



# 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."*

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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

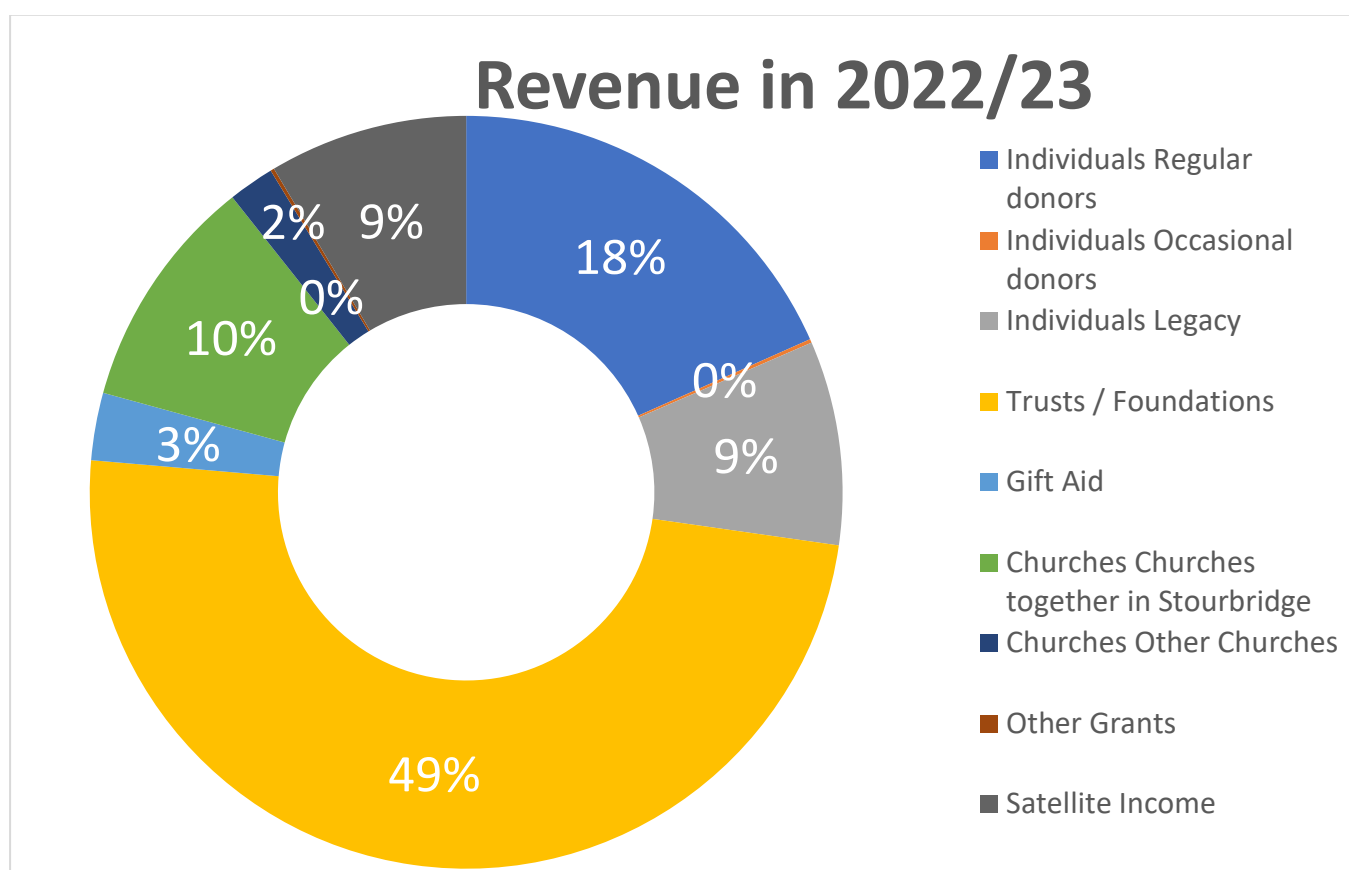
## 2. Overtime payments to senior staff due to staff and volunteer departures

