

Trustees' / Directors' Report

Objects

Community Advice Lisburn & Castlereagh ("CALC") aims to:-

1. Ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their needs effectively; and
2. To exercise and maintain a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services both locally and nationally.

Advice and support are free, confidential, impartial and available to everyone regardless of race, sex, political opinion, religious belief, age or disability. Advice is provided in urban and rural locations and can be accessed by personal call, telephone or e-mail. Information sessions are available to groups on request and to schools and colleges. Our home visiting service ensures a service that is flexible and available to all.

By using this report as a guide and reviewing it regularly, it is hoped that it will help CALC to continue to work at a professional level but will assist in securing funding from a variety of sources to recruit staff and expand our service delivery. We hope that the plan will prove to existing and potential funders that CALC has enormous potential given that it provides independent, impartial and non-judgemental advice in the city providing a service in a community of 149,915 people.

Activities

We have an ever-increasing diverse population with a variety of advice needs. It is therefore a challenge for CALC to evolve to rise to these challenges, not least increasing language difficulties as our migrant population increases.

CALC provides further information and advice to clients through having staff trained in particular roles, being;

Benefit advice and checks, Money Advice, going into communities and providing an Outreach Service, Tribunal Representation and a Home Visiting Service.

CALC greatly acknowledges the support and assistance offered by Volunteers. Volunteers wishing to give of their time in offering their skills to CALC, are given an assessment of their skills and level of knowledge that would be beneficial to CALC support to the paid staff and being able to provide expertise knowledge to the many clients requiring assistance and advice.

All Volunteers undertake the mandatory training and are trained to the same high level as paid staff.

Achievements and performance

In April 2022 we once again were successful in our bid for the tender for Advice Services in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area. This is a 3yr contract with the possibility of a further 2yrs runon. Securing this funding allows us to continue to offer a full Advice service to the community of the LCCC area.

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In May 2022 the government first announced there would be Cost of Living payments made to people receiving certain benefits. This resulted in a lot more people seeking advice relating to what benefits they may be entitled too. There was also a big increase of people seeking help relating to Mortgage/housing costs. We also seen a big increase in the number of people being referred to the Food Bank.

Financial review

The Trustees are satisfied with the performance of the charity during the year and the position at 31 March 2024 and consider that the charity is in a strong position to continue its activities during the coming year, and that the charity's assets are adequate to fulfil its obligations.

The Trustee Management Board is working to the guidelines laid down by the Northern Ireland Charity Commission, in regard to having sufficient Reserve Funds in place to cover three months Staff

Salaries and build reserves to assist in staff redundancies.

At the 31 March 2024 there was £65,033 of a surplus in unrestricted funds, £17,481 of a surplus in restricted funds together with an operational reserve of £50,000 which the company has put in place to be made available at the discretion of the Directors in furtherance of the objects of the charity.

Principal funding sources

Funding comes from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) as a result of the tender awarded. Funding continues to be provided by DFC via LCCC to meet additional costs due to Welfare Reform.

The Core Funding, allows CALC to maintain the level of expertise in our paid staff. Without the core funding, severe operational strain would be placed on CALC providing a service to the client and the community.

Structure, governance and management

Governing document

Community Advice Lisburn & Castlereagh is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, whose registered office is situated in Northern Ireland. The company was incorporated on 20 April 2006.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

Recruitment and appointment of board of trustees

Newly appointed Trustees, must undertake Good Governance Training, to allow them to be fully functional sitting on a Community Advice Trustee Management Board and possess the skills of being able to communicate with others, ask probing questions, be able to analyse and identify areas of concern and offer sound advice and in addressing such concerns and be approachable to staff and outside agencies for networking opportunities, e.g. Social Security Agency and Northern Ireland Housing Agencies. All Trustee Management Board Members are expected to promote CALC and support the working of CALC.

COMMUNITY ADVICE LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH
(COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL)
50 RAILWAY STREET, LISBURN, CO ANTRIM, BT28 1XP

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Trustee Management Members will give leadership in managing, resourcing and developing CALC's Strategy for future years, to have CALC placed and relevant in an always-changing society, driven by population and economic factors.

Trustee Management Board to ensure CALC has a risk assessment in place, to cover IT Failure with a sound back up procedure in place, a staff reporting structure chain to protect staff in the working environment and good financial audit checks in place to protect all involved in the financial management procedures.

Mrs Pamela Neill
Company Secretary