THANKS

It is traditional to end a report of this kind by thanking those who have helped us over the year and I start by thanking my fellow committee members, in particular our office bearers and others who undertake specific roles and responsibilities. Their level of attendances at meetings and their commitment to our work has been nothing short of exemplary and I value their support highly. However we do need to be careful that we do not over-impose on our committee members, most of whom have been with us since our inception. It is also good practice to have a dynamic committee where the practice is for members to come and go over a period. I would again encourage anyone with an interest in joining the committee to put themselves forward for election. Many thanks to all our funders and to those who gave donations or supported our fund raising events, we could not exist without this very generous support. Thanks to the local media who enable us to get our message across and keep our profile in front of the community. Finally, a very sincere word of thanks to all our members for their loyalty and commitment and we urge them to continue that support, especially by fund raising and by spreading the word about our services. There are still too many survivors and carers unaware of the help we can offer.

We look forward to a challenging year when our key goals continue to be expanding our services and extending our supports to more people across the Southern Trust. We particularly anticipate developing our outreach project in Armagh and opening a second outreach venue and to pursuing our vision of the provision of dedicated residential accommodation for those of our survivors who need such support.

Frank Dolaghan, Chair, on behalf of the Management Committee May 2019

ANNUAL REPORT
Year ending March 2019

This report covers our third full year of occupation of Our House and our seventh year of operations. It has been a really exciting year with the highlights including the establishment of our first outreach centre in Milford, County Armagh and our annual respite trip to Kilkenny. We have also seen a significant increase in membership from across the Southern Trust.

In Milford we have built on the success of our horticultural programme in Newry and have opened a dedicated horticultural unit at Orchard Allottments. Here we have installed a large polytunnel, outdoor beds and a shed and currently have 6 brain injury survivors attending every Tuesday afternoon. We are hoping to expand that coverage and might even tempt some of our carers to get their hands dirty. We are indebted to our horticultural tutor Caroline Lennon for her work and to volunteers Kevin, Oisin and Caolan Dolaghan for preparing the site. Thanks also to the main funders who have made the development possible: the Health and Social Care Board, Melville Garden Village Trust and Garfield Weston Foundation.

This is our BIF Family Tree which has individual photos of all our members. It came from an idea by Olive Hawthorne but was designed and drawn by our member Andrew Smyth with help from Christopher Cunningham and Andrew’s mum, Maureen. It can be seen in BIFFERS.
Our annual five day respite trip brought us this year to Kilkenny where we stayed in the fabulous five star Lyrath Estate Hotel. We had a journey on the Kilkenny Train followed by an amazing barbecue in the grounds of the hotel, we learnt a little about playing hurling and some of our group saw Ronnie O’Sullivan and Mark Allen playing exhibition snooker matches. We visited Kilkenny Castle and Kilkenny Design Centre, enjoyed a pint in Smithwick’s Visitor centre, had an Irish night in Lanigan’s pub and fitted in a little bit of shopping! We ended up at the Irish National Stud on our way home though certain people just had to visit Kildare Outlet.

Jacqueline Magee was a very good friend to BIF for many years and she sadly passed away during the year. Jacqueline was the Public and Patient Involvement Lead for the Health and Social Care Board and was based in the offices of the Board in Armagh.

Jacqui sustained life changing injuries in a traffic accident some 30 years ago but she had incredible determination and courage and never let her disability put limits on her lifestyle. We will never see her likes again. Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis.

