

**BOLSTER COMMUNITY**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023**

**STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES**

The directors are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2023. The Trustees confirm that they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which applies 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 2015).

Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

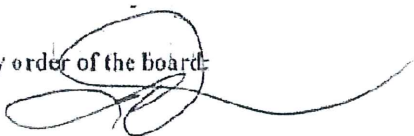
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

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

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware; and
- the directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

By order of the board:

  
**CONNOR SWEENEY**  
**TRUSTEE**

8th December 2023

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

## **Reserves Policy**

### Financial Review

The charity achieved a net income surplus of £28,583, Surplus of 46,973 (unrestricted) and Deficit of £18,390 (restricted) derived from a total income of £998,256.

The principal funding sources were grants, tenders, social enterprise generated income and income from donations and fundraising. The support of our funders and community advocates continues to be essential to maintaining our programme of activities.

### Reserves Policy

The total reserves as at 31 March 2023 were £455,855, £47,646 (restricted) and £408,209 (unrestricted). It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted reserves which have not been designated for a particular purpose should be maintained at a level to ensure that in the event of a significant drop in funding, we will be able to sustain the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. It is a strategic objective of the charity to hold a minimum reserves fund of 3 months, which would allow the organisation to be sustainable in times of challenge and to continue to operate without other sources of income. The Board of Directors are keen that a minimum fund of reserves is held for 3 months alongside a strategic aspiration of extending this to achieve a reserves fund of 6 months over the next 5 years. The directors consider that this level should be sufficient to cover three months expenses, and potential wind-up costs, currently totalling £232,966.

The Trustees regularly review the level of reserves held and consider opportunities to apply them in line with, and in furtherance of, its charitable objectives. The amount of unrestricted funds held at 31st March 2023 was £175,243. (For 2021: £260,267).

### **Auditors**

A resolution to re-appoint the auditors, O'Hara Shearer, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

## **Responsibilities of the Trustees**

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the income and expenditure of the charity for that period.

## **Achievements and Performance**

Bolster Community, previously known as Space NI is a value`s driven, practical, hands-on social enterprise and charity that works to provide services, and support to improve wellbeing.

Our business model is a hybrid of entrepreneurial vision and values that has earned an enviable reputation as a trusted partner to clients, funders, collaborators and requesters alike. We liken our culture at Bolster to a business head and a social heart. Since 2004, we've had the privilege of helping countless individuals reach their full potential. From early years right through to later years, we support and strengthen people facing life's tough challenges. Bolster Community has grown from a small campaigning organisation in Warrenpoint, to a key third sector agency providing services, support, training and leadership on community development, resilience and well-being.

**Our services are centred around supporting three categories – Family, Ability and Seniors.**

We are registered as a charity with the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland 107382. We are also a company limited by guarantee registered in Companies House, 655061

### **Strategic Projects include:**

1. Coordination of Newry and Mourne Family Support Hub
2. Practical and therapeutic support for families, including lead organisation role to the Mournes Sure Start project
3. Presenting themes for referrals to the family support Hub centre on, low mood/poor mental health in parents and children, Marriage breakdown, Autism, Poverty, Emotional and Behavioural Support for adolescents
4. Homeless prevention and tenancy sustainment projects- in partnership with the NIHE through practical activities including, a social kitchen, navigation and support service for individuals in housing distress.
5. Ability Services-provision of a wide range of community-based enterprise and training opportunities for young adults with a range of disability, adults with autism and families caring for children with Additional needs
6. Home 2 hospital volunteer led service for adults in the Mournes and Slieve Gullion areas requiring transport to out of area Hospital appointments
7. Levelling Up funded project creating opportunity for employment and training for hard-to-reach women

8. In partnership with Schools, the SHSCT and other partners we provide targeted and universal Family Support through a range of evidence-based training programmes and peer support networks
9. A social enterprise making and retailing natural soy wax candles, melts, diffusers whilst simultaneously providing day opportunities for young adults of mixed ability and developing and delivering evidence-based training programmes for children and parents in need.
10. Bolster Seniors- In 2023, we started to rebuild our seniors' services to include Discover and connect sessions, tea – dances, clover social club, and we continued to provide signposting and practical support for Seniors operating a referral dial in and traffic light system to monitor seniors impacted by ill health, rural isolation and bereavement.
11. In 2023 we rolled out a range of evidence-based programmes to support children develop coping skills through the CAWT funded MACE Project, in total 1315 children benefitted

### **Key Outcomes for 2023**

During 2023 Bolster Community supported **8835 individuals'** parents, children, seniors and people of mixed ability. **1315** children and young people took part in education, support and activity sessions.

In this financial year Bolster Community provided unique support to **440** single dwelling older people and those identified as risk of homelessness, poor mental health and with low mood. Bolster Community were able to attract and distribute **over £91000** in direct financial support for seniors, families and people living with a disability.

2022/2023 was a challenging year for recruitment and sustainability of staff. The nature of referrals received through the charity and the level and frequency of support required, has become increasingly challenging and complex. Staff have been dealing with a cost-of-living crisis, escalating costs in managing their homes as well as a range of unknowns relating to security in employment whilst simultaneously expected to meet increased outputs and outcomes. In acknowledgement of the difficulties in attracting and maintaining quality staffing, trustees acknowledged the need to succession plan and the board recommended terms of reference for a benchmarking exercise and established TOR for a remuneration committee. Over the year 2022/2023 the remuneration committee:

- Agreed and recommended to the Board the organisations new remuneration policy.
- Agreed and recommended to the board the remuneration of the Chief Executive and the staff team including bonuses.
- Reviewed and approved matters relating to minimum wage uplifts, benchmark outcomes and pension redress matters
- Reported periodically to the Board on the work undertaken by the Committee its performance, constitution, and terms of reference to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness, and recommended any changes considered necessary for Board approval.

