Minutes

 rethink.org

Annual General Meeting

**21 November 2024, 16:00 – 17:00**

Thames Suite, 28 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7GR and Via Teams

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| Present |
| Kathryn Tyson, Chair of Trustees | John Liver, Treasurer |
| Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive | Rajen Sheth, Vice-Chair |
| Aphra Tulip-Briggs, Vice-Chair | Caroline Cannar, Company Secretary |
| Brian Dow, Deputy Chief Executive | Mark Yates, Executive Director of Operations |
| Tanya Srikandan, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs | George Hook |
| Christine Stead  | Edward Gorringe |
| Jane Watkinson | Ros Homan |
| Simon Brauner-Cave | Jo Frost-Bryant |
| Philippa Lowe (online) | John Spriggs-Taylor (online) |
| Stuart McGrath (online) |  |

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| In Attendance |
| Amy Yeates, Head of the Chief Executives’ Office |  |

1. **Welcome and Chair’s Address**

Kathryn Tyson, Chair of Trustees, welcomed everyone to the AGM both those attending in person and joining online.

She then delivered her address which focussed on the Charity’s transformation, including our efforts around internal improvement, impact measurement, the vital work of our Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) and Carers Advisory Board (CAB), and our progress towards becoming an anti-racist organisation.

**Commitment to Internal Transformation**

To meet growing needs, the Charity is focused on integrating and improving our services to provide people with joined-up, comprehensive support. For example, those in our supported accommodation services now have better access to employment guidance, financial support, and other community services.

To sustain this progress, we’ve invested in building robust infrastructure. Enhancing our IT systems has been a major focus, helping us streamline processes, support staff more effectively, and improve communication across the charity. We’ve also upgraded our financial and information systems to support transparency and accountability, which is essential for delivering high standards of care. Our new HIVE database, a user-friendly system, is already making our membership processes simpler and more accessible online.

**Service Feedback and Impact**

A key focus for Trustees has been answering the ‘so what?’ question. When we review the Charity’s work, we want to see clearly the difference we’re making in people’s lives. This focus enables us to concentrate on what has the most impact and identify areas for improvement.

She expressed her delight at the progress Rethink has made. Our new Impact and Evaluation Framework allows us to better measure how our services change lives. For instance, service user feedback found that:

* 83% agreed their quality of life improved due to our support.
* 91% would recommend our service to a family member or friend in a similar position (compared to an 86% average for NHS mental health services).
* 93% rated the support they received as ‘good’ or ‘excellent.’

As we continue to refine and expand this framework, we’re committed to transparency in our outcomes and to continually improving how we meet the needs of our communities. For those interested, our framework is available on the website at: <https://reports.rethink.org/impactframework>

**The Role of LEAB and CAB**

Kathryn acknowledged the essential work of both our Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB) and our Carers Advisory Board (CAB), each providing vital insights that shape our approach to mental health services.

The Lived Experience Advisory Board, or LEAB, is made up of 18 members and any trustees who currently use or have used mental health services. This Board ensures that the voices of people with lived experience directly influence our direction. Chaired by Shaun Johnson, our former Vice-chair, LEAB meets at least three times a year, with additional informal gatherings. Its key work includes monitoring the progress of our Involvement Strategy and providing feedback on policies, communications, and initiatives affecting people who use mental health services. Their insights help us stay closely aligned with the needs of those we serve.

Our Carers Advisory Board, or CAB, upholds the long tradition of carer involvement within the charity, providing a dedicated and strong voice for those who care for people severely affected by mental illness. This Board also consists of 18 members and is chaired by Philippa Lowe, our former Chair of Trustees. CAB ensures that the unique needs and challenges faced by carers are represented, giving them a platform to influence our policy and advocacy work.

Kathryn thanked all the members of LEAB and CAB for their insight and support. Together, they bring critical perspectives to our work, helping us build services that are responsive, compassionate, and rooted in the real experiences of those we support. Their contributions are truly at the heart of Rethink Mental Illness.

