

Foyle Women's Aid

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

The Trustees are pleased to present their annual directors' report together with the consolidated financial statements of the Charity and its subsidiary for the year ending 31 March 2023 which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a Directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes.

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act (NI) 2008, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (NI) 2015, Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019.)

Structure, Governance and Management:

Foyle Women's Aid is a registered charity with Northern Ireland Charity Commission, NIC 103223, and a company limited by guarantee, registered in Northern Ireland, NI23041. The organisation was founded in 1975 and in 1989 was established under Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the Charitable Company and is governed under its Articles of Association. We are also members of the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (WAFNI) and a representative from our management committee is invited to sit on the WAFNI board. This promotes effective communication across the organisation and ensures a regional commitment and joined up approach to managing the strategic direction for Women's Aid in Northern Ireland.

Directors and trustees

The Directors of the company, as at the year-end are listed at the front of this report, are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the Company's Articles are known as members of the Management Committee. The Board comprises of six members who meet every month and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the Directors are elected to serve for a period of 3 years, after which they must be re-elected at the following AGM. The Director's liability is limited by guarantee. The chair and Vice Chair are appointed from within the board and can remain in office for 3 years although they are reappointed annually at the AGM.

The trustees during the year and at the 31 March 2023 were as follows:

Ms Eileen Webster	Ms Catherine McMinn
Ms Jacinta McCool	Ms Karen O'Leary
Ms Suzie McAneney (Appointed 13 April 2022)	Ms Amanda Biega (Appointed 17 August 2022)
Ms Karen Breslin (Appointed 17 August 2022)	

Objects and Activities

The Charity's objects are specifically restricted to the following:

- a) To relieve distress and suffering by the provision of safe temporary accommodation for women and their children, young people and vulnerable adult dependents who are, or have been, experiencing domestic, sexual or gender based violence or abuse;
- b) To relieve distress and suffering experienced by women and their children, young people and vulnerable adult dependents by providing and/or promoting a range of support services such as information, advice centres, confidential services, counselling, outreach, court support, training and advocacy;
- c) To relieve those in need by the provision of information and advice for those affected by domestic, sexual or gender based violence or abuse and referral to relevant support agencies;

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d) to advance education on violence against women and girls, including trafficking and exploitation, and its effects, and to relieve those in need by promoting its prevention and the protection of those affected;

e) To advance education on domestic, sexual and gender based violence and abuse and their effects, and to advocate for and to relieve those in need by promoting their prevention and the protection of those affected;

f) to advance women's and children's human rights and gender equality to relieve suffering and distress caused by violence emanating from the violation, impairment or nullification of enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Foyle Women's Aid Activities - core services and activities:

Foyle Women's Aid provide a range of accommodation and support services to women and children who have experienced, or are at risk of domestic abuse. Our core services are:

Support:

- Emergency, secure, temporary housing;
- Community based Floating Support Services;
- Practical and emotional support;
- Dedicated childcare unit and specialist provision for children from birth to 18 years old;
- Support for victims of men undergoing domestic violence perpetrator programmes.

Prevention:

- Specialist and generic education & training programmes for sexual & domestic violence survivors of all ages.
- The oversight of the Family Justice Centre, which will house a wide range of expert agencies providing information support and services to all sexual and domestic violence survivors.
- Collaboration with others to deliver and monitor the impact of the perpetrator programme.
- Collaboration with other partners locally, regionally, and internationally, and participate in initiatives to address needs, improve outcomes, and improve safety of all victims.
- We will continue to work with probation, supporting victims whilst they challenge and treat perpetrators of domestic violence in the area.

Protection & Justice:

- Supporting women who engage with the Criminal Justice System, including Court, meeting with Solicitors, PSNI, MARAC and agreed initiative related to domestic violence.
- Offering information and support to victims and their families and signposting them to other partner support services on site and off site of the Family Justice Centre.

