

# LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE

England & Wales · Charity number 1156191

## Details

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**Status** Registered

**Legal form** CIO

**Registered** 2014-03-14

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

## Contact

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**Address** 18A Market Street  
Stourbridge  
West Midlands  
DY8 1AD

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**Website** [lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk](http://lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk)

## Activities

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**Objects:** 1. TO RELIEVE POVERTY BY PROVIDING ETHICAL DEBT AND MONEY MANAGEMENT ADVICE, FREE OF CHARGE.2. TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT BY PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM BECOMING SOCIALLY EXCLUDED, RELIEVING THE NEEDS OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED (FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS CLAUSE 'SOCIALLY EXCLUDED' MEANS BEING EXCLUDED FROM SOCIETY, OR PARTS OF SOCIETY, AS A RESULT FINANCIAL HARDSHIP) AND ASSISTING THEM TO INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY;(I) PROVIDING ADVOCACY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES BECAUSE OF FEAR OR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OR LACK OF CONFIDENCE (II) PROVIDING TRAINING AND GUIDANCE TO DEVELOP PEOPLE'S FINANCIAL CAPABILITY (III) HELPING THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ISOLATED FROM, OR WHO ARE OUT OF TOUCH WITH, SOCIETY TO RE-ADJUST AND RE-INTEGRATE BY BEFRIENDING THEM AND RE-BUILDING THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY.3. THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH BY EVANGELISTIC MISSION THAT IS CARRIED OUT ON AN ENTIRELY NON-COERCIVE AND INVITATIONAL BASIS, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FAITHWORKS CHARTER GIVEN AS APPENDIX 1 OF THE CONSTITUTION.

**Activities:** We are a Christian support to the community within Stourbridge. After a local survey of needs in the community, the Management Team decided to initially concentrate on Debt Advice and so Life Centre Debt Advice was launched in association with Community Money Advice (CMA) as part of this initiative. It is expected in future years to expand the outreach of the Life Centre into different projects.

## Classification

- **How:** Provides Human Resources, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Accommodation/housing, Religious Activities, Economic/community Development/employment, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

## Geography

- Birmingham City
- Dudley
- Shropshire
- Staffordshire
- Worcestershire

## Finances

| Period end | Income  | Expenditure | Assets | Employees |
|------------|---------|-------------|--------|-----------|
| 2025-03-31 | £44,595 | £54,099     | -      | -         |
| 2024-03-31 | £74,095 | £62,593     | -      | -         |
| 2023-03-31 | £57,505 | £36,056     | -      | -         |
| 2021-12-31 | £34,157 | £21,623     | -      | -         |
| 2020-12-31 | £35,223 | £23,899     | -      | -         |

## Trustees

| Name                  | Role | Appointed  |
|-----------------------|------|------------|
| Christopher Heslop    |      | 2024-01-24 |
| Malcolm Moss          |      | 2019-04-01 |
| Nicola Frances Martin |      | 2022-02-03 |

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE**

England & Wales - Charity number 1156191

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# Accounts

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**Life Centre Stourbridge**  
**Annual Report & Accounts**  
**1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

*“Helping people ‘do’ life”*



Churches Together in  
Stourbridge

**cma**

Freedom from debt  
Hope for the future



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## Summary from the Chair

The focus for our service has always been 'how can we effectively help those who come to us in need of advice and support'. And secondly, to develop a team that can enhance and sustain our service. It is so encouraging to receive feedback from clients expressing their experiences of a service that has given them: -

- compassionate face to face support
- excellent regulated advice
- help that has gone beyond their expectations
- hope for the future
- support for the long term

This has been achieved through an excellent, experienced, knowledgeable, committed and hard-working team of volunteers, staff, prayer team, supporters and trustees. I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with LCDA for all that they do and particularly those things that go un-noticed but are just as vital to the effective running and provision of our service, whether it be practical, prayerful or through financial support.

My hope and prayers are that LCDA can continue to fund, equip and sustain our service to be here for many years to come, meeting the needs of those who decide to make that first big step to ask for our help.

If, having read this report you feel you would love to be part of this work, please do not hesitate to contact one of the team, we would welcome the opportunity to speak to you.

Alan Taylor – Chair



Signed on behalf of the Board:

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Our Mission

Debt is a national blight and its effects are far-reaching and destructive to our society. It affects not just those individuals who are living with debt, but their extended families, their neighbours, and eventually everyone else in the community; e.g. unpaid community debts like Council Tax.

Thankfully, there is a path out of every situation – and help, support and encouragement can be offered to those seeking and engaging with our core service – the Life Centre Debt Advice project (LCDA), affiliated to the national debt & money advice network Community Money Advice (CMA).

As the demand for the advocacy, help and support provided by the Debt Advice Sector will exceed the sector's capacity for the foreseeable future, our Goals remain: -

1. To alleviate deprivation and poverty in the Black Country.
2. To promote social inclusion, inter-connectedness and engagement for public benefit.
3. To enhance advocacy, training, coaching, referral and befriending services.

LCDA do not wish to remain focused on our immediate community but to expand our service across the Black Country. To this end, we shall continue to develop venues where we can meet clients across the Black Country by engaging with like-minded church and secular Organisations, particularly in the areas of high deprivation and poverty.

*If anyone is poor among you... in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them...rather, be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need. (Deuteronomy 15, 7-8)*

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28, 19)*

## What we offer

To anyone, we offer, free, unconditional, confidential, face-to-face support with their personal and household finances. The topics covered are: -

- Benefit Checks
- Household bills
- Budgeting support
- Grant applications
- Contacting Creditors
- Debt advice
- Implementing Debt options
- Dealing with Bailiffs
- Banking and Saving tips

In addition to the above, we also offer prayer support, encouragement and frequent pastoral contacts to help our clients 'do life'. Many of our clients come to us with issues such as: -

- Homelessness (actual or threatened)
- Cognitive and Mental Health factors
- Addiction, and substance abuse
- Family breakdown, Bereavement and Domestic Abuse
- Changes in employment status, benefit entitlements and Age Groups
- Lifestyle and behavioural decision making

## Our Activity last year

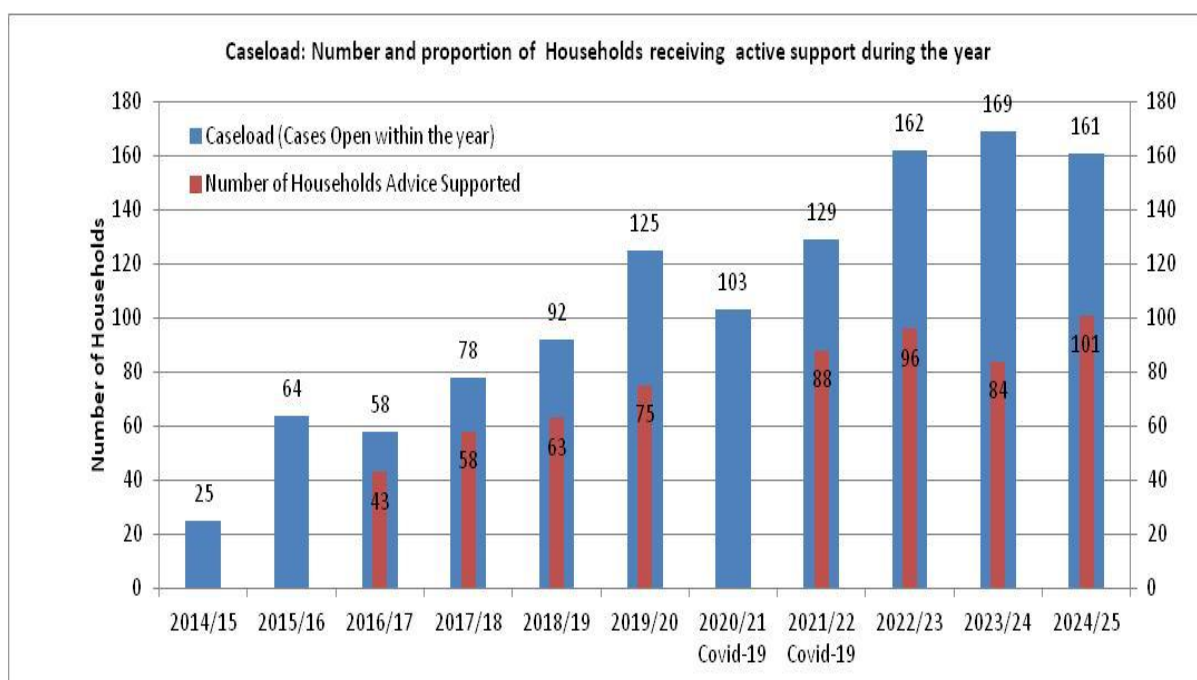
Compared to 2023/24, our level of debt advice activity dropped for these reasons: -

- We were awarded some exceptional grant support from the Government to ease the Cost of Living crisis and this allowed us to increase our capacity by 25% and fund more employee hours for the last quarter of 23/24.
- Senior staff were on agreed leave for 8 months working on another project and reduced his commitment to work for LCDA from 4 day to 1 a week.
- Our venue at Holy Trinity church, Old Hill venue closed for 7 months.

The good news is that in the last quarter service capacity levels returned to those seen in the same quarter of the previous year when we had the benefit of the Cost of Living Funding.

### Key Achievements

- The total number of households supported in 24/25 was 161 and of these 101 (63%) had at least 1 debt advice appointment.
- Overall, we offered 264 appointments of which 195 (74%) took place and 69 (26%) were frustrated.
- 80% of appointments were delivered face-to-face; others by phone call or mail/email
- 95 households were newly referred , of which 42 (44%) became clients
- The average debt of a household engaging with LCDA once a complete picture of their finances has been established was £16,985 per household. Of the 95 new referrals, another 11 (12%) were signposted on to another agency for support.
- LCDA continued to work closely with our referral partners whenever new clients struggle to engage with our services
- More than 50% of existing clients continued to be actively supported by our advisers and support staff/volunteers through their financial recovery journey, e.g. income & expenditure support, and obtaining and maintaining Insolvency solutions such as Debt Relief Orders.



We aim to close a case within 18-24 months of the household's initial engagement although support can often continue beyond this. In 24/25, LCDA closed 75 cases. On average, these households went from having a deficit of £80/month to a surplus of £80/month.

### Source of Referrals to LCDA:

LCDA continue to invite Referrals from a range of sources and network partners. Over the last 5 years, referrals came from:

- 24% Local churches/Food Banks
- 26% Public body organisations (e.g. DWP, GP & Social services, Local MBC, Schools etc)
- 29% Advice Agencies (e.g. CAB, CAP, Step Change, other CMA Centres) lacking expertise/capacity
- 21% LCDA marketing (e.g. Web sites, flyers, in person marketing at public events)

LCDA work closely with our network partners to enhance communication and feedback, assess client needs, priorities, and commitment, to benefit client engagement rates.

### The team

We now employ 5 people part-time: -

- A centre manager on 32 hrs/week (or 8hrs/week)
- A debt advisor on 16 hrs/week
- A support worker training to be a debt advisor on 16 hrs/week
- An HR administrator training to be a debt advisor on 10 hrs/week
- An administrator & support worker on 10 hrs/week

Our volunteer team comprises: -

- 4 debt advisors
- 5 support workers
- 3 Prayer partners
- 5 Trustees

The ratio of employee hours to the recorded volunteer hours is about 4 to 1 but we know the volunteer hours are under reported. We are aware that we need to increase the number of volunteers, particularly in the role of support workers, to ensure that all appointments have a support worker alongside the debt advisor.

Over the year, the staff and volunteers received 8 training sessions from CMA and a further 10 sessions on various aspects delivered internally.

Our Chair of Trustees stepped down at the end of the year after 11 years as a trustee. Furthermore, we expect another trustee with 11 years' service to step down in May 2025. So we need to bring more trustees on board.

### Venues

By having several venues, we make our service more accessible to those in need and to those who want to join the team.

- Bellmark House in Stourbridge – our main venue
- Holy Trinity Church, Old Hill
- Christ Church, Lye
- St. John the Evangelist Church, Tipton
- St. Martin's Church, Bradley
- Dudley Building Society Branches in Dudley and Brierley Hill

## Client feedback

- As one of our clients walked out of our building she said, *“Oh, I feel so much better!”*
- *“I am very, very happy. You people do a very good job. Thank you so much for your help. I will come back to you again if I need future help. To improve your service perhaps you can work other days to, not just Mondays as you provide such a good service. Your service must have saved a lot of lives, You have given me great relief of my situation - you have helped me to strive to do the right thing. I'm going to call you again, you'll see, even just to wish you a Happy New Year. God Bless you all, you are all such wonderful people. I can't remember everyone's names, but thank you for all that you do, and not just for me and my family, but for others too.”*
- *“Thank you very much for your attention. Your help is very important to me”*
- *“I managed to call my bank on Friday and got an extremely pleasant surprise. The debt is cleared 🎉 ... Obviously I had no clue until Friday and wanted to thank you for your help and happily request my file is closed.”*
- *“I have been attending the Life Centre Debt Advice Stourbridge for a few months now and would like to say thank you to Jane and Fedelia for all their help and support. They have been very patient and empathic to my situation. They are helping me with budgeting, phoning creditors (the one thing I hated to do) and hopefully setting me on the path to have a little savings. I am starting to feel a little more in control of my money now. Thank You Jane, Fedelia and the debt advice team for their kind and caring approach.”*
- Our Client of Nigerian origin, with 2 young children, working in the UK as a care worker and being of good standing, had an alleged utility liability. She came to the Life Centre Debt Advice, in Stourbridge, thoroughly confused and frustrated as to how to respond to the alleged liability. We discovered she was being unjustifiably pursued by a debt collector for several years. This created much stress and anxiety, compounded upon by unfamiliar processes in how to deal with this. Life Centre Stourbridge gathered the evidence to refute the liability, submitted this to the creditor, their legal team, and the courts. We then supported her through a court mediation process which was unresolved due to the creditor's legal team being inadequately prepared. Although another court date was scheduled, we sent resent the evidence to the creditor's legal team who then decided to discontinue their claim. There was a notable sense of joy and relief in her voice as she heard the good news that the legal claim to recover the debt of £1,600 had been discontinued. She says, *“Good morning to everyone, I am writing to appreciate Mr Martin Frize and all members of staff at Life Centre Debt Advice to say thank you so much for your understanding and how helpful you have been to me at the most difficult time of my life. I couldn't have done it without your help. I'm so grateful to you all for your concern. Thank you so much”.*

## Referral Agency feedback

- From DWP. *“Thank you for getting back to me. That is brilliant 😊. Thank you again for all the work you do for our families. It is greatly appreciated.”*
- Dudley CVS - Integrated Plus. *“Thank you for the update and your support relating to this client”*

## Challenges

Going forward, LCDA faces a number of challenges to sustain our growth in capacity: -

- Securing the funding needed to sustain and then expand our staff team
- Recruiting and training new volunteers for client-facing roles and administrative activities
- Recruiting new trustees

## Financial Review

LCDA ended the year in a financially strong position. The reasons are:

1. We received grants totalling £25,550 from six different trusts; £20,000 came from the National Lottery Awards for All Fund, over 2 years, of which 25% was expended during this financial year. Other grants were awarded to fund a long overdue Technology Audit and IT upgrade.
2. Our centre manager, reduced his hours from 32/week to 8/week from w/c June 17<sup>th</sup> onwards to work elsewhere and this reduced our employment costs by approx. £15,000. This reduction was partially offset by the recruitment of another staff member in early May which increased our employment costs by approx. £9,000.

During the next financial year, we anticipate these changes to our expenditure:

1. Our employment costs will rise to approx. £73,260/year, now that the Centre Manager has returned to a 32/hrs week; salaries were increased in line with inflation, and an extra part-time staff member was recruited for 16 hours/week.
2. Other expenditures are expected to remain stable.

Additional grant funding will be sought to reduce the need to draw on the organisation's reserves and ensure we continue to be able to offer a timely quality service.

