

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NI071572  
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NIC103369

**Youth Link NI**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Financial Statements**  
**31 March 2023**

Youth Link: NI  
Farset Enterprise Park  
638 Springfield Road  
Belfast  
BT12 7DY

**Youth Link NI**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Financial Statements**  
**Year ended 31 March 2023**

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# Youth Link NI

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023.

#### Reference and administrative details

<b>Registered charity name</b>	Youth Link NI
<b>Charity registration number</b>	NIC103369
<b>Company registration number</b>	NI071572
<b>Principal office and registered Office</b>	Farset Enterprise Park 638 Springfield Road Belfast BT12 7DY Northern Ireland

#### The trustees

RJ McCullagh  
D McWall (Treasurer)  
P Brown  
D Kelly (Chairperson)  
F McNally  
I Taylor  
G Thompson  
G Gilmore  
S Henry (Vice Chairperson)  
J McLoughlin  
B Dineen  
W Fyffe  
C Hinchliff  
E Rea

#### Key Management Personnel

Director	Gordon Woolsey	(Resigned 28 February 2023)
Interim Director	Joseph McKeown	(Appointed 1 February 2023)
Finance Manager	Jenny Bell	
Academic Studies Manager	Sharon Raine	
Executive Officer	Maria McKenna	



## **Youth Link NI**

### **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2023**

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#### **Structure, governance, and management**

##### **Governing Document**

Youth Link: NI is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated July 2015. Youth Link: NI is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

##### **Appointment of Trustees**

Members of the Executive Council and Youth Link Honorary Officers are appointed by the relevant decision-making bodies of its member Churches and / or the Denominational Representatives. Council members are appointed for a period of three years. A retiring Trustee is eligible for re-appointment.

Appointments to the Trustees by members of their respective relevant Decision-Making Bodies shall be made as follows:

- Up to six Trustees to be appointed by the Roman Catholic Church.
- Up to three Trustees to be appointed by The Presbyterian Church.
- Up to three Trustees to be appointed by The Methodist Church.
- Up to three Trustees to be appointed by Church of Ireland (Together known as the Denominational Representatives).
- Two Trustees to be appointed by the Denominational Representatives.

Members will be informed of the retirement of those Trustees who wish to retire or who are retiring by rotation and will elect Trustees to fill vacancies arising at the General Meeting.

##### **Trustee induction and training**

Induction and training sessions for Trustees are organised as required. As part of the induction process new Trustees are made aware of a Trustees' legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the operational and strategic plan and recent financial performance of the charity.

##### **Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel.**

The directors comprise the Board of Directors, who are the charity's Trustees, and the management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running, and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. All directors give of their time freely and no director received remuneration during the year. Details of directors' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 14 to the accounts.

The pay of the management team is reviewed annually and normally increased in accordance with inflation. During 2015/16 the Trustees reviewed management team salaries and benchmarked against pay levels in other similar size charities run on a voluntary basis and scale points were set accordingly. Progression is dependent upon the outcome of individual annual appraisals.

## **Youth Link NI**

### **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2023**

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#### **Organisation structure and how charity makes decisions.**

The Executive Council, which can have up to 17 members, administers the charity. The Council meets four times per annum, normally September, December, March, and June. A Sub-Committee of the Executive Council, Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee normally meets a month prior to Executive Council meetings and reviews all matters relating to the management of finance, funding, staffing, and assets. A Director is appointed by the Trustees to manage the day-to-day operations of the charity. To facilitate effective operations, the Director has delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the Trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment, and direct charitable activities.

#### **Relationships with related parties**

The Trustees do not receive any remuneration unless it is authorised by Article 7 of the Articles of Association.

Executive Council members and staff members are asked to declare their interests in, and any gifts or hospitality received in connection with their role in Youth Link NI.

A declaration of interests form is completed by all Council members and staff for this purpose, listing the types of interest that should be declared. Interests are recorded on Youth Link's Register of Interests which is maintained by the Company Secretary.

