



Annual Report

2022 / 2023

aware-ni.org

AWARE
OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.

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

Let's Talk

Take the first step.
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AWARE
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The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2022.

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, 15 Queen Street, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT48 7EQ
Company No: NI 30447. Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland : NIC100561**



Welcome

from Bernard McAnaney, AWARE Chairperson

As we reflect on the past year, it becomes evident why AWARE has been busier than ever. Mental health issues have constantly been in the headlines, whether it's a well-known personality speaking out about their struggles or the alarming lack of resources to meet the ever-growing demand for support services.

In April 2022, the Mental Health Foundation published a report indicating that 70% of our adult population had experienced a mental health problem in the last 12 months. A joint report with the London School of Economics and Political Science revealed that diagnosable mental health problems cost the Northern Irish economy £3.4 billion annually, while the Northern Ireland Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031 called for a £1.2 billion investment over ten years. Unfortunately, the lack of an Executive and the funding deficit in Northern Ireland's public services put the strategy at risk, not just currently but for the next decade.

More than ever, the support and services provided by our volunteers and staff continue to make a positive difference to our communities recovering from the Covid pandemic and now struggling with the cost of living hikes. As detailed in this report, all our departments were exceptionally busy.

The Education and Training team reached over 17,000 participants during the year, and it was encouraging to see the reintroduction of face-to-face service delivery. The growth of our programmes for schools and young people has been remarkable, with over 10,000 young individuals participating in the 'Mood Matters Young People' programme alone. Notably, the 'Back to Life, Back to Normality' project has been instrumental in handling the heavy case-loads of GP mental health cases.

Despite the challenges faced during Covid, our support groups managed to stay active, thanks to the dedication of the Support Services team and our volunteer group facilitators. Encouraging young adults to engage with our support groups has been a challenge, but we plan to build on the success of the Newtownards Young Adult (18-30yrs) group, redesigning the model based on valuable

feedback from focus groups. Recognising the importance of our peer-led support groups, we have initiated a research project in partnership with the University of Ulster to study their benefits.

You'll find us everywhere! AWARE's reach has expanded significantly, thanks to our Communications team. We are the most widely followed mental health charity in Northern Ireland, with a presence on platforms like our website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, billboards, and now even TikTok. One of the year's highlights was the Investors in Mental Health Awards, where we celebrated the contributions of schools, businesses, and fundraisers to promoting good mental health with 200 guests.

The award-winning Fundraising team has successfully attracted generous corporate sponsors and created exciting events like Giant Steps along the Causeway Coast. However, the community's capacity for giving has been affected by the cost of living crisis, resulting in lower-than-predicted funds raised. Going forward, AWARE's spending plans must consider the challenges fundraisers face in the current financial environment.

All of the accomplishments mentioned above come at a cost. In 2022/23, our total income was £1.28 million, while our total expenditure was £1.69 million, resulting in a deficit of

approximately £400,000. Although the charity's reserves covered this overspending, it's clear that we can't sustain these deficit levels in the future. The incoming year will bring significant financial challenges for staff, senior management, and the Board.

This year, we bid farewell to some long-standing contributors to AWARE. Tom McEneaney retired after 26 years of loyal service. Through his legendary networking skills and knowledge of the third sector, he made a lasting contribution to the development of the charity. Brendan Armstrong, a trustee for many years, significantly shaped our programmes with his experience as a Cognitive Behaviour Therapist and teacher. Jarlath McCreanor, who openly shared his own mental health journey, provided invaluable contributions during the Covid pandemic and remains an esteemed member of the AWARE team.

On a positive note, we welcomed three new trustees, Nicola Naughton, Marianne Downey, and Alan Robinson, whose diverse skill sets will enhance the effectiveness of the Board.

Lastly, on behalf of our staff, sessional workers, and fellow trustees, I extend heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the AWARE army of volunteers who tirelessly run support groups and raise funds year in and year out. Without your dedication, there would be no AWARE, so please continue to make a difference.

