



Association for the Study of Obesity

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING
JUNE 2021

Charity number: 1100648

LUNG CANCER NURSING UK | MIRIA HOUSE, 1683B HIGH STREET, KNOWLE, SOLIHULL, B93 0LL

About ASO

The Association for the Study of Obesity was founded in 1967 and has since become the UK's foremost charitable organisation dedicated to the understanding, prevention and treatment of obesity.

ASO Mission

The ASO aims to develop an understanding of obesity through the pursuit of excellence in research and education, the facilitation of contact between individuals and organisations, and the promotion of action to prevent and treat obesity.

ASO Objectives

- The promotion of professional awareness of obesity and its impact on health
 - Educate and disseminate recent research on the causes, consequences, treatment, and prevention of obesity
 - Prioritise obesity and provide opinion leadership in the UK
 - Enhance understanding of the prevention and treatment of obesity throughout the UK
 - Improve the quality of obesity education throughout the UK
 - Forge links between individuals and organisations concerned with the study of obesity throughout the UK
 - Support the role of patient and public involvement in obesity research
 - Connect active researchers and practitioners from diverse disciplines who contribute to the development of a UK perspective on obesity.
 - Provide appropriate input on the UK perspective at a European and international level through EASO and the World Obesity Federation.
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The ASO is affiliated to the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) and the World Obesity Federation (WOF) and organised the inaugural International Congress on Obesity, held in London in 1974. ASO was the founding body of the highly respected International Journal of Obesity.

The ASO is also a member of the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA), a coalition of over 30 charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups who have joined together to fight obesity.

2020/21 Business Priorities

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Company for the year 1 February 2020 to 31 January 2021. The Annual Report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a Directors' report under company law. The Trustees confirm that the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the charitable company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charitable company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

The Trustees have complied with the duty in part 1 section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. A detailed report of the activities undertaken and achievements by the Charity to further its charitable purposes for the public benefit is given below¹.

In 2020-21 ASO had the following business priorities:

- **Professional**

- To act as advocates for people with obesity
- To provide opportunities for members (including Hot Topics and grants)
- To promote and further the study of obesity and its management
- To raise awareness of and support our Centres of Obesity Management (COMs) to highlight clinical and service delivery examples of excellence delivering obesity management

- **Developmental**

- To ensure production and circulation of a monthly e-bulletin to share best practice and highlight relevant obesity news and information
- To maintain the ASO website creating, sharing and signposting to relevant news and events

- **Education and Clinical**

- To produce and deliver educational programmes in support of high quality excellence in obesity management and research including digital programmes such as webinars and meetings.

- **Research**

- To further research into the study of obesity
- To support funding of research into obesity management

2020-21 COVID Impact report

Our Response to COVID-19

2020 was dominated globally by the impact of COVID-19. As a professional society representing the study and management of obesity and the support of people with obesity COVID-19 would affect our strategic and operational activity. The pandemic had a substantive impact on our membership and adversely impacted on people living with obesity being at greater risk of serious complications of COVID-19

COVID-19 had a significant impact on ASO events, including the cancellation of UKCO20 and UKCO21. The timing of the pandemic meant that we were able to recoup many of the costs associated with UKCO20 (with losses restricted to services incurred up to March 2020 only). Rather than offering a fully digital congress in UKCO202, a dedicated Hot Topics members only event was hosted. Services were transformed and our educational programmes were transferred to digital delivery and taking advantage of webinars and online events.

¹ Since the Company qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the Strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013 has been omitted.

Having secured funds from NovoNordisk we were able to deliver an excellent series of webinars which were very popular. These topical webinars included:-

Date	Title
24/06/2021	The importance of Public and Patient Involvement from a research and public perspective
27/05/2021	Weight Stigma: Insights from Research, Practice and Experience
25/03/2021	Appetite and Obesity: insights from research and practice
25/02/2021	Weight Management for the prevention of Type 2 diabetes
28/01/2021	Does meal timing influence weight loss or metabolic health?
10/12/2020	The Canadian Adult Obesity Clinical Practice Guidelines 2020
29/10/2020	Targeting Obesity to Treat Type 2 Diabetes
23/09/2020	Weight Management and Mental Wellbeing
27/08/2020	Obesity and Stigma
30/07/2020	COVID-19 and obesity: A public health perspective webinar

In addition to supporting knowledge transfer and providing educational resources, these webinars have fostered partnerships (events were often co-led with other organisations, including EASO, the British Dietetic Association and ASO Networks) and increased the reach and identity of ASO.

The pandemic also required our internal operations to be delivered digitally with trustee meetings and management meetings taking place virtually.

