

**OPEN HANDS**

**ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**



# OPEN HANDS

## CONTENTS

***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023***

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Legal and administrative and information

Trustees' report 1- 13

Independent Examiner's report 14

Receipts and payments account 15

Statement of assets and liabilities 16

Notes on financial statements 17

# OPEN HANDS

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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<b>Charity number</b>	1136482
<b>Trustees</b>	Rebekka Single (Chairperson) Trevor Meadows (Treasurer) Andrea Van Hoven Julie Horn
<b>Address</b>	Millbank Cottage Horringtonford Newport Isle of Wight PO30 3AP
<b>Independent Examiner</b>	J R Caladine FCCA Caladine Limited Chantry House 22 Upperton Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 1BF
<b>Bankers</b>	Co-operative Bank 78/80 Cornhill London EC3V 3NJ

**Registered Charity Number:** 1136482

**Registered Office:**

Open Hands Charity  
Rosevine  
Wellgreen Lane  
Kingston  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 3NS

**Open Hands Trustees:**

Rebekka Single – Chairperson and Trustee  
Trevor Meadows –Treasurer and Trustee  
Andrea van Hoven – Trustee  
Julie Horn - Trustee

**Trustees Report**  
**For the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

**Status, Governance and Management**

Open Hands is a charity registered in England and governed by its Trust Deed dated 21 May 2010.

The trustees who served during the year were:

Rebekka Single

Ian Taplin – passed away 10 September 2023

Andrea van Hoven

Trustees are appointed by existing trustees. They meet regularly to manage the activities of Open Hands.

**Objects and Structure**

Open Hands remains committed to providing valuable and on-going support for vulnerable children and their families living in disadvantaged areas, primarily in Romania. The objects of Open Hands, as documented in our declaration of Trust in May 2010 are:

- (a) The prevention or relief of poverty in Romania and the surrounding countries by providing: grants, items and services to individuals in need and/or charities or other local organisations working to prevent or relieve poverty for orphan and neglected children, and among the Roma community.
- (b) To relieve poverty (or financial hardship) among the Roma community and their dependents living in Romania and the surrounding countries by providing health/housing/advice and education

This report demonstrates how we have achieved these objects within the financial year 2022-23, and we hope it will be an encouragement to all our supporters and friends.

Open Hands operates in Romania through its locally registered sister foundation, Fundatia Open Hands (FOH). All monies raised in the UK not needed to meet local governance and similar costs or to comply with our reserves policy are transferred to FOH.

**Risk Statement**

The trustees have assessed the risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate our exposure to the risks.

**Trustees' Responsibilities**

We are required as trustees to prepare financial statements each year which include the payments and receipts of Open Hands Charity for the year. The trustees are responsible for keeping accurate accounting records; this ensures that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011

**Open Hands Mission**

Open Hands was set up, and is run, by Christians who want to express their faith in Christ by showing his love in practical action. Our work is based on Christian values but welcomes persons of all beliefs and none. We work among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in Romania and our programs aim to transform their lives.

Rebekka Single first travelled to Romania in 2008 and was moved by the needs of children in the country who were still suffering from a lack of love, care, nurture, clothing and shelter. These children were of no importance to the wider communities in which they were living and had no one to be an advocate on their behalf. In 2010 Rebekka formed Open Hands Charity; she and her team have since become a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.

**Open Hands Vision and Values**

Our vision is a world free of poverty and injustice. A world where every child in every community is valued and loved. A world where every child, regardless of their ability or background can access the resources to thrive and reach their full potential.

The work of Open Hands is underpinned by our core values:

**Integrity**

- We are committed to work transparently with all resources entrusted to us and strongly believe in being accountable to our supporters. We strive to keep our administration costs to an absolute minimum and our expenses in Romania are carefully budgeted and reviewed to ensure good stewardship.

### Respect

- We respect the human worth and dignity of every person we serve. We believe that every person, regardless of ethnicity, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or beliefs is of immense value and uniquely gifted. We promote inclusiveness for all people we work with and challenge discrimination in all its forms.

### Compassion

- We act with compassion and kindness and strive to bring unconditional love to those we are helping. We believe that every child needs to experience a loving and stable environment, where their emotional, material and social needs are met.

### Empowerment

- We promote and support people's right to make their own choices, provided this does not threaten the rights, safety and legitimate interests of others.

### Collaboration

- We empower families to be active participants, and to become involved, in decisions and actions affecting their lives. We build relationships and partnerships to ensure that children and families can access the services that they need. We work together with local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and families.

### Holistic Approach

- We provide support that looks at the whole person, not just their immediate circumstances. We seek to cover all aspects of a child's life, including their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, as well as their family life, community and societal environments.

