

LIVING RIVERS TRUST

TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the Trust's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and "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 2019).

Objectives and activities

The Trustees would like to continue to thank all volunteers, staff and all involved with the charity's activities for the year ended 31 March 2024. There has been both direct and indirect public benefit to many from the activities of the charity.

The main focus of charity activity this year has been the Lighthouse Hostel supporting residents, working with others, further developing staff, and looking at longer term planning for the Hostel.

The objectives of Living Rivers Trust continue to be:

- Advancement of the Christian Faith in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Trust's statement of faith;
- The relief of poverty;
- The provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and other leisure time occupation of people who are in need as a result of their youth, age, infirmity or social and economic circumstances.

These have been carried out through our activities in:

- Living Rivers Lighthouse Hostel, Ballymena
- Support of other churches and ministries and holding online activities
- Prayer – for others and online prayer meetings
- Teaching of the Christian faith.

Public benefit

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the Trust should undertake.

Through these activities there has been Public Benefit to individuals, their families, and communities.

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Achievements and performance

Living Rivers Trust Outreach Activities

We have had in person visits and virtual meetings with other churches and Ministries. Online teaching of the Christian Faith has continued and also prayer meetings with others both in the UK and abroad. There has also been support of individuals who have contacted us for prayer and support.

In May 2023 a prayer tour was held visiting Glasgow, Oban, Iona, Lindisfarne, Hexham, Whitby Abbey, and Edinburgh. Prayer was held and the significance of sites historically was prayed into.

Assets from Living Rivers Trust continued to be used by Celebration House, (which operates to advance the Christian religion through education and the relief of poverty within Ballymena and the surrounding area). Subsequent to the year-end these have been formally transferred to Celebration House. The Trust will continue to provide ministry to those who need it.

Living Rivers Hostel

This year the Hostel had a number of voids in the first quarter but later was running at full capacity. The year has seen 84 new clients (2023 - 79) with 67 departing over this period. Fourteen of these were a positive move on, whereby the client either returned to family or was able to acquire their own accommodation. Sixty two of the 84 new clients had addictions – 73.7%. A total of 69 clients had mental Health concerns (83.1%). There has appeared to be an increasing number of residents with learning difficulties. Particularly in the latter half of the year we have continued to have a waiting list and there is a steady demand for the service.

The staff have continued to support clients, their families, and to work with relatives, the community, and other stakeholders to deliver benefit to the public. There has been good feedback from clients, relatives, and stakeholders during the year. During the year we continued to have fewer full-time staff than desired, requiring agency staff for Support Worker posts, and this continues to be addressed. A replacement Acting Deputy Manager was appointed (with Supporting People approval) in June 2023.

We have continued to use, and develop use of, the Person Centred Software. This is aiding in recording support. All processes and policies are in the ongoing process of being reviewed and updated. This was commenced in January 2024.

The Hostel had regular visits from a nurse providing Health Care and advice to Residents in the Hostel. This is a valuable service and has helped residents and identified a number of matters requiring further care. The nurse also was able to provide access to various activities such as walks, gym membership, photography, dietary advice, cooking advice with a chef, meal preparation, and hold sexual health clinics. This has helped with physical health, mental health, and supported in independent living.

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The ICare project, started several years ago, however it has remained inactive during the current year. ICare provides free eye care to people who are homeless along with a barbers service. The project previously ran for one evening per month and was staffed by volunteer opticians and barbers.

The direct benefits of this project are:

- Improved ocular health and vision.
- Reduction of vision loss due to detection of disease.
- Reduction of financial burden due to visual impairment on NHS.
- Improved education and employment opportunities.
- Reduction in vulnerability.
- Reduction in stress and anxiety.

Previous studies have found that homeless people have higher rates of cataract, glaucoma and binocular vision problems and are more likely to have uncorrected refractive error.

Many homeless people cannot access optical services for various reasons e.g. not being able to provide a permanent address, which can lead to visual impairment due to breakage of glasses and undetected ocular disease.

As vision plays a significant role in the quality of life, it is important to explore the visual needs of this already vulnerable population.

ICare has been utilised by residents from the Lighthouse Hostel, and the Women's Aid and Simon Community. It aims to offer a unique opportunity to access free eyecare which will assist in building trust and relationships with health care professionals and encourage clients to access other services if appropriate.

Waveney Eyecare provided the ophthalmic expertise at the start on a voluntary basis along with five other fully qualified optometrists in the Northern Board Area who have volunteered their time and skills to complete the testing and assessments required. Unfortunately they were then not in a position to continue this service and as a result of this and Covid 19 the ICare project did not continue.

Steps have been taken to get it restarted in conjunction with Ulster University, Belfast. We have been in discussions with the Senior Lecturer of Optometry and the Associate Research Director in Biomedical Sciences at Ulster University about their undergraduate optometry students completing placements through the ICare project, with the possibility of them taking on the lead optician role thus allowing the ICare eye clinic to recommence and give longevity to the project. Sessions have been held since the year end and of the four men seen by ophthalmic services all four have benefited from glasses. We will also be looking at what other services can be offered through this project.

We are not recruiting for the post of kitchen assistant currently due to possible developments with the Hostel.

Some of the single homeless men continue to have complex support needs and the Hostel continues to be a necessary, strategically relevant service providing support and benefit. We have seen an increasing number of people with learning difficulties in the last year.

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The Hostel has welcomed two final year Occupational Therapist students from Ulster University who have completed their community placements with us. The students initially completed 2 days within the hostel in preparation and getting to know clients. Several clients took part in the six-week programme held in ICARE which included art work and refurbishing furniture. Several clients with addiction issues remained abstinent for the duration of the course work but went back to old habits after the course was completed. This has shown a need for a full time occupational therapist and the Hostel has intentions along with Enhancing Care for Homeless, (ECHO), to look at funding for a full time occupational therapist for the Hostel and other local providers.

