

Trustee's Annual Report for the period of 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

Listening Ear



LISTENINGEAR

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NI Charity No: 108045

Public Benefit Reporting

To be a charity in Northern Ireland an organisation must have exclusively charitable purposes. One component of what makes a purpose charitable is that it is for the public benefit. This is known as the public benefit requirement. Public benefit is, therefore, at the heart of what makes an organisation a charity. By reporting on public benefit, charity trustees identify that their charity is effectively doing what it was set up to do and is making a positive difference to its beneficiaries. This should not be difficult for charity trustees of well governed charities to demonstrate. Public benefit reporting within the trustees' annual report gives the charity an opportunity to engage the reader and give them a good understanding of the impact the charity has had across the year. It is a tool to enhance accountability to all of the charity's stakeholders including its funders, donors, members and beneficiaries.

All registered charities must:

- report annually on how they have continued to meet the public benefit requirement and

- confirm that they have had due regard to guidance produced by the Commission.

Public benefits

The main purpose of Listening Ear is the advancement of health or the saving of lives. Through its range of mental health programmes to support those undergoing a mental health crisis, Listening Ear will help people improve their mental health and reduce the number of individuals at risk of suicide in Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on Newtownabbey. Health will be benefited through the opportunity for people to volunteer as part of the project either through answering phones, admin or supporting additional projects such as courses, food drives etc. This will benefit both the volunteer through improved community connections and reduction of isolation and those who avail of the services offered. Listening Ear is a mental health organisation. Our main focus is on supporting people through a mental health crisis and helping to provide individuals with the tools necessary in order to enable their mental health to improve. We offer a 24/7 emergency helpline for anyone undergoing a mental health crisis. The service is answered by people who have obtained at least their OCN Level 2 Listening Ear Empathetic Listening Training. We also offer the option for people to receive regular calls from a trained individual as a means of providing consistent support to anyone undergoing a period of mental ill-health or requiring additional support on a regular basis. We provide and

seek training on a regular basis in order to ensure are volunteers are well equipped to support our clients. We run courses and sessions related to mental health open to the public. This is in order to help de-stigmatise mental health, enable people to understand the myriad of mental health issues and causes, and support people to find the means to look at their own and others mental health. A second purpose of Listening Ear is the prevention or relief of poverty. Clients will benefit from the advice and support given by Listening Ear to help them obtain a better quality of life. This can be through support to alleviate debt, accessing benefits and budgeting. Clients will also benefit from the prevention of relief of poverty by accessing support to enable them to access work or to improve their skills to help them to progress to work with a higher financial gain. As a mental health charity we recognise the strong connection between poverty and mental ill-health. In so doing we believe it is vital that our clients are also given the support they need to enable them to move out of poverty. In order to do this we have volunteers trained in debt advice, housing advice and benefits advice. We provide support to help clients budget their spending. We also provide assistance to help people to re-enter the workplace when it is an appropriate time for them to do through helping with CVs and job searches and providing and/or signposting to relevant training. The benefits are demonstrated by the number of people availing of our phone line service either on a one-off basis for initial signposting or support, or on a regular basis in order to assist with their mental health recovery. Benefits are also noted in the increase of the number of volunteers, and the training they are able to avail of as part of their role. Often those availing in training participate in external groups such as local football teams, community groups etc and bring their new training to other aspects of community life. The benefits can also be demonstrated in the number of clients accessing debt, benefits and housing advice, availing of budgeting support and the increase in those entering new workplaces thanks to or job engagement opportunities and signposting. There is no harm arising from any of our purposes. Our charity's beneficiaries are far reaching. We aim to support anyone who approaches Listening Ear for support in Northern Ireland. An office based in a Neighbourhood Renewal area highlights the deep connection experienced between the impact of poverty and mental ill-health. Though our physical presence is embedded within this community, our phone service can be used by any person and we will aim to support every client no matter where they are. Though our direct beneficiaries tend to be adults, the knock-on effect often benefits younger people and children. In recognising this we both aim to provide additional support to the whole family structure where needed, including boosting financial stability where we can, but also by signposting to other relevant organisations with services complementing the needs of our

clients. The only private benefit flowing for the work of Listening Ear is that volunteers may also use the services provided and this is incidental and necessary because it allows people using the service to direct the work of the organisation based on their own experiences.

