

Company Limited by Guarantee

Year ended 31 March 2024

Reference and administrative details

Principal office and registered office Townsend Enterprise Park
36 Townsend Street
Belfast
BT13 2ES

Mr P Doherty
Mr S Jackson (resigned 30 June 2023)
Ms L Millar
Ms K Strain
Mr J Whyte

Auditor FEB Chartered Accountants
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
Linenhall Exchange
1st Floor,
26 Linenhall Street
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT2 8BG

Bankers Bank of Ireland
Belfast City Branch
Belfast
BT1 2BA

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The Welcome Organisation

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Directors' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

Objectives and activities

Strategic aims and activities

The strategic aims of the Organisation are as follows:

a) Relieve the poverty and distress of people who are suffering from the effects of homelessness or the threat of homelessness in Northern Ireland (the "area of benefit"), without distinction of sex, race, ethnicity, age, disability, or political, religious or other opinion in particular but not exclusively by the provision, or assistance in the provision, of:

- (i) accommodation;
- (ii) advice, counselling and support services;
- (iii) befriending service; and
- (iv) drop-in centres

b) Develop the skills and capacity of the members of the homeless community in such a way that they are better able to identify and help meet their needs and to participate more fully in society,

c) Advance the education of the public about the needs of people who are suffering from the effects of homelessness or threatened homelessness,

d) Pursue any other charitable purpose which the Directors think fit to pursue in conjunction with any of the charitable objects mentioned above

Powers

In furtherance of the said objects, but not further or otherwise, the Company shall have power to:

(a) provide or secure the provision of social and support services, educational and recreational facilities and practical assistance in the area of benefit;

(b) provide or secure the provision of advice, counselling and information and refer those in need of professional assistance to the relevant agencies;

(c) provide, endow, furnish and fit out with all necessary furniture and other equipment and maintain such buildings, premises, and centres as may from time to time be required for the purposes of the Company;

(d) co-operate and enter into arrangements with any authorities, national, local or otherwise;

(e) bring together in conference representatives of voluntary organisations, Government departments, statutory authorities and individuals;

(f) arrange and provide for, either alone or with others, the holding of exhibitions, meetings, lectures, classes, seminars or training courses, and recreational and other leisure - time activities;

(g) collect and disseminate information on all matters relating to its objects, and to exchange such information with other bodies having similar objects whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere;

(h) write, print or publish, in whatever form, such papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets or other documents, including films and recorded material, as shall further its objects, and to issue or circulate the same whether for payment or otherwise;

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(i) accept subscriptions, donations, devises and bequests of and to purchase, take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire and hold any real or personal estate, maintain and alter any of the same as are necessary for any of the objects of the Company and (subject to such consents as may be required by law) sell, lease or otherwise dispose of or mortgage any such real or personal estate, having due regard to the requirements of, or conditions established by, statutory authorities or bodies providing funds or assistance of any kind to the Company;

(j) issue appeals, hold public meetings and take such other steps as may be required for the purpose of procuring contributions to the funds of the Company in the shape of donations, subscriptions or otherwise;

(k) draw, make, accept, endorse, discount, execute and issue promissory notes, bills, cheques and other instruments, and to operate bank accounts;

(l) borrow or raise money for the objects of the Company on such terms and (with such consents as are required by law) on such security as may be thought fit provided that the Company shall not undertake any permanent trading activities in raising funds for the objects of the Company;

(m) take and accept any gift of money, property or other assets, whether subject to any special trust or not, for any one or more of the objects of the Company;

(n) invest the monies of the Company not immediately required for its objects in or upon such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit, subject nevertheless to such conditions (if any) and such consents (if any) as may for the time being be imposed or required by law and subject also as hereinafter provided;

(o) make any charitable donation either in cash or assets for the furtherance of the objects of the Company;

(p) establish and support any charitable association or body and to subscribe or guarantee money for charitable purposes calculated to further the objects of the Company;

(q) make regulations for the proper supervision, control and management of any property which may be so acquired;

(r) employ and pay any person or persons not being a Director of the Company to supervise, organise, carry on the work of and advise the Company;

Recruitment and Appointment of Board Members

The Board of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Board. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the re-elected at the Annual General Meeting.

The Organisation is governed by a small competency-based Board drawing upon professionals from a range of relevant disciplines. The Member's role is to contribute to the effective governance of The Welcome Organisation in promoting the vision, mission, aims and objectives of the organisation.

Recruitment of Board Members follows a formal recruitment process based on the specific needs and skill set required.

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All members of the Board give their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity.

Evaluation measures are used to ensure that services are appropriate, accessible and represent good value to ensure limited resources are used to their best advantage to most effectively meet presenting and underlying needs. The Welcome Organisation seeks to complement existing services rather than to compete.

