

THE PHOENIX PROJECT



Charity no. 1153748

phoenixprojectipswich.com

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Supported through



SUFFOLK
Community
Foundation



THE PHOENIX PROJECT 2024

Hello and welcome to this years Phoenix Project annual report!

We would like to extend a big thank you to Ipswich Community Media (ICM), The Hive, our funders, trustees, volunteers and members for their continued support.

This year has been a very challenging one for the Phoenix Project with the very sad loss of a vital and much loved member of the Phoenix Project staff, John King. We would like to dedicate this annual report to the memory of John.

Moving forward, we would like to say welcome and thank you to Mandy Ginn who has taken on the role of head cook. Mandy consistently serves up very healthy, delicious meals, which the members are really enjoying.

This year the Phoenix Project has continued to thrive, welcoming and supporting many members old and new. The following report is just a snapshot of some of the wonderful groups that are running, and the trips we have taken throughout the past year. We at the Phoenix Project look forward to continuing with these groups, as well as introducing new groups that support our members health and wellbeing. We hope you enjoy reading about some of the activities that have taken place this past year.

Tracy Corbett - Chair of Trustees



*"If it wasn't for this project
I wouldn't leave the
house."*

T.

*"I've enjoyed trips out and
going to Christchurch Park
and various art exhibitions.*

*Oh, and not to forget - I
like the art sessions, music,
mindfulness and
meditations."*

W.B.

*"I enjoy the social and art
aspects. I am enjoying
meditating and try to do
some on my own as well.
The music we do together
is also good. I like
spending time there."*

J.F.

*"I come along to improve
my mental health, care for
my wellbeing and make
some 'me time'."*

K.W.

*"It's helpful to chat to
people with various
experiences and enjoy
and improve ourselves."*

M.R.

With John's sudden passing I wondered how I was going to pull myself and the Phoenix Project through such a devastatingly sad time? What kept me going was the knowledge that John was incredibly proud of the project and was passionate about the value and need for support in our community. John was a very dear friend, and it was old friends that helped us through when we needed them the most.

We needed someone to 'hit the floor running' to step in quickly to head up the community lunch at Phoenix Club and by a wonderful stroke of luck we managed to find the perfect person for the job, Mandy Ginn, whom I have known for 18 years. When I heard she was available to step in I knew that we had struck gold! Passionate about cooking tasty and nutritious food, Mandy has a wealth of experience – cooking at the former Museum Street Café and The Food Museum in Stowmarket. She also worked in St Audreys Hospital rehab and elderly mental health units and has vast experience of work in community health care. She has a 'can do' positive attitude, goes the extra mile and is lots of fun to be around. Many Thanks Mandy – you are doing a great job. Welcome to our Phoenix family!



Hilary Offord, whom John and I have known since we worked at East Suffolk Mind many moons ago, helped us to establish the Phoenix Project. She has vast experience of working in the community as trustee of Ipswich play bus, the furniture project and her work with NSPCC and youth projects. Hilary stepped in to help us, providing much needed pastoral support and helping in the kitchen, with food shopping and anything else we needed help with. We are so pleased that she is now joining us as a regular volunteer and is also joining our board of Trustees as Secretary.

Many thanks to Cad Taylor for stepping in and helping us through this difficult year, helping at Phoenix Club and bringing as always, her positive vibes and support. Cad remains on our board of Trustees but will be taking a little break to take care of her wonderful new baby daughter, Orla. Welcome to the world Orla and well done and congratulations to Cad and Omid!

Michelle Brace, our True Thoughts facilitator, is a valuable team member and has helped us all to maintain well being through creative activities, mindfulness and meditation. Thanks Michelle for helping us and offering extra support when we needed it the most.

David Plowman has been a wonderful support to Phoenix and helps regularly in the club as well as through his work as treasurer on our board of trustees. Our volunteers Len Bridges, Tracy Corbett, Robert Rainbird and Christine Bugg have also been amazing with their continued support and hard work at Phoenix Club.

