



## FARA Charity Annual Review 2020



FARA Charity transforms  
the lives of the most vulnerable  
and disadvantaged in Romania

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## ROYAL PATRON

HRH The Prince of Wales

## PATRON

Eugene Sarbu

## TRUSTEES

Jane Nicholson MBE (Chair)

Richard Chalk

Siobhan Cross

Lucinda Dawson

Philippa Gitlin

Philip Groves

Odile Rimbert

Hannah Middleton



## CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

FARA Foundation is a registered Charity in the UK founded in 1991. It is the partner organisation of Fundatia FARA, a non-profit, non-governmental organisation in Romania. FARA was founded to create 'a family for those without', fara meaning without in Romanian. The charity was founded to transform the lives of children suffering neglect and abuse, abandoned in Romania's notorious state institutions. FARA today cares for the most vulnerable social groups facing extreme poverty, addressing exclusion and breaking the cycle of poverty.

There is so much to be thankful for over the last 30 years, and this has been so evident during the recent pandemic which has brought untold suffering to many millions of people. In FARA, this crisis has brought out the best of humanity in numerous acts of kindness, caring and compassion.

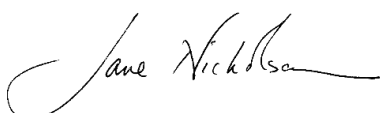
Over 30 years FARA charity has cared for over 10,000 beneficiaries in three regions of Romania. Our services include care for vulnerable children and adults with learning disabilities, youth at risk and community-based programmes tackling poverty through education, fulfilling lives, rebuilding futures and spreading hope.

I would like to thank each one of our dedicated staff and volunteers in Romania, and our amazing children and young people for their trust.

This is only achieved by in country fundraising in Romania and our generous UK donors, as well as our wonderful charity shops in the UK.

There is still so much to do and your generosity can help to bring lasting change and a brighter future. Please continue to help us expand our reach in the next 30 years.

Thank you,



Jane Nicholson

Founder and Chair of FARA Charity





## CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

In 1997 FARA built and opened its first family home, St Nicholas in Suceava, rescuing children from the local state institutions, this was the first of our family centred models of care. From one small home, FARA today cares for nearly 1,500 beneficiaries, in three regions of Romania.

FARA today is one of the largest and most experienced NGO care providers in Romania, reaching out to the poor, the marginalised and the most discriminated in society.

The FARA family extends way beyond those listed in our programmes. Thanks to our fundraising supporters in the UK, FARA has helped thousands of families living in abject poverty over the last 30 years.

**Our Vision** is of a world in which children and young people grow up with freedom and dignity in a loving protective environment, experiencing fulfilled lives whatever their ability.

**Our Mission** is to transform the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, youth and families living in Romania's poorest communities.

**Our Values** underpin all our work and are shared by those involved in carrying out our mission both in the UK and Romania.

FARA strives to build a just society serving the common good, based on Christian values of love, justice, dignity and respect, welcoming people of all faiths and none.

- We act with kindness and compassion
- We respect the human dignity of every person
- We believe in practical hands on care
- We strive to build a just society
- We responsibly collaborate across all sections of society
- We strive to be a best practice organisation





## WHY WE ARE HERE

Today Romania is home to almost 4 million children living in poverty and facing social exclusion and discrimination. As the economy grows in the country, the gap between the rich and poor expands, and more people are struggling to make ends meet.