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 MISSION

Our Mission is to:

- Promote emotional health and wellbeing
- Help people build resilience and maintain positive mental health
- Ensure people with depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder are aware of and can access appropriate support
- Increase public understanding of depression and reduce the stigma surrounding the illness

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 providing high-quality services and to being innovative for the benefit of people using our services.

AWARE has been working since 1996 to support people in Northern Ireland affected by depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder.

USER-LED

Those who best understand the challenges faced by people affected by depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder are those who have been affected by it themselves. 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. Clinical governance of all our programmes and external messages is rigorous, ongoing and embedded within the organisational culture.

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 that work with people who may be experiencing mental health problems.

OUR BEHAVIOURS

- We will respect everyone we come into contact with
- We will listen non-judgmentally
- 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.

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
- Educating the public regarding depressive illnesses by promoting and encouraging public awareness of such illnesses
- Promoting research into the causes, treatment and prevention of depressive illnesses and the dissemination of the valuable results of such research
- Acting as a national organisation for all matters concerning the relief of sufferers of depression and manic depressive illnesses and their families

AWARE 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.

The charity's work currently includes:

- Mental health peer support groups in most main towns in Northern Ireland
- Online support groups
- Email support services
- A wide range of free resources and literature on various mental health issues
- Free public talks and other events on depression and related issues
- Information outreach events in communities across Northern Ireland
- Living Life to the Full, a unique life skills programme based on CBT concepts
- Mood Matters, an education programme delivered in schools, workplaces and community settings
- Mental Health First Aid training programme
- Mindfit, a programme provided to sporting organisations
- Mindfulness programmes, including Paws b, delivered in primary schools
- My Mind & Me - a newly-developed primary school wellbeing programme based on the 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' principles
- An interactive website offering information and resources

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

▼ PELIN AND HANNAH
AT OMAGH PRIDE





Education & Training

AWARE's Education and Training department plays a vital role in raising awareness of common mental health issues and equipping people with tools to look after their emotional wellbeing. We have had a successful year, expanding our programme offerings and reach. As we approached the retirement of our esteemed Head of Education and Training, Pat Lynch, in May, we adapted the leadership structure of our team to adopt a regional approach to delivering services. We warmly welcomed Stephen McCrudden as our new Head of Education & Training (West), working out of our Derry/Londonderry office. Stephen works alongside Marina McCully, who manages the Education and Training team in the East from our Belfast office. We expanded our team further and it now comprises of seven training officers and five administrative staff members. Additionally, we recruited and trained 18 talented sessional trainers to deliver our programmes.

During 2022/23, we achieved the following:

In schools

75	Delivered 75 'Paws b' mindfulness programmes to 1,500 pupils in primary schools
2	Introduced 2 'My Mind and Me' programmes for primary schools
22	Conducted 22 'breathe' mindfulness programmes for post-primary schools, reaching 550 pupils
540	Delivered 540 'Mood Matters Young People' programmes to over 10,000 young individuals in schools and other suitable settings
29	Trained 29 teachers in an 8-week mindfulness programme
5	Provided 'Paws b' training to 5 teachers and classroom assistants, enabling the integration of mindfulness practice into the school culture
2	Organised two teacher focus groups to support teachers with 'Paws b' delivery in schools.

In the community

73	Conducted 73 'Living Life to the Full' programmes for over 565 participants in community settings
90	Delivered 90 'Mental Health First Aid' programmes to over 950 participants
2	Delivered two 'Mindfit' programmes
117	Offered 117 mindfulness programmes to over 790 adults
96	Delivered 96 'Mood Matters Adult' programmes for over 800 people in local communities
83	Ran 83 'Mood Matters Parent and Baby' programmes for over 400 parents and expectant parents
15	Delivered 15 educational talks to 340 people.

In workplaces

42	Delivered 42 'Mental Health First Aid' programmes to workplaces
108	Conducted 108 'Mood Matters in the Workplace' programmes for more than 1,600 employees
6	Provided 6 'Supporting Employee Wellbeing' programmes to 168 people.

Overall, we reached over 17,000 participants with our Education & Training programmes during 2022/23. While we conducted many community and workplace programmes via Zoom, we gradually resumed face-to-face delivery, a trend we anticipate will continue in the upcoming year.





