LINK VISITING SCHEME

England & Wales · Charity number 1139248

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	07349468
Registered	2010-12-02
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	The Link Visiting Scheme The Charity and Community Hub Waterford House Erftstadt Court Wokingham RG40 2YF
Phone	01189798019
Email	Admin@linkvisiting.org
Website	http://www.linkvisiting.org

Activities

Objects: 1.1.1TO COMBAT SOCIAL ISOLATION AND TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF PRIMARILY ELDERLY PERSONS AND ANY OTHER PERSONS WHO ARE ISOLATED FROM SOCIETY BY THE PROVISION OF REGULAR HOME VISITS, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND TELEPHONE SUPPORT1.1.2 TO RELIEVE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN CHARITABLE NEED BECAUSE OF AGE SICKNESS OR POOR HEALTH BY ANY PROPER MEANS AS THE TRUSTEES THINK FIT AND INCLUDING (WHERE APPROPRIATE BUT NOT BY WAY OF LIMITATION) THE PROVISION OF ADVICE; THE PROMOTION OF GOOD PRACTICES TO COMBAT SUCH CONDITIONS AND THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES TO ALLEVIATE OR PREVENT SUCH NEED

Activities: Our aim is to tackle the serious impact of loneliness and isolation among older people living in Wokingham Borough. This is primarily achieved through regular home visits from volunteers. We also coordinate social events and activities which enables our clients to build relationships with others in similar circumstances.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** WOKINGHAM BOROUGH AND SURROUNDING AREA
- Wokingham

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£544,141	£534,774	£550,724	15
2024-03-31	£483,985	£484,904	-	-
2023-03-31	£432,917	£363,365	-	-
2022-03-31	£286,729	£280,069	-	-
2021-03-31	£328,828	£242,476	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
John Mallaghan	Chair	2017-12-13
Antony Charles Samuel Sweet		2023-04-01
Geraint Alan Hayter		2025-09-01
Kuldip Singh Athwal		2022-10-23
Laura Kim Mitchell		2020-12-09
Pamela Anne Forsythe		2025-08-01

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LINK VISITING SCHEME

England & Wales - Charity number 1139248

Accounts

Annual Report

2024 / 2025

the Link visiting scheme



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Introduction

At The Link Visiting Scheme, we believe that no one should feel forgotten. Our mission to reduce loneliness and social isolation among older people has never been more urgent—or more inspiring. **And this year, we're proud to say: we've made a difference.**

We are thrilled to share that we were named Charity of the Year at the Thames Valley Business and Community Awards—a powerful recognition of the dedication, innovation, and heart that define our work. But the real reward? The thousands of moments of joy, comfort, and connection shared between our volunteers and Link Friends across Wokingham Borough.

"Without her, I don't know where I'd be. I look forward to her so much—it's the one thing I rely on." - Barbara, 92

Loneliness is more than a feeling—it's a public health crisis. Nationally, nearly one in three older people report feeling lonely often or always. Locally, in Wokingham's ageing population, the need for companionship is growing rapidly. According to Age UK's 2024 report, loneliness is linked to increased risks of heart disease, stroke, dementia, and depression. The Centre for Social Justice estimates that the cost to health and social care for each severely lonely older person exceeds £6,000 per year.

In the face of this challenge, our volunteers and supporters have stepped up - not just with time, but with genuine friendship. Together, we've built a network of support that brings friendship into the lives of those who might otherwise feel invisible.

This report is a tribute to the compassionate actions of our community, and a roadmap for the future we're building—one where every older person feels seen, supported, and valued.

As Coretta Scott King once said: "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

We invite you to read on, be inspired, and join us in creating a world where no one grows old alone.



What we do and why it matters

The Link Visiting Scheme is a charity working to reduce loneliness and isolation among older people in Wokingham Borough. We believe that everyone deserves to feel connected, valued, and part of a community - especially in later life, when social circles often shrink due to bereavement, health issues, or mobility challenges.

We match older people with volunteers for regular contact through one-to-one visits and/or phone calls, building meaningful friendships that make a real difference. This year, we have 212 active partnerships or 'link-ups', where each volunteer is matched with a client.

Alongside this, we run a lively programme of weekly and monthly activities—each one designed and improved based on feedback from our Link Friends.

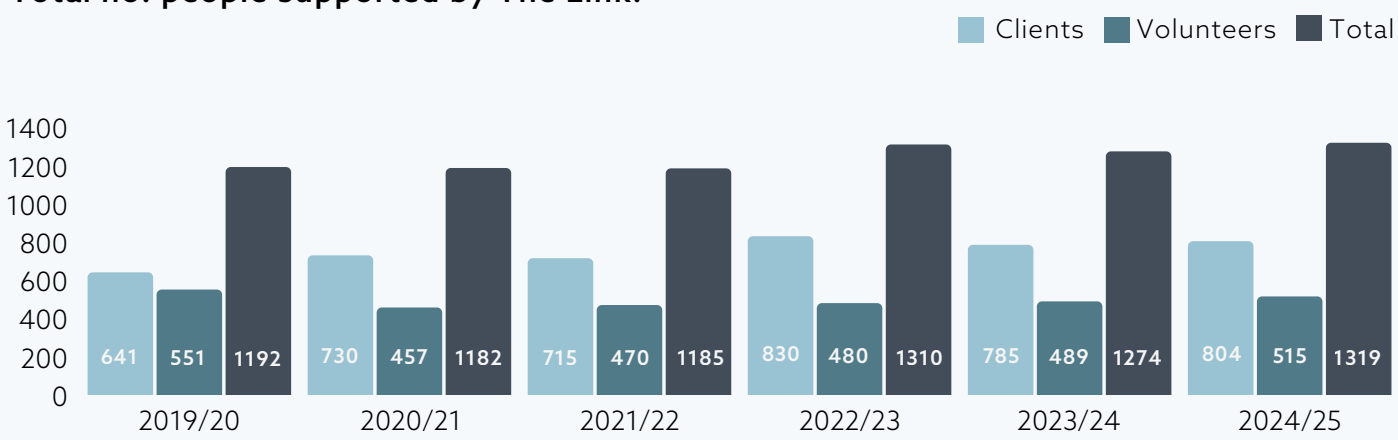
They include:

- Weekly 'Pie and Pint' club
- Monthly singalong club
- Monthly craft sessions
- Monthly quiz and games sessions
- Weekly and seasonal indoor and outdoor bowls
- 'Active Minds' for those living with dementia
- Monthly Sunday 'Community Kitchen'
- Weekly community pop-up café
- Seasonal parties and various one-off events and celebrations

Our mission extends beyond mere companionship; it's about rebuilding confidence, uplifting spirits, enhancing well-being, and fostering a sense of belonging. All of this aims to help individuals maintain their independence longer and minimise delays, ultimately reducing the need for statutory care services.

During 2024/25, we ran 180 regular weekly or monthly activity sessions, with over 2,350 attendances. This doesn't include our parties, one-off events, special outings and our Christmas programme! We are thrilled that 35% of Link Friends attend our activities. Those who are more independent are referred to local community groups that match their interests and are located nearby.

Total no. people supported by The Link:



Feedback

This year, the heart of our work has been reflected in the voices of those we serve and those who serve alongside us. From volunteers finding renewed purpose to clients rediscovering joy and companionship, the stories shared with us are a testament to the impact of meaningful connection.

We enjoy hearing how regular visits and calls have transformed daily lives. Link Friend Roy told us his volunteer "helps a tremendous amount and I enjoy her visits". Link Friend Anna shared, "It was a great morning today...we were roaring with laughter. It's such a tonic."

Marcia

Diagnosed with dementia, Marcia felt isolated and overwhelmed. Through Active Minds, she found a space where she felt understood and supported. "I didn't feel I had any friends," she shared. Now, she's part of a group that brings her joy and connection.

Joe

After losing his wife, Joe struggled with digital tasks. With patient support from a trained Link Online volunteer, he's now learning to navigate technology and reclaim independence in daily life.

Queenie and Jean

At 82, Queenie thought she might be too old to volunteer. But her visits to Jean, a 93-year-old who is bedbound, have blossomed into a cherished friendship. "It's given me some joy and purpose back in my life," Queenie reflected.

*Names changed to protect anonymity

Volunteer reflections

Volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of our organisation. Their feedback reveals not only the value they bring to others but also the fulfilment they gain themselves.

Maria O, a volunteer at our weekly pop-up cafe, told us: "It's my thing that fits into my life and allows me to still feel the structure and friendship I miss from working."

Another volunteer shared: "We have a wonderful time—we go shopping, have lunch, and even visit the pub. The staff know us so well, they save our favourite spot by the fire."



Highlights of 2024/25

While one-to-one friendship remains at the heart of what we do, this year has demonstrated the breadth of our offerings. From community events and fundraisers to group activities, special trips, and celebrations, we've created numerous ways for people to connect. It's been a busy and rewarding year, with improvements in our use of technology enabling us to work more efficiently and giving us more time to those who need our support.

Active Minds

We ran five 8-week courses for people living with dementia, offering connection, stimulation, and support in small groups. With 100% positive feedback, the programme won the Wokingham Community Award for Project of the Year. Guests, including yoga teacher Richard Welch and Sing For Yourself's Soph Tarttelin, helped participants build confidence and join wider community activities.

We also continued our commitment to Dementia Friendly Wokingham, part of the Dementia Partnership along with Age UK Berkshire and Understanding Dementia, and trained volunteers who visit those with dementia. As one participant shared, "Beth and her team are great at what they do – so friendly and focused," while another said, "I love the social interaction and meeting new people. I've had great fun."

Transport

It might not be the most high-profile part of our work, but transport is absolutely essential to everything we do at Link Visiting. We arranged over 1,300 journeys - 819 through community providers and 500+ by volunteers - ensuring no one missed out due to lack of a lift. This practical support is essential, though it comes with financial costs we must continue to fundraise for.

Keeping in Touch

With the addition of Fiona Rycraft, a retired social worker, we strengthened our support for Link Friends with emerging needs. Fiona worked with 53 individuals, resulting in 1,250 contacts and over 400 timely referrals to services, which helped people stay independent by preventing crises from developing. The project also reduces the pressure on statutory services, which, in turn, has marked reduction in costs for a wide range of stakeholders.







Community Café at All Saints Church

Our weekly café has grown in popularity and become a vibrant hub, a safe haven each week where anyone in the community can just turn up with a guarantee of a warm welcome.

This year, we also hosted a Friendship Day celebration for all supporters and members, featuring intergenerational visits from local childminders and interactive sessions with Creative Mojo and Blandy & Blandy solicitors.

Additionally, we partnered with the church to open up conversations around death and dying, and continued to offer our Chair Yoga course, along with other creative ways to manage loneliness.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

We were proud to participate in Wokingham's Pride Festival, an opportunity to affirm our wholehearted support for the LGBTQIA+ community and their right to live with dignity, joy, and equality.

We also took practical steps to make our services more accessible by translating key materials into Cantonese and Urdu, reflecting the rich diversity of our local community. Our commitment to inclusion continues through growing relationships with local faith groups, including the Gurdwara and the Wokingham Muslim Community Connect Group, where we've joined in celebratory events and strengthened meaningful connections.

These actions, along with our membership of Wokingham Borough Voice of Inclusion and Equality (ViNe) group, are part of our ongoing effort to ensure that everyone, regardless of background, identity, or belief, feels welcome, seen, and supported at Link Visiting.

Link to Nature

This project brings people together through a shared appreciation of the natural world, whether it's birdsong, flowers, growing vegetables, or simply walking outdoors. It's designed to boost wellbeing and strengthen friendships through gentle, nature-based activities.

One standout story is Anna, a Link Friend who joined in early 2024. Living with kidney disease, she embraced every opportunity, from growing her first sunflower (which reached over 2.5 metres!) to gifting homegrown tomatoes to neighbours and enjoying peaceful walks at Dinton Pastures. She told us she often replays those walks in her mind before bed because they bring her so much joy. Even more special, Anna formed a new friendship through the project. They now meet weekly, something she hadn't expected at this stage in life. "I find it very uplifting. I always come home happy - that helps a lot at my age."



A place at the table

Community Kitchen is a cherished monthly gathering where Link Friends and volunteers come together to cook, eat, and enjoy entertainment, easing Sunday loneliness with shared friendship and connection. Expertly led by Fiona Wright and supported by over 25 dedicated volunteers, it's a highlight of the month for many.

One attendee told us: "Being on my own, I just find it's not worth cooking for myself, so I really look forward to coming. I think the new venue feels like a treat, especially the comfy chairs! Everyone works so hard making it all look lovely, and the table hosts encourage even the quiet ones to talk. When I see all the smiling faces, it makes my day."

Christmas 2024

Our festive programme brought warmth and connection to many. We hosted 130 guests at Loddon Hall, with gifts donated by the community.

Our Link to Nature group made decorations and enjoyed a seasonal shopping trip. We had festive Pie and Pint Clubs along with our usual weekly activities and sixth formers at St Crispin's School hosted a musical afternoon tea. Over 150 people attended our Christmas Special at All Saints Church, featuring St Sebastian's Brass Band and reflections from the vicar.

On Christmas Day, we cooked and delivered over 160 meals—some shared at a venue, others delivered to homes. Our Kindness Tree initiative, in partnership with 19 local businesses, ensured everyone received a gift. Together, we made Christmas feel a little less lonely. A volunteer told us: "I'm very proud to be a small part of this amazing charity!"

A Link Friend told us: "I never truly feel alone when part of The Link and can't thank you enough for all you do. You have really helped me, and the people of Wokingham would be lost without you."















Fundraising

We were fortunate to receive generous donations from various organisations in 2024/25. The Statement of Financial Activities at the end of this report provides a full list of all those who have supported us financially.

Our local MP, Rt Hon Clive Jones
"The Link Visiting Scheme are a critical support within our community that provides a vital and caring service to those who are most vulnerable in Wokingham. In November, I had the good fortune of joining Link for their Christmas craft activity, as part of their Link to Nature project. On this occasion, and many others, I was able to see the positive impact made by the Link Visiting Scheme and its volunteers firsthand. I look forward to joining Link again soon at one of their projects, to help support this important charity."

Shanly Foundation
"The Shanly Foundation is delighted to support the Link Visiting Scheme, recognising its vital work in combating loneliness and fostering meaningful connections. By funding this initiative, we help bring companionship and support to those who need it most."

Helen Bushell, Head of Regional Funding for London, the South East and East of England at The National Lottery Community Fund
"Thanks to National Lottery players, our funding supports communities to be more inclusive and environmentally sustainable, including improving people's access to nature. The Link to Nature project is a great example of how access to nature goes hand in hand with bringing communities together through inclusive spaces and activities, and improving their wellbeing. It's great to see this project continuing to go from strength to strength and help people live healthier, more fulfilling lives."

David Cliff Estate Agents
"We just love being and feeling part of this incredible charity. The job of 'caring' is so easy to talk about but hard to do, we're all guilty sometimes, so to have people like the Link team is amazing and we intend to continue to support them as much as we can."

Ascot Racecourse
"We are delighted to champion the work of The Link Visiting Scheme which brings so much joy to so many isolated individuals. Our Ascot Racecourse Supports programme is focused on supporting charities who are tackling our county's most vital causes of which loneliness and isolation amongst the elderly is one."





We diversified our income streams and benefited from a number of fundraising events, including:

- A Charity Golf Day, held at East Berkshire Golf Club and organised by Easthampstead Rotary Club, had 19 teams participate, including Blandy & Blandy Solicitors and AspenTech.
- A Curry Night, held and sponsored by The Tamarind Tree restaurant in Wokingham, raised £1,134 for our Christmas Appeal.
- A Paint & Sip Party fundraiser sponsored by R Young Art Gallery and K J Smith Solicitors raised £1,130.
- Skydive Day, where three people, including our chair of trustees, raised vital sponsorship.
- An Afternoon Tea, hosted by Cllr Caroline Smith, the Mayor of Earley, raised £896. A special guest was Alexander Barfield, the High Sheriff of Berkshire.
- A Swimathon organised by Wokingham Lions Club saw our team swim 2,300 metres in 50 minutes, raising £825.
- Our regular quizzes are always very popular with our volunteers.
- We launched the Link Lottery, where players are given a chance to win a weekly cash prize and the £25,000 jackpot every week. Plus, tickets are entered into the monthly Super Draw for an extra prize.
- We have benefited from being the chosen 'Charity of the Year' with East Berkshire Golf Club, Wokingham Catenians, Shinfield Players, and the Inner Wheel Club of Reading Maiden Erlegh.
- We are thrilled to share that East Berkshire Golf Club has raised an incredible £23,500 during the 2024/25 Captaincy year! A huge thank you to Marcus Swanston, Club Captain, and Jayne Mattey, Ladies Captain, for choosing us as their joint charity. This support means the world to us and will make a significant impact on our work. Marcus commented, "It has been great fun raising funds for the charity over the past year, and working with the Link members has been our pleasure. Jayne and I are immensely proud to have led the fundraising of such a wonderful amount, which we are sure will help the charity and its community. We are so very grateful to the members of the East Berkshire Golf Club for their generosity and support. We're also delighted that some golf club members, inspired by our mission, have signed up to become volunteers.

Anyone who wants to donate to The Link can do so at www.linkvisiting.org/donations. Every donation enables us to continue to transform lives with friendship and is massively appreciated, thank you.






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BARCLAYS
The Link Visiting Scheme
£23,464.81






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Legacies

We truly value the bequests we receive - gifts left to The Link Visiting Scheme in supporters' wills. These thoughtful and generous contributions help us plan for the future with confidence and stability. Bequests allow us to invest in long-term projects, expand our reach to more isolated older people, and strengthen the foundations of our befriending services.

Every legacy gift, no matter the size, is a powerful act of kindness that helps ensure no one in our community has to face loneliness alone. We treat each gift with careful thought and respect. If there is a Link service or activity that holds special meaning for the person who left the gift, we will honour any request to use their legacy for that specific purpose. It's a lasting legacy of friendship, connection, and care. For more information, visit www.linkvisiting.org/legacy.

A special thank you to Cicely Siemssen

We are deeply grateful to Cicely Siemssen for her generous legacy gift. Cicely was a fiercely independent woman who, in her 90s, referred herself to our scheme via our online form, seeking companionship over the Christmas period. She was soon matched with Lynn, a wonderful volunteer, and the two formed a close and lasting friendship. Cicely often shared how much it meant to talk with Lynn about her worries and anxieties, especially in her later years. She also delighted us with stories of her adventurous life, including rally car racing with her husband in the 1950s and 60s, where she was the skilled navigator.

Cicely's legacy will help sustain our weekly Community Café and support special outings and events for those with mobility challenges. We are honoured to publicly thank Cicely for her kindness, generosity, and the lasting impact of her gift.



Awards and recognition

This year has been one of celebration and recognition for Link Visiting, as our work across the community has been honoured with several prestigious awards, each one a reflection of the dedication, compassion, and commitment of our volunteers, staff, and supporters.

Charity of the Year

Thames Valley Business and Community Awards

We were absolutely thrilled to be named Charity of the Year 2024, standing out among a large field of inspiring organisations across the Thames Valley. We were also shortlisted as one of the final three for the Community Impact Award, a huge achievement and a proud moment.

Wokingham Community Award

Our Active Minds course, which supports people living with dementia, was recognised with a Wokingham Community Award in association with Wokingham Today and Wokingham Borough Council. The award is a testament to the programme's impact on wellbeing, connection, and quality of life.

It's Your Neighbourhood Award

For the third consecutive year, our Link to Nature project has received recognition from the Royal Horticultural Society and Thames & Chilterns in Bloom, celebrating our creative approach to enhancing wellbeing through nature, gardening, and outdoor connection.

Mayor's Honour Awards

We were also proud to see individual members of our community recognised for their outstanding contributions at the Wokingham Borough Council's Mayor's Honour Awards:

- John Mallaghan, our Chair of Trustees, received a Mayor's Honour Award for his long-standing service and leadership.
- Andy Jones, one of our dedicated volunteers, was honoured for his volunteering and fundraising efforts, which have made a real difference both within Link Visiting and across the wider community.

These awards are more than just accolades; they serve as a powerful reminder of the impact we're making together.





Working in partnership

The Link Visiting works in partnership with a variety of local organisations to address the complex needs of the Borough's older population. We are also members of the NCVO and the Befriending Networks. Together, we offer a more comprehensive, safe and holistic approach to care and support.

Josie Obo-Mends, Locum Social Worker, East Social Care Team

The Link Visiting Scheme is "a great service that has helped numerous of my clients in relation to their social inclusion and daily living activities. Their team members are creative and proactive. Link Visiting is the difference between being a good company and a great company."

Amanda Cracknell, Social Prescriber

"I am truly grateful to be able to refer some of our lovely patients to your exceptional befriending service. I know once I send in a referral, the client will be contacted in a timely manner by a friendly member of your team. From then on, they will feel very much a part of the Link Visiting community. The way you get to know your clients and match them with a volunteer is evidently well thought through, as it seems from the feedback I receive, you pretty much get it spot on! Our patients feel an improvement in their wellbeing due to the social interaction with their befriender, especially as many don't see anyone else for a proper conversation. The Christmas lunch and gift delivery on Christmas Day is awe-inspiring and shows those who may be feeling lonely that people in their community really do care. You all do a wonderful job, thank you!"

We are part of several important initiatives in Wokingham:

The Friendship Alliance

Led by the Link Visiting, the Friendship Alliance is a dynamic partnership between Involve Community Services, Age UK Berkshire, and the Wokingham Volunteer Centre. United by a shared mission to reduce loneliness and social isolation across Wokingham Borough, the Alliance has made significant strides this year, thanks to the continued support of Wokingham Borough Council.

Together, we are building a more connected, compassionate community through:

- Friendship-based activities that foster meaningful relationships
- Accessible information and support for those who need it most
- One-to-one digital coaching through our Link Online programme
- Empowering local organisations to sustain and grow their services
- Inclusive community events that bring people together

Each partner brings unique strengths, working in harmony to create lasting impact.



Spreading the word

Friendship Alliance

Under the leadership of Project Manager, Jayne Streak, our bi-weekly newsletter showcases over 755 local activities, reaching 532 subscribers, a 23.43% increase from last year. This growth reflects the community's deepening engagement and the increasing value placed on staying connected.

Friendship Tables

Friendship Alliance

One of our proudest achievements is the expansion of Friendship Tables, a network of 65 welcoming venues across the borough where anyone can drop in, enjoy refreshments, and connect with others. Available every day of the week, these tables ensure that no one has to feel alone. Our Friendship Table calendar is now a vital tool used by Adult Social Care, social prescribers, and health professionals to prevent the serious effects of loneliness. It stands as a shining example of a preventative, community-led approach to wellbeing.

Friendship Champions

Friendship Alliance

At the core of our work within the Friendship Alliance are 105 dedicated Friendship Champions, local volunteers who actively foster community spirit in the organisations and areas they participate in and build bridges between people. 92 of these ambassadors participate in quarterly forums, sharing insights and helping us identify and address service gaps.

Tackling social isolation and loneliness

We are proud to be active members of the Public Health-led Social Isolation and Loneliness (SiL) Action Group, a collaborative initiative uniting council departments and trusted voluntary sector partners. Together, we address the complex and evolving challenges of social isolation, particularly among underrepresented groups such as men, LGBTQAI+ and individuals in residential care or sheltered housing.

Each partner brings unique expertise to the table, enabling us to share insights, co-design solutions, and implement targeted interventions that make a real difference in people's lives. This collective approach ensures that no one is left behind in our mission to build a more connected and compassionate community.

Strengthening the voluntary sector

We also play a key role in the Voluntary Sector Action Group, a strategic alliance formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by Director of Public Health Dr. Ingrid Slade, this group brings together influential leaders and decision-makers from the voluntary sector and Wokingham Borough Council.

What began as a crisis response has evolved into a powerful platform for long-term collaboration, innovation, and advocacy. Together, we continue to shape policies and services that support the wellbeing of our residents and strengthen the fabric of our community.

We are proud to contribute to the Ageing Well Subgroup of the BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Wokingham Borough Carers Strategy Group, and to have formally pledged our support to Community Vision 2035, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to a thriving, inclusive future for all.

Volunteers

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of everything we do. They bring warmth, companionship, and joy to the lives of isolated older people across Wokingham Borough. Whether it's sharing a cup of tea, reminiscing about the past, or simply being a friendly face, our volunteers create meaningful moments that transform lives.

Volunteer Claire told us: "Becoming a Link befriending volunteer has been joyful. I love visiting my Link Friend and always come away feeling happy that I've done something worthwhile. It's not just a one-way thing - my Link Friend has genuinely made a difference to my life too - we just love being together for a cup of tea and a chat! Giving a little of my time is such a small thing to do, and yet I feel it has made a big difference for us both. It is wonderful!"

By the numbers

(April 2024 – March 2025)

- 104 new volunteers completed induction training
- 97 new volunteer applications received
- 174 volunteers completed safeguarding training
- 265 volunteer pack requests received
- 39% application return rate (up from 30% in 2023/24)
- 10% of new applicants were from ethnically diverse backgrounds

This year, we also introduced a new automated volunteer application system, which streamlines the process and increases engagement. Our induction, safeguarding, and dementia awareness training ensure that every volunteer is confident and well-prepared to support their Link Friends.

Our volunteers consistently tell us how enriching and life-affirming their experiences are. One volunteer told us, "Despite my Link Friend's Alzheimer's, she always gives me a big hug. She remembers her siblings and loves making me tea. She's a happy soul, and I enjoy every visit."

Another said, "Volunteering with Link Visiting has changed my life in more ways than I expected. I'm now pursuing a career in social care."





Corporate volunteering

This year, we launched a new initiative to make it easier for employees to use their corporate charity days with us. Through a simple online form, volunteers can now:

1. Register their interest in using a charity day
2. Access a calendar of upcoming events and activities
3. Choose a volunteering opportunity that suits their schedule and interests

This streamlined process has opened the door for more professionals to engage with our mission, bringing fresh energy and skills to our events and activities. Paul Corcoran, Business Volunteers, shared feedback after his team got involved, "Love your passion and enthusiasm - you made us all so very welcome. We really enjoyed getting involved and spending time with the people you support. We'd definitely like to return again. Keep up the brilliant work you do and hope to see you again in 2025."

A community of care

From one-off visits to long-term friendships, our volunteers are supported every step of the way. Regular check-ins, peer catch-ups, and responsive staff ensure that every volunteer feels valued and empowered. One volunteer shared, "You provide amazing support—I can't think of a way you could do it better!", whilst another told us, "The Link Visiting is unique in how they care for everyone—clients and volunteers alike."

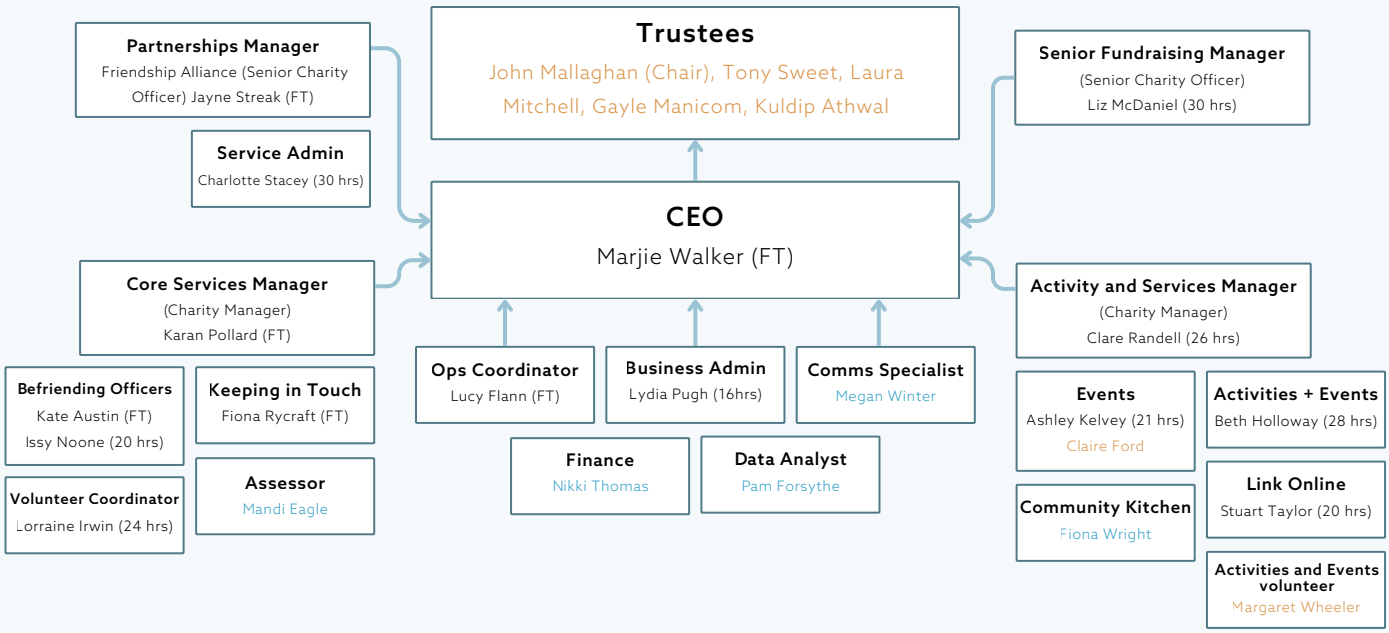
Looking ahead

As we continue to grow, we remain committed to nurturing our volunteer community. With new training programmes, inclusive recruitment efforts, and expanded corporate partnerships, we're building a future where no one in our community feels alone.