### **Where Open Hands Operates and What it Does**

Open Hands main office in Romania is in Suceava, a city situated in north-east of the country. However, our work is carried out in two locations: in villages around Suceava and in the small town of Gheorgheni, in eastern Transylvania.

We work with children and families in rural communities who suffer from isolation and poverty, typically caused by a complete lack of education and poor opportunities for work.

Because of this, many families struggle to manage their meagre financial resources efficiently. Many parents had a traumatic up-bringing themselves. They have lost hope, knowing it is almost impossible for them to meet their children's basic needs without help from outside. Governmental authorities often lack empathy when it comes to supporting poor families. Children have no positive role models in their families and so, left to their own devices, the poverty cycle continues

for another generation when they reach adolescence and then adulthood. Open Hands is often the first and only support these families receive.

Our children's centre, the Rainbow House, is based in Gheorgheni - a town affected by high unemployment, depression and alcoholism. Many families here lead lives of complete desolation.

Most children and families we work with here are of Roma ethnicity and face severe hardship and destitution. Discrimination, lack of education, unemployment, homelessness, extreme poverty and hunger are part of their daily lives.

### **Achievements and Performance - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

#### **Rainbow House (RH)**



#### **Care**

We first opened the RH as a day centre in 2016, after witnessing the extreme deprivation that Roma children are exposed to living in the local slum. Since then, we have had the same children attending the RH program on a regular basis. The children are eager to come to the RH because our team lovingly cares for each child. The children are fed, washed, changed into clean clothes, helped with homework and do many fun activities, including trips to the cinema or zoo. Over the years the children have formed strong friendships and see the RH as their second home.





### *Space for Teens*

Many children have come to the RH since we opened its doors in 2016. Since then, some of these children have come into their teenage years and require more specialised support. To meet their needs, we have developed a Teen Project which offers support throughout secondary school education. The project aims to support young people to become healthy, well-rounded, independent and responsible adults who make positive contributions to society. As the RH is very small in size, we have furnished a room in a portable cabin, which is situated in the garden of the RH. The teens can call this new space their own. It is separated from the smaller children and used for down time, workshops, meetings and home learning.



### ***Breaking the cycle***

A strong emphasis is placed in supporting children on their educational journey. Each child develops at their own pace but we continue to see steady, overall improvements. Open Hands is making sure that all RH children are enrolled in some form of education; the younger ones are at kindergarten, those with additional needs learn at a special school and those that are able are integrated into the mainstream school in town. A large percentage of the children we work with do not meet the developmental milestones of a healthily developed child of similar age. Due to a disadvantaged start in life, many RH children are developmentally delayed or/and have a disability of some sort. For these children it is a big achievement when they learn how to read and write. Our RH manager is regularly in touch with schools to make sure that the children attend. She frequently advocates on their behalf and addresses any problems that arise. The Children usually come to the RH after kindergarten and school to eat and do their homework.

All RH children and families receive regular visits at home through our Family Support Program.

### ***Summer***

Children in Romania tend to have a long summer holiday of up to 3 months. During this time the RH remained open, apart from a two weeks staff holiday, and offered its usual services to the children and families.

### ***Family Support (FS)***

#### ***Aim***

It is our aim to see every child, regardless of their ability or background thrive and reach their full potential. FS provides a way out of poverty. It enables children and their families to escape its devastating effects. However, change takes time – particularly in view of generational poverty.

#### ***Holistic Approach***

To help children reach their full potential we must look at them holistically. This means ensuring their physical and emotional well-being, as well as looking at their family life and their life in the context of their community.

By working with children in our programs, both at school and within their home, we get a clearer picture of what they need to thrive. Regular home visits allow us to see children in the context of their family and community life. Understanding the context in which a child lives helps us to tailor our support to meet their needs and improve the conditions in which they

live. It enables us to connect and work with their parents who are vulnerable individuals and also in need of support.

### ***Support***

The Romanian Child Protection Service or family doctors frequently refer children and families who are in urgent need of support to us. Although we continue to add new cases and aim to help as many in need as we possibly can, a waiting list remains. We currently support a total of 180 children in our program. Although provision is unique and tailored depending on the child's need, we typically enrol every child in either kindergarten or school and we provide clothing, food and hygiene articles. We support families in relation to welfare issues and health care needs.

### ***Children with Disabilities***

Part of our FS work is offering support to children with disabilities and/or special educational needs. Over the past year Open Hands workers supported children within their homes, in schools and by liaising with specialist therapists.