#### **Risk management**

The Trustees have a Risk Management Strategy which comprises:

- An annual review of the principal risks and uncertainties that the charity faces.
- The establishment of policies, systems, and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the annual review; and
- The implementation of procedures designed to minimise or manage any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

A Risk Register is in place and is reviewed annually. The most recent review of the Register was carried out in June 2023.

Areas of risk for the organisation were reviewed and assessed. These included risks relating to Governance & Management, Operational, Financial, People and External factors affecting the organisation.

#### **Objectives and Activities**

##### **Charity Objects:**

1. To contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming society by working together as a partnership of member Churches by:
  - working in partnership towards the building of voluntary, social and reconciliation capacity within civil society and local communities.

## **Youth Link NI**

### **Company Limited by Guarantee**

#### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

##### **Year ended 31 March 2023**

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- creating positive opportunities for cross-community experiences at local, national, and international levels.
  - promoting the inclusive involvement of young people at all levels.
2. To enable, support and encourage churches to offer a more effective ministry to young people to promote their spiritual, social, and personal development by:
- helping Youth Link: NI and member Churches to maximize existing and new resources in the service of young people.
  - facilitating the development of youth work practitioners through collaborative education and training.
  - sharing experiences, resources, and ideas amongst the churches to enhance the overall provision for young people.

#### **Vision**

Churches working together to build excellence in youth work and ministry towards a just, peaceful, and flourishing society based on the common good.

#### **Mission Statement**

Youth Link's mission is to:

- support young people to achieve their full potential.
- enable young people and youth practitioners to be agents of transformation and hope.
- promote and provide excellence in youth work and leadership training.
- encourage and equip young people to participate in Church and community and in the building of a peaceful and inclusive society.
- partner with Church bodies, youth organisations and relevant sectors with responsibility for young people and youth practitioners.
- facilitate the development of youth work and ministry within and on behalf of the Churches.
- integrate equity, diversity, and interdependence into all aspects of policy and practice in youth work and ministry.

#### **Value Base**

Central to Youth Link is the Christian faith which commits us to:

- building positive relationships.
- the personal, social, and spiritual development of young people.
- improving young peoples' lives through positive outcomes in youth work and ministry.
- encourage and support youth practitioners in their personal and professional development.
- developing effective and strategic partnerships.
- building relationships that enable transformation in the lives of individuals and communities.
- promote respect, trust, and inclusivity within a culturally diverse society.
- fairness in provision of service.
- integrity and accountability in all aspects of our work.

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

#### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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- nurturing global awareness and interdependence within the human and environmental community.
- applying theological and ethical understanding to youth work practice and to public and community life.
- promote justice, peace, healing, and reconciliation in society.

#### Strategic Aims

1. As a partnership of churches working together, Youth Link will contribute to a more **inclusive** and peaceful society by **enabling** young people and youth practitioners to build positive, healthy, and sustainable **relationships** within and between communities through education, **training**, and empowerment programmes.
2. Responsive to a changing environment Youth Link will ensure the provision of a sustainable **quality** service through **effective** and professional **leadership & management**.
3. Youth Link will raise the **profile** of the organisation as a unique model of faith based **collaborative** youth work in the churches, community, and voluntary sector.

#### Strategic Aim 1

As a partnership of churches working together, Youth Link will contribute to a more **inclusive** and peaceful society by **enabling** young people and youth practitioners to build positive, healthy, and sustainable **relationships** within and between communities through education, **training**, and empowerment programmes.

