

# PRISON FELLOWSHIP NORTHERN IRELAND

## DIRECTORS' REPORT

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 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 (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

#### Objectives and activities

The work of PFNI is governed by six charitable objects:

1. Inform, support, challenge and encourage adults and young people who are, or have been, in lawful custody, by means of educational and other programmes, individual counselling, group activities, practical help and other measures;
1. Challenge and encourage those who are, or have been, in lawful custody to reflect on their past attitudes and actions and on the individuals and groups who may have been victims of their crimes, the aim being to help bring about a change in thinking and lifestyle;
1. Help to maintain and strengthen the links between those who are, or have been, in lawful custody and their spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings and other family members and to help and support those family members where desirable and possible, through practical help, advice and other measures;
1. Support and encourage Prison Governors, Chaplains and Officers, and other staff, in their efforts to maintain and develop regimes which will assist towards the rehabilitation of offenders and the protection of society.
1. Assist the process of assimilating back into society those who are or have been in lawful custody.
1. Promote greater recognition of the effects of crime on those who have been its victims, whether directly or indirectly, and on society.

In pursuing these objects, the Company seeks to reflect and encourage Christian beliefs, principles and values.

The directors have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

During the year ended 31 March 2023, PFNI's principal activities were:

- Providing visitation, befriending, and opportunities for spiritual support to adults and young people while they are in lawful custody and after release.
- Offering care, support and hope to families of those who are in lawful custody and/or after their release from prison.
- Delivering our restorative justice programme (Sycamore Tree) to challenge the offender of the effects of crime both on the victim and the wider community.
- Working in close partnership with agencies who work within the Criminal Justice system.
- Encouraging the public to be aware of the issues faced by released prisoners to prevent re-offending.

# PRISON FELLOWSHIP NORTHERN IRELAND

## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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#### Achievements and performance

##### **Services to people in lawful custody and after release**

Through regular visits to:

Maghaberry - the high security prison housing adult men;

Magilligan - the medium security facility housing adult men and offering low-security accommodation for selected prisoners nearing the end of their sentence;

Hydebank Wood College - houses (a) young people between the ages 18 – 21 and (b) Ash House for female remand and sentenced prisoners.

- 4,570 visits were conducted to 1,296 individuals with
- 1,968 visits to 678 men in Maghaberry,
- 2,198 visits to 396 men in Magilligan,
- 136 visits to 83 young people in Hydebank Wood College, and
- 268 visits to 139 women in Ash House
- Weekly Lifesplan meetings are held every week in Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank Wood. This work is further complemented by a week of special meetings held in May in Magilligan.

##### **Prisons**

One young woman known to Prison Fellowship over a number of years, said on a visit that she was due in court and would possibly be released. She asked if we could help her find an address post release as she was very nervous and anxious about navigating her way beyond the gate.

She was released late Friday afternoon, when we collected her from Hydebank. It became clear that she had not been given an address and had been told to contact the Housing Executive's out-of-hours line. Following a significant amount of time, she was offered a crash bed in a hostel in Belfast and told to report to the Housing Executive on Monday morning. This would have been possible had it not been that she needed to report for an appointment at 9am to obtain her medication some 75 miles away. She also had a compulsory probation appointment on the Monday morning. We explained the situation and that she couldn't possibly travel each day for medication, particularly as she only had a discharge grant of around £70 and would not be able to access the benefit office until the Monday.

The Housing Executive told us that they had no spaces for her closer to where her appointments were and if she refused the crash bed there was nothing else, they could do as she would be intentionally making herself homeless. After much discussion, we decided the best and only course of action was to pay for her to stay the weekend in a local hotel.

When we arrived and got her settled into the room, it was clear that she was overwhelmed. She later messaged to thank Prison Fellowship and spoke about how she felt "like a princess" in the room we were able to house her in for that weekend.