Our partners at ICM have been invaluable to Phoenix Project and Bruce MacGregor, as always, has been a great friend and support, volunteering his time to go the extra mile to keep us all going at Phoenix. Many thanks to all Phoenix friends, funders, volunteers, members and partners. We couldn't continue without you!

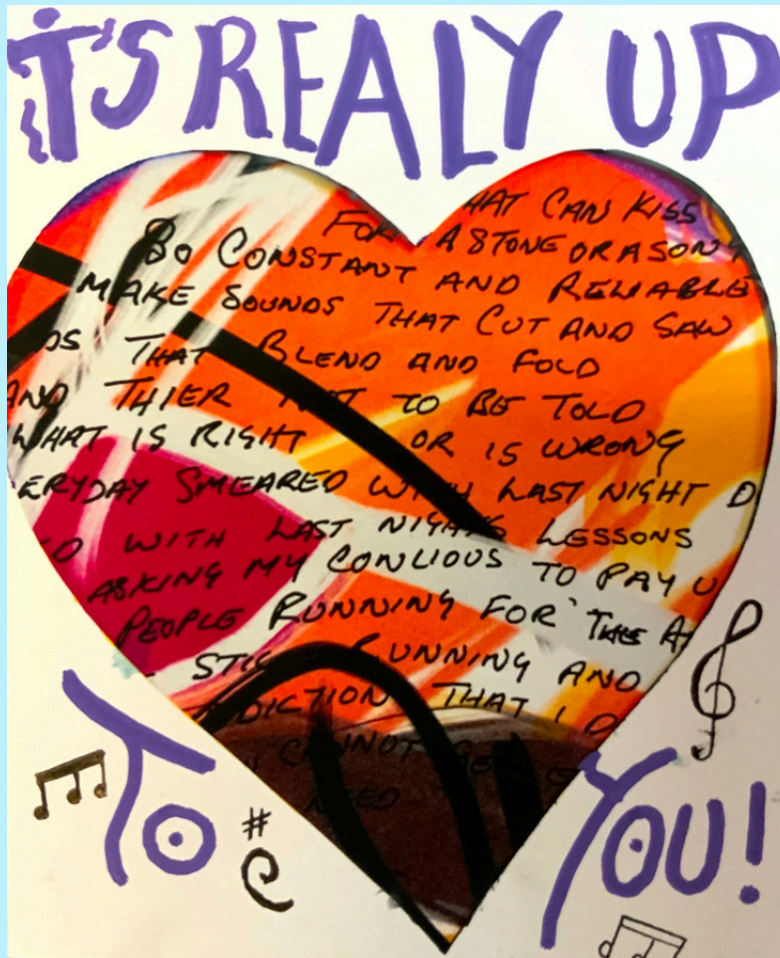


Donna Garrod

Phoenix Project coordinator

THE PHOENIX PROJECT 2024





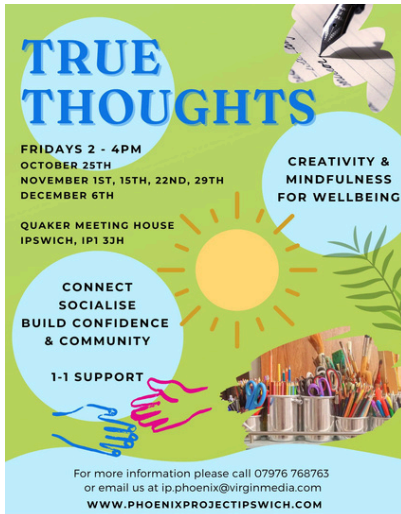
creative activities

In Friday afternoon True Thoughts sessions the group had a go at a whole range of creative activities from collage to weaving, painting abstract watercolour landscapes, printing hearts and drawing and painting flowers. We spent a few weeks playing with making fun collaboartive work - using charcoal and fuzzy felt & experimented with still life line drawings made without looking at the paper!

