These services are designed to intervene at a community level to help prevent people entering homelessness and assisting people who have a history of homelessness gain roots in their communities.

Depaul's prevention service encompasses a Harm Reduction Floating Support service and Depaul's Foyle Haven Day Centre in L/Derry. The Floating Support service in L/Derry supported 63 (2022: 52) individuals with a history of drug and alcohol misuse to remain in their own homes. The Foyle Haven Day Centre has been in ever increasing demand over the last number of years and plays a vital role in the L/Derry area supporting people with a range of challenges. In 2023 the Day Centre supported 246 people (2022: 403 people). 2023 represents a return to normal levels of support while 2022 saw increased temporary service user needs when the Day Centre re-opened for in-person support post Covid in early 2022.

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### High Support Accommodation

Depaul's origins lie in its ability to provide low threshold accommodation for men and women with significant drug and alcohol difficulties. Our High Support Accommodation services are structured to offer supported accommodation to those who have the greatest difficulties and complexities. They are designed to offer emergency and case management supports to tackle such issues and support people to move to longer term more independent living arrangements.

Stella Maris, an alcohol managed service in the docks area of Belfast, supports men and women who are homeless with alcohol difficulties. During the year Stella Maris worked with 48 people (2022: 38 people).

The Castlehill Service in Dungannon provides self-contained accommodation and during the year provided supported accommodation for 61 people (2022: 62 people).

### Families and Young People

Depaul Northern Ireland provides vital accommodation and community supports for vulnerable families and young people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.

Our Belfast based Family Floating Support service provides support to families moving on from temporary accommodation into the community and supports families at risk of homelessness. The Family Floating Support service worked with 93 adults and 87 children through the year (2022: 93 adults and 157 children).

Mater Dei in North Belfast and Cloverhill in Twinbrook are our temporary accommodation services designed to provide families with the best possible support to deal with the experience of being in temporary accommodation and assist them to move into permanent housing as soon as possible. Both Services offer 24-hour support and were assisted by a childcare support service funded by Children in Need until mid-2023. In the past these vital services have benefited from corporate donations to upgrade the furniture and fittings and improve the quality of the services we offer. Mater Dei accommodated 28 adults and 34 children (2022: 34 adults and 32 children) while Cloverhill accommodated 44 adults and 55 children (2022: 47 adults and 56 children).

### Housing

Depaul considers that housing is ultimately the solution to homelessness. Depaul Northern Ireland operates a number of services within the community, providing housing solutions for very vulnerable people. Foremost amongst these are the Housing First services in L/Derry and Belfast. Housing First is an approach based on the philosophy that all individuals, despite their background, can live independently once the proper supports are provided. Depaul have been pioneers of this approach in Northern Ireland. During the year this service worked with 60 people (2022: 56) people across the two cities.

### Health and Rehabilitation

Depaul continues to provide vital onsite healthcare support in all our services while working closely with other agencies to ensure those experiencing homelessness have access to the healthcare they require. During the year we reconfigured our Foyle Haven Day Centre space to facilitate a clinical room where external health professionals run on-site clinics including screening services, health and wellbeing checks, podiatry, vaccines and counselling. This vital intervention played a key part in supporting the health of some of the most vulnerable individuals in L/Derry. Bringing the services to these individuals helps overcome the barriers that often prevent them from accessing health related supports when they need it. As a result, 297 mental health interventions and 307 tailored physical health interventions were provided in 2023.

Depaul Northern Ireland, supported by the Public Health Agency, introduced a Needle and Syringe exchange service for those who attend the Day Centre. Use of the service has grown month on month and is a key harm reduction intervention for our service users.

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## **Volunteers**

Depaul has a strong culture of supporting volunteering. We believe that people should have a way to tangibly demonstrate their care and compassion, and that the experience should be as beneficial to the volunteers as it is to those we serve. Volunteers are given a comprehensive induction programme and supported through ongoing review and training.

We remain grateful for the unstinting efforts of our volunteers who provide such valuable benefit through a wide range of activities designed to engage, support and befriend our service users. During 2023 16 volunteers contributed 702 hours of volunteering (2022: 35 volunteers and 366 hours) across our services in Northern Ireland.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

During 2024 Depaul Northern Ireland will review its strategic plan in conjunction with Depaul Ireland and Depaul International.

