



KAVANAGH HOUSE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

An Award Winning Organisation





Chairpersons Address

**Our aim is to
facilitate the
economic and
social up-liftment
of the people
of Ardoyne.**

Ardoyne Association

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Ardoyne Association's AGM 2024. I am delighted to see so many of you here today, and a special welcome to our invited guests and our valued funders.

This year holds particular significance as our Association approaches its 50th year of service to the community. Over the past year, we have been busier than ever, as you will see in the following reports.

Our commitment to working closely with the Statutory Agencies that serve this area remains steadfast, and we continue to be actively involved in all development efforts within Ardoyne and the surrounding areas.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to my fellow Board members, our dedicated Street Reps, our hardworking staff, and our incredible volunteers. Your dedication and efforts over the past year have been nothing short of extraordinary.

As we look ahead, I am excited about the work we will accomplish together on our next 10-year strategic plan.

Marian Kane
Chairperson

House Manager Report



Elaine Burns
House Manager

Key Services and Achievements

The Ardoyne Association remains a vital service for the community in North Belfast. This annual report reflects on the past 12 months of work and programmes delivered, highlighting our commitment to transforming Lives, Maximising Household income and supporting individuals in Crisis or their employment pursuits.

Advice Services

Independent, Professional Advice: We offer high-quality, independent advice to ensure our users receive the correct benefits, enhancing their financial stability.

Universal Credit and Online Benefit Café: Our service helps individuals claim and maintain Universal Credit, providing constant support for vulnerable persons.

Income Maximisation: Our income generated primarily comes from effectively delivering advice services and helping our clients access benefit income. Through our advice service, we have substantially boosted household incomes for many families across our community. We managed a caseload of 2,430 and have brought £6.5 million into the pockets of our clients and the community.

Department for Communities: We are actively involved in the Voluntary and Community Sector Support Programme, contributing to the development of a new independent advice and debt policy framework.

Training & Employment Programmes

Skills Development: We provide formal and informal training to address isolation and loneliness to skill and reskill individuals, aiding their employment prospects.

Educational Support: Our programmes enhance educational journeys, supporting individuals and their families to lift them out of poverty.

Community Programmes

Housing and Environmental Initiatives: We focus on housing needs, community safety, and environmental issues, addressing isolation and loneliness in the community.

Health and Wellbeing: We promote positive physical and mental health through our diverse range of programmes.



Additional Support Programmes

Social Supermarket: Launched in 2024, it supports families in crisis, particularly those transitioning from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

Community Larder: Operating throughout the week, it redistributes food that would otherwise end up in landfill, meeting our environmental objectives and reducing CO2 emissions.

Cost of Living Support

Charity Shop and Uniform Freecycle Shop: Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to manage these initiatives, providing essential support to families facing financial stress.

Holy Communion Project: Launched this year, this project has enabled boys and girls to enjoy their special day despite financial constraints.

Partnership and Collaborations

University of Ulster: We collaborate with a wide range of partners, including those in the advice sector, community sector, local government, universities, and more.

NIHE: Our long-standing partnership with NIHE focuses on addressing housing needs and environmental works.

Conclusion

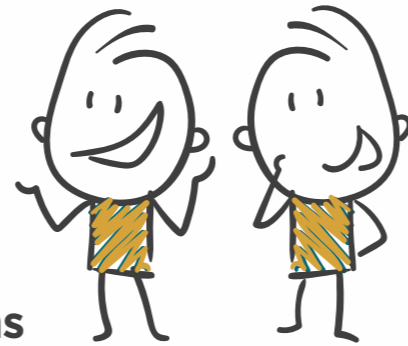
The demand for our services continues to grow, a testament to the dedication and compassion of our incredible staff. We urge the Department to invest more in the sector, ensuring job security and retaining experienced staff within the Advice Sector.

Acknowledgements

We express our gratitude to our funders, Board members, staff team, volunteers, and Street representatives who make the effective delivery of our services possible.



Ardoyne Association Advice Statistics



Cases Opened Last 12 Months

Not Specified	7
Community Care	4
Debt	9
Education	3
Employment	3
Family	1
General	12
Housing	62



Legal	3
Mental Health	3
Miscellaneous	311
Signposting	3
Universal Credit	569
Victims Payment Scheme	1
Warm Well Connected	2
Welfare Rights	1583

Report Total **2576**

Universal Credit and Online Benefit Clinic **supported 471 individuals**

Additional Support Programmes



Uniform Freecycle
425 children supported



Christmas with Dignity
300 children with Toys



Community Larder
Adults 2070 and Children 2184



Social Supermarket
135 Households 291 individuals supported

Ardoyne Association Income Generation

1086
CLIENTS

2430
CASES

2447
COMPLETED

803
WR CLAIMS

WR Summary Sum Financial Cain

£6,466,947.46



Holiday Hunger Programme
Easter Break supported 25 families with Gas, Electric and 55 children received Easter Eggs



Holy Communion Project
10 children with outfits and accessories

Our Charity Shop raised - £2025
this money went towards the **Community Larder**

North Belfast Advice Partnership

As members of NBAP, we collectively work to deliver an effective Advice Service across North Belfast.

