



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

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Charity No. NIC106079

PREAMBLE

This report, covering the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, describes a period of consolidation and development for Age Concern Causeway. The news, received just before the end of the 2023-24 reporting period, that we had been granted considerable further funding from the National Lottery Community Fund means we can be secure about providing core dementia support services until at least June 2027.

At the same time as continuing to concentrate on support for those in the early stages of dementia and their carers, the Trustees would also wish to develop more social events for other older people where there is demand, providing 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. 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 at 3 Brook Street, 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 two months, 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. Special meetings are arranged in the event of urgent decisions being required.

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 2025 are £70,718 compared to £103,114 at end of March 2024. Unrestricted funds are £68,243 compared to £71,416 in the last financial year. Restricted funds are £2,475 compared to £31,698 at 31 March 2024.

Total income for the year ended 31 March 2025 was £193,156 compared to £194,487 on 31 March 2024. Total expenditure was £191,174 compared to £176,400 in the previous year.

Our funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, while very generous, does not of course cover all the costs associated with running our services (for example premises, telephone, etc). The project leader has over the year successfully applied for smaller grants from other organisations to support our work, and those grants, together with donations and proceeds of our shop have been very important to our finances.

STAFF

We employ the full complement of staff as planned under the National Lottery Community Fund grant. These are:

Fulltime	3	Project Leader
		Dementia Support Lead
		Dementia Support Worker
Part-time	2 x 3 days	Dementia Support Workers
	1 x 2 days	Dementia Support Worker
	2 x 1 day	Dementia Support Workers
Part-time	1 x 3 days	Shop Supervisor

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

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

STRONGER 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 groups which meet weekly, each providing social and crafting activities for a maximum of eight people experiencing the early stages of dementia. During 2024-25 the groups were based 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 to satisfy demand, but numbers decreased again after just a few meetings, such as to make it once again unviable. The remaining members have been offered places at other groups or one-to-one sessions at their homes from April 2025.

At this point, we would like to express our profound thanks to the dedicated work undertaken by the volunteers who attend each of the groups to assist our staff. We can truly say that without them, it would be impossible to run the groups successfully.

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.

An innovation made possible under the new National Lottery Community Fund grant has been the introduction of a service for carers of those with dementia, where a member of staff will visit to be with the client to allow their carer to attend, for example, hospital appointments. The service is provided at no cost for up to three hours, with a nominal charge for hours beyond that. To date, 30 families are registered for this service, and we hope that it will develop as more people hear about it.

WRISTBANDS

As reported last year, a constant problem for those with dementia and their carers is when a sufferer wanders off and becomes lost. Our pilot project, with support from the Northern Trust Primary Care team, to provide wristbands which incorporate a QR code which can be scanned by a phone and the person's name and next of kin be contacted, attracted enormous interest. Publicity through the BBC on both television and radio and in the press means that provision of the wristbands has quickly spread across Northern Ireland. Wristbands are now available through the Northern, Southern and Western H&SC Trusts, and Portadown Rotary Club.

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 was for many years designed to promote active and healthy aging, stimulating both body and mind, planned by older people themselves. Over the years groups ranged from art classes to gentle exercise, computer classes to walking groups. Needless to say, the pandemic meant that all these groups had to come to an end and unfortunately we have lost contact with those who took part in them. In an ideal world we would like to resuscitate at least some of the activities, but financial constraints mean that we would only be able to do so if they could be self-financing.

One activity we have been able to restart, albeit in a changed form, is a lunch club. At present the monthly Meet and Eat lunches in cafes in Limavady, Coleraine and Ballymoney are thriving, with continuing support from various funders. It is hoped to further expand this service to other places.

FUNDRAISING

Over the years, fundraising events have raised both money and the public's knowledge of the charity and its services. During 2024-2025, 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 previous years, we raised good sums from street collections. However recently, with more people relying on using debit cards rather than carrying cash, this would involve much work for little reward. 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 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.

During the year the Trustees agreed to a short-term experiment to employ a part-time shop manager to provide better oversight of the shop as a whole. To date, the experiment has proved successful, with both increased income and increased donations.

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); NISCT, SHSCT and WHSCT (wristbands).

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: Asda; CPS Handy Park; Local Pharmacies; Tesco.

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 have 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
Charles Hayward Foundation
Radius Housing
NH&SC Trust
WH&SC Trust

We were also fortunate enough to receive various unsolicited donations from individuals. In particular we would like to thank the Methodist Church, Coleraine for their generous cheque, and those generous bereaved families who nominated our charity to receive donations from mourners after funerals.

A special mention is due to Antoinette's Cafe in Limavady, who in addition to hosting a monthly Meet and Eat lunch, held a fundraising event which led to a very generous boost to our funds.

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.

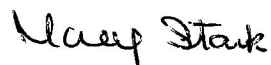
Finally, but far from least, thanks to our staff. They respond to every challenge with enthusiasm and always with the good of the charity and a wish to support our clients in mind. With a full complement of staff, we are sure their committed contribution to the charity means that we can look forward to a bright future.

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES, 2024-2025

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

Financial Adviser: Mrs Olive Wallace



Secretary
Board of Trustees