### Statement of Receipts and Payments Accounts – all funds

This statement is for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 for all funds.

|                                      | <b>2023/24</b>    | <b>2024/25</b>    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Brought Forward                      | <b>£55,190.23</b> | <b>£66,692.26</b> |
| <b>Receipts</b>                      |                   |                   |
| Churches                             | £6,169.58         | £5,145.00         |
| Gift Aid                             | £1,477.46         | £1,396.30         |
| Individuals                          | £7,914.05         | £6,850.00         |
| Trusts / Foundations                 | £46,828.00        | £25,550.00        |
| Other Grants                         | £5,150.00         | £350.00           |
| Other Income                         | £1,244.26         | £1,485.50         |
| Satellite Income                     | £5,311.52         | £3,818.29         |
| <b>Total Income</b>                  | <b>£74,094.87</b> | <b>£44,595.09</b> |
| <b>Payments</b>                      |                   |                   |
| Direct Employee Expenses             | <b>£50,583.45</b> | <b>£43,187.64</b> |
| Fees                                 | <b>£4,498.83</b>  | <b>£3,609.40</b>  |
| Indirect Employee/Volunteer Expenses | <b>£2,550.30</b>  | <b>£1,638.67</b>  |
| Marketing                            | <b>£253.00</b>    | £0.00             |
| Other Expenses                       | <b>£736.84</b>    | <b>£699.32</b>    |
| Premises Costs                       | <b>£2,803.41</b>  | <b>£1,454.76</b>  |
| Payments for assets                  | <b>£1,167.01</b>  | <b>£3,508.92</b>  |
| Journals                             | £0.00             | £0.00             |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>             | <b>£62,592.84</b> | <b>£54,098.71</b> |
| <b>Carried Forward</b>               | <b>£66,692.26</b> | <b>£57,188.64</b> |

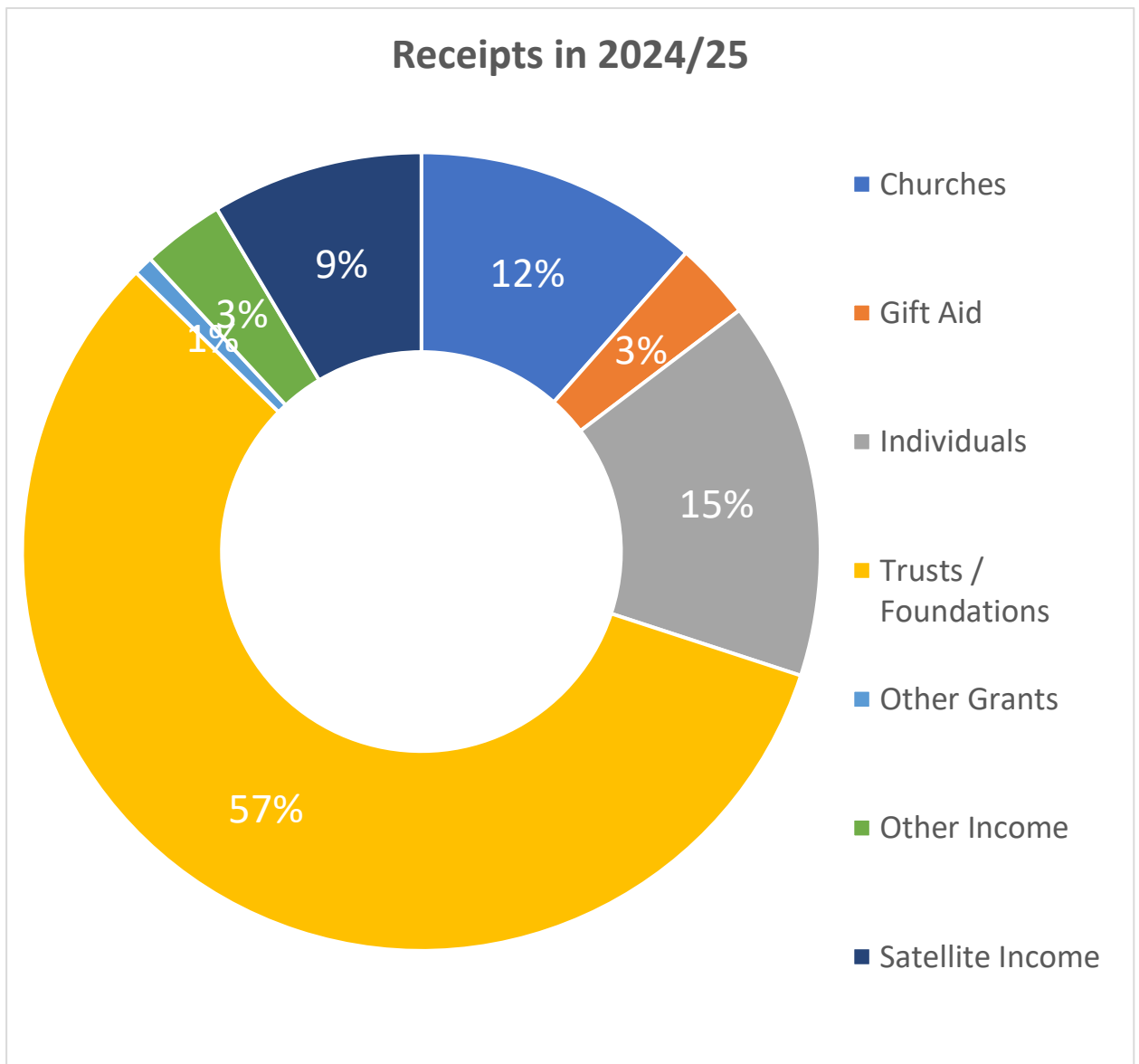
During the year, the following grants were received:

- Unrestricted funds: Donations from churches and private individuals. E.g. Holy Trinity church Old Hill; Earthen Vessel
- Restricted funds: Michael Marsh Charitable Trust, National Lottery Awards for All, Geoff Hill Charitable Trust, The Grimmitt Trust, Wylde Memorial Trust.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, our reserves stood at £57,188.64, of which £16,552.64 were restricted and £40,636 unrestricted. Restricted funds included funds remaining from grants.

### Receipts

This chart shows the breakdown of our income streams across all funds: -



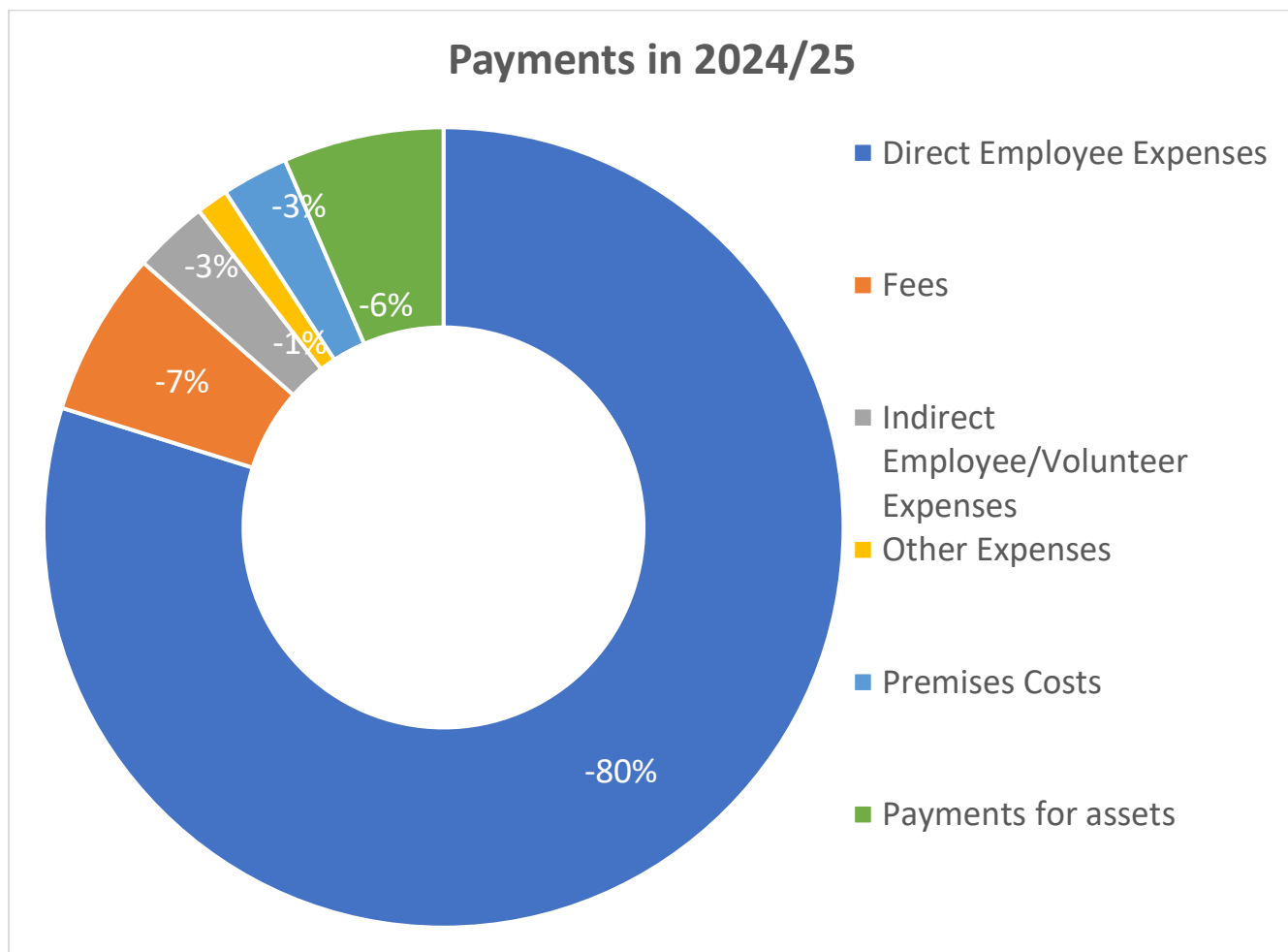
Our major source of income is from Trusts. The regular support from both individuals and churches has decreased slightly.

## Payments

The significant changes In 2024/25 were: -

1. Our employment costs decreased
2. We upgraded & expanded our hardware & software to improve our efficiency and enable a larger team

The breakdown for this year: -



## Reserves

The Trustees have a policy to retain a level of reserves equivalent to 3 month's operating costs. Our minimum running costs for a quarter are currently approximately £20,700, comfortably within our present level of reserves. However, we anticipate a requirement to raise further funds in the current year in order to maintain this position and absorb any additional expenditure..

## Independent Examination

The accounts have been examined independently and the report is on page 13.

## Governance

The Trustees and Centre Manager work together to govern the operation of the charity to the relevant standards. The Manager is primarily responsible for the quality of the Debt Advice and our compliance with the regulations and requirements of the two bodies that accredit our work, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Community Money Advice (CMA) organisation. The quality of the debt advice is externally audited annually by the CMA organisation.

In 2024/25 the Management Team (Trustees and Centre Manager) met 9 times and the Trustees once to guide the work agree new approaches, approve new employees and volunteers and any other relevant leadership decisions.

Trustees are appointed or confirmed at Trustee Meetings and may serve for a maximum of 3 years before formal re-election if appropriate, and it is recommended that they serve no more than 7 years.

The charity has an informal accountability to the Churches Together in Stourbridge (CTIS) network.

## Trustees

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Primary role</b>   | <b>End of term</b> |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Alan Taylor   | Chair                 | 31/03/25 Retired   |
| Julia Savage  | Trustee               | 01/06/25           |
| Malcolm Moss  | Secretary & Treasurer | 30/03/26           |
| Nicola Martin | Trustee               | 31/03/26           |
| Chris Helsop  | Trustee               | 24/01/27           |

## Charity Details

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Charity number</b>       | 115691   |
| <b>Charity status</b>       | Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)<br>Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.                |
| <b>Registered Office</b>    | The Upper Room, Bellmark House<br>18a Market Street<br>Stourbridge, West Midlands<br>DY8 1AD         |
| <b>Telephone</b>            | 01384 739757   |
| <b>Email</b>                | <a href="mailto:info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a>               |
| <b>Chair until 31/3/25</b>  | <a href="mailto:Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Chair from 01/04/25</b>  |  |
| <b>Independent Examiner</b> | Arthur Brown   |
| <b>Bankers</b>              | Unity Trust Bank plc<br>Nine Brindley Place<br>Birmingham<br>B1 2HB                                  |

## Charity objectives

The objects of the charity as set out in the constitution are: -

1. To relieve poverty by providing ethical debt and money management advice, free of charge.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded (for the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of financial hardship) and assisting them to integrate into society in particular but not exclusively by;
  - a. providing advocacy services for people who are unable to advocate for themselves because of fear or lack of knowledge or lack of confidence
  - b. providing training and guidance to develop people's financial capability
  - c. helping those who have been isolated from, or who are out of touch with, society to re-adjust and re-integrate by befriending them and re-building their confidence in their local community.
3. The advancement of the Christian faith by evangelistic mission that is carried out on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, and in accordance with the Faithworks charter given as [Appendix 1](#).

As followers of Jesus, we believe that prayer is the foundation of this work.

## Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees of Life Centre Stourbridge (Charity number 1156191) on accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 as set out on pages 7 to 11.**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2025**.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

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

**Independent examiner's statement:** I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed: *A Baker*      Date: 05/06/25

**Name:** Arthur Baker

**Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):** Not given

**Address:** 25b Chantry Road, Stourton, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY7 6SA

## Appendix 1 – The Faithworks Charter

Principles for Churches and local Christian agencies committed to excellence in community work and service provision in the UK

# The Faithworks Charter



Motivated by our Christian faith we, commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

### **We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:**

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

### **We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:**

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which individuals learn from any mistakes made and where excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

### **We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:**

1. Implementing a management structure, which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE**

England & Wales - Charity number 1156191

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# Accounts

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**Life Centre Stourbridge**  
**Annual Report & Accounts**  
**1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

*“Helping people ‘do’ life”*



Churches Together in  
Stourbridge

**cma**

Freedom from debt  
Hope for the future

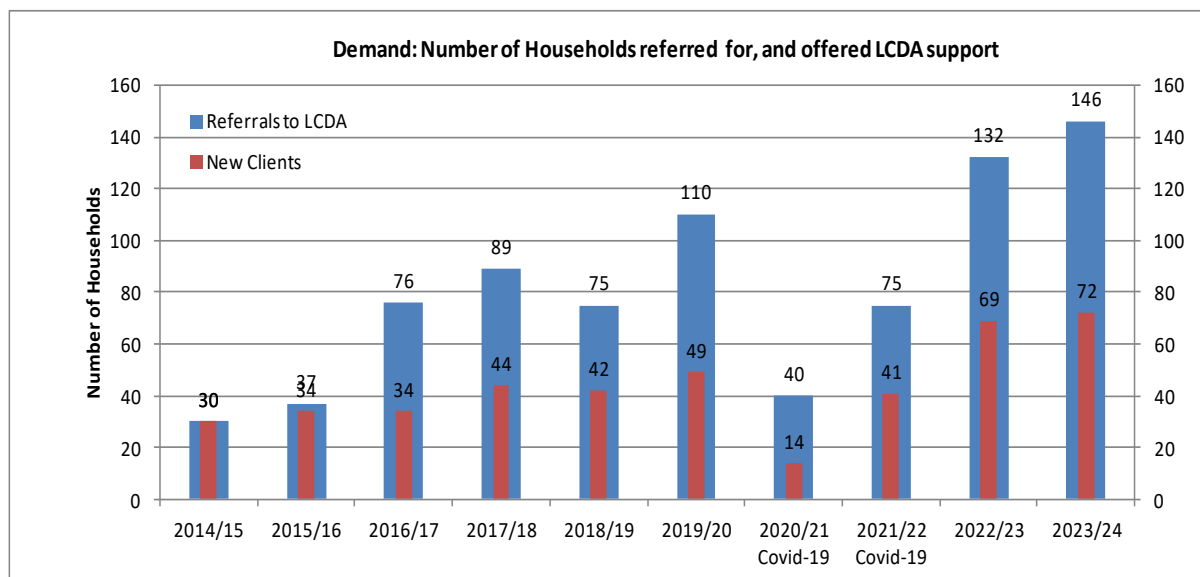


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## Trends

- Demand for LCDA services (indicated by referral rates) continues on an upward trajectory and has risen steadily each year since 2017 by 10-15% per year (and is ~35% higher than that of pre-Covid-19 levels).



- 146 new households were referred to LCDA, up 15% on last year. This growth rate is managed by employing low levels of marketing, as well as providing our referral partners with clear criteria and updates on the waiting list status.
- Most referrals come via our network of local churches and foodbanks, through word of mouth; another 30% come through public sector agencies inc. Local Authority departments, Job Centres, Health & Social Care Services; 20% come via LCDA and CMA advertising/marketing.
- 72 new client households were added to our caseload.
- Current caseload of engaged clients [as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024] is 69.- increased over the year, as we have been able to take on more clients with enhanced capacity made possible following recruitment & training of two new staff team members to cover HR and admin.

