



FINNBARS FORCE

**Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st October 2022**

Registered with the Charity Commission in England & Wales
Registration Number 1187338

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Reference and Administration Details

Charity Number: 1187338

Registered Address: 1 Park Green, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3GL.

Trustees: Paul Read (Chair)
Charlotte El-Labany
Christopher Ketley

Independent examiner: MA Barton Bookkeeping & Accounts
41 Central Crescent
Hethersett
Norwich
NR9 3EP

The Trustees present their annual report together with financial statements of Finnbar's Force for the year ended 31 October 2022.

An Introduction to Our Charity

We set up Finnbar's Force in 2017, after losing our son to an aggressive brain tumour just before his 5th birthday in 2016

Finnbar's Story

Finnbar was born in September 2010 and enjoyed a lovely start to life, doing all the things little boys love doing and being around his loving family. He was doing really well at school and was a fantastic reader - he absolutely loved stories and always had at least two every bedtime!

Then one day, a couple of months after Finnbar's 5th birthday, he started to complain that he felt dizzy. At first it was every few days, but after a couple of weeks it had become every day. We saw the GP and put it down to an ear infection. As a few more weeks passed, we became increasingly concerned as the dizziness was getting much worse - in fact it was now happening several times a day. We saw the GP again and were told to come back again if it carried on for much longer.

By Christmas we noticed that he seemed to be developing other subtle symptoms; sometimes he staggered whilst walking, as though he was drunk; and his behaviour changed - he even said that he didn't feel like himself anymore.



By January 2016, with Finnbar getting no better, we managed to get a hospital appointment. After several appointments and scans, our worst fears became reality - Finnbar was diagnosed with a brain tumour. In February he needed an emergency operation to relieve the pressure on his brain, followed by further surgeries to take a biopsy and insert a special line to administer drugs.

The biopsy results came back and we found out that the tumour was inoperable.



Finnbar began a course of chemotherapy in March but continued to deteriorate rapidly - by May he was unable to walk, could barely talk and couldn't eat. Towards the end of the month we were given the heart-breaking news that the doctors felt that there was nothing that could be done to save, or even help, our dear little Finn.

We continued to fight for Finnbar, never giving up hope of some improvement, but it was to prove a vain battle. On Friday 5th August 2016, just five months after he was diagnosed, Finnbar became very poorly. That evening we cuddled him as he slipped away from us.



A Message from Tristan Cork – Finnbar's Father and Founder of the Charity

Throughout our unwanted journey that was Finnbar's illness - which, although relatively brief, was incredible painful for him and for all that loved and cared for him - I was shocked by some of the things I found and that I have discovered subsequently.

Nobody wants their child to be diagnosed with cancer or a brain tumour, where even "benign" tumours can cause devastation. But as a parent I felt sure that everything would be thrown at Finnbar to make him better, I had great faith; I thought that in this day and age there would be many options for treatment and that the medical teams would work together to do the very best for our son.

However, sadly this didn't turn out to be the case. I began to discover that childhood brain tumours were so poorly understood - a combination of rarity and chronic lack of research - that unless the child gets a "simple", low grade, easy to remove tumour, the odds are very heavily stacked against their long-term survival. Fortunately, other



childhood cancers, such as leukaemia, have benefited from huge leaps and bounds in understanding, treatment and ultimately survivability – up to around 80% nowadays. In stark contrast, some experts think we could be 100 years away from being able to make that statement about brain tumours. We decided early on that we would support this cause – we would campaign for more research and

donate to research projects that would benefit childhood brain tumour patients. We also found that there is a frequently occurring common denominator among childhood brain tumour patients – lengthy delays in diagnosis, with some frankly shocking stories of initial misdiagnosis. So, we also raise awareness of symptoms – both to the public and to healthcare professionals.

Throughout the painful and terrifying rollercoaster ride we were on, we felt well-supported by certain individual clinicians and charities, particularly towards the end of Finnbar's life.

