



Trustees' Report to Annual Assembly 2022
Brenda Griffiths - Chair

Charitable giving and endeavour are integral to our Livery journey and it is, most importantly, fundamental to our values as the Company of Nurses.

This has been another year both of consolidation and growth for the Trust. From the outset we have sought to ensure that our money is used to offer benevolent support to nurses when and where it is needed; and contribute to the professional development of nurses today and tomorrow through scholarship and bursary. We have also made it clear that we will offer a safe repository for funds held by other organisations and donated by benefactors for the nursing profession. The generosity of the Nightingale Fellowship has allowed us to build up substantial benevolent funds and the Ann Campbell Royal British Nurses Association Memorial Fund is a sound foundation for educational endeavour. The Chantry Robinson Fund has continued to enable us 'to make a difference'.

You will recall that The Royal British Nurses Association (RBNA) has entrusted us with their remaining charitable funds to ensure that they can be used for nurses as intended by their original benefactors. It should be remembered that The RBNA has a unique place in our profession's history. Founded in December 1887 by Ethel Bedford-Fenwick, it fought for nurse training of at least three years duration incorporating national standards and the RBNA campaigned for the establishment of a register of nurses. Mrs Gordon Fenwick became SRN 1 in 1919 and is recognised as the first registered nurse. The RBNA has now entrusted its legacy and memory into our safe keeping.

The funds received date back to Queen Victoria and the early origins of the RBNA and as such came with ancient covenants and restrictions on their use. This was a time when nurses all lived in a Nurses Home, many for the duration of their entire working life and when

retired, and required to vacate their Nurses Home, the fortunate were able to move to a retirement home, often owned by the large hospitals in which they had worked. Others, not so fortunate or not working for hospitals large enough to provide for their retired nurses relied on good will and charity. Charitable funds were often in the form of Annuities, paying a fixed sum for the rest of a nurse's life so that she (invariably a she in those days) could pay for simple rented accommodation. Times have indeed changed and now with financial independence and pensions such annuities do not address the needs of modern nursing support – but with the restrictions still in place, there were severe limitations on use of the designated annuity funds.

I reported last year that The Trustees had instructed experienced solicitors to work with us to petition the Charity Commission to lift these constraints so that monies can be used to address issues which confront nurses today. An investment for the future to allow our Trust to support nurses for generations to come. I am more than delighted to report that we now have confirmation from the Charities Commission that all restrictions have been lifted and these funds can become general funds for the Objects of Company of Nurses Charitable Trust. They will be known as The Princess Helena and Ethel Mary Fletcher Fund For Nurses named after the original benefactors to ensure their generosity is not forgotten. This has been a long and, at times, arduous journey but we are now in a position to ensure that these funds can now be used for their intended purpose - helping nurses in need of either benevolence or to support professional development.

Another success this year has been a complete revision of the Charity pages of our website. Fellow Trustees join me in thanking our Web Master, Col Steve Oxlade and the Chair of the Comms Committee Hilary Andrews for their help with this. As the front window on all our activities, it is so important to provide the information people need in an engaging and accessible format. Please do take a look – I hope you will find it much improved and of interest.

We have enrolled in the AmazonSmile regime which gives us a small (a very small) donation for all orders made on Amazon. This does not make us a fortune but does allow us to be listed amongst the many charitable bodies who engage with the scheme, raising our profile and awareness of our existence. If you do use Amazon, it is easy to enrol and the Trust can benefit from any of your orders at no cost to you. Please do consider registering.

Master, I would like to give the Assembly a flavour of the Trust's recent activity:

- Our Educational Funds continue to sponsor Company of Nurses Scholars. Two nurse leaders of the future have benefitted from the renowned Leadership Programme run by the Florence Nightingale Foundation with a third about to commence the programme. Another nurse is studying acute pre-hospital medicine on a post-graduate MSc course at Queen Mary University London in conjunction with the London Air Ambulance service.
- We have funded two Awards in the School of Health Sciences at City University – one in Children's Nursing and the other in Mental Health Nursing. The Master was invited to present the awards to the successful students at their recent Prize Giving. A wonderful way to encourage the nurses of tomorrow.
- I am delighted to report that our Educational and Professional Development Committee are developing a support network for our growing number of Scholars and Alumni.

The Trust has continued to assist the pan Livery call for COVID support and contributed to the NHS Livery Kitchen Initiative. You will recall that the Worshipful Company of Drapers lead this call to arms with The Grocers and Merchant Taylors, working with volunteers from City caterer, Party Ingredients. They have produced nutritious, individually packaged meals for daily distribution to front line staff firstly at the Royal London Hospital other hospitals in the Barts Group and now also into the local community.

We also work closely with partners in nursing organisations who share our aim to support nurses in time of need. We are very pleased to work with the Cavell Trust and the Queen's Nursing Institute who share our values and desire to give support. Both organisations have seen an upturn in applications for assistance. We have made financial payments and I would like to share some examples:

- A Community nurse had a heart attack and has been left with heart failure so is unable to work. As she was contracted to an agency at the time of her infarction, she received no sick pay. When she was taken ill she was in the process of moving to a new property but now needed some adjustments to help her. The Trust made a contribution to the installation of an upstairs toilet as she is now less able to use the stairs.

- A young Children's Nurse lives with her husband and two young children. Their 4 year old son has a complex syndrome which means he is blind, developmentally delayed and now in end stage renal failure. His mother is dialysing him at home and they are preparing for a transplant. His father will be the living donor. The family live a distance away from the tertiary care centre and the Trust made a financial contribution to allow the family to pay for accommodation so they can stay together nearby when the operation is performed.
- An Occupational Health Nurse who had a car accident resulting in fractures to 3 ribs, sacral joint, right side pelvis and chipped left hip and pneumothorax. The breakdown of her marriage has resulted in mental health problems for her daughter and the Trust contributed to moving costs to allow her and her daughter to leave the marital home.
- A practice Nurse diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy in preparation for her mastectomy and reconstruction. She requested help towards travel costs to and from the hospital.

These sad examples show the importance of support being given when needed. We are pleased that the Company of Nurses Charitable Trust can help in some small way – financial support will not heal all wounds but can alleviate some of the pain.

I am, as always, indebted to my fellow Trustees who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to our work and do it all with a smile. Whilst we have identified strategic plans for the medium and longer term we also aim to respond very quickly to urgent requests for help. These are usually discussed, and a decision made within a couple of days. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Secretary, John Allen, whose wise counsel and efficient administration is without measure. Thank you, John – we are enormously grateful for all you do.

And finally, a thank-you to our growing number of Freemen who demonstrate that benevolent giving is part and parcel of Livery inclusion and who donate to the Trust on a regular basis. If you do not yet do this, I would ask you to consider setting up a Standing Order. This allows us to budget efficiently and effectively and to help our colleagues at time of need. A huge thank you to you all.

Thank you, Master. I commend this report to you.

Brenda Griffiths

May 2022