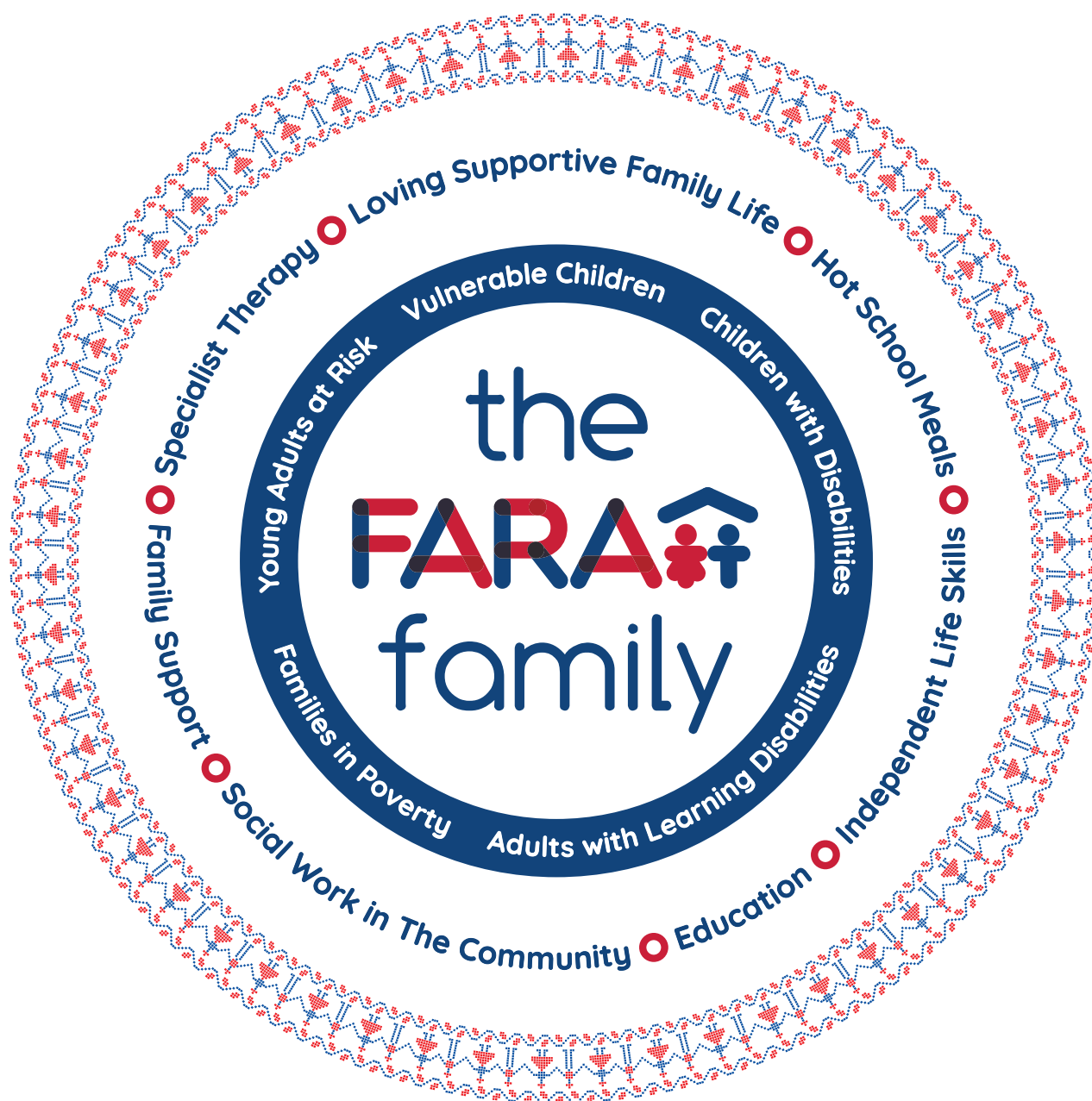
- Half of all children in Romania are at risk of childhood poverty and social exclusion and nearly 1 in 4 suffer from severe material deprivation. **(Eurostat 2017)**
- 400,000 children are out of school, drastically limiting their chances to get employment when they grow up. **(2017 UNICEF study)**
- 60,000 are separated from their families, mostly as a consequence of poverty, violence or abandonment. **(UNICEF Romania)**
- Every year, 10,000 children are separated from their parents and taken into the care system. **(UNICEF Romania)**



## WHO WE HELP

FARA is today one of the largest and most experienced care providers in Romania, giving support to vulnerable children and adults, youth at risk, those with learning disabilities, as well as families living in rural communities facing extreme poverty.

We tackle poverty through education for Romania's poorest, working to fulfil lives, rebuild futures and spread hope.





## THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WE WORK

The situation in Romania over the last 30 years has changed but there are still “more than 50% of children suffering from severe deprivation”

**Opening doors for Europe’s children.**

In Romania today, despite steps towards changing the system, many vulnerable social groups continue to face extreme poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. Families living in poverty lack support leaving children susceptible to school drop-out or being placed into social service provision and the poverty cycle continues; young adults are leaving state institutions without crucial life skills, at risk of social exclusion and homelessness; children with disabilities are unable to access vital life changing therapies and education, and adults with learning disabilities remain in institutional care.

The drive to close the institutions has been the focus across Europe and Romania but the issues that put children into the care system have not been addressed and so many children and young people are still suffering. Today there are approximately 7000 children living in 163 institutions. The Romanian Government has been instructed by the EU to close these institutions and they intend to complete this task by 2026.



“The three main causes for children being separated from their family and entering public care are poverty, abuse and neglect and disability.”

**World bank 2015.**

“Approximately 5000 children leave institutional care each year, being vulnerable and risking poverty and/or social exclusion.”

**UNICEF and Romanian Ministry of Youth and Sports 2015-2020**

## 2020 COVID 19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

In March 2020, the Covid Pandemic hit, and impacted both the way services could be delivered by Fundatia FARA in Romania and funds could be raised in the UK. All international travel was stopped and movement across both Romania and the UK was restricted and the charity's shops were closed.

Both the UK and Romanian organisations followed their government's guidelines and put in place a response to the pandemic that could protect beneficiaries and staff whilst maintaining a necessary level of care.

The UK board were informed of the impact on services in Romania and the response made to continue delivering support and care to the beneficiaries.

We worked closely with FARA Romania's team to monitor and respond to the development of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our main concern was for the protection of the children, young people, and families we work with as well as our staff and their families.

The government guidelines in Romania were strictly adhered to, isolating where necessary to protect vulnerable groups of people, working remotely where possible. Our residential services have restricted access and strict hygiene protocols in place, mitigating risks to health as far as we are able.



Fundatia FARA continued giving services by developing and implementing new ways of supporting families of children who normally access our day centres. Support to the children on our Tackling Poverty through Education programme was continued by delivering support packages of food and hygiene products to families. Families were also helped to access services and education support for their children by supplying tablets and educational support packs.

Our commitment to supporting our direct beneficiaries and their families remains strong. The global crisis will put more strain on so many of those in our care who struggle to survive and thrive. It is vital that as an organisation we continue to build ways to protect families and communities at this time of need.



## SERVICES IN ROMANIA

FARA has created successful models of care delivering secure lives for those who had previously been denied them, whether through poverty, social exclusion or disability.

Poverty leaves children susceptible to school dropout and being placed in care; it leaves young adults from state institutions without crucial life skills, at risk of social exclusion and homelessness; it leaves children with disabilities unable to access vital life-changing therapies and education, and adults with learning disabilities without important holistic care.

From the first family home opened in Suceava to the latest therapy centre opened in Bucharest in 2018, FARA funds and provides services for children with disabilities, vulnerable children, adults with learning disabilities, families in poverty and youth at risk.

### Families in Poverty

To help support families in poverty, FARA runs a community based education and social support programme. We provide children with a free daily hot meal and resources to support them in completing their kindergarten and primary education.

The FARA programme helps children start and stay in school. We employ teachers, catering staff and social workers to provide a holistic package of support. We work with the whole family to change attitudes and build futures, and help build a strong future for Romania.

This program is delivered through the schools, and when the Covid pandemic hit, schools were shut. Vulnerable children and their families were isolated without access to support, basic hygiene supplies, food, or medical care. Our FARA team developed a system of delivering material support and food to the families from local foodbanks and supermarkets. This was a lifeline to some of the families. Similarly, the lack of electricity and computers was a hindrance to online learning for the children. FARA provided 22 children with tablets to use following a campaign to raise funds for the donation of tablets. Children without the means to charge these tablets were supported with their education by the delivery of education packs.

### Impact

- 300 children supported with education and meals.
- 46,000 hot meals delivered a year to the children attending school.
- 1450 material support packages delivered during the pandemic in 2020.
- 200 educational support packages delivered a week to primary school children during the 2020 Covid pandemic.
- 450 families living in 6 villages supported with food and hygiene products during the 2020 Covid pandemic.