## 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.

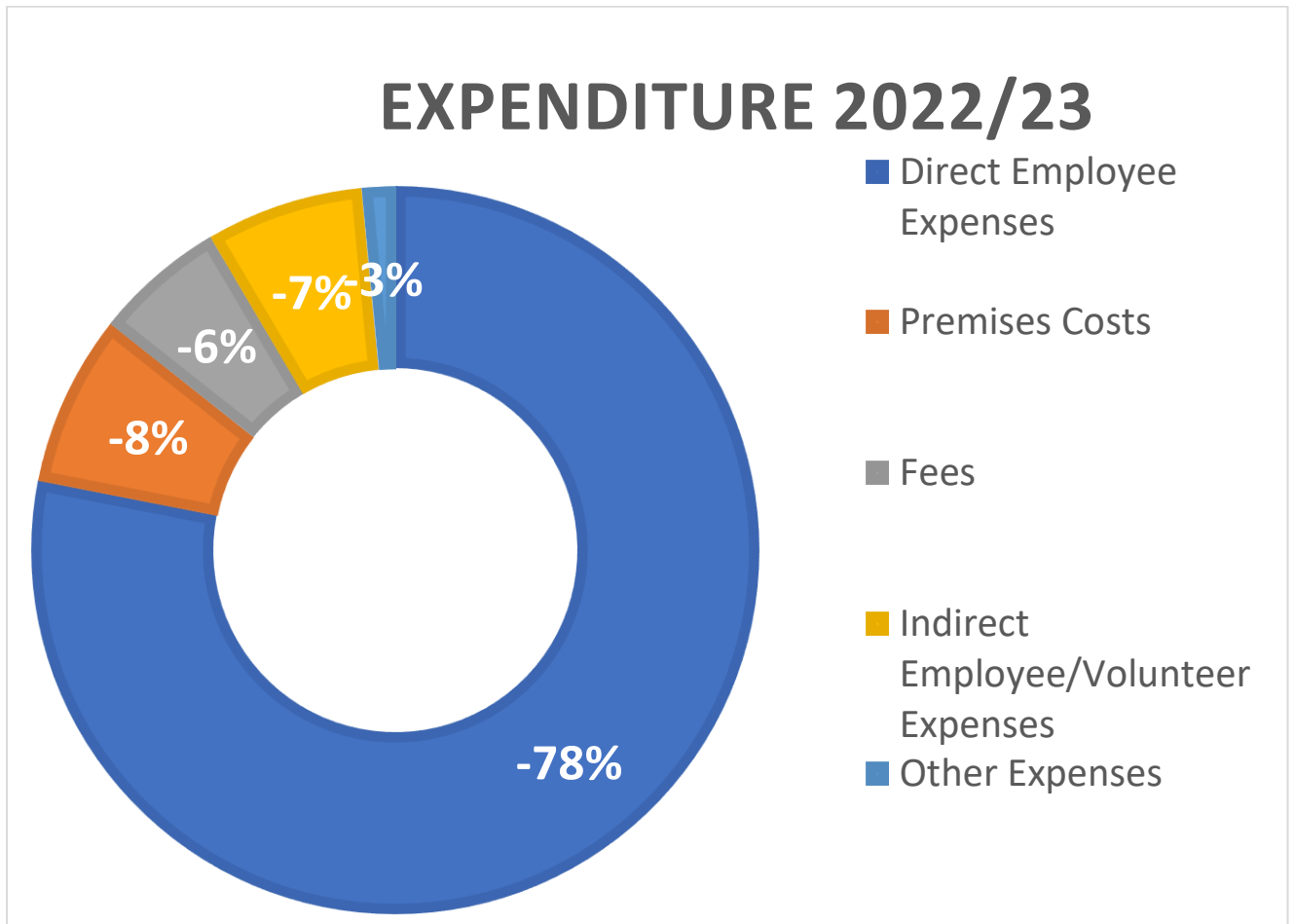


## Expenditure

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

Debit	Years			
Row Labels	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

Name	Primary role	End of term
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) Registered 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2014.
<b>Registered Office</b>	The Upper Room, Bellmark House 18a Market Street Stourbridge, West Midlands 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 Nine Brindley Place Birmingham 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

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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>

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## 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.

<b>Brought Forward bank balance</b>	<b>£33,741.12</b>			<b>£33,741.12</b>
<b>Funds</b>	<b>LCDA</b>	<b>HTOH</b>	<b>LAFa</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<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.