#### Outcomes

- 1.1 Young people and youth practitioners will have positive healthy and sustainable relationships within and between communities.
- 1.2 Services that respond to the changing needs of young people.
- 1.3 Increased capacity among young people and youth practitioners in youth work and ministry.
- 1.4 Increased knowledge and skills among youth practitioners to promote building a peaceful and inclusive society.
- 1.5 Enhanced knowledge and skills among youth practitioners to engage young people in CRED related work.
- 1.6 Increased mutual understanding, tolerance, hospitality, and respect among young people from different socio-economic, educational, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.
- 1.7 Increased capacity and social capital among young people from areas of disadvantage and social exclusion.

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

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#### Strategic Aim 2

Responsive to a changing environment Youth Link will ensure the provision of a sustainable **quality** service through **effective** and professional **leadership and management**.

#### Outcomes

- 2.1 Provision of a sustainable quality service that responds to changes within the social, political, and economic environment.
- 2.2 Effective and professional leadership, management, and governance.
- 2.3 Effective management of financial resources.
- 2.4 Integrity and accountability in governance and management of Youth Link.

#### Strategic Aim 3

Youth Link will raise the **profile** of the organisation as a unique model of faith based **collaborative** youth work in the churches, community, and voluntary sector.

#### Outcomes

- 3.1 Recognition of Youth Link as a unique model of faith based collaborative youth work in the churches, community, and voluntary sector.
- 3.2 Recognition of Youth Link as a prophetic voice within the Churches and the wider community in relation to current issues in youth work and ministry, peace building and reconciliation

#### Public Benefit Statement:

In shaping objectives for the year and planning activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

The direct benefits which flow from Youth Link's purposes include the following:

- members of Protestant and Catholic Churches in Northern Ireland and its border counties working together to promote understanding of one another's backgrounds and to improve and develop relationships.
- young people drawn from Protestant and Catholic communities based in Northern Ireland and its border counties meet those from different backgrounds and work with them towards developing an informed understanding of their own and each other's backgrounds and religions.
- relationships between those drawn from different communities and backgrounds in Northern Ireland and its border counties are developed and enhanced in a positive way.
- church leaders and youth workers are given support in their ministry to young people through provision of accredited and non-accredited youth work and community relations training opportunities specifically tailored to meet the needs of young people in Northern Ireland.
- youth work practitioners are supported, and their professional development enhanced through the provision of collaborative education and training opportunities by Youth Link.

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

#### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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- opportunities are provided for church leaders and youth workers drawn from Youth Link's member Churches to meet to share experiences, resources, and ideas to enhance their ministry to young people.

These benefits are capable of being demonstrated through:

- number of young people achieving accreditation in Youth Work and / or Community Relations Programmes at Level 1 and / or Level 2 through OCN NI.
- number of youth workers / youth practitioners achieving accreditation in Youth Work and / or Community Relations Programmes at Level 2 and / or Level 3 through OCN NI.
- number of young people and youth workers / youth practitioners participating in knowledge, skills and competency-based peace building and reconciliation programmes.
- number of young people and youth workers / youth practitioners participating in Peace Building and Reconciliation Conferences.
- number of youth workers / youth practitioners completing Youth Link's Apprenticeship Peace Programme.
- number of youth workers / youth practitioners graduating with BA Honours Degree in Youth & Community Work & Practical Theology (JNC).
- number of young people having no or little previous education, employment, or training completing accredited programmes at Levels 1 and 2.
- number of young people progressing from accredited programmes at Levels 1, 2 and 3 to the apprenticeship and degree level programmes.
- number of young people, voluntary youth leaders, full and part-time youth workers, theological students and clergy across Northern Ireland and the Border Counties participating in non-accredited programmes in Youth Work, Youth Ministry and Community Relations Skills and Issues.
- number of church and community groups participating in bespoke and accredited training programmes.
- feedback from Youth Link's stakeholders, including young people, youth workers, course participants and church leaders.
- production and circulation of regular publicity documents including annual reports, annual accounts, e-newsletter, press releases etc.
- independent external evaluations of Youth Link's service.
- improved relationships between communities in Northern Ireland and its border counties evidenced by local government surveys.