### ***Housing***

Most families we first come in contact with live in overcrowded, dilapidated and unsanitary places. Alternative housing is often not available, and we therefore spend much time, money and effort to make existing homes properly habitable. Sometimes a new roof is needed, sometimes a home needs to be re-built in whole or part. Often windows and doors need replacing. Usually, homes need a thorough clean and fresh lick of paint. All this work and much more is done in collaboration with parents. We are supported by some local authorities on these projects and sometimes local businesses help out as well, all with one aim - to create safer and humane living conditions for children and families.

This year we built a large room with a bathroom for two teenage children in our Family Support Program. The family has been homeless in the past and it is the first time that the children have a room of their own, separated from their parents. The family of four used to live, sleep and eat in a room no bigger than 8m<sup>2</sup>. Please see pictures below of the new room being built.



### ***Birthdays***

Many children we work with do not even know when their birthday is, let alone having ever experienced the enjoyment and fun of celebrating one before. We want them to know how precious they are – this is why we celebrate each birthday with a cake and gift and most importantly their friends from the program.

### **Our Lighthouse Programs (LH)**

We currently run two Lighthouse Programs in the rural communities of Suceava county. One Lighthouse is based in the village of Ciprian Porumbescu and the other in the community of Timpoceni. The concept of Lighthouse is to break generational cycles of poverty through education. Lighthouse is a program designed to supplement the school curriculum and to broaden children's perspectives by creating new opportunities and experiences, such as outdoor activities, arts and crafts, sight seeing and more. To encourage school attendance the children can only come to Lighthouse if they have been to school that day.

#### ***Lighthouse – Ciprian Porumbescu***

The children come to our centre in Ciprian Porumbescu right after they finish school to receive a hot meal. The program runs each week day from 12pm until 4pm and supports up to 26 children with their education, creative learning, outdoor activities, day trips and more.

Children who attend classes also receive clothes, shoes and school supplies from Lighthouse. Birthdays are also celebrated with cakes and balloons.

We also offer advocacy and Family Support as part of the program. Both our Lighthouse programs operate in collaboration with the relevant local authority. The space of our centre in Ciprian Porumbescu is provided by the local authority free of charge to Open Hands. Thanks

to a generous donation we were able to completely refurbish the classroom, kitchen, hallway and playroom this year.



### ***Summer***

During the long summer break, our staff organised a number of outdoor activities with the children, e.g.: visiting museums, salt mines, playgrounds, zoos, restaurants, castles and monasteries.

### **Lighthouse – Timpoceni**

Our Lighthouse in the community of Timpoceni is currently still run at the local school of Capu Codrului. The promise of the mayor to re-build the school in Timpoceni has yet to be fulfilled. The old school was torn down over two years ago and a new one has not been built. Open Hands organised that the children in Timpoceni are brought to the nearby school of Capu Codrului to learn. We established a good working relationship with the headteacher and the teachers at the school. However, the children from Timpoceni currently study in the school's gym because there is no alternative space available.

## **Ukraine**

Our headquarters are based in the northern city of Suceava which is only a short drive from the Romanian-Ukrainian border. Since the outbreak of the war Open Hands has been actively assisting Ukrainian refugees. Since the early summer of 2022 a part of the Open Hands team began travelling to Western Ukraine on a regular basis to bring aid to those displaced by war inside Ukraine. Relief items were brought to children and adults who experience extreme hardships through sickness, disability, poverty or by living in an orphanage.

We currently deliver food and other vital items to an orphanage with 52 disabled children who were displaced by war and are extremely vulnerable, many suffering from malnutrition.

However, despite the great need, the greatest gift is not the material items we bring. It is our time. It is human contact. It is knowing that someone cares. There is, as Mother Teresa once said, a terrible hunger for love. We visit to ease the pain of loneliness. And we bring aid. In addition to that we raise awareness of the unacceptable treatment of children with disabilities in Ukrainian's orphanage system by meeting with local authorities and connecting with other NGOs.



## **Open Hands Charity and Open Hands e.V. in Germany**

Since the formation of our Open Hands e.V. branch in Germany (2021) we have established a very close working relationship sharing one aim - a better future for the poorest children in Romania. Although both charities serve the same aim, they are separate entities and therefore accountable to their respective national authorities.

## **Christmas 2022**

In December 2022 we celebrated St Nicholas Day with all Open Hands children. All children received gifts and were visited in their community.



This year a charity from Austria organised the collection and the delivery to our Rainbow House of 400 Christmas Shoe Boxes. These gifts continue to bring much joy to the most disadvantaged children each Christmas. Children often tell us that receiving a Christmas gift from Open Hands is one of their happiest memories.