Organisational chart 2025

Our team consists of 15 staff (12 F.T.E), 5 contractors and 7 volunteers.



A culture of care and connection

We believe that a supported team is an empowered team. As a proud Real Living Wage employer, we are committed to ensuring every member of our staff feels valued, respected, and cared for. Our twice-yearly team away days, quarterly yoga sessions, wellbeing lunches, pub socials, and our much-loved Christmas dinner dance are just a few of the ways we foster connection and celebrate our collective efforts.

Our latest staff wellbeing survey revealed that team members feel positive about their mental health, supported by their managers, and comfortable being themselves at work. They appreciate the open communication, strong peer relationships, and the balance they're able to maintain between work and personal life. Many have taken up new hobbies, improved their wellbeing routines, and feel equipped to manage stress and bounce back from challenges.

Our team told us:

- "I love working for the Link. I love our team".
- "I truly appreciate how much support I receive from everyone. I feel very fortunate, and it is a privilege to be part of the Link".
- "Thank you for making me feel so welcome, you are all so lovely and friendly. I'm grateful that you hired me, and I work for The Link".

We are proud of the strong, unified team we've built, committed to delivering compassionate, person-centred services to our community.

Looking ahead

As we look to the year ahead, our vision remains clear: to deepen our impact by supporting the people who make our work possible, our incredible volunteers, and to continue evolving to meet the changing needs of our community.

We are seeing a shift in our volunteer demographic, with more individuals joining us while still in employment. In response, we are exploring new ways to offer flexible, meaningful support that fits around busy lives. Our volunteers are our most valuable asset, and we are committed to ensuring they feel empowered, appreciated, and equipped.

We are also embracing technology to streamline our internal processes, freeing up more time for what matters most: building relationships. By simplifying administration, we can focus even more on the human connections at the heart of our mission.

We will proudly launch our Extra Support Project, a pioneering initiative designed to provide enhanced care for Link Friends who have no family or next of kin. This project will ensure they are not only supported emotionally and socially, but also practically, helping them prepare for later life with legal safeguards such as Power of Attorney and regular, proactive contact to prevent crises. This initiative will also reduce the emotional burden on volunteers, ensuring they are not left to navigate complex situations alone.

We also recognise the emotional toll that loss can take. As part of our holistic approach, we will be placing greater emphasis on grief support for both volunteers and staff when a Link Friend passes away. We will also create safe and compassionate spaces for Link Friends to talk about death, share their wishes, and feel heard.

Throughout all of this, we remain committed to co-producing our services with the people who use them. We will continue to involve our Link Friends and volunteers in shaping our work, listening to their voices, and ensuring their experiences guide our progress.

We are excited for what lies ahead. With innovation, compassion, and community at our core, we are building a future where no one feels alone—and where every person, at every stage of life, feels seen, supported, and valued.





A message from our Chairman

2024/5 has been a positive year for the charity. Our consistently outstanding outcomes have been widely recognised – we were named the Thames Valley Charity of the Year! With Active Minds picking up Project of the Year at the Wokingham Community Awards and Link to Nature being recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society for the third consecutive year, it is fantastic to see the team receive the recognition they deserve. I was personally the proud recipient of a WBC Mayor's Honour Award, which I see as further recognition of the whole Link family.

My second skydive to raise money for the charity at my tender age was possibly my biggest – or craziest – achievement of the year!

I also want to highlight the improvements made in an area that underpins so much of what we do – transport. A huge logistical and expensive task for a small charity, ensuring people are safely transported to and from our wide range of activities is crucial.

The demand for our services is expected to continue growing in the years ahead. Although this will remain our biggest challenge, we are determined to maintain service quality and ensure costs do not spiral out of control. We are already seeing encouraging results:

- Smart use of technology and AI to minimise administration
- Effective partnerships like Friendship Alliance and Dementia Alliance broaden our reach and increase our impact
- Developing new longer-term income channels.

We have always involved Link Friends and volunteers in service design. We will go even further next year, ensuring the voices of our Link Friends and volunteers are heard loud and clear, listened to and acted on at all levels, including trustees. End-to-end co-production will ensure our services evolve with maximum impact.

For the last 26 years we have helped thousands of Link Friends reduce, delay or completely avoid the need for much more expensive health and social care, and in so doing saved families and the taxpayer many millions of pounds. As chair, and an active volunteer I am constantly inspired, and humbled, by how much our Link Friends appreciate what we do for them, and to see first-hand the smiles and laughter we spread around the local community every day – saving money by spreading some joy!

Staff and volunteers often tell us how much they gain from working with us, but the nature of our services and the close bonds that can develop with Link Friends can add significant emotional stress. Our recently launched "Extra Support Project" will provide enhanced practical help, working with partners, for those with no family or support network, as well as support to volunteers who sometimes have to navigate complex situations.

On behalf of the trustees, I want to offer huge thanks to the entire Link family - our CEO Marjie Walker, our staff team and fantastic volunteers and supporters from the people who really matter – our Link Friends. I would like to extend my gratitude to Gayle Manicom who stepped down after 7 years as a Trustee, although happily she will remain as a volunteer.

I feel it is a privilege to be part of this charity, trying to create a community where no-one in Wokingham Borough should have to grow old alone. Maya Angelou once talked about the need for kindness and empathy, and she could have been describing anyone in the Link family: "Try to bring a rainbow to someone's cloud".



John Mallaghan
Chair of Trustees

Financial review

Overview

During the year to 31 March 2025, we have seen continued increase in demand for our services and, as a result, the cost of our charitable activities further increased last year. Our total expenditure for 2024-25 was £534,774, an increase of 10% compared to £484,904 in the previous year.

Our income last year was £544,141, an increase of 12% over the comparable figure of £483,985 in 2023/24. This figure for 2023/24 excludes the Edward Gostling Fund endowment of £100,000. There was a surplus last year of £9,367 compared to a small deficit in 2023/24 (again, excluding the Edward Gostling Fund endowment) and our closing reserves at 31 March 2025 reflect an overall satisfactory financial position despite the pressures felt by all in the current uncertain environment.

Income

Total income for the year, excluding amounts we received on behalf of and for onward payment to other organisations, was £544,141 (2024: £483,985) as follows:

	2025	2024
Donations and legacies	£112,349	£ 32,427
Grants	£395,762	£426,065
Fundraising activities	£ 25,328	£ 20,186
Interest income and other	£ 10,702	£ 5,307
Total	**£544,141**	**£483,985**

We work very closely with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in providing our services to local residents. WBC continued to be our largest single source of funding, contributing around 60% of our income from donations and grants.

We received donations and grants from a further 54 organisations (2024: 53 organisations) which reflects the significant efforts of our team to meet our fundraising target. We are most grateful for every single donation received, all of which go towards enabling us to continue our work. A list of donors can be found in Note 4. Our own fundraising events and activities contributed £25,328 (2024: £20,186).

The majority of our income continues to be classified as restricted, i.e. income which the donor directs should be applied to specific activities. This is particularly the case for most of our grant income. However, our donors identify so completely with the aims of the Link Visiting Scheme that in practice any restrictions can be accommodated within our core activities.

Expenditure

As has been a feature of recent years the increase in expenditure is dominated by staff costs which rose by 20% to £417,520 from £347,953 in the previous year.

Although the number of employees is virtually unchanged from last year, we have recognised and rewarded the increased experience and seniority of our team. This includes ensuring that they are paid market rates for their work, as well as taking account of regulatory increases in the national living wage.

We were able to make savings in a number of other cost categories, notwithstanding the inflationary pressures on general services, which partly offset the increase in staff costs.

Financial position and reserves

Net assets increased from £541,357 on 31st March 2024 to £550,724 on 31st March 2025. Cash resources at the end of our financial year decreased from £570,176 to £544,079; however, we were owed £41,098 at the end of March which was paid in April.

The assets of the charity are currently held in current and deposit bank accounts. Should other opportunities arise to invest surplus funds then the trustees would consider these, and this matter remains under review. At the present time longer term investment is inappropriate.

The charity had a net operational surplus for the year of £9,367 which has been added to total funds.

In February 2024 the charity received by deed of gift an endowment of £100,000 from The Edward Gostling Fund. Under the terms of the endowment:

- the charity may use the endowment to meet operating costs which support its charitable activities
- the amount it may apply from the income and capital of the endowment in any accounting year shall be limited to the amount (if any) by which its total annual expenditure would otherwise cause its level of reserves to fall beneath six months' operating costs.

This restriction on use of the endowment is effective for the period of five years from receipt of the amount; thereafter the charity may use the income and remaining capital of the endowment for any purpose that furthers its charitable objects.

This amount is included in the charity's reserves as The Edward Gostling Fund in the amount of £103,221 being the amount of the original endowment increased by interest income earned during the year ended 31 March 2025; the charity has made no transfer from this fund to its other reserves.

Unrestricted funds at 31 March 2025 are £435,238 (31 March 2024: £425,173); these amounts include £106,921 (31 March 2024: £101,252) classified as Designated Funds. The trustees have resolved that legacies granted in the wills of Link Friends and volunteers should be included in this category and used for investment in new services and/or for projects which may, for example, exceed one year (the charity's normal measurement period) and may not recur.

At the beginning of last year, £75,000 of the opening balance of £101,252 had not been approved to be spent, but during last year the trustees authorised use of this amount for specific projects of an enduring nature. In the year ended 31 March 2025 £50,786 was spent on such relevant projects, and in July 2024 a legacy was received from a Link Friend in the amount of £56,455 which is included in the closing balance at 31 March 2025.

The trustees continue to monitor the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation, recognising the need to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to provide a contingency for emergencies and other unforeseen expenditure.

To help mitigate the risks faced from rapid growth in demand and costs, and the prevailing uncertainties in the economic outlook, trustees have resolved that our target is to maintain unrestricted reserves of 50% of our current annual budget; this may be varied if circumstances indicate it is appropriate to do so.

At 31 March 2025, general funds were £328,317 which equates to 68% of expenditure incurred in the year then ended (excluding amounts incurred from the designated funds) and a similar proportion of our expenditure plans for 2025/26. This is higher than the trustees' ongoing policy target of 50% but that policy also recognises that the actual level of reserves will be subject to short term fluctuation according to circumstances. The trustees are satisfied that this level of funds is sufficient and appropriate to meet the charity's on-going activities for the time being.

Risk management

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Link Visiting Scheme has in place a process to identify risks to which the charity is exposed, that those risks have been assessed and that there are systems in place to address those risks. The principal risks which the Link Visiting Scheme has to manage relate to continuity of funding, the availability of staff and volunteers to enable it to meet its objectives, and control of expenditure.

The trustees have given consideration to the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that procedures are established in order to manage those risks.

Trustees' report

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 (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity 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 in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust Deed.

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.

This report was approved by the trustees on 15 October 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee



Antony Sweet
Trustee

Reference and administrative details

Governing document

Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 August 2010.

Principal activities

The Company's principal activity is the provision of a befriending service for lonely, isolated, primarily elderly people who benefit from a regular home visit from one of the Company's volunteers.

The Company assesses those clients that are referred to it from doctors, families and other care agencies, then recruits, DBS checks and trains volunteers from the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and matches up a volunteer (Befriender) and client (Link Friend), based on location, common interests and hobbies. A regular programme of reassessment is also undertaken.

Over 1,000 Link Friends have benefited from our services since the charity was established. We aim to give their lives more purpose and joy, enabling them to integrate into the community and build new, lasting friendships.

Public benefit

All our activities focus on combating social isolation in the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

The outcomes that the Company aims to deliver through its services to benefit individuals, our communities, and the civic purse are to:

- Improve activity and mobility for clients
- Prevent depression and achieve improved mental health
- Delay or postpone need to enter residential care homes
- Delay or postpone need for provision of care at home
- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting independent living
- Improve volunteer social involvement and engagement
- Indirectly support carers and statutory services.

Our trustees

- Mr John Mallaghan – Chairman (Appointed 16 June 2021)
- Mrs A. Gayle Manicom (Appointed June 2018, resigned 29 April 2025)
- Ms Laura Mitchell (Appointed 9 December 2020)
- Mr Kuldip Athwal (Appointed 23 October 2022)
- Mr Antony Sweet (Appointed 1 April 2023)
- Mrs Pamela Forsythe (Appointed 1 August 2025)
- Mr Geraint Hayter (Appointed 1 September 2025)

A trustee is also a director of the company. Appointments and resignations of the above persons have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission as appropriate.

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Company's Memorandum of Association.

Other information

Link Visiting Scheme Limited is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales number 07349468.

Registered charity number - 1139248

The Company's registered office and correspondence address is: Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erftstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Independent examiner

K Gomes MAAT FCIE, Independent Examiners Limited, Unit 2 The Broadfields Business Centre, Delling Lane, Bosham, PO18 8NF

Company Secretary

Mr Kuldip Athwal

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank Plc, PO Box 200, Skelmersdale, WN8 6DG

The Charity Bank Limited, Fosse House, 182 High Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1BE.

Independent Examiner's report

Year ended 31st March 2025

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Link Visiting Scheme for the year ended 31st March 2025 set out on pages 27 to 34.

Respective responsibilities of trustees (directors) and examiner

As the trustees of The Link Visiting Scheme (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act").

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of The Link Visiting Scheme are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

Since the Link Visiting Scheme gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a fellow member of the Association of Charity Independent Examiners, which is one of the listed bodies.

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

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of The Link Visiting Scheme as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

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.

K Gomes MAAT FCIE
Independent Examiners Limited
Unit 2, The Broadfields Business Centre
Delling Lane
Bosham
PO18 8NF

Signed:

Date: 30.10.2025

THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2025** £	TOTAL **2024** £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and Legacies	2a	145,423	362,688	508,111	558,492
Charitable Activities	2b	25,328	-	25,328	20,186
Investments	2c	10,702	-	10,702	5,307
		181,453	**362,688**	**544,141**	**583,985**
Funding for Other Charities	2a(1)	-	55,182	55,182	51,843
TOTAL		**181,453**	**417,870**	**599,323**	**635,828**
Expenditure on:					
Direct Costs	3a	102,531	366,607	469,138	404,122
Charitable Activities	3b	65,636	-	65,636	80,782
		168,167	**366,607**	**534,774**	**484,904**
Funding Transferred to Other Charities	3a(1)	-	55,182	55,182	51,843
TOTAL		**168,167**	**421,789**	**589,956**	**536,747**
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		13,286	(3,919)	9,367	99,081
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		**13,286**	**(3,919)**	**9,367**	**99,081**
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds Brought Forward		525,173	16,184	541,357	442,276
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		**538,459**	**12,265**	**550,724**	**541,357**

All of the organisation's operations are classed as continuing.

The notes on pages 29 to 34 form part of these financial statements.

THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

BALANCE SHEET

Company Registration Number :07349468

AS AT 31 March 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	31-Mar-25 Total £	31-Mar-24 Total £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	8	-	-	-	-
Current Assets					
Debtors	9	41,098	-	41,098	-
Cash at bank and in hand	10	531,814	12,265	544,079	570,176
Total Current Assets		**572,912**	**12,265**	**585,177**	**570,176**
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	34,453	-	34,453	28,819
NET CURRENT ASSETS		538,459	12,265	550,724	541,357
TOTAL ASSETS less current liabilities		**538,459**	**12,265**	**550,724**	**541,357**
NET ASSETS		**538,459**	**12,265**	**550,724**	**541,357**
Funds					
General Funds	5.3	328,317	-	328,317	323,921
Restricted Funds	5.4	-	12,265	12,265	16,184
Designated Funds	5.1	106,921	-	106,921	101,252
Endowment Fund	5.2	103,221	-	103,221	100,000
Total Funds		**538,459**	**12,265**	**550,724**	**541,357**

The company's financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The Trustees consider that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("the Act") and members have not required the company to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on signed on their behalf, by:

Print Name : ANTONY SWEET

Date : 15 OCTOBER 2025

Signed on their behalf by Director .....

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

1.ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation

The Link Visiting Scheme meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Income and endowments

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

Donations are recognised when the charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance by the charity before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that these conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Legacy gifts are recognised on a case by case basis following the grant of probate when the administrator/executor for the estate has communicated in writing both the amount and settlement date. In the event that the gift is in the form of an asset other than cash or a financial asset traded on a recognised stock exchange, recognition is subject to the value of the gift being reliably measurable with a degree of reasonable accuracy and the title to the asset having been transferred to the charity.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents amounts received for future periods and is released to incoming resources in the period for which, it has been received. Such income is only deferred when:
- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Gift aid

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the Statement of Financial Activities at the same time as the gift to which they relate.

Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the institution with whom the funds are deposited.

Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category.

Charitable activities

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
The company does not currently have any fixed assets.

Debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Liabilities
Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably.
Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the company anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Pensions and other post retirement
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

2. ANALYSIS OF INCOME		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2025** £	TOTAL **2024** £
a) Donations and Legacies					
Donations and Legacies		112,349	-	112,349	32,427
Grants	4	33,074	362,688	395,762	426,065
The Edward Gostling Endowment Fund	5.2	-	-	-	100,000
		145,423	362,688	508,111	558,492
a1) Grant Funding for Other Charities					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	55,182	55,182	51,843
		145,423	**417,870**	**563,293**	**610,335**
b) Charitable Activities					
Events		11,553	-	11,553	9,394
Fundraising		13,775	-	13,775	10,792
		25,328	**-**	**25,328**	**20,186**
c) Investment Income					
Interest Received		10,702	-	10,702	5,307
		10,702	**-**	**10,702**	**5,307**

3. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2025** £	TOTAL **2024** £
a) Direct Costs					
Cost of Fund Generation - Fund Raising		3,954	-	3,954	3,023
Cost of Providing Charitable Activities	5.4	15,692	31,972	47,664	53,146
Staff Costs	6	82,885	334,635	417,520	347,953
		102,531	**366,607**	**469,138**	**404,122**
a1) Direct Costs					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	55,182	55,182	51,843
		102,531	**421,789**	**524,320**	**455,965**

b) Charitable Activities	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2025** £	TOTAL **2024** £
Accountancy and Consultancy Fees		4,400	-	4,400	13,856
DBS Checks		678	-	678	769
Independent examiner's fee		2,130	-	2,130	2,400
Insurance		2,511	-	2,511	2,202
Marketing costs		6,690	-	6,690	8,174
Office ,Computer Equipment & IT		22,698	-	22,698	20,579
Payroll Services		873	-	873	588
Post & stationery		7,539	-	7,539	6,836
Professional Memberships		8,354	-	8,354	188
Rent, Electricity & Cleaning		6,738	-	6,738	5,952
Social Events and Activities		-	-	-	2,695
Staff Training		-	-	-	3,512
Sundry Expenses		1,592	-	1,592	2,415
Travel & subsistence		1,229	-	1,229	8,159
Volunteer Training/Expenses		204	-	204	2,457
		65,636	**-**	**65,636**	**80,782**

4. Income from Grants and Donations

We acknowledge and extend a heartfelt thanks to the following organisations who kindly supported The Link Visiting Scheme during the year ended March 2025 :

52 Lives
Arborfield and Newland Parish Council
Arnold Clark Community Fund
Barkham Ladies Social Club
Barkham Parish Council
Blandy & Blandy Solicitors
Charvil Parish Council
Co-op Local Community Fund
Crowthorne Parish Council
David Brownlow Charitable Foundation
Edward Gostling Fund
Earley Town Council
East Berkshire Golf Club
Eight to the Fore
Englefield Charitable Trust
Field Seymour Parkes Foundation
Finchampstead Parish Council
Garfield Weston Foundation
Grace Trust
Helen Robertson Charitable Trust
Hurst Parish Council
Inner Wheel Club Reading Maiden Erlegh
Invesco Cares Foundation
Kings Church Wokingham
National Lottery Community Fund
Newbury Building Society
Rotary Club of Easthampstead
Rotary Club of Reading Maiden Erlegh
Ruscombe Parish Council
R Young Art Gallery Wokingham
Shanly Foundation
Shinfield Parish Council
Shinfield Studios Ltd
Swallowfield Horticultural Society
Swallowfield Parish Council
St. Nicolas Church Earley
Syder Foundation
Tesco
Twyford Parish Council
Wargrave Parish Council
Waitrose Twyford
Waitrose Wokingham
Wates Family Enterprise Trust
Winnersh Parish Council
WG Edwards Charitable Foundation
Wokingham Lions
Wokingham Borough Council
Wokingham Catenians
Wokingham Town Council
Wokingham United Charities
Wokingham Without Parish Council
Woodley Town Council
Woodroffe Benton Foundation
Woosehill Community Church

We would also like to thank our individual supporters and our supporters in-kind for their valuable contributions this year.

5.Fund Summary
Current year

5.1 Designated Funds

	Balance 1.4.24 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.25 £
Designated Funds	101,252	56,455	50,786	-	106,921
	101,252	56,455	50,786	-	106,921

For the year ended 31 March 2025, the Trustees approved the allocation of a bequest of £56,455 to the designated fund for specific projects. Expenditure of £50,786 was incurred from this fund during the year, and the Trustees have further authorised the utilisation of £50,466 from the designated reserves in the year ending 31 March 2026.

5.2 Endowment Fund

	Balance 1.4.24 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.25 £
The Edward Gostling Fund	100,000	3,221	-	-	103,221
	100,000	3,221	-	-	103,221

In 2024 the charity received by deed of gift an endowment of £100,000 from The Edward Gostling Foundation. Under the terms of the endowment the charity may:

· use the endowment to meet operating costs which support the its charitable activities, and

· the amount it may apply from the income and capital of the endowment in any accounting year shall be limited to the amount (if any) by which its total annual expenditure would otherwise cause its level of reserves to fall beneath 6 months' operating costs.

5.3 General Funds

	Balance 1.4.24 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.25 £
General Funds	323,921	121,777	117,381	-	328,317
	323,921	121,777	117,381	-	328,317
Total Unrestricted	**525,173**	**181,453**	**168,167**	**-**	**538,459**

5.4 Restricted Funds

	Balance 1.4.24 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.25 £
Christmas	7,002	15,258	17,430	-	4,830
Activities & Events	450	8,848	6,451	-	2,847
Community Kitchen	2,012	5,000	5,295	-	1,717
Link to Nature	-	22,976	22,976	-	-
Winter	-	750	750	-	-
Chair Yoga	-	3,000	3,000	-	-
Befriending	6,720	132,486	136,335	-	2,871
Friendship Alliance	-	190,880	190,880	-	-
Active Minds	-	22,697	22,697	-	-
Keeping in Touch	-	15,975	15,975	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	**16,184**	**417,870**	**421,789**	**-**	**12,265**
Total Funds 2025	**541,357**	**599,323**	**589,956**	**-**	**550,724**

Prior Year	Balance 1.4.23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.24 £
Designated Funds	150,000	-	48,748	-	101,252
Endowment Fund	-	100,000	-	-	100,000
General Funds	272,061	184,869	133,009	-	323,921
Total Unrestricted	422,061	284,869	181,757	-	425,173
Restricted Funds	20,215	350,959	354,990	-	16,184
Total Funds 2024	**442,276**	**635,828**	**536,747**	-	**541,357**

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

	2025 £	**2024** £
Gross Wages and Salaries	383,877	314,170
Employer's National Insurance Costs	24,975	26,262
Pension Contributions	8,669	7,521
	417,520	347,953

The average number of persons employed during the year was as follows: 15 16

7. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

No trustee received any remuneration or fees in the current or preceding year. The daughter of the CEO received consultancy fees of £6,690 (2024: £8,174) for work in relation to website design, communications and marketing.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

There are no tangible fixed assets. The Company expenses all individual capital items under £1000 in the period of purchase.

9. DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**Total** 2025 **£**	**Total** 2024 **£**
Prepayments	744	-	744	-
Debtors	40,354	-	40,354	-
	41,098	-	**41,098**	**-**

10. CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**2025** Total £	**2024** £
Cash at bank and on hand	531,814	12,265	544,079	570,176
Total	531,814	12,265	544,079	570,176

11. CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**Total** 2025 **£**	**Total** 2024 **£**
Deferred Income	25,667	-	25,667	20,371
Independent Exam	2,130	-	2,130	2,100
Other Taxation and Social Security	6,656	-	6,656	6,348
	34,453	-	**34,453**	**28,819**











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Link




LINK VISITING SCHEME

England & Wales - Charity number 1139248

Accounts

Annual Report

2023 / 2024

the Link visiting scheme



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Introduction

The Link Visiting Scheme is dedicated to bringing vital, life-enhancing social connections to older people and volunteers in Wokingham Borough. During our 25th anniversary year, our focus was on managing the continued growth in demand for our services.

Loneliness is seen by many as one of the largest public health concerns we face. Older people are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation – and it can have a serious effect on health. Wokingham has an increasing older population and in 2023/24 we continued to offer life-changing support in our community.

As of the last census, there are 7,644 one-person households aged 66 and over in Wokingham Borough. This accounts for 47.2% of all 16,264 one-person households. Based on Britain-wide research by ONS undertaken in 2021/22:

- 3% of the 30,500 65+ population are often/always lonely
- 5% of those 75+ are often/always lonely
- 15% of the 30,500 65+ population are lonely some of the time

"Ill health and disability are the two key drivers of loneliness in all ages, especially older age. Delaying and preventing them is essential. The key areas are physical health, mental health, which is often under-recognised in older age and disability, which can make it physically difficult for people to engage socially" - Chris Whitty, Presentation Healthy Ageing Report to APPG Loneliness, 2024

As we move further away from the difficulties we encountered during the COVID-19 crisis, our commitment to providing a tailored, personalised service to our Link Friends remains unwavering.

However, the increasing complexity of inbound referrals due to the growing demands on social services has necessitated a shift in our operational approach. To address these complexities and ensure continued high-quality service, we have allocated more staff time and enhanced our volunteer training.

While this strategic shift impacts client numbers, it positions us to better serve our Link Friends with the care and attention they require.



What we do

The Link Visiting Scheme was founded 25 years ago to help reduce loneliness amongst older people and to bring generations together in friendship and shared experiences. Our organisation has expanded to reach the growing number of older people in our community. We are proud to deliver a broad range of community projects which improve the lives of the older population living in Wokingham Borough.

We promote well-being, independence, and a sense of belonging through regular volunteer visits and inclusive activities.

As we age, building and maintaining meaningful relationships, nurturing social connections, and seeking out positive interactions can become more difficult and, for some, almost impossible. This could be due to reduced physical and mental health, loss of confidence, bereavement, or simply a lack of transport.

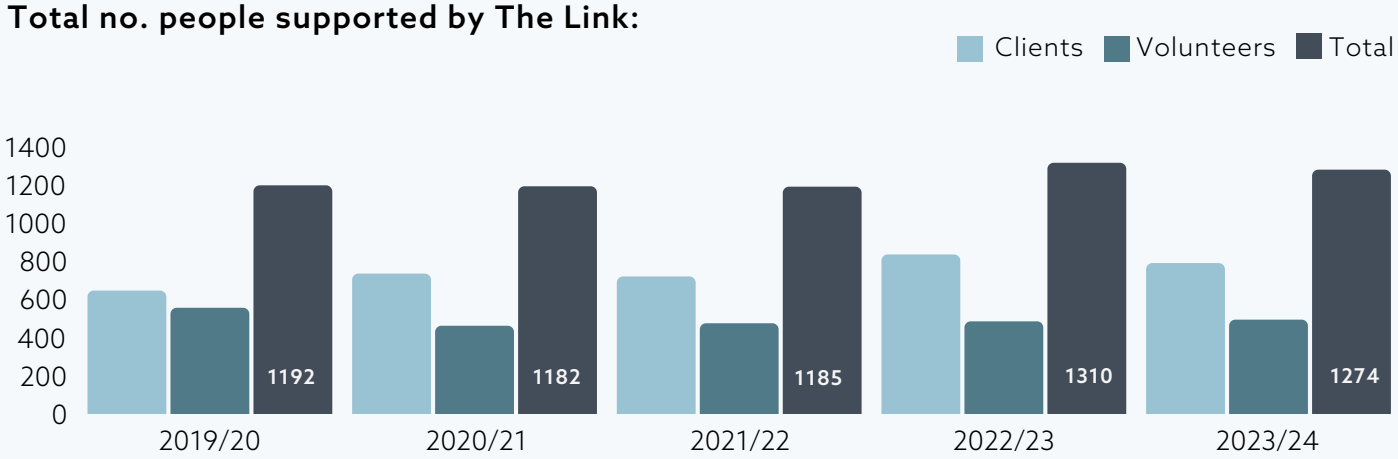
Our core business is recruiting volunteers and matching them with people who need a friend – someone to see regularly. These individuals are referred to us via social services, churches and others who are aware of our services.