The intended beneficiaries of these purposes are:

- members of Protestant and Catholic Churches in Northern Ireland and its border counties.
- young people drawn from Protestant and Catholic communities based in Northern Ireland and its border counties.
- full and part-time youth workers / youth work practitioners and voluntary youth leaders.
- theological students, clergy, and church leaders.
- members of ethnic minority backgrounds and Section 75 groups.

There is no harm or potential for harm as a result of the purposes being carried out.

# Youth Link NI

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

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#### Achievements and Performance

**Strategic Aim 1** As a partnership of churches working together, Youth Link will contribute to a more **inclusive** and peaceful society by **enabling** young people and youth practitioners to build positive, healthy, and sustainable **relationships** within and between communities through education, **training**, and empowerment programmes.

Youth Link continues to be one of the largest providers of accredited youth work training in Northern Ireland and provides a coherent training route that offers young people and adult volunteers a progressive pathway into youth work and ministry. More than 300 young people and adult volunteers received accreditation during 2022/23 and staff continued to work constructively to further develop training at youth and adult level in urban, rural and border regions. There were also over 500 young people and adults engaged in non-accredited programmes.

Youth Link continued to support Strategic Planning and Review of youth work and ministry within the Northern Catholic Dioceses affiliated to Youth Link and meetings with key stakeholders and Bishops has taken place.

#### Degree Programme:

The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has allowed classes to take place face-to-face in 2022/23 and this has been well received by students and staff involved on the degree programme.

Aspects to celebrate:

- The commitment, resilience and competence of the wider staff team and sessional workers to maintain the progression of students and deliver the programme to original timeframes despite unprecedented challenges due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.
- The degree programme in partnership with the Institute of Children, Youth and Mission/Staffordshire University came to a successful closure in August 2022 and the achievement of students and staff over the last 14 years of this degree programme are to be acknowledged and celebrated. The final graduation ceremony for Institute of Children Youth and Mission was able to take place face-to-face in Birmingham on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022. One student received first class Honours degrees, six received 2:1 classifications and four received 2:2 classifications. Post-graduation employment rates continue to be strong for students and several are also pursuing post-graduate studies. As of May 2023, 100% of students are in employment or Further Education.
- The Irish American Partnership has enabled students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to access Higher Education and this year several students have benefited directly.

The current partnership with Moorlands College will conclude in June 2024. This is due to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student recruitment. Youth Link will ensure the current cohort of students successfully complete their studies and to celebrate the last 15 years of the undergraduate Degree pathway for Christian Youth Work students.

#### Youth Work Training Programmes:

Youth Link NI's full suite of accredited training programmes are still in high demand. Delivery is taking place at Youth Link's Training and Resource centre, in the community and online. The OCN NI Level 1, 2 & 3 Award/Certificate in Youth Work Practice courses have proved successful, providing wide geographical spread, pathway opportunities to further training, degree programme and career opportunities. Youth Link has maintained OCNNI centre status and has had several external verification visits as part of the quality assurance process. Our team of over 30 sessional workers play

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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a key role in the delivery of these accredited training courses and are central to the work of Youth Link.

#### **Belfast City Council/PEACE IV - Forth Meadow Community Greenway Project:**

The project has engaged with almost 400 young people aged 11-24 over the last year, supporting them to fulfil their potential, develop skills and confidence, gain OCN qualifications and contribute positively as active citizens in their communities.

The young people lived in communities along the Belfast City Council Forth Meadow community Greenway and they participated in youth work programmes that explored the core themes of Personal Development, Good Relations and Active Citizenship, showing great resilience, especially throughout the unexpected challenges which arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting their mental health and wellbeing. Staff were innovative and creative in their delivery methods while responding to the increasing needs and supported young people through these challenging times. The Forth Meadow Community Greenway project celebrated its achievements at a special event on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast.

