

The Welcome Organisation

Company Limited by Guarantee

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

Year ended 31 March 2025

The directors, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Reference and administrative details:

Registered charity name: The Welcome Organisation

Charity registration number NIC103976

Company registration number NI070562

Principal office and registered office

Townsend Enterprise Park

36 Townsend Street

Belfast

BT13 2ES

The directors

Mr P Doherty

Ms L Millar

Ms K Strain

Mr J Whyte

Mr J Rice (appointed 1 August 2024)

Company secretary Jo Daykin-Goodall (resigned 1 December 2024)

Auditor FEB Chartered Accountants

Chartered accountants & statutory auditor

Linenhall Exchange

1st Floor,

26 Linenhall Street

Belfast

Northern Ireland

BT2 8BG

Structure, governance and management

The Welcome Organisation is a registered charity and operates as a company limited by guarantee status. 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. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

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;

(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 Board are 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. One additional Trustee was appointed 1st August 2024, Mr Joe Rice.

All members of the Board give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the Charity

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.

HOW OUR ACTIVITIES DELIVER PUBLIC BENEFIT

Building Social Capital

The Welcome Organisation provides direct support and interventions to people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness, and rough sleepers, who are vulnerable and whose life experiences have been based on multiple disadvantages, who face challenges such as poor physical and mental health, substance misuse, domestic and sexual violence and abuse, and a history of trauma.

Our services include assertive street outreach, drop-in centre providing support and advice, crisis intervention emergency accommodation and supported living accommodation for women, a mobile health unit and floating support to enable those in their own accommodation to remain there.

Collectively our services provide 24/7 coverage, 365 days a year across the City of Belfast.

Through our work we enable people who are homeless to engage with support networks that can connect them with additional support and help them back on the path of independent living and reintegration into their community.

Through our work we challenge social marginalisation and ensure the voices of homeless people across Belfast are heard and represented to service providers and decision-makers with a view to addressing the issues that have led to homelessness, securing and maintaining a tenancy and improving their life chances.

Charitable and Social Economy Sector

As we approach our 30th year of providing services to the community the Welcome Organisation has continued to be a significant contributor within the charitable and social economy sector maintaining a staff level of 53 full-time employees and circa 30 bank staff during this year. Moreover, through our continuing relationships with both statutory funders and trusts and foundations, this year we have developed plans that will see a further expansion of services in 2025-26 with particular focus on provision of support to women and we continue to see our workforce of dedicated staff increase.

This year we have linked with several private enterprises in the provision of volunteering opportunities.

This not only provides the private sector with a mechanism to achieve its corporate social responsibility goals but provides an opportunity that would not otherwise be available for people to contribute to our work of improving the lives of our service users.

On behalf of our service users, we would like to extend our thanks and gratitude for the work and efforts of all our corporate volunteers over the last year in helping to change people's lives.

Achievements and performance

Drop-In Support Services

Funding from the NI 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, washing, laundry facilities) and a place of refuge. The Drop-in model 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 without support. In July 24 following an attack on our premises the service was temporarily relocated and in December 24 moved again to a further temporary unit within Centenary House, Belfast. Due to the confined space available the delivery model was reconfigured whilst maintaining all aspects of the service.

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

In this year 1304 unique clients used the Drop-In Support Hub services. Staff worked with service

users to ascertain their immediate and longer-term needs. In addition to the practical assistance provided to service users outlined above the Drop-in Support Hub also provided breakfast and a minimum of 70 meals (lunch and dinner) every day, equating to over twenty-five thousand meals in the year.

Our dedicated staff provided 19,645 support interventions to service users this year. In addition to supporting service users to find accommodation, staff managed a further 1631

interventions related to supporting them with their immediate physical/mental health needs and access to addiction services.

24/7 Assertive Street Outreach Service

The Assertive Street Outreach service is funded from the NI 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 1459 rough sleepers and throughout the year the Outreach Teams provided basic needs to those sleeping rough or engaging in street activity on 22,333 occasions.

The Outreach Teams proactively seek out those who are sleeping rough, providing food and hot drinks, building relationships and gaining trust 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 790 occasions. The Teams also provided help to rough sleepers on 3,460 occasions in relation to their physical and mental health needs and referrals into addiction services.

The Assertive Street Outreach Service also provides 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 Support Hub as a place of safety and to rest. This aspect of the Outreach Service prevents misuse of acute services and eases the pressure on them. Within the year there were 790 Code 7 calls with 616 responded to within 30 minutes (92%).

The highest number of calls received were from the public (444 calls) followed by 107 calls received from the Police Service of Northern Ireland

Crisis Accommodation for Women

The Welcome Organisation provides crisis accommodation services to women presenting with high levels of need. The 10-bed space crash facility based originally in the city centre, is used by women who would otherwise be sleeping on the street. The service provides a place of safety and staff support service users on site. The demand for the service remains very high, with 197 unique individuals using the facility in the year, of which 63% received support to move on from the service in a planned way. In January 2025 the service moved location to south Belfast, and we are now able to provide an improved and extended service with individual ensuite rooms with additional space for service users to remain safe during the day. This enables staff to develop a better working relationship and understanding of each individual's needs, provide more timely support and access a wider range of more holistic services to meet them. We provided 3,990 support interventions as part of this service this year.