PEOPLE WHO MADE IT ALL HAPPEN

Committee members who served during the year:

Chair: Frank Dolaghan; Vice-chair: Martina Dickson; Secretary: Desie Slevin; Treasurer: Diane Rooney; Assistant Treasurer: Patricia Slevin; Helpline Co-ordinator: Aileen Dolaghan; SMS co-ordinator: Aine McKevitt

Members: Grainne McKevitt, Christopher Dickson, Alice O’Hanlon, Fiona Walker, Donna McGivern

Volunteer team:

Bronach Rooney (book-keeping); Katie Smith (Computer training); Orlaith Mackin (Big Nights Out); Jeanie Wilson (Hospitality) Rose McKevitt, Sheila McBride, Gabriel McGivern (Housekeeping); Andrew Smyth, Mark Bennett, Christopher Cunningham (Maintenance); Bronagh Cunningham, Rosemary McFerran, Sheila Rooney (hospitality); Aine McKevitt (pool team manager); Hammy Robinson (Boccia team manager and picture framing) Danielle Sliven, Duana Rooney, Doreen Shaw (fundraising), Orla and Shelene Rooney (Brainbox and photos)

Staff and part-time tutors team:

Olive Hawthorne (Project Administrator) Oonagh Campbell (Art therapist); Caroline Lennon (Horticulture) Sharon Cote (Pilates); Sean McDonald, Infinity Pool (Water aerobics) ; Rickie McGaffin (Archery)

Professional advisers:

Auditors: Daly Park and Co, Trevor Hill, Newry ; Solicitors: C Rafferty and Co, Hill Street, Newry

Bankers: Ulster Bank, Hill Street, Newry
MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

The committee was very pleased with the results of our annual membership survey. We sent copies to 78 active members, both carers and survivors and had a return from 24 survivors and 22 carers giving response rates of 68% and 55% respectively which is statistically very robust.

The full results of the survey are available on request from Olive but a summary is set out below. Participants had the opportunity to state the extent to which they agreed with statements around the potential benefits from BIF membership. Full results available from the office.

- Due to my membership of BIF I feel less stressed and anxious
- Due to my membership of BIF I feel more confident and at ease with myself
- Due to my membership of BIF I feel less isolated
- Due to my membership of BIF I feel more hopeful about the future
- Due to my membership of BIF I feel more able to cope with daily living
- Due to my membership of BIF I have made new friends
- Due to my membership of BIF I have an improved relationship with my carer or the person I care for
- Due to my membership of BIF I can access more activities where I feel included
- I believe I have a share and say in BIF

Just under 95% of carers and survivors indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with all of the statements.

Participants were invited to rate services provided by BIF on a scale from excellent to very poor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our premises (Our House and Biffers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Activities available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texting service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for money of your membership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work of the committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work of staff and tutors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100% of carers rated all services as excellent or very good. 97% of survivors rated all services as excellent or very good. Participants indicated their three most favourite activities. Most frequently mentioned by carers were Open House, water aerobics and Pilates while survivors most frequently mentioned pool, boccia and Open House.

A small selection of comments from participants is set out below:

- BIF has changed the lives for so many survivors and carers. It is a place where many feel safe and secure knowing they are with people who understand their daily struggles
- I do not think my marriage would have survived without the input and care that came from the members
- Do not want to think what we would do without BIF. It is an absolute lifeline to our family.
- BIF has added years to my life through all the trips, visits to theatre, meeting survivors. A very special place
- Very proud of all that BIF has achieved in a very short time with minimum government assistance.
- When the chips are down and the mood is low, give BIF a call and they will help you find your get up and go
SOCIAL PROGRAMME

Mystery tours this year included Belfast Botanic Gardens and dinner at Belfast Castle, a cruise on the River Liffey followed by dinner in the Monasterboice, a trip to the Transport Museum at Cultra and to Castle Espie Wildfowl centre at Comber.

We had our regular seasonal parties for Christmas, Halloween, Valentine’s Night and St Patrick’s Day and our annual Mid Summer barbecue and there were regular Nights out on the Town for our survivors.

We also visited the Marketplace theatre to see Robert Mizzell and an ABBA tribute band and we attended a performance of Wine O’Clock and we attended a performance of Wine O’Clock

HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTIVITIES

We continued with weekly Pilates in Our House and water aerobic classes moved this year to the new Infinity Pool just down the road. Art therapy classes continued twice a week. Triple T club continued every Tuesday where members participated in cookery, horticulture and arts and crafts. Pool matches and training sessions were held weekly and Open House on Friday nights continues to be the main event of the week. Often the car park is not nearly big enough. The most popular activity has become boccia which led us to take two teams to the N Ireland Disability Championships in Belfast where one team reached the semi-finals and another reached the quarter finals. Congratulations to players and team Manager Hammy Robinson. We had archery sessions during the year and introduced a new activity of picture framing. We also had a series of mindfulness classes led by new volunteer Bernadette Boyle and we had a four week course facilitated by Frank called Living with a Brain Injury for our survivors. Our carers weekend was attended by 24 carers and took place in Enniskillen.