## Operational Summary 2023/24

| ACTIVITY   | Numbers | Comments   |
|--|---------|--|
| Open cases - households received advice & support                          | 169     | Comprising 260 individuals inc children  |
| New referrals received   | 146     | over 12 months – up by 15%   |
| New referrals taken up as active clients                                   | 72      | Target of 50% of referrals taken on is constrained by capacity of debt advisers/complexity of the cases            |
| Open cases that took part in at least 1 advice appointment                 | 84      | 50% of 169 open cases  |
| Current case load of active clients as at 31 March 2024                    | 69      |  |
| Referrals in triage/waiting for a 1 <sup>st</sup> Appt as at 31 March 2024 | 47      | Households with debts waiting to be taken on as active clients (of which 30 are assigned to HTOH)                  |
| New referrals signposted to other agencies after triage; e.g. Welfare      | 16      | Money management/debt issues more appropriately handled by another agency or due to a lack of capacity within LCDA |

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

| ACTIVITY  | Numbers            | Comments  |
|---|--------------------|---|
| Rights, DWP, CAB, Step Change, Thrive, alternative CMA Centre                           |                    |   |
| New referrals failed to engage  | 17                 | did not respond after several attempts at contact/did not attend appointment offered  |
| <b>SERVICE PERFORMANCE</b>  |                    |   |
| Number of appointments offered  | 296                | Dependent on availability of qualified Debt Advisers  |
| Number of appointments taken up   | 236                | 80% taken up, a consistent level over recent years  |
| Appointments delivered face-to-face   | 64%                | Telephone (27%), email (6%), Zoom (1%)  |
| New referrals deemed in 'crisis' had their first appointment within 9 calendar days     | 100%               | A key metric achievement for our service  |
| New referrals identified as in debt had their first appointment within 30 calendar days | 100%               | We aim to see non-crisis debt clients within one month of referral, but some have had to wait longer given our limited capacity                 |
| Average advice appointment length (face-to-face, phone, email)                          | 80 minutes         | Initial assessment appointments take 2-3 hours  |
| Length of client engagement   | 6 months – 2 years | Dependent on complexity of debts and client capacity to maintain repayment arrangements   |
| <b>DEBT RESOLUTION OUTCOMES</b>   |                    |   |
| Amount of debt absolved   | £229,487           | Representing ~18% of total debt presented; already 50% higher than LCDA's best ever performance (2023) with 4 weeks still to complete the year. |
| Total no of cases closed  | 92                 | Average debt per case = £2,494  |
| Average amount of debt per open client  | £12,274            | £2,074,306 over 169 open clients  |
| Average amount of debt per new client   | £12,004            | £828,278 /69  |
| Case files closed – successful or stable debt resolution in place                       | 45                 | No longer in problem debt/debts absolved. Average debt reduction is £5,098 per case.  |
| Case files closed – short term engagement   | 27                 | Includes those signposted to other services, those who wanted/ needed short term support/advice e.g. household budgeting                        |
| Number receiving Financial Statements   | 169                | All open clients receive a (draft) Financial Statement after first appointment  |
| New Debt Repayment Plans/Debt Relief Orders   | ~45                | This will be a similar number to the cases closed.  |
| Number of people helped to increase benefit entitlements &/or improve income            | 17                 | For example, claiming pension credit.   |

### Additional 'Soft outcomes'

More detailed personal information is recorded for households in receipt of active debt/money advice (n.169):

| OUTCOMES  | Numbers | Comments  |
|---|---------|---|
| Households with employability solvency improvements | 44%     | Unemployed clients supported to improve financial stability with oncome & expenditure reviews and debt management plans                                     |
| Households in work with improved budget outcomes    | 23%     | Households in employment have improved income, and expenditure reduction and debt support to ease their financial circumstances                             |
| Households seeing health stress improvements        | 20%     | Households with sick, disabled or retired people were supported through financial difficulties to ease health stresses                                      |
| Households subject to enforcement activities        | 24      | Households supported to avert seizure of goods by bailiffs  |
| Households in crisis                                | 21      | Households at risk of homelessness under notice or threat of eviction, and/or severe mental health stress/suicide risk, or victims of domestic violence     |
| Mental health improvements                          | 12      | Clients reporting that their mental health had improved since being supported (stress reduction, less anxious/depressed) inc. suicide risk/ideation averted |
| Social inclusion improvements                       | 16      | Clients reporting improved social contacts, more active in the community, new friendships etc   |
| Relationship improvements                           | 23      | Clients reporting improved family dynamics, reduced family tensions   |
| Practical/emergency support provided                | 72      | Individuals/households receiving support with essential supplies – food, fuel vouchers, clothing  |

### Delivery Outreach

- Majority of open cases were from the Dudley and Sandwell postcodes (80% from the DY9, B63, DY2, DY8, B64, DY5, DY1 postcodes)
- Satellite Centre activity at Holy Trinity Old Hill (Sandwell Borough) resumed with partnership terms & funding renewed to 2025: Team size 3 volunteers, including 1 Debt Advisor
- St Martin's Bradley Wolverhampton: New Satellite opened 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024
- Christ Church, Lye: Clinic on Fridays
- Brockmoor & Pensnett Community Centre: Clinic attended and client activity started
- Halesowen College: information day for college leavers on managing personal finances attended by 200 students
- Awareness -raising visits to 16 churches in Dudley Borough, also Tipton.

### Organisational achievements

- 5 Debt advisors are active (4 this time in 2023), +2 in supported training
- Three new staff members employed during the year – an Assistant Centre Manager/Debt Adviser, and HR/Admin job share
- 83 Training days completed during 2023/24: AW has completed CMA Level 4 training; CMA refresher training Parts 1 to 3 underway. Heather Keats, CEO and Founder of CMA delivered CMA Part 1 training for 11 staff/volunteers.
- Team of 20 volunteers, supported through monthly meetings

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

- LCDA 10-year celebration & CD launch 27th January 2024 was well received generating £360 of donations before Gift Aid
- Lottery Awards for All funded a 12-month project ending 29<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024
- Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund grant (£34,919) awarded October 2023, completed end of March 2024
- Dudley Building Society – award of £5,000 received after customer vote
- New FCA Regulatory requirements (Duty of Care) were introduced on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023. IPSOS survey completed.

## Client/referral agency feedback:

- *"I feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders."*
- *"I feel perfect! Ever since you started helping me things have just been going great thanks. My son is going on a school trip and normally I get stressed about being able to afford it, but I have the money and was able to pay for it, so I was so pleased"*
- Dudley Building Society: *"Our customers have nominated LCDA for funding support, and you have been shortlisted for a possible grant. We've been told that LCDA is making an impact on the lives of people in our community"*
- ...from someone facing eviction: *"I wanted to thank you specifically for your valuable time, your patience and Information on my situation. I can tell you care deeply about your clients' issues and I pray you continue your good work. God bless you."*
- ...comment from a referral partner: *"Life Centre Debt Advice is the first place I'd call if one of my households has a need for debt advice."*

## Challenges

Going forward, LCDA faces a number of challenges to sustain our growth in capacity:

- Scheduling staff time to meet targets for assessing the needs of new referral clients and being able to allocate them the appropriate level of support
- Increasing availability of qualified Debt Advisers for frontline advice through reallocation of administration and staff oversight/training
- Continuous professional development for staff and volunteers to improve the effectiveness of the service and bring about speedier debt resolutions
- Fulfilling additional reporting requirements – FCA Duty of Care implementation
- Improving client engagement rates by working more closely with referral agencies and partners to ensure a better fit with client need, priorities and willingness/readiness to engage
- Completing an urgent IT Audit and implementing recommendations to improve efficiency and security
- Securing longer term funding to retain key qualified and gifted staff
- Recruiting and training new volunteers.

## Opportunities

- Building partnerships with local churches and community groups to grow a network of neighbourhood level debt & money advice delivery across deprived areas of the Black Country
- Expanding our delivery model to include access to centralised debt advice via the 'Integrated Hub' service through our national umbrella organisation Community Money Advice
- Work more closely with local authority and public agencies to influence policy and practice around debt advice and poverty alleviation.

## Summary from the Chair

The focus for our service has always been 'how can we effectively help those who come to us in need of advice and support'.

It is so encouraging to receive feedback from clients expressing their experiences of a service that has given them: -

- compassionate face to face support
- excellent regulated advice
- help that has gone beyond their expectations
- hope for the future
- support for the long term

This has been achieved through an excellent, committed and hard-working team of volunteers, staff, supporters and trustees. I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with LCDA for all that they do and particularly those things that go un-noticed, but are just as vital to the effective running and provision of our service, whether it be practical, prayerful or through financial support.

My hope and prayer is that we can continue to fund, equip and sustain our service to be here for many years to come, meeting the needs of those who decide to make that first big step to ask for our help.

If, having read this report you feel you would love to be part of this work, please do not hesitate to contact one of the team, we would welcome the opportunity to speak to you.

Alan Taylor

Chair

## Financial Review

LCDA is in a financially strong position. The reasons are:

1. We received grants totalling £39,858 from the Cost Of Living Fund which we had to spend by 31<sup>st</sup> March 24
2. We received a grant from the Dudley Building Society of £5,000 late in March which we have yet to spend

During the next financial year, we anticipate these changes to our expenditure:

1. An upgrade to our IT infrastructure – approx. £5,000
2. We recruit another staff member for 16 hours/week – approx. £10,000
3. A reduction in employment costs as Martin Frize reduces his hours from 32/week to 8/week from w/c June 17<sup>th</sup> onwards – approx. £10,000

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge  
Statement of Receipts and Payments Accounts – all funds

This statement is for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 for all funds. The comparative figures for 2022/23 are for the 15 months from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

|                                      | 2022/23            | 2023/24            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Brought Forward                      | <b>£33,741.12</b>  | <b>£55,190.23</b>  |
| <b>Receipts</b>                      |                    |                    |
| Churches                             | £6,877.00          | £6,169.58          |
| Gift Aid                             | £1,652.75          | £1,477.46          |
| Individuals                          | £15,550.51         | £7,914.05          |
| Trusts / Foundations                 | £28,015.00         | £46,828.00         |
| Other Grants                         | £90.00             | £5,150.00          |
| Other Income                         | £451.83            | £1,244.26          |
| Satellite Income                     | £4,868.18          | £5,311.52          |
| <b>Total Income</b>                  | <b>£57,505.27</b>  | <b>£74,094.87</b>  |
| <b>Payments</b>                      |                    |                    |
| Direct Employee Expenses             | -£28,153.28        | -£50,583.45        |
| Fees                                 | -£2,099.00         | -£4,498.83         |
| Indirect Employee/Volunteer Expenses | -£2,515.67         | -£2,550.30         |
| Marketing                            | £0.00              | -£253.00           |
| Other Expenses                       | -£544.23           | -£736.84           |
| Premises Costs                       | -£2,743.98         | -£2,803.41         |
| Payments for assets                  | £0.00              | -£1,167.01         |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>             | <b>-£36,056.16</b> | <b>-£62,592.84</b> |
| <b>Carried Forward</b>               | <b>£55,190.23</b>  | <b>£66,692.26</b>  |

## Statement of Receipts and Payments Accounts – by fund

This statement is for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

| Brought Forward                      | £44,017.33         | £1,897.90         | £9,275.00         | £0.00              | £55,190.23         |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Funds                                | LCDA               | HTOH              | LAFA              | COL                | Totals             |
| <b>Receipts</b>                      |                    |                   |                   |                    |                    |
| Churches                             | £6,169.58          |                   |                   |                    | £6,169.58          |
| Gift Aid                             | £1,477.46          |                   |                   |                    | £1,477.46          |
| Individuals                          | £7,914.05          |                   |                   |                    | £7,914.05          |
| Trusts / Foundations                 | £20,046.37         |                   |                   | £26,781.63         | £46,828.00         |
| Other Grants                         | £5,150.00          |                   |                   |                    | £5,150.00          |
| Other Income                         | £1,244.26          |                   |                   |                    | £1,244.26          |
| Satellite Income                     |                    | £5,311.52         |                   |                    | £5,311.52          |
| <b>Total Income</b>                  | <b>£42,001.72</b>  | <b>£5,311.52</b>  | <b>£0.00</b>      | <b>£26,781.63</b>  | <b>£74,094.87</b>  |
| <b>Payments</b>                      |                    |                   |                   |                    |                    |
| Direct Employee Expenses             | -£15,494.20        | -£6,028.80        | -£7,568.50        | -£21,491.95        | -£50,583.45        |
| Fees                                 | -£2,474.83         |                   | -£350.00          | -£1,674.00         | -£4,498.83         |
| Indirect Employee/Volunteer Expenses | -£770.96           | -£240.31          | -£226.26          | -£1,312.77         | -£2,550.30         |
| Marketing                            |                    |                   |                   | -£253.00           | -£253.00           |
| Other Expenses                       | -£736.84           |                   |                   |                    | -£736.84           |
| Premises Costs                       | -£753.02           |                   |                   | -£2,050.39         | -£2,803.41         |
| Payments for assets                  |                    |                   | -£1,167.01        |                    | -£1,167.01         |
| Journals                             | -£37.25            | £0.00             | £36.77            | £0.48              | £0.00              |
| Prior year adjustments               | £626.19            | -£626.19          |                   |                    | £0.00              |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>             | <b>-£19,640.91</b> | <b>-£6,895.30</b> | <b>-£9,275.00</b> | <b>-£26,781.63</b> | <b>-£62,592.84</b> |
| <b>Carried Forward</b>               | <b>£66,378.14</b>  | <b>£314.12</b>    | <b>£0.00</b>      | <b>£0.00</b>       | <b>£66,692.26</b>  |

**Fund Key**

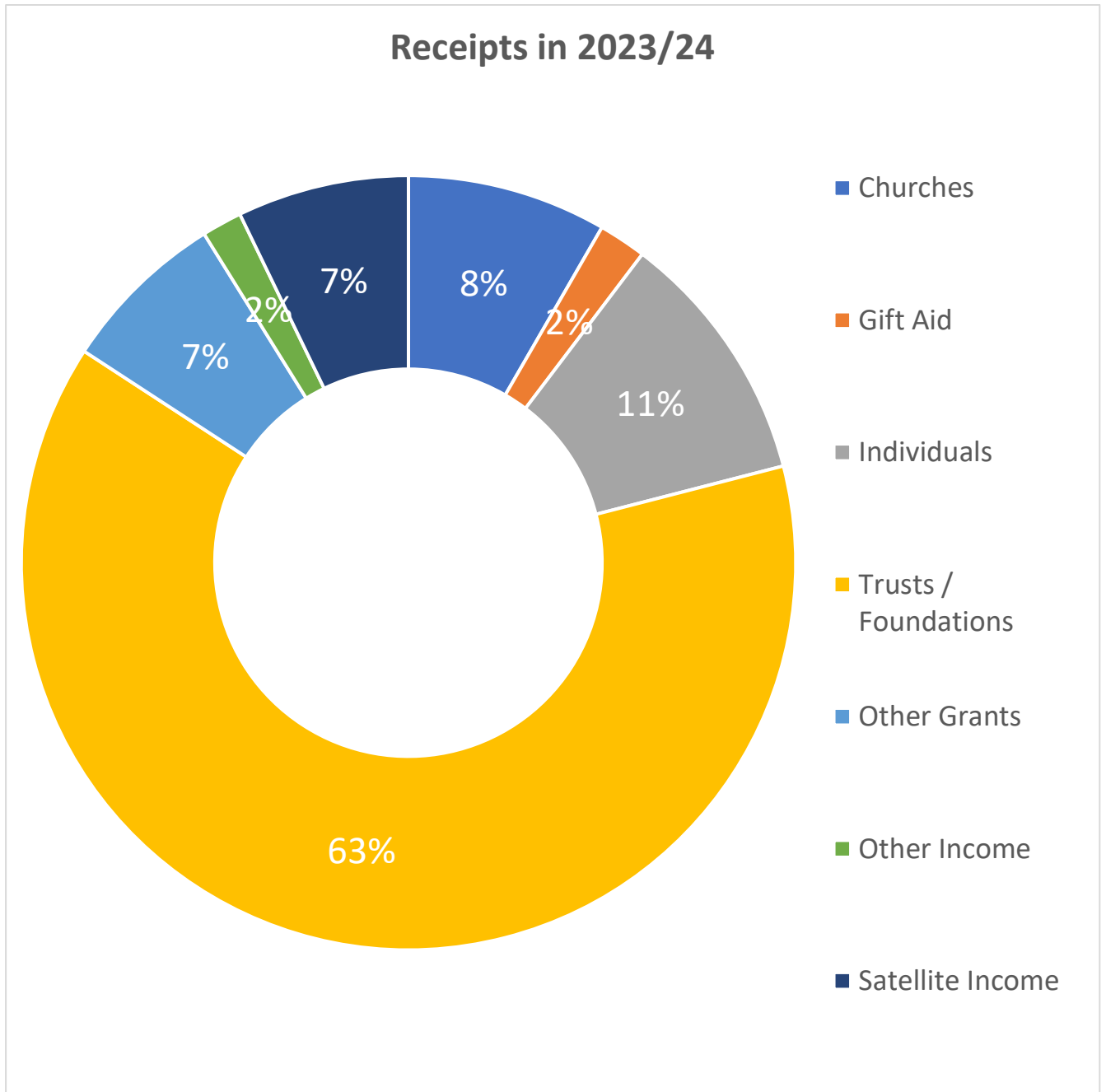
|      |   |                 |
|------|---|-----------------|
| LCDA | Life Centre Debt Advice                     | General Fund    |
| HTOH | Holy Trinity, Old Hill – a satellite centre | Designated fund |
| LAFA | Lottery Awards for All                      | Restricted fund |
| COL  | Cost of Living                              | Restricted fund |

**Notes**

1. Journals: Transfer of the expenditure above grant amount to LCDA General Fund
2. Prior year adjustment: Reallocation of expenditure in prior year to appropriate fund account as per agreement

Receipts

This chart shows the breakdown of our income streams: -

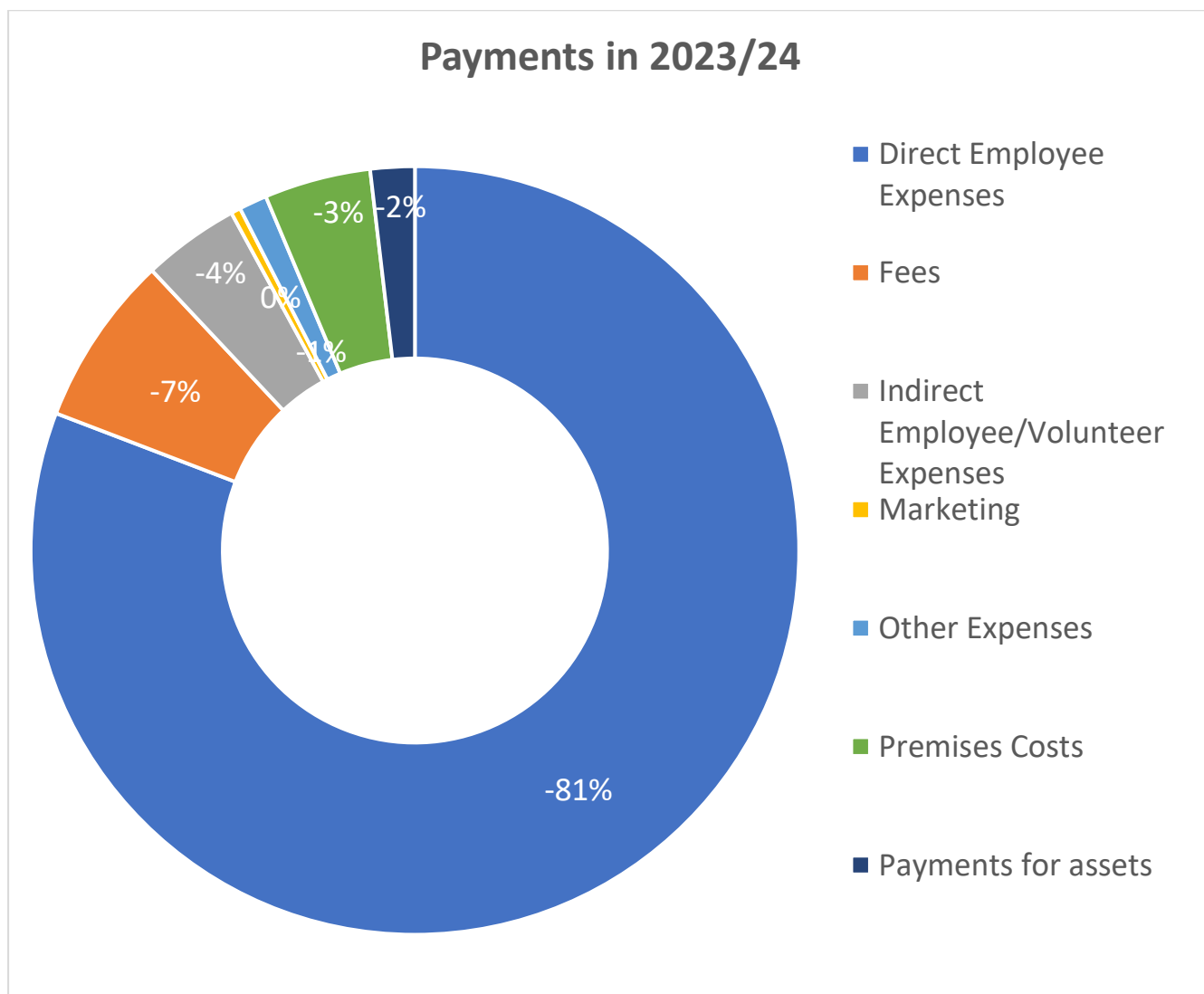


Our major source of income is from Trusts. The regular support from individuals has slightly reduced whereas the support from churches has increased slightly.

