

# 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

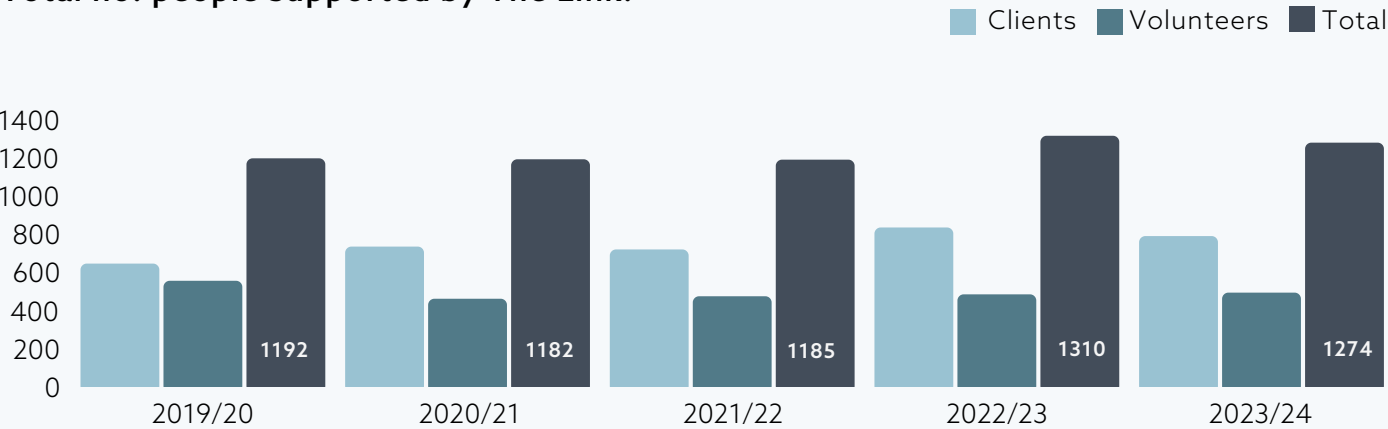
others who are aware of our services.

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.

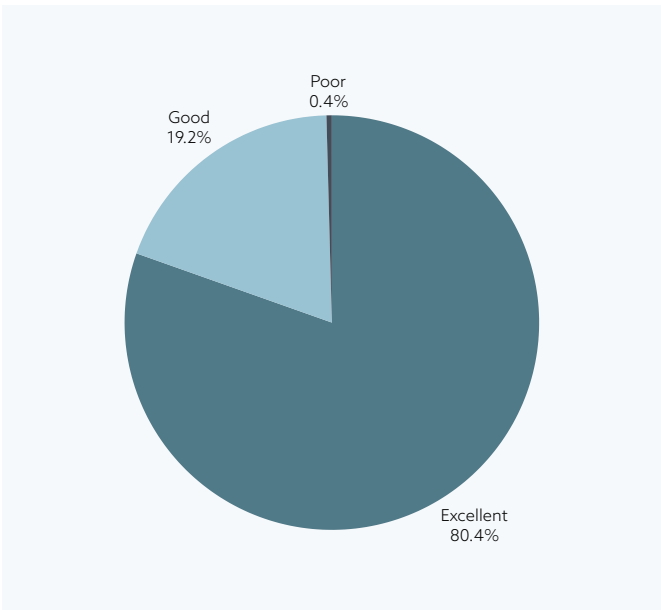
Total no. people supported by The Link:





# 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](http://www.linkvisiting.org/donations)







## 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.**

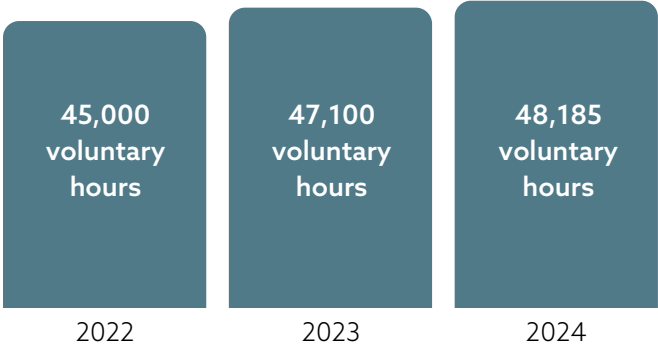
Here is some of the more detailed feedback we have also received:

"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.