In 2023/24, we matched 235 people with a Link volunteer who made contact with them, usually in person, at least once a week. This compares to 203 matches ('link-up's') in 2022/23 and 174 in 2021/22.

We also provide opportunities for individuals to connect through a number of activities, such as a singing group, going to the pub for a 'pie and pint', bowls and chair yoga. We run long-term projects such as Link to Nature and Link Online. Once a month, we host our Community Kitchen, inviting Link Friends to come and have lunch with others. We even provide fun and support on Christmas Day.

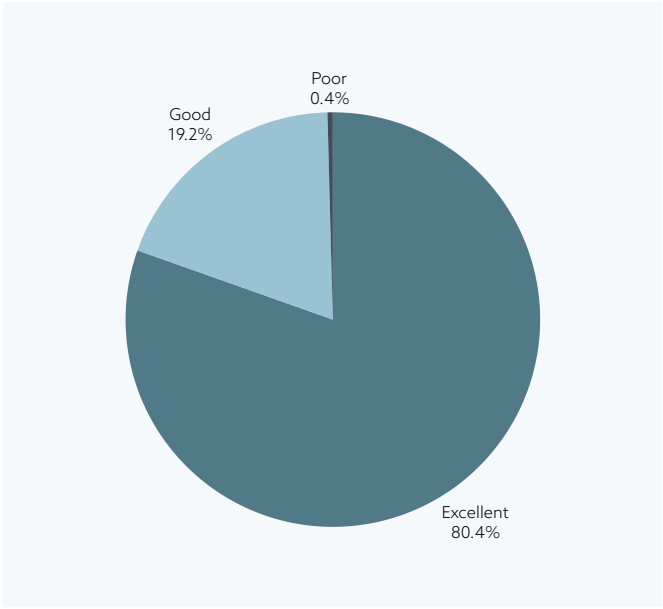
We have seen the positive impact of friendship where we provide quality time, a listening ear and focused attention on individuals who so often feel invisible and forgotten.

Total no. people supported by The Link:



Feedback

Every six months, we ask our clients to rate our services. In 2023/24, we contacted 240 clients, and the ratings were as follows:



Clients have also provided us with very positive feedback:

Mandy

"We also laugh a lot; I don't laugh with anyone else like I laugh with her. We share a sense of humour. We have so much in common. We were matched perfectly."

Shilpa

"She comes every week and stays for about two hours. Sometimes, we stay at home, and sometimes, we go out for coffee. We have plenty to talk about! It's lovely to have someone to speak to. She finds the time to visit even though she is busy, and she is like a daughter to me".

Brian

"He phones each Wednesday to check that all is well, and then he comes to visit and stays for about two hours. We get on well and talk about everything, especially birds and bird food, and he fills up the bird feeder. My volunteer is one of the best people I've ever met."

Andrew

"Camilla visits on a Thursday afternoon, and I really enjoy them. We have lots in common and talk about football, puzzles, and crosswords. We swap recommendations for TV and film. My health is very up and down, and carers pop in the day. I've learnt to enjoy my own company, but I feel less left out now due to Camilla. She has made a big difference, and I would recommend The Link to anyone who is feeling lonely."

William

"Jon phones me once a week, then calls in later in the week, and we usually go out for coffee. Jon's friendship is definitely a life changer."

*Names changed to protect anonymity



Highlights of 2023/24

Link Thursdays at All Saints Church

In September we were delighted to launch a new service – a community pop-up café in the newly refurbished town centre location of All Saints Church.

We wanted a community presence where, each week, anyone struggling with loneliness and isolation could enjoy a warm welcome, delicious refreshments, and have someone to talk to. We also provide information on community activities and organise speakers on a variety of subjects, including fire safety, wellbeing and making a will.

Despite launching at the beginning of the winter months, we have seen a growing number of people who regularly attend, not just Link Friends and volunteers, but others who want a coffee with friendly faces and some support. We usually have between 25 and 40 people each Thursday, and it's become a highlight of our week!

One attendee told us: "I enjoy being with other people and meeting new people, and the helpers are really kind and always chat with you". Another shared, "It's a wonderful way of meeting people".

Celebrating 25 years

In October, we hosted a special event to celebrate our 25th anniversary. It brought together our team, voluntary sector partners, volunteers, Link Friends and fellow advocates who share our commitment to building connections that matter.

It was an inspiring and insightful event with passionate speakers. The keynote presenter was Professor Christina R Victor from Brunel University, renowned for her work on health inequalities, loneliness and the experience of later life within minority communities. We also heard from Matt Pope, Director of Adult Social Services at Wokingham Borough Council and David Hare, Executive Councillor and leader of the Health and Wellbeing Board, both shedding light on the council's dedication to supporting older residents of the borough and their appreciation of our work.

Most of all, the event was a chance to thank everyone who has supported The Link Visiting Scheme in the past quarter century. Through the work of our charity, we've seen lives transformed, adding thousands of hours of friendship, laughter, and fun to people who had felt forgotten and invisible.









Christmas

For the twelfth consecutive year, The Link Visiting Scheme's Christmas programme was a resounding success, buoyed by the generosity of supporters and the tireless efforts of volunteers.

Our collective endeavours culminated in a remarkable fundraising total of £21,221, which meant we could make sure all our Link Friends were involved in Christmas festivities. There was an excellent response to our Kindness Tree campaign; we organised a Christmas special at our pop-up café (Link Thursdays); local schoolchildren crafted handmade cards and we held a party for 115 Link Friends and volunteers. On Christmas Day, we provided a sit-down meal for 50 Link Friends and delivered 65 meals to those unable to leave their homes.

"Thank you enormously for taking a meal to our Dad on Christmas Day, when we were not able to see him. He enjoyed it very much and also for the friendly interaction with the lady who brought it to his house and shared a Christmas cracker with him. It helped our family and also made the day so much better for him. He was sincerely grateful - and we were, too." - Julie and Maureen (daughters)

"I'm so grateful to the Link for the care and kindness during a difficult, lonely time in my life. I am truly amazed by what you do. Thank you." - Link Friend













Fundraising

We were fortunate to receive generous donations from various organisations in 2023/24. The Statement of Financial Activities at the end of this report provides a full list of all those who have supported us financially.

Helen Bushell, Head of Regional Funding for London, the South East and East of England at The National Lottery Community Fund
"Thanks to the dedication of the team at The Link, and the money raised by National Lottery players, the Link to Nature project is helping older residents in Wokingham come together and reawaken their interest in nature. Our funding supports the development of communities that are more inclusive and environmentally sustainable. This project is a prime example of how reconnecting people with their natural environment goes hand in hand with improving wellbeing."

Jennie Ellis, Regional Social Value Manager for Wates Residential
"Link Visiting are just a fantastic charity with a clear mission – to combat loneliness and help people, and their work transforms lives. This resonates with us, as indeed it should with everybody. We look forward to continuing our partnership together."

Alison Deakin, Sales and Marketing Director for Cala Homes (Thames)
"People and communities have always been at the heart of what we do, and we're proud to be able to donate over £1,600 to the Link Visiting Scheme as part of our Community Pledge in Finchampstead. "We're really pleased that our donation will go towards supporting The Link's Chair Yoga and Sing-along for the next year, helping to bring members of the community together and combat loneliness, which can often affect people later in their lives."

We diversified our income streams and benefitted from a number of fundraising events, including:

- A golf day held at East Berkshire Golf Club and organised by the Easthampstead Rotary Club, which raised £4,284. John Binney of Easthampstead Rotary Club said, "Having known The Link for many years ... we at ERC have recognised the huge challenge taken on (25 years ago) to help our local community and, in particular, the vulnerable and lonely people of all ages. The changes in society have made the work which you do even more important, illustrated by the numbers of 'Friends' who you now look after."

- A curry night held at and sponsored by The Tamarind Tree restaurant in Wokingham, which raised £1,523 towards our Christmas Appeal.

- A quiz night attended by 66 people which, together with a bar and a raffle, raised £1,247.

- A brush painting fundraiser kindly sponsored by K J Smith Solicitors

- A bucket collection at Ascot Racecourse raised £1,725.

- We launched the Link Lottery, where every week, players are given a chance to win a weekly cash prize and the £25,000 jackpot. Plus, tickets are entered into the monthly Super Draw for an extra prize.

Anyone who wants to donate to The Link can do so at www.linkvisiting.org/donations












COME TO ASCOT





Awards

Link to Nature

In 2023 our Link to Nature programme was a UK finalist in Britain in Bloom.

The project received an 'Outstanding' in the It's Your Neighbourhood Awards and we were thrilled to also be awarded a National Certificate of Distinction, which is given to projects that have done consistently well over time.

BRITAIN IN BLOOM UK FINALIST 2023
with the RHS

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and Wokingham Town Council, the programme is a way of improving the well-being of our clients. There is a wealth of research about how reconnecting with nature benefits our mental health by reducing anxiety, stress and depression. Gardening and other nature-related activities can also encourage mobility, improving physical health.

We provide a seasonal programme of nature-based activities where Link Friends and their volunteers can enjoy a common interest in nature through supported gardening and wildlife-related past times.

In spring we took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch with the RSPB to encourage engagement with wildlife. In summer we help Link Friends to re-connect with their gardens by growing flowers and vegetables. We provide nature-based indoor activities and crafts during the cooler winter months.

Through our close association with Wokingham Horticultural Association and Wokingham in Bloom, three volunteers from our Link to Nature project were also winners in the Wokingham Town Civic Awards.

Keeping in Touch

We were also very proud to be nominated for a prestigious MJ Award for Innovation in Partnerships for the Keeping In Touch project.

Funded and designed by Wokingham Borough Council, the Keeping in Touch project works alongside Age UK Berkshire and Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. This project supports older people facing life transitions and prevents possible crisis.









Working in partnership

The Link works in partnership with a variety of local organisations to address the complex needs of the Borough's elderly population. Together, we offer a more comprehensive and holistic approach to care and support. Phil Bell, CEO of Involve Community Services, explains: "The Link Visiting Scheme is a highly valued local charity that provides a lifeline of social contact for those older people living within the borough who are most isolated".

Helen Brown, Commissioning Manager (Early Intervention & Prevention), Adult Services, Wokingham Borough Council said: "The Link Visiting Scheme is an integral part of the local community in the Wokingham borough. The work they do changes people's lives and helps so many residents connect with their communities, enabling them to live full and meaningful lives. The staff and volunteers are all so dedicated, caring and professional, which contributes to the fantastic ethos and values The Link has. I am very proud to work with The Link, and we are very lucky to have them in Wokingham."

We are part of several important initiatives in Wokingham:

The Friendship Alliance

Led by the Link Visiting Scheme, The Friendship Alliance collaborates with Involve Community Services, Age UK Berkshire, and Wokingham Volunteer Centre to combat loneliness and social isolation.

Funded by Wokingham Borough Council, the Alliance has made significant strides this year. Our objectives include promoting friendship activities, providing guidance and support, one-to-one coaching for online access via Link Online, bolstering community organisations to continue to run and organising community events. Each partner leverages their expertise to achieve these goals.

Project Lead Jayne Streak produces a bi-weekly newsletter featuring over 600 activities reaching 431 subscribers - a 38% increase from the previous year. The Wokingham Borough hosts 55 'Friendship Tables' in various venues, offering a warm welcome and connection opportunities.

Additionally, 95 local 'Friendship Champions' foster community spirit. This year, the Alliance held eight 'Community Connect' sessions attended by 78 individuals, showcasing local activities like 'Sing For Yourself', boccia, Knit and Natter groups, and lunch clubs. These sessions resulted in 125 referrals to community activities.

For 2024/25, our focus is on reducing social isolation in sheltered accommodation through coffee mornings and social events and empowering residents with better access to transport schemes, bus passes, and blue badges.



Keeping in Touch

In 2023/34, the local authority funded a new project for us called Keeping in Touch. The aim is to engage with older people who have escalating needs. With the right service in place at the right time, we hope to work together to delay, reduce, and prevent the need for statutory services. This year, we made 255 signposts to organisations in the borough to prevent the risk of crisis.

"You have been a lifesaver. Without your support, I just wouldn't have known what to do. With your help, I've been able to claim Attendance Allowance and have access to a hot meal delivery service. You've also put me in touch with Adult Social Care to ensure I have had the support of carers (including additional support following an operation to enable me to come home). I have no family to support me, and I don't know what I would have done without your help. I wouldn't have known about any of this, and I am very grateful." - Link Friend, Keeping in Touch

Active Minds

We are members of the Dementia Partnership, along with Age UK Berkshire and Understanding Dementia, which delivers a varied programme of activities and support for people living with dementia and their carers. Our part is delivering our much-valued 'Active Minds' course for those in the beginning to middle stages of dementia. Through a small group format, we facilitate cognitive exercises that promote confidence, well-being, and connection with others.

"Active Minds has allowed B to have a space where he is B, not 'B with dementia'. He is a valued member of the sessions. He feels safe and has met other people who really understand how he feels. He made friends with two of the other gentlemen on the course and they would sit and have their coffee together each week. Not only has the course helped B, but it has helped his wife, too. She was able to have two hours a week to have a coffee or do the shopping." - Beth Holdway, Active Minds Facilitator



Social Isolation and Loneliness Action Group

We are members of the Public Health-led Social Isolation and Loneliness Group (SiL).
Together with trusted partners in the voluntary sector and council departments, we tackle social isolation more broadly, such as how to engage men and those living in residential care and sheltered accommodation. Each partner uses their area of expertise to collaborate, share learnings and plan how to tackle different issues.

Voluntary Sector Action Group

We are key partners in the Voluntary Sector Action Group, a group formed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is composed of key voluntary sector partners and decision-makers in Wokingham Borough Council and is led by Director of Public Health Ingrid Slade.

Volunteers

We could not offer this life-changing help without our volunteers, who give up their time to improve the lives of others. We are always on the lookout for people to join us. In 2023/24, we have seen significant growth in demand for our services, and we urgently need more volunteers to continue this vital work.

In addition to directly impacting the lives of older people, volunteers often find that their work helps them feel more connected to the community.

We ensure all our volunteers receive appropriate training, are kept up-to-date with charity news and feel appreciated. We also hold regular social events for volunteers to get together and get to know one another.

This year, our volunteers provided a staggering 48,185 hours of service, transforming lives through quality time, focused attention, and mutual friendship.

As a direct result of our continued efforts to attract, support, and retain volunteers, we have grown our volunteer staff team. We have also focused on increasing our training offer, ensuring that over 150 volunteers received a safeguarding refresher session.

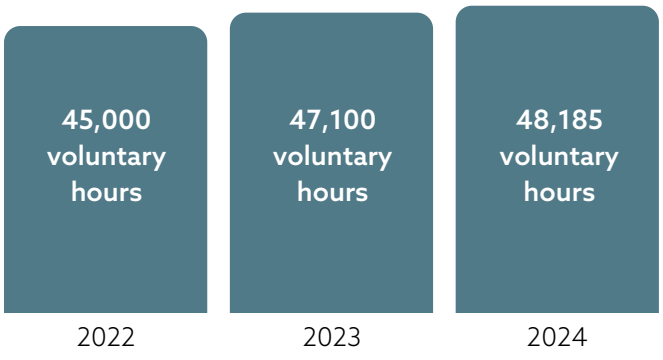
Volunteers are asked twice a year to rate how well-supported they feel. This year, our rating was 4.74 out of 5.

Here is some of the more detailed feedback we have also received:

"Thank you for the safeguarding session. It's very helpful to refresh our safety awareness. I like the way we are regularly trained to keep our safety knowledge fresh. I am very appreciative of your time doing the training for us. I am enjoying my visits with my Link Friend. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this meaningful job. This is an amazing organisation." -Xiaoxiao, volunteer.

"Just wanted to say a BIG thank you for organising the volunteers thank you evening. It was great to see so many people there. I met three new people and had a lovely evening chatting to them. One lady, in particular, is not long widowed and finding her feet and was really appreciative of the get-together with like-minded people." - Volunteer

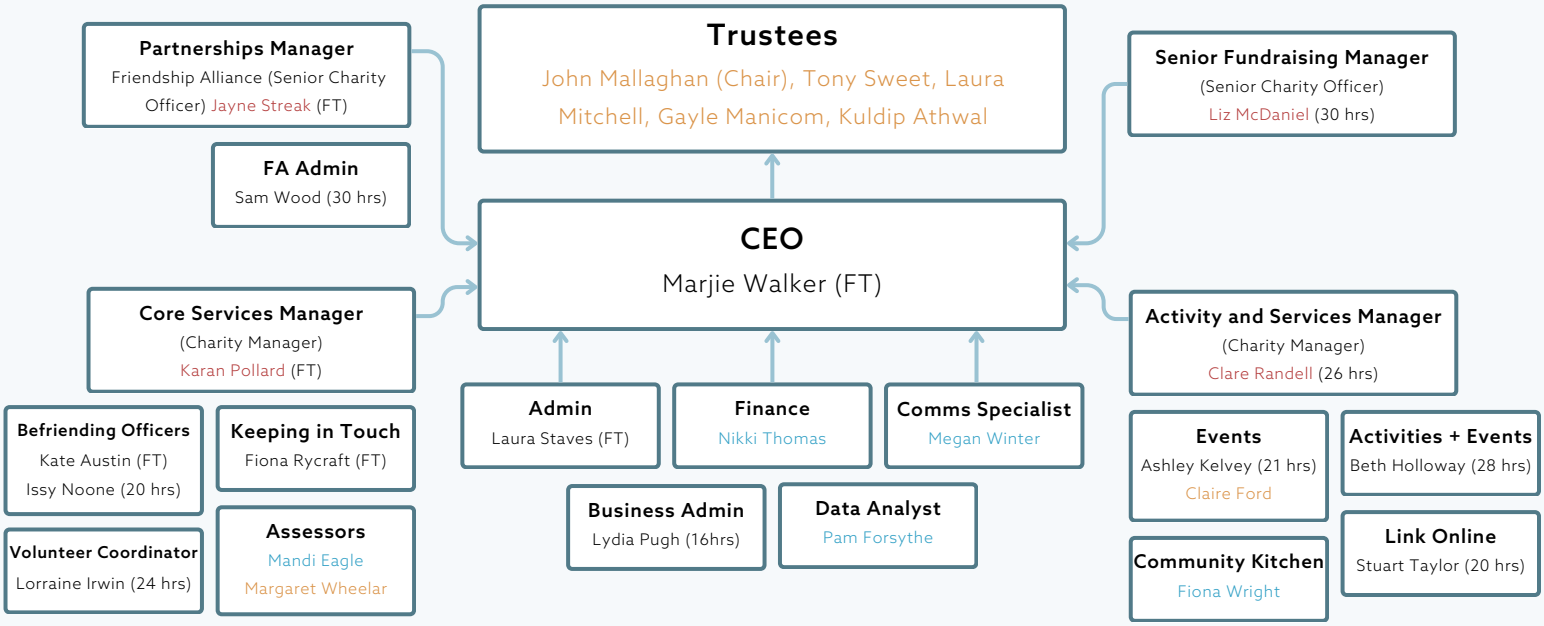
"A big thank you to all the staff at The Link. You do an amazing job, and we volunteers feel so cared for and valued. It is wonderful." - Volunteer





Organisational chart 2024

Our team consists of 7 volunteers, 5 contractors and 15 staff of which 4 are managers.



Looking ahead

The increase in the cost of living will continue to impact our organisation in 2024/25. Our costs have risen, and we have seen a drop in the number of people coming forward to volunteer. Fundraising is also more difficult in the current financial climate.

However, the need for our services is ever-increasing, and we are determined to rise to the challenge, working closely with our partners and those who support us to combat loneliness and isolation.

We are also working to ensure that people from all ethnicities know about and can access our services. We are nurturing relationships with organisations that can help us with this, and we are planning to reprint our literature in different languages.

A message from our Chairman

The Link celebrated an extraordinary milestone this year – we are now 25 years old! As demand for our services continues to grow – we have doubled in size in the last four years alone – it is worth placing our current achievements in the context of those 25 years.

From our humble beginnings in Woodley Baptist Church in 1998, eventually becoming a charity in 2010 to the much-loved organisation we are today, we have always maintained the same focus: confronting the effects of loneliness and social isolation through celebrating friendship, enabling people to play an active part in the community again, and have fun!

As an active volunteer, I am constantly inspired and humbled by how much our Link Friends appreciate what we do for them and to see first-hand the smiles and laughter we spread around the local community every day. A quarter of a century after our founders recognised the scale of the problem of loneliness, I can honestly say it is a real privilege to play a part in helping us grow sustainably and continue to deliver quality services. Wokingham Borough is a better, kinder community for having The Link as part of it.

Our charity plays a huge role in helping delay, reduce, and avoid the need for many of the community's most vulnerable to require more expensive social services. On behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank all who have supported us in the last year, with particular thanks for the continuing support of our key strategic partner, Wokingham Borough Council.

Managing demand and growth will be our number one challenge in the coming years, and I look forward to helping the team manage that growth without impacting on service quality and the outcomes we continue to deliver.

Being part of The Link family is special. Staff and volunteers get to experience directly the meaning, friendship, and fun we bring to the lives of our Link Friends. On behalf of the trustees, I want to offer huge thanks to our CEO, Marjie Walker and her team, and all our fantastic volunteers from the people who really matter—our Link Friends—for making a real difference.

2024 is the start of another 25 years of transforming thousands of lives in the community through friendship!



John Mallaghan
Chair of Trustees



Financial review

Overview

During 2023/24 our activities have continued to grow and, as a result, in the year ended 31 March 2024 the cost of our charitable activities increased significantly. Our total expenditure for 2023-24 was £484,904, an increase of 33% compared to £363,365 in the previous year.

Our income last year (excluding the Edward Gostling Fund endowment described below) was £483,985, an increase of 12% over £432,917 in 2022/23. The resulting small deficit for last year compared to a surplus in 2022/23 reflects the challenge we face to match short term fluctuations in income and expenditure. However, our closing reserves at 31 March 2024 reflect an overall satisfactory financial position despite the pressures felt by all in the current cost of living crisis.

Income

Total income for the year, excluding amounts we received on behalf of and for onward payment to other organisations, was £483,985 (2023: £432,917)

	2024	2023
Donations	£ 32,427	£48,141
Grants	£426,065	£375,896
Fundraising activities	£ 20,186	£7,810
Interest income and other	£ 5,307	£1,070
Total	**£483,985**	**£432,917**

We work very closely with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in providing our services to local residents. WBC continued to be our largest single source of funding, contributing around two thirds of our income from donations and grants, which is unchanged from 2022/23.

We received donations and grants from a further 53 organisations (2023: 32 organisations) which reflects the significant efforts of our team to meet our fundraising target. We are most grateful for every single donation received, all of which go towards enabling us to continue our work. A list of donors can be found in Note 4. Our own fundraising events and activities contributed £20,186 (2023: £7,810).

The majority of our income continues to be classified as restricted, i.e. income which the donor directs should be applied to specific activities. This is particularly the case for most of our grant income. However, we should emphasise that our donors identify so completely with the aims of Link Visiting that in practice any restrictions can be accommodated within our core activities.

Expenditure

Our expenditure on charitable activities for 2023/24 increased significantly compared to last year and as seen in recent years the largest increase was in staff costs which rose by 26% to £347,953 from £276,724 in the previous year.

The key reasons for this increase were:

- the growth in our activities has only been possible by increasing the number of people responsible for delivering our services. In 2023–24 the average number of people employed rose from 12 to 16 (some working part time) and they joined us at various times during the year. This expansion accounted for substantially all of the increase in staff costs, including related employment expenses such as social security and pension.

- direct project costs increased as a function of the increase in activities during the year.
- increases in other overhead costs similarly reflect increased activity levels and higher staff numbers, as well as the inflationary pressures on general services.

Financial position and reserves

Net assets increased from £442,276 on 31st March 2023 to £541,357 on 31st March 2024. Cash resources at the end of our financial year increased from £462,757 to £570,176.

The assets of the charity are currently held in current and deposit bank accounts. Should other opportunities arise to invest surplus funds then the trustees would consider these, and this matter remains under review. At the present time longer term investment is inappropriate.
The charity had a small net operational deficit for the year of £919 which has been deducted from total funds.

In February 2024 the charity received by deed of gift an endowment of £100,000 from The Edward Gostling Fund. Under the terms of the endowment the following apply:

- the charity may use the endowment to meet operating costs which support its charitable activities
- the amount it may apply from the income and capital of the endowment in any accounting year shall be limited to the amount (if any) by which its total annual expenditure would otherwise cause its level of reserves to fall beneath six months' operating costs.

This restriction on use of the endowment is effective for the period of five years from receipt of the amount; thereafter the charity may use the income and remaining capital of the endowment for any purpose that furthers its charitable objects. This amount is included in the charity's reserves as The Edward Gostling Fund. In the year ended 31 March 2024 the charity made no transfer from this fund to its unrestricted reserves.

Unrestricted funds at 31 March 2024 are £525,173 (31 March 2023: £422,061). During last year the trustees decided that £75,000 of the designated funds of £150,000 (included in unrestricted funds) should be used for specific projects of an enduring nature. In the last financial year £48,748 was spent on such projects and this amount has been deducted from designated reserves as of 31 March 2024. The trustees have authorised use of the remaining designated reserves in the year ending 31 March 2025.

The trustees continue to monitor the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation, recognising the need to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to provide a contingency for emergencies and other unforeseen expenditure.

To help mitigate the risks faced from rapid growth in demand and costs, and the prevailing uncertainties in the economic outlook, trustees have resolved that our target is to maintain unrestricted reserves of 50% of our current annual budget; this may be varied if circumstances indicate this is appropriate.

At 31 March 2024, general funds were £323,921 which equates to 74% of expenditure incurred in the year then ended (excluding amounts incurred from the designated funds) and around 71% of our expenditure plans for 2024/25. This is higher than the trustees' ongoing policy target of 50% but that policy also recognises that the actual level of reserves will be subject to short term fluctuation

according to circumstances. The trustees are satisfied that this level of funds is sufficient and appropriate to meet the charity's on-going activities for the time being.

Risk management

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that The Link has in place a process to identify risks to which the charity is exposed, that those risks have been assessed and that there are systems in place to address those risks. The principal risks which The Link has to manage relate to continuity of funding, the availability of staff and volunteers to enable it to meet its objectives, and control of expenditure.

The trustees have given consideration to the major risks to which The Link is exposed and satisfied themselves that procedures are established in order to manage those risks.

Trustees' report

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 (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity 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 in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust Deed.

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.

This report was approved by the trustees on 16 September 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee



Antony Sweet
Trustee

Reference and administrative details

Governing document

Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 18 August 2010.

Principal activities

The Company's principal activity is the provision of a befriending service for lonely, isolated, primarily elderly people who benefit from a regular home visit from one of the Company's volunteers.

The Company assesses those clients that are referred to it from doctors, families and other care agencies, then recruits, DBS checks and trains volunteers from the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and matches up a volunteer (Befriender) and client (Link Friend), based on location, common interests and hobbies. A regular programme of reassessment is also undertaken.

Over 1,000 Link Friends have benefited from our services since the charity was established. We aim to give their lives more purpose and joy, enabling them to integrate into the community and build new, lasting friendships.

Public benefit

All our activities focus on combatting social isolation in the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

The outcomes that the Company aims to deliver through its services to benefit individuals, our communities, and the civic purse are to:

- Improve activity and mobility for clients
- Prevent depression and achieve improved mental health
- Delay or postpone need to enter residential care homes
- Delay or postpone need for provision of care at home
- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting independent living
- Improve volunteer social involvement and engagement
- Indirectly support carers and statutory services.

Our trustees

Mr John Mallaghan – Chairman (Appointed 16 June 2021)
Mrs A. Gayle Manicom (Appointed June 2018)
Ms Laura Mitchell (Appointed 9 December 2020)
Mr Kuldip Athwal (Appointed 23 October 2022)
Mr Antony Sweet (Appointed 1 April 2023)

A trustee is also a director of the Company. Appointments and resignations of the above persons have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission as appropriate.

