



ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025

AWARE-NI.ORG



AWARE
OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.

**“ I CAN
TALK
ABOUT IT.”**



We believe you CAN.

It's good to talk. Take the first step.
aware-ni.org/ **LET'S-TALK**

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The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2025.

The financial statements have been prepared following the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts per the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (as amended by "Amendments to FRS 102 - Triennial Review - Incremental improvements and clarifications" for accounting periods commencing from 1st January 2019).

AWARE Defeat Depression, known as AWARE, 2 Crawford Square, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT48 7HR, Company No: NI 30447. Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland with charity registration number NIC100561.



WELCOME

from Bernard McAnaney, AWARE NI Chairperson

As another year passes for Team AWARE NI, I once again welcome the opportunity to reflect on what has been a very busy and often challenging twelve months. Our greatest challenge, of course, remains unchanged nearly thirty years since AWARE was founded in 1996. Then, our main focus was providing much-needed support groups for those affected by depression, anxiety and bipolar. Today, that commitment continues to sit firmly at the heart of AWARE NI's mission.

From small beginnings, we now provide 24 support groups across all six counties, delivering nearly 800 meetings during 2024/25. Uniquely, all of these groups are led by volunteers, many with their own personal experience of depression. This year, more than 70 volunteer facilitators, supported by our dedicated Support Services team, ensured that people affected by low mood, depression, anxiety and bipolar remain at the centre of our work.

A three-year research project on support groups concluded this year in collaboration with the Derry GP Federation, Ulster University, and our former Chair, Dr Patrick McKeon. This AWARE-sponsored study is an important milestone and will be published in late 2025. Particular thanks go to Dr McKeon and the Support Services team.

A few years into AWARE NI's journey, we recognised the need to broaden our reach, leading to the creation of our Education and Training programmes and more recently, our Communications team.

AWARE NI now delivers a suite of mental health awareness and support programmes. Last year, our schools' programmes reached more than 12,000 students and over 100 teachers and parents. Our workplace programmes engaged over 2,200 employees, and our community programmes reached a further 2,600 people - almost 18,000 in total.

Meanwhile, our Communications team continues to set the standard for our sector. It is now almost impossible to travel across Northern Ireland without encountering AWARE NI's messages on billboards across the country. The Investors in Mental Health initiative was again a highlight of the year, with 68 award winners drawn from schools, workplaces and communities.

Added to this are a range of campaigns, partnerships, factsheets and a strong digital presence - this year our website alone attracted 215,000 visits. It is little wonder that AWARE NI remains Northern Ireland's most widely-followed mental health charity on social media.

As challenges go, raising money for AWARE is certainly not an easy one. Our Fundraising team does an incredible job ensuring our voice is heard amid the many deserving causes competing for support in today's difficult economic climate. Last year, they raised an outstanding £622,466 - representing 40% of our total income, or nearly half of what it costs to deliver our services.

Quite simply, without the dedication of the fundraising team and the countless supporters who run marathons, walk for miles, abseil from tall buildings, plunge into cold seas, leap from aeroplanes, ditch the school uniform, or simply write a cheque, AWARE NI could not continue in its present form.

On behalf of all my colleagues on the AWARE NI Board of Trustees, I extend sincere gratitude and appreciation for the support and awareness AWARE NI continues to foster within our community.

“The year ahead will bring new opportunities and challenges, but I have no doubt that our volunteers and staff will rise to meet them.”

Bernard McAnaney
AWARE NI Chairperson





OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

Our Vision is for a future where everyone can openly discuss their mental health, access services appropriate to their needs, and develop the skills and knowledge to maintain positive mental health.

OUR VALUES

Our Values are that, above all else, we value our service users. We will treat everyone with dignity, respect and compassion. We are transparent in all our work and accountable to our stakeholders.

- **Dignity, respect and empathy:**

We will treat each other and our service users with dignity, respect and empathy.

- **Integrity, professionalism and transparency:**

We are committed to the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, and openness in all aspects of our work.

- **Innovation and excellence:**

We are committed to delivering high-quality services and driving innovation for the benefit of our users.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusivity:**

We are committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of our organisation through an intersectional lens.

OUR MISSION

- To promote emotional health and wellbeing.
- To help people build resilience and maintain positive mental health at every stage of their life journey.
- To ensure that individuals living with low mood, depression, anxiety, and bipolar are aware of and have access to appropriate support.
- To advocate for policies that facilitate access to appropriate support across Northern Ireland.

HOW DO WE EMBODY OUR VALUES?

- We will respect everyone we come into contact with.
- We will listen non-judgementally.
- We will be positive, polite and professional in our dealings with people.
- We will do what we say we will do.
- We will foster a culture that is caring and compassionate.
- We will lead by example.

Since 1996, AWARE NI has been working to offer support and education to all those in Northern Ireland affected by low mood, depression, anxiety and bipolar.

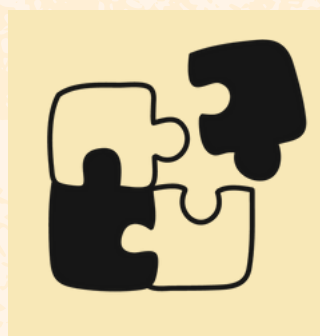
USER-LED

Those who best understand the challenges posed by depression, anxiety or bipolar, are those who have been personally affected. Therefore, we promote a strong user-led, self-help approach, and the organisation's culture is based on the active involvement of its service users, staff, and volunteers.