## Payments

In 2023/24 our employment costs rose significantly because we employed two more staff members for 10 hours/week each & then increased the staff hours later in the year to deliver the outcomes that the Cost of Living fund enabled.

The breakdown for this year: -



## Reserves

Our minimum running costs for a quarter are approximately £18,000 & this is considerably less than our current balance.

## Independent Examination

The accounts have been examined independently.

## Governance

The Trustees and Centre Manager work together to govern the operation of the charity to the relevant standards. The Manager is primarily responsible for the quality of the Debt Advice and our compliance with the regulations and requirements of the two bodies that accredit our work, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Community Money Advice (CMA) organisation. The quality of the debt advice is externally audited annually by the CMA organisation.

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

In 2023/24 the Management Team (Trustees and Centre Manager) met 10 times and the Trustees once to guide the work agree new approaches, approve new volunteers and any other relevant leadership decisions.

Trustees are appointed or confirmed at Trustee Meetings and may serve for a maximum of 3 years before formal re-election if appropriate, and it is recommended that they serve no more than 7 years.

The charity has an informal accountability to the Churches Together in Stourbridge (CTIS) network.

### Trustees

| <b>Name</b>        | <b>Primary role</b>     | <b>End of term</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Alan Taylor        | Chair                   | 28/06/24           |
| Julia Savage       | Trustee                 | 22/06/25           |
| David Watts        | Trustee                 | 28/06/23 Retired   |
| Malcolm Moss       | Scribe & Treasurer      | 30/03/25           |
| Nicola Martin      | Fund Raising            | 02/02/25           |
| Christopher Heslop | Trustee (from 24/01/24) | 23/01/27           |

### Charity Details

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Charity number</b>       | 115691   |
| <b>Charity status</b>       | Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)<br>Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.                |
| <b>Registered Office</b>    | The Upper Room, Bellmark House<br>18a Market Street<br>Stourbridge, West Midlands<br>DY8 1AD         |
| <b>Telephone</b>            | 01384 739757   |
| <b>Email</b>                | <a href="mailto:info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a>               |
| <b>Chair</b>                | <a href="mailto:Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Independent Examiner</b> | Alastair Greeves   |
| <b>Bankers</b>              | Unity Trust Bank plc<br>Nine Brindley Place<br>Birmingham<br>B1 2HB                                  |

### Charity objectives

The objects of the charity as set out in the constitution are: -

1. To relieve poverty by providing ethical debt and money management advice, free of charge.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded (for the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of financial hardship) and assisting them to integrate into society in particular but not exclusively by; -
  - a. providing advocacy services for people who are unable to advocate for themselves because of fear or lack of knowledge or lack of confidence
  - b. providing training and guidance to develop people's financial capability
  - c. helping those who have been isolated from, or who are out of touch with, society to re-adjust and re-integrate by befriending them and re-building their confidence in

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge  
their local community.

3. The advancement of the Christian faith by evangelistic mission that is carried out on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, and in accordance with the Faithworks charter given as [Appendix 1](#) of the constitution.

These objects are carried out currently by the provision of the Life Centre Debt Advice work by employing a Debt Advice Manager and training volunteer Debt Advisors and Support Workers who give debt advice and work with clients to achieve debt-free status.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that prayer is the foundation of this work.

## Independent Examiner's Report

### Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Life Centre Stourbridge

UK Charity Number: 1156191

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Life Centre Stourbridge ('the Trust') for the year ended 31 March 2024 as set out on pages 8 and 9 of this Annual Report.

#### Responsibilities and basis of report

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

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company 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 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. The procedures undertaken do not involve an examination of all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

#### Independent examiner's statement

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 that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or,
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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

Signed: 

Name: Alastair L. Greeves,

Address: 6 Clifton St.,  
Stourbridge,  
DY8 3XR

Date: 12 July 2024

## Appendix 1 – The Faithworks Charter

Principles for Churches and local Christian agencies committed to excellence in community work and service provision in the UK

# The Faithworks Charter



Motivated by our Christian faith we, commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

### **We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:**

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

### **We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:**

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which individuals learn from any mistakes made and where excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

### **We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:**

1. Implementing a management structure, which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE**

England & Wales - Charity number 1156191

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# Accounts

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**Life Centre Stourbridge**  
**Annual Report & Accounts**  
**1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

*“Helping people ‘do’ life”*



Churches Together in  
Stourbridge

**cma**

Freedom from debt  
Hope for the future



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## Summary from the Chair

The focus for our service has always been and must continue to be, how we can effectively help those who come to us in need of advice and support.

It is so encouraging to receive feedback from clients expressing their experiences of a service that has given them: -

- compassionate face to face support
- excellent regulated advice
- help that has gone beyond their expectations
- hope for the future
- support for the long term

This has been achieved through an excellent, committed and hard-working team of volunteers, staff, supporters and trustees; led by our manager, Martin Frize. I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with LCDA for all that they do and particularly those things that go un-noticed, but are just as vital for the effective running and provision of our service, whether it be practical, prayerful or through financial support. A very big THANK YOU!

My hope and prayer is that we can continue to fund, equip and sustain our service to be here for many years to come, meeting the needs of those who decide to make that first big step to ask for our help.

Alan Taylor

Chair

## Our Purpose, our impact

### Our impact in 2022-23

- 8 Households with “Suicide risk” residents have been supported, and are still alive
- 9 Households under notice or threat of Eviction from their homes have not become homeless (some being supported through active re-housing)
- 16 Households having enforcement activities (Bailiffs) in place, have been supported without “goods being seized”
- 36 Households having unemployed residents have been supported with income, expenditure reviews, and debt management plans so as to improve their day-to-day solvency
- 20 Households having sick, disabled or retired residents have been supported through difficult times having the additional burden of health stress limiting financial recovery
- 15 Households having employed residents have had income enhancement, expenditure reduction and debt support to ease their circumstances
- 10 Households facing challenging family tensions that put their relationships at risk, have been supported without further family breakdown
- 22 Households in which children are resident have been supported
- 50 Households, in which the primary income provider is aged between 41 & 59 and has experienced a significant and material change in Household income, have been supported
- Across a total of 58 Households newly engaged in the current year, £120,303 of debt was removed or reduced from their burden

### Customer Feedback

We are required to solicit feedback and keep the results.

Client 1: A vulnerable, single mum of three school age children, herself subject to historic domestic abuse, and facing eviction from her home just before Christmas, was able to keep her home, increase her income (benefit and employment support) and restore her sense of self-worth.

*She wrote to us saying: “Hi \*\*\*\* Happy New Year to you and your family thank you so much for your help and support, it is truly appreciated. I recommend (Life Centre Debt Advice) service as it is very important to help people. I'd like to thank you from my heart for your help and care and for standing by me when many people left. It's been a very hard journey for me and my children. You have been here for us and that means a lot to us. Thank you”*

Client 2: A young couple with two young school age children whom LCDA supported with a Debt Relief Order to absolve £24,000 of their debts:

*“We’re very excited for the year ahead. We’re very grateful for absolutely everything you've said and done over these last few months. We came to you as lost souls very nearly ready to throw in the towel, you have truly blessed us with more than we ever thought..... and the help you have given us has given us another chance to live with peace in our hearts and minds and with our marriage, we will be truly grateful for many years to come.”*

Client 3: A single person, living alone, nearing retirement, became unemployed and unable to work due to their disability. Having exhausted their savings, they became homeless, alcohol dependant, started experiencing feelings of low mood, and made more than one suicide attempt prior to being introduced by their GP to LCDA (and at the same time to Alcoholics Anonymous).

Following their engagement with LCDA, and once accepted on to a residential recovery program, LCDA received this email from them very recently:

*"I have finally moved out of the dry house and into a 1 bed flat... It's a beautiful ground floor flat with a bit of garden where I can sit out. It has been decorated throughout, and a brand new kitchen fitted. Best of all it is on the bus route to my AA meetings. I cannot believe how lucky I have been, although everybody tells me it is reward for my hard work over the past 8 months. You recommended that I tried to save some money while I've been at the dry house, so I have been able to buy a few things for my new flat. I would just like to thank (LCDA) for being there for me throughout this journey over the past year and a bit."*

The client still has some significant debts to address, but there is a viewpoint that their life is starting to be turned-around, from a place of despair to one of hope for the future, thanks their personal determination, and to the offered support, compassion, and experience that they needed.

Client 4: *"Things are looking up. I seem to have arrived in a sweet spot and things are turning around. I can't thank you enough. A few weeks ago I was about ready to give up."*

Client 5: Feedback score 100%. *"The service is more than I can imagine. You have done more than I could have asked for. God Bless you all."*

No complaints received, ever, either by us or the FOS (Financial Ombudsman Service).

## Our goals for 2022-23

We set ourselves these goals for 2022-23:

1. Continue to provide high quality debt advice
2. Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshop programme.
3. Expand the team including employing a part-time assistant debt advice manager
4. Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals
5. Review our IT infrastructure to support the move to mobile working & working in the Ark where we do not have a dedicated office space so we'll have to use laptops rather than desk-top computers & operate a 'clear desk' policy. This also allows us to work from different locations.

### Continue to provide high quality debt advice.

We are required to comply with the requirements of an increasing number of organisations and regulatory bodies: -

#### Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)

Life Centre Debt Advice (LCDA) is Authorised and Regulated by the FCA (Reference No. 618789) and we make annual returns to them. This has been compulsory for some years and brought in since we opened in 2014. Initially we were brought in as a free debt advice centre, part of CMA (see below) but an inspection of our "operation" will undoubtedly take place at some stage. Without this we would be unable to provide Debt Advice.

#### Community Money Advice (CMA)

Life Centre Debt Advice (LCDA) is affiliated with CMA. They support around 150 independent centres, providing support, input and advice as well as updating new requirements including when we were brought within the FCA "umbrella".

They inspect a sample of our work annually and this year described us as a *"a well-run and established centre."*

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge  
Information Commissioners Office (ICO) Registration - (GDPR)

The Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations 2018 requires every organisation, including us, that processes personal information to register and to pay an annual fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

#### Number of clients

In the reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023: -

- We received 132 referrals which is 75% more than the previous year
- These referrals led to 72 new client households: -
  - 58 had debts
  - 14 only needed budgeting advice
  - 61 of the above 72 added households engaged for at least 1 appointment
  - 11 engaged households subsequently either: never actually turned up, have not yet been offered an appointment, were subsequently referred onwards to another support service, or signposted to guidance to enable self-help
- Of the remaining 60 referrals were: -
  - 14 were signposted elsewhere
  - 46 were not engaged by LCDA simply due to our lack of capacity.
- Our referrals come from: -
  - 30% of Households were referred by public sector organisations (DWP, GP & Social services, Local MBC, Schools etc)
  - 29% from local churches/Food Banks
  - 21% from other Agencies who were lacking expertise or capacity to deal with the client
  - 20% from LCDA marketing.

Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshops  
Plans were put on hold due to lack of capacity.

Expand the staff & volunteer team, including employing a part-time assistant debt advice manager.

- A former Christians Against Poverty centre manager, started in January 2023 for two days a week.
- The year started with 21 team members and ended with 22
- 6 new team members joined the team, 4 volunteers, 1 Trustee, and 1 employee
- 5 team members (4 Debt Advisors, 1 Admin) retired during the year
- 1 Curacy Placement was started & completed in the year

Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals

Our funding breakdown, and financial examiner's report, come later in this report. Our finances are currently healthy and have improved. The trustees are aware of the need to continue to make fund raising a priority as the team expands going forward.

We have continued to receive considerable support from the Earthen Vessel charity, as well as many local churches and individuals for which we are most grateful.

Other funding received this year:

- £9,275 from the National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All
- legacy of £5,000
- Holy Trinity Church at Old Hill contributed £4,868 towards costs of supervision by our manager for 1 day 1 week.

Review our IT resources to support remote working and clear desk policy requirement at the Ark, which is shared with other users.

The Ark.

We have adapted to the new working arrangements. Three new laptops have since been purchased.

Remote working.

*Holy Trinity Church, Old Hill.*

This satellite operation suffered a set-back when two of their debt advisors resigned. Our Manager agreed to work 1 day a week there & this has stabilised the operation. Subsequent to this year-end they have secured more funding to sustain this operation.

## Our focus for 2023/24 and Future Direction

We hope to continue to meet the need of as many as we can of those in debt by whatever means are open to us. We realise the demand for what we can offer will grow. We therefore hope to expand our team both in volunteers, their ability and experience, and a second paid part time employee.

Some of our clients will only want a 'quick fix' for their current crisis – the bailiffs, rent arrears and such. Others will be ready to come on a journey with us that will help them to become financially stable for the rest of their lives.

We also hope to build on our work in money management workshops as there has been so little to help people learn to manage their finances in our complex modern world.

As a consequence, our goals remain largely unchanged.

## Financial Review

The trustees approved a change to the charity's accounting year end from 31<sup>st</sup> December to 31<sup>st</sup> March for the accounting period commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. As a result the Receipts & Payments accounts shown in this report show 12 months for accounting period ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 and 15 months for the accounting period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### Bank Balances

|                                   | Current account | Deposit account | Total   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| <b>Opening balance at 1/1/22</b>  | £4,702          | £29,039         | £33,741 |
| <b>Closing balance at 31/2/23</b> | £4,199          | £50,991         | £55,190 |
| <b>Net change</b>                 | <b>-£503</b>    | £ 21,952        | £21,449 |

LCDA is in a financially strong position. The reasons are:

1. We received a grant from the Lottery for £9,275, which we did not start spending within the period
2. We received a legacy of £5,000
3. We did not employ our deputy centre manager until January 2023 which was later than expected & this reduced our expenditure by £775 for each month of the delay
4. Our satellite operation at Holy Trinity Old Hill (HTOH) increased their financial support to LCDA

During the next financial year, we anticipate additional expenditure on:

1. We are in the process of recruiting a Human Resources/general administrator

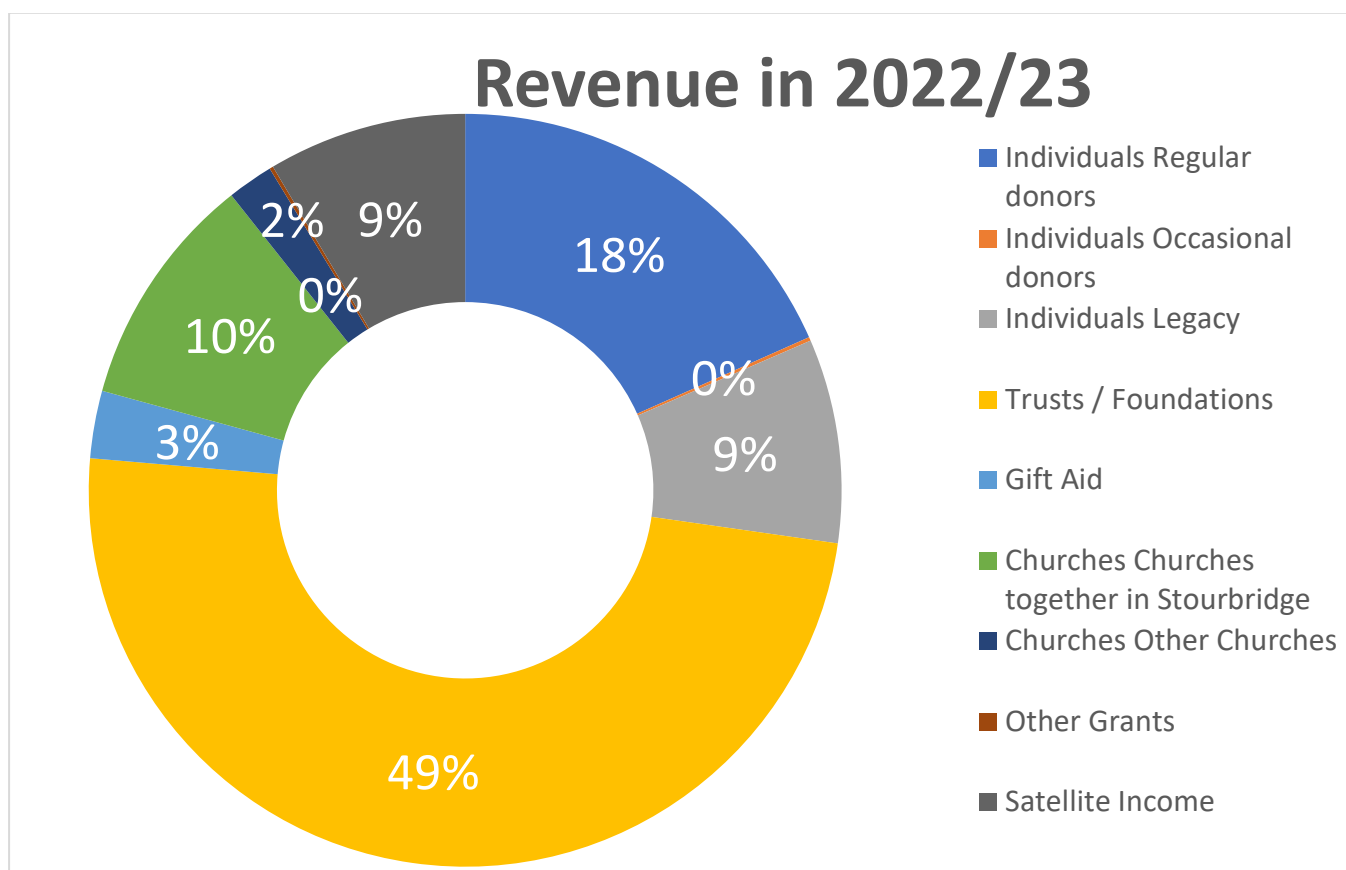
2. Overtime payments to senior staff due to staff and volunteer departures

Income

Here are the income streams for the last 4 years: -

| Revenue category                | 2019              | 2020              | 2021              | 2022/23           |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Direct Employee Expenses</b> | <b>£7.47</b>      |                   |                   |                   |
| Individuals                     | £9,732.95         | £8,470.25         | £8,192.09         | £15,550.51        |
| Trusts / Foundations            | £12,600.00        | £13,150.00        | £16,950.00        | £28,015.00        |
| Gift Aid                        | £675.66           | £3,050.07         | £1,509.45         | £1,652.75         |
| Churches                        | £6,272.50         | £6,365.25         | £5,025.00         | £6,877.00         |
| Other Grants                    | £308.00           | £3,933.28         | £1,725.00         | £90.00            |
| Satellite Income                |                   | £240.00           | £750.00           | £4,868.18         |
| <b>Grand Total</b>              | <b>£29,596.58</b> | <b>£35,208.85</b> | <b>£34,151.54</b> | <b>£57,053.44</b> |

This chart shows the breakdown of our income streams: -



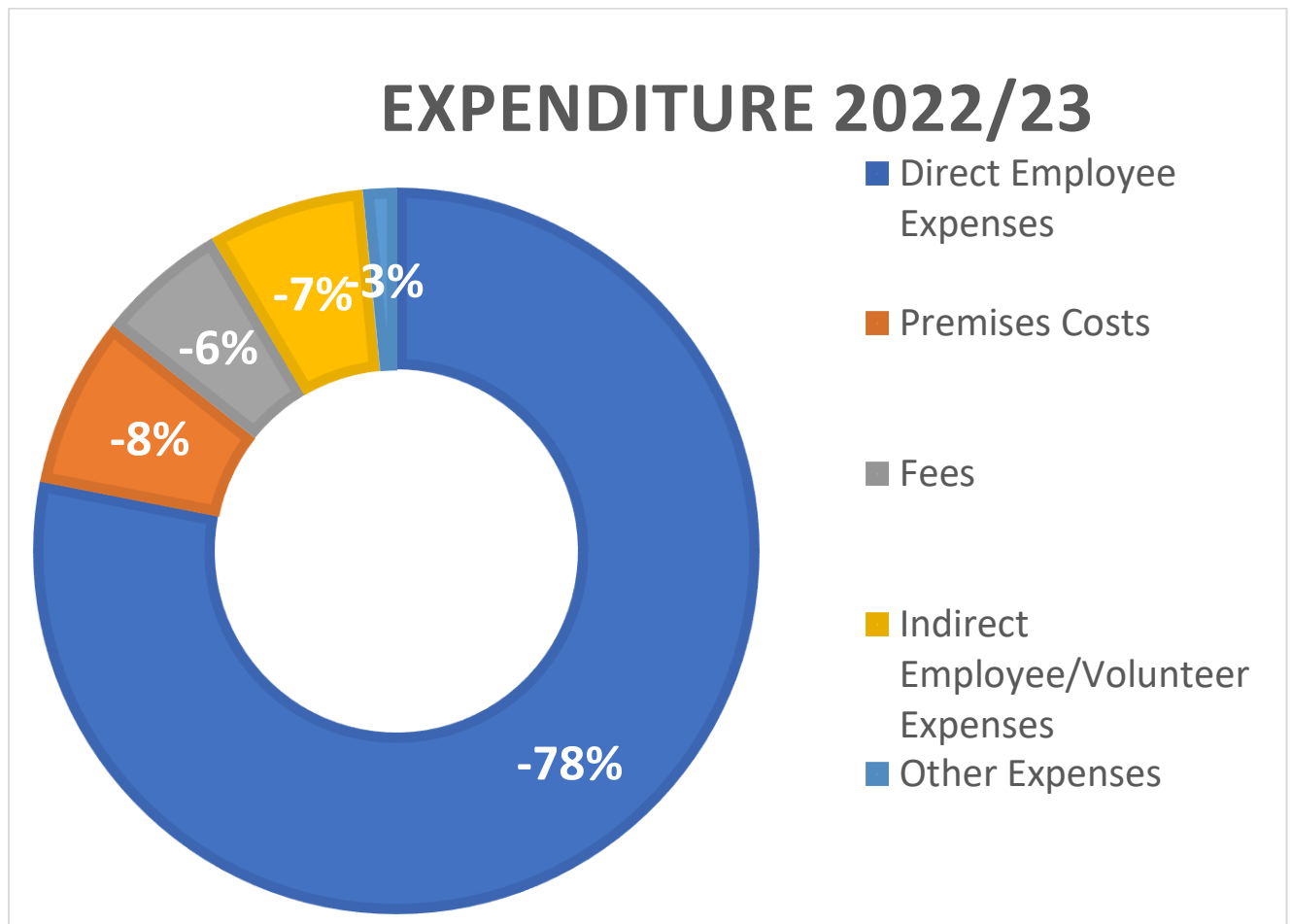
Our major source of income is from Trusts. The regular support from individuals was maintained throughout the year & this makes up 21% of our income once the gift aid is included.

Expenditure

In 2022/23 our expenditure rose because it was a 15-month year.

| Debit<br>Row Labels                  | Years           |                 |                 |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                      | 2019            | 2020            | 2021            | 2022/23         |
| Direct Employee Expenses             | -£23,905        | -£20,083        | -£15,956        | -£28,153        |
| Premises Costs                       | -£1,799         | -£1,171         | -£2,015         | -£2,744         |
| Fees                                 | -£1,313         | -£1,327         | -£1,364         | -£2,099         |
| Indirect Employee/Volunteer Expenses | -£2,413         | -£1,017         | -£1,595         | -£2,516         |
| Other Expenses                       | -£392           | -£392           | -£544           | -£544           |
| Marketing                            | -£261           |                 |                 |                 |
| Payments for assets                  |                 |                 | -£148           |                 |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                   | <b>-£30,084</b> | <b>-£23,990</b> | <b>-£21,623</b> | <b>-£36,056</b> |

The breakdown for this year: -



Reserves

Our minimum running costs for a quarter are approximately £11,000 & this is considerably less than our current balance.

## Independent Examination

The accounts have been examined independently. The report appears after the Financial Statement.

## Governance

The Trustees and Centre Manager work together to govern the operation of the charity to the relevant standards. The Manager is primarily responsible for the quality of the Debt Advice and our compliance with the regulations and requirements of the two bodies that accredit our work, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Community Money Advice (CMA) organisation. The quality of the debt advice is externally audited annually by the CMA organisation.

In 2022/23 the Management Team (Trustees and Centre Manager) met 9 times and the Trustees once to guide the work agree new approaches, approve new volunteers and any other relevant leadership decisions.

Trustees are appointed or confirmed at Trustee Meetings and may serve for a maximum of 3 years before formal re-election if appropriate, and it is recommended that they serve no more than 7 years.

The charity has an informal accountability to the Churches Together in Stourbridge (CTiS) network.

## Trustees

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Primary role</b> | <b>End of term</b> |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Alan Taylor   | Chair               | 28/06/24           |
| Julia Savage  | Trustee             | 22/06/25           |
| David Watts   | Fund Raising        | 28/06/23           |
| Malcolm Moss  | Scribe & Treasurer  | 30/03/25           |
| Nicola Martin | Fund Raising        | 02/02/25           |

## Charity Details

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Charity number</b>       | 115691   |
| <b>Charity status</b>       | Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)<br>Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.                |
| <b>Registered Office</b>    | The Upper Room, Bellmark House<br>18a Market Street<br>Stourbridge, West Midlands<br>DY8 1AD         |
| <b>Telephone</b>            | 01384 739757   |
| <b>Email</b>                | <a href="mailto:info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a>               |
| <b>Chair</b>                | <a href="mailto:Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">Alan.Taylor@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Independent Examiner</b> | Alastair Greeves   |
| <b>Bankers</b>              | Unity Trust Bank plc<br>Nine Brindley Place<br>Birmingham<br>B1 2HB                                  |

## Charity objectives

The objects of the charity as set out in the constitution are: -

1. To relieve poverty by providing ethical debt and money management advice, free of charge.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge  
socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded (for the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of financial hardship) and assisting them to integrate into society in particular but not exclusively by; -

- a. providing advocacy services for people who are unable to advocate for themselves because of fear or lack of knowledge or lack of confidence
  - b. providing training and guidance to develop people's financial capability
  - c. helping those who have been isolated from, or who are out of touch with, society to re-adjust and re-integrate by befriending them and re-building their confidence in their local community.
3. The advancement of the Christian faith by evangelistic mission that is carried out on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, and in accordance with the Faithworks charter given as [Appendix 1](#) of the constitution.

These objects are carried out currently by the provision of the Life Centre Debt Advice work by employing a Debt Advice Manager and training volunteer Debt Advisors and Support Workers who give debt advice and work with clients to achieve debt-free status.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that prayer is the foundation of this work.

## Statement of Receipts and Payments Accounts – all funds

This statement is for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 for all funds. The comparative figures for 2021 are for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

|                                     | 2022/23            | 2021               |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Brought forward bank balance</b> | <b>£33,741.12</b>  | <b>£21,207.46</b>  |
|                                     | <b>Receipts</b>    |                    |
| Other Churches                      | £1,127.00          | £650.00            |
| Churches in Stourbridge             | £5,750.00          | £4,375.00          |
| Gift Aid                            | £1,652.75          | £1,509.45          |
| Regular donors                      | £10,460.51         | £7,782.09          |
| Occasional donors                   | £5,090.00          | £410.00            |
| Trust/foundations                   | £28,015.00         | £16,950.00         |
| Other grants                        | £90.00             | £1,725.00          |
| Other income: Satellite             | £4,868.18          | £750.00            |
| Other income: Interest              | £451.83            | £1.79              |
| Other income: Refund                |                    | £3.25              |
| <b>Total income</b>                 | <b>£57,505.27</b>  | <b>£34,156.58</b>  |
|                                     | <b>Payments</b>    |                    |
| Direct Employee Expenses            | -£28,153.28        | -£15,956.24        |
| Payroll services                    | -£78.00            | -£78.00            |
| CMA fees                            | -£1,390.00         | -£1,050.00         |
| DBS fees                            | -£348.00           | -£129.00           |
| ICO fees                            | -£35.00            | -£35.00            |
| Recruitment fees                    | -£158.00           | £0.00              |
| Bank fees                           | -£90.00            | -£72.00            |
| Manager's expenses                  | -£2,401.09         | -£1,258.69         |
| Advisor expenses                    | -£60.00            | -£336.76           |
| Volunteer expenses                  | -£54.58            | £0.00              |
| Insurance                           | -£544.23           | -£544.24           |
| Premises costs                      | -£2,743.98         | -£2,015.00         |
| Equipment                           | £0.00              | -£147.99           |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>            | <b>-£36,056.16</b> | <b>-£21,622.92</b> |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b>              | <b>£21,449.11</b>  | <b>£12,533.66</b>  |
| <b>Carried forward bank balance</b> | <b>£55,190.23</b>  | <b>£33,741.12</b>  |

Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge  
Statement of Receipts and Payments Accounts – by fund

This statement is for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

| Brought Forward bank balance        | £33,741.12         |                   |                  |        | £33,741.12         |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------|--------------------|
| Funds                               | LCDA               | HTOH              | LAFA             | Totals |                    |
| <b>Receipts</b>                     |                    |                   |                  |        |                    |
| Churches                            | £6,877.00          |                   |                  |        | £6,877.00          |
| Gift Aid                            | £1,652.75          |                   |                  |        | £1,652.75          |
| Individuals                         | £15,550.51         |                   |                  |        | £15,550.51         |
| THE EARTHEN VESSEL                  | £17,250.00         |                   |                  |        | £17,250.00         |
| Oldswinford Bates Charity           | £400.00            |                   |                  |        | £400.00            |
| Wylde Memorial Trust                | £1,000.00          |                   |                  |        | £1,000.00          |
| CMA Trust Fund                      | £90.00             |                   |                  |        | £90.00             |
| Lottery awards for All              |                    |                   | £9,275.00        |        | £9,275.00          |
| Other Grants                        | £90.00             |                   |                  |        | £90.00             |
| Other Income                        | £451.83            |                   |                  |        | £451.83            |
| Satellite Income                    |                    | £4,868.18         |                  |        | £4,868.18          |
| <b>Total Income</b>                 | <b>£43,362.09</b>  | <b>£4,868.18</b>  | <b>£9,275.00</b> |        | <b>£57,505.27</b>  |
| <b>Payments</b>                     |                    |                   |                  |        |                    |
| Direct Employee Expenses            | -£25,628.35        | -£2,524.93        |                  |        | -£28,153.28        |
| Fees                                | -£2,099.00         |                   |                  |        | -£2,099.00         |
| Manager Expenses                    | -£1,955.74         | -£445.35          |                  |        | -£2,401.09         |
| Advisor Expenses                    | -£60.00            |                   |                  |        | -£60.00            |
| Other Volunteer Expenses            | -£54.58            |                   |                  |        | -£54.58            |
| Other Expenses                      | -£544.23           |                   |                  |        | -£544.23           |
| Premises Costs                      | -£2,743.98         |                   |                  |        | -£2,743.98         |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>            | <b>-£33,085.88</b> | <b>-£2,970.28</b> | <b>£0.00</b>     |        | <b>-£36,056.16</b> |
| Surplus/Deficit                     | £10,276.21         | £1,897.90         | £9,275.00        |        | £21,449.11         |
| <b>Carried Forward bank balance</b> | <b>£44,017.33</b>  | <b>£1,897.90</b>  | <b>£9,275.00</b> |        | <b>£55,190.23</b>  |

LCDA                      Life Centre Debt Advice

HTOH                     Holy Trinity church at Old Hill - satellite centre

LAFA                     Lottery Awards for All

## Independent Examiner's Report

### **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Life Centre Stourbridge** UK Charity Number: 1156191

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Life Centre Stourbridge ('the Trust') for the fifteen months from 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2023 as set out on pages 12 and 13 of this Annual Report.

#### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

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

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company 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 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. The procedures undertaken do not involve an examination of all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

#### **Independent examiner's statement**

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 that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or,
2. The accounts do not accord with those records.

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

Signed:



Name: Alastair L. Greeves,

Address: 6 Clifton St.,  
Stourbridge,  
DY8 3XR

Date: 18 September 2023

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## Appendix 1 – The Faithworks Charter

Principles for Churches and local Christian agencies committed to excellence in community work and service provision in the UK

# The Faithworks Charter



Motivated by our Christian faith we, commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

### **We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:**

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

### **We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:**

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which individuals learn from any mistakes made and where excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

### **We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:**

1. Implementing a management structure, which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE**

England & Wales - Charity number 1156191

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# Accounts

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# Life Centre Stourbridge

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts 2021

*“Helping people ‘do’ life”*



Churches Together in  
Stourbridge

**cma**

Freedom from debt  
Hope for the future

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## Summary from the Chair

As I re-read the report for 2020 it reminded me how very different a year it was. We all imagined then that somehow 2021 would revert to normal. Yes, it is more normal – but a new normal. We were still in new accommodation, in which not everyone yet felt at home. We were moving to completely a computerised office and clear desk policy. This was a struggle for the computer savvy among us – for the rest, a real challenge! I have to say, though, all our volunteers have addressed it with great good humour and acceptance.