Floating Support Services

This year the Floating Support Service supported 131 vulnerable individuals, who have secured accommodation and needed additional support to maintain their tenancy. We provide a range of flexible support services responding to the service users' fluctuating needs and tailored to each individuals' particular circumstances. This includes supporting clients with life skills, advocacy, setting up a home and sourcing furniture and appliances, attending medical appointments signposting to other specialist interventions.

Catherine House

The Catherine House service was launched in March 2023 to provide trauma-informed supported accommodation with staff on hand 24/7. This innovative service recognises the impact of trauma has had on individual women and is sensitive to their specific needs as they are moving towards independent living. In the year 31 women have been accommodated and supported by this service.

Mobile Health Unit

The Mobile Health Unit is now in its third year of operation providing much needed medical support to the most vulnerable who are unable to access the healthcare they need, e.g. through GP practices. Operating in Belfast and the Northwest in partnership with the Belfast and Western Health and Social Care Trusts the provision includes critical vaccination services and primary health care needs. The Unit operates 5 days per week and visits various locations such as the Support Hub and hostels each day, providing health care to individuals.

To conclude the review of services we also note that our staff are trained to administer Naloxone, which is a life-saving medication used to rapidly reverse an opioid overdose. Naloxone is available across all our services and staff are trained to recognise the signs of opioid overdose and to respond appropriately, thereby reducing drug-related deaths. This year, through all services, our staff administered Naloxone on 100 occasions.

We acknowledge the dedication of our staff team and thank them for their commitment in what was a particularly challenging year. Despite the disruption associated with relocating two services there was no interruption to provision in support to individuals in either. The ever-increasing complexity of needs facing our service users every day has been responded to by our staff team with professionalism, empathy and without exception they always go the extra mile to ensure the best outcome possible for every service user.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Principle Funding Sources

Against the backdrop of a challenging financial landscape for the third sector generally and the continuing lack of funding security the charity also faced significant upheaval due to an attack on our premises. Consequently, there was significant non-recurrent financial expenditure incurred to mitigate risk to staff and service users and ensure their safety and well-being. The charity invested in additional security measures, training and infrastructure improvements throughout the year to meet both compliance and the increasing complexity of needs of service users into the future.

Recurrent funding

Services are primarily funded by the NI Housing Executive's Homelessness and Supporting People programmes through grant and contract income.

Other Funding

In addition to our recurrent funding, we continue to generate income through fundraising activities and charitable donations. To continue our growth in this area we invested in the Fundraising and Marketing

function of the organisation by employing a part-time Fundraising Officer and part-time Marketing Officer from December 2024.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who donated so generously through various fundraising streams, including the following notable donors and fundraisers:

Corporate

Our partnership with Lunn's Jewellers continued in 2024-25 with the company taking part in various fundraising events and volunteering days, including £4,867 raised by participating in the Belfast City Marathon Relay.

The Financial Services Union donated £2,000, while longtime supporters InKlover raised £1,096 through various in-store and online fundraising activities.

Community

St Mary's Grammar School, Downpatrick raised £8,194 from their Europa Hotel abseil in April 2024. It is the former school of Catherine Kenny, whom Catherine House is named after, and her sister Lee-Maria Hughes, a current Catherine House volunteer, who also took part in the abseil. Mother and daughter Fiona and Kirsten Eatock raised over £1,000 by taking part in the 3 Peak District Challenge Hike

Events

Our Annual Sleepout, this year hosted by St Malachy's Church, Alfred Street on 31st January 2025, raised £2,927.

Legacy

We received a legacy gift of £16,880.13 from the estate of Mary McIntosh.

Grants

We received £5,000 from Social Bite's Winter Meals Campaign and £1,000 from the Gallagher Community Fund

Designated Reserves

To make a judgment on the level of reserve funds required, the Board considers 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.

An Annual Risk Review is undertaken which considers if there are any external potential major risks to income and expenditure during the year. Designated are maintained to ensure identified and incidental risks are mitigated for and managed appropriately. During this financial year reserves were used to manage risks responsibly.

The Welcome Organisation previously 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.

In this financial year it was agreed to use reserves for i) non-recurrent employment related matters, ii) direct costs resulting from the attack on the Townsend Street premises, iii) to

continue staff training and development, and iv) investment in IT infrastructure and Cyber Essentials accreditation.

A financial sustainability strategy is identified within the new Strategic Plan to work towards building reserves to meet the 6-month running cost threshold in the coming years.

Risk Management

The Board has conducted further review of the major risks to which the charity may be exposed. The risk register has been updated, and systems and/or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces and are reviewed regularly.

Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all financial transactions across projects, and continual monitoring of safety, risk, health and wellbeing.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all legislation related to our duty of care to service users, staff, volunteers and visitors to services.

Over the year Trustees and staff developed a new 3-year strategic plan for commencement in April 2025. One of the significant new initiatives is the establishment of the Finance, Audit, Risk and Governance Committee as part of the Board, to oversee the charity's financial reporting, internal controls, risk management, and governance practices.

At the time of writing this report the Charity awaits the outcome of a claim through the Northern Ireland Office for losses incurred due to the attack on our Townsend Street premises.

Charitable Status

The Welcome Organisation is registered as a charity with the Northern Ireland Charities Commission and evidenced compliance standards.

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 judgments 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.

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 27 November 2025 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

Mr J Whyte

Director