



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

3 Brook Street
Coleraine
BT52 1PW
Tel: (028)70357966

Charity No. NIC106079

PREAMBLE

This report, covering the year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, shows that Age Concern Causeway has recovered successfully from the setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, we have surpassed the development aims of our current funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Shortly before the end of the reporting period, we received news that our application for further funding from the National Lottery Community Fund had been approved, meaning our support for local people with early stage dementia is secure for three more years.

While our dementia support work will remain our core activity, the Trustees would wish to re-introduce more social events where there is demand, and where we are able to secure supporting funding.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

CHARITABLE OBJECTS

The object of the Association as set out in our Constitution is to enhance and develop the quality of lives of all older people, 50 years and older, and their carers in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area, irrespective of their different religious beliefs, political opinion, racial group or gender, and to provide a powerful voice on their behalf.

In furtherance of the above object, the association shall seek:

- To empower all older people to express their needs and to provide a strong voice in the appropriate places
- To promote the health and well-being of all older people
- To facilitate, maintain and develop social relationships and networks
- To deliver its services in a professional, efficient and effective manner

Age Concern Causeway aims to be a “user led and volunteer driven organisation”.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The Trustees of Age Concern Causeway confirm that they have complied with their duty under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008; and having regard to Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit (section 4b) confirm that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of Age Concern Causeway in the year to March 31st.

In evaluating public benefit the Trustees can show that the public benefit has been realised by the range of services detailed in this report, albeit that the work we could do was necessarily constrained by the effects of the pandemic. At all times, our services are based

on the identified needs of the local community, and ongoing evaluations by Age Concern Causeway show a high level of user satisfaction.

STRUCTURE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

CONSTITUTION

Age Concern Causeway is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted in September 1977 and last amended on 13th May 2010; this is available at Age Concern Causeway offices 3 Brook St. Coleraine.

MANAGEMENT

The organisation is run by its Board of Trustees which is elected at the Annual General Meeting. Service users are invited to attend the AGM and encouraged to become Trustees. In addition notice is given to the public of the meeting. There is provision in the Constitution to co-opt additional Trustees throughout the year with the agreement of the Board of Trustees.

The operational management of Age Concern Causeway is delegated to the project co-ordinator who is line managed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The co-ordinator is in attendance at Board meetings and reports to the Trustees against an agreed work plan and targets. In addition other members of staff can be asked to report on their activities or issues of interest or concern.

The Board of Trustees meets on average every six weeks, when the Chair presents a report of issues that have been addressed on behalf of the Committee. The meetings also offer a forum to review recent activities within our programmes and to plan forthcoming events.

At each meeting the financial adviser presents the latest accounts and these are reviewed against budgets and projections. A policy is in place to identify certain individuals with authority to commit expenditure within set limits. Expenditure above these levels must be agreed at Board meetings.

The Chair and Secretary are authorised by the Trustees to prepare the Annual report for approval at the Annual General Meeting, when service users and the public have a chance to comment.

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Good financial governance is maintained by regular and up to date financial information provided to the Trustees and budget holders. In addition the Board receives independent financial advice and service support which ensures transparency of all transactions. Further details are contained in the body of the report.

Total funds at the end of March 2024 are £103,114 compared to £85,027 at end of March 2023. Unrestricted funds are £71,416 compared to £64,154 in the last financial year. Restricted funds are £31,698 compared to £20,872 at 31 March 2023.

Total income for the year ended 31 March 2023 was £194,487 compared to 54,463 on 31 March 2022. This was mainly due to the timing of funding from the National Lottery. Total expenditure was £176,399 compared to £111,070 in the previous year. This was due to the expansion of our dementia support programme.

In common with most small, local charities, Age Concern Causeway is dependent to a large extent on outside bodies to finance our services. Our current support from the Big Lottery Community Fund to support our dementia work will soon expire, but we have been fortunate enough to have been granted continuing funding, again from National Lottery, to begin when our current grant ends.