Benefit Maximization

£21,132,908

8,688 
Benefit Claims

 194
Housing Claims

35 
Benefit Appeals

Can I talk to anyone about my claim?

Yes... Let's make a plan together

Claim Type	Number of Claims
Benefits	8,688
Housing	194
Consumer	5
Health	0
Employment	16
Money	32
Appeals	35
Tribunals	0
Other Enquiries	340
Housing Benefit	0
Benefit Claims	£21,132,908
Total Enquiries	9,296
Total Clients	4,145
Direct Referrals To Other Support	0
Average Volunteers	0
Benefit Maximization	£21,132,908

North Belfast Advice Debt and Money Management

Total debt was

£227,874

26 
Clients

35 
Cases Files

Total Debt levels Personal Debt - April 23 to March 24

Debts Debt Type	Debts Sum Outstanding Balance	Debts Count Number Debts	Debts Average Outstanding Balance
Bank Loan	£3,553.00	2	£1,776.50
Budgeting Loan	£600.00	1	£600.00
Buy now pay later	£6,043.00	5	£1,208.60
Cable/Satellite TV	£369.00	2	£184.50
Catalogue	£5,908.19	4	£1,477.05
Court Fines Capital	£923.90	4	£230.98
Credit Card	£17,836.16	15	£1,189.08
Credit Union	£7,584.76	1	£7,584.76
Discretionary Support	£426.58	2	£213.29
Door step lender	£1,159.30	2	£579.65
Electricity	£10,127.53	1	£10,127.53
Family & Friends	£4,000.00	1	£4,000.00
Hire purchase or conditional sale	£6,823.00	1	£6,823.00
Housing Benefit Overpayment	£1,917.14	1	£1,917.14
Insurance	£447.11	1	£447.11
Mobile Phone	£2,338.00	5	£467.60
Overdraft	£4,199.00	4	£1,049.75
Parking Penalty Charges	£80.00	1	£80.00
Payday Loans	£412.00	2	£206.00
Personal Loan	£88,542.98	11	£8,049.36
Rent Arrears	£55,515.52	12	£4,626.29
Social Fund	£630.00	1	£630.00
Store Card	£100.00	1	£100.00
Tax Credit Overpayment	£7,000.00	1	£7,000.00
UC Advance	£1,338.55	3	£446.18
Report Total	£227,874.72	84	£2,712.79

Feedback From Our Partner Organisations

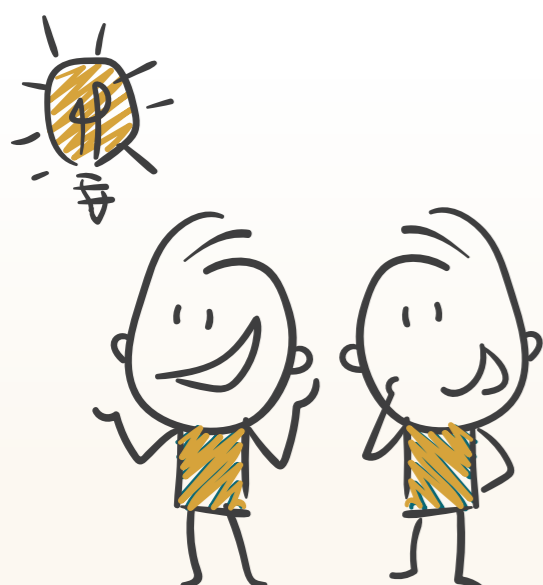


Susie Morrow,
Lead for Social Work Assessed Year in Employment, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

I coordinate a programme of support for newly qualified social work staff in the Belfast Trust. As part of this we consider the impact of wider societal issues on the people we work with.

For the past few years we have asked Elaine to come along and talk about how the Ardayne Association responds to the impact of poverty through the services it provides, and how social workers in statutory teams can work in partnership with the Ardayne Association and similar services, in the best interests of service users.

This is always a very popular session where Elaine brings to life the reality of living with poverty and outlines some of the innovative ways the Association responds to the challenges people face. Newly qualified staff always report that this is one of the most helpful and inspiring sessions in our programme, and we are grateful to Elaine and the Association for continuing to provide this input for us.



