

## **Annual Report: 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**

I am happy to report on an excellent year, for the Wokingham and West Berkshire Mental Health Association.

### **Drop-In Centre.**

The Drop-In Centre was very well used throughout the year – with attendance numbers, and those supported, reaching a total of one thousand, four hundred, and forty. In the latter part of the year, we have provided ‘warm places’ for service users who, due to limited income, cannot afford high heating bills. Our beautiful, warm rooms, have proved ideal for this purpose.

### **Crisis Intervention, Information, and Advocacy.**

This service continued successfully, throughout the year. A lot of our work involves filling in forms for service users – to ensure that they continue to receive disability benefits. Frequently, people are unaware of their entitlements, so we are able to provide them with the necessary information and advocacy.

### **Befriending.**

This service also continued, successfully, throughout the year, and we have also been successful in expanding this service.

### **Station House.**

Throughout 2023, we have carried out a large number of repairs and improvements to Station House – both internally and externally. We have repaired the roof and ceiling of the ladies’ toilet, and damp-proofed, redecorated, and refurbished, both toilets. We have dealt with both minor, and major repairs. We fixed a leaking tap, and we are still in the process of damp-proofing, redecorating, and refurbishing, the downstairs passage area. Our original plan was to re-plaster, but all agree that the exposed brickwork looks so wonderful, and so much in keeping with the character of the house, that we are leaving it as it now is. Now people want the Victorian fire-places, currently boarded up, exposed as well! Taking advantage of the summer weather, we have carried out external repairs to windows, and redecorated extensively. We have also tamed the plants, growing on, and around, the building, and thus freed up a patio space, so that, in good weather, our service users can sit in the fresh air – this being conducive to their mental health. We have generally tidied up – by removing redundant external telephone wiring, and we have re-lagged an external water pipe – its previous lagging having disintegrated. An impressive record, but there is plenty more, still to accomplish, in 2024!

### **Finances.**

We have done well, with very generous donations, throughout the year. In April, we received a donation of five thousand pounds from the Berkshire Community Foundation, and in December, a second donation from this, most generous, Funder, of two thousand and five hundred pounds – to help with the increases in bills during the Winter period. During the year, we have also received generous donations from the Wokingham Society of Friends, the Quakers, and we were also the recipient of four hundred and ten pounds – from a local Funeral Collection. We are equally grateful for a number of other, smaller, but nevertheless, very useful donations – both in money, and in kind. Very valuable to us, because they ensure predictable income, are the regular donations which members place, monthly, into our Bank Account. I am, nevertheless, working hard in making a number of applications to Funding Bodies, and, as a result of our application to Wokingham Town Council, we are to receive four thousand pounds at the beginning of the financial year 2024. I should mention here, the valuable work undertaken by our trustee, David King. He has approached several Funding Bodies on our behalf, and achieved success.

## **Supporting Individuals.**

Good finances enable us to support individuals in private treatment and psychoanalysis – where we think that this can benefit them. One such member has now completed one year of therapy at the prestigious Cardinal Clinic. As a result he has made excellent progress. The psychotherapist has equipped him with exercises, with which he can continue, in order to sustain good mental health, and the Consultant Psychiatrist has arranged to see him for a follow-up appointment in April 2024 – to ensure that such progress is being maintained. We also support individuals in a practical way. We are currently paying for taxis to get one of our members to the drop-in centre. Due to cerebral palsy, his ability to walk has deteriorated, seriously. I think that he should qualify both for the Enhanced Rate for Mobility, and the Enhanced Rate for Care – with Personal Independence Payment. So I am applying for increases on his behalf – but I have assured him that we will continue to pay for the taxis until he is in receipt of the higher rates of Benefit.

