

# VOYPIC

VOICE OF  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN CARE



## Annual Report 2019-2020





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# Welcome

**On behalf of the Board of VOYPIC I'd like to welcome you to our Annual Report and review of the year ending April 2020. As I read through the multitude of events delivered by the organisation over the last year I am once again amazed by the sheer diversity and volume of support activities undertaken for our young people. Care Day continues to be a central focus of activity but throughout the year the team has been active in so many ways.**

The year also represented a period of change at the top of the organisation with the recruitment and appointment of our new Chief Executive, Alicia Toal. In a field of high calibre candidates Alicia shone out and she has seamlessly transitioned into the leadership role and brought her own ideas to the ongoing work.

As we came to the end of the year the full impact of Coronavirus started to hit our work with lockdown presenting a new and unexpected challenge to the way in which we provide our support services. As always the team adapted to the needs of young people despite the unprecedented circumstances and the organisation will have to work hard in the coming year to maintain the level of delivery in what is likely to be a difficult financial and operational scenario.

The Board would like to offer our sincerest thanks to all the staff, volunteers and supporters of the work undertaken on behalf of our young people over the last year.

**Michael Thompson**

# Message from the CEO

Welcome to VOYPIC's annual report for 2019-20. I was delighted to take up the role as VOYPIC's Chief Executive in July and it certainly has been an interesting first year, to say the least!

The summer, as usual, was packed full of activity days, summer schemes and residentials, bringing young people from all parts of Northern Ireland together to make lasting connections and important memories.

Throughout the year we helped over 660 children and young people to find their voice, take an active part in decisions being made about their lives, and to learn and develop the leadership skills needed to influence change. We continue to work to ensure that young people shape and inform the policy and practice they experience in their daily lives.

We expanded our team and programmes this year. We welcomed Laura Doyle and Lee Kane to the Leadership Team, as Practice Manager and Engagement Manager respectively. We created four dedicated posts for care experienced individuals and successfully recruited candidates to fill these. We continued to develop our youth leadership strategy, supporting 36 young adults through our programme.

We achieved our Investing in Children Membership for the eleventh year in a row. It was lovely to hear directly from young people how they are engaged in so much dialogue and change.

**“VOYPIC has made a positive difference on the lives of so many. Anyone who has a relationship with them (VOYPIC) benefits from it.”**

We were also awarded ‘We invest in people – Silver Award’ by Investors in People in April. We have lots to be proud of and to celebrate: a welcoming, passionate team, full of talented and dedicated people intent on improving the lives of children and young people with a lived experience of care. Our strong core values drive us to make a real difference in the lives of the young people we support.

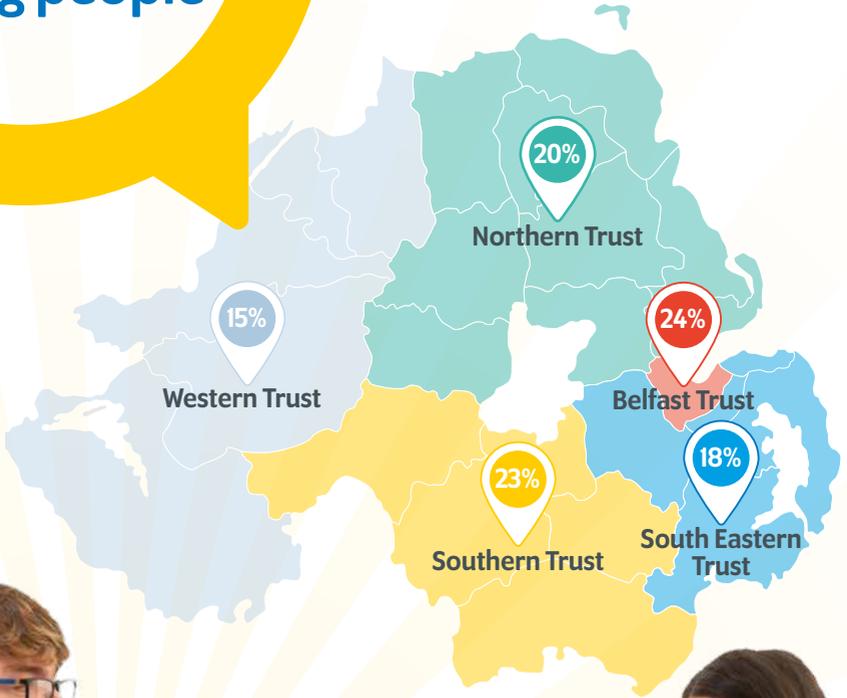
As the financial year drew to a close, the world was dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic and, in Northern Ireland, a regional lockdown. We implemented an interim strategic plan; the team worked remotely and adapted quickly to supporting children and young people in a different way. Children in care and those young people leaving or already out of care were greatly impacted, the full extent to which we are still uncovering.