Dr Fiona Bloomer,
Course Director, Health and Social Care Policy, Ulster University

The Health and Social Care Policy degree at Ulster University provides in-depth learning on a range of issues impacting health, social care and welfare sectors in our society.

A core commitment to this is ensuring students gain real-world experience to see how theory and policy are implemented in organisations throughout Northern Ireland. We are proud to have a long-established relationship with the Ardayne Association which has provided excellent opportunities for our students to gain this valuable experience.

A six-week placement for second-year students enables them to apply learning from modules on social security, policy for children and families, adult social care and research methods and to complete a project for the organisation as part of this. Students work alongside Ardayne Association staff who are supporting families accessing a range of social security benefits, providing advice on a wide range of issues such as housing, health, employment, debt and practical tasks such as managing the food larder. This experience is invaluable allowing students to understand the issues impacting families and communities and significantly enhances their knowledge of policy implementation, being able to critique government policy and understand the valuable role played by Ardayne Association in supporting the community. The course team are very grateful for the commitment of the organisation to providing placements and hope this relationship will continue to develop.



Dr Esther McGuinness,

Dr Esther McGuinness is Head of School of Law at Ulster University. She is a founding member and Co Director of the Ulster Law Clinic, where she supervises LLM students and practices/advises on all areas of employment law. A qualified mediator, with 20+ years' experience in the employment law field, she is also a founding member of the Social Justice Hub/Foyle Family Justice Centre, which specialises in providing advice and support to survivors of domestic violence and their families.

The School of Law at Ulster University in tandem with the Ulster University Law Clinic has enjoyed a working relationship with the North Belfast Advice Partnership for several years.

Clinical legal education (CLE) is the defining term for a form of education which exposes university students to the practical application of law. The concept of CLE, which first emerged in the United States in the 1960s, was that law students would work on legal simulations in order to apply their legal knowledge to problems across a diverse range of areas from family law to social security. Since then, CLE pedagogy has pushed the boundaries of skills based legal education, and the accompanying narratives around employability and civic engagement, by facilitating the creation of law clinics which are at the forefront of pro bono work and access to justice campaigns.

The overall aim of our engagement with NBAP is to collaborate with the advice team to help provide University students with opportunities to engage in real life learning experiences under the supervision of trained community advisors and legal practitioners, the latter of which are based in the University Law Clinic.

The NBAP provides a unique experience for our students to work closely with supervisors in order to learn how to manage clients in a sensitive and professional way, regardless of circumstance. Critically, the learning opportunities which NBAP provides offers

students an insight into the valuable and relentless work which community organisations face on a daily basis and challenges them to think about future employment opportunities this field of work offers in terms of roles in advice, policy and political lobbying.

In a sense, allowing the Law School to work with NBAP and the wider advice sector, created a degree of succession planning for future roles within the sector, which is critical, particularly when the demands for NBAP's services are higher than ever.

Student engagement with NBAP is premised on students completing an assessed formative reflective learning journal and a research/policy document, in collaboration with the leadership team at NBAP. This provides a 'capstone' learning experience for students and encourages them to consider the valuable contribution which organisations such as NBAP, bring to their local communities.

It also ensures that key policy areas can be highlighted and used by the NBAP team as necessary to inform future objectives. This symbiotic relationship is nurtured by Elaine Burns and the team at NBAP to ensure that students complete their 12 week placement more knowledgeable about socio-legal policy issues impacting communities, more experienced in the field of advice and more empathetic when managing client cases. In facilitating this opportunity, Elaine and her team underpin what real life learning encapsulates.

Feedback From Our Partner Organisations



Una Mc Roberts
Project Manager

Ardoyne Shankill Healthy Living Centre has invited Ardoyne Association on several occasions to provide updated information and advice on benefits. The sessions provide the service users with quality information and support on a wide range of welfare rights benefits and many issues including living on a budget, disability and carers, housing, employment, environment and many other worrying issues that people may be concerned about. The association also give advice on certified training courses that they provide for all age groups.

The group sessions are delivered in a relaxed and enjoyable setting where people feel safe while learning something new and gaining the confidence, knowledge and the skills to take charge of their own matters.

We at ASHP would like to thank the staff of Ardoyne Association for their commitment and dedication to the project in providing this service which we hope to expand further and hopefully continue the much needed partnership into the future.



Steph O'Rourke
Deputy Director

The service provided by Ardoyne Association has had a major positive impact on the lives of the young people we work with in Springboard.

Providing an in-house worker has removed so many barriers for young people who are experiencing disadvantage allowing them to access the right benefit supports, gain advice and overcome challenges they were facing.