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Company's Memorandum of Association.

Other information

Link Visiting Scheme Limited is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales number 07349468. Registered charity number - 1139248

The Company's registered office and correspondence address is: Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erftstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Independent examiner

K Gomes MAAT FCIE, Independent Examiners Limited, Unit 2 The Broadfields Business Centre, Delling Lane, Bosham, PO18 8NF

Company Secretary

Mr Kuldip Athwal

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank Plc, PO Box 200, Skelmersdale, WN8 6DG

The Charity Bank Limited, Fosse House, 182 High Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1BE.

Independent Examiner's report

Year ended 31st March 2024

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Link Visiting Scheme for the year ended 31st March 2024 set out on pages 23 to 30.

Respective responsibilities of trustees (directors) and examiner

As the trustees of The Link Visiting Scheme (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act").

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of The Link Visiting Scheme are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 (5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

Since The Link Visiting Scheme gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a fellow member of the Association of Charity Independent Examiners, which is one of the listed bodies.

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

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of The Link Visiting Scheme as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

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.

K Gomes MAAT FCIE
Independent Examiners Limited
Unit 2, The Broadfields Business Centre
Delling Lane
Bosham
PO18 8NF

Signed: 

Date: 16.9.24

THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2024** £	TOTAL **2023** £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and Legacies	2a	259,376	299,116	558,492	424,513
Charitable Activities	2b	20,186	-	20,186	7,810
Investments	2c	5,307	-	5,307	594
		284,869	**299,116**	**583,985**	**432,917**
Funding for Other Charities	2a(1)	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
TOTAL		**284,869**	**350,959**	**635,828**	**481,367**
Expenditure on:					
Direct Costs	3a	103,968	300,154	404,122	294,887
Charitable Activities	3b	77,789	2,993	80,782	68,479
		181,757	**303,147**	**484,904**	**363,365**
Funding Transferred to Other Charities	3a(1)	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
TOTAL		**181,757**	**354,990**	**536,747**	**411,815**
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		103,112	(4,031)	99,081	69,551
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		**103,112**	**(4,031)**	**99,081**	**69,551**
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds Brought Forward		**422,061**	**20,215**	**442,276**	**372,725**
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		**525,173**	**16,184**	**541,357**	**442,276**

All of the organisation's operations are classed as continuing.

The notes on pages 25-30 form part of these financial statements.

THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

BALANCE SHEET
Company Registration Number :07349468
AS AT 31 March 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	31-Mar-24 Total £	31-Mar-23 Total £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	8	-	-	-	-
Current Assets					
Debtors	9	-	-	-	326
Cash at bank and in hand	10	553,992	16,184	570,176	462,757
Total Current Assets		**553,992**	**16,184**	**570,176**	**463,083**
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	28,819	-	28,819	20,807
NET CURRENT ASSETS		525,173	16,184	541,357	442,276
TOTAL ASSETS less current liabilities		**525,173**	**16,184**	**541,357**	**442,276**
NET ASSETS		**525,173**	**16,184**	**541,357**	**442,276**
Funds					
General Funds	5.3	323,921	-	323,921	272,061
Restricted Funds	5.4	-	16,184	16,184	20,215
Designated	5.1	101,252	-	101,252	150,000
Endowment Fund	5.2	100,000	-	100,000	-
Total Funds		**525,173**	**16,184**	**541,357**	**442,276**

The company's financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The Trustees consider that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("the Act") and members have not required the company to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on signed on their behalf, by:

Print Name : ANTONY SWEET

Date : 16 September 2024

Signed on their behalf by Director .....

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1.ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation

The Link Visiting Scheme meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Income and endowments

All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies

Donations are recognised when the charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance by the charity before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that these conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Legacy gifts are recognised on a case by case basis following the grant of probate when the administrator/executor for the estate has communicated in writing both the amount and settlement date. In the event that the gift is in the form of an asset other than cash or a financial asset traded on a recognised stock exchange, recognition is subject to the value of the gift being reliably measurable with a degree of reasonable accuracy and the title to the asset having been transferred to the charity.

Deferred income

Deferred income represents amounts received for future periods and is released to incoming resources in the period for which, it has been received. Such income is only deferred when:
- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Gift aid

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the Statement of Financial Activities at the same time as the gift to which they relate.

Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the institution with whom the funds are deposited.

Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category.

Charitable activities

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Taxation

The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
The company does not currently have any fixed assets.

Debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Liabilities
Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably.
Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the company anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Pensions and other post retirement
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

2. ANALYSIS OF INCOME		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2024** £	TOTAL **2023** £
a) Donations and Legacies					
Donations		32,427	-	32,427	48,141
Grants	4	126,949	299,116	426,065	375,896
The Edward Gostling Endowment Fund	5.2	100,000	-	100,000	476
		259,376	299,116	558,492	424,513
a1) Grant Funding for Other Charities					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
		259,376	**350,959**	**610,335**	**472,963**
b) Charitable Activities					
Events		9,394	-	9,394	3,522
Fundraising		10,792	-	10,792	4,288
		20,186	**-**	**20,186**	**7,810**
c) Investment Income					
Interest Received		5,307	-	5,307	594
		5,307	**-**	**5,307**	**594**

3. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2024** £	TOTAL **2023** £
a) Direct Costs					
Cost of Fund Generation - Fund Raising		3,023	-	3,023	1,462
Cost of Providing Charitable Activities	5.4	26,424	26,722	53,146	16,701
Staff Costs	6	74,521	273,432	347,953	276,724
		103,968	**300,154**	**404,122**	**294,887**
a1) Direct Costs					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
		103,968	**351,997**	**455,965**	**343,337**

b) Charitable Activities	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2024** £	TOTAL **2023** £
Accountancy and Consultancy Fees		13,856	-	13,856	13,540
DBS Checks		769	-	769	728
Independent examiner's fee		2,400	-	2,400	2,040
Insurance		2,202	-	2,202	1,527
Marketing costs		8,174	-	8,174	4,692
Office ,Computer Equipment & IT	5.4	17,586	2,993	20,579	18,894
Payroll Services		588	-	588	313
Post & stationery		6,836	-	6,836	7,667
Professional Memberships		188	-	188	219
Recruitment		-	-	-	299
Rent, Electricity & Cleaning		5,952	-	5,952	5,434
Social Events and Activities		2,695	-	2,695	3,447
Staff Training		3,512	-	3,512	1,495
Sundry Expenses		2,415	-	2,415	987
Travel & subsistence		8,159	-	8,159	6,232
Volunteer Training/Expenses		2,457	-	2,457	965
		77,789	**2,993**	**80,782**	**68,479**

4. Income from Grants and Donations

We acknowledge and extend a heartfelt thanks to the following organisations who kindly supported The Link Visiting Scheme during the year ended March 2024 :

52 Lives
Arborfield and Newland Parish Council
AspenTech
Barkham Ladies Social Club
Barkham Parish Council
Cala Homes Thames and Legal & General Homes
Co-op Local Community Fund
Crowthorne Parish Council
David Brownlow Charitable Foundation
Earley Charity
Earley Town Council
Ecclesiastical Movement for Good
Edmund Godson Charity
Edward Gostling Fund
Eight to the Fore
Elise Pilkington Charitable Trust
February Foundation
Field Seymour Parkes Foundation
Garfield Weston Foundation
Grace Trust
Haines Hill Charitable Trust
Helen Robertson Charitable Trust
Hurst Parish Council
Invesco Cares Foundation
Kings Church Wokingham
Liberty Global Group
McCarthy Stone Foundation
Mobbs Memorial Trust
Morris Beneficent Fund
National Lottery Community Fund
Newbury Building Society
Persimmon Community Champions
PKB Accountants
Postcode Society Trust
Rotary Club of Easthampstead
Rotary Club of Loddon Vale
Rotary Club of Reading Maiden Erlegh
Rowan Bentall Charitable Trust
Shanly Foundation
Shinfield Parish Council
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust
St. James's Place Foundation
Swallowfield Parish Council
Syder Foundation
Twyford Parish Council
Wargrave Parish Council
Winnersh Parish Council
Wokingham Lions
Wokingham Borough Council
Wokingham Town Council
Wokingham Without Parish Council
Woodley Town Council
Woosehill Community Church
Zebra Technologies

We would also like to thank our individual supporters and our supporters in-kind for their valuable contributions this year.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

5.Fund Summary
Current year

5.1 Designated Funds	Balance 1.4.23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.24 £
Designated Funds	150,000	-	48,748	-	101,252
	150,000	-	48,748	-	101,252

During the year ended 31 March 2024 the Trustees approved spending of £75,000 from the £150,000 designated fund which was a bequest received in 2017. The trustees have authorised use of the remaining designated reserves in the year ending 31 March 2025.

5.2 Endowment Fund	Balance 1.4.23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.24 £
The Edward Gostling Fund		100,000	-	-	100,000
	-	100,000	-	-	100,000

In February 2024 the charity received by deed of gift an endowment of £100,000 from The Edward Gostling Foundation. Under the terms of the endowment the charity may:

· use the endowment to meet operating costs which support the its charitable activities, and

· the amount it may apply from the income and capital of the endowment in any accounting year shall be limited to the amount (if any) by which its total annual expenditure would otherwise cause its level of reserves to fall beneath 6 months' operating costs.

5.3 General Funds	Balance 1.4.23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.24 £
General Funds	272,061	184,869	133,009	-	323,921
	272,061	184,869	133,009	-	323,921
Total Unrestricted	**422,061**	**284,869**	**181,757**	**-**	**525,173**

5.4 Restricted Funds	Balance 1.4.23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.24 £
Christmas	5,088	14,200	12,286	-	7,002
Activities & Events	-	2,520	2,070	-	450
Community Kitchen	2,521	5,111	5,620	-	2,012
Friendship Groups	1,200	-	1,200	-	-
Link to Nature	8,603	8,375	16,978	-	-
Newsletter	-	800	800	-	-
Chair Yoga	-	5,212	5,212	-	-
Befriending	2,803	133,181	129,264	-	6,720
Computers	-	2,193	2,193	-	-
Friendship Alliance	-	127,490	127,490	-	-
Active Minds	-	15,877	15,877	-	-
Keeping in Touch	-	36,000	36,000	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	**20,215**	**350,959**	**354,990**	**-**	**16,184**
Total Funds 2024	**442,276**	**635,828**	**536,747**	**-**	**541,357**

Prior Year	Balance 1.4.22 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.23 £
Designated Funds	150,000	-	-	-	150,000
General Funds	103,673	178,825	10,436	-	272,061
Total Unrestricted	253,673	178,825	10,436	-	422,061
Restricted Funds	119,052	302,542	401,380	-	20,214
Total Funds 2023	**372,725**	**481,367**	**411,816**	-	**442,276**

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

	2024 £	2023 £
Gross Wages and Salaries	314,170	254,352
Employer's National Insurance Costs	26,262	16,892
Pension Contributions	7,521	5,481
	347,953	276,724
The average number of persons employed during the year was as follows:	16	12

7. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

No trustee received any remuneration or fees in the current or preceding year. The daughter of the CEO received consultancy fees of £8,174 (2023: £4,692) for work in relation to website design, communications and marketing.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

There are no tangible fixed assets. The Company expenses all individual capital items under £1000 in the period of purchase.

9. DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**Total 2024 £**	**Total 2023 £**
Debtors	0	-	0	326
	0	-	**0**	**326**

10. CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**2024** Total £	**2023** £
Cash at bank and on hand	553,992	16,184	570,176	462,757
Total	553,992	16,184	570,176	462,757

11. CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	**Total 2024 £**	**Total 2023 £**
Deferred Income	20,371	-	20,371	13,375
Independent Exam	2,100	-	2,100	2,040
Other Taxation and Social Security	6,348	-	6,348	5,392
	28,819	-	**28,819**	**20,807**

LINK VISITING SCHEME

England & Wales - Charity number 1139248

Accounts

Annual Report

A Year of Growth at The Link Visiting Scheme

2022 / 2023



the Link visiting scheme

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The problem

Prolonged loneliness is considered by many to be one of the largest public health challenges we face. It puts us at a greater risk of developing dementia, heart disease and depression. It's so serious that it even shortens our life expectancy (1).

Specific life circumstances can make older people vulnerable to loneliness, like retirement, being widowed, and being socially isolated. (2) According to Age UK, people aged 50+ living in England are 5.5 times more likely to be lonely if they don't have someone to open up to when they need to (3).

In Wokingham, over 3,000 older people are often or always lonely and could greatly benefit from our services (4).

Our work serves a public benefit as not only does social isolation cause immense suffering for those affected, but it also places great pressure on families, carers, health, and social services.



A new survey of 1,334 health professionals working in GP surgeries in the UK revealed more than a quarter of health professionals (27%) believe their time and NHS resources are majorly drained by treating lonely people.

Nearly a third (32%) confessed they regularly see patients who come to them because they are just lonely.

Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy, Maria Caulfield said: "Picking up the phone and chatting to a friendly voice can make the world of difference to someone experiencing loneliness, and I applaud those coming forward to volunteer their time."

References (1) Campaign to End Loneliness | (2) Marmalade Trust | (3) Victor, C. 'Loneliness in older age: the UK perspective' in Age UK Oxfordshire (2011) | (4) The Census 2021 recorded the population aged 65 and above in Wokingham Borough was about 30,500. Among them, it is estimated that 10% (or 3,050) feel lonely all or most of the time. The Census 2021 also recorded 7,677 one-person households aged 66 years or over, accounting for 11.1% of all households in the borough, or 47.2% among one-person households."



How we improve social wellbeing

The Link Visiting Scheme was founded 25 years ago to help reduce loneliness amongst older people and to bring generations together in friendship and shared experiences. We have seen thousands of lives transformed, and we continue to reach hundreds of older people through our work every year.

Social well-being is essential for overall health and quality of life. We meet older people at a point in their lives where building and maintaining meaningful relationships, nurturing social connections and seeking out positive interactions becomes difficult if not impossible. This could be due to reduced mental health, chronic health conditions, lack of transport or a general sense of loss including the bereavement of a loved family member.

Through our assessment process, matching and linking up with volunteers, and providing opportunities to connect to local community activities or group activities we have organised in-house, we are able to help older people begin the journey of building individual connections, relationships and interactions.

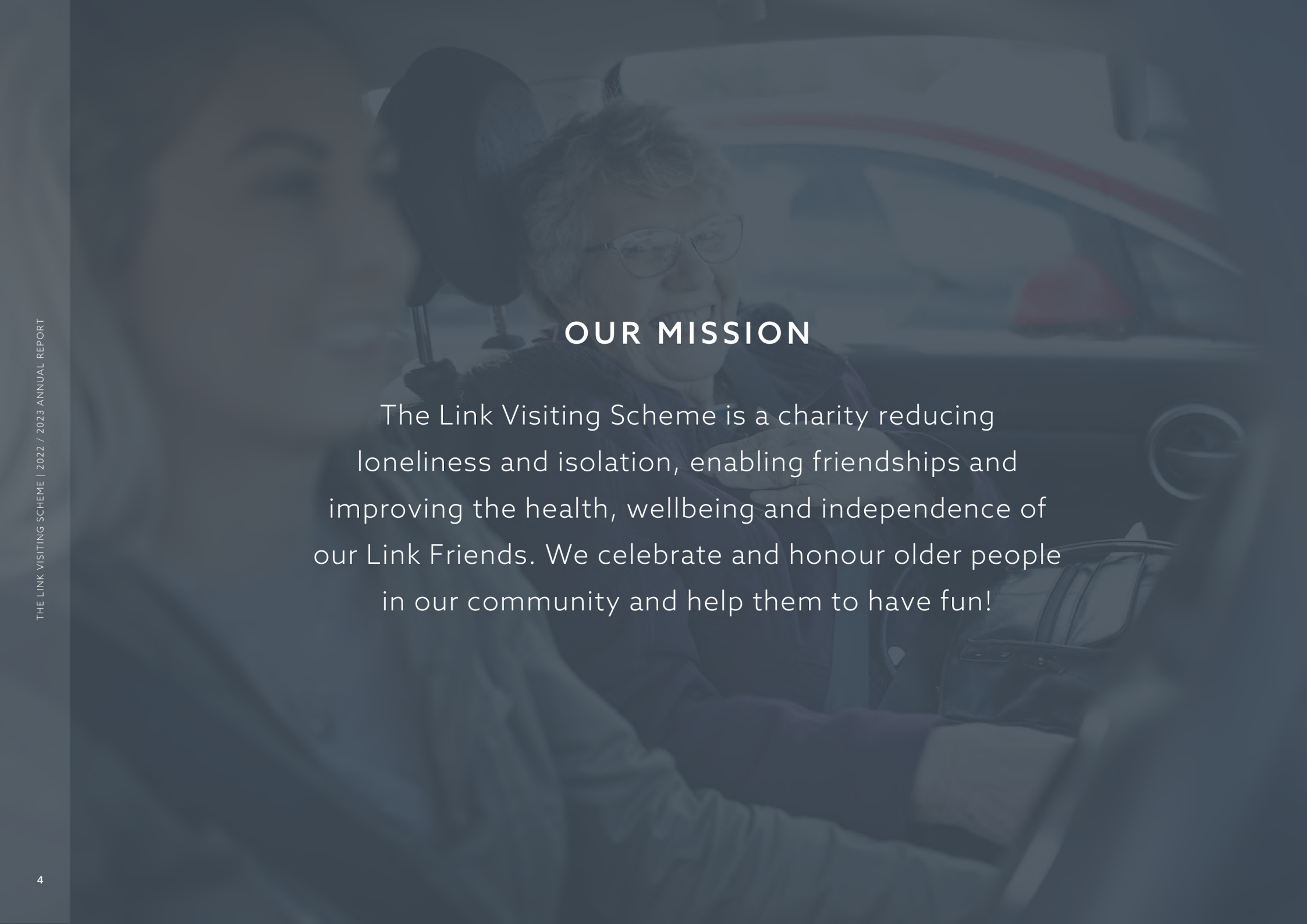
These are all crucial to contributing to improved wellbeing, where friendship can act as a buffer against stress, provide a renewed sense of purpose, build resilience, improve cognitive function and combat the serious impact of loneliness.











OUR MISSION

The Link Visiting Scheme is a charity reducing loneliness and isolation, enabling friendships and improving the health, wellbeing and independence of our Link Friends. We celebrate and honour older people in our community and help them to have fun!

Our specialist pathway

When someone comes to the Link, there are many options open to them and their personal circumstances and we are delighted to see an increases in the number of Link-Ups. We have developed a specialist pathway to support people in their journey to being better connected. As social wellbeing increases, the need for support from outside agencies reduces.

We see the transformative impact of our work daily and receive wonderful feedback from our Link Friends who consistently rate our services highly (99.6% rating us as good or excellent in our last survey) and allow us to assess their social wellbeing regularly. This year we achieved 208 Link Ups. An 8% increase on the previous year!

From loneliness to social integration

Prevention

The Friendship Alliance works to make Wokingham a vibrant, inclusive community by promoting friendship activities. This should reduce the demand on our services.

1:1 Friendship

Link Express offers initial temporary support, followed by a well-matched longer term regular friendship with a volunteer, typically visiting on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Groups

'Friendship Groups' are small local groups of Link Friends and volunteers, designed to increase social integration and self-sufficiency in various locations across the Borough.

Activities

Community activities and Link activities and events encourage wider engagement, increases social integration and self-sufficiency with a reduced need for Link services.

Project overview

Bringing people together is the core of all that we do. We all crave connection, no matter what our age - it's what makes life worth living. As well as one-to-one befriending and regular activities and events, we have designed and developed projects with quality connection at their heart.

LINK ONLINE

Opening doors to digital group activities, and reducing digital inequality by providing support for Link Friends with tablet computers and individual coaching and support. To date, Link Friends have learnt to make online medical appointments, order repeat prescriptions online using the NHS app, book train travel, pay for car parking, search for services and explore interests on YouTube and Google.

LINK TO NATURE

An ongoing seasonal project designed to re-awaken an interest in nature, enrich friendships and improve wellbeing. Including regular outings, gifts of pot plants to nurture and grow, events and special interest talks.

ACTIVE MINDS

Specifically designed for those experiencing symptoms of cognitive impairment, our group sessions allow individuals to grow in confidence, do cognitive exercises and make new friends.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Designed to establish communication and provide support for our existing Link Friends who may be at risk of escalating needs.

FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

Regular get-togethers with small groups of Link Friends and volunteers, encouraging connection with a wider social circle in a supportive setting.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Bringing together Link Friends and volunteers of all ages to prepare, cook and eat delicious food together on a Sunday afternoon once a month.

CHAIR YOGA

A six-week course to help older people to get moving again with gentle exercise to improve flexibility and wellbeing.

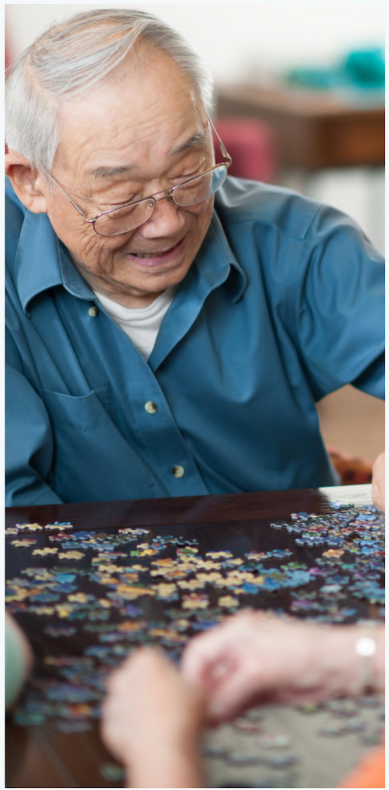
Activities and events

Alongside our projects, we have put together a programme of group activities with the aim of providing regular social interaction, peer support and create a sense of belonging. Group activities are facilitated by a coordinator who enables the group to share experiences, interests and stories with others in order to foster that sense of connection and common ground.

Routine and structure to the week have consistently been voiced as dramatically improving wellbeing. Many of our group activities include some physical warm-up, mental stimulation and most importantly an opportunity to laugh, have fun and enjoy that feel-good factor!

"Your dedication to making a positive impact in our community is truly admirable, and we are honoured to be a part of your journey."
Owners of The Dog and Duck (An activity venue in Emmbrook)







Our friends told us

Activities and events like Pie and Pint, indoor and outdoor Bowls, Crafts and Coffee, and Quiz and Singalong foster camaraderie and joy, creating meaningful connections and cherished memories.

These experiences enrich their lives by promoting social interaction, fun, and a sense of belonging.

CELIA AND COMMUNITY KITCHEN

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to you and all the volunteers - mum had a lovely time at Community Kitchen and loved the 'old music '- she was in great form that evening and kept saying how much she enjoyed it. A huge thanks to you all again for giving your time, it's hugely appreciated."

BRIAN AND LINK ONLINE

Brian not only loves his classical music; he is also an avid reader of the classics. He wanted to know if he could get a hard copy of George Eliot's Middlemarch. By searching on Google, Brian has found that his local Waterstones have a copy. Google is fast becoming Brian's best friend.

JOHN AND ACTIVE MINDS

"Joining the Link and doing Active Minds has reminded me that there is life after 90."

JEAN AND LINK TO NATURE

I have joined Link to Nature and really enjoyed the visit to the local gardens, which was such a change from the life I usually lead the past three years. The four walls have disappeared."

ALBERT AND PIE AND PINT

Albert joined Link Visiting as he was missing interactions with people his own age. He attended Pie and Pint and sat with Anne and Betty. They got on famously, and now meet up regularly. He brings them to all of our activities, and he says that the charity has given him back his purpose in life.

ANNETTE AND PIE AND PINT

"I give The Link 10/10. I was going through a really rough patch and I was basically a recluse, I didn't go out anywhere. It was a case of The Link or nothing - they've helped me through a very bad patch."

Volunteers

This year we have recruited, inducted, trained and supported 80 volunteers with a current volunteer base of 414 volunteers. Throughout the year we have supported 480 volunteers with 66 leaving the charity due to moving away, change in circumstances or poor health. 25% reduction on the previous year (88).

Volunteers join us for a number of reasons, from wanting to make a direct impact on the lives of older people to a desire to feel more connected in the community themselves as we provide a platform to make friends, socialise and contribute to our organisation and the wider community. Volunteers enjoy the personalised way we include them, working together to find the right time and day that suits them and working to maximise their interests, skills and abilities.

All volunteers are interviewed, DBS checked, references are collected and then they attend mandatory induction and safeguarding training. Only then do we match them with an older person or engage them in community activities.

This year our volunteers provided a huge 47,160 hours of service, transforming lives through quality time, focused attention and mutual friendship.

As a direct result of our continued efforts to attract, support and retain volunteers, we are directly investing in our 'volunteer team' and look forward to adding a new p/time Volunteer Co-ordinator to the team.



Our satisfaction ratings are consistently 99% positive with an 'excellent or good' rating.

"If you're thinking of volunteering in a way that directly benefits your community and some of the most rewarding and deserving individuals in it, Link Visiting is about as good as it gets".

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

This year we were delighted to receive prestigious awards that underscore our dedication to reducing loneliness through friendship and to the impressive growth we've achieved.

2022 at a glance

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS GIVING THEIR TIME:

480

TOTAL LINK FRIENDS SUPPORTED:

607

TOTAL VOLUNTARY HOURS SPENT:

47,160

PERCENTAGE OF LINK FRIENDS WHO RATED OUR SERVICE 'EXCELLENT'

84%



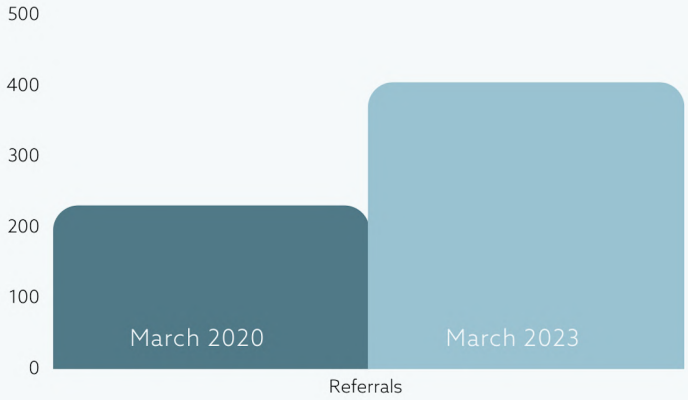


A year of growth

As of March 31 2023, our client base stood at an impressive count of 550, showcasing a remarkable increase of 15.5% from the preceding year's tally of 476 clients, as of March 31 2022. Simultaneously, our volunteer network exhibited a growth of 4.3%, reaching a total of 414 volunteers by March 31 2023, compared to the 397 volunteers recorded on the same date in 2022. Remarkably, a significant 73.4% of our volunteers actively participate in our 1:1 befriending initiative, signifying a noteworthy 2.1% increase compared to the previous year's engagement.

Our expansion has been notably pronounced in several regions within the Wokingham Borough, most notably in Earley, Wokingham, and Woodley. As our organisational presence expands, so does our active contribution towards reducing, delaying and preventing the need for social services across the Borough. We remain acutely aware of the perpetual strain on the resources of the Borough's adult services and endeavour to play a pivotal role in reducing their burden.

The most astonishing development, over the span of the past three years, lies in the volume of referrals,



which has surged by a staggering 75.2% since the end of 2020 representing an extraordinary growth trajectory. Managing this growth in demand without undermining the quality of our services, or the well-being of our Link Friends, staff or volunteers will be the biggest challenge we face in the coming years.

As is custom and practice, we have clients and volunteers moving through the Link on a regular basis and it is important to capture and understand the reasons why. We saw an 11% increase in client leavers and a 25% decrease in volunteer leavers in the past 12 months. Our projects, activities and events are more in demand than ever, with us having to restrict access to some of the most popular ones. This year we restarted 10 regular group activities which saw a staggering 258 individual activities taking place with over 2,000 attendees.

Awards

We have a unique understanding, not only of the root causes and impacts of loneliness but also of how best to tackle them in the local area. Our expertise is based on years of experience and collaboration with and learning from, other organisations both locally and nationally. We have been nationally recognised by receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK.

In addition, we have received three local awards this year:

1. Berkshire's High Sheriff chose the theme 'unsung heroes' and wanted to award Link volunteers, with special recognition for the Link Online project volunteers.
2. An award from Wokingham Borough's Mayor in recognition for outstanding commitment and contribution. Nominator Lucy Zeal DL said: "I am nominating the Link Visiting Scheme for the outstanding contribution they make to the Wokingham Borough community. I feel the hard work of their staff, volunteers and trustees deserves to be recognised."
3. A Level 5 Outstanding 'It's Your Neighbourhood Award' with the Royal Horticultural Society and Thames and Chilterns in Bloom. Our partnership with Wokingham In Bloom and Wokingham Horticultural Society also contributed to winning a Wokingham In Bloom Gold award with our Link to Nature project funded by the National Lottery.





