

Rethinking Conflict

Trustees' Annual Report

Year ending 31 December 2022

The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022.

Reference and Administrative Details

Registered Charity Name	Rethinking Conflict
Charity Registration Number	NIC108056
Principal Office Address	Rethinking Conflict, Po Box 2328, Belfast, BT5 9GX

Trustees	Debbie Watters Anne Walsh Rev. David Kerr
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Independent Examiner	Clarke & Co Accountants 53 Andersonstown Road Belfast BT11 9AG
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Governance and Management

Governing Document

Rethinking Conflict is an organisation governed by its Constitution dated 26 May 2015. Its application to be recognised as a charity was accepted by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 10 December 2021.

Appointment of Trustees

The Trustees of Rethinking Conflict meet four times a year, with an AGM held in May.

The Trustees recruit and select new Trustees as needed. They are recruited on the relevance of their knowledge, skills and experience, and their potential to be able to make a helpful contribution to the governance of the organisation. Trustees serve one year and may be re-elected at the AGM.

Charity Purpose

Rethinking Conflict aims to work in current zones of conflict and post conflict using the principles of conflict transformation, peace building and reconciliation to develop new and lasting relationships. We also work with individuals and organisations in the area of dealing with conflicted situations.

We currently work in three main geographic spaces – Northern Ireland, the Middle East (Israel and Palestine) and the United States of America.

The overall direct benefit from our work is increased dialogue and discussion between people from different religious, cultural and/or racial backgrounds, leading to greater understanding, tolerance and acceptance, which results in meaningful relationships and reconciliation.

Activities and Achievements

2022 was a very successful year for Rethinking Conflict. We were able to fully resume our activities after the Covid-19 pandemic, and we also secured funding to support our work over the next few years.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities the trustees have given careful consideration to the charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities help to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

The highlights of the year included:

- The continuation of the Compass Points Dialogue Group meetings, which bring together around 60 key influencers and representatives from across the island of Ireland with the aim of building/re-building relationships and providing a space for comprehensive engagement. The group held a major conference at the end of 2022 and meet several times during the year to discuss key topical issues. They also welcomed a visiting delegation from Israel and Palestine.
- The growth and further development of the Emerging Young Leaders group. This group, with around 60 participants, aims to support the development the next generation of civic society leaders in peacebuilding and conflict resolution work by enhancing their capacity and skills, providing learning opportunities, and supporting the development of their networks and connections. During the year we launched and delivered the first Comparative Peace Processes Programme for 24 young leaders, focusing on lessons from the British/Irish and Israeli/Palestinian contexts.
- A series of weekends which bring those from loyalist, unionist, republican and nationalist backgrounds together with politicians and leaders from wider civic society, with the purpose of facilitating dialogue, building/re-building relationships, and developing cultural understanding.
- The resumption of groups being able to visit Belfast to undertake study tours with Rethinking Conflict. We hosted seven groups, and 135 people from the United States and the Middle East. These included academics/students, churches, politicians and civic leaders. During the study tours participants gain an understanding of NI society and politics, the peace process, legacy issues, and the public and community sectors. They meet with a range of academics, politicians, service providers and local activists.

- The completion of a successful project that explored victimhood in two conflicted geographic spaces – Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. Funded by the Emergence Foundation and delivered in partnership with organisations based in Israel and Palestine, it was designed to help move the participants from the concept of competitive victimhood to inclusive victimhood.
- Two visits to the Middle East, where we are involved in efforts to strengthen civic society, develop grass roots peacebuilding and support victims, while also exploring lessons from the Irish peace process and its relevance to the region. During the visits we undertook a wide range of meetings and delivered a series of talks and lectures to students, academics and activists.
- Two visits to the USA where we continue to undertake academic and consultancy work. Our Executive Director is an Adjunct Professor at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, an affiliated expert and partner to the Negotiation Strategies Institute of Harvard University, and a visiting academic at the University of Central Florida in conflict transformation, political violence and negotiation. He has also undertaken work with the University of Portland, the Carter Center in Atlanta, and the International Centre for Religion & Diplomacy in Washington DC. The benefit these positions is that it provides Rethinking Conflict with access and connections to experienced academics and experts which in turn supports our ongoing work in NI and the Middle East. It also provides those in the USA with a greater understanding of the Irish peace process.

Financial Review

Rethinking Conflict is currently funded by two main donors (Porticus and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation). These grants cover the majority of the organisation’s core costs. In addition funding from the Irish Department from Foreign Affairs support the activity costs of some of our work. Funding generated from academic and consultancy work, along with study tours and private donations covers our remaining costs.

Income declined slightly from £226,478 in 2021 to £214,977 in 2022. Expenditure exceed income in 2022, however much of this was due to the resumption of activities in 2022 after the Covid-19 pandemic. The organisation’s largest costs are salary, followed by those associated with delivering our activities.

The organisation holds reserves of six months running costs. There are no identified private benefits flowing from the purposes of the charity.

The trustees annual report was approved on 25 May 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Debbie Watters
Chairperson