STAFF

We employ the full complement of staff as originally planned under the National Lottery Community Fund grant. These are: full-time project leader; full-time lead dementia support worker; and four part-time dementia support workers, whose hours combine to equate to two full-time staff. We also employ a cleaner part-time.

All staff have undertaken Open College Network (NI) Level 2 Dementia Awareness training and intend to continue studying for higher level qualifications.

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

BETTER TOGETHER PROJECT

At the last Annual General Meeting, we reported that we had already surpassed the requirements of our funders, in that there were seven active groups rather than the six envisaged. We can now report that there are eight active groups which meet weekly, each providing social and crafting activities for a maximum of eight people experiencing the early stages of dementia. The groups are based at venues in Coleraine (two groups), Ballycastle, Ballymoney (two groups), Garvagh, Limavady and Portrush.

The location of the groups is not set in stone, but can be changed according to need. For instance, the Garvagh group was revived during the year as demand was such as to make it viable.

One problem with trying to provide this service in a mainly rural area with such a widely dispersed population is distance from the various venues. Clients are picked up at their homes in a minibus, so by necessity must live within a reasonable (5 miles) distance from a venue, otherwise they would spend more time in journeys to and from the event than they do taking part in activities.

A possible way to approach this might be for more geographically isolated people who cannot access group activities to be offered one-to-one visits in their own homes. However, this would mean attracting both extra funding and more staff.

Now that we are fully staffed, our current one-to-one service has been expanded over the year for clients who cannot attend groups, either due to a deterioration in their condition or another reason. More than twenty clients have visits each week, and are offered various activities or, if they prefer, just a friendly ear to listen to their reminiscences.

It goes without saying that throughout the year we were cognisant that our funding from National Lottery was coming to an end. Good housekeeping meant that we were been able to stretch the support for six months beyond our previously reported date of December 2023. Many hours were spent compiling a new funding application which was submitted to the National Lottery Community Fund in October 2023. We were delighted to hear in March 2024 that the application had been successful, securing funding for three years from July 2024 to the end of June 2027.

ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Requests for advice and for assistance in accessing benefits continued to be received on a regular basis. Staff endeavour to provide assistance, even if this only amounts to providing a signposting service to other organisations.

It is clear to us that there is demand for a service providing help in completing benefit application forms, particularly from those who find it difficult to attend community advice offices and require home visits. It is a service which Age Concern Causeway used to be able to provide, but the trained volunteers have all retired from the work. We will make strenuous efforts to attract and train new volunteers so that this service can be revived.

ACTIVE AGE PROGRAMME

The Active Age programme has always been designed to promote active and healthy aging, stimulating both body and mind, planned by older people themselves. However, financial restraints mean that we are only able to promote self-financing activities. Over the year under review staff have been fully involved with dementia support work, so little time has been available to consider resuscitating our pre-Covid programme.

One project has had great success. The launch of a monthly Meet and Eat held in a Limavady cafe was reported in our last report, with seed funding from WH&SC Trust, and continues to be successful. During the year under review the project has been extended to Coleraine (with support from the Borough Council) and to Ballymoney (with support from Halifax). It is intended to extend this initiative to Ballycastle in the near future.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

A constant problem for those with dementia and their carers is when a sufferer wanders off and becomes lost. We want to address this by developing a wristband for people with

dementia which incorporates a QR code which can be scanned by a phone and the person's name and next of kin be viewed, so that they could be found quickly and safely. Similar schemes already exist in parts of England and Scotland. In conjunction with the Northern Trust Primary Care team, we have enough funding to run a pilot scheme in the Causeway Coast and Glens area, with the intention that it eventually expands throughout Northern Ireland.

FUNDRAISING

Over the years, fundraising events have raised both money and the public's knowledge of the charity and its services. During 2023-2024, we ran various raffles based in the shop and have collection boxes in various shops around the town. We are very grateful to The Railway Arms who are good enough to host an annual quiz night for our benefit.

In February, as part of the National Gardens Scheme, Benvariden gardens opened their walled snowdrop gardens and tearoom to the public. Mrs Montgomery asked Age Concern Causeway to volunteer in the tearoom with them and any money made from would be donated to the charity. As a result, our funds were increased by over £600.