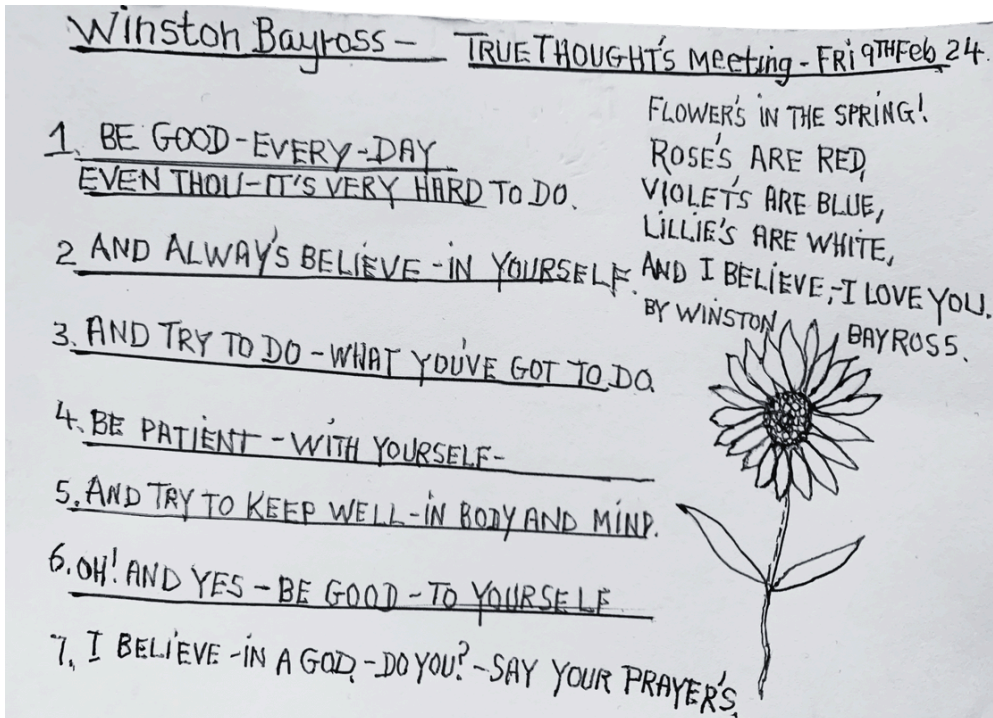
Christine Bugg has been at the club every week with creative activities for everyone including making Birthday cards for club members, bunting for our Phoenix Connects event & decorations for the Phoenix Christmas tree at St Mary Le Tower church!



MOVEMENT & MINDFULNESS



Before we begin our True Thoughts creative sessions on Friday afternoons we often do a few warm up exercises to get our bodies' moving after lunch. We follow this with a meditation exercise to relax and ground ourselves. We often do a short piece of writing in sessions too to help bring us into the present moment. We make a note of things we are aware of - sounds, sensations, the light in the room.. We also sometimes include recording of our shared thoughts on different topics - the places we love & the glimmers of 'delight' we have noticed during the week.



Thank you to Winston & Jeremy for their written pieces and to Vicky for the flower & collage



I am aware of sound
The world is silent
No tears just breeze
Trauma is there
But my oasis is here