Depaul is committed to continuously improve and develop its services. Depaul Northern Ireland is actively seeking support for a new initiative that would support women leaving prison while the appointment of a Sustainability Manager will identify other opportunities and initiatives to be progressed over the next number of years that will strengthen our service offering across Northern Ireland.

The Department for Communities along with the NIHE are undertaking a review of the Housing First approach with the intention of upscaling and rolling out the Housing First model across Northern Ireland. Depaul Northern Ireland pioneered Housing First 10 years ago and continues to deliver the Housing First service in Belfast and L/Derry. Depaul is a key participant in the advisory and steering group undertaking this review and remains committed to the importance of the Housing First model.

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

Depaul Northern Ireland is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and registered with the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland. Depaul Northern Ireland files its annual accounts and annual monitoring report with the Commission.

## **The Trustees**

The strategic direction and governance of the company is the responsibility of the Trustees. The Nominations Committee seeks people with suitable skills to serve on the Board of Trustees and manages the process for the recruitment, appointment and rotation of Trustees. Depaul International, the ultimate parent company, approves the appointment of any new Trustees. Newly appointed Trustees receive a letter of appointment and an induction programme covering responsibilities and involvement outside of formal Trustee meetings.

The following were Trustees of the company, and unless indicated otherwise, served for the entire year:

John Murphy, Chairperson  
David Lane  
Jennifer Lee  
Mary Leonard  
Fr. Joseph Loftus  
Tim McKeown (appointed 7 February 2024)  
Yvonne McWhirther (resigned 22 September 2023)  
John Megahey  
Sr. Margaret O'Donovan  
Paul O'Malley  
Paul Stanley  
Paul White

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The Company Secretary was Laurence J Tuomey.

Throughout the year, the Trustees did not receive any loans or remuneration from the company. The company does not have a share capital.

In order to ensure that Depaul Northern Ireland is managed efficiently and effectively, the Trustees have delegated a range of day-to-day decision making powers to executive management. The Trustees have established appropriate controls and mechanisms to ensure that management operate within the powers delegated to them. The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for the overall management of the Depaul Irish Group, incorporating Depaul Ireland, Depaul Northern Ireland and Depaul Housing. This team is supported by a number of senior managers and each service has a local management team.

### **Trustee Committees**

The Trustees have established five sub-committees to support the work of the Board of Trustees:

- Services, Quality and Development committee
- Finance, People and Organisation, and Risk committee
- Fundraising and Communication committee
- Remuneration committee
- Nominations committee

Each committee is governed by a Trustee approved terms of reference and may have co-opted other members when appropriate. Most of the Trustees are a member of at least one of the sub-committees of the Board. The Nominations committee also supports the appointment of committee members. Other than the Remuneration committee, which meets as needed, committees meet a minimum of four times per year.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

#### **Review of results**

Total income for the year amounted to £3.5m (2022: £4.4m) with the decrease reflecting the return of prior year unspent restricted funding to the statutory agency. Depaul Northern Ireland depends on a high level of statutory income, with over 80% of our income coming through various government departments for a range of services. We continue to invest in our fundraising activities in order to raise the profile of the organisation and to increase our ability to maintain services with this much-needed additional income.

The net outcome for the year was an unrestricted surplus of £0.2m and a restricted deficit of £0.7m, resulting in an overall net deficit of £0.4m for 2023 (2022: £0.6m surplus). The current year restricted deficit reverses the restricted reserves brought forward from prior years.

Our fundraising income for the year amounted to £0.58m (2022: £0.75m), reflecting the continued generous response from individuals across the community during a period when donors were impacted by inflationary pressures. Our supporters understand that Christmas and the winter months are a particular vulnerable time for homeless people and contributions from the public are concentrated in the last months of the year.

The impact of the additional non-statutory unrestricted income has meant Depaul Northern Ireland ended the financial year with an unrestricted reserve of £1.5m (2022: £1.2m). These funds will ensure that Depaul Northern Ireland remains able to withstand adverse events that might occur but also seek to enhance its service offering in areas where statutory agencies are not present.

