

Relatives for Justice Centre
(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)
TRUSTEES' AND OTHER INFORMATION

Trustees	Seana Quinn (Appointed 6 December 2024) John Magee Patricia Kelly Carmel Quinn Roisin McKenna Bill Rolston Claire Anne Hackett Niall Murphy
Company Secretary	Mark Thompson
Charity Number in Northern Ireland	NIC101311
Company Registration Number	NI044611
Registered Office and Principal Address	39 Glen Road Belfast BT11 8BB United Kingdom
Auditors	Quarter Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors St Anne's House 15 Church Street Cathedral Quarter Belfast BT1 1PG
Principal Bankers	Bank of Ireland 202 Andersonstown Road Belfast Co. Antrim BT11 9EB
Solicitors	Worthingtons Solicitors 24-38 Gordon Street Belfast BT1 2LG

Relatives for Justice Centre

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TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Trustees' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Trustees' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the trustees of Relatives for Justice Centre present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 31 March 2024.

The charity is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP effective January 2015).

Mission, Objectives and Strategy

Mission Statement

The charity works to achieve;

- Building and providing access to safe, integrated and professional services and programmes of support for the bereaved and injured of the conflict
- Contributing to the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors
- Realising empowerment through building skills, confidence and self-awareness
- Encouraging the bereaved and injured to realise their role in peace building and processes designed to deal with the past
- Investing in Relatives for Justice through training and sustainable partnerships

Relatives for Justice is non-governmental organisation for the advancement of education, for the relief of persons bereaved or injured as a result of the conflict (from 1968 onwards) in Ireland (the area of benefit), and for the preservation and protection of health of such persons and other inhabitants of local communities which have been among the worst affected by the conflict by the following means:

(a) Fostering an atmosphere of mutual support and encouragement among people suffering the effects of bereavement, injury or trauma as a direct or indirect result of the conflict in Ireland, and their relatives, and people in communities affected;

(b) Alleviating the suffering and trauma by the provision of a community based Drop-In Centre or centres offering emotional support and counselling services to individuals in need;

(c) Raising public awareness of the effects of the conflict in Ireland on individuals and communities;

(d) The provision of facilities in the interest of social welfare for education, recreation and other leisure time occupation of people who are in need as a result of their youth, social and economic circumstances, disability or infirmity so that their conditions of life may be improved.

Objectives

The charity's objects and principal activities, to further the charity's purposes for the public benefit, are to:

1. To provide a safe space for RFJ members to meet together to address their experiences and to support the recovery of health and well-being.

RFJ has adopted a model of hybrid delivery to include physical spaces in our offices and outreach centres plus significant delivery of online therapeutic support, classes and courses.

2. To provide individual, family and group support for the RFJ membership, which includes providing information, education and training, self-help support and counselling, welfare and legal advice and advocacy. Where appropriate RFJ will work in partnership with other organisations.

In this period RFJ delivered on average: 109 sessions of face to face and online counselling and psychotherapy to clients across the island of Ireland, Britain, the United States, Europe and Australia per week.
65 hours of social support and classes were delivered per week.

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115 hours of complementary therapies per week.

39 hours of one to one welfare, housing and benefits advice per week..

195 hours of one to one advice on the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme was provided on average each week.

176 hours of legacy advice, legal support and advocacy support was provided each week to persons seeking truth, justice and accountability.

Family reports were published and public events were held across the region on the ongoing arena of legacy and the challenges faced as a result of the introduction of the Legacy Bill.

3. To support the bereaved and injured to tell their story and document their experiences.

In this period 1008 individuals were supported in engaging official investigation processes and informal truth recovery processes. Family reports continued to be developed and published.

A photography project recording the unique experience of mothers bereaved by conflict was also undertaken.

A project supporting 98 families whose loved ones were in the GAA progressed during this period with families from across the community, and affected by all actors to the conflict involved in recording their experience as Gaels of conflict related loss. This is the first time all of these differing experiences have been brought together in one repository.

4. To build awareness and foster understanding of the specific experiences of the RFJ membership and in doing so contribute to the search for truth, highlight the injustices and contribute to a culture of human rights.

During the reported period RFJ continued to develop the website as a resource for holding all legal submissions, public reports and press statements. RFJ also engaged in meetings with the Northern Ireland Office, Irish Dept of Foreign Affairs, the Irish Oireachtas Committee on the Good Friday Agreement, United States Congress, the Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission, the Police Ombudsman, the Policing Board, the PSNI LIB, various NGOs and academics, conferences and other submissions and consultations. These engagements were with the sole purpose of raising the experience of members, highlighting violations, areas of outstanding remedy and seeking resolution.