#### **Community Relations and Peace and Reconciliation Projects**

Progress continued to be made in the development and delivery of Community Relations Equality & Diversity (CRED) initiatives through funding secured in 2022/23 through the Education Authority, The

Executive Office, Community Relations Council NI, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade and Special European Union Programmes Body.

The Common Good Resources has been successfully developed and Curriculum resource materials are being disseminated and integration into Youth Link programmes is ongoing. The resource continues to be made available to the wider post-primary school and youth sector constituencies. There were a range of Good Relations resources developed as part of the Education Authority project with train the trainer sessions delivered, and USB resources disseminated.

Youth Link provided several seminars during Good Relations Week and was involved in the celebrations of the Irish Council of Churches Inter-church meeting and celebrations marking the centenary of the organisation. Internationally, Youth Link gave a presentation at the 'Living Peace' congress in Rome. It has also been involved more locally in several regional Together Building United Communities discussions.

The Research and Curriculum Development Officer is researching current trends and working on a project around the Practice of Integrated Reconciliation. Work is ongoing on an ASPIRE resource which is an educational resource for youth workers and young people aimed at enriching knowledge, attitudes, and skills for addressing sectarianism, dealing with the past and building a reconciled society.

Youth Work and Peace and Reconciliation work is at the core of the work of Youth Link, and it was significant that the staff and organisation were invited to many celebration events marking the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. There is a sense that after the success around the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement there is still a long way to go in relation to peacebuilding and the issues impacting young people's lives. Youth Link aims to continually strive at improving young peoples' lives through positive outcomes and building relationships that enable transformation in the lives of individuals and communities.

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

#### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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**Strategic Aim 2** Responsive to a changing environment Youth Link will ensure the provision of a sustainable **quality** service through **effective** and professional **leadership & management**.

Youth Link's skilled and experienced staff team is a valuable asset and as such human resource matters are reviewed by Trustees regularly. During the year and despite the pandemic staff continued to meet with their line managers formally for support and supervision and annual appraisals were completed. Staff and management meetings continued to be held on a regular basis with additional avenues of support put in place for staff working from home. A Register of Sessional Workers is maintained, and suitably qualified and experienced people support delivery of programmes of work across the organisation. Professional development opportunities offered to staff during the year included: payment of off-line supervision and other professional services, CMI Level 7 Award in Strategic Leadership & Management, First Aid Training, TQUK Level 3 Award in Education and Training, Advanced Diploma in Accounting, BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Youth & Community Work) and Fellowship of the Higher Education Authority.

Financial resources and management of same are discussed and reviewed by Trustees regularly. Management accounting information presented regularly includes income and expenditure reports reviewed against budgets, summary of cash held, cash flow report, review of current debtors and creditors, credit card expenditure etc. Reports are regularly brought to Trustees summarising fundraising efforts, management of secured restricted funds and reporting requirements met. The Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022 were agreed and signed by Trustees at the General Meeting on 13 September 2022 – these complied with Charities Act (NI) 2008, Companies Act 2006, Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102) which came into effect on 1 January 2015.

Fundable projects / programmes and possible sources of funding are identified regularly, funding secured during the year included monies from the Education Authority -Regional funded projects and

T:BUC programmes; the European Union Programme for Peace & Reconciliation, 2014-2021; Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade – Reconciliation Fund; Department for the Economy; Belfast City Council, the Community Relations Council, The Executive Office, The Irish American Partnership and The Irish Youth Foundation.

Youth Link's Training & Resource Centre continues to be maintained to a high standard and facilities are reviewed at regular intervals with adjustments being made to meet the needs of students and other stakeholders. A 'Buildings Manual' and 'Maintenance Schedules' are in place, providing information about repairs, providers, and maintenance contracts. Health & Safety remains a priority and full risk assessment has been carried out. This year there has been a lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions. However, these changes will be monitored in accordance with changing Government advice. All staff took part in defibrillator training in September 2022 after cardiac arrest of a staff member. Maintenance of ICT systems are provided by an external consultant and improvements to systems were made which allowed all staff to access the network from home. Insurance policies were reviewed during the year as required and were renewed in March 2023. The procurement policy is adhered to when purchasing goods or services and the Asset Register was formally reviewed and updated during the year.