Roger is a service user who has engaged well with Prison Fellowship over the past number of years. He recently was going through a difficult and nerve-racking time as he went on trial for a substantial charge. During the court case proceedings, we were able to meet with him in Hydebank, offering support and listening to his fears and concerns. We were pleased when he expressed an interest in attending the football programme which we were able to run during the summer at Hydebank Wood and were able to see how he and the other guys involved benefited from the project.

During the 40th anniversary, we were delighted that he was able and willing to be interviewed and explain articulately how he and his family had benefited from the support provided by Prison Fellowship.

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## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

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#### ***Sycamore Tree***

This is a victim awareness programme teaching the principles of restorative justice. It has been delivered in Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank College by PFNI staff and supported by volunteers. Prisoners on the programme explore the effects of crime on victims, offenders, and the community, and discuss what it would mean to take responsibility for their personal actions. During 2022-2023, 6 programmes were conducted with 58 prisoners taking part. Sycamore Tree is an accredited course offering Open College Network/Gateway Qualifications Level 1 and Level 2 in Victim Awareness. 31 people were awarded Level 1 and 27 were awarded Level 2 qualifications. The value of this course has been recognised by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

One Sycamore Tree participant wrote a letter to a staff member thanking him for everything that PF had done. He began attending the Friday night meetings and over a period of months he came to faith in God. He also attended the Sycamore Tree course and views life in a totally new way, even stating that he is really glad that he came to jail in order to get where he is today. For the first time in his life, he says that he has peace. PF has maintained good contact following his release. He is doing well and tells how one of his kids said to him, "We have got a new Daddy. Daddy's got a new heart." It's great to be part of these men's journeys and seeing them go on so well when they get out of prison.

Sycamore Tree has shown itself to be life-transforming to those who attend. We have witnessed men who hadn't much interest in even speaking to PF staff or volunteers really change and open up during the programme. The six-week course has had a massive impact on all who attend and those who have been charged with serious and violent offences. Remorse, regret, but ultimately restitution are the main words used to describe the impact.

We have seen men cry as they share how their crime has ruined the victim or victim's family's lives, their own family and indeed their own life. Men who have said how they hate themselves for what they have done and would love to express that in some way to the people they have affected. Seeing men take responsibility for their actions and wanting to change and move forward and help those affected move forward is what Sycamore Tree is all about.

#### ***Aftercare***

We provided support to 195 individuals. That included:

- 598 home visits to 195 people.
- Former prisoners received practical support including assistance with securing accommodation, provision of transport to attend appointments, provision of furniture and advice.
- 'Voices of Hope' continued to meet and choir practices were held on Friday. There are 8 choir members made up of men who are former prisoners and two staff. During the year, they attended 4 events around the country.

Peter is a man we met in prison many years ago. We had sat beside him in Maghaberry on a Sycamore Tree course. Never did we think that one day a knock at the door would be Peter turning up after being released from prison. Since then, we have been on an Aftercare journey with him. He successfully completed probation and finished the remainder of his term on licence in the community.

A success story I hear you say, but he had a secret, one he said he could never tell anyone. One day, Peter shared with our Aftercare worker that he had a serious drug addiction to prescription medication. This had started when he was in prison. It went undetected and upon release he managed to dodge all the testing put in place whilst serving the remainder of his term. Peter felt he had managed to get away with it. He wrongly believed if anyone found out that he would be immediately recalled to custody. However, by hiding it, what he had in fact done was to become completely controlled by the medication. Every day of his life required him to consume vast amounts of prescription medication and it was killing him.

During this last year it took a long time to help him see that he needed to share this secret with health professionals and look for help before it was too late, even if that meant going back to prison. Eventually, after much pain and prayer, Peter knew that the Aftercare worker was right and that he needed to get help. In 2022, he signed up for a drug treatment programme provided by the Community Addictions Team. Because of his good record he would not be returned to prison, help would be provided. He attended interviews, assessments, and testing appointments.

