

ASPIRE ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Annual Report January - December 2021
Financial Report 2021



CHY 114438 / CRN 231996

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

About Aspire _____	1
Financial Summary _____	8
Income and Expenditure Summary _____	10
Statement from the Board of Directors _____	11
Contact Information _____	12

ABOUT ASPIRE

Aspire

Aspire – The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland, was established 27 years ago to support members of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Community, most specifically those with a formal diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. Today we do not categorise autism in the same way. We are still supporting our Aspergers community but we are expanding our remit to support the broader autistic community. Our goals are still aligned to that which we believed in 27 years ago, which are:

- To provide information, support and assistance for people who have the condition known as Asperger Syndrome or ASD in Ireland, in particular in the areas of diagnosis, education, training, remedial treatment, employment and personal development;
- To promote a support network for families, friends and carers of those living with Autism or Asperger Syndrome, and provide a general forum to discuss topics associated with ASD or Asperger Syndrome;
- To advocate on behalf of people with ASD, and provide them with the tools to advocate for themselves; and
- To provide a residential unit for those living with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, providing independent living skills and the tools to live independently.

To achieve these goals, Aspire focuses on five key areas:

1. To meet the needs of people living with Asperger Syndrome or ASD throughout their lives, from diagnosis, through education, social exploration, career development and independent living;
2. To ensure that information and a network of support is available to anyone who needs it
3. To promote an understanding of the unique qualities of people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD and their needs, to ensure support is provided in social, educational and employment environments;
4. To facilitate families of people with ASD or Asperger Syndrome to gain the tools and resources needed for them to support their family member in achieving their goals; and
5. To participate in and encourage research into ASD or Asperger Syndrome as opportunities present themselves.

Our Vision

Our **Vision** is a world where people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have the same opportunities to work, socialize and participate as everyone else.

ABOUT ASPIRE

Our Mission

Our **Mission** is to provide supports and services to people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD that will help them to fulfil their goals, to provide information to them and their families, and to promote an understanding in the community.

Our Values

Inclusion

We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have an invaluable insight and should be central to decisions regarding what supports are required and how our message is communicated.

Equality

We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have the right to access the same supports, community resources, educational and employment opportunities as everyone else.

Promote Understanding

We believe that a greater understanding of Asperger Syndrome and ASD in the community will lead to greater inclusion and awareness of the unique combination that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD can make

Achieving Aspirations

We believe that people with Asperger Syndrome or ASD have the right to choose their own path. Aspire is committed to providing support to individuals and promoting a level of understanding to make this achievable.

Co-operation

We at Aspire believe that co-operation is essential to effective long-term development. It allows for communication, collaboration and the collective use of resources to accomplish goals in the Social Care sector. Creating more and better supports for people with Asperger Syndrome and ASD.

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Services and Supports

Aspire proudly continued to offer services and supports throughout the year, demonstrating our flexibility through government restrictions, to ensure our community continue to avail of important supports and services:

Career Development

Aspire has entered into an exciting and highly successfully strategic alignment with Specialisterne, offering bespoke relationship management and career development support to those on the spectrum. Further supports and services in terms of in-house career development has been through the provision of informal agreement with professional bodies and agencies for our Social Enterprise (Aspire Productions) staff, recruits and volunteers. This has included industry talks, business planning, and opportunities to engage in diversity action planning.

Aspire Social Group

The Aspire Adult Social Group meets monthly. Prior to the pandemic, the group met at a retro arcade game bar near the Smithfield area of Dublin, however in the last year the group adapted to government restrictions, and now meet online to facilitate social get togethers. These include movie nights, games nights, social events, and more. The board have noted that moving the social group online has greatly increased our capacity for social outreach, and this is reflected in the increased attendance from people living outside Dublin. Plans for the group to operate both online and in person for 2022.

Aspire Productions

Aspire Productions is our successful and hugely important social enterprise, offering paid employment, employment support, training and engagement opportunities for adults with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome or ASD, in the media sector. This talented team continued to flourish this year, adapting to government restrictions when required by producing high quality documentary, design, editing, filming and other creative work.