During the pandemic, ASO responded by linking relevant resources on the website and via our newsletter and social media account. We also worked alongside ObesityUK and the Obesity Empowerment Network to produce and publish a paper "LeBrocq S, Clare K, Bryant M, Roberts K, and Tahrani A on behalf of the writing group from Obesity UK, the Obesity Empowerment Network and the UK Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO)(2020) Obesity and COVID-19: A call for action from the perspectives of people living with obesity during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol.* 2020 Aug;8(8):652-654. doi: 10.1016/S2213-8587(20)30236-9." We also launched a new grant for members to explore the role of digital weight management.

Operationally and financially ASO adapted well to impact of the pandemic, continuing to operate effectively throughout. However, there was an impact on the ability to deliver Centres for Obesity Management events given that many clinicians and other health care professionals were no longer available to attend. Similarly, ASO there were fewer Network meetings, although some areas were able to transfer in-person meetings to virtual events.

We were able to transfer all internal committee meetings, trustee meetings to take place virtually.

Professional

Influencing and contribution to national policy

ASO works alongside numerous organisations across the UK and beyond to inform obesity policy, promote best practice and act as the patients advocate for people with obesity

ASO also contributed to the drafting of, and was signatory to, several letters, statements and press releases related to obesity and COVID-19, and collated a wealth of information related to COVID-19 and obesity via a dedicated page on its website. The UK ASO responded to multiple media enquiries and NICE consultations and disseminated information to its membership and the wider community via its social media account and website

Developmental

Communicating with our members

The ongoing monthly newsletter for members continues and is widely respected as providing useful and helpful information on obesity, research and obesity management. The newsletter is also used to promote ASO activities and programmes to ensure members are fully informed. In 2021 following the implementation of a new database and website we were able to deliver the newsletter direct to members from the database and measure the analytics for opening and click-throughs to help further inform us of our members' needs.

ASO has also invested heavily in the new website in the Spring of 2020 allowing the organisation to facilitate more interaction with members and website visitors. The increased functionality allows us to conduct polls and surveys and allows members and website visitors an improved and enhanced customer experience.

Education and clinical

In 2020/2021 we delivered 10 webinars

We also ran an early career researchers meeting which was attended by 29 delegates.

Our annual conference was converted to a digital event and was attended by 95 delegates. The conference, entitled **UKCO Hot Topics**, which included eminent speakers such as Dr Giles Yeo and Professor Chris Whitty, was very well received. All sessions are also available on demand to registered delegates to watch at their leisure

Research

In June 2020 the ASO launched a call for applications for its small grant, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding was made available for new or ongoing research projects exploring the direct or indirect impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on health and wellbeing outcomes in people living with obesity or on population health. The research is expected to lead to new knowledge or innovations that make a difference to the lives of people living with obesity during the current COVID-19 epidemic. A total of £20,000 was made available. Applications for either the full £20,000, or smaller awards were welcomed. The grant was to cover

direct costs (including equipment, publication costs) but not indirect costs (i.e. overheads, estates and infrastructure)

In 2020/21 we negotiated with Novo Nordisk to create a grant fund to explore research programmes in Digital Weight Management Services. An invitation to submit grant applications was issued in early 2021 for grants up to £50,000 in value. Fourteen applications were submitted and following a structured review process by our clinical group we were delighted to be able to award two grants. The first titled, *“Examining the use of Gro Health, a remote, self-directed, and culturally-sensitive digital health intervention addressing modifiable risk in patients within a tier 3 and 4 obesity service – The AlleGro real world study.”* was awarded to Dr Georgios Dimitriadis with a grant value of £14,908. The second grant funded to the value of £60,594 was awarded to Wendy Nicholls for a research programme titled, *“Patient engagement in remote weight management services: an evaluation of acceptability, accessibility, and barriers, and development of a remote healthcare screening tool (PERSyST).”*

Plans For Future Periods

In the remainder of 2021 and into 2022 ASO will continue to build on the organisational strengths developed as a result of the COVID pandemic, particularly our increased visibility. We will maximise this momentum and consider developing more formal partnerships with other organisations. This will include the development of memorandum’s of understanding which incorporate a selection of options such as joint meetings, promotion opportunities, ASO symposia and membership discounts. We have also initiated the development of a new training and education strand to ASO, in which members will see benefit via wider accreditation, in addition to consideration of ASO endorsement of existing educational programmes.

Structure, Governance & Management

Constitution

The company is registered charity (Charity Number 1100648) and a UK company limited by guarantee (Company number 4796449). Membership is open to obesity researchers, healthcare professionals, clinicians, academics, scientists, and students who are working and/or studying in the field of obesity and to others who have a particular interest in this area. Method of appointment and election of trustees

The management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. During this period the ASO was managed by 12 trustees, led Dr Maria Bryant. The trustees, or any member of ASO can recommend a trustee for appointment. The term of office for trustees is three years and trustees may be re-appointed for a maximum of two terms of office as per the Memorandum and Articles of Association. The chair of the trustees changed in 2019 when Dr Maria Bryant was elected.