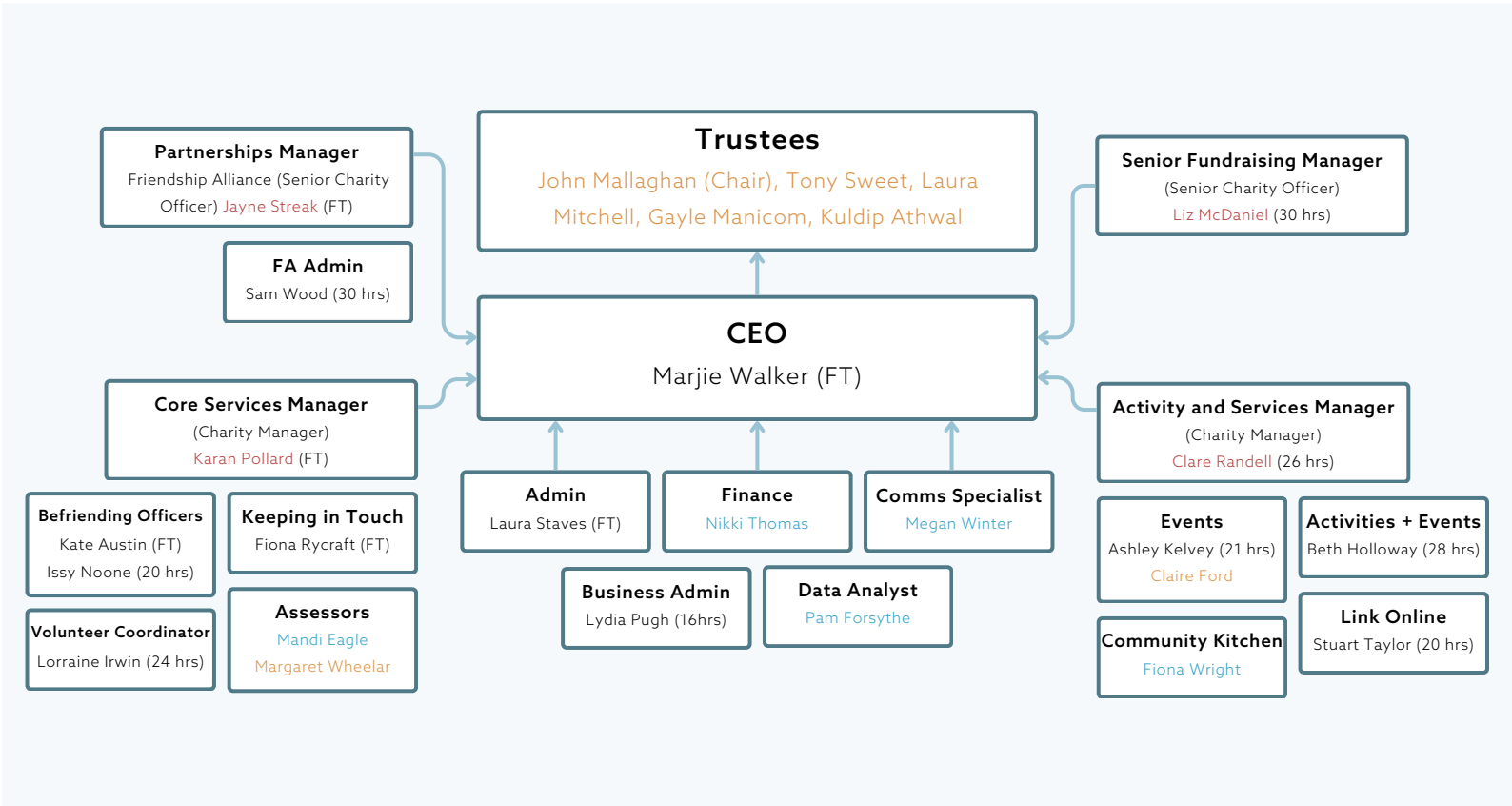
"Just wanted to say a BIG thank you for organising the volunteers thank you evening. It was great to see so many people there. I met three new people and had a lovely evening chatting to them. One lady, in particular, is not long widowed and finding her feet and was really appreciative of the get-together 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>£483,985</b>	<b>£432,917</b>