VOLUNTEERING

We place a high value on the importance of our volunteers who give up their time without financial gain to support others. We actively promote and reward volunteering across the work of the organisation.



CLINICAL STANDARDS

The clinical excellence of our programmes is paramount to our service delivery. The clinical governance of all our programmes and external messages is rigorous, ongoing, and embedded within our organisational culture.

OUR ETHOS

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We are committed to working with a wide range of groups, including those based in local communities, those representing a particular community of interest, and other sectoral organisations working with people experiencing mental health problems.



AWARE NI was founded by people with personal experience of depression, its negative impact on their lives and the lack of understanding and support available in the community at the time. This user-led ethos remains a key driver of the charity's work.

As stated in the Memorandum of Association, the charity's objectives are to improve the quality of life of people with, or at risk of, depression and their carers in Northern Ireland. This is to be achieved by:

- Relieving conditions of depression, bipolar and other mood disorders by the provision of mutual support, fellowship and counselling for persons who are or who have been suffering from such illnesses and their relatives.
- Promoting research into the causes, treatment and prevention of depressive illnesses and the dissemination of the valuable results of such research.
- Educating the public regarding depressive illnesses by promoting and encouraging public awareness of such illnesses.
- Acting as a national organisation for all matters concerning the relief of sufferers of depression and manic depressive illnesses and their families.

THE CHARITY'S WORK CURRENTLY INCLUDES:

- Mental health peer support groups are available in most main towns in NI.
- Online support groups providing accessible help no matter where you are.
- Telephone & email information services for advice, guidance and signposting.
- Free mental health resources, literature, and an interactive website.
- Free public talks, events, and community outreach across Northern Ireland.
- Programmes for families & young people (Mindful Parenting, Feel Good).
- 'Living Life to the Full', a life skills programme based on CBT concepts.
- 'Mood Matters', a mental health education programme delivered in schools, workplaces and community settings.
- 'Mental Health First Aid' training programme.
- Mindfulness programmes, including 'Paws b' and '.breathe', are delivered in schools and Mindful Parenting.
- 'My Mind & Me', a wellbeing programme for primary school children based on the 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' principles.
- eLearning modules and a range of workplace wellbeing services.

Professional Pathway

IAMAWARE: E-LEARNING PROGRAMME

An interactive e-learning programme that teaches attendees the key concepts around mental health and how to look after their own.

AGE
18+

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Designed to equip your staff with the skills and knowledge they need to help someone with a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis.



AGE
18+

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

A mental health awareness programme for managers equipping them with the skills and knowledge to support their employees' mental health.



AGE
18+

MOOD MATTERS WORKPLACE

A mental health awareness programme for employees delivered onsite in workplaces, helping participants to look after their mental health at work and in their home lives.

AGE
18+

MOOD MATTERS YOUNG PEOPLE

Looks at the 'Take 5 Approach to Wellbeing' to help young people build resilience and maintain positive mental health.



AGE
14-18

MOOD MATTERS ADULTS

Delivered in communities and workplaces. Helps participants learn to manage their mood and to maintain positive mental health.

AGE
18+



LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

A 6-week programme using CBT techniques. Participants learn practical skills to help them cope with life's challenges.

AGE
18+

AGE
18+

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness helps participants who experience stress find a healthy way to deal with it.



Personal Pathway



AGE
10-12

AGE
9-10

AGE
8-9

.BREATHE

Particularly well-suited to support the transition from primary to secondary school. Explores issues of attention, worry, sleep, and relationships.

PAWS B

A mindfulness course for primary schools to help children feel happier, calmer, and more fulfilled.

MY MIND AND ME

To teach children about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and to develop language and understanding around thoughts, feelings, emotions and healthy behaviours.

AGE
0-3

MOOD MATTERS PARENT AND BABY

Delivered to expectant parents and parents of children aged 0-3 years. This course looks at mental health during and after pregnancy.

Development Pathway

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



AWARE NI's Education and Training team plays a central role in promoting mental health awareness and equipping individuals with tools to support their emotional wellbeing. Our team now comprises five Education and Training Officers and four administrative staff members.

IN SCHOOLS

In 2024/25, our school-based programmes made a significant impact:

65	Delivered 65 'Paws b' mindfulness programmes to 1,443 primary pupils.
69	Delivered 69 'My Mind & Me' programmes to 1,515 primary pupils.
1	Ran 1 'Feel Good' programme for 120 young participants.
34	Delivered 34 '.breathe' mindfulness sessions to 648 post-primary pupils.
392	Provided 392 'Mood Matters Young People' programmes to 8,236 pupils.
46	Provided mindfulness training to 46 teachers and classroom assistants.
2	Delivered 2 Mental Health First Aid training sessions to 29 teachers.
43	Trained 43 parents through 6-week Mindful Parenting programmes.

IN WORKPLACES

Supporting employee mental health remained a strong focus:

24	Delivered 24 workplace wellbeing talks engaging 436 people.
62	Ran 62 Mood Matters in the Workplace sessions reaching 1,572 staff.
15	Ran 15 Supporting Employee Wellbeing programmes for 194 people.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Our outreach in communities across Northern Ireland included:

51	Delivered 51 Living Life to the Full programmes to 502 participants .
3	Ran 3 Living Life to the Full for Young People for 34 young individuals .
48	Delivered 48 Mental Health First Aid courses to 614 people .
2	Facilitated 2 Mental Health First Aid refresher sessions for 19 trainers .
3	Delivered 3 Mental Health First Aid refresher courses to 24 adults .
33	Provided 33 mindfulness programmes to over 300 adults .
61	Delivered 61 Mood Matters Adults sessions supporting 689 people .
55	Ran 55 Mood Matters Parent and Baby sessions for 443 parents .