In Romania there are approximately 72,000 children with disabilities registered in the state records. Many are unable to access mainstream education, and FARA offers a lifeline to families who would otherwise be isolated and unable to access support for their children and themselves.

Three therapy centres provide free of charge therapy and special needs education to children with complex needs from marginalised and deprived families. The centres care for over 240 children a week across the 3 centres, providing physio, speech, and sensory therapies for children with a range of disabilities.

The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic meant that all FARA day centers were closed between March and September. Online therapy and educational tools were developed by the team and published through a private group on social media. The therapy team developed a system of providing meetings with beneficiarys' parents online and working with the children when possible, through zoom calls and other online video call services. Packs of educational equipment were sent to beneficiaries to support the ongoing development and hygiene and material support packages were provided to families who needed them.

In September, the centres reopened with strict regulations in place to keep staff and beneficiaries safe, including a reduced number of beneficiaries accessing the centers each day. The way services are provided has been adapted to include the online support provision to maintain the level of service delivery and reach.

### Impact

- 240 children and families supported during the 2020 Covid pandemic.
- 10,800 therapy sessions.
- 67% of the children enrol in mainstream kindergartens and schools after attending FARA's therapy centres.
- 7,200 hours of online support.
- 1180 hours of counselling for parents.
- 90 KITs distributed containing educational materials, games, books, sensory toys.
- Toy and equipment lending library developed to support 240 families.



## ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

FARA provides support and care for adults with learning disabilities, giving them the chance to live a fulfilled life in a home run as a family.

Across two residential homes, care is available for adults with learning disabilities who experienced challenging childhoods living in state institutions. We know the value of a sense of family and offer a loving, supportive life, giving the adults a chance to flourish and develop their social, spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

During the Covid 19 pandemic the residential homes were forced into a strict lockdown and staff were required to adhere to a 14 day on, 14 day off shift pattern. The priority was to maintain a level of care and activity to keep the beneficiaries lives as usual as possible. The residents had online music therapy activities and were able to enjoy the work on the land growing vegetables and caring for the chickens and animals.



Casa Elisabetta in Cacica, Suceava County currently cares for 8 residents.

St Marys in Suceava County currently cares for 10 residents.

### Impact

- In the last 30 years, 36 adults with learning disabilities have been given a Home for Life with FARA.
- In the last 30 years 30% of beneficiaries have gone on to live independent lives after receiving support and care in a FARA Home for Life.

## VULNERABLE CHILDREN

FARA provides caring and loving family life for vulnerable and neglected children over the age of 3. The children are supported to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment with a trauma informed approach. Our children's homes are recognised as models of care giving "a family for those without" and are recognised as an alternative to state care.

We currently run a family style home for children and provide accommodation in the form of a Student Hostel for FARA's young people who are in further education.

The many children cared for at FARA's two children's homes over the last twenty years have stayed in contact knowing they can always ask for help and support throughout their life. They really feel part of a big family, several of our adult children now work for FARA.

St Nicholas, Suceava is a home caring for 12 children aged 7-18 years.

Nazareth House is student hostel for up to 4 young people in further education.

### Impact

- In the last 24 years, 71 children have been helped by FARA Family Homes to grow and embark on new lives.
- In the last 24 years, 10% of FARA's Family Home residents have gone on to complete a University Education.





Young adults seeking help from FARA's youth programmes are primarily institutionalised care-leavers who might otherwise fall into a spiral of homelessness and poverty. When a child reaches the age of 18, they are discharged from the system and find themselves alone in the world without crucial life skills. FARA offers a safe environment where a young person's needs can be assessed, and a pathway of support and care established.

FARA supports young adults transition into an independent life, offering life skills, mentoring, medical, training and educational support and assistance in preparation for their adult lives with two residential hostels housing up to 30 young people for up to two years. This level of intervention helps prevent a downward spiral of social exclusion, poverty and homelessness. It is a crucial nurturing period, laying down the foundations for their lives ahead of them.

FARA seeks to develop outreach programmes in the community, a drop-in service to give advice and access to training, employment, housing and personal support to a wider community of young people who have no one else to turn to. In this way, they have a real chance to grow and thrive.