We took great pride in introducing new mindfulness programmes for adults, parents, and school pupils. The ‘Mindful Parenting’ programme for parents of 5-12 year-olds received fantastic feedback. We look forward to delivering more of these in the coming year. Additionally, we successfully provided the 4-week .breathe programme for 9-14 year-olds in 20 post-primary schools and secured funding to further expand this programme in 2023/24.

The team developed a new ‘Feel Good’ programme, incorporating mindfulness practices and ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ concepts. This is a follow-on for parents, adults, and primary school children. Under the Positive Minds for Premature Parents project, we plan to roll out more of these in 2023/24.

We also developed ‘My Mind & Me’, a programme designed for P3-P7 pupils, enhanced with engaging activities to help this age group understand concepts around mental health and emotional wellbeing. Thanks to the generous support of our partner Belfast City Airport, we could pilot this in seven primary schools this year.

We successfully delivered the second year of The Community Foundation Mental Health Support project to provide our ‘Back to Life, Back to Normality’ programme, which consists of six weeks of Living Life to the Full and six weeks of mindfulness. This project supports five GP Federations across NI that have Mental Health Leads. Referrals are made by GP practices in these federations to help people on the current waiting list for services. We built strong relationships with the GP Federation mental health leads and their respective teams, regularly meeting and sharing findings with them.



▲ 1500 primary pupils benefitted from our Paws b Mindfulness programme this year

In collaboration with the Public Health Agency, we completed the review of Northern Ireland’s Mental Health First Aid programme and successfully delivered the revised version. AWARE was also involved in training 37 new Mental Health First Aid trainers, 10 of whom are affiliated with AWARE as staff or sessional trainers. This increased capacity positions us well for future MHFA delivery.

Throughout the year, partnerships remained a prominent feature of our work. We collaborated with organisations such as Tinylife, Diabetes UK, Macmillan Cancer, WRDA (Women’s Resource Development Agency), and MAS (Maternal Advocacy Support) to develop and adapt our programmes and cater to their client groups. We continued to advocate for expectant and new parents by participating in steering and implementation groups focused on infant and maternal mental health. We guided health professionals supporting new and expectant parents through the specialist perinatal section of our website. Our perinatal mental health resource is in high demand and distributed in antenatal units and Sure Starts.

The team worked hard this year to develop our workplace mental health training programme portfolio. We developed a new half-day manager’s programme, ‘Supporting Employee Well-being’, to educate managers and team leaders on supporting their employees during challenging and stressful times. We piloted the programme, reviewed and adapted it based on feedback. We also rolled out an introductory module for our e-Learning platform, iAmAWARE, to 236 participants. This comprehensive suite of workplace programmes suits the new hybrid way of working, and we hope it will help businesses across Northern Ireland invest in their staff’s mental health and wellbeing.

In addition to our fundraising activities, the sales of our programmes, primarily to the business community, contribute significantly to AWARE’s income. The Education & Training team plays a vital role in establishing connections with workplaces, cultivating relationships, and delivering training programmes. They work closely with our fundraising team to engage the business community and attract sponsorship, Charity of the Year initiatives, and general fundraising efforts. These endeavours raise awareness of mental health and the importance of mental wellbeing in the workplace. Notably, post-Covid-19, there has been a significant increase in interest and attention to mental health within workplaces, leading to higher programme sales and improved understanding of mental wellbeing.

In the 2022/23 period, AWARE generated £142,860 through programme sales, with the Mental Health First Aid and Mood Matters Workplace programmes contributing significantly to this income. These funds are used to expand and sustain our support groups and outreach services.



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The Depression Charity for Northern Ireland

Find out more
about our free
services and
programmes



Support Services and Community Outreach

AWARE's Support Services department remains committed to providing essential and unique support to individuals affected by depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.

This year, the team experienced a transition in leadership as Rhonda Murphy took over as the new Head of Department following the retirement of Tom McEaney in September 2022. Rhonda's strong community background has already proven invaluable to the team, and we eagerly anticipate the positive impact she will bring in the years to come.