We are so grateful to the team at Ardoyne Association who provide a highly supportive, professional and needs-led service.'



Paul McCusker
Project Manager

Peoples Kitchen Belfast is a service that provides support to those experiencing homelessness and poverty, we are continuing to see a rise in the amount of individuals and families who present to our services and often in crisis. Our role is to help them through the crisis and assisting them out of the situation they find themselves in. Our partnership with the Ardoyne Association is crucial as it allows the individual the opportunity to seek advice on their benefits and housing related issues and help them recover from the crisis that they are experiencing, partnerships are vitally important in responding to the needs of those in the community who experience homelessness and poverty.

Sustaining Tenancies Programme



This program has now concluded, during its 2 year operation, it successfully helped tenants sustain their tenancies by maximising household income, promoting healthier lifestyles, and addressing mental health and social isolation.

We are proud of the positive impact it had on our community and will continue to build on its successes in future initiatives.

The Advice Worker managed a caseload of	538
Total Number of Beneficiaries supported	730
Income Generated £1.7M	

Programmes	
Money Management Programme 100 individuals completed.	Reel Cardio 30 individuals.
Eat for the Seasons 100 families.	Boxercise 30 individuals.
Walk and Talk 80 Adults and 61 children.	Dance Club (Older Tenants) 30 individuals.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way to measure the value of things that don't usually show up in financial reports, like the positive impact on people, the community, and the environment. It's a method used to put a number on the social benefits that an organization or project brings. SROI helps organizations, whether they're public, private, or voluntary, to show and enhance the good they do for society, the environment, and the economy, making it easier to share these benefits with others.

Sustainable Development Goals	
3. Sustainable Development Goals	£29,070.00
4. Quality Education	£12,802.20
8. Decent Work & Economic Growth	£6,902.70
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	£24,384.75
Total	£73,159.65

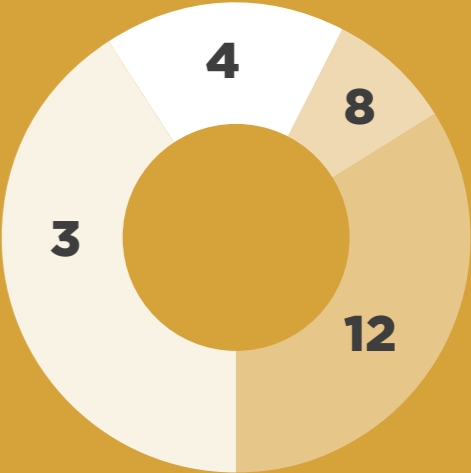
£3.93 per £1

Every £1.00 spent on this program had a return of £3.93

Net Present Value:
£52,685.65

 Some Feedback and Comments on the Sustaining Tenancies Programme

- "Very good and informative, a lot to take in."
- "Learnt quite a few money saving tips."
- "The Advice and Benefit Support given really changed my life and my families."
- "Really enjoyable and met new people."
- "Receiving the Food Vouchers was a wonderful support to me and my family."
- "Love the Fitbit, getting my 10000 steps in daily."



Urban Villages Connected Futures

At the end of another successful training year, we reflect on the progress made, as well as preparing for our future direction without Urban Villages as we have now reached the end of the 3-year contract. I would like to reflect on how we developed our role in the Urban Village Connected Futures.

A key element of the success of the Urban Villages Connected Futures Programme has been the respectful, collaborative and sustainable partnerships that have been developed with community-based organisations, who are working on the front line of communities, empowering and encouraging them to willingly work together, to fulfil the communities needs and goals. Grassroots engagement is crucial (and will always be) and involves a great deal of time and talking.

Many participants on our training cite lack of qualifications and skills, poverty and educational disadvantage as factors contribute to contested space within communities. Through the Connected Futures programme we have been tackling these disadvantages and providing safe, secure places for people to train in and provide the building blocks to employability.

We offered people hope that their lives can get better, even if they'd given up on formal education. Encouraging, supporting, and empowering people to choose a pathway to recovery, and finally people get a new goal or vision for themselves and their families. The pathways cover the whole person, their mental health as well as their economic and social

welfare. We begin with their lived experience; we add theory to that experience and prepare them for working outside the home. So, a benefit check can be as important as a skills development, and finding a safe place to live can be as valuable as finding a job. As more people got local jobs from the training and a confidence and hope manifested itself.

In our final year with Urban Villages, we celebrated the following: 21 people completed a three-hour introduction training in ADHD with Belfast Met. 17 completed the 5 week OCN level 2 ADHD Participants came from diverse areas across North Belfast, majority (56%) this time came from the PUL communities of Ballygomartin, Ballysillan, and Shankill.