During the year ended 31 March 2023 Foyle Women's Aid continued to provide a range of services including: Residential Services, Resettlement, Floating Support Service, Safety Planning, Specialised Group Work, Criminal Justice Support, Children's Services, Training, Information, Policy Development, Court Support, Dress For Success and Volunteer Management.

Achievements and Performance:

Foyle Women's Aid continued in the delivery of exceeded targets despite ongoing challenges and this can be attributed to the experience and commitment of the staff team here in Foyle. We experienced a continuing upward trend in referrals, in total, 993 referrals were received, 834 women were supported during the year, 7649 support sessions took place, 109 Women completed the Journey to Freedom programme, 227 women were supported by other agencies and 57 high-risk cases were referred to MARAC. This work was all achieved despite very challenging circumstances on the ground where it was difficult to access statutory services support teams due to home working and staff shortages.

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We were delighted to have finally opened The Family Justice Centre One Safe Place in September 2022 this centre is the first of its kind in the UK and Ireland. The Family Centre and the follow up developments will improve the way we deliver services to victims and survivors with the voices of women and children at the heart of what we do. The launch was a great success celebrated on the day with a range of prominent leaders within the legal and justice professions. This was a great day for all the team in Foyle and the culmination of years of hard work.

Children and Young People's Services

2022-23 was a busy year for all the services within the Creche and POD15.

The creche returned to operating five days a week, post COVID, offering up to 15 childcare places per day. These sessions are all child led, recognising the trauma that children within our services have been impacted by. The newly developed sensory room is widely utilised and a much-loved space with-in the centre for all ages.

76 new referrals were received and actioned for children and young people with 101 children and young people being supported. 312 direct sessions took place at the POD. We delivered 80 Kids Out toy packs at Christmas and Easter. 30 children completed the Helping Hands Program on site at POD15. We provided Christmas toy packs and pj's to 92 children in the community and at our residential settings. Mum attended 12 Stay and Play sessions with their children and 6 well baby clinics were facilitated by our attached Health Visitor Lucy Doherty.

The childcare team continued to be creative in developing and delivering a wide range of programmes and activities for all the children and young people, to help them address and deal with the devastating impact of experiencing and witnessing abuse at home.

The childcare team completed Dr Karen Tresiman's Trauma Informed training as well as, Designated officer's training, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety, Fire Awareness, Epi Pen Training and Nutrition Matters. The whole team worked extremely hard to ensure that all the courses were fully completed, and learning implemented. This year Derry City Environmental Health gave the Creche a 5-star enhanced hygiene rating after they carried out a random spot check.

Review of activities in the past year and plans for the future

Referrals continued to rise for the Floating Support Service this year, with an average of 83 women a month contacting us for help. Our Domestic abuse support team demonstrated professionalism, adaptability and commitment in responding to increased demand. The Referral and Intake team processed and triaged more women than ever before, identifying high risk cases and responding to all requests for help.

The Floating Support team also found time to achieve the Domestic Abuse Practitioner Award, a nationally recognised level 3 qualification, endorsed by the Home Office as suitable for the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate Role. The year-long training delivered by Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland covered a number of comprehensive topics including the understanding domestic abuse within social and historical context, the role of a Domestic Abuse Practitioner, the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, and working in partnership through a coordinated community response.

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A challenge came in June in terms of a major inspection of our service by our funder Supporting People. We had to provide evidence that we deliver a strategically relevant service from access to exit; that the client receives person centred housing related support; and that our clients are supported and safeguarded by appropriately trained and competent staff. The Floating Support Team passed with flying colours guaranteeing continued funding. The Supporting People team commented in their report that: Managers and staff are very experienced and knowledgeable about the housing related support the service provides. Staff could provide examples covering a wide range of activities to support housing, benefits and wellbeing. Confirmed by clients who spoke highly of support staff and the service.