GROUP VISITS TO IPSWICH ART SHOWS

AN EYE FOR LIFE

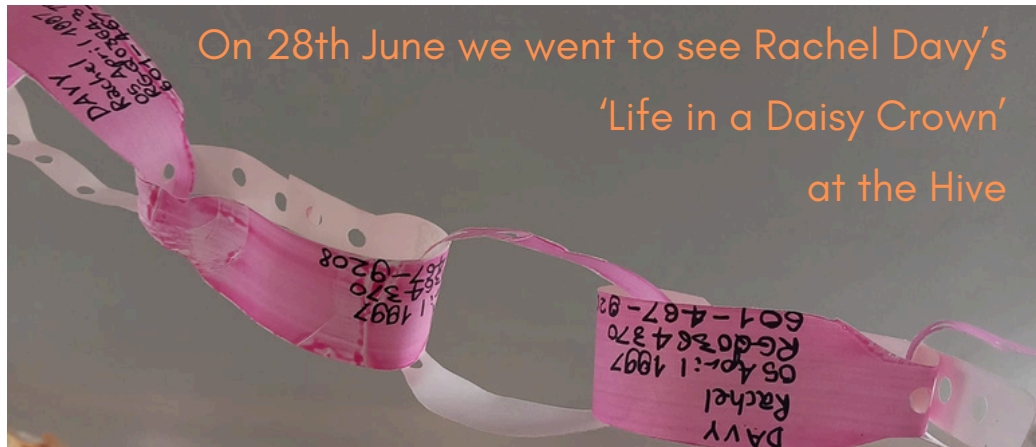
On 19th July the True Thoughts group headed over to Christchurch Park for a picnic in the bandstand and a visit to John Ferguson's photographic exhibition 'An Eye for Life'. Everybody brought picnic food. Len had made some lovely quiches and we shared strawberries and sunshine! The show was really interesting and inspiring. There was a section with portraits of people from Ipswich and some faces we recognised. After the show we popped into Christchurch Mansion cafe and shared pots of tea.

"We constantly fail to see what sometimes is right in front of us; that there's another world inside our own that we often overlook."

John Ferguson



On 28th June we went to see Rachel Davy's
'Life in a Daisy Crown'
at the Hive

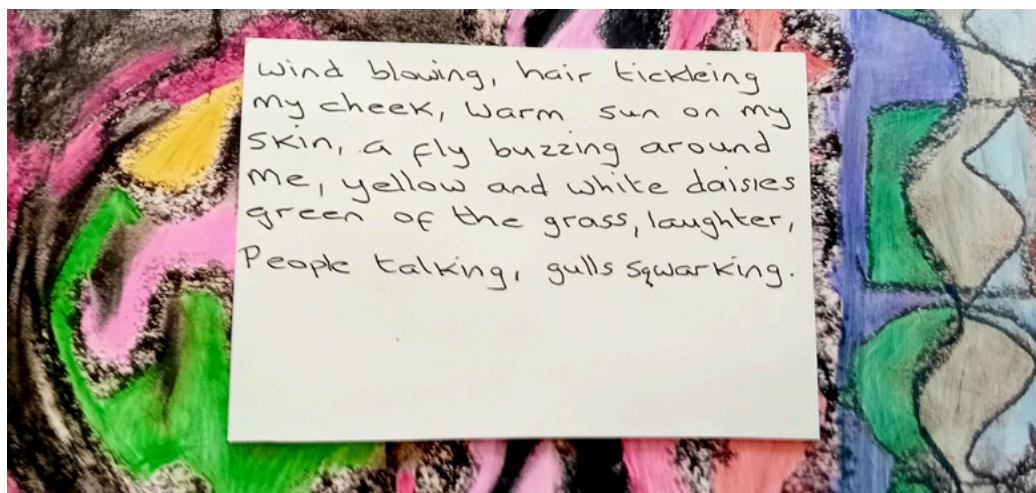


"What a great artist, it was lovely to go and see this today with the group"

Donna-Marie Elliott

Looking ahead to 2025

Sadly there will be no more Phoenix Friends on Tuesdays for the foreseeable future but we will be back with Friday afternoon True Thoughts sessions in the New Year. We have plans to do some creative work with Ipswich Museum and will be completing the artwork we've been making together for the NHS Woodlands reception. Below is a colourful piece of work by Tracy Corbett - watercolour onto charcoal background as a border for a piece of mindful writing from a summer's day in the Quakers garden!



SAFE & WELCOMING PLACES TO GO



On Friday 14th June the True Thoughts group braved the rain and ventured out to the Brighten the Corners Festival in the centre of town. We recorded a conversation about how being at a safe and welcoming local festival like BTC can help us feel connected. You can listen to the whole interview on the True Thoughts page:

www.phoenixprojectipswich.com/true-thoughts



"I think just listening to the music and feeling the vibe & being outside together, whether it's raining or sunny is good for people."