However, we also suffered at the hands of some serious failings – both in the 'system' and in the capabilities of some of the care teams. Sometimes we felt that we were not listened to or taken seriously. Sometimes communication was terrible. Often, we felt alone and isolated. In hospital we were generally very well looked after – out of hospital we felt forgotten. Simple mistakes or oversights caused us a great deal of unnecessary stress and hassle – running around trying to find a piece of equipment or medication that someone forgot to arrange, for example. Phone calls would sometimes take hours, or even days, to be returned. Sometimes they didn't get returned. All of these things made a horrific experience even worse – in fact we have been left severely traumatised by some of the things we had to go through with Finnbar. We feel that some of those things could have been prevented or made easier, if the right support was in place for us, and we know we're not alone in that – we have spoken to many parents that have described feeling the same way.

Whilst I have also heard of many positive experiences and we know that most of the care teams go above and beyond to care for children and families, we think that all families should be able to feel that they have all the support they need, when they need it – to take the load off for a while. In East Anglia there are some good mechanisms in place to support children that are at the end of their lives, but our vision would see much more support from the beginning of a journey, especially in acting as advocates and ensuring communication is effective amongst the various care teams involved.

We enjoyed an amazing start to life as a charity, with some incredible fundraising, positive conversations with individuals and organisations about how to make a difference and, most importantly, supporting dozens of families. The Covid19 pandemic has undeniably thrown a huge spanner in the works – not just for us, but for many charities, large and small, including many that we would like to work with. So the challenge now is to get properly back onto our feet and find the best way to achieve our aims. Thank you so much to everyone who helps us in our mission.

Tristan Cork

Founder

Objectives and Activities

As a young organisation we recognise that there will be some natural evolution in our ideas as we build a better picture of the present-day situation and the needs of children and families. Our vision reflects our recognition that, while we will always maintain a focus on childhood brain tumours, some of our work can and will benefit all children with cancer, in particular the opportunity to make their families feel better supported.

Our Vision:

A world where fewer children suffer and die at the hands of a brain tumour and where all children with cancer in our area receive all the support they need, when and where they need it.

Our Mission:

- **To improve outcomes;** by supporting and campaigning for increased research into childhood brain tumours; and by raising awareness of the symptoms of the disease.
- **To support children and families;** by advocating; providing easy access to the best support and information; and by working with other services to improve the overall care package.

Our Objectives

Our original charitable objectives focus on childhood brain tumours :

To relieve the needs of, children with brain tumours and cancer, their families and carers, in particular by:

- Providing information, advocacy and local support groups which offer emotional and practical support
- Providing grants of financial assistance - predominantly for associated costs that the diagnosis brings, such as travel to distant hospitals, car parking, food etc.
- Funding research to improve understanding, diagnosis and treatment of brain tumours and childhood cancers, the useful results of which will be published
- Raising awareness of childhood cancers with a primary focus on brain tumours and their debilitating effects.

Our Main Activities to Achieve Our Charitable Objectives

In undertaking our main activities, the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefits.

In our first few years as a charity, we had some brilliant successes in supporting our objectives and were aiming high with our future.

The Covid-19 pandemic that broke out shortly after our conversion completely changed the landscape for all charities, not only in terms of fundraising but also for service provision. We reacted rapidly to this to ensure that we supported families that had been seriously impacted by the sudden loss of income or support due to the restrictions imposed by the government, both financially and practically. We are proud that we were able to respond to the needs of the families so promptly and pleased to have received many heart-warming messages of thanks.

Sadly, the knock on effect of reduced fundraising, lockdowns and shifted priorities has been that some of our projects have been delayed. Our focus will be on returning our main projects to the fore as restrictions reduce.

Below we set out main activities.

How We Help:

Raising Awareness - We take every opportunity we can to provide the public with information about the symptoms of brain tumours, as well as childhood cancer generally, including through information stands and social media. We're also working to improve awareness amongst healthcare professionals. Examples include:

- Distributing symptom cards at various locations and events.
- Providing information packs for professionals, to doctors' surgeries, schools and opticians.
- Spreading the word online and on social media

Supporting Families – We want to reduce the load on parents that find themselves in the same terrible position that we did. We have helped by:

- Giving grants to families of children diagnosed with a brain tumour, or other childhood cancer, to help cover some of the costs faced upon initial diagnosis, such as travelling to a far-away hospital, car parking and food whilst away from home.