Accommodation:

Demand for our emergency accommodation continued to be high with 57 women and 51 children accommodated in our safe, self-contained units. The average stay was 189 days as specialist support staff worked with families to find suitable permanent accommodation in the community. In December the Accommodation Support Assistant team were successful in winning an award from Derry City and Strabane Council during Homeless Awareness Week Awards Ceremony. The team was nominated because of the difference they are making to the lives of women and children who have had to flee their homes due to domestic and sexual violence. The commendation read: 'This team is at the very front of our frontline service, working days, evenings and weekends with have a positive, can-do spirit and positive attitude which can be hard to find these days.' Work continued during early 2023 for the opening of 9 new units at the Family Justice Centre in Bishop Street bringing our capacity to 32 families later this year.

Southall Black Sisters Partnership:

Foyle Women's Aid has partnered with Southall Black Sisters and the Home Office, again this year, to provide support for 50 victims of domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds. The project provides support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) migrant victims/survivors of domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds or housing. They receive 12 weeks rent and £40 a week living expenses while they are supported to obtain housing; other eligible assistance and immigration advice. Foyle Women's Aid manages this regional project in Northern Ireland and we are hopeful that that the data collected will help to inform change and that the decision-makers at government level will implement changes so these vulnerable victims can avail of the same support as other victims in Northern Ireland.

Promoting Positive Relationships Programme:

Foyle Women's Aid support team continued to provide the Partner Support Service for the perpetrator programmes facilitated by the Probation Service of Northern Ireland in partnership with the Western Health and Social Care Trust. Nine women whose partners or ex partners were attending the programme were supported by Foyle Women's Aid.

Dress for Success:

It has been another busy year for Dress for Success Northern Ireland. We have developed several partnerships with local partners, including, schools, corporates and other organisations. We have supported and empowered 125 women this year via our Dress for Success services, including, interview, employment and court suiting's, career centre support and participation on our programmes. In September 2022 we received an extension fund from the Department for Communities under Phase I of the Developing Women in the Community Programme, which previously funded the first cohort of Transit Forward. We held a focus group with previous participants and subsequently delivered volunteer training with some parental support and wellbeing activities incorporated. The training was completed in March 2023, this feedback was shared by two of the participants.

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In partnership with Alchemy, NWRC, UU, First Source, and Fujitsu we delivered a Vocational Skills Day for St Brigid's College in October. Attended by a group of A Level pupils, we delivered a presentation on 'How to Make a Good First Impression', pupils were challenged in their groups to dress a mannequin. It was a fun, interactive session and Fujitsu have invited us to support a similar programme running in St Cecilia's in June 2023.

We were successful in applying to the Allstate Foundation for funding to support the development of Dress for Success and future delivery of Transit Forward in the Northwest and Belfast. In November 2022 we teamed up with the Zero Waste Hub and Little Footprints, to deliver a Pop-Up Closet social event for our current clients, the Voices, volunteers and refugees - 'Threads of Hope'. The evening was aimed at bringing women together over a shared vision of 'Hope and Connection'. It was a great success with lovely feedback from clients and refugees. The event was kindly supported by Seagate.

From Jan - March 2023 we delivered Transit Forward to a second cohort of women, funded by Training for Women Network Tampon Tax fund. 13 women completed the programme all of whom were current or closed clients of Foyle Women's Aid. The feedback was very positive, and the women reported a 100% increase in their confidence levels, they continue to support each other even though the programme has finished.

We were delighted to work with Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid to develop a bespoke employability programme as part of their Star Fish Programme. Weekly sessions were delivered over 6 weeks focusing on boosting confidence to return to work.

Financial Review:

To achieve its targets of assisting those in need the Trust must continue to maintain and strengthen its financial position. To this end the Trust can report that this year it has produced adequate resources.

Consolidated Accounts: Foyle Women's Aid (including its subsidiary company) have posted a net movement in funds of £93,942 for the year to 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £874,222), Total funds carried forward as at 31 March 2023 now stand at £2,632,050 (31 March 2022: £2,538,108).

Foyle Women's Aid (parent charity) have posted a net movement in funds of £101,650 for the year to 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £881,556). Total funds carried forward as at 31 March 2023 now stand at £2,676,408 (31 March 2022: £2,574,758).