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## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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PF helped him to go to each appointment by providing transport and encouragement. Eventually, he was prescribed a substitute drug to help him break free from the illegal prescription medication and reduce the amount he was using. This was done under strict supervision of the Doctor, Nurses and Pharmacist.

The treatment began daily, then moved to weekly, and finally, monthly prescriptions. The Aftercare worker helped Peter from 2022-23 attend every appointment and ensure he received all the treatment provided. Life remains very difficult for him, but he has now found the support of a local church and he gave his life to the Lord in November 2022. He hopes to be baptised before the end of 2023. We continue to help Peter and know there is a long road ahead. With God's help, we are confident that He who began the good work in him will carry it on to completion.

#### ***Female Aftercare***

Two volunteers assist with female Aftercare, supporting women on their release from prison. During the past year, we have commenced a programme 'Instilling Hope' in March 2023. Volunteers support the women mostly through visiting and helping with regular meetings.

We have between 3-5 women who attend alongside a volunteer and a staff member. Seeing the incredible need to provide a space for female ex-prisoners to meet on a regular basis helps to help instill hope, confidence and value on who they are. A space is created where they can be loved, supported, encouraged, and cared for both physically and spiritually. Through a link with a local church, we were able to provide practical support through a clothing Foodbank and social supermarket when needed. Most of the women who attended our PF female Aftercare Christmas dinner responded positively to the event. The other beautiful thing has been watching the women support each other.

While the group may be small there are many who we hope will be able to attend in the future. It is a big step for someone and we seek to make it as welcoming and easy to attend as possible. We also wish to establish another group in Belfast and one in the North West in the long term.

#### ***Family Work***

PFNI aims to reach out to those living in the community. Through this work, the charity supports parents, partners and children of prisoners who often struggle with significant issues apart from imprisonment including financial hardship, suicide, self-harm and a variety of other physical, social, psychiatric and psychosocial conditions. Staff and volunteers are often confronted with many challenging issues and needs.

Throughout the year, a range of services were offered to families:

- 387 family visits were conducted across Northern Ireland offering ongoing support to 137 families. During 2022-2023 PFNI engaged 53 new families. Through these visits the charity offers befriending, a listening ear, and practical advice.
- 'Hands Up' Food Ministry: through this project, volunteers prepared 225 meals for 49 families.
- Christmas Hope: the annual food hamper and toy appeal provided 566 hampers and 722 toys.
- Christmas Dinners: hosted by two local churches and attended by 15 women and 42 men.

A mother hadn't been able to see her daughter in Hydebank in over 2 years as she lives in England and due to Covid and other pressures she wasn't able to have an in-person visit. We were able to collect this mother at the airport and drive her to the prison to visit her daughter. She said how much this meant to her both in terms of logistics and having the support before and after the visit. On a further visit, we were again able to provide transport and support for her and her other daughter who lives in a remote area. The daughter hadn't seen her sister in almost 10 years, the last time being when she was in her early teens. She said it was so good to be connected with her family again.

Our family Worker commented: "The single biggest benefit for those we support through the family work is to be a 'constant' in a wife, mother, or sister's life. They know they can call us at any time day and night and that we can be trusted and have their best interests at heart. They also know we will always be honest with them and that we are not bound by time constraints. They know they are free to talk and that we will truly listen to them, they know that we 'hear' them."

One of the families we supported was able to participate in a Family Group Conference (FGC). This series of meetings enabled the family to work through their shock, anger, and confusion as a result of the father's crime under the guidance and support of FGC trained facilitators.

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## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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#### **Volunteering**

A volunteer returned to Prison Fellowship 10 years after she left her job following the pilot of the Sycamore Tree programme in Magilligan prison. She shared how it has been a real joy to see her come back as a volunteer with a heart for serving and being open to direction from staff. She has now re-joined PF as a Sycamore Tree volunteer in Magilligan prison and has successfully completed two courses and is thoroughly enjoying it.

