

Newstart Education Centre

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 2019).

Chairperson's Report

A massive congratulations to this year's programme participants. They continue to inspire and energise the work carried out by everyone in Newstart Education Centre, not least the Board of Directors, for whom I write this report on behalf of. Heartfelt congratulations are sent by everyone on the Board to each young person for what they have achieved. Best wishes for their onward journey. It has been a privilege to play a part in their progression, development, and growth.

2023 has been another successful and encouraging year. My fellow Directors continue to guide and direct the work with determination, professionalism, and a deep sense of caring. I want to thank them, on behalf of the entire team at Newstart, for their contribution, loyalty, and unyielding support.

Like every other year, 2023 highlighted the success of the entire staff team, led by our Centre Director, Mary Clarke. The team combines an excellent mix of education, youth, community, and social work specialisms, providing a strong platform for the bespoke, wraparound service each young person receives. Well done to Mary and the team and keep up the brilliant work folks!

Newstart work would not happen without consistent investment from funders. Thank you to all those agencies who support our work and who, like us, are compelled to ensure young people, regardless of background or experience, reach their full potential. A massive thank you to all our statutory and community partners. To say the impact of the work would not be the same without your collaboration would be an understatement.

Director's Report

I want to start my report by acknowledging the hard work and dedication of all the young people who we had the privilege of working alongside this year. Whatever setbacks or challenges they faced, their ability to forge forward and succeed has been an inspiration to not just me, but the entire team at NEC. Thank you for your belief in us and, importantly, your trust in us to help guide and challenge you to aim high and claim your success. You are a credit to yourselves, your parents, and carers and to the community.

I have the privilege of working with an excellent Board of Directors who continue to support me and the staff team to build and develop our work. I want to thank them for being selfless, dedicated and committed to what we do. I would like to give a special word of thanks to Jim Donnelly, our chairperson, whose continued support, and guidance are valued immensely.

The work we do and the way we carry it out, would not be possible without our team of staff. Their commitment to young people is clear in how they carry out their work and conduct themselves. Thanks to all of you for the contribution you make in raising the bar for young people and for our organisation.

For the Year Ended 31st March 2023

Newstart Education Centre

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As a community organisation we would not enjoy our success without the support of a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations, without which our holistic approach to the progression of young people could not be achieved. As mentioned previously, a huge thank you to all our funders for keeping faith with us and our work. We look forward to your continued support for our future work.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

Objectives and Activities

The Charity's objects ("Objects") are specifically restricted to the following:

To advance education for the public benefit by:

(a) The provision of informal and formal education and training in a safe, supportive, and holistic learning environment for young people who have disengaged, or been excluded from, mainstream education.

(b) the provision of courses, support, and opportunities for adult learners, lone parents, economically inactive and unemployed people.

To relieve the needs of young people who have disengaged, or been excluded from, mainstream education and their families by the provision of resources and support services including advocacy and strengthening family initiatives and by any charitable means as the trustees consider appropriate.

Newstart Education Centre

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Public benefit

The purposes of the organisation are to advance education for young people and adults, to promote benefits for young people in the Lower Falls area of West Belfast (herein called 'the area of benefit') and to educate and assist young people, so they grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society and their conditions of life may be improved. The direct benefit which flows from this purpose include:

1. The development, education, and inclusion of marginalised, at risk, young people.
2. Offering young people who have disengaged or been excluded from mainstream education an alternative setting in which to realise their learning potential with additional support mechanisms in place. NEC works collaboratively with community organisations, statutory, social work, and educational welfare agencies.

Our second purpose focuses on reducing any barriers young people experience in reaching their full potential. NEC achieves this through providing wraparound, holistic supports to young people, their parents, carers, and families. We operate a parent's group and provide training and volunteer opportunities for parents, carers, and families to support the positive development of their relationship with the young person.

We proactively work with the young person to address any issues they may be contributing to in the home and/or community including substance misuse and/or aggression. Benefits include:

1. Strengthening families and providing young people with a positive support structure in the home to positively reinforce the development work we provide in collaboration with each young person within our centre.
2. A more developed and cohesive network of service providers offering support, guidance and engagement for young people and their families.
3. Advancing the education of adult learners, lone parents, economically inactive and unemployed people through the provision of courses, support, and opportunities.

This is evidenced through the accredited achievements of young people and our partnership working arrangements with statutory referral agencies such as schools, Education Welfare, and the local Education Authority Options Panel. It is further evidenced by NEC's vast experience and success in re-engaging at risk young people, as well as the ongoing participation of parents in the activities outlined earlier, and as part of our yearly project evaluation and consultation processes.

We work in collaboration with a wide range of community, voluntary, statutory agencies, and schools. These agencies refer young people to us and in turn we signpost young people to other supports and specialisms offered by these agencies when the need them. We engage in collaborative, joint project working with other alternative education providers, youth-based organisations, and local schools to build resilience in young people through adventure learning. As a result, we bring innovative methods from community level into mainstream service provision.