It's easy to forget the world before Covid, and this annual report serves as a timely reminder of all the great things we can achieve together

We still have lots to look forward to in 2021, and we still have lots more work to do to ensure that children and young people's rights are fiercely protected no matter what.

**Alicia Toal**

We worked  
with 666  
young people



# Where do they live?



318 children and young people lived in foster and kinship care



91 were living in children's' homes



45 were living independently



72 were in a hospital setting



35 were living in supported accommodation



50 were living at home



55 were living in other types of accommodation

# How did we support them?

**457**

children and young people received advocacy support

**97**

children and young people received one to one support

**72**

children and young people took part in participation forums

**78**

children and young people accessed our independent advocacy service at Beechcroft

**381**

children and young people took part in group work programmes

**36**

young people undertook a leadership role

# And we organised:



**322**  
visiting advocacy sessions  
in children's homes



**18**  
advocacy workshops



**24**  
activity days



**65**  
young people  
attended a summer camp



**176**  
group work sessions with  
a total of 381 children and  
young people



**9**  
inputs to policy  
consultations and  
research projects



# Did we make a difference?



**97%**

of young people were satisfied with the service they received

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**98%**

received the help and support they needed from their advocate

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**97.5%**

found their advocate easy to talk to

**90%**

had a better understanding of their rights and entitlements

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**84%**

feel confident to advocate for themselves in the future

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**100%**

of children and young people gave their group work programme 7/10 or more with 55% giving it 10/10

**74%**

of young people gave their group work leaders 10/10

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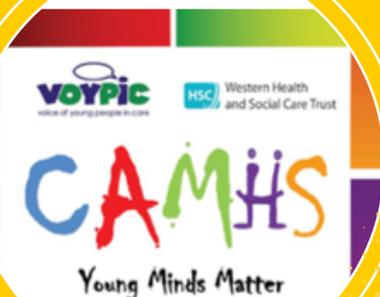
**84%**

of young people feel more confident after taking part in our group work programmes

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**72%**

of young people feel they are better at speaking up after taking part in our group work programmes



## Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Young people in the Western area worked with the Western HSCT on a series of workshops to aid with the development of a new Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) resource. The new resource was launched on 4 April at the South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen.



In partnership with Linking Generation NI and Age NI, we celebrated #AllAgesApril, bringing together generations for some virtual reality 3D painting!



## All Ages April Foster Care Fortnight

In May, we celebrated Foster Care Fortnight and the amazing contribution foster carers make. We especially celebrated the wonderful achievement of Yvonne Strange, foster carer in the Northern HSCT, who was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for her services to foster care in Northern Ireland over the past 34 years.



### We became a BBC Short Film!

We worked with a film maker from the BBC to make a short film about the language of care, and how we're changing it. The film became a viral hit, and has been viewed over a million times!

### We got a new leader!

At the end of June, the Board announced the appointment of Alicia Toal as the new Chief Executive of VOYPIC.



### Volunteers' Week

In June, we celebrated Volunteers' Week by saying a great big THANK YOU to all our incredible volunteers, for all their hard work and dedication to supporting children and young people in care.





## T:BUC Summer Camp Secure

Supported by six specially trained young leaders, we hosted 65 young people, aged 11-13 years old, in three residential summer camps across Northern Ireland. The young people took part in a range of personal and social development activities, including team building games, climbing and abseiling, caving, canoeing, high ropes as well as beach walks. These activities supported the young people to explore our shared society in Northern Ireland, and their role as future citizens in building a peaceful community.

