

## **Youthlife Limited**

### **Trustees' Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

The financial statements comply with the Charities Act (NI) 2022, Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, 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 (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019.)

The company is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 31/03/09. The company number is NI 72222 and the registered office is 23 Bishop Street, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6PR. The company is a registered Northern Ireland charity - reference NIC 105568.

#### **Directors and trustees**

The directors of the charitable company (the Charity) are the trustees for the purpose of Charity Law.

The trustees during the year and at 31 March 2024 were as follows:

Ms Dorothy Hutchinson	Ms Lisa Archibald
Ms Paula Cunningham	Mr Alan McClure
Mr Giovanni Doran	Mrs Tina Fallon
Ms Catrina McFeely	

Alan McClure stepped down from the board February 2024 due to ill health. Lisa Archibald left the board July 2023 due to family commitments. We are saddened by the loss of long-term and active board member Paula Cunningham who died 19th November 2023 and remains in our hearts and ethos of our work.

#### **Chair's report**

2023 started with dwindling funds and narrow funding opportunities; 2023 - 2024 was a challenging year for Youthlife as we endeavoured to secure longer term funding whilst continuing to deliver a first class service on a month-to-month basis, without a guarantee of ongoing security. The government Mental Health Fund was opened and withdrawn raising concern. Early summer, 2023, we realised we were entering a financial crisis and forecasted our finances lasting only until the End of Dec 2023. Staff were steadfast in support of Youthlife; hopeful the situation would be resolved.

I want to sincerely thank each member of staff and the board for their continuing dedication to Youthlife and to express how much I appreciate their input, dedication and support throughout the year.

Despite the difficulties the year was successful and services withstand across the Western Trust, with counselling and Art Therapy delivered face to face from our Derry City Centre office and outposts active in Omagh and Enniskillen on CAMHS behalf, as well as counselling online and over the phone for those who prefer.

The Children In Need Waypoint project ended December 2023 after 9 years of engaging and training young peer mentors and offering outreach activity to support positive mental health in schools and the community. Thank you to Tina McHugh for her amazing work in the post.

By March 2024 funds had been secured to allow Youthlife to continue to December 2024 with the hopes of further funding and maintained service into 2025 and beyond! The board wish to thank the staff, counsellors and volunteers for their continuing support and hard work during the year. Thanks also to our funders and supporters who have helped sustain Youthlife throughout 2023-2024.

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#### **Our purposes and activities**

The purpose of the charity is to support children and young people aged 5-25 years who have experienced bereavement, separation, and loss. Youthlife offer counselling, art, play and music therapies and peer mentor support.

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the directors have considered the Charity Commissions guidance on public benefit requirement (PBR1). We endeavour to encourage a wide range of children, young people and their parents and carers to take advantage of our expertise and community signposting services.

#### **Our Volunteers**

The Charity is governed by a Board of Directors who are all volunteers; The Board of Directors oversee the financial affairs and administration and ensure the smooth running of the Charity's affairs in accordance with legal obligations, funders requirements and ethical standards. Youthlife promotes Youth-led services and have established a Youth Advisory Board who participated in training and personal and professional development for the role! Our Volunteer Peer Mentors are young people aged 16-25 with lived experience of bereavement, separation and loss who undertake OCN qualifications and personal development workshops in order to help others. Thanks to Children In Need funding young people who require additional support upon exiting counselling can avail of Peer Mentor Support and efforts have been ongoing to secure this service without a dedicated member of staff in place.

Thanks to volunteers Sean Doherty, Michelle McCoy and Mary Duddy who volunteered their time and expertise offering therapeutic support to children, young people and their families.

#### **Achievements and performance**

Our main achievement continues to be the charities timely and effective response to all referrals Youthlife received April 23-March 24, even though adversity and funding challenges. During this period we have maintained our relationship and contracts with WHSCT in relation to providing services for approximately 50 children and young people (440 sessions) in the Northern sector of the Western Trust and completed delivery of an additional contract offering services across the Western Trust reaching an additional 50 children and young people (444 sessions). The service in Omagh and Enniskillen, provided by the Western Trust CAMHS, was temporarily closed from November, and re-opened February with a new contract.