## **Obituaries.**

It is sad to record that in 2023, Richard Grimsdell, father of our member, Philip, passed away. We have been supporting Philip, and it is particularly sad, since his mother, Denise, had also, passed away in December 2020. Our Befriender, John Hoggett, is supporting Philip in his bereavement. Long-term service user, Malcolm Chalk, also passed away in 2023 – after a prolonged battle with ill health. He decided to make a generous donation to the crisis house – a few months before his death – rather than leaving us the money in his Will. We comforted and supported, Graham, Malcolm's partner of forty-two years – who also acted as his excellent carer, during his final months. Sally Manson's mother, Shirley, finally lost her battle with dementia, in April 2023. Shirley, together with Sally, was one of our longest-standing members – joining us right at the beginning, in 1987. We comforted Sally in her bereavement. It is also sad to record, that Rosemary Moore, a long-term supporter of the crisis house, has now lost all three of her siblings, and is very much alone. Jeanette, Rosemary's sister – whom we knew personally – had been suffering from dementia, and died, just recently; her brother, Michael, died earlier in the year, shortly after Robert, her brother who had suffered from chronic schizophrenia, and for whom Rosemary was long-term carer, also died. Victoria, friend of our trustee, Paul, also died in 2023. We met her only a couple of times, and hoped that she would join our ranks, but it was not to be. This was, nevertheless, a sad time for Paul – who has benefited from our support. Finally, Daniela Pani, committed suicide in June 2023. We had known Daniela for decades, and she had made several suicide attempts, but it was still sad, and a shock, to learn of her premature death.

## **New Trustees**

I am always very keen to see that, as well as having established trustees, we recruit new people, who are working with us currently. In 2023, we have been successful in recruiting two new, excellent, trustees.

## **Publication of Book.**

I have decided to entitle my latest book – 'The Diamond in the Coal Bucket' – 'The Forty Year History of The Wokingham Crisis House.' Long may we continue to sparkle! By 7<sup>th</sup> March 2027, we will have been running services at Station House for exactly forty years – Deo Volente! On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1987, I started the Mental Health Association in Wokingham, and our first meeting, on that day, was in Station House, so, strictly speaking, the history of the Crisis House started then – even though we didn't take the building over until March 1991.

## **President and Patron.**

Lady Elizabeth Godsal is continuing as our President, and Patron, and is keen to see us continue, so I have, this year, supplied one of our new trustees with keys to the Crisis House, so that the service can continue to run, in my absence, if necessary. It always makes sense to have contingency plans in place, since everything is always 'Deo Volente'!

## **Christmas.**

Our 2023 Christmas Party was a great success. I was so pleased to read in a Christmas Card message from a former crisis house visitor, this statement - 'The Wokingham Crisis House is the diamond in the coal bucket that is the country's mental health service.' As I have explained, I am thus making the title of my forty year history, which I am currently in the process of writing – 'The Diamond in the Coal Bucket' – The Forty Year History of The Wokingham Crisis House. It is quite true that, at Christmas, we still receive grateful cards, from people who used our services more than twenty years ago, and, as a result of our support, turned their lives around, and are flourishing to this day! The value of our service can be summed up in the experience of one of our early service users. He was nineteen years old, and had lost his job, his girlfriend, and his lodgings – all in the space of a couple of days. He was standing on a bridge in Bracknell – about to jump to his death – when a member of the public grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, and frog-marched him around to the Samaritans. The Samaritans contacted me, and we took him to the crisis house. When he left us, some weeks later, he had a new job, a new girlfriend, and new lodgings – so he had no further need to commit suicide! Enough said! We need more crisis houses!

## **Vote of Thanks.**

I wish to record thanks to all those who have supported us – either, financially, or as volunteers, in carrying out our invaluable work for mental health, throughout Wokingham and West Berkshire – during the year 2023.

Pam Jenkinson, Association President.  
31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

## **Wokingham & West Berkshire Mental Health Association**

### **Income and Expenditure Account**

**for the period 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023**

#### **Income**

Brought Forward

Donations

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**Total Income**

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#### **Expenditure**

Professional Cleaning

Daily & Household Expenses

Public Liability Insurance

Television

Electricity

Fire Safety

Telephone/Internet

Water Rates

Business Rates & Rent

Repairs

Psychotherapy

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**Total Expenditure**

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**Income over expenditure**

**Bank Accounts as at 31st March 2023**

£30,500.34  
£11,303.57  

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£41,803.91

£1,296.00  
£3,562.88  
£2,076.02  
£159.00  
£1,510.11  
£160.49  
£605.54  
£175.70  
£1,713.40  
£253.21  
£1,960.00  

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£13,472.35

£28,331.56

£28,331.56

1, Arlington Close,  
Bracknell,  
Berks.  
RG42 1YF  
6 April, 2023

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I have examined the Accounts of The Wokingham & West Berkshire Mental Health Association for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023.

I confirm that this is an accurate statement of the Association's income and expenditure for this period.

Dennis M. Jenkinson