

Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid

Trustees' Report

Strategic Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present their strategic report for the year ended 31 March 2024, in compliance with s414C of the Companies Act 2006.

Financial review

Income in the year was £1,631,974 and expenditure totalled £1,580,814 giving a surplus of £51,161. Total funds held at 31st March 2024 were £1,322,150. £450,814 of the total funds are restricted and are not available for the general purposes of the charity at the end of the reporting period. Unrestricted and designated reserves totalled £871,334 at the close of the period.

Policy on reserves

It is the Charity's policy to maintain unrestricted reserves equal to 6 months running costs. In 2024, that value is £798,313. As at 31 March 2024 total unrestricted general reserves was £523,874, total unrestricted designated reserves was £347,460 and total restricted reserves was £450,814.

Principal funding sources

Our principal funding source continues to be the Supporting People Fund which ensures delivery of core services of refuge and floating support. There is no inbuilt automatic increase to this funding year on year. To manage risk we regularly review costs, identify most cost-effective means to manage running costs. To ensure that we do not have a single source of funding which will increase the risk of our ability to sustain our organisations work we seek and have secured other sources of funding to allow the introduction of necessary services and related costs. The charity recognises the increased necessity to work in partnership and collaboration with other agencies to secure future funding. All funds received are detailed within this report.

Aside from donations from private individuals and local businesses, the principle funding sources for the charity are from grant making bodies and contract income from NHSCT and NIHE Supporting People. The charity recognizes the increased necessity to work in partnership and collaboration with other agencies to secure future funding. All funds received are detailed within this report.

Principal risks and uncertainties

There is no inbuilt automatic increase to our recurring funding from NIHE & NHSCT. To manage risk we regularly review costs, identify most cost effective means to manage running costs and through our merger processes have been able to ensure organisational wide contracts which represent savings. In order to ensure that we do not have a single source of funding which will increase the risk of our ability to sustain our organisations work we seek and have secured other sources of funding to allow the introduction of necessary services and related costs. As part of our ongoing organisational change restructuring of our management functions is planned for 2024.

Going concern

The trustees believe that the charity will continue as a going concern. Funders have shown themselves to be supportive, flexible and adaptive to the current situation which is an invaluable help to the women's aid community. The organisation continues to work in partnership with government bodies and agencies in terms of developing a longer term strategy to support victims of domestic violence.

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Strategic Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

Plans for future periods

Aims and key objectives for future periods

Implementation of management and administration restructuring processes are planned for next reporting period thereby ensuring streamlined and coordinated management across full geographical area served.

To ensure all services are available across Causeway and Mid-Ulster areas application for extension of the Starfish Project will be completed reflecting need for inclusion of Causeway service users.

Options for delivery of self-contained accommodation units will continue to be pursued and all opportunities to introduce community-based children and young person services will be sought.

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The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present the annual report together with the financial statements of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Achievements and Performance

2023 - 2024 began with our services being recognised through an invitation being extended for a representative to attend the Coronation in May. This came following a visit the previous year from the then Queen Consort to our Mid-Ulster refuge accommodation. Across this year our refuges accommodated 89 women and 53 children. This figure is broadly similar to the previous reporting period and our refuge occupancy levels remain high with 96.2% occupancy in year. The high occupancy levels reflect need for service and the change in the housing environment which has seen a significant increase in demand for emergency accommodation and the knock-on impact of increasing difficulty in obtaining long term accommodation.

Our community-based services supported 748 women with the 74.1% requiring Floating Support services. These services provide housing related support, inclusive of gaining and/or sustaining safe accommodation alongside necessary activities to address safety, income and legal issues arising from abuse. The complexity of need and the increased timescales required to meet needs because of pressures experienced by key statutory partners has meant that those we are seeing an increase in duration of support required.

Our response to children in refuge has been significantly improved in year through support from Allstate, corporate partner of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland. Play facilities in both of our refuges were improved immensely for all children and we were also able to incorporate improvements in our sensory spaces.

We were very excited this year to be able to move our Mid-Ulster community-based services to new premises. This ensured much improved space for staff to work from and access to a dedicated training room space thereby allowing further development of services to women.

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Objectives and activities

Objects and aims

The Objects of the Charity for the benefit of the public are:

To relieve distress, suffering by the provision of safe temporary accommodation for women and their children, young people and vulnerable adult dependents who are, may be, or have been, experiencing domestic, sexual or gender based violence or abuse;

To relieve distress, 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;

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;

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;

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;

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

The promotion of such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined in accordance with Northern Ireland charity law.