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## Reserves

Depaul Northern Ireland's reserves fall into two types:

- *Restricted funds:* these are generated when the donor stipulates how their donation must be spent or as a result of an appeal that has been run for a specific project or activity.
- *Unrestricted funds:* These are generated when the donor does not stipulate how their donation must be spent. Unrestricted funds include designated and other funds where the Trustees have set aside money for a specific purpose or to cover possible risks.

The Trustees adopt a reserve policy which they consider appropriate to ensure the continued ability of the company to meet its objectives. Consideration is given to assessing the risk, probability and likely impact on our ability to meet financial obligations or reduce expenditure in the short term due to a decline in income.

The Trustees reviewed their reserves policy during 2022 and set an unrestricted general reserve minimum target of 6 weeks annual operating costs to cater for short term working capital needs and an additional unrestricted reserve target of between 6 weeks and 20 weeks annual operating costs to cater for longer periods of disruption that might arise due to unexpected future adverse events.

At 31 December 2023 the company had sufficient reserves for the general reserve target of 6 weeks annual operating costs and held an additional 13.7 weeks (2022: 11.3 weeks) for the unrestricted reserve target which is within the policy range of 6 to 20 weeks. The Trustees consider there are sufficient unrestricted reserves at year end to avoid an unacceptable level of disruption to the organisation in the event of a downturn in future income.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the company is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the company, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate our exposure to these major risks. The Trustees maintain a risk register, which they review regularly.

- *Cost Inflation risks:* the rate of cost inflation experienced in the last two years was significant and adversely impacted the Depaul Irish Group. Statutory funders responded to these events as did a number of corporate donors. The medium term impact remains uncertain and the Trustees continue to monitor the risk of further inflationary pressures.
- *Reputational risks:* the Trustees are conscious of the importance of its reputation as a well-run organisation delivering public benefit and have undertaken steps to ensure Depaul Northern Ireland's governance and management structures are robust and give confidence to all stakeholders and operate in line with our values.
- *Financial risks:* the organisation exposes itself to a variety of financial risks including a reduction in statutory income or in community support to fundraising appeals. Measures to mitigate this risk include strong budgetary management and cost control and proactive negotiations with key stakeholders on appropriate service budgets designed to cover direct and indirect costs. The Finance, People and Organisation, and Risk committee monitors financial risks on a quarterly basis.
- *Health and Safety risks:* the Trustees recognise the importance of health and safety in all of our services. Depaul Northern Ireland implements robust systems and structures to ensure all health and safety regulations are complied with. There is quarterly reporting on compliance to the Services, Quality and Development committee and annual reporting to the full Board.
- *Legal and Regulatory risks:* the company is required to comply with a wider range of legal and regulatory obligations. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with these obligations, however, there inevitably remains a residual risk of an operational failure resulting in a breach of these obligations.
- *Insurable risks:* the organisation incurs exposure to employer, public and property damage liability by virtue of the nature of its operations. While a strong emphasis is placed on health and safety and risk

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management practices to avoid liability arising, insurance cover is maintained to mitigate the financial impact from such events.

- *Performance risks:* there is a risk that the high quality of our services may not be maintained and we perform below our own expectations or those of our funders as set out in their service level agreements. The Trustees monitor performance on an ongoing basis and have implemented annual service audit programmes as well as employee and service user surveys to provide them with assurance in this regard.

## GOING CONCERN

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies to the financial statements.

## EVENTS AFTER THE BALANCE SHEET DATE

There were no significant events affecting the company after the end of the year.

## BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

The measures taken by the Trustees to ensure compliance with the requirements regarding proper books of account are the implementation of necessary policies and procedures for recording transactions, the employment of competent accounting personnel with appropriate expertise and the provision of adequate resources to the financial function. The books of account of the company are maintained at 449 Antrim Road, Belfast.

## DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO AUDITORS

Each of the Trustees at the time when this Trustees' Annual Report was approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that Trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware; and
- the Trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Trustee in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

This confirmation is given and should be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of section 418 of the Companies Act 2006.

## AUDITORS

The Auditors, Crowe Ireland, have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of section 485A (7) of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 24 May 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

**John Murphy**, Chairperson

**Paul Stanley**, Treasurer