Christmas

For those who are separated from their families, have lost loved ones, or don't have strong social networks, the emphasis on spending time with family and friends during Christmas can highlight their feelings of loneliness. Christmas can amplify feelings of grief and intensify sadness and memories of loss.

We are committed to giving everyone we support and the wider community an opportunity to be together and celebrate. Along with a full Christmas programme of events, we also ensure anyone on their own on Christmas Day can enjoy some company, some delicious food and presents too for 12 years running. This year, we offered a hybrid event with home deliveries to those alone and housebound and a group celebration for those who were able.

We supported over 100 people with a team of 55 volunteers.

This included a small team of professional chefs who worked hard to ensure we all enjoyed a Christmas day to remember. This event is of equal importance to volunteers and older people and a lifeline for all.





The Friendship Alliance

The Link assumed stewardship of the Friendship Alliance in April 2022 and works in partnership with Involve Community Services, Age UK Berkshire and Wokingham Volunteer Centre, funded by Wokingham Borough Council. These organisations are all experts in their field with a strong understanding of the needs of our community and have been operating as an effective partnership since the inception of the Friendship Alliance in 2019. Alliance partners operate independently, continuing to deliver services as discrete charities.

Being part of the Friendship Alliance framework, both complements, and greatly expands, the ability of Wokingham Borough Council to engage with socially isolated people, increases the visibility of the range of services available, and helps charities to manage demand.

"Thank you Jayne for all you're doing to raise awareness of these lovely groups, they are providing such important support."



The Friendship Alliance

Our stewardship of the Friendship Alliance, led by Project Manager, Jayne Streak, has also provided opportunities to engage across the Borough and be more collaborative. This has facilitated a more harmonised approach to communicating the Link and its key services.

This year we have seen impressive growth, with Friendship Tables increasing by 53% and Friendship Champions increasing by 51.8%.

Management

Setting the direction and ensuring objectives are met

The Link Visiting Scheme

Prevention

Making Wokingham a vibrant, inclusive community by promoting friendship

Friendship Alliance

Signposting

Offering effective advice on support available for people who are lonely / isolated

Age UK Berkshire
Involve

Befriending

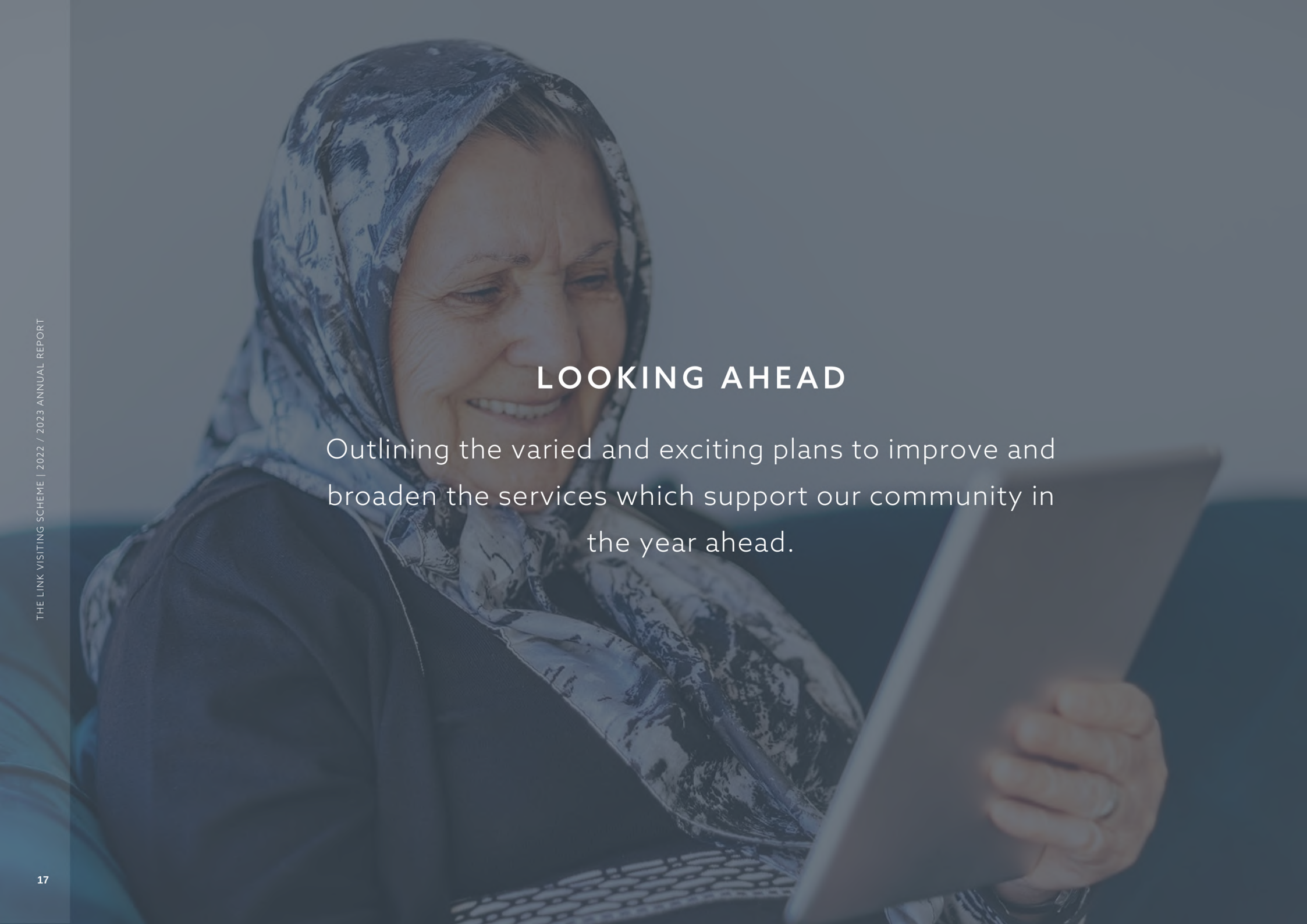
Long term, 1:1 personalised friendship services

The Link Visiting Scheme

Activities

Groups and events designed to bring the community together

The Link Visiting Scheme
Wokingham Volunteer Centre, Involve



LOOKING AHEAD

Outlining the varied and exciting plans to improve and broaden the services which support our community in the year ahead.

Looking ahead

We were profoundly touched to receive a legacy donation of £150,000 in 2017 bequeathed to us by one of our Link Friends, William Ian Hamilton. This heartfelt contribution exemplifies the appreciation and trust that Mr Hamilton had for our service.

Although delayed in our plans by Covid-19 and the subsequent increased demand and growth of our service, we are now able to leverage this donation to make a lasting and meaningful difference in combatting social isolation.

We will further enhance our offer of support and expand our reach in several different ways, including

- Launch a weekly 'Friendship Centre' (Link Thursdays at Space for All, hosted at All Saints Church) where those facing the painful impact of loneliness have a warm and welcoming space to go. Connections will be proactively facilitated, and information and practical support is given about activities, groups, clubs or organisations of interest and to find out about a broad range of services that will help connections such as transport options.
- Improve our reach to ethnically diverse communities and faith groups ensuring our service offer is accessible to all. We know that 87% of residents in the Borough are White, with 13% from ethnic minority backgrounds. 92% aged 50+ are White therefore a key objective for 2023-24 is to reach out to minority groups across Wokingham Borough with the purpose of broadening the Link's ethnic and cultural diversity. We will do this through collaboration and friendship with the Aisha Mosque, the Ramgarhia Sabha Sikh Centre and our involvement with the Inclusion and Equality Forum.
- Enable and improve access to transport options for our service users
- Encourage those who are housebound by providing 'Wellbeing Bags' full of helpful activities, treats, information and support options.
- Improve wellbeing, and boost confidence and mood through the use of assisted animal therapy.

- Manage growth and demand with more effective working with our Friendship Alliance project including starting ‘Connection Sessions’ which aim to introduce our newest Link Friends to community activities already functioning in the area where they live.

- Enable and facilitate ambitious trips out for those who rarely have this opportunity

- Celebrate together to mark our 25th anniversary

Utilising this bequest effectively will help us bring comfort, friendship and renewed hope to many more individuals in the years to come and we honour the memory and legacy of Mr Hamilton in an impactful way.

We are also keen to:

- Focus on men’s loneliness through our work with Wokingham Borough Council’s Social Isolation and Loneliness Group

- Broaden our fundraising initiatives by diversifying our strategies including emphasis on corporate and local business sponsorship, individual donations and focusing on a more sustainable plan which will help us transition from post-emergency funding from the Covid-19 pandemic to more long-term financial stability.





OUR COMMUNITY

We're constantly inspired by our community of passionate supporters, fundraisers, referrers and partners. In 2023, they grew stronger than ever. When more partners are actively involved we can achieve greater goals and make a larger positive change.

Our team and our trustees

Our team is comprised of 17 highly skilled, passionate and hard-working people who are committed to transforming lives with friendship.

A rise of 54% from the previous year of 11 team members. This wide-ranging group draws upon learnings from a variety of industries and backgrounds with one shared goal - to bring life-enhancing social connections to older people and volunteers in Wokingham Borough.

In this year, we were thrilled to welcome six new team members including a: Activities Coordinator, Keeping In Touch Befriending Officer, Core Services Administrator, Fundraising Manager, Friendship Alliance Administrator and Befriending Officer. We also continue to work with 5 contractors who help us with specialist support and manage the changing demand for our service. In total, we have 9.4 full-time equivalents a rise of 70% from the previous year of 5.5 full-time equivalents.

Our growth story owes a significant debt to the invaluable contributions of our diverse and dedicated trustees. Hailing from varied backgrounds including large global corporations, national and small charities, and the NHS, their collective expertise forms a dynamic tapestry that drives the success of our organisation.

John Mallaghan: Chair, Tony Sweet: Finance Trustee, Laura Mitchell, Gayle Manicom, Kuldip Athwal





Our partners

Our Keeping In Touch project engages with older people who have escalating needs. This year we made 255 signposts to organisations in the borough to prevent the risk of crisis.

We are members of the Dementia Partnership along with Age UK Berkshire and Understanding Dementia to deliver a varied programme of activities and support for people living with dementia and their carers.

We received 403 referrals. A 75.2% increase from the financial year end of 2020 to the financial year end of 2023.
We are members of the Public Health-led Social Isolation and Loneliness Group (SiL).

We are key partners in the Voluntary Sector Action Group - a group formed out of the Covid-19 pandemic, composed of key voluntary sector partners and decision-makers in Wokingham Borough Council, led by Director of Public Health, Ingrid Slade.





Our partners told us

AMANDA CRACKNELL, SOCIAL PRESCRIBER

"The Link is an absolute lifeline to a number of our patients. As a social prescriber, I am often supporting people who are lonely and isolated, and The Link is the perfect service to refer them to. The feedback I receive is always positive, and I know of many true friendships that have been formed. The impact on their health and wellbeing is evident. The Link also hosts a number of events that bring volunteers and clients together to share in some uplifting social fun. Their Christmas lunch delivery event on Christmas Day brought so much joy to those who wouldn't have seen anyone, it was so heartwarming!"

NIKKI STEWART, SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER (LOCUM), WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

"I have referred to The Link on numerous occasions; it is a valuable resource in the Wokingham area. It provides people in the community opportunities for engagement, which minimises social isolation. The Link serves to improve wellbeing by having a peer they can rely on for a regular friendly chat."

LEWIS WILLING, HEAD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE INTEGRATION, BERKSHIRE WEST CCG & WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

"As a Council, we continue to value the work done by the Link Visiting Scheme. They are key partners to support with our Friendship Alliance (for those that are at risk of social isolation) and our Keeping In Touch project, which was a finalist in the national Municipal Journal Awards this year. On top of these services that the council commission there are many invaluable interactions to keep people active in their communities and involved in, build or grow their networks. "

Corporate support

We work with generous organisations who choose to support The Link Visiting Scheme. They stand by us in countless ways – from raising awareness to supporting our team, to generously funding projects in our community.

"The Link Visiting Scheme is an excellent charity that does amazing work throughout the local community. It is life-changing for so many people and makes a real difference. Congratulations to everyone at The Charity and the fantastic volunteers" - Mike Lotus, Consultant

"The FSP Foundation Committee were blown away by the amazing work The Link does in the local community. It is clear that the work they do in confronting loneliness in older people is invaluable." - Hannah Sims, Associate - Family





Our fundraisers

Our fundraisers have done some amazing things to raise money for The Link Visiting Scheme. In 2022, fundraisers planned marathons and skydiving, hosted golf days and baked cakes – all to raise money for their community.

GRAEME MARSH – HEAD OF FOUNDATION, MCCARTHY STONE FOUNDATION

"The McCarthy Stone Foundation is proud to work with The Link Visiting Scheme, who provide front line support for older people experiencing social isolation in the Wokingham area. Our foundation seeks out local, grassroots organisations who are embedded in their local community, supported by volunteers, and are helping older people to feel valued, connected and engaged to others, and The Link is a perfect example of this. Through the use of unrestricted funding, we trust the team at The Link to know where their need is the greatest and help ensure they can sustain the vitally important parts of the charity that are often hardest to fundraise for. Crucially, we can do so with the confidence that The Link will deliver on their objectives and meet the rising needs of older people in their community."

CO-OP LOCAL COMMUNITY FUND

"We proudly support groups such as the Link Visiting Scheme as they are making a difference to local families supporting their physical and mental wellbeing, providing access to opportunities to learn new skills and providing food parcels where needed. Their project also looks at continued skills and training new volunteers to support the befriending service."

ANDREW OUGHTON - EDMUND GODSON CHARITY TRUSTEE

"The Edmund Godson Charity is delighted to be able to support The Link Visiting Scheme, whose friendship based service provides such comfort to the lonely and isolated people that live in Wokingham & the surrounding villages."

Our Link Friends

RELIEVING STRESS AND PRESSURE THROUGH SOCIAL CONNECTION

Bob is 93 and has a diagnosis of dementia. He lives with his wife, who is his sole carer. Bob and Carol were used to living a very active and full life, walking clubs, yoga, art groups, singing and performing, and both musicians.

After Bob's diagnosis and reduced mobility, life became hard for them both, with Bob becoming frustrated and withdrawn which caused Carol to feel stressed and tired.

At the assessment, we referred Carol for a carer's assessment and Bob for a needs assessment. We arranged for Bob to have a weekly befriender to take him for a walk and consequently give Carol some much-needed respite. Bob was also interested in attending our Active Minds course. An 8-week course to improve cognitive function, have fun and make friends. Although reluctant initially both accepted that it would be beneficial for Bob to socialise and find new tools to help his memory.

Bob attended each session. He sang for the group, and Carol says: "He seems like a new man!"

He made a friend, Alan, who he now meets up with at a Link Coffee Morning. And Carol meets with Alan's wife, as they are both carers and support each other.

"Joining The Link and doing Active Minds has reminded me that there's life after 90!"

Active Minds covered mindfulness and Bob now meditates daily and Carol reminds him to practice breathing exercises when he feels stressed or agitated. Carol told us: "I've been overwhelmed by the support we've received. Bob enjoys his volunteer visitor and I feel like I've got a bit of free time. I want to give back for all the help we've received and I am looking into volunteering.

Everything feels more manageable now we know we have people to call on when life gets tough".

*names have been changed to protect anonymity

Our Link Friends

KEEPING CONNECTIONS THROUGH LINK ONLINE

Sheila is one of our Link Friends in her late 90s and has enjoyed a close and supportive friendship with her neighbour for many years. Sheila was anxious and low when her neighbour moved away adding to her feelings of loss. Through individual coaching and support and via the loan of a tablet computer, we were able to set her up with a WhatsApp account. Not only does Sheila enjoy the company of her Link Online volunteer but she is now able to continue her friendship with her beloved neighbour using WhatsApp to message and talk & video conference as well as exchanging photos.

"It's made a big difference to me as now we can keep in touch. I didn't think I would use a computer but it's not as difficult as I thought. Thank you to my patient volunteer!"

*names have been changed to protect anonymity





Our volunteers told us

NATALIE

"This is a fantastic scheme offering support to the local community. It offers Margaret more social activity and has enriched my life by listening to her stories and being in her company. Thank you! I'm so pleased I signed up!"

SARAH

"Have always found help when I needed it and the team has always without fail responded. Thank you. 'So very glad I decided to volunteer. Enjoy my Link visits and meet-ups with new people. Thank you. Feel I have benefited so much from my association with Jill."

CHRIS

"I have had nothing but great experiences with The Link Visiting Scheme so far, from the communication and training to my pairing with Val as we get on great together and have lots to talk about. It was been a really rewarding and enriching experience for me, I'm so glad I volunteered. Thank you!"

FLORENCE

"I very much enjoy spending time with Betty and having a good chat, often at her home but sometimes at her local pub or at the park nearby. I get just as much out of it as Betty does. I usually take my 1-year-old son and they love seeing each other."

SAM

"I just love going to see Pam, she is always so positive and happy. We laugh lots and time just fly's by. When I leave I'm already excited to see her again."

ALEX

"The Link has grown substantially over the last few years and does a superb job of enriching the lives of lonely elderly people. Long may you continue!!"

AMANDA

"You are very supportive & definitely have the person's best interests at heart. Very caring."

A message from our chair

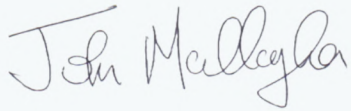
22/23 has been a challenging year, but one where everyone involved – staff, trustees, supporters and particularly our wonderful volunteer family - can feel so proud of the outcomes we have achieved together!

As we enter our 25th year of confronting loneliness in Wokingham Borough, demand for our services continues to grow substantially. The impact of social isolation on individuals' physical health and mental wellbeing, and the drain this has on NHS and social care resources is now well understood. Thankfully, the huge role played by the charity in helping delay, reduce and avoid the need for many of the most vulnerable in the community to require access to these more expensive services is also more widely recognised. On behalf of the Trustee Board, I would like to thank all who have supported us in the last year, with particular thanks for the continuing support of our key strategic partner Wokingham Borough Council.

The continued growth in demand has been reflected in the increased resources required by the charity, without impacting the quality of our services. We have seen a net increase in Link Friends of over 15% during the year, and although we sadly saw some experienced staff members move on to other opportunities, we exit the year with a wonderful, motivated team who continue to bring so much meaning, friendship, and fun to the lives of our Link Friends.

Managing demand and growth will be our number 1 challenge in the coming years. Staff hours have risen by 70% in the last year, which has a major impact on our fundraising requirements. One result of our success can be seen in the huge increase in new referrals – since 2020 these have risen by 75%, which results in a huge drain on staff resources. Successfully managing growth will also require trustees help in strengthening the stewardship of key partners and supporters, evolving to more sustainable, longer term fundraising strategies and helping the CEO where required on operational issues and volunteer recruitment.

On behalf of all trustees, I want to offer huge thanks to our CEO Marjie Walker and her team - staff and volunteers - for the incalculable difference they make every day to the lives of our Link Friends. As an active volunteer I am constantly inspired, and humbled, by how much our Link Friends appreciate what we do for them, and to see first hand the smiles and laughter you will find at any of our activities. Thanks to all of you from the people who really matter – our Link Friends – for making a difference.



JOHN MALLAGHAN
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Financial review

OVERVIEW

Recognition across Wokingham Borough of the positive outcomes we deliver to some of the most vulnerable in our community has continued to grow and, as a result, in the year 2022-23 the cost of our charitable activities increased significantly. Our total expenditure for 2022-23 was £363,365, an increase of 30% compared to £280,069 in the previous year.

This recognition is however also reflected in our income last year which at £432,917 was an increase of 51% over £286,728 in 2021-22. This not only more than covered the year's expenditure but contributed to the underlying financial strength which allows us to deliver quality services to an ever-growing client base.

INCOME

Total income for the year, excluding amounts we receive on behalf of and for onward payment to other organisations, was £432,917, (2022: £286,728), analysed as follows:

	2023	2022
Donations	48,141	42,541
Grants	375,896	240,805
Fundraising activities	7,810	3,275
Interest income and other	1,070	107
Total	432,917	286,728

The total income for 2023 represents an increase of 56% over last year.

We work very closely with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in providing our services to local residents, and during 2022-23 we were delighted to secure additional funding from this key strategic partner when we assumed stewardship of the Friendship Alliance in April 2022. Operational costs of the Alliance are funded by WBC, which draws on the expertise of a number of charitable organisations, greatly increasing our ability to address the needs of socially isolated people within the borough. WBC continued to be our largest single source of funding, contributing around two-thirds of our income from donations and grants (2022: 57%).

We received donations and grants from a further 32 organisations (2022: 46 organisations) which reflects the significant efforts of our team to meet our fundraising target. We are most grateful for every single donation received, all of which go towards enabling us to continue our work. A list of donors can be found in Note 4. Our own fundraising events and activities contributed £7,810 (2022: £3,275).

The majority of our income continues to be classified as restricted, ie income which the donor directs be applied to specific activities. This is particularly the case for most of our grant income. However, it is important to emphasise that such is the nature of how our donors identify with the aims of Link Visiting that in practice any restrictions can be accommodated within our core activities.

EXPENDITURE

Our expenditure on charitable activities for 2022-23 increased by 30% compared to the previous year. The largest increase was in staff costs which rose by 30% to £276,724 from £212,111 in the previous year.

The key reasons for this increase were:

- The significant growth in our activities has only been possible by increasing the number of people responsible for delivering our services. In 2022 – 23 we welcomed six new members to our team and they joined us at various times during the year. This expansion accounted for substantially all of the increase in staff costs, including related employment expenses such as social security and pension.
- Direct project costs increased as a function of the increase in activities during the year.
- Increases in other overhead costs similarly reflect increased activity levels and higher staff numbers, as well as the inflationary pressures on general services.

FINANCIAL POSITION

Net assets increased from £372,725 on 31st March 2022 to £442,276 on 31st March 2023. Cash resources as at the same date have increased from £366,849 to £462,757.

The assets of the charity are currently held in current and deposit bank accounts. Should other opportunities arise to invest surplus funds then the trustees would consider these, this remains under review. At the present time, longer-term investment is inappropriate.

RESERVES

The net surplus for the year of £69,551 has been added to total funds meaning that these have increased to £442,276 at 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £372,725).

Restricted funds at the beginning of the year were £119,052 and following a detailed analysis performed during the year it was established that this amount could be reduced. As a result, the required level of restricted funds at 31 March 2023 is £20,215.

Unrestricted funds at 31 March 2023 are £422,061 (31 March 2022: £253,673). Following receipt of a large one-off legacy, the trustees resolved in 2019 to designate £150,000 of unrestricted funds for a major project, the details of which to be decided. These plans have been delayed by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic but remain under review.

The trustees continue to monitor the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation, recognising the need to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to provide a contingency for emergencies and other unforeseen expenditures.

To help mitigate the risks faced from rapid growth in demand and costs, and the prevailing uncertainties in the economic outlook, trustees have resolved that our target is to maintain unrestricted reserves of 50% of our current annual budget; this may be varied if circumstances indicate this is appropriate.

On 31 March 2023, general funds were £272,061 which equates to 75% of the total expenditure incurred in the year then ended and around 60% of our expenditure plans for 2023/24. This is higher than the trustees' ongoing policy target of 50% but that policy also recognises that the actual level of reserves will be subject to short-term fluctuation according to circumstances. The trustees are satisfied that this level of funds is sufficient and appropriate to meet the charity's ongoing activities for the time being.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The trustees have reviewed the risks to which a medium-sized charity operating with a small number of full-time and part-time employees is exposed. Appropriate procedures are in place to identify, monitor and review these risks on a regular basis.

Trustees' report

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 (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

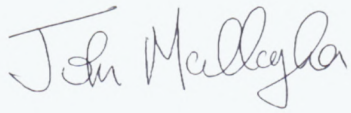
Company law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust Deed.

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.

This report was approved by the trustees on 22 November 2023 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee



Antony Sweet
Trustee

Independent Examiner's report

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts The Link Visiting Scheme for the period to 31st March 2023 set out on pages 37 to 43.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity's Trustees of The Link Visiting Scheme (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of The Link Visiting Scheme are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since Link Visiting Scheme gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a fellow member of the Association of Charity Independent Examiners, which is one of the listed bodies.

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of The Link Visiting Scheme as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities [applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

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.

K Gomes MAAT FCIE
Independent Examiners Ltd
Unit 2,The Broadfields Business
Centre Delling Lane
Bosham
PO18 8NF

Signed:  **Date: 06/12/2023**

Reference and administrative details

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated 18 August 2010.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Our mission is outlined in the 'About us' section of the Impact Report on pages 1 to 9. Over 1,000 Link Friends have benefited from our services over since the charity was established. We aim to give their lives more purpose and joy, enabling them to integrate into the community and build new, lasting friendships.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The Company's principal activity is the provision of a befriending service for lonely, isolated elderly people who benefit from a regular home visit from one of the Company's volunteers.
The Company assesses those clients that are referred to it from doctors, families and other care agencies, then recruits, DBS checks and trains volunteers from the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and matches up a volunteer (Befriender) and client (Link Friend), based on location, common interests and hobbies. A regular programme of reassessment is also undertaken.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

All our activities focus on combatting social isolation in the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.
The outcomes that the Company aims to deliver through its services to benefit individuals, our communities, and the civic purse are to:

- Improve activity and mobility for clients
- Prevent depression and achieve improved mental health
- Delay or postpone need to enter residential care homes
- Delay or postpone need for provision of care at home
- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting independent living
- Improve volunteer social involvement and engagement
- Indirectly support carers and statutory services.

OUR TRUSTEES

Mr John Mallaghan – Chairman (Appointed 16 June 2021)
Mrs A. Gayle Manicom (Appointed June 2018)
Ms Laura Mitchell (Appointed 9 December 2020)
Mr Kuldip Athwal (Appointed 23 October 2022)
Mr Antony Sweet (Appointed 1 April 2023)
Mr Michael Roberts resigned as a trustee on 22 March 2023.

A trustee and a director of the company are the same. Appointments and resignations of the above persons have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission as appropriate.

TRUSTEES' REPORT

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Company's Memorandum of Association.

