

PRISON FELLOWSHIP NORTHERN IRELAND

DIRECTORS' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

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 objectives:

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 support, group activities, practical help and other measures.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Assist the process of assimilating back into society those who are or have been in lawful custody.
6. 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 objectives, the charity 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 2024, PFNI's principal activities were:

- Providing visitation, befriending, and opportunities for practical, emotional and spiritual support to adults and young people while 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 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.

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DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

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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.

6,951 visits were conducted to 2,414 individuals with:

- 1,992 visits to 689 men in Maghaberry,
- 3,965 visits to 1,043 men in Magilligan,
- 121 visits to 95 young people in Hydebank Wood College, and
- 673 visits to 168 women in Ash House

6 Lifesplan meetings are held each week in the three prisons, and these are further complemented by a week of special meetings held in Magilligan during the month of May.

Prisons

We have been supporting a woman who has been in custody for a significant period of time and whose journey very clearly demonstrates how PFNI is making a difference in individuals' lives.

We were able to walk alongside her from committal until release. This was challenging at the beginning as she struggled to trust anyone and took a long time to engage with us, but once she did, she began to share and open up and by the time of release she had seen our member of staff on a regular basis during her time in custody.

Not only had she had one to one visits, she also was able to complete Sycamore Tree course and engaged in "Yarn", our knitting group, when it was running.

Alongside the support she received, she has a close family member in custody and he has also completed Sycamore Tree, he also receives regular support from our prison staff and volunteers in prison.

Our Family Worker regularly visits with a member of her family on the outside and has been a great support to them, this person attends support groups and was present at the Christmas dinner.

Following release, we were able to put Aftercare support in place for this lady, with yet another member of PFNI staff, who met her and began that support the day after she was released from custody.

This family has benefitted from our Christmas Hope project over the years, and I believe are a clear example of the wrap-around care that is available from PFNI and the difference such care makes.

Sycamore Tree

During the year we delivered 9 Sycamore Tree programmes in the three prisons, as well as with the students in Hydebank Wood College and a group of men in Burren House. 110 Participants commenced the course with 102 obtaining qualification. We deliver this with a team of three trained facilitators plus a team of 17 volunteers.

The course with the women in Hydebank was the first female course that had run in several years. It was a particularly challenging course due to the range of offences committed by the women in attendance. Alongside several life sentence prisoners and those serving a significant amount of time in custody, we also had women who were deemed "vulnerable" by the prison staff due to the offences they had committed. These women at that stage did not mix with the rest of the prison population, so putting them into a classroom was a bit of a risk. However, they managed to be part of the group for the six weeks, and even integrated with the other women to some extent.

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The highlight of that course for the facilitator was during the final session on week six, the ladies received their certificates along with the other women in the class and when their names were called out, the other ladies clapped for them. This may sound like a small thing, but it was truly massive, mostly for the three women who had been so nervous to attend the course to begin with. "I was truly humbled" when a Senior Officer commented, that "Nobody but Joanne could have done that." Kind words, but truthfully it was God alone who brought unity in that room.

Aftercare

Our Aftercare work is primarily carried out on an individual basis and through group activities and regular activities at the PF Centre in Belfast with the help of supporters, volunteers and staff. During the year under review the Centre was closed for refurbishment. We offer help and support with homelessness, suicide and self-harm, poverty, addiction, unemployment, benefits, education, social exclusion, loneliness, transport, medical services and resettlement into the community.

We provided support to 38 individuals. That included:

- 553 individuals were visited.
- 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 8 events around the country.

Just before Christmas the office received a call out of hours. A message was left on the answering machine. There was no name or contact details left. Just a message – Is there anyone there? Our Administrator thought she recognised the man's voice, a younger man from a few years ago. She remembered that he had known the Aftercare worker and immediately got in touch the staff member. The aftercare worker was very unsure, no way it could be him.

We had not heard from him for several years, in fact the last time he saw him mentioned was an appeal from the PSNI for a missing man – several months before. That evening, sitting on his bed, our Aftercare worker prayed and phoned an old number he had. A man answered the phone, a whisper, but the worker knew immediately it was him. Quickly, in case the call would end, the aftercare worker got the contact details. By the end of the week, we had visited him in his home. Provided food and repairs to the man's flat.

The man had been released from prison several months earlier, been assaulted and in hiding – hence the PSNI alert. The man said he had nobody – even his own family had turned on him – so he remembered Prison Fellowship – he phoned the office and left a message – but didn't think there was anyone there and didn't expect a call back. He was facing many difficulties, and the aftercare worker has been able to help him prioritise and offer practical help along the way. There are several supportive churches in the area and he began to go to church every Sunday – he has even joined a gym – a local Christian man is a Physical Training Instructor.

Our worker helped him reengage with PBNI and attend several court hearings. He is now off tag and finished his house arrest. He has recommenced community service, which is of course at a nearby church! It is still a long road for him, but we are very glad he called that day, and we are very glad that Christine in the office never forgets a face or a voice.

