

## **Aspire (N.I.)**

(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)

# **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

for the financial year ended 31 August 2025

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the unaudited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 August 2025.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Trustees' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Trustees' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the trustees of Aspire (N.I.) present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 31 August 2025.

The charity is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and, although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS 102, the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

### **Principal Activity**

Aspire exists to aid children in need and help to help close the educational gap between the rich and poor in Northern Ireland.

### **Mission, Objectives and Strategy**

#### **Mission Statement**

Aspire (NI) exists to deliver on its principal activity to work with children in Northern Ireland in poverty to help close the educational gap between the rich and poor. We are a faith driven charity based in Craigavon, Northern Ireland that work with local youth workers and churches to provide free services for children from lower income families to support and equip them in education. Our work with schools and relevant agencies ensures that we aim to:

1. Provide relationships that enable young people to recognise their skills and full potential.
2. Provide facilitators to encourage young people in education and help them to take ownership of their own education.
3. Help those from lower income families by providing free tuition services
4. Help young people to learn outside of the classroom by providing fun based educational activities outside of school hours
5. Give young people the opportunity to explore faith.

#### **Aspire Sessions**

These offer a place for young people to work in a supervised and supportive environment after school. We provide facilitators who encourage the young people and provide them with support. The facilitators are youth workers from local churches or organisations. Our young people are provided with laptops, resources, and refreshments.

#### **Aspire Tuition**

For young people who take part in our after-school sessions who are struggling with any subjects, Aspire will endeavour to link this young person to a suitable tutor from our bank of volunteers who are qualified in this subject and provide a period of free tuition.

#### **Aspire Activities**

Education is not just what happens in the classroom but can be fun too. Aspire activities are monthly activities for young people run by local churches and youth groups where learning is combined with leisure such as sport or music lessons.

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## Structure, Governance and Management

### Structure

Aspire (NI) is a company limited by guarantee and registered with Companies House under the reference NI 639811. The organisation is also a Registered Charity under the reference NIC107570 with The Charity Commission of Northern Ireland. Aspire (NI) is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and controlled by its Trustees. The day-to-day management of the charity on behalf of the Trustees is undertaken by Mark Knox. Trustees are appointed and retire in accordance with the charity's governing document with all new Trustees undergo an induction and initial training on their role and responsibilities.

## Review of Achievements and Performance



2024/25 has been another exciting year for Aspire. We continue to grow and expand our reach, building on the success of previous years. Aspire now works in twenty-nine schools, providing vital support to young people across Craigavon, Belfast, and beyond. This year, we ran numerous academies, covering areas such as art, business, youth work, music production, and more. These academies provided essential training and inspiration for secondary-age children while also engaging primary-age children in foundational programs.

We held our largest-ever cross-community camp, bringing together almost fifty young people at the Crawfordsburn Scout Centre. The camp featured a rich program of activities, including sports, workshops, and leadership development, all focused on fostering understanding and connection across different backgrounds.



"The best camp ever..."

That's how Aspire leaders summed up this year's Camp Aspire at the end of the summer.

Camp is always a significant moment in our year. For both leaders and young people, it's a chance to build relationships in ways that just don't happen in the classroom. In school, leaders are often the ones pushing young people to get work done. At camp, those same leaders are helping build rafts, cheering them on at activities and sharing laughs around a fire.

This year felt extra special. We had the biggest number of young people ever attend, an amazing staff team, a full programme of activities and sunshine the whole week!

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## The Programme

For many young people on the Aspire Programme, summer holidays are out of reach. Trips, sports camps and summer schemes are often too expensive once you add up fees, clothing and equipment. The NI Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy says that "social disadvantage has the greatest single impact on educational attainment." That's exactly why events like Camp Aspire matter. When young people are given opportunities to learn, explore and build new friendships, it has a lasting effect on their confidence and success back in school.

This year's programme included archery, climbing, axe throwing and team challenges during the day. Evenings were packed with activities designed to build social skills, open minds to other communities and encourage young people to accept one another. Educational sessions followed the theme of "So High School." Just like the characters in classic teen movies who learn to unite despite their differences, our young people discovered that they aren't defined by labels and that real friendships cross those divides.

## Stories of Change

One boy who joined Aspire at Easter came to camp struggling with social anxiety. At first, he was quiet and unsure, but by the end of the week he was out of his shell, making friends, joining in activities and most importantly, having fun. The change in his confidence was clear for everyone to see.

Cross-community connections were another highlight. At the start of the week, some arrived saying, "I don't like them," simply because the others were from a different community. By the end of camp, those same young people were laughing together, hanging out and building friendships that will last well beyond the summer.

Sarah, one of our leaders, put it perfectly:

"Camp Aspire had so many lasting memories but the last night really stood out to me. I loved seeing everyone around the campfire singing and chatting about their favourite memories of the week with their new friendships. That moment really captured what camp was all about."

## Keeping Connections Alive

Later this year we'll host our annual Camp Aspire Reunion. It's a chance for everyone to reconnect with friends they may not see often, reflect on their favourite memories, and strengthen the relationships built over the summer.

## Fuelling Local Impact

We're proud to announce our new partnership with FUEL, a community-focused tech company committed to supporting local education. FUEL is backing our in-school work with young people who need it most.