Policies adopted for the induction and training of trustees

A trustee manual is available for all trustees and induction. This is being reviewed and updated in 2021 in line with a major review of all policies.

Following appointment of a new secretariat in March 2021 a review of all policies was undertaken and a schedule of updates was developed. Priority was given to critical policy updates to ensure the safety and

security of the charity. These include Financial Controls Policy, Investment, Reserves, Procurement, Commercial Funding, Publication, endorsement and representation.

In 2021/22 the remaining policies will be reviewed, updated or implemented as follows:-

- Safeguarding and well being (NEW)
- Equality and diversity (NEW)
- Risk management (UPDATE)
- Membership (NEW)
- Terms of reference for trustees and sub-committees (UPDATE)
- Conflict of interest (UPDATE)
- Code of conduct (UPDATE)

Organisation structure and decision making

The Trustees are assisted by a number of ASO sub-committees including Finance, governance and membership; communication, partnerships and networking; research and scientific and clinical practice and obesity management.

The organisation was supported by Bioscientifica to run the secretariat and support the day to day activities of the organisation until March 2020. At the trustees meeting on November 2020 it was agreed to terminate the agency Bioscientifica due primarily to the costs. Bioscientifica were contracted to ASO with the idea of developing the organisation and thus act as an investment. To monitor this, 24 and 12 month contracts were approved for the management of the events and office respectively. Towards the end of the contracting period, there was no evidence of benefit regarding the increased investment and, given that ASO is a relatively small organisation, the risks (financial loss) were felt to be too high. In addition, Trustees felt that they needed a secretariat that members were familiar with and who had a good understanding of the organisation.

Following a review of potential support companies, an agency, Red Hot Irons Limited (RHI), was contracted to run the day-to-day business administration and operations of the organisation from March 2021 supported by Consultancy, Simon and Gail Williams, who have been engaged to undertake the communications, committee management and event management.

Since their appointment Red Hot Irons has introduced new stringent measures for financial controls including the implementation of Xero accounting software for day-to-day book-keeping. Their governance and compliance officer has undertaken a review to ensure full compliance to Data Protection laws and registered the organisation with the Information Commissioner; a full review of policies and procedures has also been undertaken and recommendations made to the trustees for updates and new policies in line with Charity Commission guidance. Red Hot Irons has also introduced a new database CiviCRM (open source software) which allows increased functionality, better member engagement, tracking and reporting options and improved reporting on membership payments. The software also allows us to track member engagement thoroughly and permits online registration for events. A new website complements the database and supports substantially improved functionality. Red Hot Irons have also taken over the delivery of webinars from Summer of 2020 at substantially lower fees than the previous provider saving the organisation significant funds.

It is hoped that these new investments in technology will allow us to provide improved services and functionality for our members at cost effective rates.

Consultants Simon and Gail Williams have also been engaged to undertake committee management and event management services for ASO.

Pay Policy for key management

There are no paid staff, all work undertaken by the committee and trustees is done so voluntarily. The support agency is contracted to run the operational day-to-day activities and business administration.

Application and adherence to the Charity Governance Code

ASO recognise good governance is essential to our effectiveness, reputation and credibility. The Board of Trustees regularly review activities, policies and processes to ensure the charity is delivering against its mission and charitable objectives. We have implemented new robust measures to ensure effective and clear overview of financial controls. The board will also be undertaking a review of its effectiveness, assessing competencies, skills gaps and training needs through a process of external audit and facilitated discussion during 202/2022.

We operate a robust conflicts of interest policy, and all Trustees and Committee members complete declarations of interest each year. Conflict of interests form a standing item on all committee/board agendas. The Board aims to continuously improve its governance processes and is currently working through the new [Charity Governance Code](#) to ensure its governance structures adhere to the principles of the code and recommended practice.

