



WM Funders Network

Charity Number: 1173579

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Review for the Period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

March 2021

WM Funders Network

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Review

for the Financial Period from 01-04-2020 to 31-03-2021

Reference & Administration Details

Charity Details:

Name: WM Funders Network

Number: 1173579, registered with the Charity Commission on 27 June 2017.

Address: C/o 109 Court Oak Road, Birmingham B17 9AA

e-mail: info@wmfn.org.uk

website: <http://www.wmfn.org.uk/>

Names of the Charity Trustees who Manage the Charity

Pauline Roche – Chief Information Officer, RnR Organisation (Individual Member) - **Chair**

Lee Jagger – Regional Manager, Charity Bank - **Vice Chair**

Peter Hardisty – Grants Officer, Harborne Parish Lands Charity – **Treasurer**

Stuart Ashmore – Deputy Chief Executive, Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations (joined March 2021)

Melinda Connelly – Regional Manager, Central Region, BBC Children in Need

Tina Costello – Chief Executive, Heart of England Community Foundation (joined November 2020)

Yvonne Gilligan – Chief Executive, Edward's Trust

Popinder Kaur – Chief Executive, The Haven (stepped down May 2020)

David Owen OBE – Chair, Owen Family Charity Trust (stepped down November 2020 AGM)

Debbie Pippard – Head of Programmes, Barrow Cadbury Trust

Austin Rodriguez – Head of Stronger Communities, Solihull MBC (joined November 2020)

Names & Addresses of Advisors

Role	Name	Address
Bank	Lloyds Bank	32-34 Alcester Rd S, King's Heath, Birmingham B14 7PU
Independent Examiner	Steven Simpson	C/o 109 Court Oak Road, Birmingham B17 9AA
Secretary	Dipali Chandra	C/o 109 Court Oak Road, Birmingham B17 9AA

Names of Senior Staff with Delegated Responsibilities

None

Structure, Governance & Management

Description of the Charity's Trusts

The object of the CIO is to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the charitable activities of voluntary and not-for-profit organisations and grant making charities working in the West Midlands and its environs ("the area of benefit") and the effective use of charitable resources for the public benefit in particular but not exclusively by promoting and developing good practice in the making of charitable grants by exchanging information, knowledge, expertise and experience.

Type of Governing Document:

Constitution

How the Charity is Constituted:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustee Selection Methods:

There must be at least three charity trustees. The maximum number of trustees is 12.

In accordance with the Constitution, Trustees are appointed or re-appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

In appointing Trustees, who must be members of WMFN, due consideration is given to ensuring that the Trustees have, between them, the skills and experience necessary to manage the charity effectively and in accordance with charity law. Skills gaps are identified through skills audits.

The assessment of new trustees is informal (i.e.: an introductory meeting with the Chair).

How New Trustees are Inducted and Trained:

New Trustees are introduced to the work of the WM Funders Network by meeting with the Secretary and Chair as part of their induction and are invited to attend a Trustees meeting as an observer. An information pack of the constitution, organisational policies and procedures and relevant reports are provided.

Trustees are invited to attend a strategy review and planning session held every three years. A skills audit is undertaken to identify gaps in knowledge and skills required for the governance and management of the CIO.

Additional Governance Issues

The charity is run and managed by delegation of a workplan to an external contractor who meets regularly with the Chair, and with the Treasurer as required.

There are occasional working parties responsible for specific projects which the charity is, or is planning to, undertake, and task and finish groups who undertake reviews of policies & procedures.

Objectives

Objective 1: Increase skills and expertise among members and others with an interest in civil society

Objective 2: Establish WMFN as the go-to organisation for information about issues of relevance to funding of civil society

Objective 3: Start to influence policy and practice among third parties in the region

Objective 4: Create a solid, sustainable organisation with a good reputation across the WM

Statutory Declaration on Public Benefit

The charity makes decisions in ways that manage risks or harm to the charity and its beneficiaries consistent with the purpose of the charity, the charity commission guidance on public benefit.

No personal benefit is more than incidental.

