

Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group

Trustees' Annual Report

Year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group

Charity registration number 103386

Principal office

The trustees

Timea Galambos	(Appointed 28 July 2022)
Gerty McGlinn	(Resigned 28 July 2022)
Jimmy Law	
Domnic Pinto	(Resigned 28 July 2022)
Marta Jozefowska	(Resigned 28 July 2022)
Rowena Barrun	
Andrea de los Santos	(Appointed 28 July 2022)
Lorena Cassidy	
Danuta Kelly	(Appointed 28 July 2022)
Christine Rodgers	
Allan Rainey	
Joni Beatty	

Independent examiner

Nial Colhoun
Watson & Colhoun
Unit B15, Omagh Enterprise Centre
Great Northern Road
Omagh
County Tyrone
BT78 5LU

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Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

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Structure, governance and management

i) Governing document

Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group (OECSG) was established in 1998

ii) Recruitment and appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed at each annual general meeting.

iii) Trustees induction and training

New members of OECSG Management Committee are provided with a copy of the Constitution and policy document outlining the relevant responsibilities of Committee members and Office Holders. The Manager of OECSG will ensure that new members are properly briefed and provided with the necessary induction and training to carry out their duties.

iv) Risk management

The major risk facing OECSG is the uncertainty over funding from government bodies which the charity is dependent on. New streams of funding are constantly researched and sourced to enable our work to continue.

v) Organisational structure

At present there are nine trustees who serve on the management committee who meet on a regular basis and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity as outlined in the Constitution.

vi) Related Parties

All Management Committee meetings include a "conflict of interest" obligation for members to declare should it be required.

Objectives and activities

The charity's objective and principal activity is to offer support to ethnic minority groups and their supportive organisations primarily within the Omagh district area, but also including County Tyrone and the whole of Northern Ireland. They do this by:

a) Promoting good relations in Northern Ireland;

b) Endeavouring to eliminate isolation and discrimination on the grounds of race in the area of benefit; and

c) Encouraging equality of opportunity within the area of benefit between people of different racial groups.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the charity and in planning for future activities.

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Achievements and performance

Overview

The period 2022-2023 has, unfortunately, been a time of continued political stalemate in Northern Ireland due to the continued absence of the Executive and the Stormont Assembly. The absence of political leadership and guidance presents a great many challenges throughout the community with the impact especially challenging for the voluntary/community sector which we are a part of. This political vacuum has had a particularly negative effect on the distribution of much needed funding to the many organizations dependent on the Executive Office for their continuing work. Thankfully, we have managed to weather the storm so far, but the uncertainty is still putting our group under a lot of pressure with the delayed transfer of approved funds.

On a more positive note, we are managing to meet all our planned target outputs and in a few areas, such as our training programme, we are well above our targets. What has become very clear post Brexit is that the Northern Ireland economy is performing better than other areas of the UK, largely due to the work of the large population of migrant workers who have chosen to remain here and happily call this place their home.

We are especially grateful to all the volunteers and people who continue to support our work and activities, starting with our dedicated Management Committee members who offer so much of their time and effort to keep our organization strong. A very special word of thanks to our Chairman Jimmy Law who works incessantly to guide us in the right direction.

Advice & Advocacy

Our drop-in service continues to be the focal point of our work which is available daily, providing our members with the support they need in just about every aspect of their immediate concerns, including employment, housing, health, education, access to public services and social welfare entitlements. We have also assisted hundreds of people with immigration advice and support in partnership with STEP Dungannon.

The total number of registered enquiries dealt with through our office for the 2022-23 year was 1814, which was slightly above our target figure. It should also be noted that the great majority of our clients do not have English as a first language and were provided with interpreter support to ensure the optimum outcome for their needs.

Funding

In March we completed the first year of our 3 year funding award from the Minority Ethnic Development Fund which runs until March 2025. We completed all the requisite progress reports and final claims to ensure we availed 100% of our award amount which covers staff 3 salaries and our utility and rent expenditure.