**In the lead up to the launch of the Secure Panel in September**, we represented the views and opinions of young people in its development. The regional multi-agency panel replaced the restriction of liberty panels in each of the five HSCTs, and has both a decision-making role and a monitoring role. With the HSCTs, we agreed a joint protocol to ensure young people potentially being placed in secure care have timely access to advocacy support.



**FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT**  
2 AUGUST AT 1PM  
SEAVIEW PARK HOME OF CRUSADERS FC

**IN DeMAND**  
VOYPIC

Create a team of 6 aside plus 2 subs or come along on the day and join a team!  
Don't miss your chance to train with Irish League footballers ahead of the tournament!  
To book your team/place contact Debz on: 078 5425 4981  
deborah.webb@voypic.org

## Football Tournament

In August, our In DeMAND group, for boys and young men, hosted a football tournament at Seaview Park, home of Crusaders FC.



### Who Cares? Scotland Love Rally

In October, nine VOYPIC Young Leaders joined their peers in Scotland and marched through Glasgow city centre as part of the Who Cares? Scotland Love Rally. One young person, from our Western area, spoke to the crowd, delivering a speech about her experiences of 'love' in care.

### National Lottery Community Fund

In November we joined many charities across the voluntary and community sectors in saying a huge THANK YOU to the National Lottery Community Fund on the 25th anniversary of the lottery.



### Anti-Bullying Week

In November we marked Anti-Bullying Week. Coordinated by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, the theme was 'Change Starts With Us'.

**VIBE - VOYPIC:** Inspire, Believe, Empower, the South Eastern Area Participation Forum, was named runner up in the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum's creative competition, for their play Just Jack. The young people performed this in front of an invite audience of 30 people during Anti Bullying Week, and were then invited to perform the play at the NIABF awards ceremony in February at the Lough Neagh Discover Centre.





### Social Work Awards

Our SWITCH group, Participation Forum, was shortlisted for the NI Social Work Strategy Co-Production Award, alongside the Northern HSCT! Helen, Christina and Craig, had a great time at the Social Work Awards ceremony, representing the group and VOYPIC.



### Happy Birthday UNCRC!

Twenty-seven young people from VOYPIC attended NICCY's World Children's Day celebration event at W5, Belfast, marking the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



### REMOVED Play

In October and November we supported the first Northern Ireland tour of the play *Removed*. VOYPIC young leaders participated in post-show discussions in theatres right across the region, and we were delighted to attend the gala performance of the play in Belfast.



### Christmas Fun

Christmas is a special time, and we had great fun with lots of parties, activities, movie nights and yummy dinners across the whole region. Thanks to some very generous individuals and organisations, we were able to distribute gifts and hampers to many young people throughout the Christmas period.



### Pledge Promises

In the run-up to the UK General Election in December, we called on all candidates to make a pledge, promising to listen to the voice children in care. Positive support was received from candidates for all major parties, and a number of independents.



### Democracy Day

Our Engagement Ambassadors attended the Community Foundation's celebration of Democracy Day (29 January) at Stormont. The team used the opportunity to raise awareness of our shared responsibilities for children and young people in care. Aoife called on everyone to step up, saying "we all have a responsibility to support young people in care, improving life chances and building active citizenship."

### TRIUMPH Network workshop

In January, three young leaders, Stacie, Jordan and Martha presented their thoughts at the TRIUMPH Network workshop on improving the mental health of young people.

Since May 2019 VOYPIC has been a Youth Partner Organisation of the TRIUMPH Network. **"What's normal to us isn't necessarily normal to people who haven't experienced the care system"** Martha McCallin, VOYPIC



### Strategy for Looked After Children

In January, young people from VOYPIC worked with the Department of Health and Department of Education on the final edit of the draft **Strategy for Looked After Children**.

Co-production has been an essential part of this process, and it is essential young people with lived experience of care are actively involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the strategy.



### Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Youth Assembly

Three VOYPIC Young Leaders were selected to represent their peers at the first Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Youth Assembly in February. Rebecca, Aaron and Naomi spent the day in the Assembly Chamber and in Committees, ensuring the views and experiences of young people in care on this important issue are heard loud and clear.

### Comic Book

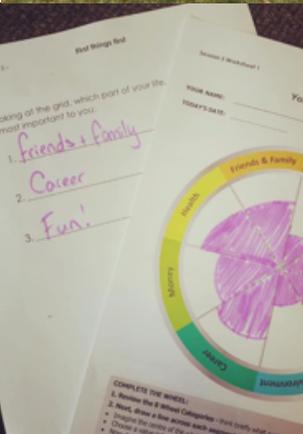
We supported two young people to create a comic book based on their real life experiences in care, in partnership with UBER Comics. The finished comic was published in February and is available online and for schools to explore the issue of coming into care with children in the classroom.



### State of Child Health

In March we worked with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, exploring the data and findings of their report on the State of Child Health. Young people from VOYPIC supported the RCPCH to present the report findings to MLAs, civil servants and decision makers, at a special event in Stormont.

In February we held our annual Care Day celebrations. More about Care Day 20 later...





### Developing Young Leaders!

We had an awesome weekend at our VOYPIC Young Leaders Training Residential in March. Over 20 young people and VOYPIC staff spent the weekend in the Jungle (Magherafelt), developing leadership skills, and exploring ways to ensure the voice of young people in care is heard.



### Coronavirus Response

In the middle of March, we took the difficult decision to suspend all face-to-face group work, in response to the Coronavirus outbreak. The health, safety and welfare of the young people we support, our staff and our communities is paramount. While we are unable to be together, we continue to come together and support each other online and over the phone.

**VOYPIC**  
voice of young people in care

**REMEMBER -  
WE ARE STILL HERE TO HELP**

We will continue to provide  
advocacy support to care  
experienced children and  
young people, so you can still get  
help, support and advice.

Just email us or call your local office:

Belfast / South Eastern – 028 9024 4888  
Northern – 028 2563 2641  
Southern – 028 3831 3380  
Western – 028 7137 8980

info@voypic.org

# Care Day



## Care Day 20 – Reimagining

Care Day took place across the UK and Ireland on Friday 21 February 2020, under the joint theme **#REIMAGINING**. The campaign challenged the general public's understanding of care, inviting people to 'rethink what you think you know about care'.

VOYPIC delivered a media (social and traditional) campaign, highlighting key messages around the theme. The campaign secured coverage in 23 regional and local newspapers, reaching almost 700,000 people. Additionally, we had appearances on TV and radio, including UTV/Good Morning Britain and BBC Radio Ulster Evening Extra.

Our teams in the Belfast, Western and Southern areas had Care Day Breakfast with the Mayors!



**Belfast team** with Cllr Daniel Baker, Lord Mayor of Belfast.



**Western Team** with Cllr Michaela Boyle, Mayor of Derry and Strabane.



**Southern area team** with Cllr Mealla Campbell, Lord Mayor of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.



**The Regional Secure Panel celebrating Care Day 20.**

In addition to VOYPIC activity, more than 30 events and activities were held across Northern Ireland to mark Care Day 20. These events, for a wide range of audiences, ranged from information sessions, training events and award ceremonies, to baking competitions and crafting get-togethers.

**The Northern Health and Social Care Trust Foster Care Registration Panel celebrated with doughnuts and coffee.**



**Belfast Boxer, Carl Frampton,** dropped in on the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Care Day 20 celebrations.



Care Day 20 culminated with our flagship event showcasing the talents of more than 50 care experienced young people from across Northern Ireland. This Is Me took place on the evening of Friday 21 February, in the Waterfront Hall. The event attracted the largest Care Day audience to date, with over 450 people in attendance, including the Minister for Health, Robin Swan MLA.



# VOYPIC Projects

## SEEMEE

Throughout the year young people have been working on a series of short films to help teachers and other school staff understand the experiences of young people in care. The scripts were developed by the young people, based on their collective experience of school. They also worked alongside a professional production company to make the films, including starring in them!