We are pleased to announce the reopening of two support groups in Cookstown and Enniskillen. These groups offer a safe and supportive space for individuals with mental health challenges to connect with others who share similar experiences, allowing them to discuss their feelings and exchange coping strategies.

A primary focus this year has been developing our support group model for young adults, building on the success of our flagship 18-30s group in Newtownards. Through a series of focus groups with young support group members and external youth organisations, we have gathered valuable insights to redesign our support group

model, ensuring it meets the specific needs of young people. We are excited to continue this work to provide meaningful support to even more young individuals.

Volunteers play a crucial role in our services, and we were thrilled to welcome new volunteer facilitators for our support groups this year. Their dedication and commitment significantly contribute to the success and effectiveness of our services.





In collaboration with UU (Ulster University) and QUB (Queen's University Belfast), we continue to offer placements to postgraduate students in PWP (Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner) and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) courses. Additionally, we initiated an academic research project with UU, which examines the benefits of peer group support. We eagerly await the findings and recommendations that will further enhance our services.

To better understand the experiences and perspectives of our support group members, we conducted a Support Group Survey, gathering valuable feedback on the benefits of attending support groups. The feedback was incredibly positive, and this information allows us to implement suggestions and share the findings to continually improve our services.

To ensure effective planning and tailored service delivery, we established Locality Planning Meetings in each Trust Area, fostering connection and collaboration among facilitators. These meetings have facilitated valuable discussions and actionable steps for service planning and implementation.

As active advocates within the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, we have been dedicated to promoting the mental health needs of local women and babies, particularly in our campaigning and lobbying efforts for a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) in Northern Ireland.

Our Community Outreach team has been incredibly busy throughout the year, engaging with various statutory, community, and public sectors. With a strong presence in all Trust areas, we have successfully promoted our services, raised awareness, reduced stigma, and offered advice and support. In total, we delivered 116 Information Outreach events, reaching approximately 78,000 participants and significantly impacting our community.

The Support Services department's unwavering dedication and hard work have allowed us to continue providing crucial support, raising awareness, and fostering a supportive environment for those affected by mental health challenges. We remain committed to promoting wellbeing and improving the lives of individuals in Northern Ireland.



▲ Our public talk in Coleraine

During 2022/23 :

- We have 25 support groups, including two online and one young adult group (18 -30 years)
- We held 1,243 support group meetings during this year
- We recorded 6,555 attendances at the support groups
- We responded to 2,008 support emails
- We answered 1,299 Support calls this year
- We delivered 116 Information Outreach events, some via Zoom or through the provision of literature, with an approximate reach of 78,000 participants.
- We held five public talks throughout the year in Derry, Belfast, Coleraine, Strabane and Newry in partnership with The Royal College of Psychiatry. These events had different topics such as Young People and Mental Health, Addictions and Mental Health and Menopause and Mental Health, and we were supported by partner agencies such as PIPS, ARC Recovery and Causeway Coast GP Federation. These public talks were well-attended, with highly encouraging feedback.
- We developed two AWARE-affiliated groups in Larne and Kesh, which continue to provide vital support within local communities.
- We held our annual Volunteer Celebration Event in the Ulster Museum in Belfast, which was a wonderful opportunity in a beautiful setting to acknowledge the enormous contribution our highly-committed volunteers make to delivering our services.

Communications

Throughout the year, the Communications Team has played a vital role in promoting AWARE's services and raising awareness of mental health issues within the community. Consequently, AWARE has seen noticeable growth in our public profile and increased brand recognition.

This progress is evident in the charity's rising website traffic, social media engagement, and press coverage. These achievements further reinforce AWARE's position as an industry leader and the most widely-followed mental health charity in Northern Ireland.

The dedication and hard work of the Communications Team have been pivotal in supporting AWARE NI's mission to advocate for mental health and provide essential services to those in need.

We have undertaken various successful campaigns throughout the year to generate awareness. During Mental Health Awareness Week 2022, we launched a digital video series entitled 'My Journey with Depression.' This impactful campaign featured young AWARE support group attendees and volunteers who bravely shared their personal experiences with mental ill-health and their paths to recovery. The campaign received significant engagement and positive feedback, inspiring more young people to reach out and seek help through our support groups.