VIA E-LEARNING

2	Provided 2 corporate partner packages to 35 employees
1	Delivered 1 school e-learning project to 1000 school staff members .
1	Delivered 1 trainer support programme to 45 sessional trainers .



**PUPILS AT ST MARY'S COMPLETED
.BREATHE MINDFULNESS TRAINING**

In 2024/25, AWARE NI's Education and Training programmes reached nearly 18,000 participants across schools, workplaces, and communities, continuing our mission to improve mental health awareness and provide practical tools for emotional wellbeing.

Schools and Young People

We continued to expand our work with young people, particularly in primary schools.

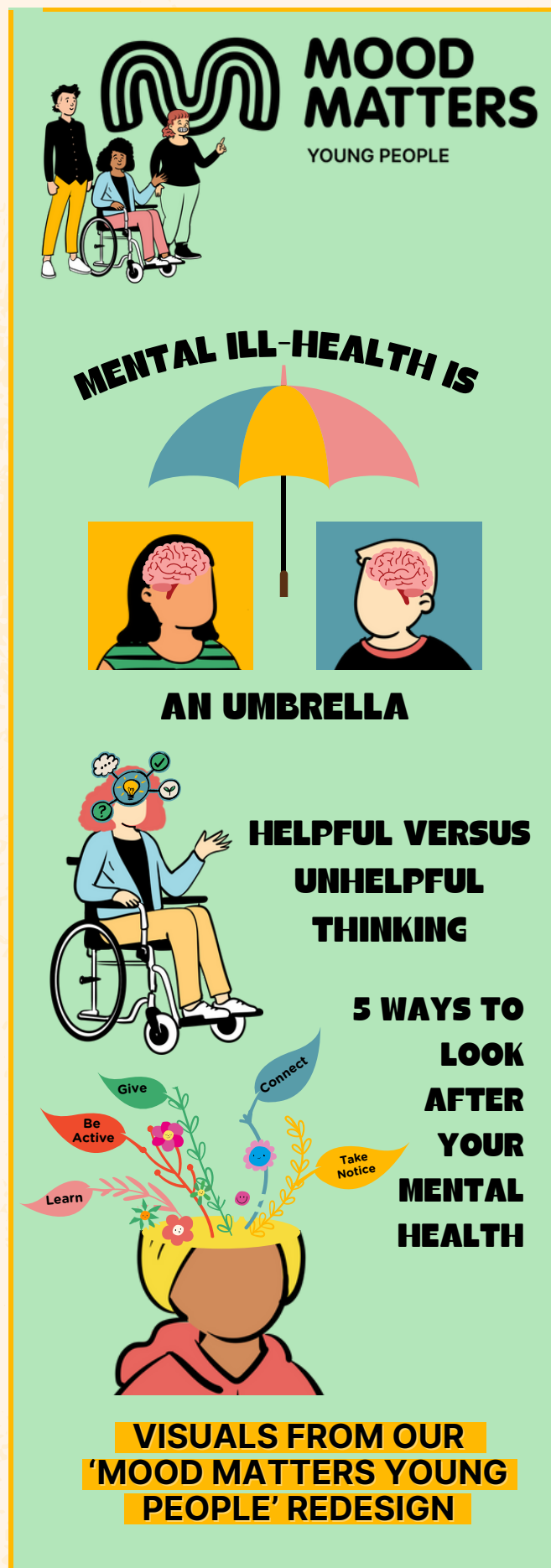
- Our 'My Mind and Me' programme, based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing, was delivered to 69 Primary 5 classes, engaging 1,515 pupils. Feedback from schools remains overwhelmingly positive.
- We launched our new 'Feel Good' programme, a single-session wellbeing workshop for 11–14-year-olds that combines mindfulness with the Five Ways to Wellbeing. It was successfully piloted with 120 pupils at a local secondary school.
- Work also began on a significant refresh of the Mood Matters Young People programme. Updates include refreshed content, updated statistics, a more trauma-informed approach, and redesigned slides. The full re-launch, along with trainer upskilling, is scheduled for 2025/26.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and Strategic Partnerships

In collaboration with the Public Health Agency, we played a key role in the development of Northern Ireland's Mental Health First Aid Refresher Programme.

This included:

- Training MHFA instructors
- Co-leading a successful pilot programme in partnership with Action Mental Health.



Community Engagement and Collaboration

Working in partnership remained a key theme throughout the year. We worked with a range of organisations, including:

- Diabetes UK
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- WRDA (Women's Resource and Development Agency)
- The Ma's Project (Maternal Advocacy Support)

These collaborations helped us tailor and adapt our programmes to meet the specific needs of diverse client groups.

Our commitment to perinatal mental health continued through:

- Participation in regional steering and implementation groups
- Providing guidance to health professionals via the specialist perinatal section of our website
- Ongoing distribution of our perinatal resource, which remains in high demand in antenatal clinics and Sure Start centres

Workplace Wellbeing

Our workplace training portfolio continued to evolve in response to changing work environments and mental health priorities.