During the 2022-23 period we received project grant awards from different agencies for a total of £31,125 to carry out a wide range of training projects as well as social and cultural events. This included £9,520 from Big Lottery for training courses, £5,750 from Fermanagh & Omagh Council for support services and cultural activities and £4,880 from Apex & Radius Housing for social/cultural events. Under a service level agreement with STEP Dungannon we also received £10,975 to provide immigration advice and support, which we are continuing to do.

Activities & Events

Over the 2022-23 period, OECSG organized a wide range of social and cultural activities and events including: - Ethnic Halloween celebration in Community House with more than 100 attendees

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- Christmas gathering in St. Joseph's Hall with 120 people
- Chinese New Year in Community House with 120 attendees
- Visit of Hungarian Ambassador to Omagh
- Family outing to Crumlin Road Gaol
- Platinum Jubilee celebration in Castle Irvine
- 8 diversity presentations

Training / Capacitation

Preparing our members with skills to access employment and training in practical activities continues to be an essential component of our programming as we help them to integrate more fully into the local community. With this objective in mind, OECSG organized an extensive range of training and capacitation courses during 2022-23.

- Total of 6 ESOL courses for Beginners and Improvers in Omagh and Enniskillen. These included 2 courses in Omagh in collaboration with Focus, 2 courses funded by Big Lottery in Omagh and 1 course in Enniskillen with the support of Fermanagh & Omagh Council - First Aid course in Community House
- 2 Pilates wellbeing courses
- 1 recreational Spanish course.

Networking

Working with other groups within the community/voluntary sector is at the heart of our networking strategy to make maximum use of the resources available from both statutory and community sector groups to ensure that the rights of ethnic minorities are respected and upheld. This collaborative work has enabled us to identify the wider needs of ethnic groups and offer practical responses and make important referrals to other bodies when required. The principal groups we have been networking with include:

- STEP in the provision of immigration advice and support
- Focus language support as part of the Community Voices Programme
- Good Relations Team at Fermanagh & Omagh Council improving access to public services- British Red Cross in providing direct material help for families experiencing hardship because of the cost of living crisis. The support of these and all our cohesion partners has helped us to ensure that the issues impacting ethnic families become priorities in the policies of both statutory and community groups.

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Financial review

Principal Funding Sources

The main funder of the charity is The Executive Office which effectively covers the salaries of OECSG. The charity has continually sought and secured funding from other sources to assist with ongoing expenditure. The principal sources for our project work continues to be Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, STEP Dungannon, the Northern Ireland Refugee Relocation Programme and Focus.

Reserves Policy and Going Concern

The trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risk to the organisation namely the availability of funding from third parties and agreed that unrestricted funds not committed should be between 3 to 6 months of the charity's annual expenditure excluding salaries. The reserves are needed to bridge the gap between the receiving and spending of income and to cover any unplanned emergency spending.

The most challenging aspect is maintaining funding streams to carry out the work of the charity and OECSG has been fortunate once again to receive approval of core funding from The Executive Office for 2021-22 period as well as additional funding approved from other sources. Considering the above the trustees do not believe there are any uncertainties surrounding the going concern of the charity.

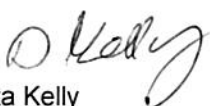
Plans for future periods

Because of ongoing Covid restrictions, it is very difficult to see too far into the future with any degree of certainty. Like everyone else we are subject to government and official guidelines regarding the extent to which we can organise gatherings and events. Thankfully, we have secured funding to organise our annual Halloween and Christmas events from the Community Relations Council and also support from Focus to run a number of coffee morning presentations. The signs are looking positive for the moment and we are confident we will be able to complete nearly all of our planned activities.

Our face-to-face advice services are operating on an appointment only basis at present and the number of people we can assist is restricted due to social distancing rules. Only one member of staff can deal with the public at any one time, so we have arranged a rota system for staff to allow this service to function as well as possible in the circumstances. This arrangement is subject to government guidelines

We are also becoming accustomed to the use of virtual technology to attend meetings and this new reality may well become a regular feature of our future working methods. Nonetheless, we believe the more in person contact that is possible will allow our work to be that much more effective, especially considering that ethnic minority community members are more susceptible to social isolation.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 19 June 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:


Danuta Kelly
Trustee