- Developing an information toolkit for families to direct them to the best online resources and connect them with charities and services that can help them locally.
- Offering 1-to-1 advice and support by visiting families at home to share experiences and point parents in the right direction for further advice. We have also connected families to each other for support.
- Working with service providers and charities in Norfolk to look at ways support can be improved for families with a child undergoing treatment for cancer;
 - We are committed to closing and filling gaps that currently exist in the services available in Norfolk for children with cancer and their families. We hope to work with other charities to achieve this.
 - We meet with families to find out their perception of the care they have received.
 - We are currently establishing a team of volunteers to work alongside a future permanent member of staff in delivering support at home as well as improved communication with healthcare professionals.
 - We aim to open a support group to coincide with children's chemotherapy clinics at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, where families can drop in for lunch and a coffee before and after clinic appointments.

Supporting Research – We're committed to improving the outlook for future children that suffer with brain tumours, by supporting research that improves the understanding of childhood brain tumours, aids diagnosis or improves treatment. Since we began fundraising for research, we have provided over £50,000 toward paediatric brain tumour research projects and will continue to commit up to 20% of our annual spend on supporting research projects.

Our Impact

We have received very positive feedback in respect of our support, a few examples of correspondence that we have received from families we have supported are given below;

"We wouldn't know half the things we do about childhood brain tumours if it wasn't for them"

"Tristan has been amazing – I wouldn't have found out half of the information that I now have if it wasn't for his support. People need this kind of help when they're in this situation and it's really tough when you're in such a state"

"The money has helped us so much! My husband is on half pay now so we need every penny we can get"

"I didn't know who to talk to or where to turn when I needed to find out what benefits I could claim, but Finnbar's Force pointed me in the right direction and I had it sorted within weeks"

"Thank you for referring us to EACH – you've been amazing"

"The grant you gave us meant we could be with our son whilst he was at Addenbrookes for a week – I don't know what we would have done without it as I am self-employed! Thank you!"

The help they gave us with getting our son to Disneyland was brilliant. I didn't think it was going to happen, but these guys got hold of a charity that took care of EVERYTHING! We had a wonderful time!

Financial Review

How We've Raised Funds

The majority of our funds have arisen from very kind and generous donations from members of the public and local businesses. These may be from a collection tin in a shop or from one of our fantastic supporters following a small fundraising event or as a result of a sponsored activity, along with 'charity of the year' or one-off donations from fabulous local businesses, clubs and societies. We are so grateful to each and every person and organisation that has donated or raised money for us – every penny goes into our general fund that supports families, goes to research and helps the charity to run.

A good amount also comes in from our own selection of fundraising events that we hold throughout the year, however in light of the pandemic, these have been hugely reduced over the last 12 months. Whilst we normally aim to hold at least 6 events per year, this year we have held only our Christmas Lights event, meaning that the event income is far less than previous years. Previous events include:

- Jedi Walk
- Family Adventure Day
- Community Sports Day
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Christmas Concert
- Christmas Lights



Future Income Strategy

We recognise development of stable income streams and intelligent financial management are vital to the success of the organisation and our ability to deliver on our mission.

Post-covid, we aim to become less reliant on event and donation based income and seek new sources, such as grants, commercial partnerships and legacies.

Main Use of Funds

Our current intention is that funds will be used as follows:

- £12,000 to be maintained for reserves (see policy below).
- Income and expenditure have been grossly affected by the pandemic and running costs of the charity are expected to increase further this year. We anticipate that combined spending on day-to-day running and fundraising will increase to a figure nearer £40,000. In the next year we will set a baseline budget for running costs, including staffing. After this amount:
 - Approximately 20% of the remaining funds will be directed towards supporting research.
 - The remaining approximate 80% of funds will be used to fund family assistance grants and support our local projects.

In future years we will set aside specified funds for each project we are undertaking and we intend to launch a specific fundraising appeal to cover the cost of the specialist role, estimated at a total of around £220,000 for three years. We will also apply for grant funding for projects and incorporate full cost recovery into bids.

Our policy is being reviewed during our 2022-23 financial year.

Reserves Policy

Finnbar's Force's policy so far has been set to ensure that sufficient funds should be present at any given time to support the 'assistance grant' aspect of our activities for at least six months without any income of new funds. Based on the grant-giving policy in place previously, at an estimated 2 'new' families per month, this represented an amount of £6,000 set aside as reserves.