Additionally, during Volunteers Week, the team ran a campaign highlighting the stories of volunteers from various departments within AWARE. These heartfelt narratives shed light on why these individuals choose to dedicate their time and energy to volunteer with AWARE, showcasing the immense impact of their contributions.



▲ My Journey with depression video with Eve Elliott





AWARE’s Communications Team also collaborated with Dad’s Voice, AWARE’s affiliate support group in Ballymena, for a men’s mental health campaign. The campaign focused on stories of fatherhood and mental health, providing a platform for fathers to share their experiences and challenges. By sharing these stories, we aimed to destigmatise men’s mental health issues and encourage open conversations within the community.

During Children’s Mental Health Week, we launched a campaign highlighting the impressive evaluation report for AWARE’s Paws b primary school mindfulness programme. Additionally, we shared valuable content for parents and teachers, offering guidance on initiating conversations about mental health with children. These efforts aimed to create a supportive environment for young minds to understand and address their mental wellbeing.



The team worked with Holy Cross College to create a promotional video for AWARE’s Mood Matters for Young People programme. This video featured staff and pupils, effectively conveying the programme’s benefits and the importance of supporting young people in developing awareness of their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

In addition to these campaigns, the team successfully executed a rebranding initiative for AWARE’s Mood Matters logo and visuals, creating a fresh and engaging look that aligns with the charity’s current branding.

Furthermore, we established a TikTok channel, which has proven highly successful in attracting followers and delivering engaging video content.

This strategic move has enabled AWARE to reach a broader audience, particularly among younger demographics. It has provided a platform to share valuable mental health information and resources in an accessible and entertaining format.

In October 2022, AWARE held its second Investors in Mental Health Awards at the Europa Hotel in Belfast. The event celebrated the contributions and support of businesses, schools, and community fundraisers, emphasising the significance of investing in mental health. The Communications Team eagerly anticipates the next Investors in Mental Health event in 2024, further enhancing meaningful collaborations and raising vital awareness.



Our website had **274,086** page views and **75,369** users



Our network of Facebook followers has reached **26,668**



We now have **9,537** followers on Twitter



Our Instagram community reached **6,181** followers



Our YouTube channel was viewed **10,670** times



AWARE appeared in **529** online & press articles



We featured in **18** radio & TV interviews



Our LinkedIn following reached **2404**, with **885** newsletter subs



We are now on TikTok! Our channel is steadily growing followers and views.

Income Generation

Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, AWARE experienced a surge in community engagement and financial support, leading to a highly successful fundraising year in 2021/22. However, the ongoing cost of living crisis has significantly affected organisational fundraising in 2022/23, resulting in lower-than-expected income. This decrease in fundraising income poses challenges for the charity's service delivery in 2023/24.

During 2022/23, fundraising generated £537,550 from the general public, AWARE fundraising events and our corporate partners. Although this is still a substantial amount raised, highlighting the generosity of the public and support for mental health, it represents a 20% decrease in fundraising income from 2021/22. The impact of the challenges faced over the past three years and how this affects charitable giving is evident.

Despite these financial challenges, AWARE remains deeply grateful for the overwhelming support from the general public, corporate partners, and volunteers. We have consistently adopted an innovative and creative approach, always prioritising the wellbeing of our beneficiaries and ensuring that we demonstrate the impact of the support from our donors.

AWARE's events continue to be a popular and engaging part of our fundraising strategy. Throughout the year, we organised ten events that saw the participation of 659 individuals. These events included exciting activities such as abseiling off Belfast Castle, sea splashing in Benone Strand and Ballyholme Beach, the Fermanagh Colour Run, a Sunset Climb in Cavehill, racing up the Lagan in Viking Boats, trekking to Cambodia, and walking 13 miles along the picturesque Causeway Coast in our inaugural Giant Steps event. Collectively, these events raised over £62,000. Although this figure represents a decrease in event income compared to the previous year, despite hosting more events

with larger participant numbers, the cost of living crisis has impacted event sponsorship as individuals have less disposable income. Nonetheless, bringing people together, fostering connections, having fun, and raising vital funds for our services was heartening.