### Impact

- In 2020, 135 young adults benefitted from the services of FARA's two residential centres.
- Development of outreach programmes to give wider access to training, employment, housing, and personal support.





## CASE STUDIES

### FARA means hope - Eugen's story

Eugen was abandoned at birth by his mother due to abject poverty and has lived in various state institutions until 2011.

In 2011, Eugen came to FARA and lived in the Recovery and Rehabilitation centre set on the organic farm in the North of Romania. Here, Eugen worked on the land and cared for the animals. He learnt new skills and enjoyed the way of life which gave him access to the wider community and friends.

Eugen is a wonderful member of the FARA family and now lives at the Home for Life in Suceava County. Although he will always need FARA's support and care, he is very much a member of the wider community and enjoys going shopping and visiting friends in the neighbourhood. FARA has given Eugen the support and care he needed to flourish and reach his potential.



“For me FARA Foundation means family and hope. I am grateful that I receive help in all my health problems. The whole staff take care of me and gives me the affection I need. Many thanks to those in England who help us financially. At our home in St. Mary's we built a house and a hope!!!”

### Growing up in FARA - Dana's story

Dana was born in 1993 with a heart defect, shortly after the fall of Ceaușescu. Her parents were unable to care for her and provide her with the support she needed, and she was abandoned.

She spent time living in large state institutions before coming to FARA's St Nicholas home as a young child.

While growing up in the family home, Dana was given the care and support she needed to grow and flourish. She could access counselling to help her process her difficult start in life and the medical care required to help her with the heart defect she lives with. At the age of 20 she completed her education and qualified as a specialist educator. Dana now works for FARA in one of our therapy centres, providing the same care she so gratefully received.



“FARA Foundation is ‘my family’! Here I met love and dedication! Growing up at St. Nicholas Home I learned what family, humanity, love mean. For me, FARA is my family who educated me, and I will always be grateful to the “FARA” family, because without this family, I would probably have been “lost” and without education.”



## Adela's story

Adela was abandoned as a small child to a life of neglect in a state institution.

At the age of 18 she came to FARA with little hope and in great need of support to help her recover from her traumatic start in life. Like most young people leaving Romania's state institutions Adela was unprepared for life beyond the institution and was vulnerable and at risk of becoming homeless and of being exploited. She needed to be nurtured and supported to develop life skills and emotional maturity.

Adela's keyworker helped her gain confidence in her own abilities and slowly she learnt that she was worthy of and can lead an independent life. Adela now works at the Opera Comica in Bucharest and it has given her the chance to shine and integrate with a team of people beyond FARA who accept and respect her.



Photo by: Catalina Urse

"You are the family who changed my life and have always been with me.  
You are the family who made me happy. Because of you, I am another person,  
I am better because of you. I now have what I wanted: a job, a house.  
Thanks to you I know what love means."

2020 was an unprecedented year for the Foundation as it was for so many Charities. Most of its annual funds are generated by the activities of its 40 plus shops based in London. The funds that FARA Enterprises Ltd. was able to contribute in 2020 were reduced considerably because of the pandemic and the impact on the shops trade. Despite this the Foundation managed to fully fund activities in Romania by utilising reserves built up over 30 years. Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic in 2021 there may well be a similar impact on funds raised in 2021 due to the mandated closure of non-essential shops in the early part of 2021.

It is clear that High Street retail is facing an uncertain future with many shoppers having converted to Online shopping and many may not return to the High Street. This has fast forwarded the development of the FARA Enterprises Ltd. Online Shop which will lessen the dependence on the High Street in the years ahead.

During 2020, FARA's retail arm FARA Enterprises Ltd received £1.26m under the Job Retention scheme and £770k in Retail grants while also taking advantage of a rates reduction in the amount of £57k. This coupled with the support of the Foundation helped to ensure the survival of the shops business in 2020. Similar funding will be available in 2021 under the Job Retention Scheme and through the retail grant scheme.



## UK FUNDRAISING

In 2020 for every £1 raised

95p was sent to Romania.

£275k

was raised in the shops,

£55,817

was donated by supporters and through other fundraising efforts.

£724,642 total income in 2020 from fundraising activities, donations, gift aid and investments.