Senior Leadership Team

Ms. Jo Daykin-Goodall	Chief Executive Officer
Ms. Mo Sykes	Head of Corporate Services
Mr. Kieran Hughes	Head of Fundraising & Marketing
Ms Colleen Hamilton	Head of Operations

HOW OUR ACTIVITIES DELIVER PUBLIC BENEFIT

Social Capital

The Organisation creates value for people who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness and dis-connected from community and services by:

- supporting networks that connect individuals who are diverse, sustaining generalised reciprocity.
- building diverse community through the delivery of services which challenge social marginalisation and isolation

Achievements and evaluation of this objective is collected through case management outcomes, outcome monitoring and client profiling.

The Organisation supports individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, offering a range of services to include crisis intervention, support and advice, and accommodation support services which include a Drop-in Centre, Street Outreach, Floating support service and crisis and supported living accommodation for females. Collectively, all services provide 24/7 coverage, 365 days a year.

Social Economy

As a social economy the Welcome Organisation employs 46 full-time and 7 part-time staff.

In addition to this the organisation also supports volunteering and throughout the year 21 individuals were engaged in regular activity at our sites. A further 190 individuals assisted special projects including organising the Christmas gift appeal.

We also commend the work of the volunteer fundraisers including the 45 individuals who ran in the Belfast Marathon for Welcome. Particular thanks this year to our Corporate Sponsors Mortgage IQ and the generosity of their staff, in particular everyone who took part in the various events they held throughout the year, including a fundraising Night at the Races which raised over £5000 and the branch-to-branch cycle which also raised over £5000. The team also committed over 15 staff members to one-off volunteering at Welcome.

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Health and Well Being

The Organisation strives to promote positive changes which enhance health and well-being and contributes to the fulfilment of individual persons/human aspirations and potential. This was the first operational year of our 10-bed therapeutic supported living unit for women who are homeless, living complex lives and ready to progress their journey towards independent living. The trauma informed service recognises the unique situation of these women and provides 24/7 support. We continue our other services providing a holistic range of interventions for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including:

- provision of food, clothing, personal hygiene facilities, laundry services and other interventions aimed at meeting basic needs and reduce harm
- supporting individuals to sustain accommodation and prevent homelessness
- access to specialist services including counselling on drug and alcohol issues
- provision of regular health, housing and advisory clinics
- personal support to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge to improve their own wellbeing, and develop resilience skills in the face of difficulties.

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Achievements and performance

Drop-In Support Services

Funding from the Housing Executive's homelessness budget is made available to the Welcome Organisation to provide a Drop -in Centre for people who are rough sleeping, homeless or at risk of homelessness. The service provides for the basic needs of the individual (food, clothing, showers, laundry facilities) and a place of refuge. The Drop-in is underpinned by the provision of individual tailored support which recognises the unique circumstances and needs of the service user and provides a gateway to a broad range of services which are difficult for marginalised people to access normally.

These services include access to healthcare in partnership with our colleagues at the Belfast Health Trust's Belfast Inclusion Health Service, benefit support, addiction services and mental health support. All services are delivered within a high tolerance, harm reduction model, which is central to the Organisation's success in working with people with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

In this year 1390 unique clients used the Drop-In services, presenting to us over 16,000 times combined. Staff worked with clients to ascertain their immediate and longer-term needs. On a daily basis clients were provided with a range of practical assistance including clothing, washing facilities. The Drop -In services also provided three meals every day, equating to over ten thousand meals in the year.

Staff also provided support interventions in excess of 11,400 occasions this year, helping clients access accommodation.

In addition to supporting clients to find accommodation, staff also supported over 1,250 individual applications for welfare and benefit claims and managed a further 2032 interventions related to supporting clients with their immediate physical/mental health needs and access to addiction services.

24/7 Street Outreach

The Street Outreach service is funded from the Housing Executive's Prevention of Rough Sleeping in Belfast budget. The service delivers a rapid response to individuals who find themselves rough sleeping in the city. In this year we recorded over 600 rough sleepers and throughout the year the Outreach Teams provided basic needs to those sleeping rough or engaging in street activity on over 17,000 occasions.

The outreach teams proactively seek out those who are sleeping rough, providing food and hot drinks, building relationships and gaining trust in order to support their journey off the streets. This year as well as meeting their basic needs, the outreach teams helped rough sleepers to access relevant welfare benefits and financial support on 1,498 occasions. The teams also provided help to rough sleepers on 7793 occasions in relation to their physical and mental health needs and referrals into addiction services.