The National Lottery Community Fund has secured a self-referral pathway to our services following bereavement; reducing CAMHS waiting list and ensuring children receive the right support at the right time. NLCF provides 640 counselling sessions per year topped up and enhanced though other small project funds with an additional crisis pathway. This has developed and strengthened partnerships across the Children and Adolescent Mental Health statutory, community and voluntary sectors. Our Virtual Youthlife service continues to reach geographically and demographically as many teenagers in particular feel more confident attending sessions online or on the phone. Youthlife continue to offer services on CAMHS behalf in Omagh and Enniskillen.

Youthlife have retained a skilled team and our reputation for quality services and meeting mental health need continues to grow.



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#### **Achievements and performance - continued**

In this period April 23 - March 24 Youthlife has engaged 276 children and young people in 1887 counselling sessions including 150 clients (1104 sessions) delivered on CAMHS behalf. In addition,

50 young people in Longtower Primary engaged in a Transitions project.

8 young people engaged in peer mentoring OCN training.

3 children enjoyed Equine Therapy over a 4 week period.

22 young women enjoyed empowering young women workshops through Oakgrove College.

8 young women participated in a mind Body Fit workshop.

6 active Youth Advisory Board members.

2 children availed of un-time-limited Art therapy (14 sessions) through the Looked after Children's services; our Art Therapy is highly regarded especially where talking therapies are not an option or due to trauma or communication difficulties.

Youthlife performance is measured through SDQs (Strength and difficulties questionnaires) and Youthlife evaluations. The SDQ responses measure improvements over a range of indicators including emotional and physical symptoms and relationships with friends, family and peers. Response indicated Youthlife is an effective intervention, the majority of clients moving from 'abnormal' or 'borderline' category to 'normal' (SDQ terminology) levels over the range of indicators. Feedback from parents and clients is highly positive with noticeable improvements within the 8-10 week period.

Following 1:1 counselling:

- " 86% of recent participants have reported 'yes, counselling has helped me,' 13% still felt unsure.
- " 95% agree or strongly agree 'I am feeling more in control of my life.'
- " 87.5% agree 'I value and respect myself more.'
- " 88% 'I feel I can cope more with everyday life.'
- " 78% 'my self esteem has increased.'
- " 79% 'I have made plans for the future.'
- " 87.5% 'I am managing my relationships better.'

#### **Financial review**

Funding of £179,972 was secured during the year and donations and fundraising totalled £6,006. Direct costs including wages and programme costs were £120,962, administration overheads were £35,236 and depreciation of £461 was charged. This resulted in a surplus for the year of £29,780 which when added to opening reserves of £67,332, left the Charity with reserves of £97,112 at the year end.

The Directors were pleased with the results for the year. The unrestricted reserves at the year end were £15,194.

#### **Reserves policy and going concern**

Reserves are needed to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned emergency costs. Due to the nature of the activities of the Charity no material unplanned costs are expected. The major costs are wages, programme costs and rent but funding is/will be in place to cover most of these costs. The Directors consider that a satisfactory level of unrestricted reserves to be in the region of £7,000.

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#### **Plans for future periods**

Youthlife's core service aims to secure 2000 sessions per year; delivered across the Derry and Strabane area.

The end of the Children in Need project, and the loss of a staff member, has significantly reduced our capacity to deliver OCN training, The Peer mentoring service and outreach activities and workshops. Once our maximum capacity of 2000 sessions is financially secure, funding efforts may turn to the creation of a coordinators post, and to maintaining service in Omagh and/or Enniskillen to meet an identified need in more rural communities.

Future plans also include, an increase in 'alternative therapies' including equine therapy, use of art, sport, dance and music to improve confidence and mental health.

We will review and update our current strategy and, we seek to secure a new coordinator post and, enhance board membership and development.

#### **Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities**

The Charity Trustees (who are also the directors of the Youthlife Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing a Trustees' Annual Report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law 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 charitable company and of the profit or loss of the company for that year.

In preparing these the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- state whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company 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 company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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

This report was approved by the Board on 28 October 2024 and signed on its behalf by



Dorothy Hutchinson  
Chairperson  
28 October 2024