In previous years, it was possible to raise good sums from street collections. However recently, perhaps even more so since the pandemic when more people began to rely on using debit cards rather than carry cash, the work involved in organising a collection does not make the idea viable. The same applies to collections in supermarkets, which in the past brought us considerable sums of money.

AGE CONCERN SHOP

Our shop is the "face" of Age Concern Causeway and continues to be an important source of funds for the charity. It is completely staffed by volunteers who do everything from unpacking donations to manning the till. They all do a tremendous job, and the Trustees appreciate the time and effort they put in to their work on the charity's behalf.

The Trustees would like to express their thanks to all those who support Age Concern Causeway as customers of, or donors to the shop, and often both!

PARTNERSHIPS

Age Concern Causeway has links with the following organizations.

Public Bodies: Causeway Coast and Glens BC; Community Mental Health Team for Older People; Community Access Support Worker; Community Navigator; Dementia Navigator; GP Multi-Disciplinary Teams Social Workers; GP Multi-Disciplinary Teams, Mental Health Teams; Hospital Social Workers; NHSCT (Contracts); NI Housing Executive; Road Service.

Voluntary and Community Organisations: Alzheimer's Society; Causeway Rural and Urban Network; Causeway Volunteer Centre; COAST; Community Advice Causeway; Community Development Health Network; Connected (Causeway Loneliness Network); Dementia NI: Limavady Community Development Initiative; Linking Generations NI; SVP Coleraine/Portrush; The Olive Branch; local Primary and Secondary Schools.

Businesses: Abbeyfield House Ballycastle; Asda; CPS Handy Park; Habinteg; Henderson Group; Kenny's Spar Garvagh; Local Pharmacies; Savers; Spar Kilrea; Rothesday Court Coleraine; Tesco; Tullaghmurphy Fold Portstewart.

FUNDING AND DONATIONS

The Trustees would like to express our thanks to our major funder since 2020, the National Lottery Community Fund, for their support to us and their belief in the importance of our dementia support work which has led them to continue to fund us for another three years. Their representatives were always been extremely supportive to us throughout in our struggles to cope with the impact of the pandemic and continued to be so as we worked to prepare our application for continuing funding.

We have also received smaller grants during the year under review from the following:

Asda Foundation
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
Causeway Rural and Urban Network
Community Foundation NI
Dementia Services Fund
Halifax
John Moores Foundation
NH&SC Trust
NRPB Culture, Arts and Heritage
The Honorable the Irish Society
Skipton Building Society
WH&SC Trust

We were also fortunate enough to receive various unsolicited donations from individuals. In particular we would like to thank North Antrim Vintage Club and Coleraine Society of Friends for their generous donations.

THANKS

Our work can only continue with the financial support of our funders, and we are grateful to all of them, be their contributions large or small.

Our volunteers are absolutely essential to the charity. It is no exaggeration to say that nothing would happen without them, and they can be assured that the Trustees fully appreciate all they do. To those who left during the year we would like to extend our thanks for their contributions while they were with us. It has proved hard to replace those no longer with us, and we would encourage anyone who has a few hours to spare to support our work to contact us: we can always find a niche for someone who wants to help.

Finally, but far from least, thanks to our staff. There have been many changes during the year, and they have responded to every challenge with enthusiasm and always with the good of the charity and a wish to support our clients in mind. With a full complement of staff, we are sure their committed contribution to the charity means that we can look forward to a bright future.

* * * * *

BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 2023-2024

Chair	Cllr William McCandless
Secretary	Mrs Morag Stark
Trustees	Mrs Joan Baird (co-opted) Mrs Thelma Dillon Mr Tony Hegarty (co-opted) Mrs Rosemary McCaw (co-opted) Mrs Angela McLaughlin (co-opted) Mrs Ann McNickle Ms Lydia Watton

Financial Adviser: Mrs Olive Wallace

Secretary
Board of Trustees