Jayne Duff

"It's nice to have local things that everyone can get to. You can feel a part of the community. It's a safe space & everyone's on the same page - listening to the music. It teleports you to a different place."

Andrew

PASS IT ON COLLECTIVE

In 2024 members of the True Thoughts group went along to South Street studios on Thursday afternoons to take part in Pass It On Collective creative media activities. As well as refresher training with Sam Brilliant in use of the radio studio, members of the collective learned how to use the new Rodecaster, edit stories on the Phoenix website, upload files to Soundcloud & transcribe interviews using AI. The group also planned, recorded and edited a series of interviews on the theme of 'Safe & Welcoming Places to Go'. Conversations with Activ Gardens, Geek Retreat & the Coffee Crawl were promoted on ICM social media & went out on BBC Radio Suffolk during Mental Health Awareness Week!

To read & listen to all the stories in this series go to:

www.phoenixprojectipswich.com/news/the-hive-a-safe-welcoming-and-creative-place-to-be

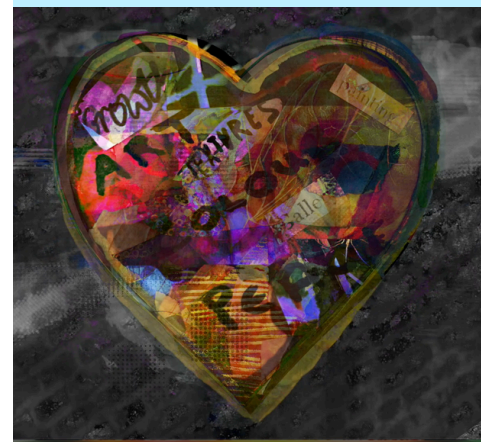


PHOENIX CONNECTS

On Tuesday 17th September Phoenix Project members welcomed guests to the Smokehouse, South Street for their showcase event!

In the run up to Phoenix Connects group members met to help with planning and preparations and to rehearse songs for the Connected Voices Phoenix Choir! Carl, Jon and Winston also had the experience of spending a day in the recording studio at South Street. Carl recorded one of his own songs 'Never Go Back', Winston recorded the Buddy Holly classic 'Heartbeat' and Jon Fuller worked with Mandy and Donna to arrange and record a version of 'Love Song' – a song originally by Lesley Duncan, later recorded by Elton John.

The daytime open studio event attracted guests from community organisations including Inside Out, the Caribbean Men's Mental Health group, the Hive, Ipswich Museum and Ipswich Community Media. Phoenix members did a brilliant job of hosting – showing guests around the venue and talking to them about the Phoenix Project's creative and media work.



Volunteer
Event Host
Pass It On Collective



"Having the opportunity to perform at True Thoughts events has been so good for me and has built my confidence up so much. I'm glad I stepped outside of my comfort zone. I would like to do more of this.."

Carl Swallow

Halil ordered Turkish food for everyone who had been helping at the event!!

The evening event went really well with poetry readings by Christine and Michelle and freestyle spoken word performances by Gary (Cheese & Ham Sandwich) and Jeremy (a very moving tribute to John King). Len (aka Johnny Cash) performed 'Ring of Fire' whilst Winston entertained us with some spontaneous jokes and a karaoke performance of 'So Far Away' (Dire Straits). Carl sung and played a short set of his favourite songs (with backing vocals by Jeremy and Kirk) and the night was topped and tailed with an original musical performance by Jon Fuller. We were treated to a rendition of 'Born in the NHS' written specially for the event by Bruce, a world premier of recent studio recordings by Phoenix members and a stirring version of 'Lean on Me' by the Connected Voices Phoenix Choir.

To read the full story & watch the 'Love Song' video featuring artwork by the True Thoughts group go to: www.phoenixprojectipswich.com/news/phoenix-connects



Phoenix Member Spotlight : Carl Swallow

I heard about True thoughts through a friend who was already attending. I went along and really liked the project. It offers a calm and safe space to meet others on a similar path to my own – maintaining well-being. Everyone has their struggles but all are united by a sense of seeking self-improvement.