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

This has been a particularly busy year. We held four roadshows in Lurgan, Crossmaglen, Banbridge and Dromore to promote BIF using our DVD My Injured Brain which has had a tremendous reaction even 18 months after it was shown. We attended a celebration marking the end of the Space and Place Programme, Frank gave a keynote address at a conference for the Community Foundation and also spoke at events organised by The Southern Trust and Carers Trust. We attended a housing conference in Newry to help lobby for accommodation for our survivors and we participated in campaigns to restore government to N Ireland. Some of our members took part in a Walk for Ellen while we were also represented at events organised by Carers Trust. We attended a housing conference in Newry to help lobby for accommodation for our survivors. Our carers weekend was attended by 24 carers and took place in Enniskillen.

This was a successful year for our survivors. Our carers weekend was attended by 24 carers and took place in Enniskillen.

Frank is now a member of the Southern Trust’s Carers Reference Group and of the Carers Strategy Implementation Group for Northern Ireland and has recently been appointed as one of a small team of independent carers to advise Government on transforming care. We have collaborated with the Southern Trust in the establishment of their Brain Injury Forum and we are represented on that Forum by Aine, Olive and Frank.

During the year we were pleased to welcome a number of visitors including David Petticrew, Carers Lead in the Health and Social Care Board, Merrisa McGeary and Alison Patterson from the Health Board, Michael Hughes, former Manager of the Space and Place Programme Rev Brian Colvin, Minister of First Newry Presbyterian Church and Joe McVey new CEO of Brain Injury Matters.

FUNDING

We had a very successful year of fund raising. We secured grants of £65,000 from the Henry Smith Foundation, £15,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation, £5,000 from the Clear Project, £4,000 from the Mercy Sisters and smaller amounts from Danske Bank and the Enkalon Foundation. We were pleased to receive donations from a series of fund raising activities organised by Mary Cunningham, Joe and Sheila Rooney, Dan Gregory’s, Millbrook Service Station, Clark Fuels, Specsavers, Dunbarton Bowling Club, One and All Financial, Rooney International Coaches, the Murphy family, St Brigid’s GAA club in Belfast, Ida Cartmill and Julie Wilson. There were also several anonymous donations during the year. We continue to draw down funding from the Big Lottery’s People and Community Programme

Our own fund raising included rental income from Biffers and Our House, our annual bag pack at Tesco, a quiz in the Canal Court, raffles at Easter and Christmas, our Christmas Santaland, sales of gingerbread men made by Donna McGivern and our pink collection boxes which are very successful. We are indebted to the many businesses which have our boxes on display and to our members who regularly collect and replace them.

Over the year we had a total income of £171,466 and expenditure of £130,759.79 leaving us with a surplus of £40,705.90. Corresponding figures for the previous year were £127,647, £100,888 and £26,759. In terms of our balance sheet we now have a net worth of well over £430,000.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

During the year we continued to invest in our people. Olive completed her Level 3 ILM in Leadership and Management and attended courses in suicide prevention and the implications of GDPR for BIF while other members of the committee attended courses on mental illness. Internally we ran a very successful four week course for our survivors on Living With a Brain Injury and our horticultural tutor Caroline Lennon successfully helped four of our trainees to gain NVQ certificates in horticulture. These are the first formal certificates we have achieved.

Some of our members had individual successes during the year and deserve congratulations.

Aidan Creamer spent two weeks volunteering in Kenya, Glen McFerran graduated with a HNC, Becky Devlin won Gold at the Special Olympics and Norah Crawford completed her nursing degree