

Damask Community Outreach
Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by 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 (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

Damask Community Outreach was formed in July 2011 to work primarily in the community of East Lisburn. The mission statement of Damask Community Outreach is "Dedicated to providing safe, inclusive and challenging opportunities that are changing lives and building futures in our community." The key purpose and services provided by Damask were established in response to an audit carried out in the community. The public benefit delivered by Damask provides support for older people, parents and carers and young people through a range of activities and programmes, together with advice services and support to those experiencing health problems, loneliness, unemployment, age related problems, poverty and financial difficulties.

Damask Community Outreach is a Christian faith-based organisation, working in partnership with Seymour Street Methodist Church, but is open to all and committed to equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability or dependency. Damask is committed to building partnerships in the community, with statutory agencies and with other relevant groups and organisations to ensure that it can offer a wide range of services that match the needs of the community and help with the personal development of individuals.

Ensuring the work delivers the aims of the company

The aims, objectives and activities are reviewed throughout the year at Damask Board Management meetings held monthly, looking at what has been achieved and the outcomes of the work. The effect of each key programme and service and the benefits they have brought to the community and the groups are reviewed systematically. This process helps ensure that aims, objectives, programmes and services remain focused on the stated purposes. The Board refers to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing its aims and objectives, and in planning its programmes and services.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Overview of activities

The Advice Service continued to operate throughout the year, and when our Adviser took maternity leave at the end of December we were able to appoint a new temporary Adviser, Maya Lazarenko, to cover her period of leave. Counselling support has continued to be provided by Ricky Keag.

The youth programme in collaboration with Youth Initiatives, and partly funded by Children in Need, continued to run in that way until the end of December 2022. However it was becoming more difficult to combine the nature of the work YI wished to carry out with direction that Damask, with Seymour Street Methodist Church, wanted to see and so the Memorandum of Understanding was brought to close mutually. Damask is grateful to YI for the valuable work that Ryan Lilley and other leaders have led over the last five years or so. From January 2023 Damask appointed Rebecca Wills to lead the continuing Damask youth programme and to work with The Seymour Street Youth Pastor, Ashleigh O'Sullivan, in planning and running this programme.

The Damask Wellbeing Programme which was initiated during the time of COVID has developed into a continuing Tuesday Morning programme with a well-attended pilates class, followed by a social time with tea and coffee. During the year a small group also enjoyed indoor bowls and walks, craft groups and other activities were organised from time to time.

The Toddler group continued its weekly meeting and with the decline in COVID restrictions the requirement for advance booking was dropped. The monthly Tea Dances which were formerly run have not resumed. Fund raising through regular Car Boot Sales carried on throughout the year. Although they could not be held every month they still made an important contribution to Damask's funds. Damask with help from Seymour Street Methodist Church continues to gather food donations for the Lisburn Food Bank. We do not currently have any 'Befriending' taking place.

Volunteers

Volunteers continue to provide a vital backbone to our activities. The Damask Board, which is made up of voluntary members continued to provide management and administration via online meetings, and the time spent on administration remained high due to additional funding applications and the need to keep altering and re-developing our activities. In most months we have held a car boot sale which depends on voluntary support, as does the Toddlers. The Wellbeing group has voluntary leadership as does the Advice Service, and the youth programme depends on young volunteers who have come up through the group.

The below table showing year on year volunteering hours with Damask Community Outreach:

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
Youth Projects	1,800	2,000	1,020
Advice Service	320	200	400
Befriending Service	-	-	30
Wellbeing Group	120	120	-
Toddlers Group	480	360	-
Covid Food Box Deliveries	-	-	300
Management & Admin	936	1,400	1,400
Car Boot Sale	304	300	50
Food Bank Collection	50	50	50
Total	4,010	4,430	3,250

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Paid Staff and Session Workers

At the end of March 2023 Damask had two contracted staff, Maya Lazarenko, Temporary Adviser working 20 hours per week and Febbie Francis, Adviser (on maternity leave). Rebecca Wills, the sessional youth worker, works 6 hours per week on the Fusion Project (After-school Club). Session workers are employed where necessary to deliver specific programmes such as Pilates, the Wellbeing programme, craft activities, and youth outreach.

Grant applications and donations

The Damask programme over 2022/23 has been supported by a range of funding bodies and we are grateful to these bodies for their grants. These include Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, The Education Authority, Children in Need, Lisburn and Castlereagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership and Youth Initiatives. In February 2023 we were awarded a grant from the Victoria Homes Trust which will be used to support the Fusion Project (after school club) in 2023/24, continuing from Children in Need. We have received donations from Seymour Street Methodist Church as well as private individuals. The Wellbeing programme is fully funded through weekly donations from those attending and the toddlers group is funded through a small weekly subscriptions by those attending.

