



FINNBARS FORCE

**Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st October 2023**

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)

Christopher Sharman

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 2023.

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



Finnbar's illness was a harrowing journey, a constant battle against a tide of fear and uncertainty.

As a parent, I expected advanced treatment options and seamless teamwork. Sadly, the reality was different. Childhood brain tumours receive a fraction of the research funding compared to other cancers. This lack of understanding translates into poor diagnoses and limited treatment options.

Our painful insight into this world ignited our passion to change the landscape, which is why we support research, raise awareness of symptoms, and advocate for families facing this difficult diagnosis.

Whilst exceptional clinicians and charities offered invaluable support at times throughout Finnbar's illness, particularly near the end, there were undeniable gaps in the system. The impersonal nature of some interactions and communication breakdowns left us feeling isolated and unheard. Sadly, this isn't an uncommon experience. Many families face similar frustrations, burdened by avoidable mistakes and a lack of support outside the hospital setting. Unreturned calls, missing equipment, and a sense of being forgotten outside the sterile walls added a layer of unnecessary stress to an already unbearable situation.

Witnessing these shortcomings firsthand fuelled our resolve to make a difference. Finnbar's Force isn't just about research and awareness; it's about empowering families. We envision a support system that extends far beyond the hospital walls, offering not just practical assistance but also emotional solace and a strong advocacy voice. We want families to feel heard, understood, and supported throughout their entire ordeal.

I'm so proud of everything that we have achieved in Finnbar's name so far. The way we have been able to support families, especially during the uncertain and frightening times of recent years, has inspired us to do more. This year we have the most exciting progress of all, taking on our first employees and securing our first premises, to become our headquarters and a support centre for families.

We are so grateful to all of our supporters and volunteers for, slowly but surely, turning our vision into reality.

A Message from Paul Read, Our Chair

As this report demonstrates, our charity continues to go from strength to strength. Over the past 12 months, we have raised funds by engaging with our local community and providing families with the opportunity to try new experiences, fostering a sense of community. This year marked another incredible day at Eaton Vale for our Family Adventure Day, and The Christmas Lights in Hethersett have grown from strength to strength, bringing joy to thousands of visitors. Both events exemplify the type of fundraising that epitomizes our charity, along with the dedication of our volunteers. The funds generated and positive feedback from attendees have encouraged us to move forward, expanding our fundraising abilities. In addition to our fundraising activities, we have diligently worked to grow and develop as a charity. We expanded our team with the appointment of a Fundraising Officer, Georgie. Georgie will serve as a focal point to enhance our fundraising efforts, enabling us to increase the support provided to families during challenging times. The trustees recognise that as our charity grows, we need to bring in more expertise to support families directly and to raise vital funds for our grant-giving efforts. This necessitates the effective recruitment of staff to support all aspects of the charity.

Finnbar's Force will open its new premises this year, providing a welcoming environment for families to access support and information. Our new headquarters will extend our reach and scope, improving our offerings to the community. We plan to conduct support sessions in this new environment.

To ensure success, we recognise the need to increase our fundraising efforts and expand as a charity. While we have stated goals yet to be fulfilled, our dedicated team is diligently working towards achieving them. We believe that the steps we have taken, and will take, will help us meet our goals and continue to be a focal point for support while raising awareness of childhood cancers.



Objectives and Activities

Our vision reflects our recognition that, while we will always maintain a focus on childhood brain tumours, we can and will support families affected by childhood cancer of any kind. In fact, we recognise that as we grow, the focus of our vision and mission is evolving to include new levels of support, such as our new support centre.

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 we're 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.

As our charity itself has begun to recover from the effects the pandemic has had on the third sector environment as a whole, our focus has returned to our core support projects.

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 help by:

- Providing financial grants of up to £500 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.
- Providing a comprehensive information toolkit on our website to direct parents and caregivers 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 (and soon inviting them to our support centre) to share experiences and point parents in the right direction for further advice. We have also connected families to each other for support.
- Our support hub will allow us to run support groups, family drop in sessions, coffee mornings and holistic care offerings, such as yoga sessions, massage therapy, music therapy, play therapy, craft sessions and counselling by trained professionals.
- We are training 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.
- 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.

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 a percentage 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;

"Finnbar's Force was a lifeline during our darkest hour. Their financial support allowed us to focus on our daughter's health, and Tristan's emotional support offered a beacon of hope when we needed it most. This charity deserves all the support it can get."

"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"

"Finnbar's Force has helped us economically and it made a huge difference, less worries and more fun for the boys, having just recently moved to the area with all that that implies the grant allowed us to pay debt and still do fun things and create memories together. Thank you so much"

"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"

"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 still come 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. We 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
- Tour de Fox Cycle Ride
- 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.

Now that we have employed a fundraising officer, Georgie, we will become less reliant on event and donation based income and we are actively raising funds from new sources, such as grants, commercial partnerships and legacies.

Main Use of Funds

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

- £60,000 to be maintained for reserves (see policy below).
- 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 £60,000 over the next financial period, including staff costs and costs associated with running the office. Ahead of the next financial period, we will set a baseline budget for running costs, including staffing.
- £12,000 set aside for family assistance grants.
- Any remaining funds will be divided between supporting research projects (approx. 20%) and set aside for our own local projects (approx. 80%)

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.

Reserves Policy

Finnbar's Force's policy is currently under review to ensure that it is fit for purpose with respect to employing staff and running a support centre. However, we have always determined that we must maintain reserves at a level to enable us to carry out our support services for at least six months without any additional income. We recognise that a greater level of certainty will be required going forward, so this has been increased to a term of one year. Currently we aim to hold reserves of £60,000 which we deem sufficient to do this at the present time.

At 31st October 2023 the charity had unrestricted cash funds of **£114,593** 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.

With an ever increasing workload, we are now employing staff to take on some of the functions of running the day-to-day activities of the charity, including fundraising and general 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

10 June 2024



Chris Sharman

Trustee

10 June 2024

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 2023.

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: 4th June 2024

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 August 2023

	<u>Unrestricted funds £</u>	<u>Restricted funds £</u>	<u>2023 Totals</u>	<u>2022 Totals</u>
<u>Receipts</u>				
Donations and sponsored events	34,930	-	34,930	13,121
Fundraising events	11,206	-	11,206	12,170
Online sales and merchandise	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-
Interest (Reserve Account)	1,121		1,121	98
Total	<u>47,257</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>47,257</u>	<u>25,389</u>
<u>Outgoings</u>				
Employment costs (incl Training)	12,409		12,409	0
Grants/Donations	7,300	-	7,300	8,600
Runnings costs/consumables	4,550	-	4,550	2,902
Other expenses	286	-	286	36
Events	4,286	-	4,286	4,204
Employment costs	0	-	0	0
Promo/Merchandise	1,357	-	1,357	1,177
Total	<u>30,187</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>30,187</u>	<u>16,919</u>
Net Receipts	<u>17,070</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>17,070</u>	<u>8,470</u>

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 August 2023

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2023 Totals
Cash Funds at 31st October 2022	123,063	1,374	124,437
Net Receipts for the period	17,070	-	17,070
Cash Funds at 31st October 2023	<u>140,133</u>	<u>1,374</u>	<u>141,507</u>

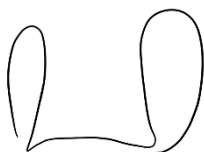
Bank Account Balances

Current Account	38,279
Savings Account	103,228
Total Funds	<u>141,507</u>

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the accounts above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Paul Read

Chair

10 June 2024



Chris Sharman

Treasurer

10 June 2024

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 2 employees.

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.