Due to the growing number of children in our programs, we held a number of separate Christmas parties for all children. All children and parents were also provided with a special Christmas dinner at home. Many different art and craft activities were held, Christmas carols were sung and Father Christmas came and brought gifts.

### **Other Aid Trips**

In the summer of 2022, a lorry from Germany once again made its way to our Rainbow House in Romania to deliver warm clothing and shoes, toys, blankets, children's bikes, school materials, furniture and many other items. These are stored in a container there and distributed throughout the year to families and children in need.

The aid delivery was achieved with the support of HFN, a German humanitarian charity, specialising in aid trips for over 20 years. Their donations have been an enormous support to our work as we are able to provide all our children with school supplies, clothing and much more.

### **Financial Review**

This year we have been under increased financial pressure. The cause is the war in Ukraine and the following high inflation. The rapidly rising costs of food and energy are having a profound impact on our staff, our projects and our children and families in Romania. For example, our costs in Romania have increased significantly. While most donors are faithfully continuing their support and new people have started to support us, we remain under constant pressure to fundraise in order to meet the need. At the time of writing our finances continue to hold up and we are able to meet the needs of children and families in Romania – although we are facing substantially more pressure.

During 2021-22 most German based donors migrated to Open Hands e.V. with the result that the income of Open Hands Charity inevitably dropped significantly as compared with previous years.

## **Thank You**

Open Hands is led by a board of Trustees who bring a range of professionalism, skills and experience to the charity. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the Trustees for their reliability, devotion, contribution and hard work for Open Hands Charity.

On behalf of Open Hands Charity, I would like to extend my gratitude to all of Open Hands dedicated staff in Romania and to the volunteers in the UK and Germany for all their hard work and dedication and for sharing the loving spirit of Open Hands by caring for Romania's most vulnerable children.

I would like to thank our wonderful sponsors who have enabled us to continue this vital work and who have stood with us through difficult times. Their giving has enabled us to continue our valuable work and I am very much moved by such commitment. Most of our donors are individuals but we also received support from a number of organisations. In the UK. These include Trinity Church in Lewes, Humanity@Heart Charity Shop and Blakell Europlacer Group. From my heart I would like to thank you for being so faithful in your support, especially during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,  
Rebekka Single



**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF OPEN HANDS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

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I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Open Hands ('the Charity') for the year ended 31 March 2023, which are set out on pages 15 to 17.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- (2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



**J R Caladine FCCA**  
Caladine Limited  
Chartered Certified Accountants  
Chantry House, 22 Upperton Road  
Eastbourne, BN21 1BF

25 January 2024

# OPEN HANDS

Page 15

## RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
<b>Receipts</b>				
Donations	58,918	-	58,918	83,774
Interest	57	-	57	-
Gift aid	10,041	-	10,041	-
Total receipts	69,016	-	69,016	83,774
<b>Payments</b>				
Projects and aid to Romania NGO	81,431	7,036	88,467	66,399
Travel costs	717	-	717	1,431
Insurance	431	-	431	431
Professional fees	-	-	-	-
Office costs	2,792	-	2,792	716
Accountancy and Independent Examination	780	-	780	780
Bank charges	35	-	35	58
Other expenses	-	-	-	-
Total payments	86,186	7,036	93,222	69,815
<b>Surplus / (Deficit) for the year</b>	(17,170)	(7,036)	(24,206)	13,959
<b>Cash funds at 31 March 2022</b>	65,503	7,036	72,539	58,580
<b>Cash funds at 31 March 2023</b>	48,333	-	48,333	72,539

# OPEN HANDS

Page 16

## STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	<u>2023</u> <u>£</u>	<u>2022</u> <u>£</u>
<b>Cash funds</b>		
Cash at bank	<u>48,333</u>	<u>72,539</u>
<b>Other debtors</b>		
Gift aid receivable	<u>5,022</u>	<u>10,026</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accountancy and Independent Examination	<u>798</u>	<u>780</u>

Approved by the trustees .....



Trevor Meadows - Treasurer

25 January 2024

**NOTES ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS*****FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023***

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**1 Accounting policies****1.1 Basis of accounting**

The Financial Statements have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, as allowed under section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 for small charities that are not companies.

**1.2 Income and expenditure**

All income and expenditure has been included when received and paid.

**1.3 Funds****General unrestricted fund**

The Charity operates an unrestricted General Fund that can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the trustees.

**Restricted funds**

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

**2 Trustees**

Trustees received no remuneration in the year.

In the year, Trustee Trevor Meadows was reimbursed expenses of £431 (2022: £431) for insurance payments. Trustee Ian Taplin received reimbursed expenses of £nil (2022: £780) for accountancy fees.