We are proud to have established several new partnerships this year, including MacBlair, Trouw Nutrition, Glanbia Cheese, Rutledge Group, AC Hotel, Davidson McDonnell, OneSource Virtual, and FinTrU. Danske Bank has also extended their partnership for a final year throughout 2023. Maxol, a dedicated and passionate supporter of AWARE, donated £17,000 to our cause through their 2022 Christmas Coffee Cup campaign. We continue to enjoy mutually beneficial corporate partnerships and extend our deepest gratitude to all of our partners for their unwavering dedication and commitment to promoting positive mental health in their workplaces and the wider community. Their support, engagement in workplace fundraising, and participation in AWARE events have generated substantial amounts of income.

Our income from Trusts and Foundations was also significantly reduced in 2022/23 totalling just £161,777. This includes income from

- Ground Works UK
- AE Harvey Charitable Trust
- Inner City Trust
- Victoria Homes Trust
- The Community Foundation for N Ireland

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Our Community Fundraisers continue to astound us with their remarkable creativity, determination, and unwavering passion. Throughout the year 2022/23, our dedicated supporters went above and beyond, raising vital funds through a wide range of personal challenges and events. These included ladies' nights, vibrant colour runs, arduous marathons, thrilling treks in the Mourne, golf days, heartfelt wedding favours, and even all-night sleep-outs. We are profoundly grateful for the ongoing support we receive from schools, universities, churches, various community organisations, and sports clubs across Northern Ireland. Their fundraising efforts and generous donations contribute significantly to our cause. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to those who faithfully support us through monthly donations, those who donate in memory of a loved one, and those who graciously include AWARE in their Will, thus helping safeguard future generations' mental health.

In February 2023, we were delighted to launch a partnership with the Belfast Northstars, a team competing in the Baseball Ireland adult league. We eagerly anticipate this collaboration's growth, which will raise awareness of mental health and contribute to fundraising efforts.





During 2022/23, we embarked on our first-ever Direct Mail campaign, focusing on developing AWARE's support groups for young adults and seeking small donations. Unfortunately, the campaign fell right amid the cost of living crisis. The campaign raised just under £1,200, which was lower than anticipated. Nonetheless, it provided a valuable opportunity to engage with our previous donors, supporters, and beneficiaries while highlighting the pressing need and future plans for expanding AWARE's services.

Lastly, we cannot express enough gratitude to our invaluable partners, supporters, event participants, and donors. Their passion, commitment, and dedication are a constant source of inspiration and humility. Without their continued support, we could not fulfil our mission. Now more than ever, we rely on their unwavering support as we strive to make a difference in the realm of mental health. The financial landscape may present challenges, but AWARE remains resolute in its mission to support individuals affected by mental health challenges. With the continued support and generosity of the community, we are determined to overcome these obstacles and continue making a positive impact on mental wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

Financial Review

TOTAL INCOME	£1,281,460
Donations & Gifts	£537,550
Grant Funding	£442,122
Trusts & Foundations	£161,777
Workshops & Courses	£139,757
Investments	£254

TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£1,693,104
Charitable Activities	£1,322,814
Raising Funds	£370,290

The spend on charitable activities was **78.13%** of the total spend

RESERVES

At 31st March 2023 AWARE holds total reserves of £855,683. During 2022/23, due to the lower income generated, we made use of reserves to the value of £411,644. This was spent on the development of the following key areas as planned:

- £12,000 for the further development of our eLearning platform.
- £32,000 for additional programme delivery staffing costs and £37,000 on additional administration support
- £48,110 for the delivery of community-based mental health awareness programmes, which include our Mood Matters and Living Life to the Full Programmes for schools, communities and workplaces.
- £15,500 to continue three support groups which had no statutory funding stream.
- £15,585 for the development of the Salesforce CRM system
- £4,238 for communications activity to support promotion and access to services, campaigning, and positive mental health messaging

Given the reduced fundraising income there was an updated plan for the use of reserves. We utilised an additional £247,211 of our reserves to subsidise core services as fundraising and sales income was lower than projected.