Much as IT and such is challenging for many of us, it is important also to record our gratitude to Malcolm, one of the Trustees, and Martin our manager who both can grapple with these things and keep us on the right track. In fact, the whole process of Debt Advice and its recording and monitoring is now so much more complex than when we started. From GDPR to the FCA requirement of the name of a “responsible person” to answer to them for our casework underline how much more challenging it has become. My thanks do go both to CMA and to Martin for getting to grips with it, mastering it, and then telling us what we need to do to comply in plain English.

We have largely returned to seeing clients face to face. Zoom and Teams were very good but however we were getting on, many of our clients did not have the IT ability, or the system downloaded on their phones, or battery power, or the Data available in their package or the right number and so on.

Fortunately, The Ark is so much better for ventilation. One would have had much less confidence where we were previously.

In one sense the numbers of those we have seen do not look as impressive in 2021, but Martin our manager, is triaging potential new clients, usually by phone, to ensure they really do want the support we can offer.

In many other settings some of the potential clients have only got in touch to please someone else – the job centre etc. Sadly many of those will not actually attend an appointment or do what they are asked and stay the course.

That is a pity, as it takes up time someone else might have used better and it is a disappointment for the debt adviser volunteers and support workers.

An unexpected but very exciting development in 2021 has been the “tie up” with Holy Trinity Church in Old Hill.

We have a structure, built over a number of years and robust, and we have experience. Linking in with that has allowed them to set up a Debt Advice Centre at their church under our “umbrella” - formally a Satellite - so much more quickly than had they “gone it alone”. They now have 3 trained Debt Advisers based there, seeing clients and going “from strength to strength”.

As I see what they are doing and achieving, I feel all the pride of a parent – albeit rather a strange one!

So it has been a year of transition and we have “got there”! Well done everyone!

## Our Purpose, our impact

### Our impact in 2021

We set ourselves these goals for 2021:

1. Continue to provide high quality debt advice
2. Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshop programme.
3. Employ a part-time assistant debt advice manager
4. Improve our ability to operate from our base in Stourbridge, other locations across the borough & enable mobile working
5. Expand the team
6. Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals
7. Review our IT infrastructure to support the move to mobile working & working in the Ark where we do not have a dedicated office space so we'll have to use laptops rather than desk-top computers & operate a 'clear desk' policy. This also allows us to work from different locations.

### Continue to provide high quality debt advice.

We are required to comply with the requirements of an increasing number of organisations and regulatory bodies: -

#### Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)

Life Centre Debt Advice (LCDA) is Authorised and Regulated by the FCA (Reference No. 618789) and we make annual returns to them. This has been compulsory for some years and brought in since we opened in 2014. Initially we were brought in as a free debt advice centre, part of CMA (see below) but an inspection of our "operation" will undoubtedly take place at some stage. Without this we would be unable to provide Debt Advice.

#### Community Money Advice (CMA)

Life Centre Debt Advice (LCDA) is affiliated with CMA. They support around 150 independent centres, providing support, input and advice as well as updating new requirements including when we were brought within the FCA "umbrella".

They inspect a sample of our work annually and this year described us as a *"a well-run and established centre."*

#### Information Commissioners Office (ICO) Registration - (GDPR)

The Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations 2018 requires every organisation, including us, that processes personal information to register and to pay an annual fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

#### Customer Feedback

We are required to solicit feedback and keep the results. In 2021, client questionnaire responses showed a 92% satisfaction level.

Less formally expressed client statements include *"You are my guardian angel, and I couldn't have done this without you"* Client No. 208 Sept 2021.

No complaints received, ever, either by us or the FOS (Financial Ombudsman Service).

#### Number of clients

In 2021, the number of clients we were able to take on was significantly reduced by the Covid-19 pandemic due to lockdown restrictions and shielding etc.

We conducted many Zoom meetings but some clients did not find this "user friendly" or lacked mobile phone or IT facilities and skills. Also creditors were less active in debt recovery. Pre-Covid LCDA reported an average of 260 transactions (debt-advice interactions) per year to the FCA (2018-2020) with an average of 46 new clients per year or 5.6 transactions per client.

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

In 2021 LCDA supported 34 new Households, at least £154,000 of household debt. A further 33 existing clients continued to receive our ongoing support, and a still further 33 clients remain active cases although became “dormant” (some clients have gone to ground during the pandemic). A total of 127 transactions were reported by LCDA Debt Advisers in 2021 (4.8 per client).

The total Debt being supported across all these clients in 2021 was some £900,000.

Before the first appointment we try to ensure, by an informal telephone triage, that we will be able to help clients and that they are willing to engage with us. This has reduced the number of “no shows” and thus volunteer time wasted considerably.

### Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshops

In early 2020 LCDA got a grant of £450 from DMBC to create and offer appropriate clients Money Management Workshops. Three workshops were delivered prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

It was re-formatted for presentation via Zoom but with less success. The training materials and content remains useful with individual clients and we hope to resume the workshops in 2022.

### Employ a part-time assistant debt advice manager.

A salaried part time assistant manager would provide more capacity, more resilience into the future and more support for our volunteers as debt advice delivery becomes more complex and demanding. The work and need is there.

A job description, person specification and vacancy advert had been prepared just prior to the Covid outbreak but it was felt that the time was not yet right to proceed with the recruitment. Hopefully this can be restarted in 2022.

### Expand the team

LCDA has welcomed six new team members in the twelve months to Jan 2022 – despite the rigours of the pandemic. They have all undertaken the CMA training required to work as a Debt Advisor. This takes the number of people in the team able to offer advice to twelve.

#### Meet the Team

As 2021 ended, LCDA comprised twenty-one active, part time, team members:

- Trustees: 4 volunteers
- Centre Manager: 1 Part time salaried (24hrs/week)
- Debt Advisers: 7 volunteers
- Support Workers: 4 volunteers
- Admin Support: 1 volunteer
- Prayer Team partners: 3 volunteers

### Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals

Our funding breakdown, and financial examiner’s report, come later in this report. Our finances are currently healthy and have improved as we did not go ahead and take on an assistant manager during the pandemic.

We have had the benefit of considerable support from one local charity, as well as many local churches and individuals for which we are most grateful. The trustees are aware of the need to continue to make this a priority especially if suitable projects that fit in with our hopes for the future can be identified for other charity grant applications.

Review our IT resources to support remote working and clear desk policy requirement at the Ark, which is shared with other users.

The Ark.

We have continued to settle in to the Ark, on the second floor at Bellmark House at the corner of Market Street and Bell Street in Stourbridge - installed new telephones, office mobile, laptop computers in place of the desktops, Zoom, What's App, removal and disposal of remaining paper-based files, replaced by the CMA created Catalyst system – and generally got used to all the changes in environment and working practices. This has extended to our Trust documentation and P&Ps too. There do remain some IT issues to resolve as one might expect with such a change.

Remote working.

*Holy Trinity Church, Old Hill.*

The PCC at HTOH obtained a grant from Sandwell MBC and a local charity to open a debt advice centre attached to their church.

They had no previous experience and we agreed to support them using all the knowledge and experience we have accrued. Three of them joined us as volunteers. They have completed the CMA training and sat in with our debt advisors with our clients to learn. One of our volunteers has seen clients local to Old Hill at their church premises.

They have contributed to our funding and have formally become a Satellite to us and part of our structure, as we help them to benefit from our experience.

Their volunteers live in Old Hill and want to work as debt advisors their own community. They probably would not have become part of a Centre working in Stourbridge and this way we can further our concern to help any in debt through our friends in Old Hill.

*Other options.*

We have a debt advisor volunteer who has also worked at the Brierley Hill project. She is able to see clients from the project, at Brierley Hill as our volunteer – within our system and in accordance with our rules.

Another debt advisor lives in Kidderminster, and has on occasion seen clients in Kidderminster – still as part of our Centre. There are some individuals in the church community who would love to build on that link.

CMA recognises both of these situations as Clinics under the auspices of LCDA.

## Our focus for 2022 and Future Direction

We hope to continue to meet the need of as many as we can of those in debt by whatever means are open to us. We realise the demand for what we can offer will grow. We therefore hope to expand our team both in volunteers, their ability and experience, and a second paid part time employee.

Some of our clients will only want a 'quick fix' for their current crisis – the bailiffs, rent arrears and such. Others will be ready to come on a journey with us that will help them to become financially stable for the rest of their lives.

We also hope to build on our work in money management workshops as there has been so little to help people learn to manage their finances in our complex modern world.

As a consequence, our goals remain largely unchanged.

## Financial Review

### Bank Balances

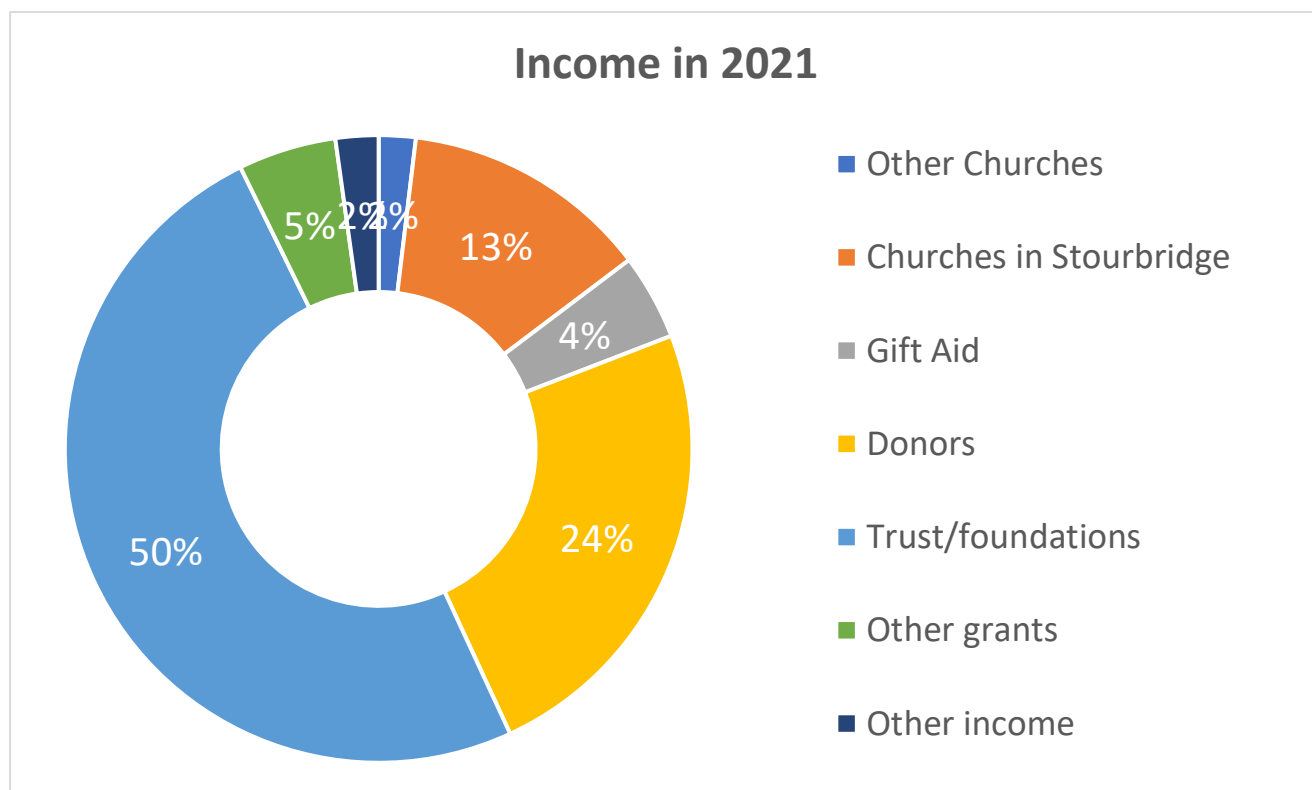
|                        | Current account | Deposit account | Total   |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| <b>Opening balance</b> | £4,170          | £17,037         | £21,207 |
| <b>Closing balance</b> | £4,702          | £29,039         | £33,741 |
| <b>Net change</b>      | £532            | £ 12,002        | £12,534 |

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

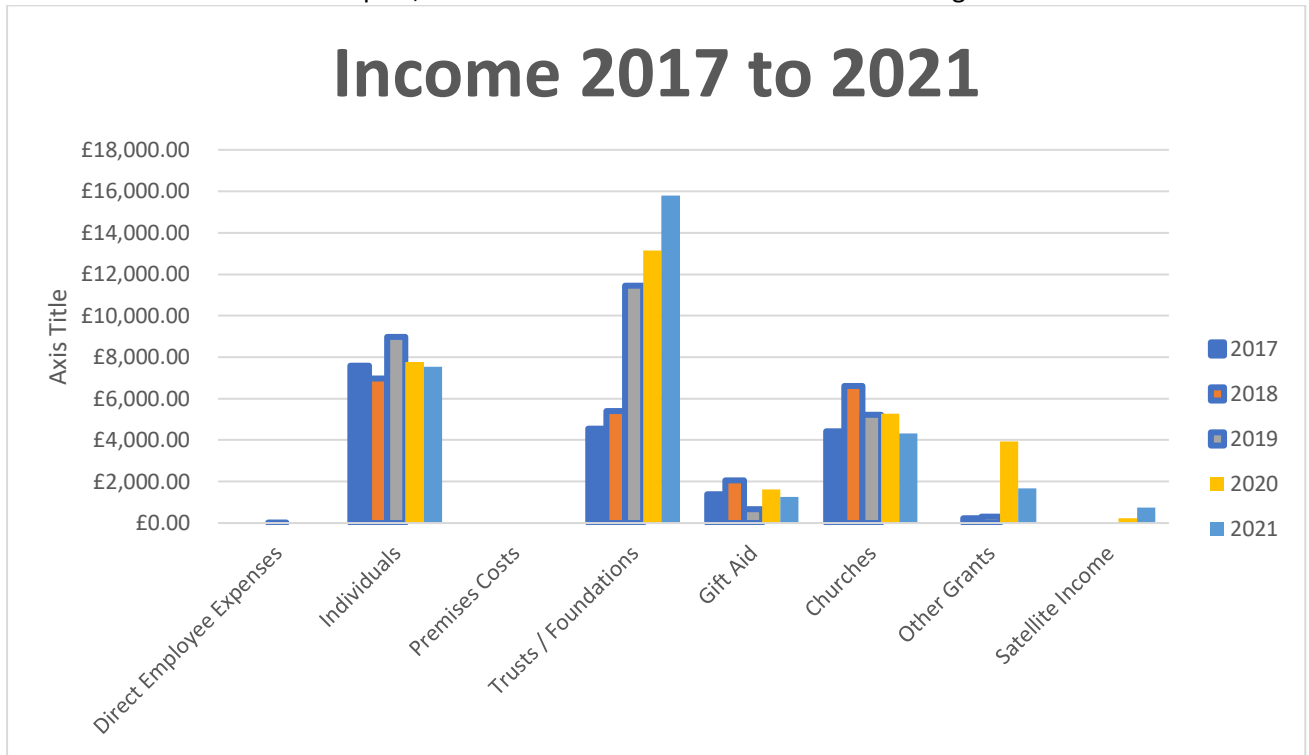
The increase in our bank balance shows that LCDA is in a financially strong position with no expenses outstanding. Although we transferred a further £12,000 into the deposit account from the current account, the interest earned was only £1.79!

### Income

Our overall income dropped by 3% or £1,066 to £34,156.58 and this chart shows the breakdown of our income streams: -

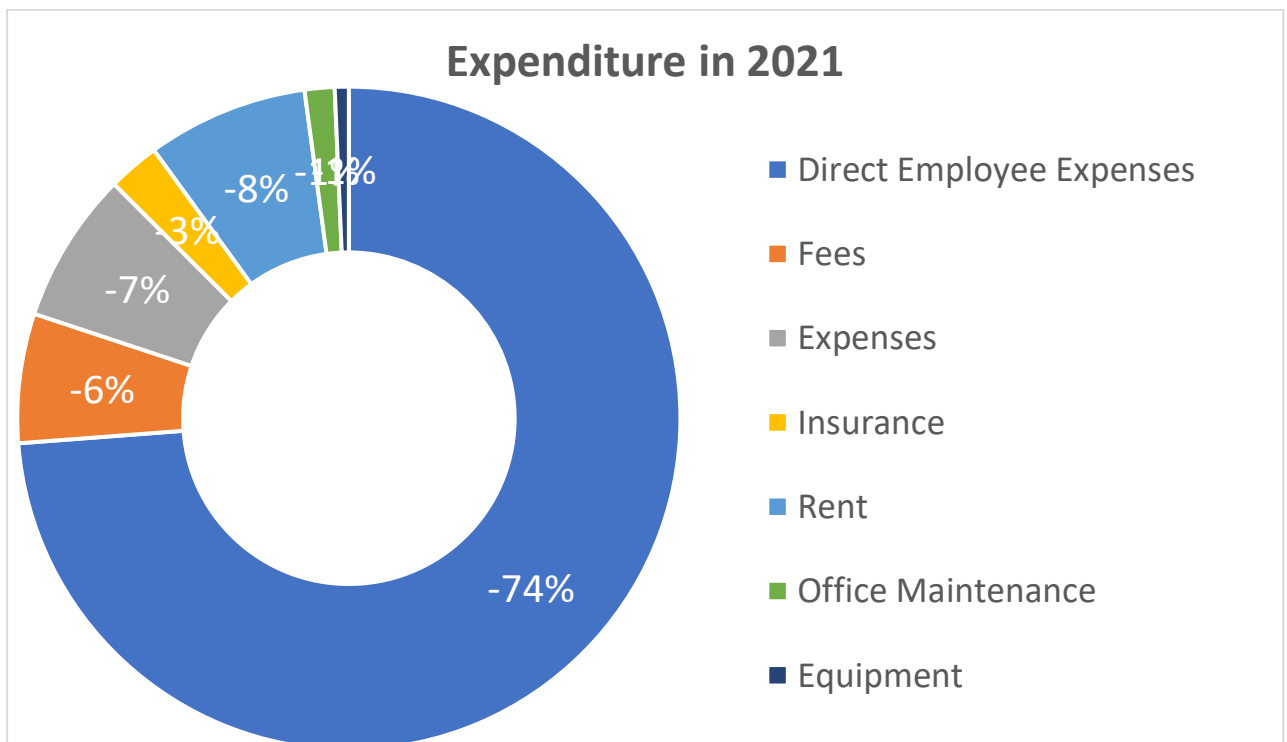


Our major source of income (50%) is from the Earthen Vessel Trust. The regular support from individuals was maintained throughout the year & this makes up 28% of our income once the gift aid is included. Support from the churches in Stourbridge dropped by 23.5% or £1,340. The chart below shows the trends for the last five years.