Adult learners benefit from a unique comprehensive range of programmes incorporating personal and professional development, vocational enhancement, academic accreditation, developed over a period of 20 years by NEC as a response to the ongoing, specific education and training needs of local communities. Our programmes are designed to underpin each participant's capacity to gain and sustain meaningful employment by equipping them with transferable skills. Our work helps break the cycle of systemic poverty, disadvantage, unemployment, and economic inactivity, directly felt by most of our participants and their families.

Newstart Education Centre

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Year on year, our work enables an increase in volunteering across the local community. We support young people, adults, parents, and carers to develop their skills and motivation to contribute to local community development and regeneration efforts.

Importantly, all our work is underpinned by the principle of causing 'no harm', flowing directly from our main charitable core purpose, aims and objectives

Overview of the accounting year

This year, the organisation has worked on numerous projects:

1. Day School -28 young people attaining qualifications from entry level up to and including GCSE, through a 5-day per week timetabled programme. 13 young people were supported in additional work to achieve GCSEs in twilight and evening class provision.
2. WHAM (Wellbeing, Health, Adventure and Mentoring - 75 vulnerable and at-risk young people supported to strengthen their emotional wellbeing through adventure learning and intensive mentoring.
3. High 5 - we provided over 600 hours of intensive support to vulnerable and at-risk young people.
4. Healthy Living - over 100 beneficiaries from across the city of Belfast receiving family and healthy living supports to improve their lives.
5. NEC provided a range of placement opportunities for students undertaking Degree programmes in Community Youth work.
6. Healthy Living supports to over 100 people across Belfast.
7. Employability skills development programme to over 50 young people from across Belfast.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Review of the year

The company had net outgoing resources for the year of £127,359 (2022: net incoming resources of £39,445), which reflected the completion of a number of projects during the year. Unrestricted funds decreased by £90,569, while restricted funds decreased by £36,790. The total fund balance at 31 March 2023 was £95,914. (2022 £223,273)

Reserves policy

The organisation's policy is to retain a level of free reserves, which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The organisation has developed a plan to establish and maintain this agreed level for free reserves. The organisation will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Board will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

In reference to our reserves policy, it is good practice to have 6 months running costs and salary contingency plans along with redundancies.

Newstart Education Centre

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

FUTURE PLANS

A forecast for the year ahead:

EOTAS provision - this coming year we will continue to provide places to the Education Authority Northern Ireland for young people outside of mainstream education provision.

Belfast City Council - provide intensive support to young people in the day school through the continuation of our High 5 programme. We will continue to deliver healthy living and family supports to 100+ beneficiaries from across Belfast.

Continue to deliver our WHAM programme to vulnerable and at-risk young people facing emotional wellbeing challenges.

Secure Peace Plus funding to work collaboratively with a range of youth work partners to deliver an intensive cross community, cross border programme.

Secure funding to extend our programmes to include the provision of early intervention / prevention focussed activities for younger age groups

Continue to review and develop our policy and procedural framework ensuring board and staff undertake relevant training.

Refurbish part of our second-floor space into a multi-use workshop space to provide a programme of skills development such as joinery, horticulture, and DIY.

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.

Governance of the Organisation

During the period under review the directors met monthly. Trustees/directors are appointed by nominations made in writing by any existing director. At the General Meeting nominated directors are appointed by election.

Newstart Education Centre

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Risk management

The principles of good governance are embedded within all aspects of Newstart Education Centre operations with management and staff being keenly aware of the Boards responsibility of ensuring that the organisation protects itself from financial exposure and reputational damage, A close working relationship is maintained between the Board and management to ensure that operationally staff are aware of the standards required of them by the Board and the Board are always in a position to provide guidance and support to management in the discharge of their duties. This two way relationship is the key feature of Lower Falls Newstart Project Limited governance arrangements and is a key strength in the company.

A conscientious approach to ensuring that contractual project requirements are achieved has been maintained at all times both in the accounting period being reported on and since Newstart Education Centre establishment. Very tight financial controls on expenditure and all financial commitments are maintained at all times and project staff have been trained and have become experienced in budgetary controls. In both these areas ie Project delivery and financial controls management all staff have established close working relationships with funding organisations to ensure all mandatory standards are consistently achieved. Board representatives also actively engage with funding bodies.

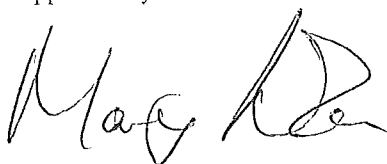
The Board, management and staff are fully aware that the nature of the work in which Newstart Education Centre is involved can bring with it a high level of scrutiny to ensure that all activities are fully compliant with funding requirements and, therefore, beyond reproach. The Board of Newstart Education Centre is, therefore, greatly reassured of the company's compliance with the highest of standards of governance on the basis that all monitoring and evaluation of project delivery demonstrates achievement of all funders objectives and that funders' audits and vouching of financial expenditure and the independent examiners report confirm compliance with both probity and regularity in the use of monies received.

TAX STATUS

The company is recognised by HMRC as a registered charity. The company is entitled to charity tax exemption.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 1 December 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



Miss M Nolan - Secretary