The Street Outreach teams also provide an emergency response service (Code 7's) to support 'blue light' services. Where appropriate, individuals are transported back to their hostel/accommodation or if this is not feasible to the Drop-in as a place of safety and to rest. This aspect of the Outreach service prevents misuse of acute services and eases the pressures on them. Within the year there were 790 Code 7 calls with 673 responded to within 30 minutes (85%). The highest number of calls received were from the public (442 calls) followed by 134 calls received from the PSNI.

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Annsgate Crisis Accommodation for Females

The Welcome Organisation provides crisis accommodation services to women presenting with high levels of need. The 10-bed space crash facility based at Annsgate is used by women who would otherwise be sleeping out on the street. The service provides a place of safety and staff support clients on site. The demand on the service remains very high with 188 unique individuals using the facility in the year of which 63% received support to move on from the service in a planned way.

The facility is also recognised as a gateway service for women and enables them to access a wider range of more holistic services to meet their specific needs.

Floating support services

This service provided support up to 111 vulnerable individuals, who have secured accommodation and need additional support to maintain their tenancy. The service delivers a range of high to low flexible support services responding to the clients' fluctuating needs. The services are tailored to each individuals' particular circumstances.

Catherine House

This new service was launched in March 2023 and provides trauma informed supported accommodation with staff on hand 24/7. This innovative service recognises the impact of trauma and is sensitive to the specific needs of individuals living with trauma and moving towards independent living. In the year 27 individual women have been able to avail of this service with 12 making planned move on's to more permanent accommodation and 10 remaining in service.

Mobile Health Unit

The mobile health unit is now in its third year of operation and provides much needed medical support to the most vulnerable who would otherwise be unlikely to access the healthcare they need. Operating in Belfast and the North West in partnership with the Health Trusts the provision includes critical vaccination services and primary health care needs. The unit operates 5 days per week and visits an average of 8 locations each day, providing health care to 22 individuals per day.

To conclude the review of services we also note that our staff are trained to administer Naloxone which is an evidence-based intervention that can save lives by blocking or reversing the effects of a heroin or opioid overdose. Naloxone is available across all our services and staff are trained to recognise the signs of overdose and to respond appropriately thereby reducing drug-related deaths.

This year across the services, our staff administered Naloxone on 181 occasions.

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PRINCIPLE FUNDING SOURCES

Financial review

Against the backdrop of finite resources and insecurities within the sector in relation to funding and lack of political stability it can be difficult to plan or develop services. Nevertheless, the charity invested in training and infrastructure improvements throughout the year which has strengthened the overall ability to meet both compliance and increasing needs of service users into the future.

Recurrent funding

Services are primarily funded by the Housing Executive's Homelessness and Supporting People programmes by way of grant and contract income from Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Funding (other)

Aside from recurrent funding we continue to generate income through fund raising activities and charitable donations.

Our Charity of the Year partnership with Mortgage IQ has been very successful raising over £25,000 across various events.

Other notable fundraising efforts the charity would like to acknowledge and thank include Lunn's Jewellers (£2,514) and the NI Human Rights Commission staff team (£1350). Seven people took part in our Belfast Castle Abseil raising a total of £985.

As we seek to further develop our services the charity will continue to seek to diversify funding sources.

Designated Reserves

To make a judgment on the level of reserve funds required, the Board consider the risks in respect of expenditure, unrestricted income and where appropriate restricted income and where funds can only be realised by the disposal of a fixed asset.

A risk assessment is undertaken annually and determined using a risk Identification approach. Also taken into consideration are any external potential major risks to income and expenditure during the year. Designated reserves therefore reflect areas outlined in the Organisations Risk Register which is maintained to ensure identified risks are mitigated for and managed appropriately.

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The Organisation has adopted a policy to build up and retain cash reserves equalling 6 months running costs, to reflect:

- historic delays in statutory funding receipts,
- withdrawal or reduction of government funding
- support for organisational growth

Reserves and Risk are reviewed regularly as part of the business planning and included in financial reporting at regular Board meetings.

In this financial year it was agreed to use reserves to support organisational growth and specifically used to purchase a vehicle for the Outreach Service, substantive upgrade the IT infrastructure and to deliver a robust training plan for all staff and the production of a new Staff Handbook.

Risk Management

The Board has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces.

Internal Control

Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors services.

Procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

In the year all organisational policies were reviewed and a new Staff Handbook developed to provide guidance and detail on all policies and procedures.

Charitable Status

The Organisation continues to be registered as a charity with the Northern Ireland Charities Commission and evidenced compliance standards.

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Directors' responsibilities statement

The directors, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the directors' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity directors to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The directors 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. 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.

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Auditor

Each of the persons who is a director at the date of approval of this report confirms that:


- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a director to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The auditor is deemed to have been re-appointed in accordance with section 487 of the Companies Act 2006.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The directors' annual report was approved on 24 October 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Mr J Whyte

Director