Activities

- Increase skills and expertise among members and others with an interest in civil society
- Establish WMFN as the go-to organisation for information about issues of relevance to funding of civil society
- Start to influence policy and practice among third parties in the region
- Create a solid, sustainable organisation with a good reputation across the WM

Events

12th May Roundtable online video discussion: Sharing funders and Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) response to COVID-19 (Attendance 31)

25th June online video Workshop: Planning for Recovery – Funders and VCSE response to COVID-19 [Claire Spencer, Senior Policy Adviser](#) - Public Services & Inclusive Growth, WMCA and [Ali Harris, Chief Executive](#), Equally Ours (Attendance 38)

28th July online video Briefing: Real Living Wage – [Yasmin Mahmoudi, Programme Manager](#), Living Wage Foundation, [Saidul Haque Saeed](#), Lead Organiser, [Citizen UK Birmingham](#)

6th November online video Seminar: Funders sharing changes in grant-making practices in response to COVID-19. [Tina Costello, CE](#), HoECF and [Eliza Buckley, Head of Research](#), IVAR (Attendance 34)

1st December online video Annual General Meeting & discussion: Future WMFN strategy and work priorities with members (Attendance 23)

28th January online video Workshop: Funders dealing with internal organizational disputes – [Shivaji Shiva, Partner](#), Veale, Wasborough Vizards Solicitors (Attendance 25)

10th February online Funding Workshop: Central and East Birmingham Partnership. Access to funding with HoECF and Birmingham City Council (BCC) (Attendance 67)

25th February online video Workshop: Reading and Understanding accounts – [Fleur Holden, Partner](#), Sayer Vincent (Attendance 30)

Communications

We circulated on average 1 events e-bulletin every quarter and 8 news and events updates per month over the 12 months and updated the website on a regular basis. For nearly all the postings we were above the industry average for opening emails sent.

Our Twitter account (@westmidfunders) has over 1,200 followers and we also have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WMFundersNetwork/>.

We continue to use social media to spread news about our work and connect with others doing similar work, and we use these routes to circulate information and promote members' work.

Outreach

Due to the pandemic and Government restrictions it has been more difficult to undertake outreach work. However, we have continued to build relations with other national and local infrastructure bodies that support civil society, including Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF), Small Charities Coalition, WM Communications Network, Councils for Voluntary Service, Local Authorities, West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Coalition for Digital Inclusion, Institute for Voluntary

Action Research, , 360 Giving, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coalition, , ACF's Collaborative Funders Hub, NOMI (West Midlands Refugee support network), Data Collective, Datakind UK.

Achievements and Performance

2020 financial year started on an unprecedented note with the impact of the pandemic on all our lives. It started with a need to plan the delivery of our events and meetings online. Our work practices and delivery were quickly adjusted to accommodate the Government restrictions during the most difficult periods of the pandemic.

A series of 3 events over 2020 were held to facilitate discussion on how funders in the region were responding to the impact of COVID-19 on civil society and its work. The first event in May highlighted key points: greater co-ordination of referral systems in response to those most in need between VCS, PHE and Las and more visible neighbourhood mutual aid groups providing practical support, increased online communication on support and services available. Many funders suspended existing funding programmes and implemented emergency programmes in response to emerging needs.

Most(?)adjusted their grant making practices to ensure that funds were quickly allocated as well as enabling grantees to adjust the use of existing grants, plus a 'light touch' to monitoring and reporting required in the short term. National funders with a presence in the WM were also looking at way to co-ordinate funding as well as Community Foundations facilitating the pooling of funds to better target those most in need. Smaller funders in the region also noted that fewer applications were being received from individuals in need as VCS staff were being furloughed and raised GDPR issues.

The second event in June considered how funders were planning recovery based on growing evidence of the unequal impact of the pandemic and Government restrictions: health and mortality, exacerbation of pre-existing differences in household income and job security for different social groups and social exclusion – particularly due to IT and digital exclusion. The WM experienced a significant increase in welfare and unemployment benefit claims. Nearly half a million people furloughed and a significant increase was seen in people living in temporary accommodation and women experiencing domestic violence. The discussion considered funders using an equalities and human rights lens in how they prioritised the allocation of grants, and consideration of the importance of civil society infrastructure bodies focussed on equalities and diversity reaching those most in need and giving them a voice in planning for recovery. From a public sector and Combined Authority perspective and emphasis was placed on giving 'space' in different ways to enable those who will be adversely affected by the impact of the pandemic and economic recession to make informed choices about their future. Of particular concern were women with caring responsibilities; addressing digital exclusion and valuing key workers by reducing their cost of living if wages can't be increased.