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

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

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

# THE LINK VISITING 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 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>					
Tangible assets	8	-	-	-	-
<b>Current Assets</b>					
Debtors	9	-	-	-	326
Cash at bank and in hand	10	553,992	16,184	570,176	462,757
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>553,992</b>	<b>16,184</b>	<b>570,176</b>	<b>463,083</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	11	28,819	-	28,819	20,807
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		525,173	16,184	541,357	442,276
<b>TOTAL ASSETS less current liabilities</b>		<b>525,173</b>	<b>16,184</b>	<b>541,357</b>	<b>442,276</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>525,173</b>	<b>16,184</b>	<b>541,357</b>	<b>442,276</b>
<b>Funds</b>					
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	-
<b>Total Funds</b>		<b>525,173</b>	<b>16,184</b>	<b>541,357</b>	<b>442,276</b>

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 .....

*ASweet*



## THE LINK VISITING SCHEME

### 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.

**THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME**

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

**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 £
<b>a) Donations and Legacies</b>					
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
		<u>259,376</u>	<u>299,116</u>	<u>558,492</u>	<u>424,513</u>

**a1) Grant Funding for Other Charities**

Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
		<u>259,376</u>	<u>350,959</u>	<u>610,335</u>	<u>472,963</u>

**b) Charitable Activities**

Events		9,394	-	9,394	3,522
Fundraising		10,792	-	10,792	4,288
		<u>20,186</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,186</u>	<u>7,810</u>

**c) Investment Income**

Interest Received		5,307	-	5,307	594
		<u>5,307</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,307</u>	<u>594</u>



## THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

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

<b>3. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE</b>		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	TOTAL <b>2024</b>	TOTAL <b>2023</b>
	Note	£	£	£	£
<b>a) Direct Costs</b>					
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
		<b>103,968</b>	<b>300,154</b>	<b>404,122</b>	<b>294,887</b>
<b>a1) Direct Costs</b>					
Funding transferred to Other Charities	5.4	-	51,843	51,843	48,450
		<b>103,968</b>	<b>351,997</b>	<b>455,965</b>	<b>343,337</b>
<b>b) Charitable Activities</b>					
	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	TOTAL <b>2024</b>	TOTAL <b>2023</b>
		£	£	£	£
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
		<b>77,789</b>	<b>2,993</b>	<b>80,782</b>	<b>68,479</b>

## THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

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

#### 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.



## THE LINK VISITNG SCHEME

### 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
<b>Total Unrestricted</b>	<b>422,061</b>	<b>284,869</b>	<b>181,757</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>525,173</b>

##### 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	-	-
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>20,215</b>	<b>350,959</b>	<b>354,990</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,184</b>
<b>Total Funds 2024</b>	<b>442,276</b>	<b>635,828</b>	<b>536,747</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>541,357</b>

## THE LINK VISITING SCHEME

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

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
<b>Total Unrestricted</b>	<b>253,673</b>	<b>178,825</b>	<b>10,436</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>422,061</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>119,052</b>	<b>302,542</b>	<b>401,380</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20,214</b>
<b>Total Funds 2023</b>	<b>372,725</b>	<b>481,367</b>	<b>411,816</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>442,276</b>

#### 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
	<b>347,953</b>	<b>276,724</b>

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
	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>326</b>

#### 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	<b>553,992</b>	<b>16,184</b>	<b>570,176</b>	<b>462,757</b>

#### 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
	<b>28,819</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,819</b>	<b>20,807</b>