**Anti-Racism Progress Update**

In March 2024, we published our "Anti-Racism Progress Report," sharing updates on our journey to become a truly anti-racist organisation. While we celebrate the significant progress made, we also recognise that more work lies ahead.

Key Achievements:

* Anti-Racist Leadership and Governance: We established a robust governance framework and appointed an Associate Director for Race Equality and Equity. This role drives our Race Equality Action Plan, which centres on strategic oversight, supporting ethnically diverse colleagues, and enhancing support for minoritised service users.
* Workplace Representation: Ethnic minority representation has increased from 11% in 2021 to 15% in 2023. However, challenges remain, particularly in increasing ethnic diversity among management roles.
* Mutual Mentoring Programme: Launched in January 2023, this programme has allowed senior leaders to understand the lived experiences of ethnic minority colleagues and provided mentoring support.
* Anti-Racist Advocacy: We’re committed to addressing mental health inequalities faced by racialised communities, especially Black communities. Our recommendations for tackling these inequalities were adopted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Draft Mental Health Bill.

**Recognising the Support of Our Donors**

Finally, Kathryn acknowledged that Rethink’s growth and success would not be possible without our remarkable supporters, members, and donors. This past year, we received our largest legacy donation from the estate of Raymond Briggs CBE, a man who believed deeply in the mission of Rethink Mental Illness. This generosity, combined with that of other donors, has empowered us to expand our services and sustain our innovative programmes, bringing hope to so many in need.

She then concluded her report by asking members to formally adopt the Minutes of last year’s AGM.

1. **Adoption of the Minutes of the previous AGM**

Members noted the Minutes of the last AGM held on 23 November 2023 which were circulated with the agenda and were asked to adopt them as a true record.

**Proposer: Aphra Tulip-Briggs**

**Seconder: George Hook**

**RESOLVED**:

**To adopt the minutes of the AGM held on 23 November 2023 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.**

The Chair then thanked everyone for their continued support before handing over to Chief Executive Mark Winstanley for his Annual Review.

**3. Chief Executive’s Annual Review**

Mark Winstanley gave an update on the performance and transformative growth of Rethink’s services over the past year and recent policy developments and efforts to improve services and influence the national mental health agenda, in the context of a new government, rising needs, and significant challenges.

**Driving Systemic Change through Policy**

In 2023/24, our policy work brought both progress and frustration. Despite all our efforts, the previous government shelved both the cross-departmental mental health strategy and the Mental Health Act reform, which was, to put it mildly, extremely disappointing.

Our response was to take a pragmatic approach. We were dealing with the close of a 14-year administration, one more focused on creating a radical, distinctly conservative agenda than policies with all party support. Our advocacy shifted toward influencing the incoming government, and we have made headway: we have seen the first reading of the long-overdue Mental Health Act reforms soon.

Whilst we hope the new government will bring fresh energy to addressing the needs of people severely affected by mental illness, we understand it is still finding its feet amid a challenging economic environment. This gives us a mixed picture.

The good news: the government recognises long waiting lists for mental health services and the need for increased NHS funding, which was boosted in the recent budget. Additionally, a public consultation has been launched to shape a new Ten-Year Plan for the NHS - an opportunity for all of us to make our voices heard.

The less encouraging news is that funding for mental health and social care still lacks clarity, particularly in terms of prioritisation. This will require ongoing reassurances.

Most concerning, however, are planned changes to Work Capability Assessments by the Department for Work and Pensions, which could make it harder for people who are too unwell to work to make ends meet. The ongoing focus on economic inactivity, and the periodic scapegoating of people living with mental illness by some politicians and media, is a challenge we need to stand up to with a united voice. In due course and as the details are known, we are likely to mobilise our supporter to make their voices head to their MPs on this issue.

Within these challenges, though, there is a silver lining of opportunity. Many people living with mental illness who are currently out of work would like to return to employment, with the right support and flexible, compassionate employers who recognise their potential. The announced funding for such support must, however, be effective and meaningful, addressing wider barriers like financial insecurity and housing instability.