OTHER INFORMATION

Link Visiting Scheme - a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales

Registered charity number: 1139248

Company registration number: 07349468

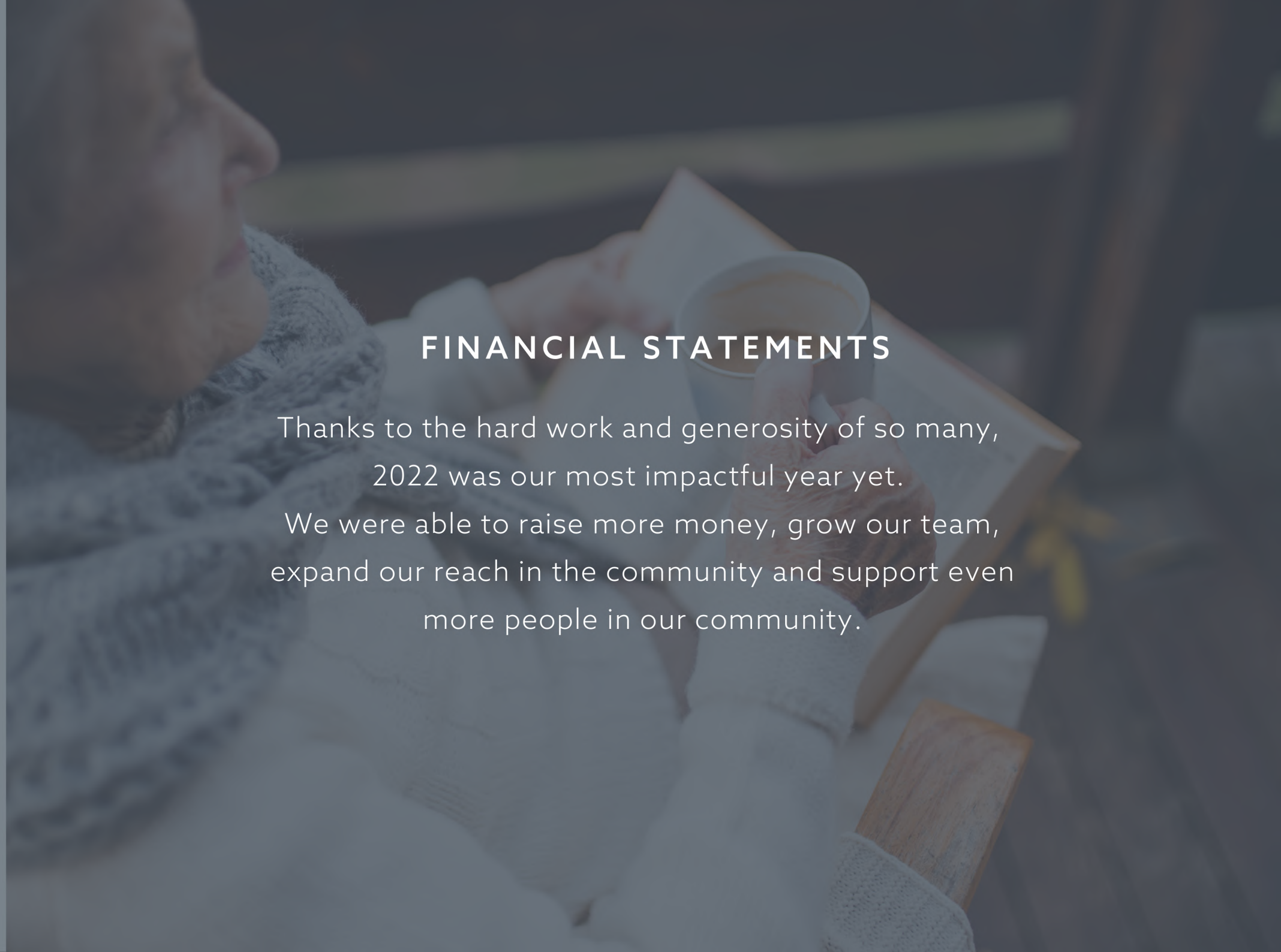
Registered office: The Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erftstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Correspondence address: The Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erftstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Independent examiner: K Gomes MAAT FCIE, Independent Examiners Ltd, Unit 2,The Broadfields Business Centre Delling Lane, Bosham, PO18 8NF

Company Secretary: Mr Kuldip Athwal

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank Plc, PO Box 200, Skelmersdale, WN8 6DG



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of so many, 2022 was our most impactful year yet. We were able to raise more money, grow our team, expand our reach in the community and support even more people in our community.

THE LINK VISITING SCHEME

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2023** £	TOTAL **2022** £
Income and Endowments from:					
Donations and Legacies	2a	170,421	254,092	424,513	283,346
Charitable Activities	2b	7,810	-	7,810	3,275
Investments	2c	594	-	594	107
		178,825	**254,092**	**432,917**	**286,728**
Funding for Other Charities	2a(1)	-	48,450	48,450	-
TOTAL		**178,825**	**302,542**	**481,367**	**286,728**
Expenditure on:					
Direct Costs	3a	1,462	293,425	294,887	224,456
Charitable Activities	3b	8,975	59,504	68,479	55,613
		10,437	**352,929**	**363,366**	**280,069**
Funding Transferred to Other Charities	3a(1)	-	48,450	48,450	-
TOTAL		**10,437**	**401,379**	**411,816**	**280,069**
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		168,388	(98,837)	69,551	6,659
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		**168,388**	**(98,837)**	**69,551**	**6,659**
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds Brought Forward		**253,673**	**119,052**	**372,725**	**366,066**
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		**422,061**	**20,215**	**442,276**	**372,725**

All of the organisation's operations are classed as continuing.

The notes on pages 39 to 43 form part of these financial statements.

THE LINK VISITING SCHEME

BALANCE SHEET
Company Registration Number :07349468
AS AT 31 March 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	31-Mar-23 Total £	31-Mar-22 Total £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	8	-	-	-	-
Current Assets					
Debtors	9	326	-	326	8,832
Cash at bank and in hand	10	442,542	20,215	462,757	366,849
Total Current Assets		**442,868**	**20,215**	**463,083**	**375,681**
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	20,807	-	20,807	2,957
NET CURRENT ASSETS		422,061	20,215	442,276	372,725
TOTAL ASSETS less current liabilities		**422,061**	**20,215**	**442,276**	**372,725**
NET ASSETS		**422,061**	**20,215**	**442,276**	**372,725**
Funds					
General Funds	5.3	272,061	-	272,061	103,673
Restricted Funds	5.4	-	20,215	20,215	119,052
Designated	5.3	150,000	-	150,000	150,000
Total Funds		**422,061**	**20,215**	**442,276**	**372,725**

The company's financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The Trustees consider that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("the Act") and members have not required the company to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act.

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 22nd November 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

Print Name : ANTONY SWEET

Signature: 

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1.ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Statement of compliance
The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). They also comply with the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

Basis of preparation
The Link Visiting Scheme meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

Going concern
The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern nor any significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying value of assets held by the charity.

Income and endowments
All income is recognised once the charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of the income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donations and legacies
Donations are recognised when the charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance by the charity before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that these conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.
Legacy gifts are recognised on a case by case basis following the grant of probate when the administrator/executor for the estate has communicated in writing both the amount and settlement date. In the event that the gift is in the form of an asset other than cash or a financial asset traded on a recognised stock exchange, recognition is subject to the value of the gift being reliably measurable with a degree of reasonable accuracy and the title to the asset having been transferred to the charity.

Deferred income
Deferred income represents amounts received for future periods and is released to incoming resources in the period for which, it has been received. Such income is only deferred when:
- The donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or
- The donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Gift aid
Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the Statement of Financial Activities at the same time as the gift to which they relate.

Interest receivable
Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the institution with whom the funds are deposited.

Expenditure
All expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to that expenditure, it is probable settlement is required and the amount can be measured reliably. All costs are allocated to the applicable expenditure heading that aggregate similar costs to that category.

Charitable activities
Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary

Taxation
The charity is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes. Accordingly, the charity is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Chapter 3 Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Tangible fixed assets
The company does not currently have any fixed assets.

Debtors
Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

Cash and cash equivalents
Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and call deposits, and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Liabilities
Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the Balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably.
Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the company anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Pensions and other post retirement obligations
The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme, which is a pension plan under which fixed contributions are paid into a pension fund and the charity has no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions, even if the fund does not hold sufficient assets to pay all employees the benefits relating to employee service in the current and prior periods.

2. ANALYSIS OF INCOME		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2023** £	TOTAL **2022** £
a) Donations and Legacies					
Donations		48,141	**-**	48,141	42,541
Grants	4	121,804	254,092	375,896	240,805
Other Income		476	**-**	476	-
		170,421	254,092	424,513	283,346
a1) Grant Funding for Other Charities					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5	-	48,450	48,450	-
		170,421	**302,542**	**472,963**	**283,346**
b) Charitable Activities					
Events		3,522	**-**	3,522	2,828
Fundraising		4,288	**-**	4,288	447
		7,810	**-**	**7,810**	**3,275**
c) Investment Income					
Interest Received		594	**-**	594	107
		594	**-**	**594**	**107**

3. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2023** £	TOTAL **2022** £
a) Direct Costs					
Cost of Fund Generation - Fund Raising		1,462	**-**	1,462	100
Cost of Providing Charitable Activities	5.3	-	16,701	16,701	12,245
Staff Costs	6	-	276,724	276,724	212,111
		1,462	**293,425**	**294,887**	**224,456**
a1) Direct Costs					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5	-	48,450	48,450	-
		1,462	**341,875**	**343,337**	**224,456**

b) Charitable Activities	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	TOTAL **2023** £	TOTAL **2022** £
Accountancy and Consultancy Fees	5.3	3,940	9,600	13,540	9,696
DBS Checks	5.3	-	728	728	578
Covid Related Costs	5.3	-	-	-	1,647
Independent examiner's fee		2,040	-	2,040	3,939
Insurance		1,527	-	1,527	3,190
Marketing costs	5.3	-	4,692	4,692	6,081
Office, Computer Equipment		-	-	-	1,500
Payroll Services		313	-	313	312
Post & stationery	5.3	-	7,667	7,667	6,519
Professional Memberships		219	-	219	210
Recruitment		299	-	299	175
Rent, Electricity & Cleaning	5.3	-	5,434	5,434	4,933
Social Events and Activities	5.3	-	3,447	3,447	-
Staff Training	5.3	-	1,495	1,495	991
Sundry Expenses	5.3	637	350	987	-
Telephone & IT Costs	5.3	-	18,894	18,894	13,324
Travel & subsistence	5.3	-	6,232	6,232	1,653
Volunteer Training/Expenses	5.3	-	965	965	865
		8,975	**59,504**	**68,479**	**55,613**

4. Income from Grants and Donations

We acknowledge and extend a heartfelt thanks to the following organisations who kindly supported The Link Visiting Scheme during the year ended March 2023 :

Arborfield and Newland Parish Council
Barkham Parish Council
Charvil Parish Council
Earley Town Council
Finchampstead Parish Council
Hurst Parish Council
Shinfield Parish Council
Sonning Parish Council
Spencers Wood & Grazeley PCC
Swallowfield Parish Council
Wokingham Borough Council
Winnersh Parish Council
Wokingham Town Council
Wokingham Without Parish Council
Woodley Town Council
Wokingham United Charities
52 Lives
Arnold Clark Community Fund
Aviva Charity Foundation
Barchester Charitable Foundation
Berkshire Community Foundation
Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust
Easthampstead Rotary Club
Edward Gostling Foundation
Field Seymour Parkes Foundation
Haines Hill Charitable Trust
Hedley Foundation
Invesco Cares Foundation
Masonic Charitable Foundation
McCarthy Stone Foundation
Mobbs Memorial Trust
Shanly Foundation
Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust
Syder Foundation
The Englefield Charitable Trust
The February Foundation
The Morris Beneficent Fund
The National Lottery Community Fund (Link to Nature)
The Persimmon Charitable Foundation

5.1 Designated Funds
Current Year

	Balance 1.4.22 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.23 £
Designated Funds	150,000	-	-	-	150,000
	150,000	-	-	-	150,000

The Trustees have approved spend in the year ending March 2024 of £75,000 from the £150,000 designated fund bequeaths in 2017. Further funds may be approved for release during the year depending on progress on other projects.

5.2 General Funds

	Balance 1.4.22 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.23 £
General Funds	103,673	178,825	10,437	-	272,061
	103,673	178,825	10,437	-	272,061
Total Unrestricted	**253,673**	**178,825**	**10,437**	**-**	**422,061**

5.3 Restricted Funds

	Balance 1.4.22 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.23 £
Restricted Funds					
Christmas	5,793	19,000	19,704	-	5,089
Core Activities	4,748	500	18,138	12,890	-
Friends for Ages	2,890	-		(2,890)	-
Community Kitchen	9,885	7,619	4,984	(10,000)	2,520
Friendship Groups	9,588	4,800	13,188	-	1,200
Link to Nature	13,931	19,175	24,503	-	8,603
Re-Integration	-	10,031	10,031	-	-
Pathway	7,500	1,400	8,900	-	-
Winter	-	3,500	3,500	-	-
Befriending	-	10,148	7,345	-	2,803
Computers	-	2,632	2,632	-	-
	54,335	78,805	112,925	-	20,215
Wokingham Borough Council					
Friendship Alliance	63,918	167,504	231,422	-	-
Active Minds	799	20,233	21,032	-	-
Keeping in Touch	-	36,000	36,000	-	-
	64,717	223,737	288,454	-	-
	119,052	**302,542**	**401,379**	**-**	**20,215**
Total Funds 2023	**372,725**	**481,367**	**411,816**	**-**	**442,276**

Prior Year

	Balance 1.4.21 £	Income £	Expenditure £	General Transfer £	Balance 31.3.22 £
Designated Funds	150,000	-	-	-	150,000
General Funds	122,422	138,412	157,161	-	103,673
Total Unrestricted	272,422	138,412	157,161	-	253,673
Restricted Funds	93,643	148,317	122,908	-	119,052
Total Funds 2022	**366,065**	**286,729**	**280,069**	-	**372,725**

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Gross Wages and Salaries	254,351	196,371
Employer's National Insurance Costs	16,892	11,377
Pension Contributions	5,481	4,363
	276,724	212,111
The average number of persons employed during the year was as follows:	12	9

7. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

No trustee received any remuneration or fees in the current or preceding year. The daughter of the CEO received consultancy fees of £4,692 (2022: £6,081) for work in relation to website design, communications and marketing.

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

There are no tangible fixed assets. The Company expenses all individual capital items under £500 in the period of purchase.

9. DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	**Total** 2023	**Total** 2022
	£	£	**£**	**£**
Debtors	326	-	326	8,832
	326	-	**326**	**8,832**

10. CASH AT BANK AND IN HAND

	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	**2023** Total	**2022**
	£	£	£	£
Cash at bank and on hand	442,542	20,215	462,757	366,849
Total	442,542	20,215	462,757	366,849

11. CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	**Total** 2023	**Total** 2022
	£	£	**£**	**£**
Creditors	13,375	-	13,375	2,957
Other Taxation and Social Security	5,392	-	5,392	-
Other Creditors	2,040	-	2,040	-
	20,807	-	**20,807**	**2,957**



LINK VISITING SCHEME

England & Wales - Charity number 1139248

Accounts

The Link Visiting Scheme

Annual Report and Accounts

2021 / 22



the Link visiting scheme

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Confronting loneliness,
celebrating friendship.

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2021/ 22 Annual Report and Accounts from The Link Visiting Scheme, the befriending charity in Wokingham Borough. We're excited to share the impact of our work on confronting loneliness and isolation by creating connections that transform lives.

Loneliness is seen by many as one of the largest health concerns we face. It's painful. It's harmful to our bodies. It puts us at a greater risk of developing dementia, heart disease and depression. It's so serious that it even shortens our life expectancy.

- **Loneliness is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day** (1)
- **76% of GPs report that between one and five patients a day attend primarily because they are lonely** (2)
- **In Wokingham, one in three over 65s live alone** (3)

About us

The Link Visiting Scheme was founded more than 24 years ago to help reduce loneliness amongst older people and to bring generations together in friendship and shared experiences. We have seen the positive impact of friendship where we provide quality time, a listening ear and focused attention on individuals who so often feel invisible and forgotten. We have seen thousands of lives transformed, and in 2021/22, we continued to reach hundreds of older people through our work. We could not offer this life-changing help without our volunteers, partners, and employees. We have a unique understanding, not only of the root causes and impacts of loneliness, but also how best to tackle them in the local area. Our expertise is based on years of experience and collaboration with, and learning from, other organisations both locally and nationally.

Our focus is on promoting and enabling friendships in everything we do. When we receive a referral for someone in the grips of loneliness, we need to respond quickly, with sensitivity, kindness and skill.

We have developed a pathway that enables us to respond quickly to a referral and support the individual on their journey to establishing long term friendships and broadening social circles to include both interactive activities and events. We take people from isolation to a feeling of social wellbeing in their local community with local volunteers.

In April 2021 we were delighted and honoured to have been awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. Equivalent to an MBE, it is awarded for life. We also received special recognition for our response to the pandemic. We could not be prouder of our incredible volunteer family, whose hard work and dedication are at the heart of all we do.



(1,2) Source: Campaign to End Loneliness | (3) Source: POPPI



A year in numbers

45,000
volunteer hours

720
Link Friends benefitted

486
volunteers got involved

469
total active Link Friends

86%
of our Link Friends have a disability including significant mobility issues, dementia or mental health concerns



269
assessments completed

32 to 101
was the age range of Link Friends

230
Link ups completed

345
referrals received

9
staff members in our team

5
trustees helped guide Link Visiting - John, Michael, Anne, Laura and Gayle

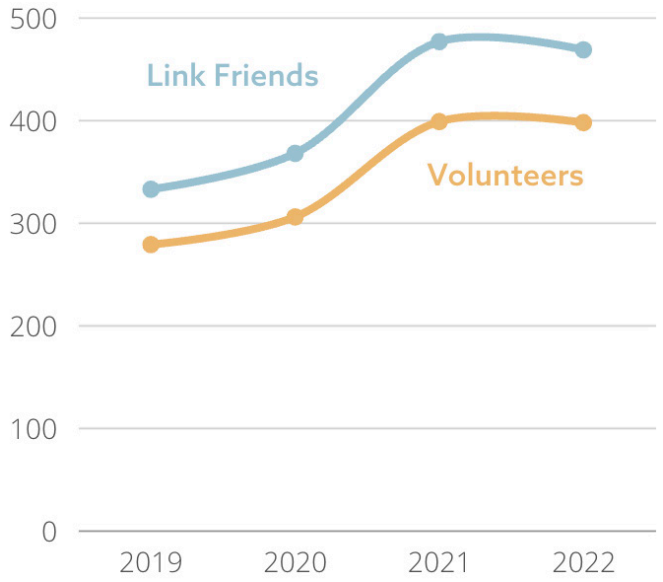
Improving social wellbeing

We have developed a specialist pathway to support people in their journey to being better connected. As social wellbeing increases, the need for support from outside agencies reduces.



We provide a range of friendship-based services within our pathway framework, including telephone-based interim support 'Link Express', long-term one-to-one befriending, small social groups 'Friendship Groups' and larger community events.

Using our highly personalised approach, we evaluate how we can best assist our Link Friends to achieve social wellbeing using our innovative pathway approach.



We see the transformative impact of our work daily and receive wonderful feedback from our Link Friends who consistently rate our services highly (81% rating us excellent in our last survey) and allow us to assess their social wellbeing regularly.

Over 50% of new clients report an improvement in social well-being in the first 12 months of becoming a Link Friend



Making a difference

We are well-embedded in our local community receiving referrals from many sources including Community Navigators and NHS Social Prescribers. Demand for our services continues to grow, with referrals increasing from an average of five per month pre-pandemic to 30.

Since 2019 the number of Link Friends has grown by over 40%.

Key achievements

Winning the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

We were absolutely thrilled for the hard work of our volunteers to be recognised by receiving the Queen's Award with a special mention for their outstanding contribution to the community during the pandemic. We celebrated together by holding a garden party in the beautiful grounds of Ludgrove School.

"The strength, quality and dedication of our volunteers is a constant reason for our charity to be thankful. I couldn't be prouder of each and every one"
- Karan Pollard, Volunteer Coordinator



I am sure I am not alone when I say I feel privileged to be a small part in the Link Visiting Scheme & so very proud of the award which is well deserved. I shall wear my medal with great pride!" - Link volunteer

Launching our Active Minds programme to support those living with dementia

'One in 14 people over the age of 65 have dementia, and the condition affects 1 in 6 people over 80. The number of people with dementia is increasing because people are living longer. It is estimated that by 2025, the number of people with dementia in the UK will be more than 1 million.' - NHS

We know that those living with dementia often withdraw from friends, hobbies and group activities as symptoms become more difficult to manage and loneliness can make life harder for the carer too.

Active Minds' group sessions are for older people who are experiencing symptoms of cognitive impairment such as forgetfulness, difficulty making decisions, increased anxiety and reduced ability to follow instructions.

The programme is based on some of the techniques we use in the delivery of Maintenance Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (MCST) for early-stage mild to moderate dementia sufferers. 'Active Minds' groups comprise no more than 10 older people who will participate in volunteer-facilitated activities such as quizzes, word games and discussions designed to stimulate thinking in an informal, reassuring environment with the key objective to improve confidence, make new friends and have fun. Each course consists of 8 consecutive weekly sessions. Older people can refer themselves or be referred via family members or professionals. There is a high demand for these sessions given the lack of interaction and stimulation so many of our older residents have suffered during the pandemic.

"Coming along to Active Minds was the highlight of my week and I've made wonderful new friends who are in the same boat as me. We now go along to Bowls and Pub Lunches together. My son says joining Link Visiting was the best thing that happened to me"
- Active Minds attendee



Launching our Keeping In Touch (KIT) programme, A new initiative to support the most vulnerable

Working closely with Wokingham Borough Council this project began with the aim to prevent the needs of older people escalating. With early intervention and effective signposting we hope to see older people living independently for longer with improved wellbeing and reducing and delaying the need for longer term statutory support.

Establishing and developing the Friendship Alliance

Partnership lies at the heart of the Friendship Alliance and was formed to tackle loneliness, recognising that working together enables better outcomes, increases capacity to meet the needs of communities and reduces health inequalities. The connections that our partners are making in our communities, be that delivering at grassroots level, promoting community events or working collaboratively all help to maximise impact and help to build a stronger, more connected and kinder community. This year we became the lead organisation in the Alliance.

The founding members are:

- The Link Visiting Scheme
- Age UK Berkshire
- Wokingham Volunteer Centre
- Involve Community Services

These organisations are all experts in their field with a strong understanding of the needs of our community and have been operating as an effective partnership since the inception of the Friendship Alliance three years ago. Alliance partners operate independently, continuing to deliver services as discrete charities.

Being part of Friendship Alliance framework, both complements, and greatly expands, the ability of WBC to engage with socially isolated people, increases visibility of the range of services available across the Borough and greatly helps charities to manage demand.

- 274 new activities which have been identified as friendly and welcoming have been promoted and shared
- 27 Friendship Tables in cafes and organisations across the borough, manned by volunteers. People have somewhere to go every day of the week where they will receive a warm welcome and meet a friendly face, so far reaching over 380 people.

Celebrating on Christmas Day

We know that for many, Christmas Is a difficult time If you are on your own. So we are committed to giving everyone we support and the wider community an opportunity to be together and celebrate. Along with a full Christmas programme of events, we also ensure anyone on their own on Christmas Day can enjoy some company, some delicious food and presents too!

This year, we continued to offer our Christmas Meal delivery service to just under 100 people who would otherwise not seen anyone with a huge team of over 50 volunteers. This Included a small team of professional chefs who donated their time and expertise to ensure our Link Friends had a delicious meal and a Christmas to remember.

"Sophie has been refusing help and struggling with her mental health but she was immensely touched by the food and gifts, and was particularly taken with the lovely blanket, which is by her side constantly. It helped her get through a particularly difficult day. The work you all do is absolutely invaluable." - Senior Social Worker

Clients benefitted from new services

We continued to innovate our services and made significant progress in their delivery.

Link to Nature

An ongoing seasonal programme designed to re-awaken an interest in nature, enrich friendships and improve wellbeing. Launched in early 2021 this project now reaches 45 Link Friends and their volunteers and we are delighted to work closely with Wokingham in Bloom and Wokingham Horticultural Society to deliver plants, recycle plant pots and hold special interest talks and outings.

Link Online

Opening doors to digital group activities, services and interests for Link Friends. We have delivered over 30 tablet computers to older people providing them with individual coaching and support to get them online and pursue their interests.
We have received 118 referrals and helped over 95 people with their own devices. We have 18 'digital' volunteers who work with each person on an individual basis.

Bill at 92yrs old wanted to learn how to use a tablet computer with enthusiasm. **"He has shown a real interest to learn about his tablet. He is getting a lot of enjoyment searching for classical music via Google and then viewing it in YouTube. This, alone, is a joy to see. He uses the voice command when searching on Google and helped to use Gmail and has been sending and receiving emails.**

We have done things together like attach a photo of his dog, Lady, and sent it to one of his daughters who only uses email. We've introduced him to Whatsapp too and he has been having fun sending/receiving messages, and has even had a video chat with another of his daughters."
- Digital volunteer





Friendship Groups

Regular get togethers, helping Link Friends to stay connected. We have 9 active groups ranging from a 'bridge club' a walking group, a group exploring local cafés and a 'grumpy mens club'! The focus is on broadening everyones social circle In a supportive group setting.

Link Express

Immediate support at a time of crisis. Link Express is an invaluable resource where we work with a small team of volunteers to call Link Friends who have been assessed but waiting for to be matched to a long term volunteer.

Chair Yoga

Helping Older people to get moving again after the long period of lockdown in a safe and welcoming environment.

Joan* came along to chair yoga and told us it was only the second time she has left her home since the lockdowns began. **"I was very anxious about coming along and last night had thought of all sorts of excuses I could make not to come, but in the end I got myself dressed, put my makeup on and made it! I really enjoyed the session and loved having a good chat to people afterwards. I'm so glad I was encouraged to make that first step to get out. Looking forward to the next one now!"** - Link Friend

We strengthened our reputation for collaboration and partnering and along with being the lead organisation in the Friendship Alliance we also...

Moved our offices to the Charity and Community Hub

We continued to work closely with our main strategic partner, Wokingham Borough Council and were delighted to move into the Charity and Community Hub in November 2021. The Hub now houses nine charities who are all delivering services in Wokingham Borough.

This has led to greater networking and partnership working in a town centre environment.

Became a member of the Wokingham Voluntary Community and Faith Sector Steering Group

This group is a network of charities who share common goals with their service users. These goals are to reduce the differences in health between different groups of people, to support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives, to ensure good mental health and wellbeing for all adults and to promote physically active communities.

Action groups are formed from this group and we are active members of the Loneliness and Isolation Action Group and the Voluntary Sector Action Group (VSAG).



"Thanks to you, the four walls have disappeared. My life is so different now"

Looking ahead

For the coming year, our priorities relate to:

Our clients:

- Focus on supporting older socially isolated residents in Wokingham Borough to ensure we can meet rising demand
- Maintain an 'open door' policy in terms of access to our services so that all can receive support and aim to reach a more diverse client group
- Enhance our support for other groups such as volunteers and carers recognising the wider impact of loneliness
- Focus on the cost of living crisis and work with our voluntary sector partners to ensure older people remain warm and well this winter.

Our services:

- Ensure clients and volunteers play a full and active role in service design
- Recognising the issue of cognitive decline, work with key partners to form the Wokingham Dementia Partnership and ensure Wokingham Borough is a dementia friendly place to live
- Continue to develop our Activity Programme ensuring we are inclusive to all

Our organisation:

- Exercise financial prudence to ensure we can continue to provide services for the long term
- Develop or organisational structure to ensure our staff team feel supported and equipped to perform their role to the best of their ability
- Increase our use of data to support decision-making and demonstrate impact

"We are so different but we get on so well. We just click and it's great. I really appreciated the extra support over Christmas, the lunch, the presents, everything. Every town should have a Link Visiting!"



Link stories

Julie*

Julie joined Link Visiting during the pandemic. In her 70's with several long term health conditions that means she can only mobilise with a wheelchair.

Loneliness took hold and Julie was very anxious when she was referred to us. She told us: "my confidence plummeted, suddenly I had no visitors and was so worried about how I was going to manage. Being part of Link Visiting has been life changing for me. I now feel safe, knowing I've got them to turn to and I love seeing my volunteer. We spoke on the phone during the pandemic 2 or more times a week and I really looked forward to her call.

We now meet up face to face and she takes me out sometimes but mostly I just love having someone to talk to about the things I worry about and she cheers me up and I hope I cheer her up too. I send her pictures of my dogs and talk about everything. I am so grateful for Link Visiting and helping me get through a very difficult and lonely time in my life".

John*

"When my wife moved into a care home, I was lost and struggled to get through the day. I worried about visiting my wife because often she didn't recognise me and this upset me so much.

With the help of Link Visiting, I now understand a little more about dementia and they have helped me build up a better relationship with the care home who now support me. I've got a volunteer who visits regularly and she brings so much brightness to my day. I'm so glad I'm a part of The Link Visiting Scheme."

Cathy*

"Before joining The Link, Cathy talked about feeling very lonely and not wanting to go out, she said she almost became agoraphobic. She explained that she would have a little weep because she was feeling so lonely especially after her best friend had also passed away. When Cathy referred herself, she confided that she was 'feeling absolutely desperate'. We linked Cathy up with Sally and they both talk about how well they get on: "Sally is absolutely brilliant, and I am really, really pleased with how things are going. Sally has taken me on several walks and it has given me the determination to get fitter. I've now joined a local fitness and swim class. My confidence has already increased since joining the link and meeting Sally. I am so grateful to the Link."

Alex

The Link team do a fantastic job supporting our Link friends and volunteers. I started volunteering with the Link through the Community Kitchen Project in 2020 and then being a telephone buddy. In all aspects of my interaction with our Link Friends I believe I get more out of it, in terms of value and feel good, than I put in. Its great and I would highly recommend volunteering and making new friends.

*names changed



Chair's statement

The lives of our Link Friends, and the services we provide, have been hugely impacted by the pandemic, but as we all emerged from lockdown this year there is every reason to feel confident The Link Visiting Scheme (The Link) can be even more effective in confronting loneliness and helping transform lives in the community through friendship!

At the start of 2021, 28% of Link Friends were under 75 years old with 8% aged under 60. Although the chronically lonely (those who feel often or always alone), particularly those living alone, are the group we can offer most help to, our services are not restricted to only this category. Our "open door" policy means no one is turned away without considering how we can help directly, via the Friendship Alliance, or through signposting to other organisations.