Highlights include:

- Ongoing delivery of core programmes such as Mood Matters in the Workplace, Supporting Employee Wellbeing, and Workplace Mindfulness
- Continued collaboration with the Public Health Agency to deliver Mental Health First Aid and pilot the new Refresher Programme
- Updates to training content to reflect current best practice and relevant data





We also:

- Refined and updated our e-learning platform, iAmAWARE – including a streamlined Introduction to Mental Health module and new multimedia content
- Secured CPD accreditation for our first iAmAWARE module, with more to follow in 2025/26
- Delivered seven corporate e-learning packages to a total of 280 employees
- Began preliminary research into developing a workplace wellbeing webinar model for future delivery
- Entered early development of a new AWARE NI Workplace Wellbeing Hub, to be launched via our updated website

Our flexible delivery model, offering face-to-face, online, and e-learning formats, ensures that we can meet the needs of all business sectors in today's hybrid working world.

The Education and Training team continues to build strong relationships with employers across Northern Ireland. Working closely with our Fundraising team, they promote mental health training and advocate for workplace wellbeing through:

- **Sponsorships**
- **Charity of the Year partnerships**
- **Engagement at major corporate events**

These efforts not only raise awareness of AWARE NI's work but also generate vital income to support our wider services.

The only thing more
exhausting than being
depressed is pretending
that you're not.

Let's Talk

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING LOW MOOD, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY OR BIPOLAR?

You are not alone. Things can get better.

**Our free-to-attend mental health support groups can help
you manage your feelings and meet other people who
understand you.**

**We have 24 support groups across Northern Ireland,
including three online.**

To find the support group nearest to you please scan the QR code below



SUPPORT SERVICES & COMMUNITY OUTREACH



AWARE NI's Support Services team continues to provide vital advice, information, and emotional support to individuals living with low mood, depression, anxiety, bipolar, and related mental health conditions. This is delivered through our network of peer support groups (both in-person and online), public talks, information outreach, and support mail and calls.

This year saw some key staffing changes as our Head of Support Services and Administrator moved onto new roles. We were also pleased to welcome a new Administrator and an additional Support Services Officer to the team. Due to financial pressures, we had to take the difficult decision to make redundant our Outreach Workers. They provided great value to the promotion and awareness of our services, and we are grateful for their dedication and contributions to community engagement across Northern Ireland.

Support Group Survey Insights

In August 2024, we conducted our biennial anonymous survey of support group users. The response rate more than doubled from 2022, with 158 participants sharing valuable feedback on the service's impact.

Key findings include:

- 98% said the groups helped them manage anxiety, 96% reported benefits for depression, and 95% for isolation

- 91% felt the groups helped them cope with thoughts that life is not worth living
- 98% found the groups beneficial overall (76% "very", 22% "some-what")
- 83% had no difficulty returning after their first meeting
- 97% would recommend the groups to others

Participants described the groups as unique due to:

- The peer support model, fostering companionship and connection
- The safe, non-judgemental environment
- Free access with no waiting lists
- The skill and empathy of facilitators

This feedback is instrumental in shaping and improving our services.



Peer Support Research Project

We continued our three-year Support Group Research Project in collaboration with Derry GP Federation and Ulster University, with final findings due for publication shortly.

Preliminary results show:

- Frequent group attendance significantly improved self-reported depression and anxiety
- Those attending more than twice in four weeks had lower scores on GAD-7, PHQ-9, and HAM-D scales
- Participants reported increased confidence in seeking help and improved coping strategies

We look forward to using this data to inform best practice, secure future funding, and promote our impact more widely.

Our Impact & Volunteers

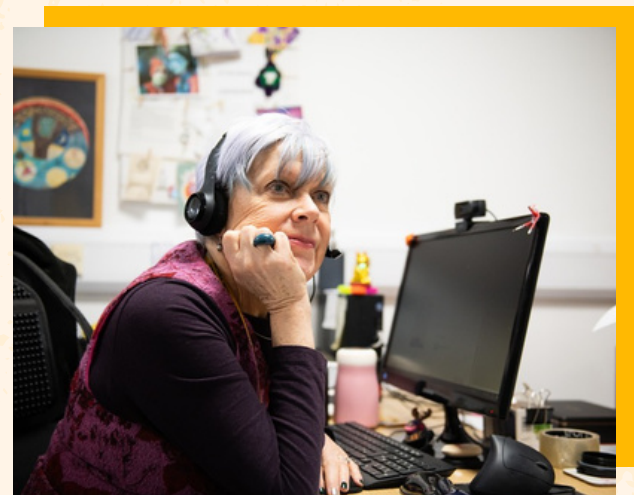
Our volunteers remain the heart of Support Services. This year, over 70 volunteer facilitators delivered compassionate, peer-led support across NI. To enhance support, we introduced monthly online peer supervision with built-in training components, and we've seen a welcome increase in younger people volunteering.

Thanks to our volunteers, we operate 24 peer support groups, including three online.

In 2024/25, we:

- Held 1,092 support group meetings
- Recorded 6,443 attendances
- Responded to 1,659 support emails
- Answered 621 support calls

We also expanded our online provision, adding a third online group - a new evening session that's been especially valued by people unable to attend during the day.



Group Development

We're seeing positive growth in previously lower-attendance areas:

- Our Strabane group relocated to The Koram Centre in January 2025. The new venue has boosted engagement and referrals.
- In Enniskillen, increased attendance and a strong facilitator team led us to shift from fortnightly to weekly meetings.