We are pleased to announce our latest corporate partnership with FUEL, a community-focused technology company based in Portadown. Behind the scenes, FUEL has been giving back locally for years, particularly through education and support initiatives. FUEL chose to partner with Aspire because of our direct, in-school work with young people across the community who need support. They were particularly struck by the stark reality that fewer than 50% of students eligible for Free School Meals achieve five GCSEs at grade C or above, a figure that's 24% lower than their more advantaged peers.

"Aspire NI's mission aligns closely with our values, and we're excited to support their incredible work, from mentoring programmes to after-school support for students who need it most." Paul Trouton | CEO | FUEL

## What this partnership means

Currently, we work with over 350 young people across twenty-nine schools each week. Partnerships like this one enable us to better plan our finances and grow strategically.

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The maths behind our model is simple: each staff member, with the support of volunteers, can work with 10–15 young people per school, and cover up to five schools per week. To grow our impact, we simply need more staff members working in more schools, supported by more volunteers. FUEL is committed to helping us do just that, reaching more young people who urgently need support.

With over 103,000 children living in relative poverty in Northern Ireland, the need is great. These children face significantly lower chances of academic success compared to their better-off peers. But with the backing of local businesses, we can continue expanding our reach and give more young people across Northern Ireland a fair and equal chance at success.

"Businesses hold a significant place in our communities. They have a unique ability to support work like ours and create real, lasting impact. We're delighted to be partnering with FUEL to reach and support even more young people."

## The Results

We have the data to back up our impact, young people on the Aspire programme achieve GCSE results at a rate of 87%, compared to the national average of just 49% for students eligible for Free School Meals. It's a clear sign that, together with our partners, we are helping to close the educational attainment gap.

Aspire's uniform exchange program and back-to-school events remain key parts of our outreach, providing practical support to families in need across Craigavon and Belfast.

We have also continued to develop other meaningful partnerships with businesses, working alongside various organisations detailed below. These partnerships allow us to further our mission and provide greater opportunities for the young people we support.

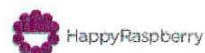
### Partners

**"...We are delighted to continue partnering with charities such as Aspire NI in breaking down the barriers that prevent equal access to education for young people."**



Allison Reid, Partner  
Gateley legal NI

Gateley / LEGAL



A&O SHEARMAN



EMTEK



We are grateful for the ongoing financial support from all our funders detailed in these financial statements.

We are proud of the success of our young people, with 86% of GCSE-age participants achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C—an improvement that reflects the hard work and dedication of both our team and the young people themselves.

Aspire has once again proven that with the right support, young people can thrive in school, in their communities, and beyond.

## Financial Review

The financial results for the current year are detailed in the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet. The organisation has been able to secure additional funding in the 2025 financial year from various sources, which has helped it expand its operations and take on more staff and expand operations into Belfast. Total income for the year was £244,429 up 20% on the 2024 income figure of £204,532. Total expenditure increased 28% in the year to £260,146 (2024 approx. £203,770). An overall deficit of £15,717 is reported this year (2024 surplus £762) because of these changes.

## Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of £36,365 (2024 - £49,915) and liabilities of £4,000 (2024 - £1,833). The net assets of the charity have decreased by £(15,717).

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### Reserves Position and Policy

#### Reserves Policy

From incorporation Aspire has been successful at raising sufficient funds to support its running costs. The purpose of Aspire is not to be a profit-making company, however it must remain sustainable to function and continue to aid the Children in need. The aim is to achieve a level of unrestricted free reserves equivalent to six months running costs, which the trustees believe is essential to maintain the stability of the organisation and continue to meet its aims and objectives.

#### Reference and Administrative details

##### Public Benefit

The Charity has considered the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities entered into during the year have helped to achieve the organisation's objectives and activities, as well as providing public benefit. The direct benefits which flow from our purposes include improvement in the wellbeing, self-esteem and opportunities for children from a lower income background. These benefits are demonstrated through our feedback from the children and their educational results. These purposes do not lead to harm. The charity's beneficiaries are the children from lower income families.

#### Trustees

The current trustees are as set out on page 3

Carol Little (Resigned 18 February 2025)  
David McBride (Resigned 18 February 2025)  
David Wylie (Resigned 18 February 2025)  
Ian Bingham (Resigned 18 February 2025) Leonard  
Adamson (Resigned 10 September 2025)  
Megan Collins  
Steven Allaway (Appointed 18 February 2025)  
Noeleen Floyd (Appointed 18 February 2025)  
Mark Hand (Appointed 18 February 2025)  
Maria Maguire (Appointed 18 February 2025)  
Gemma Managh (Appointed 18 February 2025)

In accordance with the Articles of Association, the trustees retire by rotation and being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

#### Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards

The charity engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Aspire (N.I.) subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2006
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 6/3/26 and signed on its behalf by:

  
Megan Collins

  
Steven Allaway

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# STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

for the financial year ended 31 August 2025

The trustees, who are also directors of Aspire (N.I.) for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees as the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law) including FRS102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland". Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the net income or expenditure of the charity for that period.


In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:


- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The trustees 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.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 6/3/26 and signed on its behalf by:

  
Megan Collins

  
Steven Allaway