## Uniting the Care Experienced Community

In February we launched a new programme to design and test a membership scheme for the care experienced community in Northern Ireland. A Membership Project Worker has been appointed to work in partnership with young people and other stakeholders to develop and test the idea.

## Supporting the Corporate Family

We recruited three care experienced Engagement Ambassadors in January to develop a suite of training materials to raise awareness of care amongst statutory sector bodies. The project aims to support agencies to understand and fulfil their corporate family responsibilities, and better support care experienced young people.

## Peer Research & Evaluation

Young people in VOYPIC have been involved in two exciting projects as peer researchers and evaluators. Fifteen young people from VOYPIC received training on conducting peer research. Some of them worked alongside the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to assist in the evaluation of the Fostering Educational Attainment and Achievement Scheme. Young researchers conducted interviews and co-facilitated group evaluations as part of their role.

Young people also designed and facilitated a number of workshops with young people who were participants in Extern's regional mentoring programme. The young leaders collated the feedback and presented their findings in a written report.

# Financial Year 2019-2020

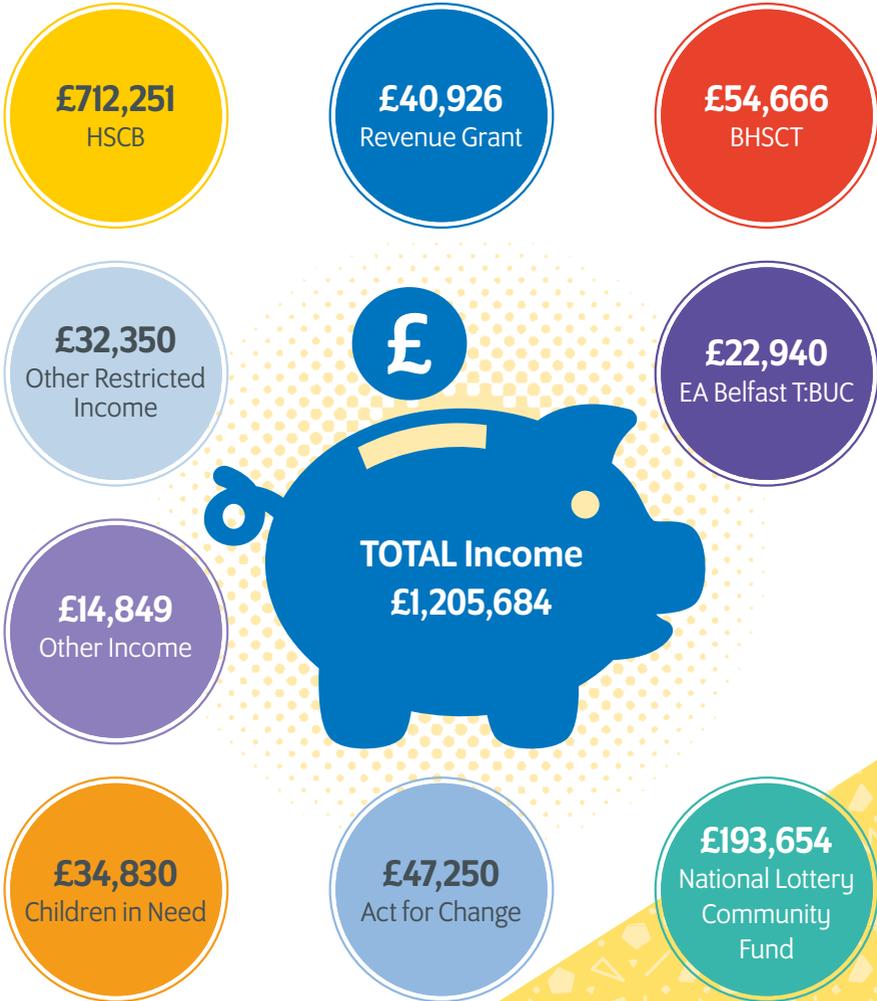
We would like to acknowledge and thank all our funders and sponsors who have supported VOYPIC throughout the last year. Without this support, VOYPIC's capacity to deliver such a range of services to care experienced children and young people would be impossible.