The third event in November considered future plans and practices by funders from the learning gained in response to the pandemic in support of civil society. The key good practice shared was related to how funders considered the balance between trust, accountability and risk in the longer-term approach: taking a relational approach to grant-making; being accountable, responsive and transparent; sharing power with grantees and enabling grantees to be sustainable by funding core costs where possible and giving more than just money.

A briefing in July looked at the importance of the Living Wage in planning for recovery from the pandemic. In 2017 the Living Wage Foundation published Low Pay in the Charity sector report, which was the first in depth look at the problem of low pay in the charity sector. It found that more than a quarter of charity staff are paid less than Living Wage, compared to 21 per cent of UK workers overall. In the West Midlands New [research by KPMG](#) in November 2019 has found there are 450,000 jobs in

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Commented [D2]: I don't think the significant increase was specific to the WM as all regions would have seen this, but notable that WM saw the largest increase (I haven't checked the exact statistic so that wording may not be quite correct).

the West Midlands (21%) still paying less than the real Living Wage and Birmingham is the only Living Wage accredited council in the Combined Authority.

The January and February workshops were held during the year to support the knowledge of Funder Trustees and staff in governance and reading accounts.

Publications including 8 events and news updates per month, and on average 1 events e-bulletin every quarter over the 12 months.

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Strategic Review and Plan

Trustees instigated a strategic review due in **September 2020** facilitated by a [Cranfield Trust](#) consultant. An members' online survey was held and interviews with a cross-section of members and other stakeholders that the WMFN has been working with. The outcome of the review was shared with members at the AGM in December and a discussion on the future strategy and work priorities, which led to the agreement of the Network's strategic plan for 2021-2024.

Funds and Sponsorship

We remain grateful to members who continue to support WMFN through membership subscriptions. In addition, with additional contributions from particular members towards running costs, we have been able to develop the Network services. We are also grateful for the 'in kind support' that members have provided.

PAULINE ROCHE, CHAIR

Financial Review

State of the Charity's Finances

West Midlands Funders Network is now into the third year of operating following the transfer of assets from our former legacy organisation, Charitable Trusts West Midlands, and the charity continues to do well in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, itself now approaching its third year. As a result, the charity's financial activity is much easier to report for the year 2020/21.

Membership income has grown again for the second year running, again due in part to an increase in secretariat activity, reflected in the accounts. Naturally, as a consequence of the pandemic, events income is reduced on last year; in fact, this is zero. However, conversely, the events costs are (in real terms) also nothing. Donations have also increased on last year, with donations from Barrow Cadbury Trust, and The South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust, David Owen Family Trust, Limoges Trust and Eveson Charitable Trust.

Despite this increased income and decreased expenditure, the accounts appear to show an increase in the deficit on last year. This is entirely due to larger cost activity that occurred in the previous year but for which the invoices received in this financial year. If a full accrual accounting methodology is applied to both this year and the previous year, we would see a deficit of £8,005.55 in the year 2019/20 and a much smaller deficit of £2,304.71 for this year; a figure in-line with the budgetary expectation of a £2,232 deficit.

Statement of the Charity's Policy on Reserves

The budgetary expectation is that the charity is slowly building up reserves in the year, and the charity's current budget shows a small surplus of £68.12 for the year 2021/22. The trustees have expressed an interest in building up operating reserves, in line with many other charities, and this financial trend

appears to support this intent. The on-going effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are only slightly eased as of time of writing, and the charity faces another challenging year ahead in 2021/22. With an updated strategic plan, policy improvements in place around governance and operational activity, the charity is in a stable position to plan a programme of activity within the resources it needs to achieve its charitable purpose.

Details of Any Funds Materially in Deficit

The Trustees declare that the charity had no funds which were materially in deficit at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

PETER HARDISTY, TREASURER

Restricted Funds

None

Particulars of Any Outstanding Guarantee Given by the Charity

The Trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Particulars of Any Outstanding Debt

The Trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.