We have continued to work with NIHE, Supporting People, other agencies and Hostels. We have appreciated the support received from local groups, community, and churches. Men have benefited from gifts of toiletries, food, and clothes and these are much appreciated. We appreciate the relationship with emergency services who have supported residents and staff at different times during the year.

The Hostel continues to work alongside and in partnership with Enhancing Care for Homeless (ECHO) in delivering projects such as, medicine management, admissions and discharge policies for hospital stays and A&E, and a homeless aware nurse, based at Antrim Area Hospital.

We continue to have a good working relationship with our main funders, Supporting People, which has seen our recurring funding increase in December 2022 and we were successful in our application in December 2023 to have HB bed rates increased. These increases mean that we are able to meet the increased costs of providing our services and the increased costs associated with staffing. It has also meant that the overspend on the Supporting People project which is met out of the charity's own unrestricted funds has been minimised.

The charity continues to hold restricted funds of £110,527 (2023 - £110,527) in line with Supporting People letter of offer, as the charity awaits the resolution of ongoing discussions with the funders regarding monies advanced to the charity during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Significant factors

There have been no safeguarding or GDPR issues during the year. There have been occasional cases of Covid 19 but it has not been the same issue and steps of prevention have been relaxed following PHA advice during the year.

Financial review

The attached accounts show there was an increase in both income and expenditure compared to the previous year. The expenditure exceeded income by £24,872. Various factors contributed to this:

- Increased cost of living costs
- Increased agency staff costs
- Prayer tour expenditure where income was received in the previous year
- Bed vacancies in the year
- Non-payment of service charge by some residents

The financial position was markedly helped by the one off £14,633 payment for support related services in the Hostel by Supporting People to help with a cost-of-living salary increase and to enable staff appointment and retention.

The finances were continually monitored in year and adjustments made to areas of expenditure and the above points were monitored and addressed where possible.

We have continued the recording of accounts on Excel this year, enabling management accounts to be monitored every month. This has been advantageous during the period of increased costs and decreased income to enable real time spending reviews. Ongoing budgets for 23-24 have been reviewed. We have given support staff a 9.9% pay increase for 2024-2025. We were able to give a bonus, in recognition of all the work done and support provided, early in 2024. We are thankful for all the commitment and work done by staff.

At 31 March 2024 the balance of unrestricted reserves was £49,505 (2023 - £50,330).

Restricted funds are restricted for the purpose specified in letters of offer provided by the funding bodies. At 31 March 2024 the balance of restricted funds was £116,962 (2023 - £141,009) .

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Reserves policy

It is the policy of the Trust that unrestricted funds, which have not been designated for a specific use, should be raised to a level equivalent to two to three months expenditure. The Trustees consider that reserves of this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, Trust activities can continue while consideration is given to either alternative funding streams or taking necessary steps regarding the charity's ongoing activities. At present unrestricted reserves are not held at this level but are gradually being increased. Supporting People restricted reserves are still held that we can apply to use in the event of a funding stream issue.

Plans for future periods

The Lighthouse Hostel has been re-accredited by Supporting People in the year 24-25.

A separate new company has been set up and registered as a charity in the year 23-24 with a view to it taking over the Lighthouse Hostel. This will have largely new Directors and will be good for the longevity and development of the Hostel. Supporting People and others are supportive of this. Steps in this process are taking place in 2024-2025.

The priority for the next period continues to be development of the Lighthouse Hostel. All usual activities will continue. We aim to appoint, and train, a full staff complement. Last year there was a significant non-payment of service charge, which has been addressed and continues to be monitored. We have also worked hard at ensuring fuller occupancy.

We will continue to encourage the use of the client's computer suite. Use of the internet will also be developed and monitored with the use of the Person Centred software, used very successfully, by staff in client support.

At an appropriate time, we will also be looking at advice groups for clients, a dual diagnosis project, revisiting medicine management, and further developments to the ICare service.

Trustees and the management committee will continue to meet and have input and oversight.

There are plans to hold another prayer tour in March 2025, through the ministry continuing to be provided by the Trust.

Structure, governance and management

Living Rivers Trust is a charitable trust constituted under a Trust Deed dated 2 April 2001, and is a registered charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Pastor P Brady

Dr H Grahame-Smith

Pastor J McGowan

Pastor C Watson

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Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The Charity Trustees identify the need for a new Trustee and any particular skillset required. Selection is then made of a Trustee for the Charity. They are interviewed to ensure they are in agreement with the Charity aims and objective, statement of faith, and Trust Deed. Information is also sought to ensure they are a "fit and proper person" to hold position from a financial, Access NI, and Charity perspective. They are supplied with previous accounts, minutes, and given information on policies and procedures and controls. Training is given during induction in such areas as Charity Governance and CCNI requirements of Charity Trustees, Safeguarding, and Data Protection.

Charity Trustees hold a minimum of two formal meetings per year and other more informal meetings as needed.

Financial reports and projections are produced for the Hostel quarterly and circulated. The Trustees delegate Dr H Grahame-Smith and Pastor P Brady to communicate more regularly as needed. Dr H Grahame-Smith has responsibility for oversight on an ongoing basis on reporting serious incidents, investigations, complaints, financial matters, data protection, and safeguarding issues.

Dr H Grahame-Smith and Mr M Forsythe are responsible for the day to day running of the Hostel.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Trust and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the Trust for that year.

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; 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 disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Trust and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Trust and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Pastor P Brady
Trustee

17 October 2024