Participants reaction who attended the training "very well delivered, informative session, learnt a lot", "Amazing class, very good company, can't wait for the next class" "Tutor friendly and helpful" "really enjoyed the training, very interesting" "I've learnt a lot, which I can adopt to real life" 76% said they met someone new at the training. 94% felt that the facilities were a safe place to learn in. 88% would recommend the training to a friend. 100% benefited from taking part.

74 74 people completed the Introduction to ADHD, Autism and STL (Classroom assistant training) with Belfast Met. 19 then completed the Level 2 Managing Challenging Behaviours training with Belfast Met. This training will qualify people to seek employment as classroom assistants.

15 15 people completed Level 2 Food & Hygiene training with Workforce, this is essential for working with the community Food Larder.

17 17 people completed their First Aid Certificate training, which is certified for the next 3 years. This was conducted in partnership with the Ballysillan Community Forum.

38 38 people attended craft workshops and our Office community garden. 13 people spent six weeks learning new skills in Irish and Guitar. We are also supporting another 2 participants completing Open University Access training.

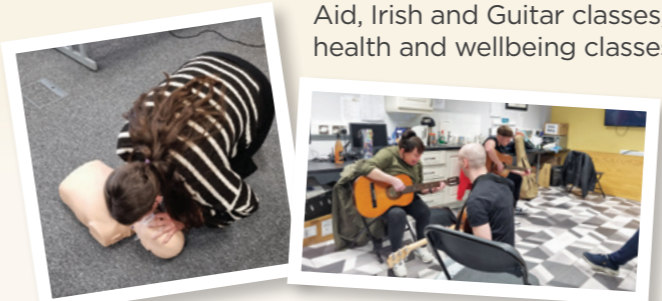
13 13 participants have attended OCN Level 3 Certificate in Generalist Advice training which was delivered by the Law Centre. This training qualifies participants to seek employment as advice workers. The participants come from a wide area of North Belfast including NBAP Advice Centres. To date 8 have been employed within the sector.

To celebrate the training success, a Graduation ceremony was held at the Lansdowne Hotel, on the Antrim Road, which was attended by Funders, Tutors, Political Representatives, Trainees as well as the Ardoyne Associations Board members and Staff.



32 32 completed the Driving Theory Test preparations, 28% have so far passed the driving theory test. 100% felt this was a safe place to train in. 86% benefited from taking part in the training. 40% said they met someone new.

17 This year we ran more than 17 training programmes with over 466 participants. Including Driving Theory test preparation, Family First Aid, Irish and Guitar classes, mental health and wellbeing classes.



One of our trainees Lynsey wrote...

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone at the Ardoyne Association, especially the Training and Community Contact Team. You truly are an outstanding group. Since that rainy morning in January when I first arrived, I've felt so welcomed and supported.

Though I didn't have to walk far thanks to the Training Officer coming to personally collect me, I'm so glad I decided to step through your doors. I first heard about the "Intro to ADHD" course and the five-week NVQ Level 2 in ADHD from a relative who shared the information with me. Even though I had never been inside your welcoming yellow building before, I jumped at the chance to join.

I'm so glad I did because not only did I meet some truly wonderful people, but I also earned an NVQ Level 2 Qualification in ADHD. I wasn't sure if I still had the mental capacity for studying, especially after having kids and becoming a bit forgetful. However, the patience and encouragement I received from the staff made all the difference. I'm eternally grateful for the boost of confidence this experience gave me.

I also appreciate the help I received with emails, phone calls, texts, and printing documents. Your support made everything so much easier for me.

One of the most memorable classes I attended was a CPR course. The instructor had such a vibrant personality and shared so many interesting life stories that I couldn't help but feel more comfortable, even when I was nervous about some of the topics. Their reassurance and patience were truly appreciated.

Another course I attended was on Money Management, which was both informative and enjoyable. It was a short session, but I walked away with some practical tools, including a notepad, a piggy bank, and even a voucher, which was a lovely surprise!

I'm excited to see what the rest of 2024 and 2025 hold for me at the Ardoyne Association. You can be sure that this isn't the last you'll see of me!

From the bottom of my heart,
thank you all so much!

Lynsey

Community Contact & Engagement

During this period, we've had two Community Contact & Engagement workers in post. Community engagement involves building positive relationships, implementing clear lines of communication, community safety, crime prevention, housing and environmental issues and to report on safer neighbourhood initiatives.



6 An Estate Inspection was carried out in February 2024, Street Reps together with a range of agencies we spent time walking around the area highlighting issues and areas of concern.