Volunteers helped during Christmas Hope when we successfully delivered 564 food hampers and 722 parcels of toys - the largest number of parcels in PFNI's history. Concerns arose about how we would distribute this large number of gifts across the country given we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. While we may have had our doubts about people choosing to deliver hampers with the cost of fuel etc., it was amazing to see how many men and women came along to offer their help. We ended up with over 60 volunteers arriving to make Christmas Hope 2022 succeed.

PFNI is committed to working in close partnership with Criminal Justice agencies.

There are many examples of interagency working at an operational level where staff engage in multi-disciplinary meetings and support prisoners who are vulnerable or are struggling to adapt within the prison setting.

In addition to the operational relationships with statutory and voluntary organisations working within the Criminal Justice sector during 2022-2023, the charity was:

- represented on the 'Public Protection Agency Northern Ireland' (PPANI) a multi-agency forum made up of a range of statutory and voluntary organisations. PPANI aims to provide a multi-agency, coordinated system of risk assessment and risk management, that will be effective in reducing the immediate and long-term risk of sexual or violent re-offending,
- a member of the 'Restorative Justice Practices Forum'. The aim is to promote restorative justice philosophy and practice across all aspects of life and society,
- part of 'Accessing Services for Offenders' - an umbrella group of voluntary organisations working with people who are or have been in custody.

PFNI seeks to encourage the public to be aware of the issues faced by released prisoners to prevent re-offending.

During 2022-2023, the charity:

- spoke at 53 deputations to groups throughout Northern Ireland.
- supported 10 prayer groups, which meet each month.
- distributed 4 editions of 'News and Prayer Focus' to 1,304 individuals, and 535 people received monthly communication by electronic mail.

The work of PFNI during the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 could not have been achieved without the dedication of staff and volunteers, the financial support received from personal donors, churches, companies, NI Prison Service, and charitable trusts and foundations, and the strategic and operational partnerships with statutory colleagues: NI Prison Service Staff & Management, Probation and PSNI and voluntary agencies, Quakers, NIACRO and Christians Against Poverty.

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## DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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#### Financial review

The results are set out in detail on pages 10 to 23. The company returned net incoming resources for the year of £83,615 (2022: £163,599) leaving unrestricted funds of £162,687 (2022: £176,413) and restricted funds of £419,366 (2022: £322,025). The unrestricted funds are considered to be essential to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise and fulfill legal obligations of the charity in the event that current levels of income are not maintained.

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's expenditure. The directors consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised.

The directors have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

#### Structure, governance and management

The charitable company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The company is not for profit and limited by guarantee, the liability of the members is limited to £1.

The organisation is governed by its Board of Directors who meet regularly.

The directors who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mrs J Holley

Mr S Cairns

Dr G McIlroy (Chairman)

Mrs C Stirling

Mr R Pedlow

Mr S Nelson

(Resigned 14 March 2023)

Mrs H Dunn

Mr G Reynolds

The Board of Directors delegates the day-to-day work of the organisation to its Chief Executive Mr. Robin Scott. There is a team of nine employees and one hundred and four volunteers who ensure the successful delivery of high-quality services to help people who are, or who have been in lawful custody, and the families and victims of crime.

During 2022-2023 the Board of Directors:

1. Celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the charity which was delayed due to Covid.
2. Completed discussions with staff and Board to inform the strategic plan.
3. Updated Safeguarding policies and procedures.

# **PRISON FELLOWSHIP NORTHERN IRELAND**

## **DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)**

### **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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During the year ended 31 March 2023 the total number of hours offered by volunteers to Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland (PFNI) was 4,370. This is equivalent to 2.3 full-time staff and using the National Living Wage would be a cost to the charity of over £46,705.

The directors are indebted to the staff and volunteer teams for their selfless dedication and commitment to further the work of the organisation.

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

The directors' report was approved by the Board of Directors.

**Dr G McIlroy (Chairman)**

Director

Dated: 28 November 2023