I am in my early forties and about ten years ago my mental health challenges first really started with me having a break down. I was diagnosed with schizophrenia following admission to hospital. On leaving hospital I moved into supported housing and had a couple of relapses. I struggled with feeling overwhelmed by life and what was going on in the world. I found it hard to quieten my mind down and had a terrible time where I couldn't sleep properly for a month and the voices I had in my head were relentless. I had struggles with gambling and excessive use of alcohol and drugs. This was a dark time in my life, but I do remember that music really helped me. Listening to it and playing guitar, which I have always loved, did give me some respite and hope that things would change. I am pleased to say that with support for the last 4 years I have been keeping well.

"This project has helped me with my personal growth, I feel that I have a voice within the group, that I am listened to and in turn it is good to share and hear other people's ideas and points of view"



I feel the project reinforces the direction I had already decided to take in maintaining well-being. The mindfulness and meditation has been so helpful and I now meditate first thing in the morning when I wake. I am trying to balance my energy levels, to have periods of rest and I like to use my notebook to record my thoughts and remind myself of my purpose, objectives and what I am trying to achieve, what are my priorities?

I recognise that I am artistic, autistic and have an addictive personality and what helps me to stay well is to achieve a balance by way of physical exercise, being creative and social whereas before I was either very 'all or nothing' and felt overloaded. I know now that I have personal responsibility, but I am not responsible for everybody and everything which was so exhausting to me. I like my own space.

Having the opportunity to perform at True Thoughts events has been so good for me and has built my confidence up so much – being with friends and knowing that everyone is friendly and 'on my side' so to speak. I loved the experience of recording a song I had written, I felt quite anxious about the process of going into a studio, but the technician was so friendly at Punch Studios, and I soon felt relaxed. I am glad that I stepped outside of my comfort zone. I would like to do more of this, and I am feeling also that I might be able to take my guitar along to some 'open mic' nights in the not-too distant future. I feel inspired to practice my guitar regularly now and improve my skills with singing and playing guitar. I have enjoyed making music with other group members such as J.F. and we plan to have some 'jamming sessions' together soon.

"There is nothing I don't like about this project!"



I have really enjoyed making some art at the creative sessions – it's been fun and social as well. I also like going with the group to local galleries and enjoyed 'Brighten the Corners' festival. I avoided going out for a long time as I felt I needed to stay away from pubs but at the festival everyone is there primarily for the music. There are some good music venues that feel comfortable to be at. I also go to 'Coffee Crawl' social, which I discovered through True Thoughts.

A Personal Reflection

by Tracy Corbett

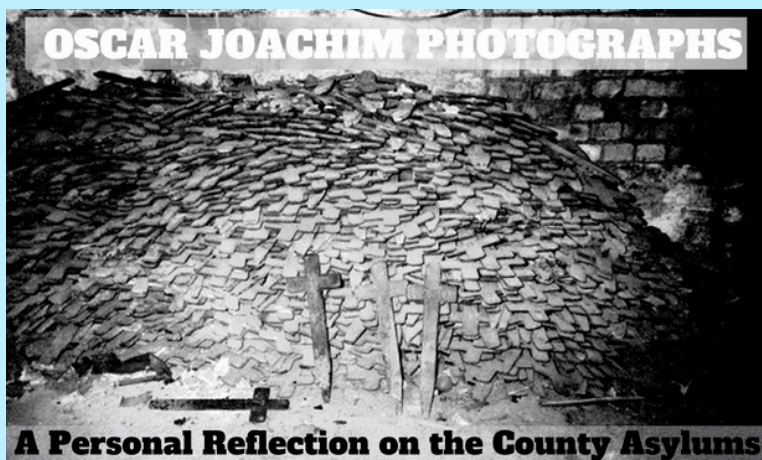
Oscar Joachims exhibition for me, was the highlight of the year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Oscar for showing our group around his beautiful and thought provoking exhibition and for taking the time to answer the many questions the group had.