6 Housing and Environmental meetings, hosted and chaired by the Association addressing the outcomes of the Estate Inspection and other Housing or Environmental concerns that maybe raised.

6 6 meetings held to deal with ASB.

40 Street Reps reported ASB e.g. drug dealing in alleys.

20 20 supported through crime prevention initiatives.

80 80 Street Reps were invited to workshops to upskill and update them on their roles and responsibilities.

70 70 adults consulted on issues e.g. rise in rat infestation, dog fouling, drug abuse.

70 70 Street Reps - Explored race issues with people from different community backgrounds.

The positive outcome of this is there has been an increase in engagement from ethnic minorities coming to Ardoyne Association for a range of support and services.

A Training Needs Analysis was conducted with Street Reps/Volunteers to ascertain what educational/training interests the community may have. This then influenced our educational/training calendar.

Street Reps and individual residents have brought their environmental concerns to our office.

1. Abandoned cars.
2. Abandoned properties.
3. Unkempt gardens with overgrown shrubbery/trees/rubbish - causing neighbour disputes.
4. Sewage overflow.
5. Broken/missing manholes.
6. Residents reporting witnessing drug use/evidence of drug paraphernalia in residential area.
7. Housing issues regarding mould/infestations/repair maintenance/loose or broken chimneys.
8. Residents reporting ASB among youth in Ardoyne Avenue/Galgani Crescent/Flax Street/Cliftonpark Avenue. Collaboration with BCC/youth groups/PSNI/Clanmil/NB Housing and Housing Executive.

9. Missing bollards encouraging vehicles to drive through pedestrian areas.
10. Home Energy Saving Schemes/Boiler replacements/Cavity wall insulation.
11. Traffic calming/signage.
12. Increase in traffic in built up areas after Peace Gate opened.
13. Residents' issues with new builds' lack of boundary gates/fences.
14. Large, gated Electricity Boxes with surrounding area overgrown and becoming a fly tipping point and ASB/burning pallets and rubbish.

Our Community Contact workers engaged in various training from Asylum/Refugee Training and Housing Rights Training boosting their ability to understand some of the issues faced by ethnic minority families.

Case Study

The initial referral was from the Housing Executive who had received concerns from neighbours about an increase in rats in and around their homes.

An elderly lady who lived alone was suffering from frequent ASB from youths throwing eggs and bottles at her property, which was singled out as the blame of the increase in vermin because she was struggling to maintain her property. After the first home visit, it became apparent that there were issues of hoarding and an inability to resolve this issue because of frailty.

The Community Contact worker spent time building rapport and trust with the resident who then agreed to avail of having a benefit check from Ardoyne Association and additional referrals made for further support. The Community Contact worker then developed communication pathways between a range of agencies to provide the overall support required for this lady.



STOCK PHOTOS



78 78 Street Reps delivered leaflets and posters for dog fouling and recycling.

This has been successful as many residents are calling into the office requesting "poo bags".eted the Level 2 Managing Challenging Behaviours training with Belfast Met. This training will qualify people to seek employment as classroom assistants.

A new litter bin has also been installed at Etna Drive to support and encourage residents, including dog-walkers, to avail themselves of it. 70 people have collected "poo bags"

50 50 families took part in our community walk and talk.

The event was very successful, residents received information about local resources and services.'New to the area families' stated it was particularly useful to them to learn about the support available within the area.

100% found that the event improved their knowledge of the work and services within the area. 67% met new people from the community. 95% of the people found the time meaningful.

ABC Hub Phase 2



The Ardoyne Association's Collaborative Efforts in North Belfast Community Development. The Ardoyne Association is proud to continue its collaborative efforts with the ABC Trust on the second phase of the Health and Leisure Hub for the North Belfast community. It has been a pleasure to provide administrative and financial support for this significant project, ensuring its smooth progression and success.

New Housing Development at the Flax Centre Site

In addition to the Health and Leisure Hub, the Ardoyne Association is working alongside a Developer to plan 45 new housing units on the current Flax Centre site. This development aims to address the housing needs of the community by providing modern and affordable housing solutions.

Creation of a New Shopping Area at the Old St. Gemma's School Site

The Ardoyne Association has also been engaged in supporting the Developer in creating a new shopping area on the site of the old St. Gemma's School. This project is expected to enhance the local economy and provide residents with improved access to retail services.

Community Engagement and Representation

Actively engaging with all housing associations, the Ardoyne Association represents the community on various fora. These engagements focus on addressing the community's needs and ensuring effective service delivery by all agencies involved in servicing the North Belfast community.

Through these initiatives, the Ardoyne Association continues to demonstrate its commitment to the development and well-being of the North Belfast community.