Funding provided to Romania for Charitable activities in 2020 amounted to

£710,642

109 number of Gift Aid donors in 2020  
(add shops gift aiders too. TBC)

£3284.77 raised through social media donations in 2020

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

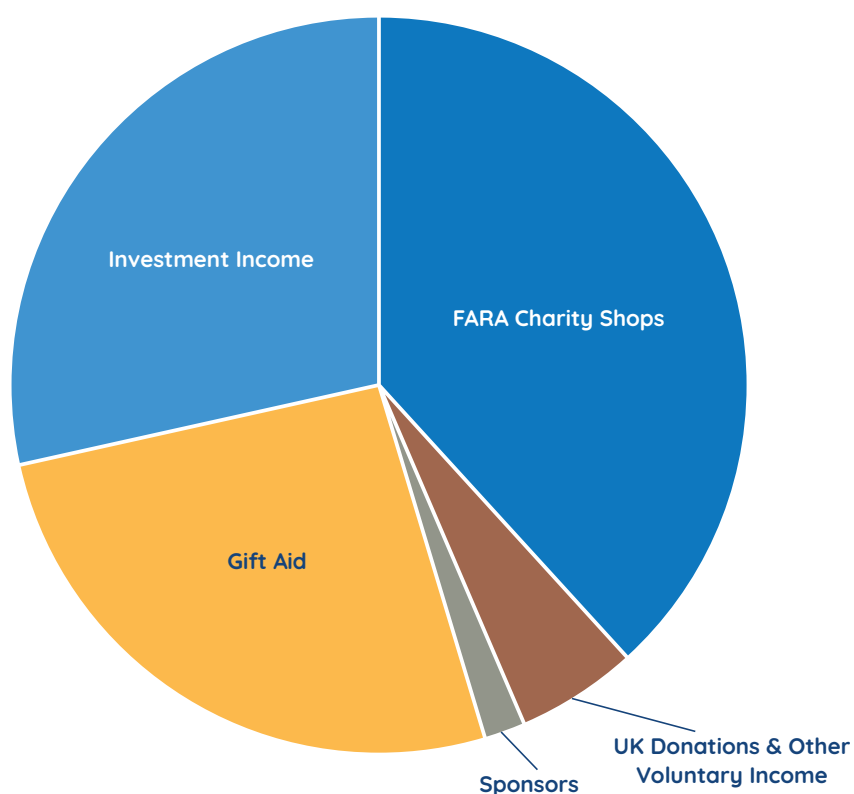
Due to the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020 all developments were put on hold due to restrictions and the need to develop alternative ways of delivering services to maintain a necessary level of support to beneficiaries.

In 2021 the expansion of the Tackling Poverty Through Education programme is planned to increase support to the whole family. A child and family centre will be opened in 2021 to deliver a service to meet the needs of the whole family and helping them to create a secure future for their children.

