

Wise Men of the East Network

Registered Charity Number: 100219

Trustees' Annual Report

For the year ended 31 March 2025

1. Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name: Wise Men of the East Network

Principal Address: c/o Beersbridge Road Elim Church, Belfast, BT5 [Insert postcode]

Trustees (as at 31 March 2025):

- John Lemon, Chairperson
- John Lavery, Secretary
- Henry Brown, Treasurer
- Ian Carr – Committee Member
- Jim White – Committee Member
- Jim Vincent – Committee Member
- Jim Collins – Committee Member

The current board of trustees took up their positions in **June 2024**. The previous trustees have not provided access to any historic records or documentation prior to this date. The current trustees have, however, secured access to the charity's bank accounts and can provide statements from June 2024 onwards if required.

***In order that we could complete the Annual return we had to contact the charity commission multiple times to seek support to complete the annual returns as the online portal would not let us submit a report for the 24/25 year until all previous years has either been skipped (max 4) or submitted. Under the guidance of Charity commission staff we submitted 22/23 and 23/24 reports with essentially blank information as we do not hold any of this information and were not acting on behalf of the charity during these periods. We uploaded a cover letter to explain this for each. This allowed us to submit the report for 24/25 when we took over as trustees.*

2. Structure, Governance and Management

Wise Men of the East Network is governed and managed by a **voluntary board of trustees**..

During the year, the charity underwent a significant transition period following the appointment of new trustees and the relocation of premises. The new trustees have focused on ensuring continuity of service and stabilising the organisation's operations, finances, and governance.

3. Objectives and Activities

The charity's **purposes**:

- Provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where men aged 50 and over can meet, share skills, and support one another.
- Relieve social isolation, improve wellbeing, and encourage positive mental health among older men in the local community.
- Foster a sense of community by enabling men to work together on practical projects, share experiences, and participate in social activities.

The charity delivers these objectives through its **Men's Shed**, which operates as a community space where men can meet regularly, enjoy camaraderie, and participate in various activities.

4. Public Benefit Statement

The trustees confirm that they have had regard to the guidance issued by the **Charity Commission for Northern Ireland** on public benefit.

Wise Men of the East Network provides clear public benefit by offering a safe and supportive environment for older men who may otherwise experience loneliness or social isolation. The Shed helps members to:

- Build friendships and community connections;
- Maintain and develop practical skills;
- Improve their emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging;
- Access peer support and informal advice networks.

These outcomes contribute positively to mental health, community cohesion, and local wellbeing.

5. Achievements and Performance (April 2024 – March 2025)

This year has been one of transition and consolidation for the charity.

Relocation

- The Shed was previously located in Connswater Shopping Centre but had to vacate the premises during the year.
- A **temporary venue** was secured at **Beersbridge Road Elim Church**, allowing the charity to continue its operations with minimal disruption.
- The relocation was a significant focus for the trustees during this period.

Regular Activities

- Despite the challenges of relocation, the Shed continued to meet **three days per week**, providing members with a safe and welcoming space to meet, chat, and enjoy a coffee together.
- Activities during this period were primarily social rather than project-based, to maintain contact and continuity for members.

Events and Outings

In the latter part of the year, the charity successfully reintroduced organised outings and social events, including:

- A **Christmas Lunch** for members;
- A **Summer Picnic**;
- A **Tour of the Aquarium**.

These events were very well received and contributed to rebuilding engagement and morale among members.

Funding and Development

- The charity successfully secured **funding through the Take 5 Initiative**, which will support future activities focused on wellbeing and connection.
- The trustees have also been working to strengthen governance, record-keeping, and financial management, ensuring a solid foundation for future growth.

6. Financial Review

The charity currently holds and manages its funds through its designated bank account. Due to the change in trusteeship in June 2024, the current trustees only have access to financial records and statements from that date forward.

Efforts were made to contact the previous trustees to obtain earlier records, but these were **unsuccessful**. As a result, the current trustees are unable to provide financial documentation for periods prior to June 2024. However, all available bank statements to the Commission if required.

The trustees confirm that all income and expenditure during this period has been used solely to further the charity's purposes and support its members.

We have had financial accounts completed by Kim and these were then verified by Joan Baird, Finance Manager, East Belfast Development Agency. We also requested they included within their report that we have no access to accounts or documentation prior to us taking over in our roles as trustees. However they instructed that this would not be something they would be able to include in their report.

7. Plans for the Future

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, the trustees plan to:

- Secure a **permanent venue** for the Shed to ensure long-term stability;
- Expand the range of **activities and workshops**, particularly intergenerational and skills-sharing projects;

- Continue to strengthen **governance and financial transparency**;
 - Increase outreach to **new members**, especially those who may be isolated or recently retired;
 - Build further partnerships with local community organisations and health networks.
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8. Statement of Responsibilities of the Trustees

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and ensuring that the charity's financial statements are properly maintained. They confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate and that all activities are carried out in accordance with the charity's purposes and public benefit requirement.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on: 29 October 2025

Signed on behalf of the Board:



Chairperson

Name: John Lemon

Position: Chair Person

Date: 29 October 2025