Finance Report 2024

Ardoyne Association

Independent Examiner's Report to the Members of charitable company

Ardoyne Association

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended on pages 6 – 11.

31/03/24, which are set out

Respective responsibilities of Directors and examiner

As the charity trustees (and also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law, and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Derek Browne ACMA
Insight Business Services

53 Bernice Road
Newtownabbey, BT36 4QZ

Minutes of AGM 2023

Thursday 28th September 2023

Venue: Ardoyne Community Centre



Opening Blessing

Fr Myles Ardoyne Associations Honorary President open the proceedings with a Blessing on the work of the 12 months and praying for Gods continued blessings on the Associations growth and commitment going forward.

Welcome Address

The Chair Marian Kane welcomed and thanked those present for attending. The Chair gave an overview of the work during 2022/2023. As always, we've had a very busy time since our last AGM. The theme of this year AGM is 'The Importance of Independent Advice - To meet local need', and the board and I are extremely proud of all the team at Ardoyne Association as they put local need, upfront and centre, and at the heart of our service.

We have witnessed significant changes over the last few years, with the introduction of Welfare Reform and Social Security Changes in 2016, the team have support people moving from DLA to PIP, the introduction of Universal Credit and changes to social fund. Ardoyne Association Advice team has played a key role in supporting local people through changes and in accessing new entitlements and support.

In March 2020, with the COVID19 Pandemic, the team, moved quickly to design and deliver a huge COVID Response and Recovery Project, ensuring local people were supported through lockdown, making sure no one was left behind in our community, keeping the doors open and continuing to provide advice and help.

And From COVID19, straight into a Cost-of-Living Crisis, the Association has once again, responded with a huge response, delivering Fuel and Energy Scheme, Christmas Support to families, School Uniform Shop, the Food Larder but more importantly providing people with advice on long term solutions, benefit checks, income maximisations and budgeting.

As we prepare for the next challenge, Moving to Universal Credit for people on Legacy Benefits starting next month for tax credit claimants, the team have already put in place a range of support services such as the UC Café in partnership with University of Ulster Law Students. Also providing local people with a range of Employment and training programmes and work with our local Jobs and Benefits Office, building relationships that will ensure seamless services to people and address their needs and concerns.

Behind the scenes the team at Ardoyne Association has gone from strength to strength, securing funding from the Big Lottery and NIHE Sustaining Tenancies, as well as continued support from our long-term funding partners DfC and Council, we have built a service to ensure we can serve this community and drive change to improve the quality of lives of people living here.

Secretary Report and Launch of Annual Report

Elaine gave those present time to read over the minutes of the 2022 AGM. It was agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the previous AGM, and they were proposed by Sinead McKinley and seconded by Claire Kelly. Minutes were signed off by the Chairperson Marian Kane.

Elections

Two Board Members Sinead Mc Kinley and Carmel Holly were stepping down. The chairperson thanked them both for their service to the Association. The AGM was opened for nominations from the floor.

Gemma Mulholland nominated by Niamh Burns and seconded by Alisha Varndell

Tammy Lee Burns nominated by Claire Kelly and seconded by Doloras Murphy

Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick nominated by Sinead Mc Kinley and seconded by Emma McMeekin

Orla Mc Callin nominated by Sinead Mc Kinley and seconded by Ursula Short

Elaine congratulated the four new board members.

Finance Report

Derek Browne the Association's Accountant gave a comprehensive review of our accounts and supplied copies of the accounts for people to read. His examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. The Association's bank balance is healthy with positive net assets. Derek thanked Claire for keeping excellent financial records. Chairperson signed off on the accounts.

Patricia Mulligan

Independent advice agencies provide services in every community in every locality in Northern Ireland. Access to advice supports people to receive the benefits they are entitled to or resolve problems before they escalate. Timely debt advice, for example, enables people to alleviate their money problems and take charge of their financial future.

The independent advice sector plays a fundamental role in tackling poverty in NI: the service underpins all other work including community, health, education and economic / social wellbeing. Providing advice and information at the right time for people who need it, in a range of formats and through a range of channels, with benefit entitlement checks, income maximisation, debt advice, tribunal representation, housing and immigration advice (with access to interpretation services as required), allows people to then go on and fully engage and participate in society. But the experience of poverty is about more than this. Access to independent advice should be enshrined within the Anti-Poverty Strategy, it has been an essential service for communities and a lifeline for so many. Therefore, we believe that the strategic outcomes should include a further outcome to ensure independent advice is easily accessible to everyone. We propose the following Additional Outcome: The right to access independent, free, quality, confidential advice and information, that will provide people with access to a range of welfare support including social security benefits, debt, housing, immigration advice and tribunal representation. This provision should be made widely available across all council areas, with increased provision within areas of high deprivation, and including specialist help for specific social groups and for specific issues as required.