Objectives for 2022/23

The main objectives for 2022/23 were to develop the Advice Service particularly with regard to supporting victims of domestic violence as we received PCSP funding for this aspect of the work and to build on the successful Wellbeing Programme. We aimed to secure new funding to provide continuing support to the after-school club at the conclusions of the Children in Need funding.

In addition the Damask Board aimed to maintain the 2022/23 balance sheet in credit as had been achieved in the previous three years.

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ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Programmes and Activities

The Damask Response to the needs of Community during 22/23

Advice Service

Febbie Francis was able to deal with the calls coming in to the advice service effectively and the new arrangement of having Friday morning sessions in the Lisburn Food Bank worked well. However some health issues meant there were periods when the service could not operate. Once we became aware that a period of maternity leave would be required we again had no success finding a qualified Adviser. However Maya Lazarenko, a refugee from Ukraine, applied and was offered the post from January 2023 following a period of online training and work experience in November and December 2022. This appointment opened the door for Damask to offer support to Ukrainian refugees in the Lisburn area in addition to our usual local clientele, which we felt was a very much in line with the aims of Damask Community Outreach.

We continued to receive PCSP funding to enable us to support clients who are victims of Domestic Violence. Due to our change of staff and periods of closure, we were not able to develop the domestic violence aspects of the work as hoped. However we intend to remain focussed on this issue which is still widespread in the community. We did, however, refer a number of clients with domestic violence issue to Ricky Keag for counselling.

Youth Programme

The main programme during 2022/23 was the Children in Need 'Go' project with up to 50 young teens attending after school on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. This was under the management of Ryan Lilley from YI, but led by Rebecca Wills. Early in 2022 it became apparent that the detached youth work with older teens at weekends was no longer finding groups of young people on the streets in Lisburn and the focus with older teens moved to working within Forthill College providing informal counselling during lunch and break times.

An evening group for older girls was established but a boys group did not attract support.

From January Damask took over management of the youth programme from YI with Rebecca Wills continuing as Leader of the after-school programme, now called Fusion, and Rebecca Ringland ran the group for older girls. The Fusion programme is now becoming more integrated with the work of Seymour Street Methodist Church and has the assistance of Ashleigh O'Sullivan, the Youth Pastor.

With the support of the PCSP grant several weeks of summer Holiday Clubs were run.

Toddlers Group

With the decline in concern over COVID the Toddlers group was able to operate without a requirement for pre-registration. There is a team of about six voluntary leaders and the group is largely self-funding through a small weekly subscription.

Community Wellbeing Projects

Walks for Wellbeing:- From Easter 2022 to the summer, fortnightly Walks for Wellbeing were organised, but there were declining numbers. This programme did not restart after the summer.

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Community Wellbeing :-

The popular Pilates class had sessions running from April to June 22, September to December 22 and January to March 23 with a regular attendance of 14 to 20. Weekly donations from those attending more than covered the costs of running this programme and the coffee time afterwards. While the Pilates group was predominately women, a small group of men enjoyed the short mat bowls in the main hall. The overall programme has become a well-supported and valued addition to the Damask activities bringing together a wide mix of people from the local community and church and has the potential to be further developed with a wider range of day-time activities.

Damask Board and other aspects of Damask

The Damask Board continued to meet approximately monthly, mostly but not entirely online via Zoom throughout 2022/23.

The Car Boot sales continued to be an important fundraising, and community activity of Damask generally raising £700 to £800 per sale, including £125 to £150 from refreshments. In the absence of an alternative the stage in the main hall is the main area where donated items are stored. Most donations are coming from Church members and their support in this way is appreciated. After each sale a significant amount of unsold material is disposed of at the dump!

Damask has continued to support the **Lisburn Food Bank** by gathering food donations from Church members and others and passing them on.

Future Plans

With the Youth Programme now being managed directly by Damask our aim, particularly with the younger teens, is to have a more regular Christian input into the programme and to develop opportunities for church young people to be involved as members or youth leaders. However we do want to maintain the link with Forthill College and identify and support for older young people who might otherwise drop out of education and also to continue the evening group of older girls.

As we expect opportunities for grant funding to become more difficult in Northern Ireland we will need to look at new potential sources of funding particularly for the Advice/Counselling work. While Maya Lazarenko will finish when Febbie Francis returns to work the possibility of Damask working with Maya to provide additional support to the local refugee population could be a new area of work for Damask if appropriate funding could be found.