Training and Capacity Building

To respond to changing user needs, we provided specialist training for our facilitators in:

- ADHD
- Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD)
- Bipolar
- LGBTQIA+ awareness
- Cultural competence

We also hosted an in-house ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) course in August 2024, supporting facilitators in suicide prevention skills.

Outreach and Engagement

Our community outreach remains a core strand of support delivery:

- 201 information outreach events and presentations reached an estimated 21,334 participants
- We hosted three public talks in Derry, Lurgan, and Belfast in collaboration with partners including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Foyle Port, and Macmillan Cancer - all of which received excellent feedback

OUR VOLUNTEERS HELPING US MAKE A SPLASH AT OUR FUNDRAISING EVENTS!



Support Group Attendee Report 2024



Demographics of Attendees

158 support group users completed the survey between 31/07/24 and 5/09/24.

2.2x as many as 2022

53% of respondents were female.

44% of respondents were male.

56% of respondents were aged 45-64.

30% of respondents were aged 25-44.



Impact of Support Groups

Almost all participants found the support groups helped with their feelings of:

Anxiety: **98%**

Depression: **96%**

Isolation: **95%**

76% of respondents found attending the support groups very beneficial overall.

22% of respondents found it somewhat beneficial.

How & Why People Use Support Groups

Most respondents self-referred to the support groups:



18% of respondents found us through social media or search engines.



15% of respondents found us through recommendation from family or friends.

The majority of respondents attended the groups to help manage their depression **81%**, anxiety **78%**, or low mood **62%**.

Other reasons for attending included trauma, grief or bereavement, bipolar, OCD, ADHD, autism, and personality disorders.

83% of respondents found they did not have any difficulty returning to the support group after their first meeting.

The majority of respondents had attended a support group for 2 years or longer **40%**, followed by those who attended for 1 to 2 years **21%**.

The Best Things About Support Groups



Being able to relate to others.



Having a confidential, non-judgmental and safe place to talk.



Feeling understood and supported.



Hearing about different experiences from other people.

What Makes an AWARE NI Support Group Unique?



THAT IT IS A PEER SUPPORT MODEL

OUR SKILLED & CARING FACILITATORS

OUR GROUPS ARE FREE TO ATTEND AND OPEN TO ALL

97%

of respondents said they would recommend the support groups to others

What Changes Would Respondents Like to See?

EXPANDED BRIDGING SERVICES

MORE GROUPS AND LONGER/MORE FREQUENT SESSIONS

COMMUNICATIONS



In 2024/25, the Communications Team played a pivotal role in promoting AWARE NI's services, driving public awareness of mental health, and strengthening our organisational voice across Northern Ireland. Our digital platforms now serve as a vital extension of our support services, allowing us to educate, inspire, and connect with people far beyond physical settings.

Campaigns, Projects, and Partnerships

Back to Life, Back to Normality Programme:

We produced a powerful video feature showcasing the transformative impact of this initiative, supported by GSK King's Fund funding. The film captured the real-life stories behind the programme, underlining its benefits for participants.



By Your Side Campaign:

In collaboration with the Fundraising team, we launched a storytelling campaign centred on three emotionally resonant videos exploring the impact of peer support. The videos achieved over 32,000 views, 100+ shares, and nearly 600 reactions. Feedback highlighted how audiences connected deeply with the central character, helping reduce stigma and build empathy around mental ill-health.



The IMH campaign secured 13 press articles and 238 social media mentions, significantly raising AWARE NI's profile.

Investors in Mental Health Awards:

We introduced a new structured application and tiered awards system. Engagement was high, especially from schools. In total, 68 award winners were recognised for their positive contributions to mental health in education, workplaces, and communities.

Express Yourself Poetry Competition:

Over 100 primary schools registered to take part in this initiative encouraging P6 and P7 pupils to express their emotions through poetry. The campaign was supported by Isla McManus, a young local singer, whose ambassadorship helped boost engagement and reach.

Mood Matters Redesign:

We gave our Mood Matters Adults programme a refreshed, brand-consistent visual identity. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and work is now underway to revamp Mood Matters Young People in a similar style.

Factsheet Updates:

We began updating our suite of factsheets with cohesive, modern visuals. A new factsheet on menopause and mental health was launched to expand our resource offering and reflect evolving public health conversations.

Mental Health All-Party Group:

AWARE NI proudly took over the Secretariat role from MindWise on World Mental Health Day 2024. We've since launched a survey examining the impact of menopause on mental health, with findings to be compiled into a report aimed at informing future policy through lived experience.

Maternal Mental Health Advocacy:

As part of our involvement in the Everyone's Business Campaign and the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, we continued to advocate for a dedicated Mother and Baby Unit in Northern Ireland. Progress has been encouraging, with movement toward securing both capital and revenue funding. We also continued campaigning for improved perinatal care guided by women's voices and the lived experiences of local families.

Support Group Survey Campaign:

We designed and launched our Support Group Survey findings as part of Time to Talk Day, generating significant media attention with a combined press reach of over 300,000.

World Bipolar Day Campaign:

A heartfelt video feature with supporter Emma-Jayne, sharing her lived experience with bipolar disorder and wellness strategies, resonated widely. It reached 5,400 users via social media and was featured on Belfast Live, reaching 137,000 readers with 4.1 million site visits, amplifying our message and helping reduce stigma.