Risk management

The Trustees analyse and undertake a review of the risks the Charity is exposed to as part of an annual business planning process and in accordance with Charity Commission guidance (CC26), scoring the risks according to likelihood and impact. The systems and actions established to mitigate those risks are also reviewed by Trustees at each Board meeting and updated and adjusted accordingly, with the net risk in each area agreed. High risks closely monitored by the Trustees are:

- High level of dependency on too few income streams puts ASO at risk of sudden and/or long-term loss of funding – efforts continue to diversify income streams to include more Trusts and Foundation as well as funding from non-pharmaceutical companies.
- Potential for a sudden drop in income and the need to dip into accumulated reserves
- The risk that ASO could be perceived as being unduly influenced by sponsors/pharmaceutical industry. ASO has adopted stringent sponsorship & partnerships and endorsement policies and ensures where possible that there is a balance of sponsors from across the industry spectrum with no one sponsor having significant influence or control. Sponsors are not permitted to have any form of editorial control or influence over the content and development of new ASO branded materials

Volunteers

The Society is heavily reliant on the time, expertise and energy of its committee and other members. Much of the work of the charity is conducted virtually via email and teleconference and is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Trustees, & senior management

Trustees

Dr Maria Bryant (chair)
Dr Nerys Astbury
Professor Graham Finlayson
Mr Patrick McGinley (Treasurer)
Dr Rebecca Richards
Professor Rachel Batterham
Mr Ken Clare
Dr David Hughes
Dr Alexander Miras
Dr Kath Roberts

Dr Abd Tahrani (stepped down in June 2021)
Professor James Stubbs (stepped down Sept 2021)

Registered office

Miria House
1683b High Street
Knowle
Solihull
B93 0LL

Charity Registered Number

1100648

Bankers

Unity Trust bank plc
Nine Brindley Place
Birmingham
B1 2HB

ASO sub-committees

Finance, Governance and Membership
Chair: Dr Maria Bryant

Clinical Practice and Obesity Management
Chair: Dr Alex Miras

Research and Scientific
Chair: Dr Rebecca Richards

Communications, partnerships and networks
Chair: Professor Graham Finlayson

Accountants

Essex Abel
4 Bank Court
Weldon Road
Loughborough
Leics
LE11 5RF

Financial Review

Principal Funding

The principal funding sources for the Charity in 2020 as in previous years were:

- Voluntary income from the pharmaceutical and diet industry (fees for event sponsorship)
- Voluntary income from the pharmaceutical and diet industry (to support educational webinar programmes)
- Restricted grants provided by the pharmaceutical industry to support research programmes
- Membership fees

The total funding secured in 2020/2021 £126,067

Principal Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2020/2021 was £178,156

Key expenditure areas were on the secretariat provided initially by Bioscientifica and latterly Red Hot Irons and the provision of webinar services and planning for Hot topics.. The decision to move from Bioscientifica was driven by the cost which was unsustainable.

Reserves Policy

ASO has no regular guaranteed sources of income and the long-term funding of the charity is uncertain. The charity however does have fixed operating costs in terms of the activities required to maintain its presence and further its charitable objectives. The charity's work is planned one year in advance with financial commitments made up to two years in advance on some programmes such as the annual conference.

The Trustees have therefore decided that in order to secure the viability of the organisation beyond the immediate future, to provide reliable service and required funding over the longer term, ASO must be able to absorb financial setbacks. It is therefore necessary to set aside some of the current income as a reserve against future uncertainties.

In view of the financial needs of the organisation, the trustees have agreed to maintain a reserve policy to retain sufficient funds to cover the operating expenses of the organisation for one year. The reserve would cover: secretariat expenditure, supporting funds for agreed projects, and other liabilities such as legal expenses, and other miscellaneous expenses that are necessary for the operation of the charity.

The trustees will review the reserve policy at a Trustee meeting each year held prior to the AGM to ensure that:

- 1) the policy is adequate for its need in the coming year
- 2) reserve level is enough to cover one year operating expenditure
- 3) take necessary steps if reserve falls short of the funding requirement.

Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

Financial Review Conclusion

The Society ended the year with an in year deficit of £52,109. COVID affected the services that were possible to provide but the resulting webinar series was popular and well received. Obviously as costs were covered no surplus could be generated, but it was a valuable service for all members.

The charity continues to hold healthy reserves.... However, sponsorship and funding remain a significant challenge and cutting further costs will be difficult. 2020/2021 was an unprecedented year and savings were made due to an inability to travel and hold face to face events, but like many organisations, it is likely that we will revert back to some level of travel and face to face events in the future which will inevitably see some costs rise. The Trustees continue to recognise that the funding situation remains challenging, and will continue to be innovative in our approach to fundraising, cost savings and ensuring value for money.

The impact of COVID-19 on our finances has been significant in limiting the events and type of events that could be provided, and the funding that could be generated.

Meanwhile ASO continue to explore other opportunities for funding programmes of activity and will be further exploring grant opportunities during 2021/2022.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

Each of the persons who are Trustees at the time when this Trustees' report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that Trustee is aware, there is no relevant information of which the charity's accountant and independent examiner are unaware, and
- that Trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Trustee in order to be aware of any relevant information and to establish that the charity's accountants are aware of that information.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Maria Bryant

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date: 25.11.21