Words & Comments

Word from Chairman
I said in my comments last year that 2008 would be different to previous years – different it certainly was! Little did anyone know what was about to happen, and in future years 2008 will probably be remembered most as the year of the worldwide economic tsunami. The original causes may stem from decisions made in the board rooms of the world’s leading financial institutions, but the impact has rapidly found its way to those who have least capacity to resist – right where we operate. These are uncertain times for many, and in uncertain times fear, hopelessness and pessimism tend to be amplified.

Our commitment is to continue to be a source of courage, hope and optimism to the lives that cross our path – and where courage, hope and optimism converge, Providence has a habit of showing up.

I would like to thank board and staff for their continued commitment to the work of Oasis, and being agents of providence in Inner East Belfast.

Angus Beck, Chairman

Word from Executive Director
2008 could be summed up as a year of opportunity and challenge. We ran our first gala ball in February, opened our new social economy business “Eat Etc” in June, were part of a Belfast consortium that won a tender to deliver essential skills and have had over 500 people through our different projects. It was a challenging year with funding coming to an end for 3 of our projects in the summer. I would like to pay tribute to all our staff for their resilience and commitment at this time. Despite the difficulties, our vision “Transformed Lives, Transformed Communities” remains the same and it is with renewed hope that we look forward to 2009.

Cliff Kennedy, Executive Director

Word of thanks
We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the tutors who have volunteered with Oasis in the interim period between funding finishing and new projects beginning. Their dedication has meant that we were still able to offer life changing courses to local people in the community.

Highlights of 2008
2008 saw a Business Development Manager, Jill Dunlop, being employed. Jill’s remit is to manage and develop the Social Enterprises that Oasis run.

Oasis were also short listed for the Pride of Place awards - an all-Ireland competition, hosted by Co-operation Ireland, which aims to recognise and celebrate the vital contributions that community groups make to society.
Training at Oasis in 2008

Activity continued under the First Steps Project and Women & Work Project before funding ended offering courses to a broad cross section of the local community. Training courses in Personal Development, ICT, Essential Skills in English and Maths and Customer Services were on offer. In addition we continued to link with Mornington Community Project to develop our education and learning activity, and the women jointly made two Peace Quilts towards the end of the project as tangible evidence of their journey together. To mark the end of funding for both projects, a celebration event took place in June 2008 to acknowledge the achievement of all learners. Personal testimonies of what it had meant to be a part of the work at Oasis had a powerful effect on everyone there.

The Oasis Men’s Group continued to be an important part of the life of the centre and during 2008 the men had the opportunity to embark on a photo project. With the expert tuition of photographer Stephen Wilson, the men put on a photographic exhibition entitled ‘Home’. This was a significant event for Oasis which attracted media attention – the exhibition work is currently on display in the Oasis Café.

The delivery of courses in the second half of the year was made possible through the help of dedicated volunteer tutors. An English class ran once a week and a Women’s Group was formed and met every week with a varied and interesting mix of activities. In addition the 55 Alive Group was formed with the hope of engaging the older members of the community formerly associated with the Good Neighbour Project. Both these new groups benefited from the Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership which funded a local pharmacist to visit once a month and discuss health matters. This was a new venture for us and was very positively received by all.

In November 2008 Oasis secured their role in a Belfast wide partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College to deliver essential skills in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT to adults in the community who would not otherwise engage in learning. This is the Learner Access and Engagement Programme which will be piloted for three years.

Befriending

Imago developed further as a befriending service during 2008, with the introduction of a personal development group which started in May 2008. The group, consisting of both men and women, was designed as a continuing development process for past and current clients to boost confidence, self esteem and develop coping skills. It is facilitated by two Imago staff. Activities include art, creative writing, quizzes, tasks and crafts.

The Personal Development group had the idea to compile a book containing creative writing pieces, art work etc to help other people who may be in similar situations and the book ‘Full Esteem Ahead’ was launched in November 2008. There was a high profile launch with many professionals and other organisations present. Clients also stood up to tell their own stories from the book. It was a very moving and successful event.

Imago also successfully tendered to work with Contact Youth in June 08 as part of the “Lifeline” programme - to provide a Adult Crisis Response Befriending Service. This programme plays an important part of the Suicide Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland under the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. One member of staff elected to work with this client group and our written Lifeline ‘Safe Plan’ and 5 session procedures, received praise from Contact Youth for its detail.

It was a busy year and the Imago team managed 110 referrals.

Oasis Trading

Eat Etc situated on the Belmont Road opened for its first day of trading on the 9th June 2008. Local residents & traders were among the many who were invited to come and sample the range of speciality coffee’s and exciting food menu on offer. The Rt Hon Peter Robinson MP MLA was given the honour of officially opening “Eat Etc” on the 28th November 2008. Speaking at the opening of the coffee shop, the long standing East Belfast MP said that he was honoured to open such a unique food venue which he hoped would provide a vital source of funds for the future work of Oasis.

The menu includes fresh home made soups, a selection of gourmet and custom made sandwiches, salads, platters, cheeseboards, plus a two or three daily specials. The business is open 7 days per week until 10pm. Currently, Eat Etc employs 16 members of staff, including Coffee Shop Manager Stuart Leitch and Assistant Manager Michael Price.

Social Housing

In January 2008 we completed on the purchase of our 8th property. There were a couple of changes in tenancies during the year but each property was re-let fairly quickly. One house was vacant for a few months while repairs were carried out and the bathroom modernised. We have been approached by local councillors on a couple of occasions asking for help with housing for some of their constituents. We are really excited to be able to offer a high standard of rental accommodation in the area.

Transformed Lives, Transformed Communities

The Oasis Café remains the hub of the Oasis Centre, and is open from Mon-Fri 9-5pm. Recent developments in the menu has kept the coffee shop popular with course participants, visitors, and includes items such as homemade cakes & desserts, and a new range of hot & cold food specials such as the classic homemade Italian Lasagne, served with crisp salad & crusty bread... delicious!
## Statement of Financial Activities

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007 Total Funds (£)</th>
<th>2008 Total Funds (£)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income and expenditure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Income Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grant Income</td>
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<td>298 899</td>
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<td>Income Generated</td>
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<td>233 866</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td><strong>Total Incoming Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resources Expended</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support costs in furtherance of the objects of the charity</td>
<td>542 040</td>
<td>631 555</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and administration</td>
<td>4 347</td>
<td>5 123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net incoming resources/net income for the year</td>
<td>74 173</td>
<td>(58 824)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* N.B. 2008 accounts are draft figures

### Acknowledgements to funders and donors

- Belfast City Council
- Belfast Education Library Board
- Belfast Local Strategy Partnership
- Belfast Regeneration Office
- Big Lottery Fund
- Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership
- Children in Need
- Christian Fellowship Church, Belfast
- Community Relations Council
- Playboard
- Proteus
- Training for Women Network

### Board of Directors

- Angus Beck – Chair
- Richard Gardiner – Treasurer
- Heather Kennedy – Secretary
- Sammy Douglas – Voluntary Advisor
- Ronnie Baird
- Hugh Jervis
- Helen Kyle
- Gloria Ross
- Colin Stitt

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Transformed Lives, Transformed Communities