5. Assist families engaging with relevant legal professionals, and government bodies and through the advocacy of cases going through domestic and international courts.

RFJ employs five caseworkers who support families engaging in all of these arenas. With full time workers specialising in submission, support with the courts, legal advice and representation in all areas of the north this is now a fully operational support programme delivering to individuals bereaved and those physically and psychologically harmed. As the deadline for the legacy court actions and inquests loomed this work was of particular intensity and importance.

6. To build links with international human rights NGOs and the UN in bringing to their attention many of the circumstances surrounding incidents in which people have been injured and killed.

During the reported period RFJ made submissions in writing to the European Court of Human Rights, the US Congress, the United Nations Committee against Torture, the UN Cttee on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Committee on Social Economic and Cultural Rights. This ongoing engagement has developed into provision of regular reports, updates and memos with strong links and relationships now a part of the operational fulfilment of this objective.

Strategy

Relatives for Justice is an accredited member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. We provide counselling and psychotherapy and pathways of referral where appropriate to statutory mental health providers. All counsellors and psychotherapists are fully accredited and supervised. RFJ is a permanent Board member of the Regional Trauma Network. Health and Wellbeing Caseworkers are registered with the NI Social Care Council.

RFJ also provides complementary therapies and training in complementary therapies registered with the International Federation of Holistic Therapists.

RFJ is a member of the Law Centre and provides an advice service on applications for benefits and for individual schemes of assistance available from the Victims and Survivors Service and the Payments Scheme for the Permanently Disabled.

RFJ provides research advice to families seeking information on the circumstances of the deaths and injuries of their loved ones - this includes research services using public records and available contemporaneous materials. RFJ provides advice and support to those engaging with historic investigation mechanisms such as inquests, PSNI

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investigations and Police Ombudsman Investigations.

RFJ also provides drop-in services of safety and we provide vocational and non-vocational classes such as painting, quilting, pottery, creative writing, flower arranging. These are all designed to support the expression of traumatic experience in a safe and managed environment. RFJ also support families and individuals to safely record their experience of trauma through writing, painting, quilting and other creative art forms.

Partnerships with other NGOs and with academic institutions remains a key area of strategic importance for RFJ and this year was no different with projects involving Committee on the Administration of Justice, the Pat Finucane Centre, Amnesty International, Queens University Belfast, Edgehill University, University of Minnesota, and University of Ulster.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, which was incorporated on 6 November 2002. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

The charity has been registered as a charity with HM Revenue and Customs and Charity Commission of Northern Ireland.

The organisation is governed by the Board of Trustees, elected as part of the Annual General Meeting. The composition of the board allows for people with a direct experience of conflict related bereavement and injury, the primary function of the organisation being to provide support services to same.

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic management and governance control of the charity. The trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits. The Board of Trustees meet on a regular basis in order to review a range of business matters including governance, organisation objectives, strategic direction, best practice, funding and a range of other ongoing relevant issues.

Governance

An AGM was held in January 2024, where the 22/23 audited accounts were discussed, the annual report presented and the Board of Directors elected. The Board of Directors met bi-monthly to ensure good governance and oversight of the organisation. Sub-committees of the Board of Directors also met to support good governance, financial, and human resources matters.

The Board of Directors also undertook training in Officers obligations, Trustee reporting, employment law, Company Directors training and trauma training.

Management

Mr Mark Thompson is the CEO of Relatives for Justice Centre and has been delegated the responsibility for the strategic development and daily management of the charity. The Trustees are responsible for setting the remuneration package for key management personnel and this is based on level of funding available, current annual remuneration and any other information the trustees have available at the time of the review.

Ms Andree Murphy is also key management personnel, who has day to day responsibility for operational and financial management noting that overall legal financial responsibility rests with the Board of trustees.

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance

The principal area of charitable activity is the provision of counselling, therapy and group support.

These are mainly run from 3 offices in Belfast and Dungannon and 5 regional outreach centres, with additional support workers based across the North of Ireland.

In the past twelve months a range of achievements have indicated that the organisational performance is healthy and fulfilling its overall aims and objectives, and thus the needs of families and individuals it supports.

These include;

Legal & Advocacy

Families have been affected by the introduction of the Legacy Troubles and Reconciliation Bill, and have in the context of the ending of investigations been supported by RFJ to understand the implications of the Legacy Act for the pursuit of human rights compliant remedy for violations. This time of uncertainty and change has been deeply distressing for all families.