In early 2019 we amended our policy to allow further grants to families on a discretionary basis and during the pandemic we broadened our criteria and allowed repeated applications, resulting in a much higher than usual spending on grants. As the government provided more relief to families the need for this reduced and we stopped the grants. We would not expect to provide this level of

assistance again during the pandemic and will not set aside specific reserves for this purpose, however we may elect to use funds previously assigned to other projects, should a similar situation occur.

We have seen that some families need additional funding, whereas others do not, for various reasons. It is difficult to anticipate demand, and we have seen fluctuations over the last 18 months, but to enable the assistance grant aspect to continue for a minimum of 6 months without new funding, we will set aside a reserve of £12,000, which in practice is far higher than current demand. The policy is currently under review and the reserves policy will change to reflect any changes in the policy as necessary.

This policy does not take account of any other cost of running the charity, as most costs thus far have been relatively low. We know that as the organisation grows, the cost to run it will increase – for example we expect that it will be necessary to employ staff to carry out some functions within the next 6 - 12 months and we are likely to need office and storage facilities to work from. We are currently reviewing our reserves policy to ensure that it covers the expected running costs of the following 12 months – this will form part of the overall financial management review.

At 31st October 2022 the charity had unrestricted cash funds of **£124,437** and restricted cash funds of **£1,374**.

Governance

In 2020 we converted from a Trust to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). A Foundation Constitution was established for the CIO on 2 January 2020, amended from the original document of 3 October 2019.

Charitable status was awarded on 13 January 2020. The charity is run by the trustees in conjunction with a Chief Executive Officer who undertakes day-to-day alongside volunteer admin team members. Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a special meeting of the charity trustees. In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the charity. The trustees keep a record of the names and address of each trustee, together with the dates of their appointment, re-appointment or retirement and will provide a copy of the charity trust deed and latest report and account to each new trustee. In addition, all trustees are encouraged to read Charity Commission and other newsletters designed to keep them abreast of their duties and responsibilities. The trustee board currently meets at least four times each year.

As a result of the incredible success that we have enjoyed in terms of support and fundraising, but also the level of engagement with the community, stakeholders and families required (including in running and managing our own events and services), the workload will become increasingly difficult to manage amongst our volunteers as we continue to grow.

We may also recruit paid staff to deal with ongoing and time-consuming administration. We also hope to recruit more trustees with specialist skills to help us lead as effectively as possible.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees:



Paul Read

Chair

30 August 2023



Chris Ketley

Treasurer

30 August 2023

Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of Finnbar's Force

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 August 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M A Barton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

M A Barton MIAB, Cert Acc. (Open)

Date: 20th August 2023

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 August 2021

	<u>Unrestricted funds £</u>	<u>Restricted funds £</u>	<u>2022 Totals</u>	<u>2021 Totals</u>
<u>Receipts</u>				
Donations and sponsored events	13,121	-	13,121	18,398
Fundraising events	12,170	-	12,170	5,490
Online sales and merchandise	-	-	-	0
Miscellaneous	98	-	98	9
Total	25,389	-	25,389	23,897
<u>Outgoings</u>				
Grants/Donations	8,600	-	8,600	1,900
Runnings costs/consumables	2,902	-	2,902	626
Other expenses	36	-	36	170
Events	4,204	-	4,204	1,914
Employment costs	0	-	0	10,598
Promo/Merchandise	1,177	-	1,177	754
Total	16,919	-	16,919	15,963
Net Receipts	8,470	-	8,470	7,934

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 August 2021

	<u>Unrestricted funds £</u>	<u>Restricted funds £</u>	<u>2022 Totals</u>
Cash Funds at 31st October 2021	114,593	1,374	115,967
Net Receipts for the period	8,470	-	8,470
Cash Funds at 31st October 2022	123,063	1,374	124,437

Bank Account Balances

Current Account	22,329
Savings Account	102,108
Total Funds	<u>124,437</u>

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Paul Read

Chair

30 August 2023



Chris Ketley

Trustee

30 August 2023

Notes to the Financial Statements

1 General Notes

Basis of accounting:

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis.

2 Transactions with Trustees

The Charity has 1 employee.

No remuneration or benefits were paid to the Trustees or people connected with them, by the charity.

No expenditure transactions were undertaken by the charity in which a trustee or connected person has a material interest.

During the year, no trustee was reimbursed for expenses.