## **Social Return on Investment**

The charity completed an independent SROI study which calculated that the charity returned **£24.00** of social value for **every £1** invested.

## **Other Charitable activity and milestones**

1. "Autism Connect" a ground-breaking social space for adults with autism but without a learning disability or mental health diagnosis launched and executed an exciting conference "Empowering Autistic voices", highlighting issues in employment, relationships, education and socially for young adults with autism
2. We were successful in providing trauma informed training and support through the MACE Interreg project resulting in 1315 children accessing quality support to build resilience and cope better with life challenges
3. Provision of a summer scheme, benefitting 36 children supported by a major Housing association and the local health trust
4. Through Community foundation NI funding supported by the DOH fund we were able to establish and develop two new services "After the Bell" and Tots and Tea to ensure an easement of provision so there would be no cliff edge for children and parents once the TNL funding ceased
5. We significantly grew our social value offer, and celebrated some key wins through our growing partnership with Women's Tec/CTS/ and were delighted to be recognised by our peers for this ground breaking work recognised by both the 3rd Sector and Private Sector as an innovative response to social value clauses.

**During this year Bolster Community staff and CEO have provided input, representation and support to the following partnerships, organisations and committees and boards:**

- The Strategic Stakeholder Partnership Newry and Mourne Down District council area
- Chaired the CYPSP Newry Locality Planning group
- Members of the South Armagh Locality Group
- Members of the CYPSP Southern area Outcomes group
- Members of the strategic CYPSP regional Partnership
- Facilitated a "Joining the Dots" networking event in the Canal Court in Newry
- Formed a new partnership with Womenstec Belfast and Newry and CTS projects
- Sustained corporate partnership with Keoghs Cars Newry, Killeavy Castle, Best Estate agents Warrenpoint
- We have provided mentorship to 4 organisations this year
- Supported the board of CO3

**Funding- the following funding applications and income streams were successful in 2022**

- CFNI- DOH Carers fund
- The National Lottery Dormant accounts fund
- NIHE- Homeless Prevention grant/Sustaining Tenancy grant
- Sure Start - Department of Education Sure Start extension
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust - Promoting Wellbeing Activities

- SHSCT-Family Support HUB/ disability/ autism connect
- Public Health Agency – EISS/ Parents Plus
- NM&D Council - Home 2 Hospital,
- Generated Income from Social Enterprise, Friends Resilience sales, donations and Room Hire

### **Plans for the Future**

This is a small synopsis of the Charitable activity we have provided from December April 2022- March 2023 we look forward to progressing and developing relationships with Partner agencies, stakeholders and most importantly the individuals, children and families in the area to ensure more people can reach their potential and thrive.

## **Public Benefit Statement**

The direct benefits which flow from our purposes include:

- Improved understanding, awareness and reduced social isolation leading to reduced levels of stress, anxiety and loneliness. These benefits are demonstrated through feedback from participants, regular evaluation and external monitoring and evaluation of our services.
- Improved partnership working to provide improved health and wellbeing for the constituents and awareness with and between the beneficiaries and stakeholders responsible for planning, services to promote health and wellbeing for an area.
- These benefits are demonstrated through feedback from participants, evaluation and monitoring of services. The benefits of this purpose are provided to those individuals who participate in the process of partnerships as a community representative or agency representative and provide Improved knowledge, resources and access to facilities and education within their locality which may lead to a better understanding of health and wellbeing choices.
- These benefits are demonstrated through feedback from participants and partners community engagement opportunities and through usage of programmes provided.
- Improved knowledge, improved collaborative working and information sharing as well as advice and practical support, for individuals and organisations which lead to a better shared understanding of health and wellbeing choices.
- Improved access to help and support so that individuals may reach their true potential regardless of ability, age, youth, infirmity or social and economic circumstance. Additional benefits may include enhanced confidence and serve to help others in the community develop skills as a result of witnessing the success of others

## **Organisational Structure**

The policy and general management of the affairs of the Initiative shall be directed by the Committee which shall meet not less than five times a year and shall consist of not less than four members of the Initiative elected at the Annual General Meeting. Aside from the management committee the organisation has a range of staff including a CEO, Operation Manager, Project Manager, Social Enterprise Officer, Family Support Workers and a range of staff and volunteers who support the project.

## **Related parties**

None of the Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the Charity. Any connection between a trustee or senior manager of the charity to related parties must be disclosed to

the full Board of Trustees in the same way as any other contractual relationship with a third party. There were no such disclosures in the current year.

### **Risk Management**

The Trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- A finance, audit and risk sub-committee (FARC) which reviews all risk and completes the risk register prior to each board meeting and undertakes an annual review of the risks the charity may face
- The establishment of systems including a risk register, and procedures to mitigate those risk identified; and the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise

This work has identified that financial sustainability is a major financial risk for the charity. A key element in the management of financial risk is via the reserves policy. Attention has also been focused on non-financial risks arising from fire, cyber safety, health and safety of employees, volunteers and scheme users. In providing access and opportunities to people and children, the Charity recognises that there are potential risks to children and vulnerable adults. A key element in the management of non-financial risk is the establishment and implementation of a robust chart of policies and procedures including Access NI Disclosure Check, Child Protection Policy and the renewal and training of staff in this area.

The Trustees are satisfied that the necessary policies and procedures are in place to safeguard participants, and ensure that the benefits provided outweigh any potential harm.