TEAM AWARE NI AT INVESTORS IN MENTAL HEALTH 2024



DIGITAL & MEDIA REACH 24/25

DURING 2024/2025:

 Our website had **215,000 visits** from **62,000 unique users**

 Our Facebook network reached **28,227 followers**

 Our Instagram community rose to **7,876 followers**

 Our YouTube channel recorded **10,862 views**

 AWARE NI appeared in **506 online and press articles**

 AWARE NI were featured in **5 radio and TV interviews**

 LinkedIn reached **3,637 followers**, with **1,848 newsletter subscribers**

 On TikTok we surpassed **1,000 followers**, with a total of **2,562 likes**

**Our combined social
media following grew to a
whopping 50,246
- that's a 5% increase!**

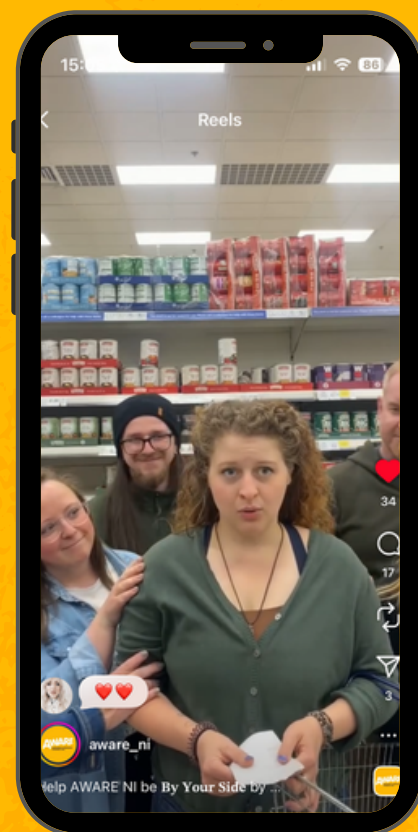




This year, we launched our new fundraising campaign, By Your Side, inviting our community to stand with us in supporting mental health across Northern Ireland.

We have already seen a remarkable 16% increase in attendance at our support groups, a powerful reminder of the vital role these services play in people's lives. To keep these groups running throughout 2024, we need to raise £70,000.

As part of the campaign, we created three powerful videos that highlight the transformative impact of peer support, sharing real stories of hope, connection, and resilience. These stories bring to life why our work matters - and why we're asking people to be By Our Side.



**Scan the QR code
to watch the videos**



INCOME GENERATION

In 2024/25, AWARE NI raised £605,216 through fundraising activity. While this figure represents a decrease from the previous year, it reflects a challenging fundraising environment experienced across the sector. Despite this, the generosity and determination of our supporters remained a powerful force, enabling us to deliver our vital mental health services throughout Northern Ireland.

Events and Challenge Fundraising

Challenge events remained a cornerstone of our fundraising programme, raising a total of £150,000. Our flagship Giant Steps Coastal Walk, now in its third year, was sponsored by Henry Brothers and attracted just under 500 participants across the 26, 13, and 7-mile routes. Together, they raised an extraordinary £59,000, embodying community spirit and commitment to mental health support.

The festive season brought with it the return of our Santa Abseil at the Europa Hotel. This daring and cheerful event saw participants descend the iconic building in Santa suits, capturing hearts and attention while raising £30,000. Other exciting events throughout the year included the Jungle Olympics, the Derry City Hotel Abseil, and the Benone Sea Splash, all attracting enthusiastic individuals, families, and employees from corporate partners.

We were uplifted by the courage of those who took on skydives and marathon challenges throughout the year. Skydives contributed £9,000, while marathon fundraisers generated £42,000.

A heartfelt thank you to all involved, particularly the incredible students and staff of Friends School, Lisburn, whose participation in the Belfast City Marathon alone raised a phenomenal £16,500.



Corporate Fundraising

Corporate support was once again a major pillar of our income generation, contributing £142,885 in 2024/25. We are deeply thankful to our corporate partners for their steadfast commitment to mental health and community wellbeing. Their dedication, generosity, and active participation make a lasting difference.

We extend special thanks to our long-standing partners MacNaughton Blair and Hastings Hotels, whose year-round support includes both vital financial contributions and invaluable in-kind assistance.

Our two-year partnership with FinTrU concluded this year, having raised an outstanding £200,000. Their staff enthusiastically engaged in AWARE NI events and hosted a wide range of fundraising activities from regular giving, quizzes, and walking challenges. This partnership was deservedly recognised with a Highly Commended award at the 2025 Institute of Fundraising Awards, celebrating its impact on both fundraising and mental health awareness.

We also wish to acknowledge the continued support of partners including KPMG, Todds Insurance, Wilson Nesbitt, BT Digital, Urban HQ, Essential Design Group, and Trouw Nutrition. Your efforts truly help us to bring mental health support into the heart of local communities.



Community Fundraising

Community spirit shone brightly throughout 2024/25, playing a vital role in our fundraising success. While the year began at a slower pace, support quickly gathered momentum, particularly around Mental Health Awareness Day, when our new By Your Side campaign inspired a wave of action. This appeal invited individuals, schools, and groups from across Northern Ireland to fundraise in support of AWARE NI's local, peer-led support groups, and they responded with energy, compassion, and creativity.

We were especially moved by the dedication shown by schools, whose pupils and staff organised events ranging from non-uniform days to wellness walks. Their enthusiasm not only raised essential funds but also sparked vital conversations about mental health among young people.

