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Chairs Annual Report for NAIRO AGM, 23.4.21

This has been another busy year for NAIRO when we have made further progress in achieving our charitable objectives of promoting the welfare of children in care.

The Covid Pandemic

Of course this years work has been overshadowed by the Covid pandemic which has seriously affected our national life generally and has had serious implications for children's services, and services for children in care in particular.

Great caution has had to be applied to direct meetings between staff and children and their families. Face-to-face meetings have become comparatively rare and we have all been learning about the opportunities of using virtual meetings.

Assessments have had to rely less on face-to-face observation and contact. These matters have great implications for the way all staff in children's services departments have had to work, and great implications in particular for the work of IROs. When life returns to normal we will need to assess the extent to which we should return to our old ways and whether some new ways of doing things may have advantages that should be embedded into future practice.

We were concerned that during Covid, the government introduced Statutory Instrument 445 which removed various protections for children in care, including duties in relation to IROs. It was argued that these relaxations were necessary because of the pandemic. We believed (along with many others in the sector) that these measures were unnecessary and reduced essential protections for vulnerable children. Following court action instigated by Article 39, the measures were found to be unlawful because they were introduced without the necessary statutory consultation.

Annual Conference

Our annual conference scheduled for October 2020 was postponed in light of the pandemic. We decided we would attempt an online conference using zoom, which took place in March 2021. This was new territory for us and we were very nervous about it. However with the expert and indefatigable help of our business support officer Michelle, we pulled it off and held I think a highly successful conference. We brought together IROs from all over the country to share ideas about promoting and enhancing good practice, considering threats and opportunities on the horizon, and generally promoting the morale of the IRO community. We had outstanding speakers (Jackie Tiotto, chief executive of Cafcass and Sir Michael Keehan, High Court Judge

who stimulated and inspired us. We had great contributions from young people from Gloucestershire, Barnsley and Sheffield.

Training

Our training activity was curtailed because of the pandemic. We offered 2 events online which appeared to work well and may provide a model for post pandemic days.

Here is the link to the training page on our website. <https://nairo.org.uk/iro-training/>

The Children's Social Care Review

The government has now commenced its review under the leadership of Josh Macalister previously of Frontline. NAIRO has many misgivings about the way this review has been set up and we have communicated these to government. Nonetheless we will engage constructively with the review and seek to influence it in order to strengthen and improve the IRO service for the benefit of looked after children.

We have prepared a report for the review (with the help of a steering group composed of other agencies) which we have now submitted. We hope this report will be influential in preserving and improving our service.

Advocacy Campaign

We have worked closely with Article 39 (a children's rights charity spearheaded by one of our patrons Carolyn Willow) to promote a campaign to dramatically strengthen and improve advocacy services for children in care (and other vulnerable children) This campaign was inspired by our late patron John Kemmis who sadly died in December 2018.

We worked with the Children's Commissioner, who published a report in spring 2019 with strong recommendations. Here is the link <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CCO-Advocacy-for-children-June-2019.pdf>

We are continuing to work with other agencies and particularly the DfE to take the matter forward

We will keep members informed about developments.

New Trustees

We are always looking for new trustees and if you are interested please do get in touch. We meet about four times a year to organise the activity of NAIRO. We are particularly looking for

- people with website expertise
- people with social media expertise
- people interested in training
- people interested in conference organisation
- people interested in developing policy and practice

Please do get in touch with us at info@nairo.org.uk if you would like to help in this way

If you have any ideas about for NAIRO development or improvement, please do post them on the Google group members forum or email us at info@nairo.org.uk

Conclusion

All in all it has been a busy year for NAIRO overshadowed of course by the pandemic. We have sought to support our members through this difficult time and as we emerge from it we hope there may be some lessons from it which may have long-term benefits for our service.

We believe, in spite of the difficulties, we have achieved much to protect and promote the rights and welfare of children in care, and we hope to be influential in improving IRO services over the next year. See our website for more information www.nairo.org.uk

Good luck for next year!

Paul Smart and Jon Fayle

Co-chairs of NAIRO

April 2021

NAIRO Annual Accounts year ending 31/03/2021

I am presenting the annual accounts for the National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers. The 2020/21 accounts are also included by way of comparison.

The impact of the health pandemic can be clearly seen with the reduction in income for the year .NAIRO has become reliant upon Training (3463 net income in 2019/20) to supplement our core income or subs + national conference.

As a charity, the goal is to produce a financial position which is at least in balance. Given the need to substantially adjust our operating model in 2020/21, it will be not surprise that we produced an operating shortfall of £1719.73 to be offset by 2021 conference receipts of £1266.72 not yet booked in NAIRO's year-end numbers . This will reduce the shortfall to £453.01 – more in line with 2019/20 outturn.

Positives to take from the year were:

1. Membership: **a 27% increase** in membership receipts. This reflects the success of a virtual offering during the year as well as a more stable membership website/ recording system
2. Conference: this will record a positive outcome (certainly compared with 2019) and this is a good pointer to the future of NAIRO events.

This is my final Treasurer's report as I will be standing down at the AGM after 3 years in the role. It has been a pleasure to perform this task for the charity.

Peter Brotherton, Treasurer

NAIRO Annual Accounts year ending 31/03/2021

Prepared by Peter Brotherton, Treasurer

£	RECEIPTS	(OUTGOINGS)	NET TOTAL	NOTES
Membership	5243.00		5243.00	
<u>Training</u> Receipts Trainers' fee& expenses Training room hire	51.78	0 0	51.78	
<u>Conference</u> receipts Conference expenses Room hires Catering Travel & misc/fees	15.0	74.21	(59.21)	NB Conference 21 receipts £1266.12 received after 31/03/21
Business Support		5272.00	(5272.00)	Fees for 02/21 & 03/21 not yet claimed
IT Support		606.45	(606.45)	
Donations		250.00	(250.00)	Article 39 legal fee donation
Room Hire		0		
Travel		0		
Misc items:		826.85	(826.85)	>PO Box fee >IP host fee >ZOOM account fee
TOTAL	5309.78	(7029.51)	(1719.73)	

Represented by

£	Opening 01/04/2020	Closing 31/03/2021
1NAIRO Community Bank Account	4986.70	3869.18
NAIRO Contingency Reserve Bank Account	1500.37	1505.64
Adjusting item – cash receipts re 2019/21		(607.48)
TOTAL	6487.07	4767.34 down £1,719.73

NAIRO Annual Accounts year ending 31/03/2020 (for comparison)

Prepared by Peter Brotherton, Treasurer

£	RECEIPTS	(OUTGOINGS)	NET TOTAL	NOTES
Membership	4142.25		4142.25	
<u>Training</u> Receipts Trainers' fee& expenses Training room hire	6218.75	1785.55 969.48	3463.72	
<u>Conference</u> receipts Conference expenses Room hires Catering Travel &misc/fees	2499.48	1092.00 1263.6 1047.45	(903.57)	
Business Support		6693.20	(6693.20)	
IT Support		207.50	(207.50)	
Donations				
Room Hire		872.00	(872.00)	
Travel		297.00	(297.00)	
Misc bank income/expenses	17.07		17.07	Old bank a/c
Misc items		450.47	(450.47)	PO Box fee IP host fee
TOTAL	12877.55	(13508.75)	(631.20)	