Aspire Residential Unit

The Aspire Residential Unit provides independent living support to individuals with Asperger Syndrome through a talented and dedicated team of qualified social care workers. A person-centric approach is used to facilitate engagement and activities both with the community and with our social enterprise, providing progressive opportunities to further independent living. The Residential Unit works with various government agencies such as HIQA and the HSE to ensure compliance with all relevant regulations and best practice.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2020

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

Aspire's first Strategic Plan was successfully created and implemented for 2017-2020. Given the pandemic, the board shifted priority focus from research and information provision to service provision, which saw a move from the delivery of in-house services to strategic partnership with specialist not-for-profit services. This has included career development provision with Specialisterne,

Other services, including the Residential Unit Service and Community Engagement continued throughout 2021. Our social enterprise, Aspire Productions, provided paid work and engagement opportunities throughout the year, as well as exciting training and certification opportunities.

Due to the Global pandemic Aspires Strategic Plan 2017-2020 ran over and guided the work of Aspire for 2021.

Work has commenced on the new Strategic Plan, with scope of delivery including service provision, information provision and awareness, fundraising and collaboration.

Aspire Board of Directors

Aspire is governed by a Board of Directors, including a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Company Secretary, who meet at least 10 times per year, and are responsible for steering Aspire towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies - ensuring the organisation has adequate resources to advance its mission.

The Board is currently compiled of 6 Non-Executive Directors, all of whom are experienced and qualified corporate professionals, passionate about providing the ASD community with effective support and services. The Board is made up of individuals who have a vested interest in the Autism Community.

Directors have a range of experience, including finance, commercial business, human resources and not for profit management. The Board have also established three sub-committees, including Strategic Planning, Financial and Risk. Both the members of the Board and the sub-committees are recruited through our professional membership, via the ASD Community, through professional services who link in with Aspire, and through board level search facility, Boardmatch.

Due to the nature of the work the Directors are connected to through Aspire, a Board Members Conflict of Interest and Loyalty Policy is in place to ensure objectivity in decision making. The Board is responsible for delegating operational duties to the Chief Executive Officer and providing support and oversight to this role.

Key decisions can be requested through the provision of proposals or questions from the CEO. The Chairperson, Company Secretary and CEO prepare the agenda and board pack in advance of meetings, including major decisions that require contemplation, minutes of previous meetings, and important documents requiring review. An Action Tracker schedule and decisions register is utilized to ensure decisions and actions are followed up on and carried out as planned.

The Treasurer is responsible for financial oversight and oversees and approves all transactions made via online banking, reviewing statements and invoices on a quarterly or more regular basis to identify issues.

The Board of Directors has met its objectives in ensuring compliance with the Charities Regulator Code of Governance, with the following work undertaken:

Board Governance:

- proposed Audit Schedule to review documentation and processes in line with Strategic Plan
- a detailed review and update to the Memorandum and Articles of Association as aligned to the Companies Act 2004
- complete review and update to the Board Manual including key policies such as the Board Recruitment Policy and Conflicts Policy
- the establishment and adoption of necessary registers including Action Tracker, Voting, Decisions, and Conflicts Registers
- consistent application of board pack including agenda template, Action Tracker and minutes distribution with board pack distribution.

GOVERNANCE

- review and update to formal board position descriptions, as well as full review of all staff position descriptions including CEO spec.
- annual board evaluation as required

Operational Governance:

- understanding of landscape against other charities with a view to understanding our points of difference, other areas of specialization and opportunities for cooperation, especially in relation to programmes or services including for the Residential Unit, career development, parental support programmes, and Aspire Productions.
- consequential decision further to landscape review to change operational model which saw the introduction of partnerships with key charities and not-for-profits specialising in relevant areas. Strategic Partnership with Specialisterne established with a view for further partnerships envisaged this upcoming year.
- full review of all programmes and services on offer, with renewed vigour surrounding risk assessing programme outcomes by way of proposal template for utilisation prior to approval of programmes, noting operational model change with strategic partnerships.
- significant transformative work at Residential Unit to bring operations to a place of best practice since November 2020. HIQA action plan agreed and completed February 2021.
- Announced HIQA inspection took place in October 2021. Recommendations made have been actioned and are in line with the agreed response timeline due to be completed by the end of 2022.
- all Residential Unit staff 100% compliant with training requirements, including the design of Training Needs Analysis.
- website overhaul and agency employed.