The Trustees were made aware of this position throughout the year in monthly management accounts and noted that this was an appropriate use of reserves within the context. However, they noted that a balanced budget was required for 2023/24, and continued use of reserves at this level would place the organisation in a precarious financial position.

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' well-being 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 2023/24 budgeted expenditure (excluding depreciation) and the Board update to our reserves policy, the target level of reserves is £557,674 to £836,511.

Within our current reserves, the charity holds total reserves to the value of £855,683 which includes £102,271 of redundancy contingency and £20,900 restricted reserves leaving free reserves of £732,512.

The total income for the year was £1,281,460 of which £442,122 was generated from contracts and grants, £139,757 from the sales of workshops and courses and £699,327 from donations, trusts and foundations, legacies and fundraising activities and £254 from investments. Total expenditure was £1,693,104 of which £1,322,814 was expended on direct charitable activities and £370,290 on raising funds.

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Mindful of the cost of living crisis and its impact on household finances, AWARE took a conservative approach to estimate our fundraising income for 2022/23. However, even with these cautious projections, our income fell short of expectations. As we enter 2023/24, we have made even more conservative projections and will focus on delivering services only where income has already been secured. To mitigate these challenges, we are actively diversifying our income sources, particularly through Trusts & Foundations, and continue to value and rely on the support of our corporate partners.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & 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)
- Ms Linda Megahey (Treasurer)
(Resigned 13th August 2022)
- Mrs Nicola Naughton (Treasurer)
(Appointed 9th February 2023)
- Mr Joe Mahon (Secretary)
- Dr Patrick McKeon
- Mr Malachai O'Hara
- Dr Josephine Deehan
- Mr Jarlath McCreanor
(Resigned 21st February 2023)
- Dr Maria Kee
- Mr Owen Crilly
- Mr Alan Robinson
(Appointed 9th February 2023)
- Miss Marianne Downing
(Appointed 9th February 2023)

The Trustees meet every 2 months as a full Board. We have sub committees for Clinical Governance and Finance. These sub committees 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 Advisory Council and Locality Planning structures. This council meets quarterly to reflect on the organisation's activities and provide input to the Board on the effectiveness and potential improvement of these services. Similarly, 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 administration of the charity and meets on a bi-monthly basis. The Board has appointed a Chief Executive to manage the charity's day-to-day operations. Within the terms of delegated approval, the Chief Executive has delegated authority for operational matters, including employment, project delivery and budgetary management.

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

In addition, Directors are offered additional training in, for example, committee skills, finance management, child protection, data protection, strategic planning and other relevant areas. During 2023/24 we plan to deliver specific training for the Board on Keeping Children & Adults Safe, Understanding Charity Finances and Understanding our Governing document.

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

During 2022/23, a tendering process was conducted for the provision of external audit services and Harbinson Mulholland, a Belfast-based company, was appointed as auditor for AWARE. 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.



Plans for the Future

As we enter the final year of our '2019-2024 Strategic Plan,' which outlines key themes and an ambitious programme to enhance our services, we have identified several priorities for this year:

- Securing funding to ensure the sustainability of our community-based mental health awareness services.
- Expanding our offerings to workplaces, reaching more individuals in professional settings.
- Extending our e-Learning platform to provide accessible mental health resources.
- Piloting our young adult support group model, tailoring our services to better serve this demographic.
- Introducing new programmes targeting primary schools and 11-14-year-olds, promoting early intervention and prevention.
- Raising awareness of mental health in NI through our Investors in Mental Health conference and campaign.
- Evaluating our services and identifying areas for improvement

Our team plays a crucial role in the success of our organisation. We have fully staffed our team and will focus on their development and wellbeing, investing in their growth and satisfaction.

Continuing to invest in our infrastructure, we have achieved milestones such as deploying an enhanced VOIP phone network and updating our server environment during 2022/23.

We are dedicated to developing and implementing a new CRM system, which will enhance our programme management, promotion, and overall awareness-raising efforts.

Engaging with our stakeholders to shape the strategic plan for 2024-2029 will be a key priority for us this year, ensuring we align with their needs and expectations.



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 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!

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AWARE
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