Our strategy this year defined priorities, including:

- Link Friend, staff team and volunteer well-being
- Reablement of our Link Friends
- Additional help for Link Friends with dementia
- Successfully move to the new charity hub
- Managing increased demand and growth

We have already made substantial inroads in all these areas. We started the re-launch of our activities in the second half of the year, understanding that extra care was needed with many Link Friends nervous at the prospect of re-engaging in the community post lockdown. The team's "reablement" approach has shown great dividends and one by one we have rolled out our much-loved activities like pub lunches and bowls and introduced new ones like Link to Nature and Active Minds.

We celebrated winning both WBC competitive tenders we entered, gaining substantially increased funding for our core befriending service as well as new funding for our role as lead charity of The Friendship Alliance, expanding our ability to confront loneliness in partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Involve Community Services and the Wokingham Volunteer Centre.

We do face some major challenges, however. Whereas the pandemic initially led to an increase in the availability of volunteers, "Covid fatigue" has led to the reverse effect post lockdown. Demand for our services is rising while finding new volunteers is increasingly challenging. This year we said farewell to four of our most experienced team members who shared over 20 years of experience. While they will all be sadly missed and have played a huge part in creating a great local charity, we will treat the task of finding new team members as an opportunity to reorganise, refocus and build an even better Link!

I would like to thank fellow trustees for the tremendous support they have given to the staff team and volunteers over what has been another challenging year. I would particularly like to thank Anne Constable, who resigned as a trustee and volunteer this year for personal reasons. Her contribution to the charity will be missed in many ways, not least for the real empathy and understanding of the needs of our Link Friends she brought to her roles. On behalf of all trustees, I want to offer huge thanks to our CEO Marjie Walker and her entire team, past and present, for creating such a fantastic local charity, giving us the real privilege of playing our part in helping so many Link Friends play an active part in the community.

Recognition across Wokingham Borough of the positive outcomes delivered by The Link to some of the most vulnerable in our community continues to grow. We look forward to confronting loneliness through celebrating friendship for many years to come, bringing as many smiles as possible to the faces of our Link Friends! We also look forward to sharing our stories of Friendship widely so we can spread the word and help others transform lives with friendship!



John Mallaghan
Chair of Trustees



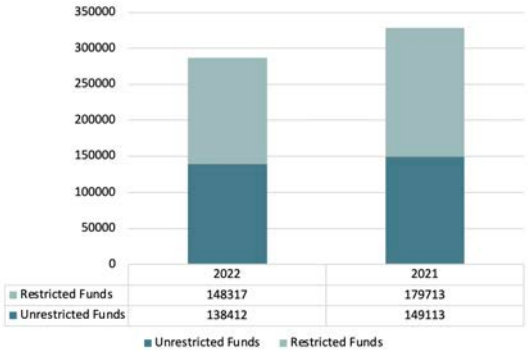
Financial review

Overview

Following two years of extraordinary growth during and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, our focus turned towards the reablement of our Link friends as restrictions began to ease. Our total income was sufficient to cover our expenditure for 21-22 which had increased by 15.5% (see section below), despite income dipping 12.8% to £286,729 compared to 2020-21 (£328,828).

Link Visiting Scheme works very closely with Wokingham Borough Council in providing our services to local residents, and we were delighted to secure continued funding from this important revenue source for a further three years. Whilst contracts continue to be negotiated, these grants will assist enormously in meeting our expenditure which has remained at significantly elevated levels compared to the period immediately pre-pandemic.

Restricted v unrestricted income



Income from grants

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) continued to be our largest single source of funding, contributing in total £162,094 (2021: £117,870) which accounts for 56.5% (2021: 36%) of our total income.

We received funds from a further 46 organisations (2021: 21 organisations) which reflects the significant efforts of our team to meet our fundraising target. These other sources were generally smaller in nature than last year and ranged in size from £15,000 down to less than a hundred pounds, yet we are most grateful for every single donation received, all of which go towards enabling us to continue our work. List of donors can be found in note 2. Total income from grants for the year fell by 11.4% to £240,805 (2021: £271,938). This was principally due to a substantial one-off grant in 2021 which was not repeated this year. Receipts from other fundraising activities remain significantly reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions putting such activities on hold.

Other income

Continued COVID-19 related difficulties meant that our own fundraising efforts from events and activities remained substantially depressed from pre-pandemic levels at £3,276 (2021: £1,251). The gradual reopening of such events continuing to perpetuate this effect. Personal giving has to a large extent helped to offset the effect of the COVID-related limitations to fundraising during the pandemic, and despite falling back significantly has continued to represent a meaningful proportion of our income for the year at £42,648 (2021: £55,638). We are very grateful to everyone who has kindly given their support to Link Visiting during the period.

Expenditure

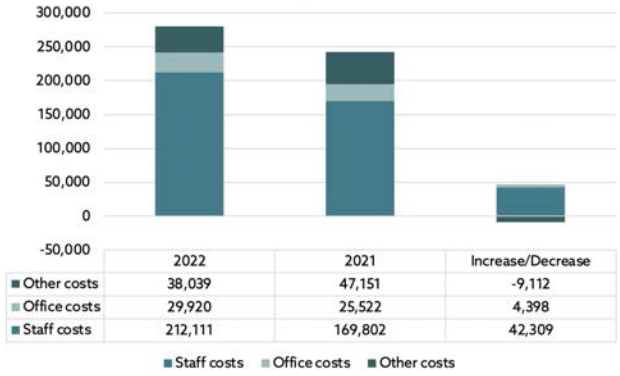
Our expenditure on charitable activities during the period increased to £280,069 (£2021: £242,476), representing a 15.5% increase to our already elevated expenditure levels compared to the pre-pandemic period. Office costs increased 17.2% compared to 2021 due to a move from our independent offices to the more modern and collaborative Charity Hub. The largest increase was in staff costs which totalled £212,111 (2021: £169,802), representing an uplift of 24.9%.

The key reasons for the increase in staff costs during the period were:

- A pay increase of 5% across the staff team, reflecting the high level of living costs inflation over the period, and our desire to ensure our pay scales remain competitive in the marketplace.
- A discretionary fund of £2,000 was granted to the CEO to reward outstanding performance to individual team members.
- The team size increased markedly during the previous period although some of these additional

- team members joined part-way through the year. Although headcount did not increase during this reporting period, this is the first full-year of a team staffed to current levels.
- The staff-related employment expenses such as pension and social security commitments, which are included within staff costs, increased accordingly.
- As new members joined the team, additional training costs were incurred.
- Mileage and parking expenses were almost 4 times the level of last year, reflecting the lifting of lockdown restrictions and the requirements for the team to be more mobile.

Expenditure 2022 v 2021



	2022	2021	Increase/Decrease
Other costs	38,039	47,151	-9,112
Office costs	29,920	25,522	4,398
Staff costs	212,111	169,802	42,309

Financial position

Net assets have increased slightly from £366,065 on 31st March 2021 to £372,725 on 31st March 2022. Cash resources as at the same date have increased from £351,650 to £366,849. Restricted funds have increased from £93,643 to £119,053, whilst Unrestricted funds have reduced from £272,423 to £253,673. Of this Unrestricted figure, the trustees resolved in 2019 to designate £150,000 of the large legacy bequest received in 2018 for a major project as discussed in previous annual reports.

Investment policy

The assets of the charity are currently held in current and deposit bank accounts. Should other opportunities arise to invest surplus funds then the trustees would discuss these, however at the present time longer term investment is inappropriate. This remains under review.

Reserves policy

The trustees continue to monitor the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation, recognising the need to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned emergencies and other expenditure.

On 31 March 2022, general funds were £103,673 which equates to 37% of the total expenditure incurred in the year then ended. The trustees are satisfied that this level of funds is sufficient to meet the charity's on-going activities for the time being although it is at the lower end of the level with which we are comfortable.

The trustees aim to increase the level of reserves to more than 6 months' total expenditure given the current economic environment, uncertainties created by the cost-of-living crisis and taking into consideration the rapid rate of increase in our total expenditure. This will remain under review in the coming years.

Legacy bequest – designated funds

In 2018 the charity received a large and unexpected legacy in the sum of £160,361. At the time, the Trustees resolved to designate £150,000 of this for a major project, the details of which to be decided. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic which ensued, it was not possible to progress these plans and the amount remains designated within our unrestricted funds. This is to be further reviewed by the Trustees in the coming year to decide how best to deploy these available funds.

Risk statement

The trustees have reviewed the risks to which a medium-sized charity operating with a small number of full-time and part-time employees is exposed. Appropriate procedures are in place to identify, monitor and review these risks on a regular basis.



Michael Roberts
Finance Trustee



Trustees report

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 (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity 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 in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust Deed.

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.

This report was approved by the trustees on 12/12/2022 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee

Michael Roberts
Trustee

Our trustees

- Mr John Mallaghan – Chairman (Appointed 16 June 2021)
- Mrs A. Gayle Manicom (Appointed June 2018)
- Ms Laura Mitchell (Appointed 9 December 2020)
- Mr Michael Roberts (Appointed 9 December 2020)

Other trustees who served during the year:

- Mr S.T.M. Elliott – Chairman and Secretary (Resigned 16 June 2021)
- Mrs Anne Constable (Resigned 10 March 2022)

A trustee and a director of the company are the same. The appointments and resignations of the above persons have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission as appropriate.

Trustees' report

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Company's Memorandum of Association.

Independent Examiner's report

Year ended 31 March 2022

I report on the financial statements of the Company for the year ended 31st March 2022 which are set out on pages 15 to 22. This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work on this report.

Respective responsibilities of trustees (directors) and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

1. Examine the financial statements under section 145 of the Act.
2. Follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and
3. To state whether any particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records.

It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
- To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
- To prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act. have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



Timothy Randall BA ACMA
Independent Examiner

40 Oxford Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG41 2XZ

Date: 12/12/2022

Reference and administrative details

Governing document

Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated 18 August 2010.

Objectives and activities

Summary of the objectives of the Company: Our mission is outlined in the 'About us' section of the report. Well over 1,000 Link Friends have benefited over the years from our services. We aim to give their lives more purpose and joy, enabling them to integrate into the community and build new, lasting friendships.

Public benefit

The Company's objectives and principal activities are described above. All our activities focus on combatting social isolation in the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

The outcomes that the Company aims to deliver through its services to benefit individuals, our communities, and the civic purse are to:

- Improve activity and mobility for clients
- Prevent depression and achieve improved mental health
- Delay or postpone need to enter residential care homes
- Delay or postpone need for provision of care at home
- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting independent living
- Improve volunteer social involvement and engagement
- Indirectly support carers and statutory services.

Principal activities

The Company's principal activity is the provision of a befriending service for lonely, isolated elderly people who benefit from a regular home visit from one of the Company's volunteers. The Company assesses those clients that are referred to it from doctors, families and other care agencies, then recruits, DBS checks and trains volunteers from the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and matches up a volunteer (Befriender) and client (Link Friend), based on location, common interests and hobbies. A regular programme of reassessment is also undertaken.

Link Visiting Scheme
(LVS) A company limited by guarantee

Registered charity number
1139248

Company registration number
07349468 in England and Wales

Registered office
The Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erfstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Correspondence address
The Link Visiting Scheme, The Charity and Community Hub, Waterford House, Erfstadt Court, Wokingham, RG40 2YF

Independent examiner
Mr. T. Randall BA ACMA
40 Oxford Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG41 2XZ

Company Secretary
Michael Roberts

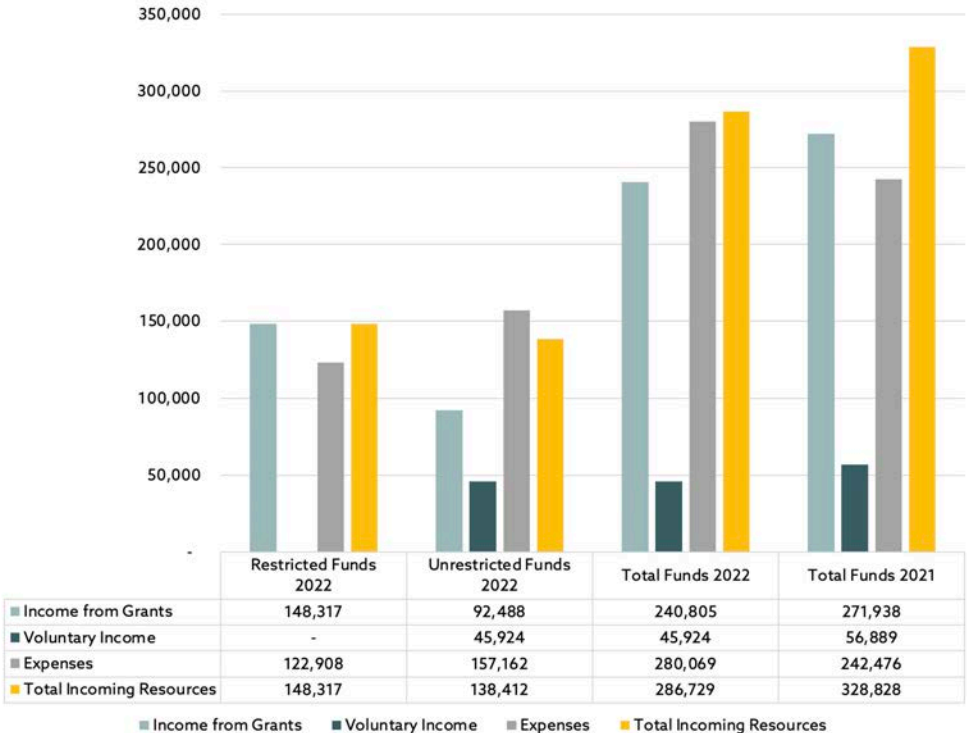
Bankers
The Co-operative Bank Plc, PO Box 200,
Skelmersdale, WN8 6DG

Financial statements

Statement of financial activities (incorporating income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2022

	Note	Restricted Funds 2022	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
		£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources					
Income from Grants	2	**148,317**	**92,488**	**240,805**	271,938
Voluntary Income	3	**-**	**45,924**	**45,924**	56,889
Total Incoming Resources		**148,317**	**138,412**	**286,729**	328,828
Resources Expended					
Charitable Activities	4	**122,908**	**157,162**	**280,069**	242,476
Total Resources Expend	5	**122,908**	**157,162**	**280,069**	242,476
Movement in Total Funds for the Year - Net Income for the Year		**25,409**	**- 18,750**	**6,659**	86,352
Total Funds at 1st Ap	10	**93,643**	**272,423**	**366,066**	279,713
Total Funds At 31st March 2022		**119,053**	**253,673**	**372,725**	366,065

Income and expenditure summary



	Restricted Funds 2022	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021
Income from Grants	148,317	92,488	240,805	271,938
Voluntary Income	-	45,924	45,924	56,889
Expenses	122,908	157,162	280,069	242,476
Total Incoming Resources	148,317	138,412	286,729	328,828

Balance sheet as of 31 March 2022

		2022		2021	
Current Assets		£	£	£	£
Receivables	7	8,832		18,050	
Cash at bank		366,849		351,650	
Total		375,681		369,700	
Current Liabilities					
Payables	8	-2,957		-3,636	
Net Current Assets			372,723		366,064
Net Assets	9		372,723		366,064
Charity Funds					
Restricted Funds	10		119,053		93,643
Unrestricted Funds					
- Designated Funds	10	150,000		150,000	
- General Funds	10	103,670		122,421	
			253,670		272,421
			372,723		366,064

The notes on pages 18 to 22 form part of these financial statements. The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 12/12/2022 and signed on their behalf by:

John Mallaghan
Trustee

Michael Roberts
Trustee

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

Basis of preparation
Link Visiting Scheme is a public benefit entity. The financial statements have been prepared in compliance with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), and FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis. There are no material uncertainties in respect of the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future, based on latest strategic plans and financial forecasts. The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and on an accruals basis.

Fund accounting
General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds are set aside at the discretion of the Trustees for specific purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes and are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund.

Income
All income is included in the statement of financial activities when: the charity is legally entitled to the income; the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy; and any performance conditions attached to the item of income have been met or are fully within the control of the charity.

Income arising from legacies is recognised when entitlement is established and the value can be measured reliably.

Expenditure
All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Estimation uncertainties
The Trustees have not made any significant judgements, estimates or assumptions about the carrying value of assets and liabilities when applying the charity's accounting policies.

2. Income from grants

We acknowledge and extend a heartfelt thanks to the following organisations who kindly supported The Link Visiting Scheme during the reporting period.

- Albert Hunt Trust
- Aviva Community Fund
- Barkham Parish Council
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Berkshire NHS Trust
- Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust
- Charvil Parish Council
- Earley Town Council
- Ecclesiastical Movement for Good
- Edward Gostling Foundation
- Englefield Charitable Trust
- February Foundation
- Finchampstead Parish Council
- Francis Winham Foundation
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Groundwork UK
- Haines Hill Charitable Trust
- Hurst Parish Council
- Masonic Charitable Foundation
- Morris Beneficent Fund
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Shanly Foundation
- Shinfield Parish Council
- Sonning Parish Council
- Tatiana Korsicova
- Wargrave Parish Council
- WG Edwards Charitable Foundation
- Winnersh Parish Council
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Wokingham Town Council
- Wokingham United Charities
- Wokingham Without Parish Council
- Woodley Town Council

3. Voluntary income

	Restricted Funds 2022 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
Donations		**42,648**	**42,648**	55,638
Income from charitable activities		**2,829**	**2,829**	272
Fundraising		**447**	**447**	979
	-	**45,924**	**45,924**	56,889
Legacy income income			**-**	-
Total voluntary Income	**-**	**45,924**	**45,924**	56,889

4. Analysis of expenditure

Summary

	2022	2021	Difference
Staff costs	**212,111**	**169,802**	**42,309**
Office costs	**29,920**	**25,522**	**4,398**
Other costs	**38,039**	**47,151**	**-9,112**
Total	**280,070**	242,475	**37,595**

4.1 Staff costs

	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Wages and Salaries	**200,734**	160,274
Social Security Costs	**11,377**	9,529
	212,111	169,802
Average monthly number of part time employees	**9**	9

4.2 Office costs

Office Costs	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Telephone & IT Costs	**13,466**	12,168
Office Rent incl Elec & cleaning	**4,933**	3,662
Printing/Postage/Stationery	**6,519**	7,195
Insurance	**3,190**	536
Office/Computer Equipment	**1,500**	1,649
Payroll services	**312**	312
Other		
	29,920	25,522

4.3 Other costs

Other Costs	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Social Events and Activities for Clients	**12,347**	26,719
Staff Training	**991**	324
Recruitment	**175**	-
Accountancy and Consultancy Fees	**19,716**	12,979
Travel & Mileage	**1,653**	431
Volunteer Training/Expenses/Gifts	**865**	155
Covid related and other costs	**1,647**	5,428
DBS Checks	**578**	926
Professional Memberships	**210**	35
TV License	**(142)**	154
Other	**-**	-
	38,040	47,151

5. Transactions with trustees and key personnel

No trustee received any remuneration or fees in the current or preceding year. The daughter of the CEO received consultancy fees of £6,081 (2021: £5,988) for work in relation to website design, communications and marketing. These fees are included within "Other costs: Accountancy and consultancy" as shown in note 4.3.

6. Tangible fixed assets

There are no tangible fixed assets. The Company expense all individual capital items under £500 in the period of purchase.

Receivables, payables and funds

7. Receivables

	2022 £	2021 £
Prepayment and Accrued income	**8,832**	**3,999**
		-
	8,832	**3,999**

8. Payables – current liabilities

Social security and other taxes £2,957 (2021 £3,636)

9. Net assets by fund

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds			
	Restricted	Designated	General	Total	Total Funds
	£	£	£	£	£
31st March 2022					
Receivables			8832	8832	8832
Cash at Bank	119053	150000	97798	247798	366851
Payables			-2957	-2957	-2957
Net Assets	119053	150000	103673	253673	372725

10. Net movement in funds

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds			Total Funds
	Restricted	Designated	General	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£
Balance at 31st March 2021	93643	150000	122422	272423	366066
Income	148317	0	138412	138412	286729
Expenditure	-122908	0	-157162	-157162	-280070
Transfer between funds	0	0	0	0	0
Balance as at 31st March 2022	119053	150000	103673	253673	372725

LINK VISITING SCHEME

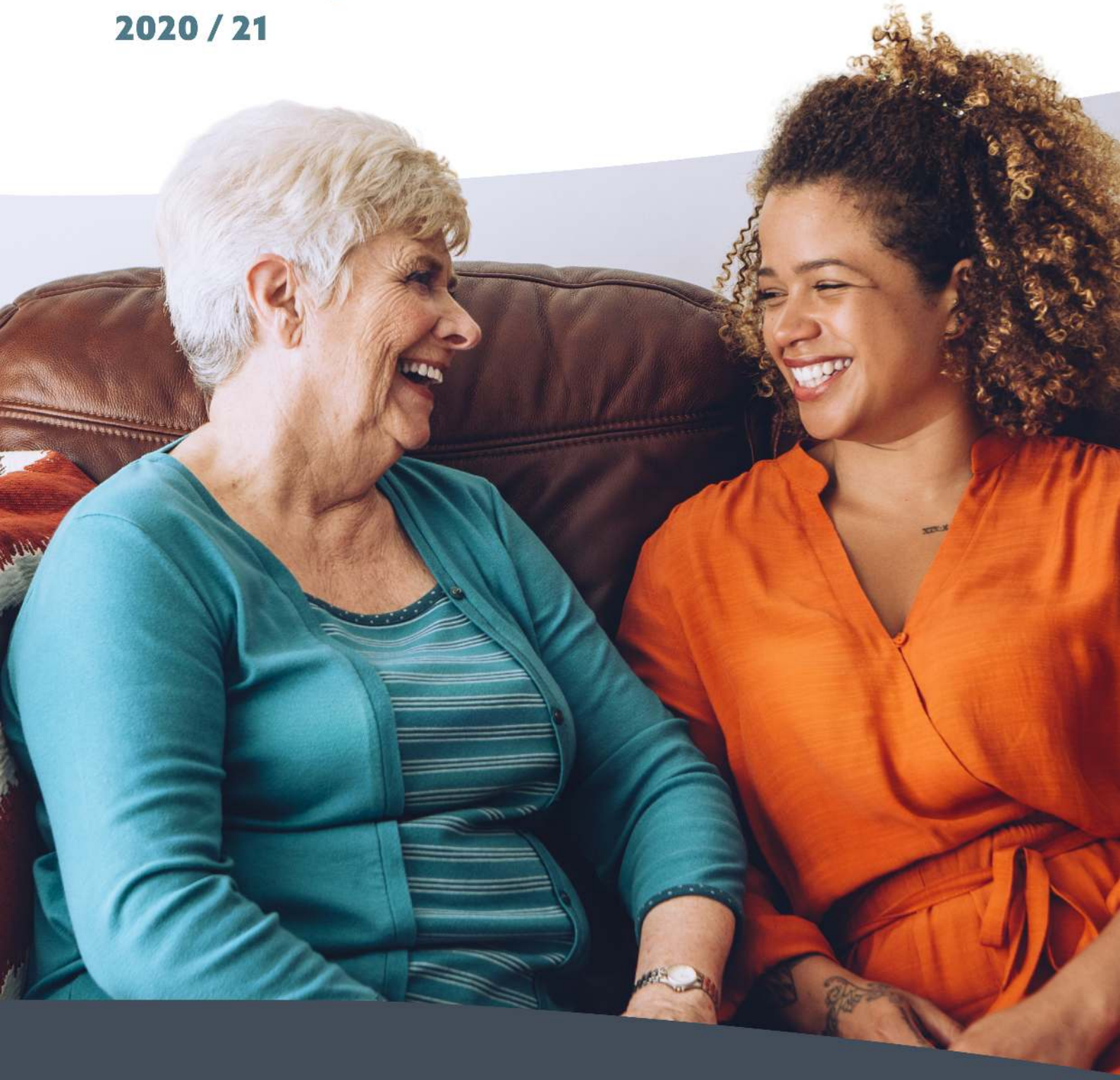
England & Wales - Charity number 1139248

Accounts

The Link Visiting Scheme

Annual Report and Accounts

2020 / 21



the Link visiting scheme

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Confronting loneliness,
celebrating friendship.

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The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The Link Visiting Scheme are proud recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2021

Introduction

Welcome to the 2020 / 21 Annual Report and Accounts from The Link Visiting Scheme, the befriending charity in Wokingham Borough. We're excited to share the impact of our work on confronting loneliness and isolation by creating connections that transform lives.

Loneliness is seen by many as one of the largest health concerns we face. It's painful. It's harmful to our bodies. It puts us at a greater risk of developing dementia, heart disease and depression. It's so serious that it even shortens our life expectancy.

- **Loneliness is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day** (1)
- **76% of GPs report that between one and five patients a day attend primarily because they are lonely** (2)
- **In Wokingham, one in three over 65s live alone** (3)

About us

The Link Visiting Scheme was founded more than 20 years ago to help reduce loneliness amongst older people and to bring generations together in friendship and shared experiences. We have seen the positive impact of friendship where we provide quality time, a listening ear and focused attention on individuals who so often feel invisible and forgotten. We have seen thousands of lives transformed, and in 2020/21, we continued to reach hundreds of older people through our work. We could not offer this life-changing help without our volunteers, partners, and employees.

We have a unique understanding, not only of the root causes and impacts of loneliness, but also how best to tackle them in the local area. Our expertise is based on years of experience and collaboration with, and learning from, other organisations both locally and nationally.

Our focus is on promoting and enabling friendships in everything we do. When we receive a referral for someone in the grips of loneliness, we need to respond quickly, with sensitivity, kindness and skill.

We have developed a pathway that enables us to respond quickly to a referral and support the individual on their journey to establishing long term friendships and broadening social circles to include both interactive activities and events. We take people from isolation to a feeling of social wellbeing in their local community with local volunteers.

In April 2021 we were delighted and honoured to have been awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. Equivalent to an MBE, it is awarded for life. We also received special recognition for our response to the pandemic. We could not be prouder of our incredible volunteer family, whose hard work and dedication are at the heart of all we do.



(1,2) Source: Campaign to End Loneliness | (3) Source: POPPI

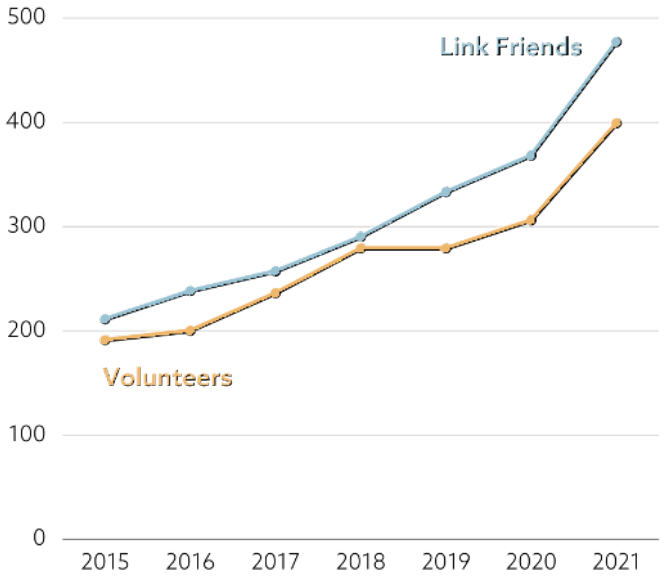
Improving social wellbeing

We have developed a specialist pathway to support people in their journey to being better connected. As social wellbeing increases, the need for support from outside agencies reduces.



We provide a range of friendship-based services within our pathway framework, including telephone-based interim support 'Link Express', long-term one-to-one befriending, small social groups 'Friendship Groups' and larger community events.

Using our highly personalised approach, we evaluate how we can best assist our Link Friends achieve social wellbeing using our innovative pathway approach.



We see the transformative impact of our work daily and receive wonderful feedback from our Link Friends who consistently rate our services highly (79% rating us excellent in our last survey) and allow us to assess their social wellbeing regularly.

Over 50% of new clients report an improvement in social wellbeing in the first 12 months of becoming a Link Friend



Making a difference

We are well-embedded in our local community receiving referrals from many sources including Community Navigators and NHS Social Prescribers. Demand for our services continues to grow, with referrals increasing from an average of five per month pre-pandemic to 30. Since 2016 the number of Link Friends has doubled and in the past 12 months numbers grew by 30%.

Key achievements

We played a central role supporting our community...

When the pandemic struck, we felt it essential to play a key role supporting the most vulnerable within our community. Wokingham Borough Council appointed the Link Visting Scheme as the lead partner for welfare checks and social support as part of a coordinated Community Response.