In short, while we see some green shoots with the new government, it’s not yet a new dawn for people severely affected by mental illness. A coordinated, cross-government approach will be essential. Each department’s actions reverberate widely: the Department of Health and Social Care’s efforts to reduce waiting lists, for example, directly impact people’s ability to work, while the Department for Work and Pensions’ efforts to reduce social security costs may inadvertently increase demand for mental health services. As a charity and a sector, our role is to help the government join these dots to improve mental health across the nation.

**Challenging Stigma**

Beyond influencing decision-makers in Westminster, Whitehall, and public bodies, we know that people severely affected by mental illness still face stigma and discrimination. The *Time to Change* campaign, which we co-delivered with Mind, made a significant impact in changing attitudes and behaviours around mental health. However, progress has been uneven. While society is now more open to discussing conditions like anxiety and depression, stigma remains around, for example, diagnoses such as schizophrenia and borderline personality disorder.

At Rethink, we are fully committed to challenging stigma and discrimination that impacts people with severe mental health conditions. This summer, we launched our first integrated campaign across social media, our website, and TV, airing our first advert in over ten years.

To date, over 7,000 people have registered to receive our campaign guide. Most of these people are new to the charity, and we hope, over time, they will join us as campaigners, donors, and members. The advert, broadcast on ITV, reached 11 million viewers and 9% of the UK adult population.

This reflects our growing confidence to demand change and spread our message of hope far and wide.

**Service Performance and Community-Based Models**

Last year, our community-based services and supported housing directly supported over 24,000 people - an increase of more than 4,000 from the previous year. In addition, our advice and information service reached thousands more, with millions accessing support through our social media channels, media outreach, and website.

Our “Communities that Care” model continues to shape our work, bringing a holistic approach to supporting people severely affected by mental illness. In Somerset, our Open Mental Health initiative provides integrated, place-based care to over 10,000 people annually, reducing the need for emergency care and supporting long-term recovery. Since this programme’s launch, we’ve seen a 15% reduction in A&E visits, demonstrating the importance of preventive, community-focused care.

Building on this model, we’ve partnered with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to bring similar services to Sheffield and Coventry & Warwickshire. Recently, we were awarded a contract with the Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire ICB to deliver a new personality disorder service. We are also thrilled to have retained the contract to lead Open Mental Health in Somerset.

Housing is another cornerstone of recovery. Working with New Philanthropy Capital, we’ve deepened our understanding of the housing challenges people living with mental illness face. This year, we added 28 new supported accommodation units, bringing our total to 508. Stable, quality housing is essential to improving long-term mental health, and we remain committed to advancing this cause.

**Call to Action**

Rethink has been described as ‘not a think tank, but a do tank’ and continues to be the charity for serious mental illness. We’re dedicated to expanding our reach, enhancing our services, and driving systemic change across the UK. The road may be long, but we move forward together, celebrating our achievements and mobilising against new challenges.

The next twelve months will be pivotal. As the nation recovers from austerity, the pandemic, and economic hardship, we face the question of whether we’re willing to invest in supporting those severely affected by mental illness. This is not only a moral imperative but also key to unlocking human potential.

Finally, he thanked Rethink’s members for their continued commitment and support and recognised the input of some key people in the last year:

* Brian Dow, Mark Yates, Tanya Srikandan and Caroline Cannar plus the Directors and wider staff team.
* An especially big thank you to Caroline Cannar who was attending her last AGM as Company Secretary for the past 10 years.
* Our Chair, Kathryn, and all of our Trustees who give so much to the Charity.

He then handed over to John Liver to deliver his Treasurer’s report.

**4. Treasurer’s Report**

John Liver, Treasurer gave a summary of the Charity’s financial results for the year to 31 March 2024.

Overall, the Charity had an operating deficit of £1.7million, compared to an operating deficit for the prior year of £0.5 million, with an overall deficit for the year of £1.2 million.

He reiterated the points raised at the previous year’s AGM that the environment for the year was looking challenging, and in the circumstances overall performance stood up well. Rethink continues to grow its services, support its amazing staff, invest in strategic priorities and maintain a good level of financial resilience and discipline for which he extended thanks on behalf of the Board to the executive team and all colleagues at Rethink colleagues.