Appreciation

The Damask Board wish to place on record our deep appreciation and thanks to all our Volunteers who give of their time so freely, to the staff providing the Damask Advice and Counselling, the Community activities and leading the youth programme and to those who give donations regularly and generously to support the work of Damask Community Outreach.

At this stage Damask would also like to thank Ryan Lilley who was employed by Youth Initiatives to lead the Damask youth programme over the last four/five years. Over much of this time there was a strong element of detached youth outreach in Lisburn and YI/Damask were providing a stabilising influence at a time when the PSNI were finding it difficult to keep tabs on the groups of young people in Lisburn. Ryan provided well organised and prepared leadership and maintained the required applications, paperwork and reports to satisfy our funders. Damask also appreciates the commitment from the CEO and Board of YI to support this work with Damask with staff and finance.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Review and Reserves Policy

In partnership with our principal funders as detailed in the notes to the financial statements we delivered an agreed programme. The amount directly expended on charitable activities in the 12 months to 31 March 2023 amounted to £42,152 (£42,935 31 March 2022)

We maintained tight control over our finances and are seeking to establish a reserves policy, which will maintain the financial stability of the charity.

We will continue to keep our Principal Funders fully informed through briefing and progress reports to agreed timetables.

Finances

The Statement of Financial Activities reflects a general reserve increase of £5,917, from £28,444 at 31 March 2022 to £34,361 at 31 March 2023.

The Restricted Funds carried forward at 31 March 2023 increased by £3,081 from £1,190 at 31 March 2022 to £4,271 at 31 March 2023.

Risk Management

The Board continue to review the major risks to which the charity is exposed and they endeavour to maintain control procedures and systems to mitigate those risks.

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

Company Law requires the Board to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the balance sheet date and of its incoming resources and applications of resources, including income and expenditure, for the financial year. In preparing those financial statements the Board follows best practice and selects suitable accounting policies, makes judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent and prepares financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is not appropriate to assume that the company will continue on that basis.

The Board of Directors is responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with all legal obligations. The Board of Directors is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and therefore for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

Damask Community Outreach is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 22 July 2011 and registered as a Charity by the Charity Commission Northern Ireland NIC102073 on 6 March 2015. It is recognised by HMRC as a charity for tax purposes. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of Damask as a charitable company, and is governed under its Articles of Association.

The Articles of Association were amended by a Special Resolution of the Company at a Special General Meeting held on 21 October 2013.

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

The Directors of the company are also known as charity trustees and under the Company's Articles are known as the Board. Members of the Board are elected by the decision of the Directors, or by an ordinary resolution. All members of the Board of Directors give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. At present there are ten Board members who have served during this past year who are listed on page 8. The Board seeks to ensure that there is an appropriate mix of skills within the trustee body and that it adequately reflects the nature and diversity of the work of the company.

Organisational structure

The Damask Community Outreach Board of Directors, who met every 6 to 8 weeks during the year, is responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity.

A scheme of delegation through an established management structure is in place. During the period of this report the Advice Service was managed by Jim Irwin, the Youth Programme by Dr Lindsay Easson, the Befriending Service by Harold Baird and the Toddlers, and Tea Dance by Shirley Carrington. Each of these Board Members reported to the Board on these areas at each Board meeting.

Induction and training of new trustees

Trustees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the obligations of membership of the Board of Directors. They are also encouraged to be aware of charity legislation, to attend training relevant to their position and be aware of the current financial position, resourcing, future plans, objectives, policies and procedures of the company.

Risk management

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Company number

NI608313 (Northern Ireland)

Registered Charity number

102073

Registered office

16 Adlon Crescent
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
BT28 2EG

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Trustees

Dr David Lindsay Easson Retired
Rev David Lee Turtle Minister
Miss Jennifer Michelle Baird Certified Chartered Accountant
Mr John Harold Baird Chartered Management Accountant
Mrs Shirley Anne Carrington Director
Mr James Edward Irwin Retired
Mr William Donald Kinghan Engineer
Ms Anne Teresa Maxwell Retired Librarian
Mr William Eric Rainey Retired
Mrs Janet Adrienne Stewart

Independent Examiner

John McCleary FCA
McCleary & Company Ltd
Chartered Accountants
Garvey Studios
14 Longstone Street
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
BT28 1TP

Bankers

Danske Bank
PO Box 183
Donegall Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JS

Solicitors

Carson McDowell
Murray House
4 Murray St.
Belfast
BT1 6DN

Chairperson

Dr David Lindsay Easson - appointed 31 January 2019

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 27 June 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'D. Lindsay Easson', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Dr David Lindsay Easson - Trustee