This was a huge challenge for the organisation involving screening over 600 potential volunteers, conducting regular welfare calls for 3,000 clinically vulnerable shielding residents and making regular social support calls with over 550 isolated residents.



Our work was highlighted by James Sunderland, Bracknell MP in the House of Commons. In March 2021, we were so pleased that our extensive efforts were recognised by winning the Berkshire High Sheriff Award for 'Supporting the Isolated' during lockdown.

We adapted to make sure we could continue to support our clients...

For an organisation that relies on bringing people together, the impact of the pandemic was huge. We had to rapidly change our service model and our internal organisation to ensure we could continue to support our Link Friends. Steps taken included:

- Directing our volunteers to use safe methods of staying in regular contact, using telephone, video conferencing and socially distanced doorstep visiting, in strict adherence with government guidelines and with support from our Public Health team.
- Rapid innovation to provide in-home services such as a jigsaw exchange service, regular newsletters containing messages of reassurance and activities, delivery of cakes and other goodies; all designed to reassure Link Friends they hadn't been forgotten.
- Complete redesign of our Christmas programme to be home-based including gifts for all, telephone support throughout the Christmas period and a hand delivered hot lunch and goody bags for those alone on Christmas Day.
- Helping those with who had lost mobility and confidence due to prolonged periods of lockdown by working with the local council Sports and Leisure team and developing the 'Moving with Confidence' project.

3,000
clinically vulnerable, shielding residents supported

16,000
welfare check calls made during the first lockdown

Clients benefitted from new services...

We continued to innovate our services and made significant progress in their delivery.

"In these difficult times it is such a pleasure to watch together with my volunteer, the seeds grow into plants and nurture them"



Link to Nature

An ongoing seasonal programme designed to re-awaken an interest in nature, enrich friendships and improve well-being. Launched in early 2021 with bird feeders, we have delivered over 400 sets of plants and seeds to Link Friends and volunteers, supported by Wokingham in Bloom and Wokingham Horticultural Society.



Link Online

Opening doors to digital group activities, services and interests for Link Friends. Launched in late 2020, we initially helped a small number of Link Friends to become digitally competent. We've since expanded the programme to include more clients and recruited volunteers to assist with coaching and support.



Friendship Groups Regular get togethers, helping Link Friends to stay connected. Our first Friendship Group took place late 2020, with seven groups formed by the end of March 2021 and 27 virtual meet ups having taken place by then. One Link Friend told us their group has "really done me a lot of good - conversation, seeing people and listening to people".



Link Express Immediate support at a time of crisis. Link Express became an invaluable resource during the pandemic, with an extended team of volunteers making hundreds of social support calls to lonely and socially isolated residents as part of our role in the Community Response.

We strengthened our reputation for collaboration and partnering...

We continued to work closely with our main strategic partner, Wokingham Borough Council and the strength of our relationship was evidenced during the pandemic where we collaborated very closely to support the wider community.

Recognising that the issue of loneliness affects all ages, we launched an exciting new initiative, the Friendship Alliance, with partnership at the heart. Together with Age UK Berkshire, Involve Community Services, and the Wokingham Volunteer Centre, we are addressing loneliness and improving the mental and physical well-being of residents in Wokingham Borough.

In January 2021 we agreed to become a member of the new Voluntary Sector Hub in Wokingham Town Centre. We'll be relocating in late 2021 to a shared facility with other voluntary sector organisations helping us to further achieve our aim of stronger partnership working.

"What you are doing is immeasurable, literally a lifeline. Brilliant people."



Looking ahead

For the coming year, our priorities relate to dealing with the legacy of COVID-19 and keeping up with the demand for our services. COVID-19 has heightened the problem of loneliness and has severely impacted physical and mental health.

We'll be running a comprehensive programme designed to reconnect our Link Friends to the wider community, tackling reduced mobility by providing chair yoga sessions, introducing new 'Active Minds' groups for those experiencing cognitive decline and recruiting new volunteers to grow our wonderful volunteer base.

Longer term, our trustees and senior management team will lead the organisation based on our strategic priorities:

Our clients:

- Focus on supporting older socially isolated residents in Wokingham Borough to ensure we can meet rising demand
- Maintain an 'open door' policy in terms of access to our services so that all can receive support
- Enhance our support for other groups such as volunteers and carers recognising the wider impact of loneliness

Our services:

- Ensure clients and volunteers play a full and active role in service design
- Recognising the issue of cognitive decline, introduce additional services for those affected
- Collaborate and partner with other organisations as part of our growth strategy

Our organisation:

- Exercise financial prudence to ensure we can continue to provide services for the long term
- Maximise the benefits of technology for service delivery and organisation efficiency
- Increase our use of data to support decision-making and demonstrate impact

"My volunteer's warm welcome restored my confidence. With frequent visits and activities, I've managed to get back on my feet. I cannot thank them enough for helping me get my life back again."



Link stories

Bob*

Bob is 80 years old and is a full-time carer for his wheelchair-bound wife who suffers from dementia. He was referred to us because he was feeling lonely and isolated. Within three weeks we paired him with one of our specialist, short term Link Express service volunteers.

Bob started to feel better almost straight away, "I was feeling down in the dumps at times. It is not very friendly where we live, no-one really talks to you unless you bump into each other. They do not knock on the door to check if you are ok. It was nice to have someone to talk to when Frank* called and to share the load. It was nice that someone called to ask how you are." Bob is now linked up with a long-term one-to-one befriender.

Iris*

Iris is 90 years old and has a daughter and grand children who live in Australia. Iris was initially cautious about the idea of learning new technology but late in life it has become a life changer for her.

With coaching and support from our Link Online service, she is now able to use Zoom to call her family and can 'see' them for the first time in over two years. The experience has given a huge boost to her morale and general wellbeing.

Simon*

Simon's sister contacted the Link because she was concerned about her brother's mental health and general wellbeing. We carefully matched Simon with a one-to-one befriender who has worked hard to build a good relationship with him and, recognising his love of gardening, encouraged him to join our Link to Nature programme.

Emma

Connecting with people at a critical point in their lives, and sharing their situation even just for a little while is a rare privilege. It has been humbling to hear the struggles people face, and very rewarding to be able to listen and to point them towards the right help. Volunteering for The Link has been significant and meaningful. Knowing that I help isolated people feel more connected and know that they are not forgotten has made this all worthwhile. It has been a real pleasure to volunteer for The Link. It has been a super organised, friendly and very effective campaign to reach and assist isolated people. It works like clockwork - I feel well supported and communication is great.

*names changed



Chair's statement

The year has been by far the most challenging ever faced by The Link Visiting Scheme (The Link). Despite the enormous challenges posed by the pandemic, we have emerged in 2021 in a strong position – undeniably as strong as the charity has ever been in both our commercial position and the depth and quality of our staff and volunteer teams. We have become a more trusted and visible presence in the community and are seen by Wokingham Borough Council as a key strategic partner. However, staff have been placed under great pressure in the last year, and our operational processes have seen major transformation.

Over the last two years we have doubled our size and cost-base, placing huge pressure on fundraising efforts. COVID-19 and the lockdown had a huge impact on our services, and directly on our more vulnerable Link Friends. We redesigned our face-to-face befriending service to telephone support and grew the number of lonely and isolated people we supportedfrom 350 to more than 700 during the height of the pandemic. We also joined forces with other local charities and Wokingham Borough Council to form the 'Community Response Team' and played our part by calling almost 3000 people on the shielded list offering support. I would like to thank Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of trustees for the additional funding granted to cover our increased costs incurred.

The dedication, hard work and consistently great outcomes delivered from the staff team have been formally recognised by the Borough Council Adult Social Care team, the Town Council and mayor, by winning the Berkshire High Sheriff award for helping the isolated during the pandemic and most recently by receiving the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the 'MBE for voluntary groups'. The growth in demand, team size, and partnership working has been recognised by trustees.

We are very happy to announce that Marjie Walker, who has managed operations from the start of the charity, has been promoted to the new role of Chief Executive Officer. Trustees will offer Marjie all the help she needs to be as successful for the next 13 years as she has been for the last 13! We face some major challenges in the coming year, including managing our rapid growth and operational change, delivering a sustainable fundraising strategy, and recruiting and retaining volunteers. We will move to the new Voluntary Sector Hub in Wokingham Town Centre, a facility shared by many local charities, offering us many advantages, including opportunities to develop new partnerships.

The Link Visiting Scheme has an exciting future. Our role in the community response to COVID-19 has given the charity a unique opportunity to re-think how we can deliver services even more efficiently and effectively. A key goal of the next 12 months is to minimise the risk posed by our predicted growth and the parallel need for change and evolution in service delivery. I would like to thank fellow trustees for the tremendous support they have given to the staff team and volunteers over what has been a challenging year. We are truly fortunate to have such breadth of expertise and professionalism available to the charity. I would particularly like to offer my enormous gratitude to the departing Chair, Simon Elliott, leaving us after eight productive years in the role, overseeing a critical period of growth and change for the charity, and now planning a new adventurous episode with his family in Australia.

As the new chair of trustees, I look forward playing a key role in stakeholder engagement, representing an outstanding charity in the community, and helping the team get maximum benefit from trustees. I will also continue to visit my two Link Friends and help where I can with activities, seeing first-hand the fantastic outcomes we deliver every day!



John Mallaghan
Chair of Trustees



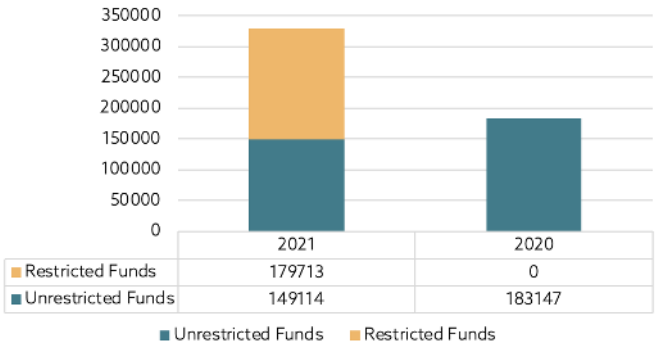
Financial review

Overview

In our 2020 report, we highlighted that an increased focus on fundraising had been successful, with income increasing by over 80% to £183,147 in 2020. Due of the extraordinary impact of COVID-19 and the partnership role that the Link has undertaken with Wokingham Borough Council and others, our total income has again grown by 80% to £328,828 in 2021.

However, in a significant change in our funding environment, the majority of the additional income has been provided to deliver new, COVID-19-related services contractually specified by the fund-givers, mostly on behalf of WBC, with substantially increased expenditure as a result. Much of these costs have been in relation to staff, to cope with the additional services and significantly increased demand, which is expected to continue. This is explained further overleaf. We have accounted separately for restricted funds, distinguishing them from the normal unrestricted funding that we received for our core services.

Restricted v unrestricted income



	2021	2020
Restricted Funds	179713	0
Unrestricted Funds	149114	183147

Income from grants

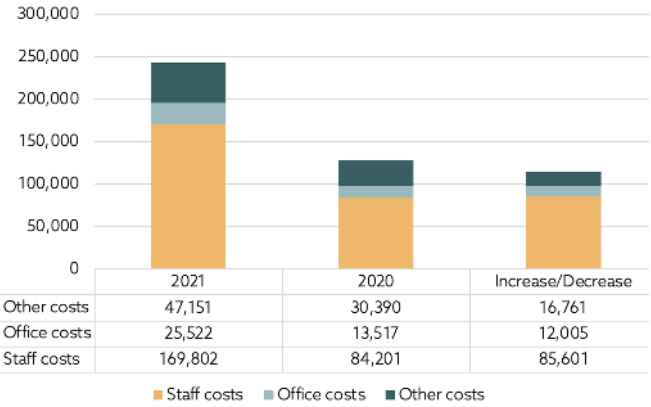
Our single most significant provider continues to be Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). In total, WBC provided £117,870 (2020: £55,530) in both Restricted and Unrestricted funding, which is 36% (2020: 30%) of our total income. In addition to the funds from WBC, funding was received from a further 21 organisations. These range in size from £76,493 from the National Lottery to the many donations of a few hundred pounds each from other Town and Parish Councils. Details of these donors are set out in note 2, and we acknowledge our gratitude for each and every one.

Total income from grants increased by 124% to £271,938 (2020: £121,076). COVID-19 severely damaged our ability to raise voluntary income. The fundraising activities aimed at individuals were largely put on hold during the year, and we were unable to operate our charitable activities (for example, certain courses) because of COVID-19. Our income from these areas fell by 95% to £1,251 (2020: £27,798) However, in a year of great pressures and challenges on the finances of nearly all elements of society, many individuals increased their support, with donations rising by 62% to £55,638 (2020: £34,273). Details are set out in note 3 and we acknowledge our gratitude for their amazing generosity. Taken together, the total Voluntary Income declined 8% to £56,889 (2020: £62,071).

Expenditure

Details of our expenditure on charitable activities is set out in note 4, and shows an 89% increase of £114,368 from £128,108 in 2020 to £242,476 in 2021.

Expenditure 2021 v 2020



	2021	2020	Increase/Decrease
Other costs	47,151	30,390	16,761
Office costs	25,522	13,517	12,005
Staff costs	169,802	84,201	85,601

Office costs increased by £12,005, due to an increase in variable costs related to the provision of office services to staff. The largest increase was in the cost of provision of telephony and IT to staff members obliged to work from home during COVID-19 restrictions and the engagement of much needed professional IT services.

Staff costs increased due to:

1. A 1.2% pay increase for all staff with effect from 1 April 2020. This compares with the 2% increase given on 1 April 2019.
2. Additional pay increases for certain roles in line with the benchmark salary scales introduced by the trustees in July 2019.
3. Some team members increased their working hours compared with the prior year.
4. Further changes in personnel, roles, and responsibilities during the year, bringing a broader skill set to the team to meet the wider range of services being provided.
5. Increase in staff numbers during the year, to deliver the services required by the restricted funding. The average monthly number of staff increased from 5 to 9.
6. Additional pension and social security costs incurred.

Financial position

Net assets have increased from £279,713 on 31 March 2020 to £366,065 on 31 March 2021, with cash resources increasing from £284,201 to £351,650. Restricted funds have increased from £59,339 to £93,643. General unrestricted funds have increased from £220,374 to £272,423, noting that of this figure, the trustees had agreed in 2019 to designate £150,000 from the 2018 legacy bequest of £160,361 for a major project as discussed in the previous annual report.

Investment policy

The assets of the charity are currently held in current and deposit bank accounts. Should other opportunities arise to invest surplus funds then the trustees would discuss these, however at the present time longer term investment is inappropriate.

Reserves policy

The trustees continue to monitor the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation, recognising the need to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned emergencies and other expenditure.

In view of the extraordinary circumstances brought about by COVID-19, the rapid growth of staff, activities and services required to address the COVID-19 requirements, and the increased risk of unforeseen change as the economy reacts to COVID-19 relaxations, the trustees have decided to increase the level of reserves to be retained. This will remain under review in the coming year.

Unrestricted general funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets held by the charity should not ordinarily exceed 6 months of expenditure. On 31 March 2021, general funds were £122,423, which equates to 50.5% of the total expenditure incurred in the year then ended.

The trustees are satisfied that this level of funds is sufficient to meet the charity's on-going activities but intend to increase the level of reserves to 12 months' total expenditure cater for the increased COVID-19 related risks and uncertainties, particularly while fundraising activity opportunities remain restricted.

Legacy bequest – designated funds

In 2019, the charity received legacy income of £160,361. As referred to on page 10, the bequest is included within our unrestricted funds; in 2019/20, the trustees allocated £150,000 of the legacy income as designated funds to meet the future costs of delivering specific long-term projects for the benefit of the local community.

Risk statement

The trustees have reviewed the risks to which a medium-sized charity operating with a small number of full-time and part-time employees is exposed. Appropriate procedures are in place to identify, monitor and review these risks on a regular basis.



Michael Roberts
Finance Trustee



Trustees report

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 (UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity 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 in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust Deed.

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. This report was approved by the trustees on 16/11/2021 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee

Michael Roberts
Trustee

Our trustees

- Mr John Mallaghan – Chairman (Appointed 16 June 2021)
- Mrs A. Gayle Manicom (Appointed June 2018)
- Ms Laura Mitchell (Appointed 9 December 2020)
- Mrs Anne Constable (Appointed 9 December 2020)
- Mr Michael Roberts (Appointed 9 December 2020)

Other trustees who served during the year:

- Mr S.T.M. Elliott – Chairman and Secretary (Resigned 16 June 2021)
- Mr D.M. Cleary (Resigned 16 September 2020)

A trustee and a director of the company are the same. The appointments and resignations of the above persons have been registered at Companies House and with the Charity Commission as appropriate

Trustees' report

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Company comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland and the Company's Memorandum of Association.

Independent Examiner's report

Year ended 31 March 2021

I report on the financial statements of the Company for the year ended 31st March 2021 which are set out on pages 15 to 21. This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for my work on this report.

Respective responsibilities of trustees (directors) and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

1. Examine the financial statements under section 145 of the Act.
2. Follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and
3. To state whether any particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records.

It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
- To keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
- To prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act. have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



Timothy Randall BA ACMA
Independent Examiner

40 Oxford Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG41 2XZ

Date: 16/11/2021

Reference and administrative details

Governing document

Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated 18 August 2010.

Objectives and activities

Summary of the objectives of the Company: Our mission is outlined in the 'About us' section of the report. Well over 1,000 Link Friends have benefited over the years from our services. We aim to give their lives more purpose and joy, enabling them to integrate into the community and build new, lasting friendships.

Public Benefit

The Company's objectives and principal activities are described above. All our activities focus on combatting social isolation in the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

The outcomes that the Company aims to deliver through its services to benefit individuals, our communities, and the civic purse are to:

- Improve activity and mobility for clients
- Prevent depression and achieve improved mental health
- Delay or postpone need to enter residential care homes
- Delay or postpone need for provision of care at home
- Improve self-confidence and self-esteem, supporting independent living
- Improve volunteer social involvement and engagement
- Indirectly support carers and statutory services.

Principal activities

The Company's principal activity is the provision of a befriending service for lonely, isolated elderly people who benefit from a regular home visit from one of the Company's volunteers. The Company assesses those clients that are referred to it from doctors, families and other care agencies, then recruits, DBS checks and trains volunteers from the Wokingham Borough and surrounding area, and matches up a volunteer (Befriender) and client (Link Friend), based on location, common interests and hobbies. A regular programme of reassessment is also undertaken.

Link Visiting Scheme
(LVS) A company limited by guarantee

Registered charity number
1139248

Company registration number
07349468 in England and Wales

Registered office
Wescott Annexe, Wescott Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG40 2ER

Correspondence address
Wescott Annexe, Wescott Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG40 2ER

Independent examiner
Mr. T. Randall BA ACMA
40 Oxford Road, Wokingham
Berkshire, RG41 2XZ

Company Secretary
Michael Roberts

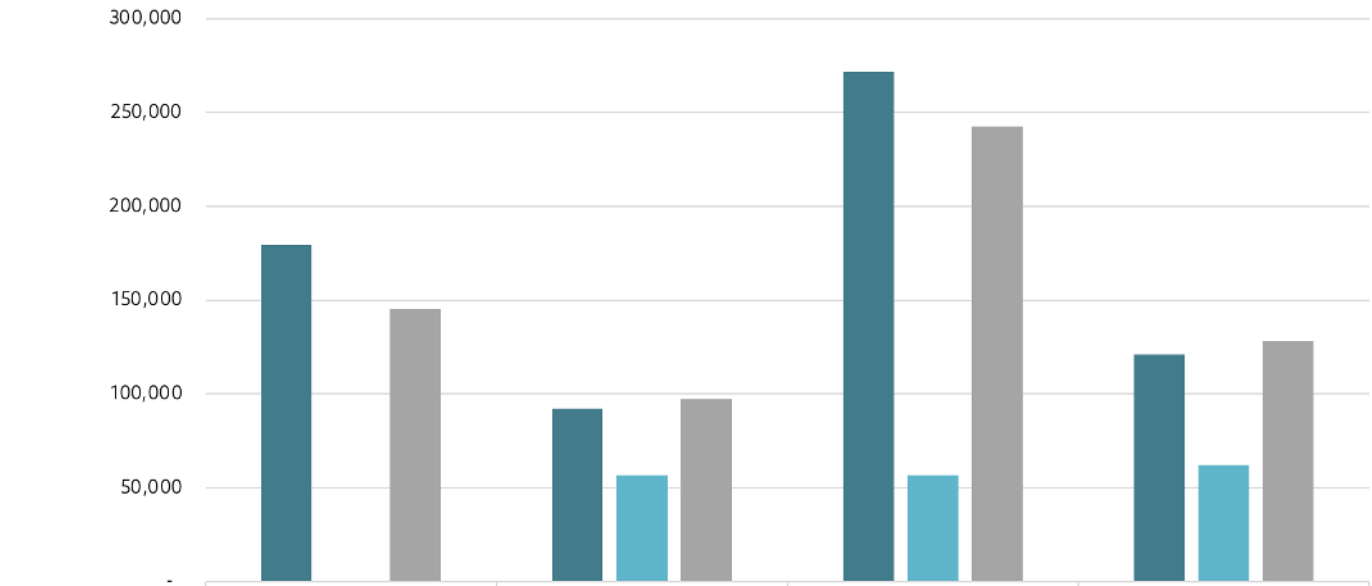
Bankers
The Co-operative Bank Plc, PO Box 200,
Skelmersdale, WN8 6DG

Financial statements

Statement of financial activities (incorporating income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Note	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
Income					
Income from grants	2	**179,713**	**92,225**	**271,938**	121,076
Voluntary income	3	**-**	**56,889**	**56,889**	62,071
Total income		**179,713**	**149,114**	**328,828**	183,147
Expenditure					
Charitable activities	4	**(145,410)**	**(97,066)**	**(242,476)**	(128,108)
Total expenditure		**(145,410)**	**(97,066)**	**(242,476)**	(128,108)
Movement in total funds for the year - Net income for the year		**34,304**	**52,049**	**86,352**	55,039
Total funds at 1 April	10	**59,340**	**220,374**	**279,713**	224,674
Total funds at 31 March	10	**93,643**	**272,423**	**366,065**	279,713

Income and expenditure summary



	Restricted Funds 2021	Unrestricted Funds 2021	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
Income from Grants	179,713	92,225	271,938	121,076
Voluntary Income	-	56,889	56,889	62,071
Expenses	145,410	97,066	242,476	128,108

Balance sheet as of 31 March 2021

			2021		2020
		£	£	£	£
Current assets					
Receivables	7	**18,050**		3,999	
Cash at bank		**351,650**		284,201	
		369,700		288,200	
Current liabilities					
Payables	8	**(3,636)**		(8,487)	
Net current assets			**366,065**		279,713
Net assets	9		**366,065**		279,713
Charity funds					
Restricted funds	10		**93,643**		59,340
Unrestricted funds					
- Designated funds	10	**150,000**		150,000	
- General funds	10	**122,423**		70,374	
			272,423		220,374
			366,065		279,713

The notes on pages 17 to 21 form part of these financial statements. The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 16/11/2021 and signed on their behalf by:



John Mallaghan
Trustee

Michael Roberts
Trustee

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

Basis of preparation
Link Visiting Scheme is a public benefit entity. The financial statements have been prepared in compliance with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102), and FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis. There are no material uncertainties in respect of the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future, based on latest strategic plans and financial forecasts. The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and on an accruals basis.

Fund accounting
General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds are set aside at the discretion of the Trustees for specific purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes and are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund.

Income
All income is included in the statement of financial activities when: the charity is legally entitled to the income; the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy; and any performance conditions attached to the item of income have been met or are fully within the control of the charity.

Income arising from legacies is recognised when entitlement is established and the value can be measured reliably.

Expenditure
All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Estimation uncertainties
The Trustees have not made any significant judgements, estimates or assumptions about the carrying value of assets and liabilities when applying the charity's accounting policies.

2. Income from grants

We acknowledge and extend a heartfelt thanks to the following organisations who kindly supported The Link Visiting Scheme during the reporting period.

- Wokingham Borough Council
- Barchester Healthcare
- Childwick Trust
- Postcode Community Lottery
- Woodroffe Benton
- Earley Charity
- Morris Benificient
- Wokingham United Charities
- Masonic Charitable Foundation
- Francis Winham Foundation
- The ASDA Foundation
- Pears Family Charitable Foundation
- Berkshire Community Foundation
- Charles Hayward Foundation
- Finchampstead Parish Council
- Woodley Town Council
- Berkshire NHS Trust
- Winnersh Parish Council
- Shinfield Parish Council
- Wokingham Without Parish Council
- Arborfield Newlands Council
- Hurst Parish Council
- Earley Town Council grant
- Barkham Parish Council
- Charvil Parish Council
- Wargrave Parish Council
- Aviva Community Fund
- National Lottery
- Wokingham Town Council
- Edward Gostling Foundation
- Tatiana Korsicova
- WG Edwards Charitable Foundation
- The Albert Hunt Trust Groundwork UK
- Shanly Foundation

3. Voluntary income

	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
Donations	-	55,638	55,638	34,273
Charitable activities	-	272	272	15,820
Fundraising	-	979	979	11,978
	-	56,889	56,889	62,071
Legacy income	-	-	-	-
	-	56,889	56,889	62,071

4. Analysis of expenditure

Summary

	2021	2020
	£	£
Staff costs	**169,802**	84,201
Office costs	**25,522**	13,516
Other costs	**47,151**	30,390
Total costs	**242,476**	128,108

4.1 Staff costs

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages and salaries	**160,274**	81,749
Social security costs (net of allowances received)	**9,529**	2,452
Staff costs	**169,802**	84,201
Average monthly number of full-time employees	**1**	1
Average monthly number of part-time employees	**9**	5

No individual employee received more than £60,000 during the current or preceding year.

4.2 Office costs

	2021	2020
	£	£
Telephone and IT costs	**12,168**	4,063
Rent including electricity	**3,662**	1,780
Printing, postage, stationery and photocopying	**7,195**	4,012
Insurance	**536**	1,769
Office equipment	**1,649**	1,581
Payroll services	**312**	312
	25,522	13,516

4.3 Other costs

	2021	2020
	£	£
Social events and Activities for clients	**26,719**	15,251
Accountancy and consultancy fees	**12,979**	8,361
Transport	**-**	2,611
Staff training	**324**	524
Volunteer training, expenses and gifts	**155**	2,605
COVID-related and other costs	**5,428**	-
Travel and mileage	**569**	569
DBS checks	**926**	435
Professional memberships	**35**	35
TV Licence	**154**	-
	47,151	30,390

5. Transactions with Trustees and key personnel

No trustee received any remuneration or fees in the current or preceding year. The daughter of the CEO received consultancy fees of £5,988 (2020: £3,600) for work in relation to website design, communications and marketing. These fees are included within "Other costs: Accountancy and consultancy" as shown in note 4.3.

6. Tangible fixed assets

There are no tangible fixed assets. The Company expense all individual capital items under £500 in the period of purchase.

Receivables, payables and funds

7. Receivables

	2021	2020
	£	£
Prepayments and accrued income	**18,050**	3,999

8. Payables – current liabilities

	2021	2020
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	**-**	4,189
Social security and other taxes	**3,636**	4,298
	3,636	8,487

9. Net assets by fund

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds			Total Funds
		Designated	General	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£
31 March 2021					
Receivables	**-**	**-**	***18,050***	**18,050**	**18,050**
Cash at bank	**93,643**	***150,000***	***108,007***	**258,007**	**351,650**
Payables	**-**	**-**	***(3,636)***	**(3,636)**	**(3,636)**
Net assets	**93,643**	***150,000***	***122,421***	**272,423**	**366,065**
31 March 2020					
Receivables	-	-	*3,999*	3,999	3,999
Cash at bank	59,339	*150,000*	*74,862*	224,862	284,201
Payables	-	-	*(8,487)*	(8,487)	(8,487)
Net assets	59,339	*150,000*	*70,374*	220,374	279,713

10. Net movement in funds

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds			Total Funds
		Designated	General	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£
Balance at 1 April 2019	12,518	-	*212,156*	212,156	224,674
Income	56,076	-	*127,071*	127,071	183,147
Expenditure	(9,255)	-	*(118,853)*	(118,853)	(128,108)
Transfers between funds	-	*150,000*	*(150,000)*	-	-
Balance at 31 March 2020	59,339	*150,000*	*70,374*	220,374	279,713
Income	**179,713**	-	***149,114***	**149,114**	**328,828**
Expenditure	**(145,410)**	**-**	***(97,066)***	**(97,066)**	**(242,476)**
Transfers between funds	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Balance at 31 March 2021	**93,643**	***150,000***	***122,422***	**272,423**	**366,065**