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Chair's Annual Report for NAIRO Charity Commission Return

This is an abridged report presented to the AGM 25 April 2025

Introduction

This has been a year of challenges for NAIRO, some of these are internal, some external. Fortunately, none were as serious as the existential threat from the IRCSC.

The new Government

The long expected general election took place in the summer of 2024 and the slow implementation of the IRCSC came to a halt. But many of its recommendations have not gone away. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is now in the House of Lords and while there is no specific mention of IROs – a positive step we feel – many of the measures will be relevant to IROs, such as the local offer to care leavers, depriving of liberty and corporate parenting improvements. We welcome the Bill and its provisions, but we are working with our colleagues in the Alliance of voluntary agencies to see how this can be improved.

Training

In the last year we have offered training events run by Jon Fayle our former chair, assisted by me. These covered training for those new to the role and training in relation to effective challenge.

The training we offered earlier in the year had poor take-up and some courses were cancelled, but this has picked up with recent offerings.

The New and Aspiring IRO course is the more popular, with the Challenge of Challenge, being something of a challenge to fill. We have reviewed this and will be broadening our marketing.

We have also decided to combine the courses as we believe that experienced IROs will also benefit from looking and some of the principles and case studies alongside those who are new to the role. Dates will be advertised shortly.

We have also successfully run some courses for specific local authorities and hope to expand this.

However, as you know, local authorities have no spare money and are reluctant to fund external training however relevant (and good value). We will keep this under review.

Independence

The nature of the independent role of IROs has long been debated and we held a series of workshops to present the issues. The key question was whether IROs should remain under the auspices of children's social care, or be managed by an external body.

Members had mixed views, those with less experience highlighted the value of remaining close to local authority colleagues and the strength of personal relationships. Others, mostly those who had many years in the service, felt that being managed, ultimately, by a service charged with delivering services to children in public care, meant that it was harder to then challenge that service's failures.

The lack of any clear consensus led Trustees to decide that at this point we will not take a position either way, while reserving the possibility of revisiting at some point in the future.

Annual Conference

At the last AGM we spoke enthusiastically about the planning for an autumn conference which was then in its early stages. This planning continued through the summer but take-up of places was disappointing. Had we continued we were at risk of putting on a poorly attended event and lost more money. We took the difficult decision to postpone the conference.

The rearranged conference, with most of the original speakers, takes place next month [it took place in May 2025] and the take-up is much better. We originally did not want an online option as part of the value is IRO networking, but the world has changed and the new conference will be a hybrid affair.

Core Business

The Board of Trustees has reviewed what we are want to do in line with our charitable aims and what we are able to do with our resources.

Our three key areas of active are:

- Campaigning;
- Training; and
- Advice

We have agreed to continue with these, but at a level that is sustainable – see below for more on this. The political campaigning is noted above in the work with the new Government and training is also covered. We will continue to update the website with advice and encourage the use of Google Groups as a means for IROs to share questions, solutions and views.

Trustees

We are always looking for new trustees. We have had some enquiries in the last year, but none progressed to joining the Board. Some felt that that could not commit while others who showed interest, were not practicing or recent IROs. The Board is required to have a certain number of practicing IROs as Trustees and, as many of us age, this is becoming fewer and it was felt that new trustees should be IROs or have that experience. We are enormously grateful for those who have offered or expressed an interest.

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.

It is essential that we do recruit new Trustees. The current Board is very enthusiastic, but all members are volunteers so are limited in the time they can devote. The more we have, the more the work can be spread and the more effective.

Conclusion

Last year I noted that the coming year will be a challenging one for children in public care. Public finances were not strong and it was unlikely that any party would be able to invest in the way we would like. Little has change in this respect. 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.

Jerry Curtis

Chair of NAIRO

15 January 2025

Created 15 January 2026
From Date 1 April 2024
To Date 31 March 2025

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

Turnover

4010	Memberships	5,726.46
4011	Training	1,322.53
4900	Miscellaneous Income	136.35
Total Turnover		<u>7,185.34</u>

Less Cost of Sales

Total Cost of Sales	<u>0.00</u>
Gross Profit	<u>7,185.34</u>

Less Expenses

6003	Support Services	(6,841.40)
6900	Miscellaneous Expenses	(905.36)
7507	Website Maintenance	(137.79)
7901	Bank Charges	(373.34)
8206	Venue Hire	(1,244.60)
Total Expenses		<u>(9,502.49)</u>
Profit Before Tax		<u>(2,317.15)</u>