



Trustees' Report to Annual Assembly 2023
Brenda Griffiths - Chair

Master, Wardens, Honoured Guests, Freemen, Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Charitable Trust began life in October 2016 and was first registered with the Charity Commission in January 2017. Since that time, every year I have reported back to you at this Assembly on our development and progress.

I have shared with you how we have sought and been entrusted with substantial funds; found like-minded partners who share our vision; our banking and investments arrangements ensuring a firm financial footing; our legal obligations and how we have complied with the ever-growing requirements of a modern charity. We have developed processes that are efficient and effective and, dare I say, slick, so that the Trustees are able to respond speedily to requests for support and I am very proud of what we have achieved. You do not need to hear it all again this year – the Company's Charitable Trust is established, reputable and doing exactly what was intended – making a difference.

I am often asked how we spend our money. So this year, I would like to share some specifics with you. What exactly are we doing with our money and why should you and others continue to support us so that we can continue to make that difference.

A quick reminder of our Objects as registered with the Charity Commission.....*Promoting the development of the profession of nursing, including the awarding of scholarships; recognising excellence and innovation by nurses; supporting discussions and furthering the debate on matters relevant to nurses through educational and professional development; working with other organisations who share the same aims; providing benevolence to nurses and former nurses in need.*

Our Trust Objects now give us great flexibility and allow us to support applicants irrespective of where they trained or when. Our only restriction is that we can only support trained nurses or those in training. Our funds are broadly divided between those used for Education and Professional Development and those for supporting nurses in time of need.

I would like to start with Education and Professional Development. These are very challenging times for the NHS and all providers and recipients of healthcare. A perplexing time of perhaps turmoil for our profession. We all know that a highly educated and skilled workforce is essential but demands on Trusts – Acute, Community and Mental Health – are ever increasing. I make no judgement, but funds for ongoing training and development are sadly diminished and increasingly nurses who wish to take on further education and develop their skills are unable to do so with the financial support from their employer and they turn to charitable funds for support.

- We are pleased to be able to work with partners to encourage the development of nurses who aspire to lead in the future. Our Educational Funds continue to sponsor Company of Nurses Scholars. Three nurse leaders of the future have benefitted from the renowned Leadership Programme run by the Florence Nightingale Foundation with another about to commence the programme. We are also giving support to a community nurse who is undertaking the Aspiring Leaders Programme with the Queen's Nursing Institute and we will be supporting another nurse in each of the next two intakes.
- We supported the first nurse to be accepted on the acute pre-hospital medicine post-graduate MSc course at Queen Mary University London in conjunction with the London Air Ambulance service. Two more nurses are in the process of joining her.
- Our Chantry Robinson Fund has allowed three nurses to undertake the Health Inclusion Course at UCL allowing them to develop their skills in Homeless Health. We will be sponsoring further nurses in this very specialist area of practice when the course re-commences.
- A practising Senior Staff Nurse in ITU requested help with fees in order to complete the Critical Approaches in Advance Practice at City University. This we financed

jointly with the hospital where he works. Such shared funding is an avenue we will explore further.

- We now fund two undergraduate 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 Prize Giving. A wonderful way to encourage the nurses of tomorrow.
- Building on this collaboration, we now also fund a post graduate prize in the same University – thus rewarding continued excellence.
- 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.

We are also able to react to unexpected calls for support. You may have heard that the Florence Nightingale Museum put out a plea to assist with repatriating the wheelchair Florence used for most of her life. It has been restored at Johns Hopkins in the United States and the museum wishes it to return to the UK. A significant challenge because the shipping will require custom made packaging and air freight. It is hoped that it will be here in time for a new exhibition in the summer. The Trustees were unanimous in deciding to contribute to this project from our Education and Development funds. It serves several purposes within our Objects as well as contributing to an artefact of historical significance in nursing history.

The footfall at the museum is such that we can reach the many school parties that visit as well as nurses of all levels. It is quite remarkable how many go through those doors and thus we promote our profession. We are also keen to reach the public by emphasising the fact that Florence used the wheelchair for over 50 years and it did not stop her achieving so much. A great affirmative message for anyone who has similar health or mobility issues. I am also pleased to say that a plaque (+/- a video) will be displayed beside the Chair, recognising the Trust’s contribution to its repatriation and this may, perhaps, also act a recruitment tool for Company membership! You will be interested to know that we have

negotiated reduced entry fees to the Museum for our Freeman and we are working with them to identify the best process for accessing this discounted entry fee.

And now let me turn to benevolence and nurses in need. It is possibly timely to remind you that increasing numbers of nurses do not have NHS or equivalent contracts. COVID and budgets had led to a rising number of employers who prefer to offer zero hours contracts, Bank and other means of engagement. I am not sure anyone would have anticipated that working nurses would need to source Food Banks.

We 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. I am going to share with you some examples of how our funds have been spent since my last report:

- A community nurse who has a young daughter was recently widowed as her husband took his own life. She has suffered with PTSD since this incident occurred in their home. He was self-employed and she is now struggling financially. She requested flexible working from her employer but was turned down. She did receive Widows allowance, but this only for 6 months and has now stopped.
- A nurse who has severe mobility problems due to complex medical health difficulties. The Trust funded an automatic fold up scooter and a car hoist to enable more independence.
- A practice nurse currently studying Advanced Clinical Practice to become a Nurse Practitioner changed surgeries last year. Her husband died unexpectedly, aged 41. He had worked in construction and his work had been a bit slow since Covid. The couple have two children. Because she had been at her current workplace for less than 12 months she was not entitled to sick pay whilst off work after the death of her husband. We awarded a grant to help her cover rent and some bills whilst there was no other income.

- A Learning Disability Nurse working in a Nursing home for adults with complex needs was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and underwent surgery and chemotherapy. She was then diagnosed with a pulmonary embolism. She has also had to have part of her bowel removed and now has a stoma, so she has been very unwell. The Nursing home (in common with many others) does not pay their nurses sick pay and SSP ran out after 28 weeks. We were able to help her with rent and some living costs at such a challenging time
- We were also able to help a psychiatric nurse with a young son aged 10. Last year she was violently attacked by her ex-partner after he was released from prison for domestic violence. She and her child had to flee in the night and were homeless for 8 months, staying with friends and family. She and her young son have suffered through the trauma and are both very anxious, now diagnosed with PTSD. They have both had some therapy. They are now in a new council house but it is completely unfurnished. Her partner used her name for phones and other purchases on credit, now she cannot get any credit. Our contribution towards furnishings – including a bed each – has helped them settle into a new home and life.
- A Community Practitioner was living with his mother and stepfather. His mother died from cancer and his stepfather made him homeless. This was completely out of character as they had always got on. He managed to find council accommodation but was unable to get local authority support to furnish the flat. All of his belongings were at his mother's home. Cavell have supported him with a washing machine, QNI have awarded a grant to buy flooring and we helped with the purchase of a cooker.

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. We can only do this with the support of our benefactors, friends and Freeman. A huge thank-you to our growing number of Freeman 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.

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. 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 lastly, I end with the words of one of our recipients, suffering from severe Rheumatoid Arthritis

“I honestly don’t know what to say. My washing machine came today and I’ve done my first lot of washing for myself and it is absolutely amazing. I can’t thank you enough for the kindness the Company of Nurses have shown me I’m so grateful, as is my daughter. This is a huge help, thank you for your kind words they also mean a lot.”

That is how with small steps, we are able to make a difference.

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

Brenda Griffiths

May 2023