At the start of November the True Thoughts project took a trip out to the Hive on Norwich Road to see the Oscar Joachim photography exhibition titled "A Personal Reflection on the County Asylums". Oscar's exhibition was a photographic history of St Audreys and St Clements psychiatric hospitals. It was a fascinating walk through the old asylums to the more modern St Clements hospitals. The photographs were beautifully taken and the majority were natural photographs as opposed to posed photographs.

The photograph that really struck a chord with me was the one below of all the metal crosses piled high. Oscar explained that they were removed from the graves of the patients who had died in the asylum when burial space ran out so that the graves could be reused. This photograph made me very emotional because it made me feel that all these people had been forgotten, their lives disregarded. All that was left to mark their final resting place now lay in a heap with hundreds of other crosses.

A second photograph that struck a chord showed how the wards were laid out with rows of beds in each dormitory. I know some may feel this left patients with no privacy but for me the modern psychiatric units of today don't allow for a community feeling and shared experiences. Also, during the days of St Audreys, many people came from large families where it would have been the norm to share a room and in many cases a bed. Having wards with beds in rows gave the asylums a more homely feel.



The show included many pictures of past patients when they had trips out from St Audreys and St Clements hospitals. It was lovely to see patients and workers outside the asylum setting. I feel this was the best therapy they could have had. The expressions on the patients' faces contrasted greatly with the photographs taken in the asylums - they looked happier and more relaxed.

There were also photographs of the grounds around the asylums which patients could use to walk in or just to sit and relax. Studies have now shown communing with nature is really beneficial to mental wellbeing.

FINANCIAL REPORT



Charity no. 1153748

INCOME RECEIVED FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

Phoenix Project – fund raising, donations and catering	£4,199.98
Peoples Health Trust supported through Health Lottery East – Active Communities fund	£18,666
TOTAL	£22,865.98



Contact Us:

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www.phoenixprojectipswich.com
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facebook.com/the phoenixprojectipswich



Watercolour of poppies in a field by Donna-Marie Elliott

Thank you to all our funders for their support!

Phoenix Project board of trustees:

Tracy Corbett – Chair
David Plowman – Treasurer
Hilary Offord – Secretary
Robert Rainbird – Trustee
Cad Taylor – Trustee



PHOENIX PROJECT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

GENERAL PHOENIX (NON-RESTRICTED ACCOUNT)

Balance from 2022/22	4,387.70		
INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
<i>Income from service users and catering</i>	<i>4064.95</i>	<i>Room Hire</i>	<i>2118.00</i>
<i>Donations</i>	<i>135.03</i>	<i>Sessional work</i>	<i>0.00</i>
<i>Raffle</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>Catering Expenses</i>	<i>0.00</i>
<i>Tombola</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>Stationery</i>	<i>0.00</i>
		<i>Costs of Governance</i>	<i>205.40</i>
		<i>Equipment</i>	<i>270.82</i>
		<i>Service Users Activities</i>	<i>845.00</i>
Total	4199.98	Total	3439.22
Balance of account as at 30th April 2024	5148.46		

PEOPLE'S HEALTH TRUST - TRUE THOUGHTS (Restricted Account)

Balance from 2022/23	904.87		
INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
<i>Grant</i>	<i>18666.00</i>	<i>Stationery</i>	<i>10.00</i>
		<i>Sessional Work</i>	<i>12240.00</i>
		<i>Publicity</i>	<i>131.00</i>
		<i>Volunteer expenses</i>	<i>400.00</i>
		<i>Venue Hire</i>	<i>1626.00</i>
		<i>Admin</i>	<i>386.41</i>
		<i>Laptops</i>	<i>0.00</i>
		<i>Project managemen</i>	<i>427.52</i>
		<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>184.14</i>
		<i>Events</i>	<i>600.00</i>
Total	18666.00	Total	16005.07
Balance of account as at 30th April 2024	3565.80		

TOTAL OF ALL ACCOUNTS

INCOME	22865.98	EXPENDITURE	19444.29
Total Balance from 2022/23	5,292.57		
BALANCE OF ALL ACCOUNTS AS AT 30th April 2024		£8,714.26	