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Female Aftercare

Our Female aftercare worker first met a Suzzie* in Hydebank many years ago when she regularly attended 'Lifesplan', the weekly Bible study. She was a repeat offender who was frequently in and out of prison struggling with addictions - alcohol, drugs and theft.

Suzzie is an enthusiastic young woman, who always took part in everything with great enthusiasm. She appeared to have a faith, although didn't profess to being a Christian. She prayed, and as she read her bible, we have no doubt she came to faith. She has been released from Hydebank, some eighteen months, had stayed clean from drugs and alcohol and had not reoffended. Her determination has been amazing and inspiring! She now has managed to get her own flat, and we have had the privilege of helping her move in. A volunteer obtained a van which came in very useful! Imagine three of us trying to get a washing machine up three flights of stairs which was fun on another level!

Suzzie has spent many hours volunteering with local young people in youth clubs and has realised this is in her heart and what she wants to do. She has successfully applied and been accepted onto a youth work course in a university, after completing an intensive English GCSE course which she passed.

Recently she has also found open water swimming has really helped her mental health. It has been a privilege, and fun too, go swimming with her. We always pray after any of our visits and Suzzie says she loves prayer as it brings her incredible peace.

* Name has been changed to protect identity

Family Work

We have been able to support an elderly couple whose daughter had been in and out of Hydebank frequently due to her alcohol addiction, but sadly she passed away earlier in the year. This mum felt quite isolated and had a very limited group of friends and mixed only with her family. The couple always loved to receive a family visit. We were able to support them especially through this difficult time and listened to them as they grieved for their daughter and tried to encourage the mum especially to get out more with her husband. Sadly, the mum passed away suddenly at the end of 2023.

PFNI aims to reach out to those living in the community. Through this work, we support 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:

- 321 family visits were conducted across Northern Ireland offering ongoing support to 127 families. During 2023-2024 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 56 meals for 21 families.
- Christmas Hope: the annual food hamper and toy appeal provided 526 hampers and 624 toys.
- Christmas Dinners: hosted by two local churches and attended by 15 women and 42 men.

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DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Volunteering

During the year we had 55 regular volunteers who delivered support to those in custody their families and people released from prison as well as a further 60 volunteers helping with the Christmas Hope Project. Other opportunities for volunteering included aftercare support, Letterlink and the hands up project.

The impact of volunteering: -

In our Aftercare work volunteers work directly with men in the community, they are required to have their own transport and be flexible to meet the needs of ex-offenders in the community. Experience of working with men with mental health issues, addiction, loneliness, poverty, homelessness, offending behaviour – including sexual offending, suicide and self-harm, are all key areas for the volunteers. Helping men with advice, guidance and providing a listening ear, from time to time even assisting with transport to appointments are just a few of the ways the volunteers begin to build trust with the ex-offender.

The volunteer role is a befriending role and setting boundaries with men in the community is important – we do not provide legal, medical, financial or housing advice although signposting and helping men engage with these services can be a great benefit to a person released from prison. The volunteers have been invaluable helping men attend medical and probation appointments and many services now require smart phone technology and familiarity with the internet which the volunteers are able to help with.

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 2023-2024, 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 2023-2024, the charity:

- spoke at 77 deputations to groups throughout Northern Ireland.
- supported 10 prayer groups, which meet each month.
- distributed 4 editions of 'News and Prayer Focus' mailed to 1,304 individuals, and 535 people received our quarterly electronic mail, as well as the monthly prayer updates. We continue to encourage electronic mail to help with reducing costs.

The work of PFNI during the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 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: N I Prison Service Staff & Management, Probation Board, PSNI and voluntary agencies, Quakers, NIACRO and Christians Against Poverty.

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DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Financial review

The results are set out in detail on pages 10 to 22. The company returned net incoming resources for the year of £15,946 (2023 - £83,615) leaving unrestricted funds of £167,901 (2023 - £162,687) and restricted funds of £430,098 (2023 - £419,366). 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

(Resigned 12 September 2023)

Dr G McIlroy (Chairman)

Mrs C Stirling

Mr R Pedlow

Mrs H Dunn

Mr G Reynolds

The Board of Directors delegates the day-to-day work of the organisation to its Chief Executive Mr R Scott. There is a team of eleven 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 2023-2024 the Board of Directors:

- Reviewed and updated our policies in line with current legislation.
- Undertook a review of Family Work and made recommendations for the development of the work among families.
- Agreed to increase the staffing level at Maghaberry due to the increasing prison population by adding an additional part-time staff member.
- Developed a program work with the PDU at Maghaberry - Prisoner Regime and Enhanced Privileges (PREPS) program to address issues where an inmate who has lost privileges can review and seek to address the matter and what needs to be done to remedy the problems.

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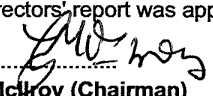
DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

During the year ended 31 March 2024 the total number of hours offered by volunteers to Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland (PFNI) was 4,571. This is equivalent to 2.4 full-time staff and using the National Living Wage would be a cost to the charity of over £54,852.

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.


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Dr G McIlroy (Chairman)
Director

Dated: 4/9/24