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Chair's Annual Report for NAIRO AGM 26 April 2024

This has been a year of consolidation for NAIRO following the successful campaign to retain the IRO role following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (IRCSC). We have been continuing to make progress in achieving our charitable objectives of promoting the welfare of children in public care.

The IRCSC occupied much of our time and energy last year. The campaign was a huge success and we have continued to work with colleagues and partners to implement changes, including on new advocacy standards. We prepared a carefully argued case, setting out why the abolition of the IRO role would be unwise and dangerous, as well as including ideas for strengthening the role. But this is the beginning of a process, and we now need to focus on how to improve and strengthen the role.

We have continued to work with colleagues including Article 39, the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, BASW, the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Children, Coram Voice and NYAS. NAIRO has been involved with our partners and the DfE in looking at implementation of *Children's social care: stable homes, built on love*, the government's response to the IRCSC.

We anticipated much activity and while some work has been undertaken, progress has been comparatively slow. While this is not on the whole an issue that political parties see as contentious, the likelihood of a general election this year may have diluted the focus. NAIRO is committed to work with whichever party forms the next government to ensure that future initiatives are in the best interests of children in public care, and we expect the pace of change to pick up towards the end of the year.

Annual Conference

We did not hold a conference last year, but we have been determined to revive this and we are now planning a conference looking at key IRO in the autumn. It will be open to all but with a much reduced fee for members.

We are aware of the importance of continuous professional development to our members and to their Social Work England registration. This conference will include a training element and the whole conference should be viewed as a learning event.

In part this learning will be from each other. I am conscious that social work has become much less 'social' in recent years. This has, of course, been accelerated in the rush to online meetings during the pandemic. I started in a world of handwritten records and the only way to speak to a colleague or service user (we called them clients in those days) was in person or on the phone. I think practice with children in public care has improved immeasurably since my days as young residential social worker in the early 1980s; the focus on the voice of the child, the increase in diversity and the standards of care are all much better. But we have lost something of the human touch, not least in communicating directly with colleagues, over the desk, sharing a coffee etc. These 'social' occasions at work are an immense opportunity for casual learning that we don't get over a Teams or Zoom call.

This is why we are holding this conference in person, and we hope many of you will be able to attend, to listen, learn, contribute and discuss the issues of the day with colleagues.

Training

In the last year we have offered training events run by Jon Fayle our co-vice chair and recent co-chair. These covered training for those new to the role and training in relation to effective challenge. We are immensely grateful to Jon, but we are conscious we could be too dependent on him; he deserves a rest. I will therefore be assisting Jon in the coming year so we can have a consistent and regular programme. You will have seen recent communications about forthcoming dates, which are published on the website.

New Trustees

We welcomed Sean Hayes as a new trustee last year and he has played a very positive role in our work. We have, however recently said farewell to Jane Hallam who is not able to continue at this time; we are very grateful for her years of support.

We are always looking for new trustees. We are exploring some recent interest, but if you can help, we would love to hear from you. 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

Workshops.

We have started to look at topic based online workshops as a way to further our work and to involve members.

We have run one workshop on the independence of IROs; should they remain with the local authority or does that compromise their ability to promote the best interests of young people; there are different views about this.

Jon Fayle also chaired a workshop looking at proposals to revise advocacy standards. Jon wrote a response to the consultation on our behalf.

Website

Our website was looking a little tired and dated. You will have noticed it is looking much fresher and, I hope, easier to navigate. We are grateful to David Higham for his work on this.

Conclusion

The next year will be a challenging one for children in public care. Public finances are not strong and it unlikely that any party will be able to invest in the way we would like. However, we will continue to discuss, assist and challenge to ensure our voice is central to work of the IRO service and the children we serve.

Good luck for next year!

Jerry Curtis

Chair of NAIRO

April 2024

Created 30 January 2025
From Date 1 April 2023
To Date 31 March 2024

NAIRO
Profit & Loss Statement
(All values reported in GBP)

Turnover

4010	Memberships	5,704.45
4011	Training	1,291.72
4900	Miscellaneous Income	2.32
Total Turnover		<u>6,998.49</u>

Less Cost of Sales

Total Cost of Sales	<u>0.00</u>
Gross Profit	<u>6,998.49</u>

Less Expenses

6003	Support Services	(6,056.75)
6900	Miscellaneous Expenses	(993.23)
7400	Travelling	(79.15)
7507	Website Maintenance	(225.29)
7901	Bank Charges	(314.59)
8206	Venue Hire	(75.00)
Total Expenses		<u>(7,744.01)</u>
Profit Before Tax		<u>(745.52)</u>