**Mind in Mid Herts (MiMH’s) Paul Ronald, Chair’s Statement**

This statement provides a short summary of key events and reflections of the year 2018/19 as part of our preparation for our Annual General Meeting being held on January 15th.

If I can begin by saying, it is a genuine privilege to have continued my connection with Mind in Mid Herts throughout the year. I have been chair of our organisation for six years now and continue to be inspired by the work of all our brilliant team, our staff, our volunteer counsellors, our many other friends and volunteer staff, our funders and our partner organisations.

I speak on behalf of my fellow trustees when I say that we are aware of our responsibilities as trustees and remain committed to support and guide the organisation to deliver the best services we can in pursuit of the national commitment that;

***“We will not give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect.”***

In the remainder of this short report and throughout the agenda of our AGM we seek to show how between us all we have sought to move our Vision forward in the year just gone.

The theme of our Annual general meeting is “Moving Beyond” and amplifies the recovery focus, which underpins the work we do and is reflected in one of our Values- to be **Inspirational- inspiring others to achieve their potential**. Throughout the sessions, you will hear examples of how, with the support of our team, a number of us have taken steps to make things better for themselves and those closest. This will centre on the keynote presentation from Isaac Kenyon who has recently joined us as a trustee and will share his story and in the various showcases of the work taken place within some of the groups, we hold. I would point out that that there is great evidence of recovery and growth seen everywhere within the work the team do.

As an example when I sat down to write this statement, I received a copy of an email to our CEO of which I have extracted the following;

“…..*This was partly due to the wonderful support Loreta gave me as she was willing to talk to me during the sessions. I was in particular distress when I turned up to a couple of sessions after having a real tough day. Fortunately, Loreta wanted to check that I was ok and it was a relief to be able to offload stress without being judged. I am also grateful for her emails and phone calls to check how I was after an appointment I had recently. Again, her contact gave me great comfort and helped me to calm down*.”

The email ended with the offer *“I hope that I can in the future offer support as a volunteer with Mind”* and shows the continuing value of the services we provide, the positive impact and also the fantastic staff that work with us. The email referred specifically to Loretta, Sarah, Cameron, Ashley and the volunteers at Hertford.

In terms of 2018/19 then reflecting on the year the challenges and the successes I would begin with the challenges of December 2018 and the Ceiling coming down and having to shut the St Albans office for 2 months. This was a very challenging time yet as always, led by our exceptional CEO the team rallied round and ensured that we put in alternative arrangements allowing us to continue to support people over Christmas and through January, which we know, is a key period when people need support. In doing this we were extremely grateful to Dagnall Street Baptist church that allowed us the use of their premises and were so very helpful. If there was ever a time we saw the resourcefulness and positivity of our team then this was a most striking example.

We were delighted to launch three new service projects within the year each addressing a specific and ongoing need. These projects, which we may touch on during the AGM, were:

* Community Support Workers in GP surgeries in St Albans district in partnership with HPFT
* Creative Minds – working with 4 partners delivering pottery, drama, creative writing and photography courses
* Get Set to Go, a program developed by National Mind with people with lived experience to look at the recursive nature between physical and mental health. As part of this program we have started a swimming group and yoga and have plans for football, cycling and Nordic walking in 2020.

The work that is required in developing and mobilising new services is substantial and to have three new services launched within a year is remarkable and is a testament to so many within the team. From identifying the funding opportunity, building the service specification, writing the bid, developing the job specifications, recruiting the staff developing policies and in marketing the service the preparatory work is very much a team effort and hugely appreciated by our trustee board.

2018/19 saw us continue to build our partnership working particularly with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Mind where we have been very grateful for their advice and support. We also continue to work with Herts Mind Network and other 3rd sector organisations. We know that 2020 will see some major changes in how health services are organised in Hertfordshire and we will continue to want to play a part in this and support collaborative working with partners, which puts service quality at the centre of what we do. We also continued to develop our working with Hertfordshire Partnership FT and we were delighted to see them awarded an outstanding CQC rating. A strong mental health presence within Hertfordshire is central to the ambitions we set ourselves. We also continue to work with National Mind and we are really pleased with the focus that is now being provided to support local Mind organisations.

Buildings/premises continue to be a challenge and we have been fortunate to receive small pots of money from district councils that have allowed us to work in community centres and off site in various community settings. Whilst this is welcome, it does come without challenges regarding staff – if one person is off sick or on annual leave we have to cancel groups off site, which is obviously something we do not want to do. We have been very fortunate to be the recipients of a substantial donation of restricted funds (£400,000) from a family in memory of their son who died at the end of 2017. This restricted money is the foundation to fund a building to support the delivery of services in the Welwyn/Hatfield/St Albans area. This is an exciting opportunity for MiMH to build a secure future. This means so much to us to give the people who use our services the confidence that we will support them for as long as they require us to.

In order to help us develop our strategy to move the building project forward, we applied to the charity Pilotlight to be considered for their Unlocking Insights Programme, which is run in conjunction with Barclays. We were delighted to be selected for the programme, which has provided MiMH and its Trustees with a task force strategy and recommended steps to achieve our goal. The Trustees are now in the process of setting up the task force for this project and are keen to hear from people who would be interested in supporting this development – particularly in the areas of Fundraising, Property Search and Management and Project Management. Our vision is that this building would encapsulate everything we currently run and more.

In terms of our wider finances then our financial strategy is to continue to seek to grow our funding base both through developing our relationships with our existing funding bodies and to seek new funding sources including our voluntary and activity related income. In addition, in the coming financial year the Trustee Board are committed to increasing support to the management team and in making substantial progress towards the delivery of the building capital project referred to above. You will see that in 2018-19 the Trust reported a small deficit, which was in line with the financial plan reflecting the investment in I.T infrastructure in terms of updating a new database (charity log), and in designing and developing a new website. These investments will support our future growth.

In closing as Chair, we would want to thank the trustees who have supported not only me as Chair but also Sharn our CEO. The advice and support that is so willingly given is greatly appreciated. 2019 has seen quite a lot of change within our trustees and in the way we want to work to support the team in making great strides in delivering upon our mission and the underpinning strategic plan. We have established a number of subgroups on key areas and our trustees have committed to work with our management team to deliver several stretching goals over the next months. Trustees are also acting as mentors to the management team and in supporting our new trustees. This is all part of our commitment to work more closely and practically in supporting the team. I would thank Jo Couchman, Nina Ziaullah and Jess Attard who stepped down as trustees since the last AGM

I would also thank Rosemary Farmer who chose us as the St Albans Mayor charity of the year in 2018/19. Rosemary has agreed to be the patron for our Alon House project going forward which is great news. We are also very grateful to the many fundraisers who support our work one recent example being Landy who in memory of her daughter recently raised £5000 for us with a great music event and is going to continue to raise awareness and funds for us.

The next period can, I believe, be a very exciting one for MiMH. There will be a level of change but if we can continue to be focussed on building and supporting a great team to provide locally based services that are welcoming and based upon what our service users tell us is best for them, then we should view 2020 as a year of opportunity. As an organisation, we view the theme of “moving beyond” as a goal for the organisation. You will see today that much is being achieved but we recognise that as an organisation we are fragile and that we need to strengthen our finances and partnerships in 2020 to invest in our team and in our buildings and equipment so that we are less reliant on our brilliant staff continually going beyond what should be expected of them. That is what Moving Beyond means to the Board of MiMH and I do believe we can continue to ask for your support in getting there. In closing we wish you every success in 2020.