Restricted funds (including restricted capital funds) for the group comprise £1,550,361 as at 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £1,566,565), with unrestricted funds comprising £1,081,689 as at 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £971,543).

Plans for future:

Going forward our key priorities for the incoming year will be the following;

- We will continue to successfully lead in the provision of a range of domestic and sexual abuse services to women and children and young people across the Foyle area including; Derry/Londonderry, Strabane and Limavady districts.

- We will implement the new Foyle Women's Aid strategy for the next three years.

- We will work with the Family Justice Centre Board and our interagency partners, to implement the targets of the first One Safe Place strategy.

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- We will continue to develop our services in line with need and demand, and in partnership with all our service users, our funders and in line with our own and departmental strategies.
- We will continue to consolidate on the progress made in the Dress for Success project and expand the activities and training to support service users into employment and economic independence.
- We will continue to follow our operational plan to monitor progress against targets and outcomes, across the key objectives in our strategic plans.
- We will continue to review and develop our policies and procedures in line with expansion into new services and good governance.
- We will continue to fundraise to conduct the much-needed capital investment for our current Pathways building.
- We will continue to work on further development of the Family Justice Centre.
- We will continue to meet with our interagency stakeholders to successfully complete the comprehensive targets and plans for an integrated service.
- We continue to work with APEX and Supporting People to agree and implement the management agreement and internal structure to support the new accommodation provision and address homelessness.
- We will seek funding/finance to support in line with our business plan and to open Café Central as an onsite social economy business. This café will provide income directly to victim services and we will carry out activities that will further support survivors of abuse.
- We will make available literature and create awareness of all forms of domestic abuse across the council area.
- We will continue to work as a management partner with BLWA and MAP to support and provide oversight and pursue development opportunities to the ASSIST project and work together to overcome the challenges in partnership with DOJ.
- We will work with the funders and architects to establish the Camp Hope project on site this year. We will review the implementation of the Hope Evaluation across all our projects.
- We will continue to grow and develop the Voices Forum to inform local and regional policy in Northern Ireland.
- We will continue to work with WAFNI and other key partners to lobby, campaign and strengthen regional services for victims and advisors of abuse in Northern Ireland.
- We will strengthen relationships with the Southall Black Sisters project and work together to deliver services for BAME communities in Northern Ireland.

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Reserves policy

Foyle Women's Aid aims to maintain 6 months reserves to enable us to manage financial risk and deliver on our commitments. Our reserves policy is to ensure that there is no disruption to our services at short notice, due to lack of funds, an unforeseen reduction in income or an increase in expenditure, while at the same time ensuring that reserves are no higher than necessary and not retained for longer than required. This gives time in the event of a drop in funding to seek alternative funds, restructure and cut costs whilst continuing to provide current services.

The Trustees assess the risks Foyle Women's Aid could be exposed to, and the appropriate level of reserves that we should maintain. The current assessment of the target range of free reserves funds that are freely available to be used for our general charitable purposes - held by the charity should be between 3 and 6 months' expenditure. This decision is considered to reflect the organisational needs and has been determined by taking account of the strategic plan, operating budgets and known commitments and liabilities. The actual levels of reserves are reviewed regularly, and if the level looked likely to move significantly outside the target range, action would be taken to bring it back in line with the target.

The total unrestricted reserves of the group for 2022/2023 are £1,081,689 (2021/22: £971,543). In assessing our level of free reserves, we exclude the designated funds of £130,600 (2021/22: £130,600), held in unrestricted funds, which leaves free reserves of £951,089 (2021/22: £840,943).

The unrestricted reserves are further analysed in note 18 to these financial statements. This analysis note shows that a significant component of the free reserves are held as tangible fixed assets, such as property and equipment. The free reserves held as current assets, totalling £317,531 at 31st March 2023 consists of both bank balances and debtor balances. These free reserves of £317,531 are required to be held to cover other short-term liabilities and as an ongoing working capital facility for the organisation.