### Expenditure

In 2021 our expenditure dropped by £ 2,367 or 10% to £21,623 due to the unusual nature of the year.



### Reserves

Our minimum running costs for a quarter is approximately £5,000 & this is considerably less than our current balance. Furthermore, the prospect of losing all sources of income at the same time is remote.

## Independent Examination

The accounts have been examined independently & no exceptions were reported. The report appears after the Financial Statement.

## Governance

The Trustees and Centre Manager work together to govern the operation of the charity to the relevant standards. The Manager is primarily responsible for the quality of the Debt Advice and our compliance with the regulations and requirements of the two bodies that accredit our work, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Community Money Advice (CMA) organisation. The quality of the debt advice is externally audited annually by the CMA organisation.

In 2021 the Management Team met 7 times and the Trustees 3 times to guide the work agree new approaches, approve new volunteers and any other relevant leadership decisions.

Trustees are appointed or confirmed at Trustee Meetings and may serve for a maximum of 3 years before formal re-election if appropriate, and it is recommended that they serve no more than 7 years.

The charity has an informal accountability to the Churches Together in Stourbridge (CTIS) network.

## Trustees

| <b>Name</b>   | <b>Primary role</b> | <b>End of term</b>     |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Julia Savage  | Chair               | 19/04/22               |
| Alan Taylor   | Assistant Treasurer | 15/03/22               |
| David Watts   | Fund Raising        | 28/06/23               |
| Malcolm Moss  | Scribe & Treasurer  | 01/04/22               |
| Alex French   | Trustee             | 15/02/21 Resigned      |
| Nicola Martin | Trustee             | 02/02/25 Joined 3/2/22 |

## Charity Details

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Charity number</b>       | 115691   |
| <b>Charity status</b>       | Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)<br>Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.                  |
| <b>Registered Office</b>    | The Upper Room, Bellmark House<br>18a Market Street<br>Stourbridge, West Midlands<br>DY8 1AD           |
| <b>Telephone</b>            | 01384 739757   |
| <b>Email</b>                | <a href="mailto:info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a>                 |
| <b>Chair</b>                | <a href="mailto:julia.savage@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">julia.savage@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Independent Examiner</b> | Alastair Greaves<br>6 Clifton Street<br>Stourbridge, West Midlands<br>DY8 3XR                          |
| <b>Bankers</b>              | Unity Trust Bank plc<br>Nine Brindley Place<br>Birmingham<br>B1 2HB                                    |

## Charity objectives

The objects of the charity as set out in the constitution are: -

1. To relieve poverty by providing ethical debt and money management advice, free of charge.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded (for the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of financial hardship) and assisting them to integrate into society in particular but not exclusively by; -
  - a. providing advocacy services for people who are unable to advocate for themselves because of fear or lack of knowledge or lack of confidence
  - b. providing training and guidance to develop people's financial capability
  - c. helping those who have been isolated from, or who are out of touch with, society to re-adjust and re-integrate by befriending them and re-building their confidence in their local community.
3. The advancement of the Christian faith by evangelistic mission that is carried out on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, and in accordance with the Faithworks charter given as [Appendix 1](#) of the constitution.

These objects are carried out currently by the provision of the Life Centre Debt Advice work by employing a Debt Advice Manager and training volunteer Debt Advisors and Support Workers who give debt advice and work with clients to achieve debt-free status.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that prayer is the foundation of this work.

## Financial Statement

This is the statement of receipts and payments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

|                                      | 2021               | 2020            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Bank balances brought forward</b> | <b>£21,207</b>     | <b>£9,974</b>   |
|                                      | <b>Revenue</b>     |                 |
| Other Churches                       | £650               | £650            |
| Churches in Stourbridge              | £4,375             | £5,715          |
| Gift Aid                             | £1,509             | £3,050          |
| Regular donors                       | £7,782             | £7,781          |
| Occasional donors                    | £410               | £689            |
| Trust/foundations                    | £16,950            | £13,150         |
| Other grants                         | £1,725             | £3,933          |
| Other income: Satellite              | £750               | £240            |
| Other income: Interest               | £2                 | £14             |
| Other income: Refund                 | £3                 |                 |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                 | <b>£34,157</b>     | <b>£35,223</b>  |
|                                      | <b>Expenditure</b> |                 |
| Direct Employee Expenses             | -£15,956           | -£20,083        |
| Payroll services                     | -£78               | -£66            |
| CMA fees                             | -£1,050            | -£995           |
| DBS fees                             | -£129              | -£154           |
| Other fees                           | -£35               | -£40            |
| Bank fees                            | -£72               | -£72            |
| Manager's expenses                   | -£1,259            | -£710           |
| Advisor expenses                     | -£337              | -£76            |
| Volunteer expenses                   | £0                 | -£231           |
| Insurance                            | -£544              | -£392           |
| Rent                                 | -£1,700            | -£700           |
| Landline                             |                    | -£471           |
| Office Maintenance                   | -£315              |                 |
| Equipment                            | -£148              |                 |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>             | <b>-£21,623</b>    | <b>-£23,990</b> |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b>               | <b>£12,534</b>     | <b>£11,233</b>  |
| <b>Bank balances carried forward</b> | <b>£33,741</b>     | <b>£21,207</b>  |

**Notes:**

1. Figures shown in the above Receipts and Payments Account have been rounded to the nearest pound for reporting purposes.
2. There are no restricted or endowment funds.
3. The organisation's policy for assets is that it will record assets with a value greater than £500 and list them in the annual report. As at 31st December 2021 there were no such assets.

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Life Centre Stourbridge**  
UK Charity Number: 1156191

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Life Centre Stourbridge ('the Trust') for the year ended 31 December 2021 as set out on page 11 of this Annual Report.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

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

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company 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. The procedures undertaken do not involve an examination of all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

**Independent examiner's statement**

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 that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or,
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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

Signed:



Name: Alastair L. Greeves,

Address: 6 Clifton St.,  
Stourbridge,  
DY8 3XR

Date: 18 February 2022



## Appendix 1 – The Faithworks Charter

Principles for Churches and local Christian agencies committed to excellence in community work and service provision in the UK

# The Faithworks Charter



Motivated by our Christian faith we, commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

### **We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:**

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

### **We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:**

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which individuals learn from any mistakes made and where excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

### **We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:**

1. Implementing a management structure, which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE**

England & Wales - Charity number 1156191

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# Accounts

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# Life Centre Stourbridge

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts 2020

*“Helping people ‘do’ life”*



Churches Together in  
Stourbridge

**cma**

Freedom from debt  
Hope for the future

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## Summary from the Chair

Rereading the annual summary for last year – 2019 – underlines what a very different year this has been for so many. We have experienced a pandemic the like of which has not been seen for over a century. Initially in the first lockdown, face to face meetings and just about everything else at the Centre had to cease. The only thing that remained were the Monday morning Zoom fellowship meetings our Centre Manager, Martin Frize, initiated and which have become a great way to keep the Volunteer team together, build fellowship and offer support.

Although for much of 2020 we have not been seeing many clients we have none the less been very busy. We have moved our accommodation from the Upper Room at Café 105 to the top floor - The Ark - in Bellmark House on the corner of Market Street and Bell Street. This was a major undertaking involving not just removals but telephone and computer issues, files, office equipment, notifications, insurances and so on – all in the midst of social distancing. This was a real team building exercise! We are very grateful to Alan Taylor, a trustee of the Life Centre and also of the Ark for agreeing to our sharing accommodation with them. Thanks also go to Malcolm Moss, another trustee, for sorting much of the Trust's computer records and resources.

Two volunteers Andy Burton and Jane Sutherland, have spent much time constructing, recording and presenting a "Moneywise" course on budgeting. This has been presented both in person and via Zoom and is a very useful resource. During Summer and Autumn, we have been seeing some clients, both in the Covid secure environment of our office and via Zoom. It is difficult but better than nothing.

The cessation of much of the debt collection enforcement has given our clients and potential clients some respite but we know that there will be many more needing help as the realities of their financial situations catches up with them. We must be ready to help meet that need and that will be our challenge for 2021 and beyond.

So well done everybody in unprecedented circumstances for all you have achieved. We look forward to going from strength-to-strength next year.

## Our Purpose, our impact

### Our impact in 2020

We set ourselves two main goals for 2020 but both have been significantly affected and disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. These goals were to: -

- Continue to provide high quality debt advice
- Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshops

#### Continue to provide high quality debt advice

The major consequence of the pandemic has been a substantial reduction in both the number of referrals and client interviews. Both were down to a third of the pre-pandemic levels. The increase in benefits was another reason for the drop in referrals.

Engaging with clients was also hampered by the restrictions on face-to-face meetings and holding client interviews remotely. Engagement flows from the relationship that is built up between the client & the debt advice team & this is difficult under normal circumstances.

#### Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshops

We did run 2 Money Management Workshops face-to-face. The team re-worked the material so that it can be used online & they successfully ran a trial session. Although this course has been scheduled & advertised several times, there was a lack of response during 2020.

## Our Organisational impact in 2020

We had the following aspirations for our organisation for 2020 and we can report progress against each of these goals: -

- Employ a part-time assistant debt advice manager
  - We did not do this because the workload did not require it
  - Furthermore, our centre manager's hours reduced from 5 days a week to 3 days a week from mid-April onwards due to reduced workload.
    - From September he started working for 2 days a week for CMA as an Operational Support Manager.
  - These two developments may look like a step backwards but we do not see it like that.
    - We are benefiting from Martin's experience at other debt advice centres
    - This preserves our resources to employ a part-time assistant debt advice manager at some point soon
      - We expect the need for our services to rise beyond the pre-pandemic levels over the next few years
- Consolidate our ability to operate from several locations across the borough
  - We are about to sign an agreement with Holy Trinity at Old Hill
  - The Brierley Hill Project is on-hold at present due to the pandemic.
  - Hope House in Lower Gornal will open as an autonomous CMA debt advice centre in February 2021
  - Baxter Church Kidderminster is on-hold at present due to the pandemic.
  - The following Churches have expressed an interest in becoming a clinic for debt advice: -
    - Christ Church, Lye
    - Life Central Church, Halesowen
  - We are also moving towards using mobile technology to allow us to work at locations where there is no phone or internet connection that we can securely use
- Review our accommodation in Stourbridge
  - We have moved out of the Upper Room above Café 105 on the High Street & our Stourbridge town centre base is now in Bellmark House, 18A Market Street which we share with Riverside Christian Fellowship
  - We had to make both our Stourbridge bases 'Covid-19 safe' and we must thank Martin for his work in establishing and implementing the new procedures to keep everybody as safe as possible.
  - By the time the pandemic restrictions ease, we will be working from laptops rather than desktops so that we can leave the space clear for other users at the end of each LCDA session
- Recruit more volunteers
  - We did not recruit any more volunteers & Dave Davies, our former centre manager, retired. Thank you, Dave for your dedication & organisation.
- Recruit more trustees
  - Alex French joined us but Ken Baker resigned after many years of service. Thank you, Ken for all that you did.
- Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals
  - We applied for grants from: -
    - Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council: -
      - Connecting People fund: £3200 with £1,600 received in 2020.
      - Money Secret Workshop: £450
    - Co-operative Community fund: £1,243
    - Yorkshire Building Society: £680

## Our focus for 2021

As you would expect, our goals are very similar to last year's: -

## Annual Report, Review & Accounts for Life Centre Stourbridge

- Continue to provide high quality debt advice
- Expand the range of services LCS offer by rolling out Money Management Workshops
  - We have already completed the online version of the course for 6 people.
- Employ a part-time assistant debt advice manager
- Improve our ability to operate from our base in Stourbridge, other several locations across the borough & enable mobile working
- Expand the team
- Raise the required funds from trusts, churches & individuals
  - Our main source of grant funding will stop in March 2022 & in 2020 this accounted for 37% of our income
- Review our IT infrastructure to support the move to mobile working & working in the Ark where we do not have a dedicated office space so we'll have to use laptops rather than desk-top computers & operate a 'clear desk' policy.

### Future direction

We have no hesitation in repeating what was written last year as it is still as relevant now as it was then: -

The charity's practical money-orientated ministry will continue to focus not just on matters pertaining to handling money, but will also seek to bring people into the freedom of being good stewards of what God has given, working holistically with people to bring restoration across a broad spectrum of related elements of "Life events". In as much as money management may be a "starting point" for client engagement, the journey to freedom is not just about money alone, it's about its impacting affects and often the character issues that have contributed to things getting out of hand in the first place.

Our future ministry is about encouraging and supporting an increasing number of churches building a bridge to encounter people in the community, at their point of need. We believe there is a very powerful, faith building parallel between the journey out of poverty and debt, and the journey to faith. Our future direction therefore seeks to: -

- Alleviate poverty - ensuring clients have an acceptable, proportional level of living, whilst working toward their responsible repayment of indebtedness.
- Liberate clients - from oppression and isolation, caused by debt, being chased and harassed by Creditors, giving rise to guilt and shame, a loss of self-esteem, a sense of personal failure, depression and insignificance.
- Create Spiritual awakenings – in parallel to practical help and support, opportunities for teaching and discipleship on stewardship and God's provision will be explored.
- "Help people 'do' life".

### Our people

We are people who are trying to follow Jesus. As he had compassion for the poor, the marginalised & the oppressed, we are trying to emulate his example. At the end of 2020, the team consisted of 12 people actively engaged in the following roles with others waiting to re-engage once they feel able to do so: -

- 1 part-time employee: The Centre Manager & debt advisor
- 5 Trustees
- 3 Active Debt advisors
- 1 Active Support worker
- 3 Prayer supporters
- 4 Inductees

## Financial Review

The increase in our bank balance of £11,233 indicates that LCDA is in a financially strong position however this overstates the real position slightly for the following reasons: -

1. This year we have not only received tax relief on donations for all of 2019 but also for the first 11 months of 2020.
2. Expenses incurred by the manager in 2020 have not been claimed for yet.
3. We have yet to pay some of the premise-related costs arising from moving to Bellmark House.

The combined effect inflates the year-end bank balance by approximately £2,390.

### Bank Balances

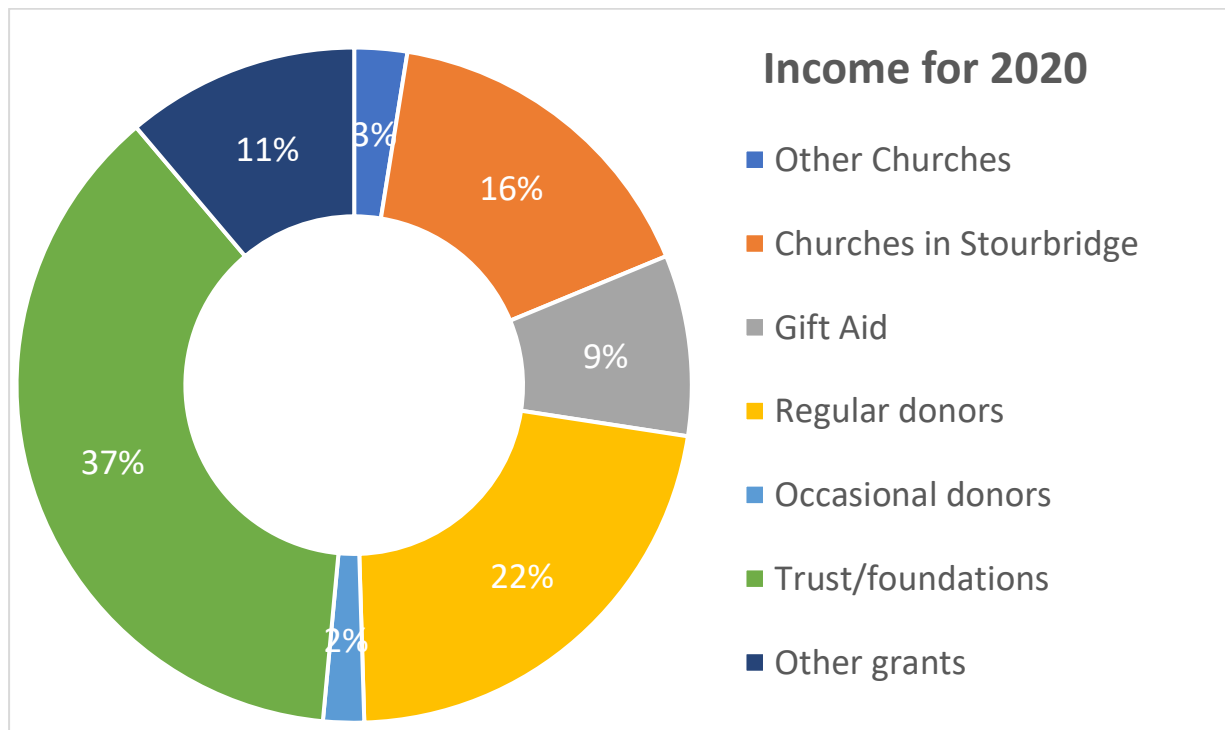
|                        | Current account | Deposit account | Total   |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| <b>Opening balance</b> | £2,951          | £7,023          | £9,974  |
| <b>Closing balance</b> | £4,170          | £17,037         | £21,207 |
| <b>Net change</b>      | £1,219          | £ 10,014        | £11,233 |