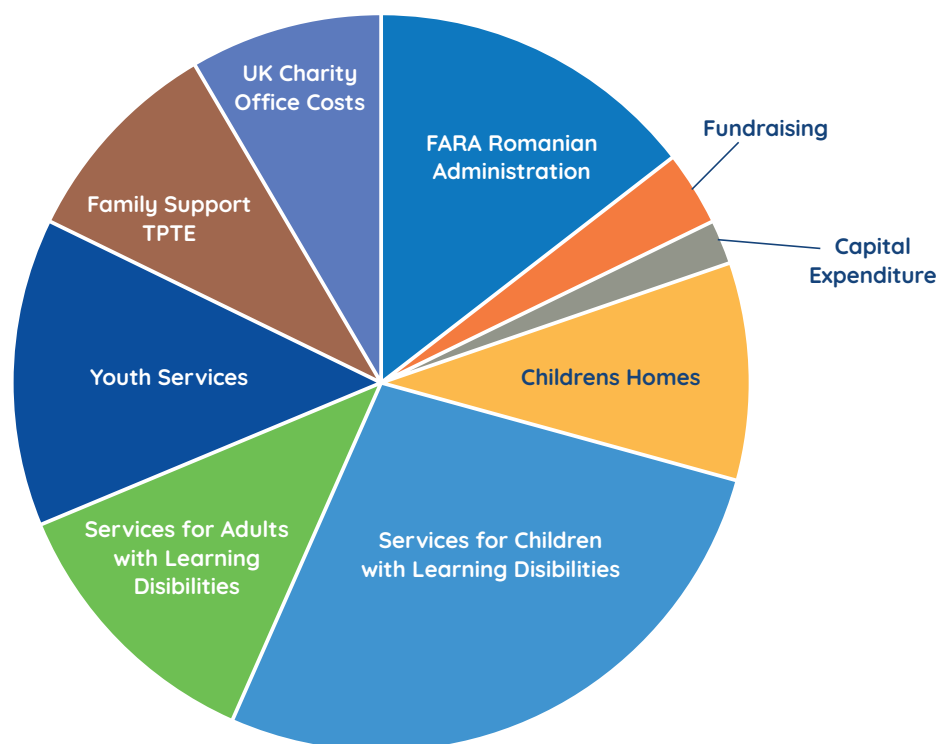
- A new Home for Life will be opened to meet the growing need. As the process of deinstitutionalisation continues more and more adults with learning disabilities will need a loving, nurturing home, and FARA is well placed to provide this kind of care.
- Development of a Day Centre for people with disabilities in the community. The centre will be a place of support for the adults and their family, providing activities and services including occupational therapy and psychological support to help people flourish, create friendships and live a more fulfilled life.
- Child and Family centre in Suceava county to expand the reach of the TPTE programme.



FARA FOUNDATION INCOME 2020



FARA FOUNDATION SPEND 2020



## RESERVES POLICY

The position on cash reserves is reviewed at each Trustees meeting and the reserves policy is examined annually when the financial statements are being finalised. The crucial measure of the Charity's ability to continue its care provision in Romania is its level of liquidity cover. Accordingly, in reviewing and establishing the reserves policy, the Trustees have considered both the requirement to set aside funds for the long-term future support required in Romania, together with the short-term requirements for readily realisable assets should the economy not behave as forecast. It is acknowledged that the income from the Charity shops, which provides significant sums annually, carries risks and can be affected by a sudden downturn in economic conditions as seen with the Coronavirus pandemic which has had a significant negative impact on the Charity Shops and retail in general.

The Trustees have therefore considered it prudent to retain, as a minimum, cash reserves more than one year's projected charitable expenditure. This cash is considered as an integral part of the charity's overall investment portfolio. For the year to 31 December 2021 the net annual expenditure on the FARA Programmes in Romania is projected to be approximately £1.87m.

The Trustees recognise the long-term commitment of the Charity to an increasing number of children and adults in its care. FARA's responsibilities extend to two homes for adults with learning disabilities. These are permanent homes for these adults who will require a substantial amount of care for the rest of their lives, the running costs of which can be measured in excess of £35 million over the expected lifetime of the residents which is an average of 75 years although given the varied medical conditions many of them suffer their lifespan may be expected to be shorter.

The Trustees are able to earmark unrestricted funds for particular future charitable purposes in accordance with the Charity's objectives. In light of the above, the Trustees took the decision that funds totalling £4.67m being the total value of the freehold property held in its wholly owned subsidiary and fund investments should be specifically set aside and designated for the longer-term commitment to children and adults who are likely to remain within the Charity's care for the duration of their lifetime. The Trustees would normally expect to be able to add to this designated fund in excess of £.5 million annually in order to meet the target of £35 million for their long-term care. However due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on its fundraising activities in the UK and the losses on its investments in 2020 it has had to utilise over £.76m of its reserves.

The Trustees are very much aware of the fact that we can only address the enormous poverty by fighting it at grass root level. Empowerment of rural communities, education and the development of sustainable livelihood is essential to address the extreme poverty levels in rural northern Romania. This requires a long-term financial commitment and FARA will use its reserves to develop programmes in this area.

The Trustees will continue to keep the reserves policy under regular review as the impact of the current economic conditions on the Charity becomes clear.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Further financial information can be found in the document Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 December 2019. This can be obtained from the charity office at the address below or on the Charity Commission website or at Companies House.



## Contact us

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