What Listening Ear does

Help and support the community with mental health, suicide prevention, drugs and alcohol, awareness welfare and debt management. To deliver support to all sections of the community ensuring not to exclude anyone based on religious beliefs, political opinions, sexual orientation, gender, socio economic background, age, race, disabilities/ abilities nor any other person within Northern Ireland Act 1998 section 75. To build capacity within the community by providing support, training and mentoring. To build community cohesion by helping address issues which are dividing families and communities. To provide a resource and a hub for intergenerational development and friendships. To address social isolation by the development of a Natter group and the Support and Survive group for those going through or have gone through the treatment of cancer. To partner with groups within the area to identify the needs of their members and work to address them. i.e. mobi changer, hoist and support of Abbey Allsorts. To act as a voice for the community and the individual when they feel they cannot be heard. To liaise with statutory bodies to build a better community and ensure civic pride develops within the area Supporting clients impacted by threats; liaise with PSNI, HE and Base 2.

Summary of work during 2024

- 24/7 mental health support telephone line.
- One to One meetings.
- Emergency walk in sessions.
- “Daily” calls.
- The provision of gas/ electricity vouchers, food vouchers and meat vouchers.
- The provision of white goods to those homeless or under threat of homelessness.
- Close work with the Community mental health team, voluntary and statutory groups.
- Welfare and debt advice.
- Housing support.
- Christmas: Preloved toys project, Santa’s Little Helpers project Christmas and New Year free food market.
- School uniform appeal.
- Community events to address loneliness and to engage the community.
- The provision of a free Community Friday
- Delivery of training courses including OCN Empathetic listening and drug and alcohol awareness
- The provision of free mental health counselling by a professional Mental Health Counsellor.
- Knit and Natter Group: dinners, tea dances, trips and weekly meetings.
- Men’s Group: history talks and trips.
- Commencement of 3D and VR headset project supported by SERC: developing a project for mental health support and youth intervention.
- Youth engagement with trips.
- Close work with intergenerational groups in the area.
- Active members of Thrive Newtownabbey.
- Direct engagement with those impacted by drug and alcohol addiction.

Regard to the Commissions Public benefit requirement statutory guidance (CCNI ARR08 June 2019)

The Charity Trustees of Listening Ear declare that they have had regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit and, additionally, to report on the activities the charity has carried out to further its purposes for the public benefit.

Listening Ear is a constituted organisation detailed within the "Listening Ear Constitution 26th March 2021"

Trustees during the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024

- **Brian Kerr**
- **Paula North**
- **Janine Caddell**
- **William Smallwood**
- **Samantha Wallace**

The procedure to select replacement Trustees is>

- Stated communication to all the Trustees giving 30 days notice detailing purpose of meeting.
- Nominees must be proposed and seconded by Trustees. On agreement of a proposed replacement Trustee two Trustees will be appointed to verify suitability of individual and report back at a meeting within the next month.
- On receipt of a favourable report from the scrutineers at the next meeting the replacement Trustee will be appointed and invited to the next meeting.

Listening Ear financial position at the end of the year

At the end of the 2024 year Listening Ear is in a good financial position.

- Currently there are no financial liabilities.
- Assets have decreased in value from £8355 in 2022 to £8000
- Restricted funds from grants increased during the period and where spend for the public benefit as per the Grant Funders guidelines.
- Reserves will be used to cover outgoings while awaiting payment from Funders.
- Reserves will be used for training of volunteers.
- Reserves will be used for the emergency support of service users.
- No funds are materially in deficit
- No funds are held by the charity as a Custodian trustee.

A summary description of the purposes of the charity.

Listening Ear is established for the following purposes.

- (1) To provide support and training to the Community on mental health, suicide prevention and drug & alcohol awareness.
- (2) To provide support to the community on debt and welfare advice.

2.2 In furtherance of these objectives Listening ear shall endeavour

- (1) To support a network of Listening Ear volunteers in the role that they undertake engaging with statutory bodies to build capacity both within and without the organisation.
- (2) To organise or assist in organising classes, lectures, meetings, exhibitions, tours, events, and activities consistent with the objectives of Listening Ear.
- (3) To increase the capacity and confidence of those attending Listening Ear courses.
- (4) To cooperate to such extent as may be necessary with voluntary and statutory agencies and inhabitants of the area of benefit to advance the said objectives.
- (5) To raise funds by way of donation, contributions, and other lawful methods.
- (6) To do all such other lawful things as may advance the above aims and objectives.

Signature of Trustee: *Brian Kerr*