He then spoke to his slides which are attached to these Minutes.

**Slide 1 – Operating Performance**

Income overall rose 8% from £40.9m to £44.5 million which was helped by winning new mandates or expanding existing ones in a number of different areas. Importantly Rethink’s quality scores also remained strong. Fundraising grew, in part due to some significant legacies which are so important to support the Charity’s work.

Reflecting the extra services we are now running, and with inflation remaining high, costs rose 11% from £41.5m to £46.2m. Rethink also made £1.6 million of investments in its capabilities and infrastructure as the Charity continues to develop its work on Communities that Care model along with a programme of improvements to our buildings and key systems which provide the modern foundations we need to deliver our ambitious strategy.

**Slide 2 – Investment Portfolio**

In addition to our operating performance, our results are affected by the performance of our investment portfolio. This had a much better year than in 2022/23, with investment gains amounting to £0.4 million during the year. Our overall financial health, and ability to manage shocks and unplanned events, which is reflected in our reserves and in particular our free reserves, remained in our target range, at some £5.9 million.

**Slide 3 – Snapshot of 2024**

The continuing cost of living pressures, and pressures on the NHS and local government budgets, mean that the environment remains tight, and we will probably have an operating deficit again this year. We will need to, and will continue to, operate with discipline. But our ambition to continue to provide more services as set out in our Communities that Care strategy remains undimmed – there is no doubt about society’s need for the vital work Rethink does.

The accounts are available on the [website](https://www.rethink.org/aboutus/who-we-are/accounts-funding-and-impact/agm-2024/).

Members were then asked to vote to adopt the annual accounts.

**Proposer: George Hook**

**Seconder: Rajen Seth**

**RESOLVED:**

**To adopt the annual accounts for 2023/24.**

Members were then asked to appoint the Auditors and to authorise the Board of Trustees to fix their remuneration.

**Proposer: George Hook**

**Seconder: Simon Brauner-Cave**

**RESOLVED:**

**To appoint MHA MacIntyre Hudson as Auditors.**

**5. Endorsement of the Appointment/Re-appointment of Trustees**

The Company Secretary, Caroline Cannar, outlined the important role of Trustees and thanked them all for their continued work and commitment on behalf of the Charity.

There were five Trustees standing for reappointment at the AGM:

Edward Gorringe (Yorkshire and North East region)

Ros Homan (London region)

John Liver (Treasurer)

Aphra Tulip-Briggs (Vice-Chair)

Kathryn Tyson (Chair)

There were two new Trustees to be appointed:

Simon Brauner-Cave (South Eastern region)

Jo Frost-Bryant (Eastern region)

And there was one resignation during the year, Jeremy Connick, who had served on the Board for four years.

Members were then asked to endorse the reappointments and appointments as stated above.

**Proposer: Aphra Tulip-Briggs**

**Seconder: Christine Stead**

**RESOLVED:**

**To re-appoint/appoint Trustees.**

Caroline then formally announced her planned retirement at the end of March 2025 after 32 years with Rethink before handing back to the Chair for any questions.

**6. Questions**

Kathryn thanked Caroline for her commitment to the Charity over many years and on behalf of the Board wished her well for her retirement. She then the closed the formal business of the AGM as there were no questions from members.

**Operating Results**Deficit of £1.708m (2022/23: £552,000 deficit)

* 8% growth in income
* Growth in Fundraising including strong Legacies performance
* Strong growth overall, especially Alliances & Partnerships, community services and criminal justice
* Expenditure growth of 11% in line with contractual activity growth and price pressures
* Includes £1.6m investment through designated funds (22/23: £1.0m)
* Free reserves of £5.9m close to top end of target range of £3.5m to £6m
* Investment of £1.6m during the year through designated funds on strategic priorities
* Transfer of £1.1m of closed funds back to free reserves

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* Partial recovery in the investment portfolio with a gain of £371k