Management Governance:

- review and update to all contracts of employment, Employee Handbook/workplace policies to ensure employment law compliance.
- performance appraisals for all staff carried out, with board commitment to invest in necessary training and upskilling of both board members and staff, on a rolling basis.
- appropriate and/compliant Induction / Onboarding programme, training and development, recruitment and selection processes now in place. These include succession and capacity planning and effective remote working onboarding.
- workstation ergonomic risk assessment carried out for all home working staff to ensure reduced risk of claim / personal injury. New equipment/furniture required for staff has been purchased.
- appointment of Accounts Assistant in internal accounts and payroll processing (no longer outsourced).
- update and/or creation of internal forms and processes including timesheets in line with legislation, annual leave forms, induction checklist, orientation/onboarding manual, expense claim form, end of probationary period assessment (checklist and process), etc.

Agency / Bodies Risk and Governance:

GOVERNANCE

- Residential Unit Policies have been reviewed/updated to ensure HIQA, HSE and relevant Employment Law compliance.
- a high priority has been placed on relationship building with staff, alliance partners in sector, and key agency figures (HSE, Pobal, Charities Regulator, etc). Engagement with Pobal, HSE, HIQA, WRC and Charities Regulator and strong relationship developed with same.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financial Summary

Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements

Our annual report and audited financial statements, as presented by the Board of Directors, provides information on the financial status at year end and a breakdown of income sources and expenditure. The organisation maintains monthly management accounts, including a forecast for the year and an annual budget. The audited accounts are prepared by external auditors RBK Chartered Accountants, Park View House, Beech Hill Office Campus, Clonskeagh, Dublin D04 X7V2.

Income Sources 2021

Our main source of income in 2021 was from the HSE under a HSE Section 39 Service Level Agreement and from the Pobal Community Services Fund (Department of Rural and Community Development) under a grant agreement. Residential rent and donations made up the remainder of our income in 2021.

There was an increase in income between 2020 and 2021 mainly due to extra unexpected funding received from Pobal during the Covid 19 pandemic. There was also an increase to HSE funding following the settlement of pay restoration.

Total Income: €376,417

Expenditure 2021

There has been an increase in expenditure of €35,218 from 2020 to 2021, this was mainly due to an increase in the following costs :

1. Further legal and HR consultancy costs resulting in an increase of +€14k,
2. Increased Repairs and Maintenance to the residential unit of +€12k and
3. A prudent provision of +€10k made against Paypal funds owned by the company but which are proving difficult to access.

It should be noted that the board are satisfied that the above costs are expected to be significantly less in the current year, 2022.

Establishment and service provision costs remained stable from 2020 to 2021 however they were still impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Programs, normally run by Head office, did not take place in 2021. Previous costs associated with these amounted to approx. €5k in 2020. Recruitment costs of €9k were incurred in 2021 due to the ongoing difficulty hiring carers at the residential unit during the pandemic.

Total Expenditure: €513,497

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Reserves

Reserves are funds set aside or saved for future use. They can be built from retained profits, revaluation of assets and other surplus monies.

The balance sheet of the annual audited financial statements shows the total reserves that an organisation holds as at the balance sheet date. As at 31 December the reserves for Aspire were €125,930.

Challenges in a Post-Covid environment :

Remote working - Admin and Social Enterprise staff have continued to work from home as necessary, however it is expected that a new office space will be sought soon on a part time basis. As stated in 2021, this cannot be considered until Aspire is in a position to deliver programmes and cover the costs of these.

Aspire Productions continue to work on producing documentaries and other film projects for which it has secured some ARISE funding in 2022. Training continues to be required to ensure high quality outcomes.

The Residential Unit in Ballinteer is aging and requires increasingly more work to ensure a comfortable, safe and appropriate living environment. This comes at a cost, which is not always provided for by the HSE. Funding is required to facilitate major works.

Like much of the not-for-profit sector around the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected Aspire's operations, and notably the ability to charge out for events and programmes to support our community. The focus must revert back to delivering worthwhile Community programs as well as engaging in significant funding to resist drawing on our reserves.

