



Annual Report from Rescare Trustees to 2021 AGM

September 2020 to September 2021

The Rescare year 2020-2021 has again been busy and has sadly been overshadowed by the continued disruption caused by Covid 19. In accordance with government guidance we have been working mainly from our homes during this time but pleasingly we have been able to continue supporting our members AND RAISING OUR PROFILE whilst not losing sight of our plans to strengthen and grow for the future.

We have been massively supported by the three new trustees appointed at the AGM last year. Helen Wilman, our company secretary, Jim Howell our treasurer and Julie Abbott, our adviser on visibility, have greatly strengthened our vision and governance.

The trustees have all been working flat out during this past year and there have been some pleasing improvements to our services. We are happy, for instance, to say our website has undergone a major transformation, enabling on-line applications for membership and new domains for volunteers and campaigns. Rescare also featured on BBC Radio 5 following the BBC Katie Price documentary on getting her son into the special residential National Star College.

During this year the trustees have managed to keep in touch but with little in-person contact. There have been meetings monthly by Zoom and the Annual General Meeting last year, following a virtual format. There was an informal trustee and volunteer meeting in July in Katie Booth's garden (*it rained*), but all this interaction has been important because of the developments we have steered through despite the national emergency. In August this year we finally began working again regularly in the Buxton Road office, with clear infection control guidelines.

We found the pandemic has impacted severely on some of our friends and members. We had heard about virtual best interest meetings arranged at minimal notice, which have proved distressing and worrying. In addition there has been countrywide confusion about who could visit whom and when, in care facilities. We have been very pleased to be there for people, offering our expert advice and support on the email and telephone helplines.

We have been fortunate in attracting some volunteers to help us. Funds attracted from the *National Lottery Awards for All* have enabled us to extend the hours of our telephone helpline. We are now able to take calls 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (the afternoon shifts taken by a rota of trained volunteers). This is manageable for volunteers as calls can be routed to a personal phone and although not high in volume, we have been able throughout the pandemic to get help promptly to members facing very upsetting circumstances.

A grant from the *Baily Thomas Charitable Fund* has enabled us to develop a pilot scheme for befriending members on a one-to one basis. This is being overseen by Nicola Zielinski who joined us as a part-time employee in May this year. We have really appreciated her enthusiasm and expertise. Advertising and recruitment of potential befrienders and befriended is well underway and a training package developed. In addition we have begun to recruit and train volunteers to help us in the office.

As always, we are indebted to James Reid whose kindness, knowledge and hard work during his part-time hours has again been the bedrock of our activities. Keeping in touch with our membership has continued to be a priority. Resnews has been produced three times a year with copies mailed out to members. Back copies are available on our website and a PDF version is available to send to our sister organisations and overseas members. Following comments from last year's AGM we have initiated a series of facilitated discussion forums every other month by Zoom. These have been increasingly popular. The July session on Deputyship facilitated by Alex Rook was attended by over 25 members whose questions were pertinent and authoritatively answered by Alex. *(He was thanked by a bottle of premium Italian wine donated and taken to his chambers by a London-based friend of Rescare).*

We have featured in Resnews two residential communities under threat of closure, Furlong Close and Ravenswood. We have worked with them to highlight their difficulties and with a generous donation from them we have been identifying possible partners in a future campaign around protecting choices for the learning disabled. We will also be advertising and participating in a virtual conference about this issue in November.

In all we have had a successful and vibrant year, however our financial situation remains grave. We are urgently developing further fundraising efforts and have hopes of further money from the National Lottery. The grants we have obtained this last eighteen months have supported our expanded work but without sustainable funds to underpin our core activity we may have to close in the summer of 2022. We are asking for support from this meeting to establish a regular giving scheme which may appeal to a wider audience.

We thank all our friends and members for their continued support, including your generous donations. We will, of course, keep everybody informed. We will review the situation again in early 2022, when we hope to have had better news.

ANITA BENNETT, for the Trustee Board