Local sports clubs also stepped up, with a highlight being our new partnership with Derry GAA, launched during the County Finals in October. The campaign generated significant community engagement and awareness, demonstrating the powerful role sport can play in promoting mental wellbeing.

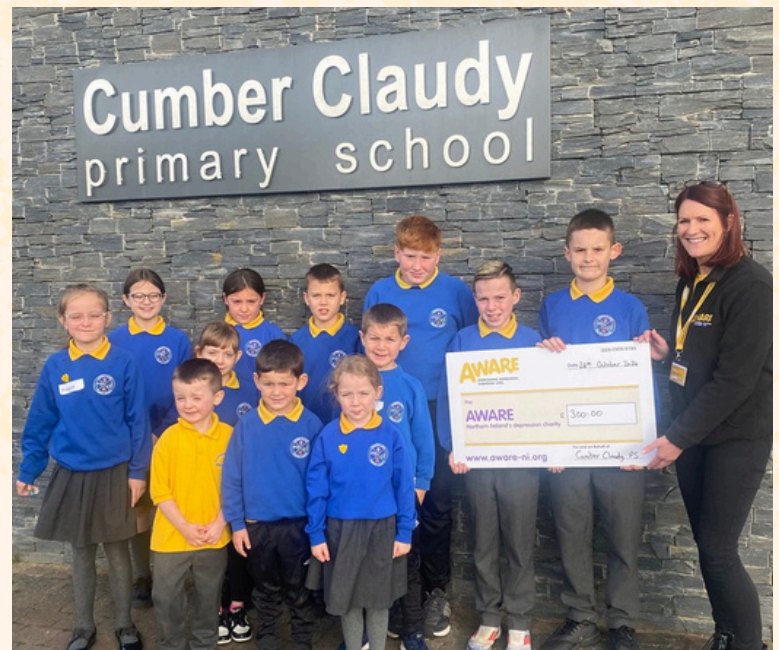
Meanwhile, individuals and families across the country hosted coffee mornings, organised raffles, and took part in festive collections - proving once again that grassroots efforts make a big impact.

Thanks to this groundswell of community support, Community Fundraising raised a total of £116,000. This income is a direct reflection of the generosity, initiative, and solidarity shown by people of all ages and backgrounds, coming together to ensure AWARE NI's services remain free and accessible to those who need them.

Individual Giving

Individual donors continued to be a vital part of our income generation strategy. General donations accounted for £113,000, while regular givers contributed £5,000, and In Memory donations raised £13,500. We are truly grateful to every person who chose to support AWARE NI, whether through one-time gifts or ongoing generosity.





Our income from Trusts and Foundations in 2024/25 totalling £328,634.
This includes income from:

- John Atcheson Foundation
- Ulster Garden Villages
- The Grace Trust
- Enkalon Foundation
- GSK
- Kate Lagan Foundation
- Radius Housing
- Inner City Trust
- Eoin Henry Foundation
- JD Foundation
- The Fuellers Charitable Trust
- The Honourable Irish Society
- Dorina Lady Dunleath Charitable Trust
- St James Place



We are deeply grateful for the unwavering support and incredible efforts of our donors. Their passion, creativity, and hard work are the lifeblood of our organisation, enabling us to continue providing essential local mental health support services.

Looking to the future, we aim to further enhance our fundraising initiatives and aim to encourage even more individual and group efforts. Together, we can build on this year's success and continue to make a significant impact.

From skydivers and marathon runners, to school fundraisers, corporate champions, and individual donors, your support allows AWARE NI to stand by people in their time of need. On behalf of our staff, volunteers, and everyone we serve, thank you for being by our side during this special 24/25 year.



FINANCIAL REVIEW

TOTAL INCOME	£1,533,101
Donations & Gifts	£605,216
Grant Funding	£472,528
Trusts & Foundations	£328,634
Workshops & Courses	£117,815
Investments	£8,908

TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£1,637,490
Charitable Activities	£1,245,782
Raising Funds	£391,708

The spend on charitable activities was **76%** of the total spend.

RESERVES

At 31st March 2025, AWARE NI holds total reserves of £836,950. During 2024/2025, we made use of reserves to the value of £272,091.

This was spent on the development of the following key areas as planned:

- £54,755 for unfunded support groups
- £16,700 for additional programme delivery
- £25,042 for communications activity, including campaigns and Investors in Mental Health
- £3,366 on further development of our e-learning products
- £35,250 on infrastructure development (CRM)
- £88,137 for office running costs
- £25,435 for corporate costs
- £23,406 on capital investments

The use of reserves was partially replenished in year, and we ended the year with a deficit of £104,389.

Reserves have been designated within the 2025/26 budget to produce a balanced budget position for the year alongside challenging fundraising targets.

The Trustees consider it prudent to hold monies in reserve if unforeseen circumstances lead to financial difficulties that might jeopardise the future of its employment capacity, users' wellbeing and general charitable work.

The Trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation and established a formal policy which stipulates that free reserves be maintained at a level which ensures that the charity's core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty. The Trustees define free reserves as unrestricted income funds freely available for use as the charity determines and excludes any funds committed, invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity and restricted or designated funds.

Based on 2025/26 budgeted expenditure (excluding depreciation) and the Board update to our reserves policy, the target level of unrestricted reserves is £400,203 - £800,405.

Of our current reserves of £836,950 this includes £123,295 of redundancy contingency and £280,147 other designated reserves.