A new CEO took office in October 2021 and is actively engaged in rebuilding the charity so that it can resume the provision of high-quality supports and services.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

Income and Expenditure Summary

Income and Expenditure Statement

	2021	2020
INCOME		
Grants HSE	301,037	279,021
Grants National Lottery	-	42
Grants Comic Relief	150	-
Grants Pobal	66,036	53,128
Donations/fundraising	3,994	5,599
Sale of books	-	151
Member Subscriptions	-	4,970
Resident contribution	5,200	5,249
Aspire Productions video production	-	6,729
Social Eyes program	-	2,819
	<u>376,417</u>	<u>357,708</u>
ADMIN COSTS		
Travel & subsistence	3,666	2,567
Consultancy	31,167	7,112
Printing, postage and stationary	907	1,493
Telephone	2,007	836
Computer costs	7,186	1,538
Legal costs	16,977	27,260
Audit & accountancy	6,166	9,135
Bank charges	648	921
Bank account Provision	10,131	-
Insurance	13,035	9,088
Subscriptions	-	450
General expenses	6,316	1,313
	<u>98,206</u>	<u>61,713</u>
ESTABLISHMENT COSTS		
Rent payable	-	16,013
Light, heat and power	3,500	2,344
Cleaning	443	-
Security	2,222	-
Repairs and maintenance	21,052	8,615
Depreciation of tangible assets	13,344	13,342
Amortisation of capital grant	- 9,780	- 9,780
Office Equipment leasing	399	-
	<u>31,180</u>	<u>30,534</u>
SERVICE PROVISION		
Social eyes expenses	-	2,734
Community Engagement Costs	-	42
Wages and salaries	318,847	325,662
Employers PRSI	31,175	33,989
Staff costs	8,500	4,341
Mindfulness program	150	-
Recruitment	8,687	-
Entertainment	53	-
Spectrum Alliance Workshops	-	170
Remote Working allowance	3,478	-
Training	3,868	5,780
House Supplies and Requisites	9,353	11,344
Aspire Productions	-	2,310
	<u>384,111</u>	<u>386,032</u>
Operating Surplus/(deficit)	- 137,080	- 120,571
Other interest receivable and similar income		38
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	<u>- 137,080</u>	<u>- 120,533</u>

STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Statement from the Board of Directors

As Covid-19 restrictions continued to persist this year, Aspire's shifted focus to an operational model surrounding informal and formal partnership with specialist not-for-profits and professional bodies has proven hugely successful in terms of engaging our community. Not only has this resulted in greater participation from business planning, career development, and social enterprise perspective, but we have seen a huge uplift in online/social media presence and engagement.

We are incredibly proud of the seismic work that has been undertaken to ensure not only compliance, but best practice across the business, with all staff having completed important training and development in recent months, as well as demonstrating ongoing flexibility in adapting to our new model of operations. As Residential Unit staff continue to provide outstanding service to our Residents, our operational staff are best placed to provide the highest level of supports and services.

We take this opportunity to thank our staff, volunteers and recruits for their positivity, engagement and ongoing dedication to Aspire. As we have noted so frequently in recent months, we are incredibly fortunate and grateful to have such talented people working at Aspire!

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the considerable impact the pandemic continues to have on our community. While there is much to be positive about in terms of our planned expanded programmes and strategic partnerships, we understand there is more to be done as we strive for best practice and engage with you through the work of our committees and online.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our service users, staff and Board of directors for their dedication and commitment to Aspire through the challenges of 2021. We now look forward to the next chapter of Aspire.

Donal McCarthy
Chairperson

CONTACT INFORMATION



Aspire – Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland
Address: 30 Ballinteer Park, Ballinteer, Dublin 16
Phone: 089 465 2026
Email: info@aspireireland.ie
Web: www.aspireireland.ie
CHY 11438 / CRN 231996

Aspire Ireland is partially funded through a HSE Section 39 Service Agreement and receives project funding from the National Lottery



Aspire Productions Department, Aspire -The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland
Address: 30 Ballinteer Park, Ballinteer, Dublin 16
Phone: 086 0297650
Email: hello@aspireproductions.ie
Web: www.aspireproductions.ie

Aspire Productions is a Social Enterprise of Aspire Ireland, and supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal through the Community Services Programme