Membership of Board of Directors and attendance by members is monitored in accordance with stipulations provided for in Memorandum & Articles of Association. Trustee meetings were held remotely, via Zoom, since June 2020 to demonstrate and ensure good governance of the charity, as permitted by the Charity Commission, and in keeping with Government advice on the management of the coronavirus pandemic. The Annual Confirmation Statement was submitted to Companies House on 30 January 2023 for the period to 30 January 2024. Trustee records held by Companies House

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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and The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland are updated regularly throughout the year. Annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022 were submitted to Companies House and Charity Commission NI. The Charity Commission NI Annual Monitoring Return for the financial period ending 31 March 2022 was submitted on 2 November 2022. A review of the Risk Register was carried out on 6 May 2022 and the Register subsequently updated and agreed at Council on 7 June 2022.

Identification of risks relating to loss of funding and inability to sustain current staffing levels led to implementation of a strategic review process by Trustees during 2021/22. The recommendations highlighted in the subsequent structural review process has now been carried out. This resulted in a new staffing structure as of 1 January 2022. A review of the 5 Year Strategic Plan commenced in May 2022 with an external consultant and the process is ongoing. The current strategic plan has been extended to March 2024 to allow this process to be completed successfully. In accordance with General Data Protection Regulations relevant materials were disposed of during the year. The 'Register of Interests' in respect of Trustees and staff was updated in November 2022. Induction and training sessions were held for three new Trustees during the year. A review of the 'Safeguarding Policy' was carried out and agreed by Council in March 2023. A review of the 'Adults at Risk of Harm & in Need of Protection Policy' was carried out and agreed by Trustees in March 2023.

Written reports outlining progress against objectives were presented by staff at Council meetings held in June and December 2022. Qualitative and quantitative reports were submitted to funders as required. Operational Plan for 2023/24 will be brought to Trustees for discussion at Council in June 2023 and will be disseminated to key stakeholders.

**Strategic Aim 3** Youth Link will raise the **profile** of the organisation as a unique model of faith based **collaborative** youth work in the churches, community, and voluntary sector.

End of project celebration of learning events were delivered via online platforms and in person following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions for all those who completed the BA Honours Degree Programme in Youth and Community Work and Applied Theology and the Peace IV Forth Meadow Community Greenway Project with Belfast City Council.

During the year collaborative working partnerships continued to develop with local church and community-based youth groups through the provision of placements for young people and young adults engaged in accredited training at Levels 1, 2 & 3 and in the Degree Programme. Youth Link has also engaged Nationally through the Irish Council of Churches during their 100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary and has presented at the International 'Living Peace' Conference in Rome with the Focolare movement.

Youth Link's marketing plan and strategy continues to be reviewed and refined with the ongoing developments within the organisation and sector. There will be a review of the Social Media channels and Website engagement and a strategy developed in 2023. The Rank Foundation worker will help Youth Link to raise its profile in the wider community.

Through the Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations Forum (Network Youth), North South Educational Training Standards (NSETS) and other youth sector fora, staff continued at a time of significant change to ensure that the voice and needs of the Churches' youth sector have an influence on the development of new youth sector structures and mechanisms for the future implementation of Priorities for Youth led by the Education Authority. The Department of Education also aims to review this policy in 2023.

A significant time commitment is involved not just for the actual meetings but also pre/post consultations and discussions with other colleagues across the sector. It is of benefit to Youth Link to

## Youth Link NI

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### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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have such involvement, not least for the positive profile the organisation derives and influence it can bring.

Youth Link continued to present and measure the effectiveness of its yearly programme of work drawing on an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) Framework and will conduct a social value analysis.