We are extremely grateful for all resources received to help us achieve our objectives in the face of continued challenges to services for children and young people.

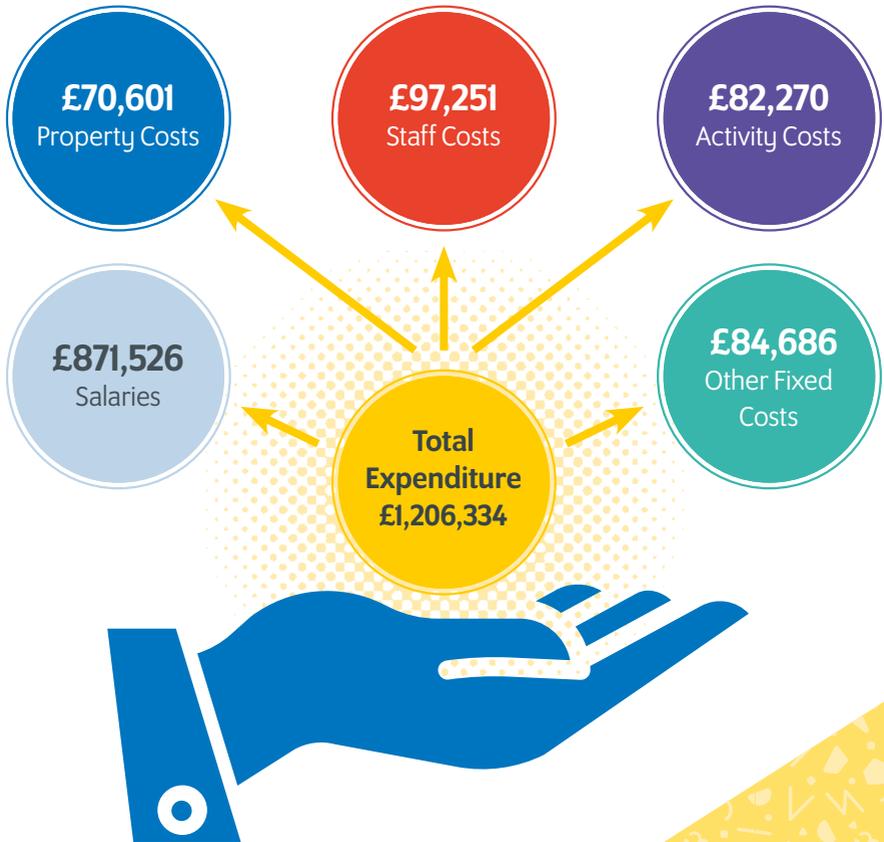


Total income  
**£1,205,684**

## Breakdown of Income



## VOYPIC Expenditure Financial Year 2019-2020



# Funders

Act for Change\*  
Health & Social Care Board  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Belfast City Council  
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust  
Children in Need  
Department of Health  
Education Authority NI  
Elevate Programme  
Esmée Fairbairn  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
Power NI  
Ormeau Credit Union  
Social Innovation Fund

\* The Act for Change Fund comprises of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the National Lottery Community Fund and iWill campaign.

## **Donations received from:**

White Stuff  
Marks & Spencer's  
Tommy Rossi  
Legacy Donation from the Estate  
of John Fisher Little

# Staff list

## 2019-2020



Aine Mulholland  
Aisling Meenan  
Alicia Toal  
Aoife Clarke  
Brenda Kilpatrick  
Briega O'Connor  
Caitriona Leonard  
Caoimhe Coyle  
Caroline Hunter  
Christina Howarth  
Courtney McBride  
Deborah Webb  
Deidre McMahon  
Donna O'Kane  
Edward Wallace  
Fiona Morrison  
Gavin Canning

Iain Black  
Jennifer Warden  
Jo Irvine  
Julie-Anne Neeson  
Karen Stirling  
Laure Doyle  
Lee Kane  
Margaret Guy  
Niamh McLaughlin  
Nicola McCready  
Nyree Mulholland  
Owen O'Connor  
Rachel Dawson  
Roisin McComb  
Trevor McDaid  
Vivian McConvey

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9-11 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1JG