Additionally, RFJ has made numerous submissions to domestic policy makers and international human rights bodies on outstanding violations and need for remedy and particularly on the question of legacy.

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Health and Wellbeing

RFJ has consolidated its support programmes under one umbrella of health and wellbeing support. Social Support, Complementary therapies, Counselling and psychotherapy and health and wellbeing support are now all managed and delivered with a strategic joined up approach. All health and wellbeing workers are registered with the NI Social Care Council.

All social support is now governed by clinical approaches to peer support with groups engaged in accredited and non-accredited classes, courses and activities, practical therapeutic support in terms of stress, anxiety, healthy living, diet, dependency on prescribed medication, and other complementary therapy clinics delivering a range of positive interventions and empowerment. Safeguarding has been at the heart of this development and staff training and policy development has been a key arm of delivery this year. The organisation invested in technological devices and software to ensure the highest standards of delivery.

This Financial year was marked by one of growth as new staff made an impact in the range and depth of service provision.

Staff training and organizational development is a strategic priority with the development of staff reflective practice, compassion fatigue training, an expansion of external supervision and investment in staff training plans.

Relatives for Justice continues to develop in professional expertise as an accredited centre with the BACP and is a key strategic voice in the Victims Sector regarding the provision of mental health services. RFJ is a Board member of the Regional Trauma Network and sits on the Strategic Implementation Group for the TPDPS as a community representative to the cross-departmental implementation body.

Relatives for Justice commitment to professional development is indicated by its continued investment this year in professional data security systems and monitoring and evaluation systems including Salesforce, Mymops and Corenet. Annual GDPR reviews now take place to supplement good practice.

The introduction of plans to introduce an amnesty as a package of inadequate non human rights compliant measures to dealing with the past impacted negatively on the wellbeing of Relatives for Justice client base and there is a marked increase in demand for family reports in the absence of formal processes, counselling and therapeutic services in the absence of measures of resolution. The decision by the Irish government to take an unprecedented InterState case gave hope to families and was a welcome development amidst a very bleak time for their rights. The organisation found itself engaged in one to one and group explanation of the implications of all of these developments and dealing with heightened symptoms of mental ill health directly caused by this legislation.

The impact of the cost of living crisis and the housing crisis created additional welfare and benefit needs which also created additional strains on the organisation. With victims and survivors of the conflict also being disproportionately economically adversely affected by their experience of conflict harm, the impact of the cost of living crisis created an additional strain on our welfare advice services and on the members of Relatives for Justice.

Partnerships with other NGOs and with academic institutions remains a key area of strategic importance for RFJ.

The victims payment scheme for the injured continues to create exceptionally high demand for services. While this is welcome in expanding the client base to include victims of physical and psychological injury there is worry about in built discriminations affecting women, the bereaved and persons with convictions, and victims of sexual violence. This meant a significant increase in referrals for counselling and welfare support. The organisation's decision to dedicate the RFJ offices in Ardoyne for the purposes of delivery of support for persons applying to the scheme was well made, with demand already placing strain on the capacity of that relatively small office space. The organisation's administration and governance systems were leaned on heavily as waiting lists and care demands continued to grow.

Financial Review

The charity performed in line with expectation in year ended 31 March 2024.

Income

The principal source of funding during the financial year was that of grant funding which accounts for £1,288,724 of £1,354,010 income. Relatives for Justice Centre is indebted to the continued support of these funding bodies and all it's donors to enable it to carry out its objectives and activities. The major funders in the 2023/24 financial year included Victim & Survivors Service (VSS) (£798,739), Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (£50,000), GAP Funding (£180,181) and TPDPS programme (£259,804). Without this funding Relatives for Justice Centre would not be able to continue to provide its services.

Expenditure

During the financial year £1,318,339 (2023: £1,234,068) was spent on the carrying out it's activities, reflecting an increase of £84,271 on 2023.

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Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of £242,165 (2023 - £324,158) and liabilities of £35,700 (2023 - £153,364). The net assets of the charity have increased by £35,671.

Reserves Position and Policy

At 31 March 2024 the company had net assets of £206,465. This was made up of restricted funds totalling £196,178. The charity also had unrestricted reserves totalling £10,287. It was noted the charities position has benefited during year ended 31 March 2024.