### Deposit Account

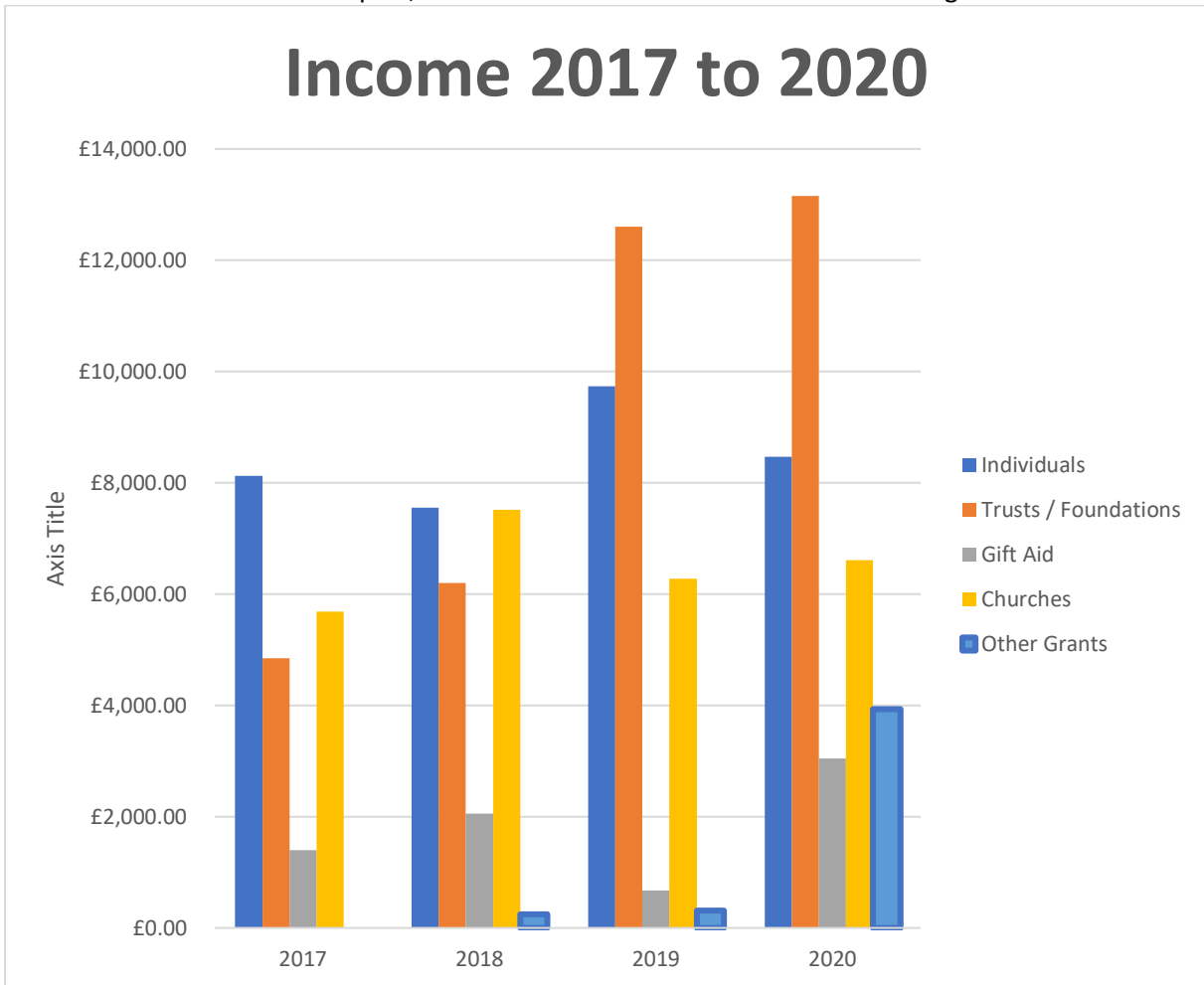
We transferred a further £10,000 into the deposit account from the current account & this has earned interest of £14.01.

### Income

Our overall income grew by £5,612.27 or 19% to £35,222.86 and this chart shows the breakdown of our income streams: -

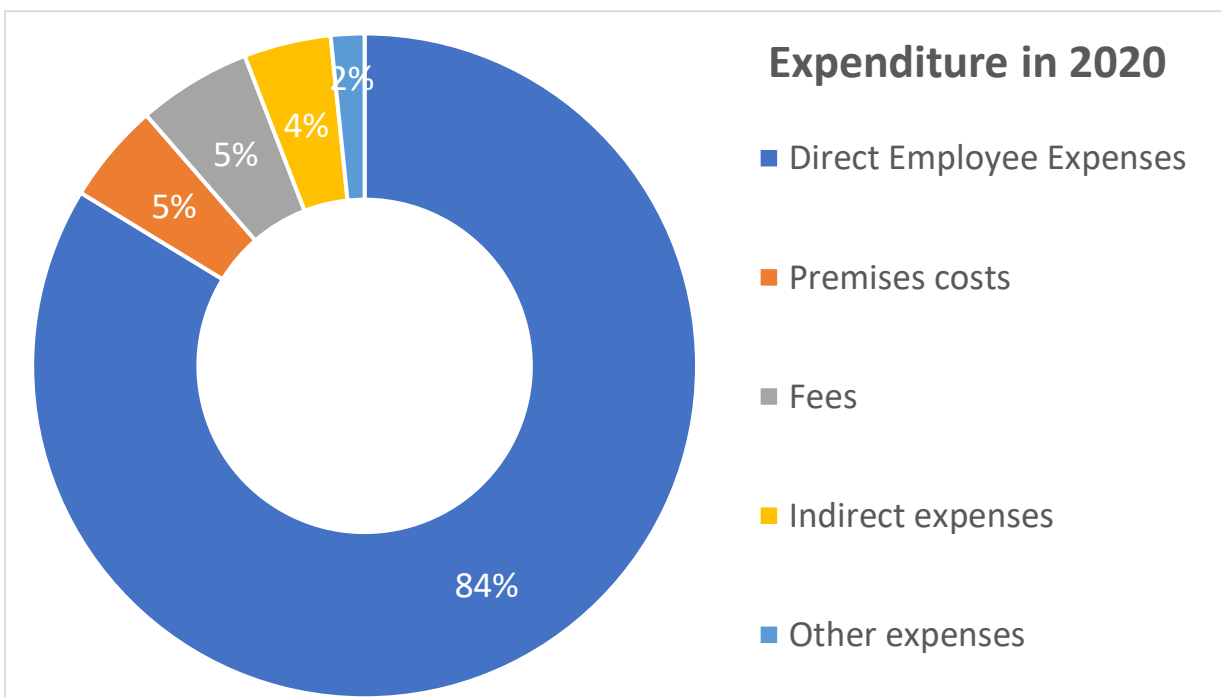


The regular support from churches & individuals grew by 8.2% & 3.1% respectively this year but the major growth in our income has come from the trusts (The Earthen Vessel) & grants (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council & The Co-Op) as depicted by the chart below.



### Expenditure

In 2020 our expenditure dropped by £6,094 (13%) to £23,990 mainly due to the reduction the manager’s hours from 5 to 3 days a week from June onwards saving £3,822. There was also a delay in paying some indirect expenses & premises costs and the value of these outstanding items is about £960.



### Reserves

Our minimum running costs for a quarter are approximately £5,000 & this is considerably less than our current balance. Furthermore, the prospect of losing all sources of income at the same time are remote.

### Independent Examination

The accounts have been examined independently & deemed a true record. The report appears after the Financial Statement.

## Governance

The Trustees and Centre Manager work together to govern the operation of the charity to the relevant standards. The Manager is primarily responsible for the quality of the Debt Advice and our compliance with the regulations and requirements of the two bodies that accredit our work, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Community Money Advice (CMA) organisation. The quality of the debt advice is externally audited annually by the CMA organisation.

In 2020 the Management Team met ten times to guide the work, agree new approaches, approve new volunteers and any other relevant leadership decisions.

Trustees are appointed or confirmed at Trustee Meetings and may serve for a maximum of 3 years before formal re-election if appropriate, and it is recommended that they serve no more than 7 years.

The charity has an informal accountability to the Churches Together in Stourbridge (CTiS) network.

## Trustees

| <b>Name</b>  | <b>Primary role</b> | <b>End of term</b> |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Julia Savage | Chair               | 19/04/21           |
| Alan Taylor  | Assistant Treasurer | 15/03/22           |
| David Watts  | Fund Raising        | 28/06/23           |
| Malcolm Moss | Scribe & Treasurer  | 01/04/22           |
| Alex French  | Trustee             | 15/02/21 Resigned  |
| Ken Baker    | Trustee             | 01/04/20 Resigned  |

## Charity Details

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Charity number</b>       | 115691   |
| <b>Charity status</b>       | Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)<br>Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.                  |
| <b>Registered Office</b>    | The Upper Room<br>Bellmark House<br>18a Market Street<br>Stourbridge<br>West Midlands<br>DY8 1AD       |
| <b>Telephone</b>            | 01384 739757   |
| <b>Email</b>                | <a href="mailto:info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">info@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a>                 |
| <b>Chair</b>                | <a href="mailto:Julia.savage@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk">Julia.savage@lifecentredebtadvice.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Independent Examiner</b> | Peter Brazier<br>93 Hyperion<br>Stourbridge<br>West Midlands<br>DY9 6SJ                                |
| <b>Bankers</b>              | Unity Trust Bank plc<br>Nine Brindley Place<br>Birmingham<br>B1 2HB                                    |

## Charity objectives

The objects of the charity as set out in the constitution are: -

1. To relieve poverty by providing ethical debt and money management advice, free of charge.
2. To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded (for the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of financial hardship) and assisting them to integrate into society in particular but not exclusively by; -
  - a. providing advocacy services for people who are unable to advocate for themselves because of fear or lack of knowledge or lack of confidence
  - b. providing training and guidance to develop people's financial capability
  - c. helping those who have been isolated from, or who are out of touch with, society to re-adjust and re-integrate by befriending them and re-building their confidence in their local community.
3. The advancement of the Christian faith by evangelistic mission that is carried out on an entirely non-coercive and invitational basis, and in accordance with the Faithworks charter given as [Appendix 1](#) of the constitution.

These objects are carried out currently by the provision of the Life Centre Debt Advice work by employing a Debt Advice Manager and training volunteer Debt Advisors and Support Workers who give debt advice and work with clients to achieve debt-free status.

As followers of Jesus, we believe that prayer is the foundation of this work.

## Financial Statement

| Current account             | 2019               | 2020               |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Brought forward</b>      | <b>£10,437.85</b>  | <b>£2,950.92</b>   |
|                             | <b>Income</b>      |                    |
| Other Churches              | £990.00            | £890.00            |
| Churches in Stourbridge     | £5,282.50          | £5,715.25          |
| Pension refund              | £7.47              |                    |
| Gift Aid                    | £675.66            | £3,050.07          |
| Regular donors              | £7,545.00          | £7,781.25          |
| Occasional donors           | £2,187.95          | £689.00            |
| Trust/foundations           | £12,600.00         | £13,150.00         |
| Other grants                | £308.00            | £3,933.28          |
| <b>Total income</b>         | <b>£29,596.58</b>  | <b>£35,208.85</b>  |
|                             | <b>Expenditure</b> |                    |
| Direct Employee Expenses    | -£23,905.27        | -£20,083.13        |
| Payroll services            | -£54.00            | -£66.00            |
| CMA fees                    | -£995.00           | -£995.00           |
| DBS fees                    | -£156.75           | -£153.50           |
| Other fees                  | -£35.00            | -£40.00            |
| Bank fees                   | -£72.00            | -£72.00            |
| Website fees                |                    | £0.00              |
| Manager's expenses          | -£2,383.33         | -£709.54           |
| Advisor expenses            | -£29.99            | -£76.19            |
| Volunteer expenses          |                    | -£231.31           |
| Training                    |                    | £0.00              |
| Marketing                   | -£261.32           | £0.00              |
| Insurance                   | -£392.00           | -£392.00           |
| Courses                     |                    | £0.00              |
| Rent                        | -£1,200.00         | -£700.00           |
| Landline                    | -£516.05           | -£470.84           |
| Office Maintenance          | -£82.80            | £0.00              |
| Transfer to Deposit account | -£7,000.00         | -£10,000.00        |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>    | <b>-£37,083.51</b> | <b>-£33,989.51</b> |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b>      | <b>-£7,486.93</b>  | <b>£1,219.34</b>   |
| <b>Carried forward</b>      | <b>£2,950.92</b>   | <b>£4,170.26</b>   |

| Deposit account        | 2019             | 2020              |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Brought forward</b> |                  | <b>£7,023.19</b>  |
|                        | <b>Income</b>    |                   |
| Transfer in            | £7,000.00        | £10,000.00        |
| Interest               | £23.19           | £14.01            |
| <b>Total income</b>    | <b>£7,023.19</b> | <b>£10,014.01</b> |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b> | <b>£7,023.19</b> | <b>£10,014.01</b> |
| <b>Carried forward</b> | <b>£7,023.19</b> | <b>£17,037.20</b> |

| <b>Combined accounts</b>           | <b>2019</b>        | <b>2020</b>        |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Current Brought forward</b>     | £10,437.85         | £2,950.92          |
| <b>Deposit Brought forward</b>     | £0.00              | £7,023.19          |
| <b>Total Brought Forward</b>       | <b>£10,437.85</b>  | <b>£9,974.11</b>   |
| <b>Current account Income</b>      | £29,596.58         | £35,208.85         |
| <b>Deposit account income</b>      | £7,023.19          | £10,014.01         |
| <b>Total income</b>                | <b>£36,619.77</b>  | <b>£45,222.86</b>  |
| <b>Current account Expenditure</b> | <b>-£37,083.51</b> | <b>-£33,989.51</b> |
| <b>Deposit account Expenditure</b> | £0.00              | £0.00              |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>           | <b>-£37,083.51</b> | <b>-£33,989.51</b> |
| <b>Surplus/deficit</b>             | <b>-£463.74</b>    | <b>£11,233.35</b>  |
| <b>Carried forward</b>             | <b>£9,974.11</b>   | <b>£21,207.46</b>  |

**LIFE CENTRE STOURBRIDGE (CIO 1156191)**

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S FULL REPORT**

**1.1.2020 to 31.12.2020**

This final report for the financial year 2020 must be read in conjunction with my Interim report dated 19 October 2020 which covered the first six months of the financial year. I collected the file containing the monthly bank statements and supporting bills and invoices on 15 January 2021 having previously received emails with various computer printouts attached. On Wednesday 20 January I started my examination which I completed the following day on Thursday 21 January 2021.

My examination took the normal form – I checked the invoices provided and marked these off against the “Cash Book” and then traced these items through the bank statements. All payments had been made correctly and had been authorised by the appropriate signatories. At the conclusion of this report, I have listed certain matters which will need to be dealt with. As there were no papers relating to incoming funds it was necessary to mark off the donations/gifts/trust fund receipts direct from the bank statements and trace these into the “Cash Book”. It was not possible to do a normal Bank Reconciliation for the reasons which will become clear at the end of this report.

Subject to the matters referred to shortly I have signed off the formal statement of the Independent Examiner to the Trustees using the approved declaration from the Charity Commission. I have also examined the latest Gift Aid tax reclaim and I am satisfied that this is accurate.

**NOTES**

1. The office manager's expenses claim whilst being clearly justified did not contain till receipts or supporting invoices. Some of the expenses related to legitimate courses - therefore I would have expected that documents etc would have been available. These need to be seen.
2. The BT telephone bill for £115.70 paid 15.12.2020 needs to be made available.
3. A credit of £250 being an amount paid in to the bank on 9.12.2020 (which I later discovered was from St Michaels) did not appear on the “Cash Book” sheet.
4. My report Interim report mentioned the Insurance fraud and that the Trust was expecting a refund of £392 to be made. This amount has not yet appeared in the accounts. However, the Trustees do need to be assured that the Trust is covered fully for Insurance and to that end the policy document and renewal premium receipt needs to be produced to confirm full coverage.
5. In my Interim report I made reference to the lack of a “Cash Book”. It is very important that there should be a Prime Document into which the Treasurer puts all items whether debit or credit which is issued or received at source. It is not acceptable to rely on the Bank Statement as that Prime Document – surprisingly enough even banks can make mistakes!! And if the Bank Statement is relied upon then the Independent Examiner is unable to reconcile the cleared bank balance - in effect this is agreeing the balance with itself!!

Once again Alan Taylor as Trust Treasurer has proved to be a very careful manager of the Financial affairs of the Trust. Having been your Independent Examiner since the inception of the Trust in 2014, I have decided that the time has come for me to hand on this duty to another person. Thank you for bearing with me and my fussy ways.

Peter E Brazier ACIB

Independent Examiner 21.1.2021

## Appendix 1 – The Faithworks Charter

### The Faithworks Charter



Principles for Churches and local Christian agencies committed to excellence in community work and service provision in the UK

Motivated by our Christian faith we, commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

**We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:**

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

**We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:**

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which individuals learn from any mistakes made and where excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

**We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:**

1. Implementing a management structure, which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.