The focus of our work

Our focus is in the provision of direct services to women and children who have experienced domestic and sexual violence through provision of accommodation and community based support to ensure all necessary crisis intervention and long term support is in place to support victims. We work in partnership with statutory and community/voluntary organisations to ensure best outcomes for service users and engage in community based awareness raising on the topic of domestic and sexual violence. Strategic engagement with relevant statutory bodies and government departments is ensured to promote our services and necessity for further development.

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Relationship with related parties

Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid recognises the necessity for meaningful partnership working to ensure the best possible outcomes for those who need our support. To embed this within our practice Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid has been represented on the following multi-agency groups within this period:

- Northern Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership and associated sub-groups
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences
- Coleraine and Gold Sure Start Partnerships
- Advice NI Management Committee
- WAFNI Forum
- Family Hub
- Northern Area Safeguarding Partnership
- Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers
- Local Area Housing Group - NIHE
- Central Homelessness Forum - NIHE

Public benefit

How our activities deliver public benefit:

All our charitable activities focus on the support of women and children who are or have been victims of domestic violence and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes and for public benefit.

Who used and benefitted from our services?

In 2023-24 both our refuges have seen 98% and 95% occupancy rates accommodating 89 women and 53 children.

748 women accessed our community-based services ensuring that support to address the safety, housing, financial, legal, health and personal development needs of women can be addressed. Our preventative education programmes reached over 2000 11–14-year-olds ensuring that all secondary schools in both Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid-Ulster have access to programmes supporting their ability to identify unhealthy relationships and support options.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements the Charities Act 2008 (Northern Ireland) to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Structure, governance and management

Nature of governing document

Causeway & Mid Ulster Women's Aid is a Company Limited by Guarantee, governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. It is controlled by a voluntary Management Board who are responsible for strategic planning and decision making, financial governance and probity and have employment responsibility for all staff.

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Trustees' Report

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Management Committee. Members of Management Board are recruited through professional or personal recommendation and by advertisement. Volunteers who are to be appointed receive induction to assist them to fulfil their roles in relation to governance of the organisation. Members to the Board are proposed at the annual general meeting.

Office bearers are elected at the first Management Committee meeting following the annual general meeting.

The day-to-day management and operation of the activities are carried out by a staff team, led by the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team who report regularly to the Committee. Operational staff and volunteers contribute to the day to day activities of the charity and their contribution is invaluable to the charity meeting its aims and objectives.

The Management Committee meets eleven times per year to receive reports (including financial) from the CEO.

Arrangements for setting key management personnel remuneration

Setting pay and remuneration of the charity's key management personnel is managed through using benchmarking to set appropriate levels and through resources available to the organisation from funding sources. This is carried out by the board as and when required.

Major risks and management of those risks

There is no inbuilt automatic increase to our recurring funding from NIHE & NHSCT. To manage risk we regularly review costs, identify most cost effective means to manage running costs and through our merger processes have been able to ensure organisational wide contracts which represent savings. In order to ensure that we do not have a single source of funding which will increase the risk of our ability to sustain our organisations work we seek and have secured other sources of funding to allow the introduction of necessary services and related costs.

Financial instruments

Objectives and policies

The organisation has a risk management policy and operates a risk assessment framework which includes carrying out risk assessment on all activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors to our premises. Supporting People QMT (Quality Management Tool) is fully implemented and externally validated. Individual project evaluations are completed to ensure that the services we provide clearly benefit our service users. Risk management is a standing agenda item at all management committee meetings to mitigate the risks that the charity faces.

Cash flow risk

The charity's activities expose it primarily to the financial risks in the area of income generation. The charity relies heavily on government agencies whose budgets are reduced year on year, leaving the charity increasingly reliant on other agencies and the public.

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Credit risk

The charity's principal financial assets are bank balances and cash, trade and other receivables, and investments. The charity's credit risk is primarily attributable to its trade receivables. The amounts presented in the balance sheet are net of allowances for doubtful receivables. An allowance for impairment is made where there is an identified loss event which, based on previous experience, is evidence of a reduction in the recoverability of the cash flows.

Liquidity risk

In order to maintain liquidity to ensure that sufficient funds are available for ongoing operations and future developments, the charity has a reserves policy of maintaining reserves at 6 months running costs and that all restricted reserves are available in the form of cash at the bank.

The trustee's report (incorporating the directors' report and the strategic report) was approved by the trustees of the charity on 19 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Alice Quinn
Trustee