The charity recognises the requirement to hold limited reserves to ensure it can meet any shortfall in funding, however, due to the nature of the charity and its reliance on funding from grant making bodies it has not been able to meet the preferred level of reserves, which the trustees believe should be 3 months expenditure levels. For year ended 31 March 2024 the preferred level of reserves is £329,585. The trustees will look to build its reserves back over future years through the voluntary donations.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

While these were positive elements the work of Relatives for Justice was challenged by the lack of implementation of the mechanisms to deal with the legacy of the past the unilateral introduction of a human rights incompatible Legacy Bill.

The hiatus on dealing with the past impacted negatively on the wellbeing of Relatives for Justice client base and there is a marked increase in demand for counselling and therapeutic services in the absence of measures of resolution.

The impact of the cost of living crisis and the introduction of welfare and benefit changes also created additional strains on the organisation. With victims and survivors of the conflict also being disproportionately economically adversely affected by their experience of conflict harm, the introduction of these changes has created an additional strain on our welfare advice services and on the members of Relatives for Justice.

The high demand for support for the permanent disablement payment scheme for the injured increased staffing in RFJ with additional staff being recruited to support individuals access the scheme. There are risks regarding the expectation of the membership and access to the scheme. Bereaved persons not present at the scene of killings are excluded, irrelevant of whether they have psychological injury as a result. Persons with convictions will be treated differently and may not be eligible. Persons who suffered so called punishment attacks are also excluded. As many persons supported by RFJ will meet those criteria there is a risk of unmet demand and increased support needs.

There is a significant issue regarding the premises in which RFJ is housing its main office. There is a lack of space for staff, with no dedicated recreation/eating area. Staff, especially sessional staff have no breakout area which is impacting on the wellbeing of staff.

There is limited space for meeting the increasing demand for counselling and complementary therapies. This is a risk as demand for services increase and there is a realistic expectation that demand for services will increase.

There is no dedicated advice space. RFJ is regularly seeking meeting space outside of the premises. This is not suitable in line with the objective of creating safe space.

The charity recognises that the key risk affecting it is the loss any key funder, which could seriously restrict its ability to meet its objectives. The charity has responded to this by maintaining a good relationship with their funders and ensuring they provide a high-quality service to further the aims of the charity and ensure it meets the objectives of the funders.

Plans for Future Periods

The board anticipate that in the short term they will continue to provide the support and legal advocacy in a similar manner, with the continued support from its key funders.

New staff will be employed to meet the needs of supporting persons applying to the payment scheme for the injured.

Reference and Administrative details

The charities administrative details are included within Trustees' and Other Information located in page 3 of the financial statements.

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Trustees

The trustees who served throughout the financial year, except as noted, were as follows:

Seana Quinn (Appointed 6 December 2024)
John Magee
Patricia Kelly
Carmel Quinn
Roisin McKenna
Bill Rolston
Claire Anne Hackett
Niall Murphy

JJ Magee was suspended without prejudice by the Chairperson on November 4, 2024, pending an ongoing external investigation into matters completely unrelated to RFJ.

The secretary who served during the financial year was:

Mark Thompson

Health and Safety

Relatives for Justice Centre ensures the well-being of its employees and clients through the strict adherence to health and safety standards. Systems are in place to ensure that employees are aware of and implement the charity's health and safety requirements. Employees are required to work in a safe manner as mandated by law and best practice.

Staff Training and Development

Relatives for Justice commitment to professional development is indicated by its continued investment this year in professional data security systems and monitoring and evaluation systems including Salesforce, Mymops and Corenet. A GDPR review in anticipation of the introduction of EU regulations enhanced the systems in place. Staff training in IT, data management, trauma, suicide awareness, employment law and benefits advice was undertaken.

Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards

The charity engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Relatives for Justice Centre subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2006
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)
- The Companies Act 2006
- Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

Transactions Involving Trustees

None of the trustees had any interests in any contracts entered into by the charity during the year.

Public benefit statement

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance "Public benefit: running a charity (PB2)".

RFJ continues its work of highlighting the importance of human rights and healing in a post-conflict society, building and empowering victims and survivors to articulate and record their own stories and to engage with all mechanisms designed to support their own personal and public journey of recovery.

The Auditors

The auditors, Quarter, (Chartered Accountants) have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Bill Rolston
Director

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STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are also directors of Relatives for Justice Centre for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees as the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law) including FRS102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland". Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the net income or expenditure of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006 and. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the charity's auditor in connection with preparing the auditor's report) of which the charity's auditor is unaware, and
- the trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as trustees in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 16 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Bill Rolston
Director