#### Financial review

During the financial year ending 31 March 2023, Youth Link's incoming resources decreased by £497,464, 45%, represented by a decrease in unrestricted income of 16% and a decrease in restricted income of 57%. Expenditure during the year decreased by £368,569, 33%, represented by an increase in expenditure from unrestricted funds of £95,755, 33%, and a decrease in expenditure from restricted funds of £464,324, 56%.

During the year the following changes in income were noted:

- Member church contributions increased by 2%.
- Degree programme income decreased by 36% due to the decision to not recruit students for Year 1 in 2022/23 onto the BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Youth & Community Work) with JNC through Moorlands College. A further decision has been made by the board to discontinue the degree programme due to increasing tuition fees and recruitment struggles. The final year group of students will conclude their studies in June 2024.
- Course fees increased by 88% due to increased delivery of programmes to external organisations following the Covid-19 pandemic. Several tenders were successful for work with The Housing Executive during the year.
- Donation Income increased by 231% due to a one-off donation of £1000 made by a previous employee.
- The Rental of Facilities charged to the degree programme decreased by 19% due to the fact two years group were on the degree in 22/23 rather than 3-year groups as in previous years.
- Bank Interest rates rose in the year causing an increase in bank interest received of 356%. Fixed term deposit accounts which matured during the year were reinvested at weekly rates rather than annual rates as in previous years.
- Other Income increased by 288%. This included donations made by staff towards staff leavings gifts, fees paid by staff leaving to purchase their company laptops and a refund from British Telecom for incorrect charges on our account since the move to the mobile phone system in March 2021.
- Four sources of funding which were granted in the 21/22 accounts, were not renewed for the 22/23 year.
- One new funding source was secured in 2022/23 from The Rank Foundation. A three-year contract totalling to £90,000 was secured.
- Income received from The Education Authority for three projects halved compared to 21/22 as the projects only ran from April to September 2022 when the projects concluded.

Restricted funds held at year end equate to £19,614. Last year, total restricted funds held were £44,319, an overall reduction of 56%. The restricted funds are held in respect of ongoing Community Relations and youth work programme expenses.

During the year support costs, including governance costs, decreased by 8% to £141,791. Support Costs decreased by 7% due to decreases in Telephone, Stationery, Printing and Developing Resources expenditure. There were slight increases in overheads such as heat, light & water as more staff presence has been seen in the office in 22/23. Governance Costs decreased by 15% and this was mainly attributable to a decrease in the Auditors fee as Youth Link's finance manager has taken

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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over the preparation of the annual accounts therefore reducing the audit fee. Bank charges also decreased during the year as several bank accounts were closed and fixed term deposit accounts were combined into one bank account.

#### ***Investment powers and policy***

The Trustees, having regard to the liquidity requirements of the charity, have kept available funds in an interest-bearing deposit account and seek to achieve a rate on deposit which matches or exceeds inflation measured by the retail prices index.

#### ***Reserves policy and going concern.***

The Executive Council has examined the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not designated for a particular purpose or invested in tangible assets held by the charity should be between 3 to 6 months of expenditure.

The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Executive Council are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding.

As of 31 March 2023, the charity held total funds of £905,607. £19,614 are restricted funds, £0 are designated funds and £490,629 are funds that can only be realised by disposing of tangible fixed assets. The free unrestricted reserves of £395,364 represent six months running costs which is in the target range. The Executive Council and management continue to work to secure additional unrestricted reserves and accept that this is a difficult challenge in the current economic climate.

#### **Plans for future periods.**

Youth Link plans to continue with its activities as outlined above in the forthcoming years, subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

#### **Trustees' responsibilities statement**

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

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP.
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

## Youth Link NI

### Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2023

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The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity 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 charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

#### Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

#### Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 12 September 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



D McWall (Treasurer)  
Trustee



D Kelly (Chairperson)  
Trustee