Designated reserves have been allocated to enable the following:

- £79,576 for unfunded support groups
- £13,950 for additional programme delivery
- £17,761 for communications activity, including campaigns and Investors in Mental Health
- £30,000 on infrastructure development (CRM).
- £87,700 for office running costs
- £22,970 for corporate costs
- £20,490 on capital investments
- £3,700 on further development of our e-learning products
- £4,000 on evaluation of services

We have designated reserves totalling £403,442, leaving free reserves of £433,508.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Looking to the remaining 4 years of our strategic plan for 2024-2029, we have identified key themes as follows:



CONNECTION

We have identified several priorities for this year:

- Maintain our Support Group network and outreach services and grow attendances.

- Promote access to our workplace services and opportunities for practice sharing.

- Giving greater attention to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

- Focusing on our engagement with volunteers.

We will maintain our focus structurally on:

- Investing in our staff and volunteers.

- Developing further our CRM to support with stakeholder engagement and communications, programme monitoring and review, and finance/fundraising management.

- Securing diverse generation to drive fundraising to meet the needs of our service users.



CHANGE



COMMUNITY



FINANCE & FUNDRAISING

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Aware Defeat Depression (trading as AWARE) is a company limited by guarantee and accepted as charitable by HMRC under reference XR 11534. The company was incorporated on 7th February 1996. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the company and is governed by its Articles of Association. The liability of members is limited in that every member of the company undertakes to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 in the event of the company being wound up.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements, were:

- Mr Bernard McAnaney (Chairperson)
- Ms Helen McDonnell (Vice Chair)
- Mrs Rachael Lees (Treasurer)
- Mr Joe Mahon (Secretary)
- Dr Josephine Deehan
- Mr Alan Robinson
- Ms Alex Murdock
- Ms Marianne Downing
- Mrs Sophy Irwin
- Mr Tommy Monteith

The Trustees meet every 2 months as a full Board. We have subcommittees for Clinical Governance and Finance. These subcommittees meet quarterly. The terms of reference and chair of these groups are reviewed periodically.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF THE TRUSTEES

The charity Trustees are also Directors of the company. A Trustee is initially elected for a term of three years in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Trustees may be re-elected if they are so willing and accepted by the Board, serving up to a maximum of 9 years.

CORPORATE AND CLINICAL GOVERNANCE

The Board ensures the organisation complies with the relevant legislation and good practice. The Board supports a clinical governance and finance support group to support this. The Board also engages service users directly through our Locality Planning structures. The Locality Planning groups meet regularly to review activities in local areas and with the staff team to suggest and explore development opportunities. The Board has a schedule for the regular review of all programmes of work, policies and procedures, including an ethical policy regarding our fundraising initiatives and partnerships. We have a schedule of all organisational policies reviewed on a 3-yearly cycle.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the charity's administration and meets bi-monthly. A Chief Executive, appointed by the Board, manages day-to-day operations with delegated authority over employment, project delivery, and budgetary matters.

In 2024/25, the organisation undertook a staffing review, focusing primarily on the SMT but also affecting other areas. This was driven by financial pressures and the need to sustain services within a constrained budget. In early 2025, the Board approved specific redundancies and the introduction of a revised organisational structure.

While the process was challenging, the organisation entered 2025/26 with a more sustainable and fit-for-purpose structure. We look forward to welcoming a new Head of Operations and an Education & Training Manager in summer 2025, and congratulate two internal staff members on their promotions. We also extend our sincere thanks to the outgoing Heads of Education & Training for their dedication and service to AWARE NI.

DIRECTORS' INDUCTION AND TRAINING

All new Directors are given an induction by the Chairperson and Chief Executive and provided with an induction pack which includes the following documents:

- Strategic Plan
- Descriptions of the role of Directors and/or Office Bearers
- Profile of the charity
- Charity literature
- Staff profiles and biographies

Directors are offered additional training e.g., in committee skills, finance management, child protection, data protection, strategic planning etc.

During 2023/24 we delivered specific training for the Board on Keeping Children & Adults Safe, Understanding Charity Finances and Understanding our Governing document. The Board also led on the process for development of a new Strategic Plan 2024-2029.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In accordance with good practice, the charity has developed a Risk Management Policy and procedure and regularly completes risk assessments in relevant areas. A Corporate Risk Register has been drawn to prioritise the risks requiring action. The Risk Register is reviewed and updated bi-annually by the Board and quarterly within the senior management team or as soon as a potential threat is identified. Analysis for each risk is detailed in the Risk Register, with the controls currently in place to mitigate the risk and the further actions required to minimise the risk. We have a streamlined Risk Action Plan, which the SMT reviews monthly to ensure action on priority tasks. This year, we have specifically updated the policy and training on Lone Working.

AUDITOR

Harbinson Mulholland, a Belfast-based company, was appointed as auditor for AWARE NI. This appointment is for a 3-year period until March 2026.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO THE AUDITOR

Each of the Trustees has confirmed that there is no information they are aware of that is relevant to the audit but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and establish that the auditor is aware of it.

THANK YOU

We want to thank our staff, volunteers, service users, supporters, fundraisers, donors, ambassadors, campaigners and partners for all you have done to support AWARE NI this year.

We appreciate your ongoing efforts to support people living with mental ill-health in Northern Ireland. We couldn't do what we do without you, and we're looking forward to another great year!



aware-ni.org

BELFAST OFFICE : 40-44 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GG

DERRY/LONDONDERRY OFFICE : 2 Crawford Square, Londonderry/Derry, BT48 7HR

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