Given the ongoing uncertainties that our organisation faces, our future plans are to maintain our levels of general reserves to meet the working capital requirements of the organisation. The Trustees are confident that, at this level, there are sufficient reserves held at the year end to enable it to continue to further its aims and goals in the event of a significant drop in funding and they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity for the foreseeable future.

Designated funds (unrestricted) for the group - are those unrestricted funds that have been allocated by the Trustees for particular purposes. The designated funds for Redundancy of which £50,000 (2021/22: £50,000) has been ring fenced to cover any/all potential redundancies should core funding cease.

Restricted funds for the group - These funds are tied to particular purposes, specific areas or activities, as specified by the donor, or as identified at the time of receiving the funds. At 31 March 2023, restricted funds were £1,550,361 (2022: £1,566,565).

The Trustees believe that there are sufficient reserves held at the year-end to successfully manage operational and financial risk. The Board therefore considers there is a reasonable expectation that the organisation has adequate resources to continue our core work for the foreseeable future. Whilst the current economic and public sector funding situation is expected to remain challenging for some time to come, Foyle Women's Aid has had a good track record over the years of being able to maintain income as we deliver valued and cost-effective services.

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Risk management

The Directors have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks which the charity faces and confirm that systems have been established to enable regular reports to be produced, so that the necessary steps can be taken to lessen these risks. Committees, where appropriate, have been established to cover all risk areas and these committees report regularly to the Board of Directors.

Principal Risks & Uncertainties:

Risk Policy and Internal Control Framework:

Foyle Women's Aid has established a risk management process, which will ensure that the organisation manages and mitigates risk in line with the agreed risk of the organisation. The Risk Analysis Matrix and the Risk Register are regularly reviewed and thoroughly assessed and takes account of uncertainty, the nature of that uncertainty and how it can be addressed. Having primary responsibility for risk management, the Board regularly consider the main strategic, business and operational risks facing the organisation. The Directors confirm effective controls and reporting systems are in place to lessen these risks.

Information Security and Continuity:

At all times Foyle Women's Aid strives to ensure that we operate a secure environment in relation to data security. We are dependent on IT and communication systems for processing and storing data. To prevent disruption to operations due to damage to systems or unauthorised access to data, Foyle Women's Aid has developed robust information security and data recovery measures.

Compliance and regulation:

Significant damage to Foyle Women's Aid's reputation could be caused due to non-compliance with laws, regulations or codes of best practice. Foyle Women's Aid implements well established policies and procedures and adheres to the sector's recommended codes of practice (such as the Statement of Recommended Practices -SORP) to ensure compliance with applicable regulatory and legal standards.

Environmental and External Risks:

Foyle Women's Aid monitors the external environment in order to anticipate political, social or economic risks, so that plans can be put in place to minimise any negative impact on organisational activities or the reputation of the organisation. We have robust procedures to assess and implement effective measures to reduce the likelihood and the potential impact of risks occurring.

We have confidence in the need for our support services, the effectiveness in our approach and the backing of our partners and we will endeavour to make every effort to continue to provide sustainable, responsive, high quality and effective services that meet the needs of women and children living with domestic violence. We will continue to negotiate with government departments to extend their commitment to ensure that our core work can effectively continue and secure the sustainability of all our projects.

Related Parties

Foyle Women's Aid has an investment in Avert Enterprises Limited (a trading organisation). They are related parties by virtue of the fact that Foyle Women's Aid is the sole shareholder in Avert Enterprises Limited.

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Statement of Trustees Responsibilities

The charity trustees (who are also the directors of Foyle Women's Aid for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the income and expenditure of the company for that year. In preparing these the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- state whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- 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 adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and 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 and other irregularities.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the company's auditors are unaware, and
- the directors 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 company's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

Fergus McAteer & Co. are deemed to be reappointed in accordance with Section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

By Order of the Board



Ms Catherine McMinn

Director

18 December 2023