Nuala McKenna Voluntary & Community Division of DFC

Elaine introduced and welcomed Nuala McKenna of the Voluntary & Community Division of DFC and invited her to speak and give the AGM an update on Advice / Anti-poverty Strategy especially now in this 'Cost-of- Living' crisis.

Nuala introduced her role as lead for advice provision within the 'Financial inclusion Team' for DFC who provides funding through local councils for the provision of independent, community-based advice services, including representation for social security appeals and debt. She was aware of how vital the independent advice sector is to the communities in which they serve, and the difference the work of the Ardoyne Association makes to people's lives and the impact it makes within the local community.

The Department is currently undertaking a refresh of the overall policy framework for our support to the Community & Voluntary Sector. The Department is currently engaging with stakeholders, Councils,

regional and sub-regional advice services to consider how best to support advice provision in each Council area. This engagement is important to ensure all voices are heard.

Nuala concluded her presentation by presenting OCN Level 2 Certificates to several participants in our benefit training programme.

Flax Centre Redevelopment & Development of ABC Hub

Elaine gave a brief update on the ongoing developments on behalf of ABC Trust and the Developer, ABC Hub phase 1 is now complete, with newly built Construction Academy and the new Sports Hall currently the temporary home for the Irish Dancer and the Boxing Club. The redevelopment of the Flax Centre will see the development of 45 Housing Units, addressing high levels of housing stress in North Belfast.

Elaine also spoke about the ongoing campaign to protect GP services within Ardoyne area which is vital to local infrastructure and economy.

Q & A

A discussion around progress on the opening of the Flax Street Gates took place. DOJ have indicated that the new gates will be operational for the opening of the Brookfield Mill development and the moving in of 70 new families. Discussion took place on the possible location for the new GP Services.

Launch of Lottery Funded 5-year Programme

Seamus McKenna sent apologies for not being able to attend the AGM to Launch the new 5-year lottery Funded programme with the Ardoyne Association. Elaine spoke of how important this funding was to help the Association.

■ Sustaining our services.

■ Launch our UC and Benefits Clinic in partnership with UU LLB students.

■ Extend our opening hours.

■ The posts include 2 new full time advice workers and a full-time development officer.

AOB

No other business was discussed

Closing Remarks

The Chairperson Marian Kane thanked the Lottery for their funding and looked forwarding to their partnership with the Ardoyne Association, she also thanked Derek (accountant), our guest speakers from DFC, and Elaine and her team for all their work and commitment to the Association. Finally, she thanked all those who attended and contributed to the AGM and those who received their certificates and welcomed them to volunteer with Association.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS.

We couldn't do the our
work without their help



**Housing
Executive**



Project supported by the PHA





FAREWELL SINEAD

NBAP CO ORDINATOR

Earlier this year, we bid farewell to Sinead McKinley, the Coordinator of the North Belfast Advice Partnership (NBAP). Sinead's unwavering dedication to ensuring clients could access social justice and navigate the often-complex benefits system was truly remarkable. Her commitment to training advice staff played a crucial role in delivering essential services to the people of North Belfast.

Sinead will be greatly missed, but we are thrilled to wish her the very best of luck as she embarks on a new journey, managing her own advice service. The Ardoyne Association extends heartfelt thanks for her invaluable contributions as a Board Member.

BOARD MEMBERS 2023/24

Marian Kane - *Chairperson*

Una Mc Roberts - *Secretary*

Marie Coleman - *Treasurer*

Joe Blair

Marie O'Neill

Dr Ciara Fitzpatrick

Tammi Lee Stewart

Gemma Mulholland

Orla McCallin

STAFF MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

Elaine Burns
*Centre Manager and
Advice Worker*

Laura Ward
Advice Worker

Niamh Burns
Advice Worker

Kevin McGarry
*Training and Community
Development Co Ordinator*

Claire Kelly
*Finance Officer and
Advice Worker*

Catherine Ferrin
*Community Contact &
Engagement Worker*

Deirbhile Johnston
*Community Contact &
Engagement*

Maeve Murphy
Advice Volunteer

Alisha Varndell
Community Larder Volunteer

Jennifer McGlinchey
Community Larder Volunteer

Shauna Gargan
Advice Worker

Emma Mc Meekin
Advice Worker

Rebecca Mc Allister
Reception Volunteer

Ardoyne Association

111 Etna Drive

Belfast

BT14 7NN

T: (028) 9071 5165

