

SAMARITANS

North Herts & Stevenage

Charity number 1173578

2020–2021 Annual report and accounts

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Director's message

It is my pleasure to introduce this **annual report on North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans** for the period of April 2020 to March 2021.

I first need to pass on heartfelt thanks to **Hilary 1090**, experienced previous branch director from Cheimsford Samaritans, who took on the role of **interim director and chair of trustees** for our branch from 1 January 2020. This was shortly before we were all hit by the unsettling news and restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, which necessitated a rethink and reorganisation of all local and national Samaritans activities and procedures.

One of the overriding fears of any charity during this time was the threat to fundraising. Research in July 2020 showed that one in three charities feared they would not survive the impact of the pandemic, or that they would at least need to make cuts to service delivery. North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans shared these concerns, and we are delighted now to report that we have successfully made it through the first year of Covid-19 with **minimal disruption** to the support we provide to our callers.

Thanks for this success are due to our fundraising teams and to all of those who have provided us with much-needed funding. Please see the Fundraising section below for details of all the individuals, organisations and institutions who have helped us financially during this period. Thank you for enabling us to survive – and thrive – in these most challenging times.

The emotional support we provide was confirmed by the government in March 2020 as an **essential service**, with our volunteers recognised as key workers and therefore permitted to continue attending the branch for shifts. However, **volunteer safety** remained of the upmost importance, with all branches adopting and following strict guidelines. This all had to be undertaken while minimising disruption to our helpline and reassuring the public that we were still here for those who needed us most.

Covid restrictions soon became the new norm for our branch, including strict hygiene standards and social distancing, reduced fundraising and outreach activities, different approaches to meetings, a new rota system, different shift patterns, new online training, and 'rainbow leave' for any volunteers who needed to take extra precautions against the health risks posed by Covid-19. It is testament to the **dedication of Hilary, the trustees and her team of deputy directors** that these measures were successfully introduced and maintained throughout lockdown. And **all of our volunteers** must be credited for adapting to the numerous new requirements, while constantly assessing the risks to their own health.

As in many other areas of life, some of the new measures – such as virtual meetings and self-signup to our rota – have proven so successful that they will be continued for the foreseeable future. And while people throughout the world reassessed life's priorities, we saw a **nationwide increase** in the number of people applying to become volunteers, including at our own branch. The **new online training** seemed dauntingly challenging at the start of the pandemic, but our training team positively embraced this new way of working, and by the end of this financial year managed to clear our backlog of potential volunteers.

On 1 January 2021 I assumed the role of branch director and chair of trustees for North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans. Since that date it has been a real privilege to work with so many committed volunteers in continuing the work of our branch as we enter our **50th anniversary year**. It is also wonderful to have seen how our longest-serving volunteer, **Adeline**, who has been at our branch since its start in Hitchin in 1971, in February 2021 received the **Dedication Award** in the Volunteer Achievement Awards from North Herts District Council. An inspiration to us all!

As we move forward in 2021, we have a number of plans in place for the **further improvement** of North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans. These include the transformation of an unused room in the branch into a second ops room to **increase our capacity for service delivery**. We are also continuing to explore

the possibility of acquiring a larger and more **fit-for-purpose property**, which would enable all volunteers and face-to-face visitors to gain access to our branch and all its facilities.

The main focus of our branch as we move into the new financial year will remain on providing emotional support to those who are experiencing distress and despair, including suicidal feelings. Pivotal to this is the wellbeing of our volunteers, so I will strive to find and support ways to help our volunteers feel connected, valued and motivated. I am lucky to have a **very supportive team of deputy directors and a highly capable board of trustees**. Together, we will do everything we can to support our volunteers in supporting our branch, thereby continuing the essential service we provide to our callers.

Ilsa 383, branch director and chair of trustees

About Samaritans

Samaritans provides non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide. We offer our service by telephone, email, letter and face to face, from our branches and at hospitals, schools, prisons, workplaces and festivals, through a network of 201 branches in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

From its base in Hitchin, North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans is a charity operating as a branch of Samaritans. Whilst supporting the residents of the surrounding area, it also supports the residents of the whole of the UK and ROI via the Samaritans central calls system.

Our vision

Our vision is that fewer people die by suicide.

Our mission

- We make sure there's someone there for anyone who needs someone.
- Every year, Samaritans volunteers spend over one million hours answering calls for help via our unique 24-hour listening service, by email, letter and face to face, and through our Welsh language service.
- We give people ways to cope and the skills to be there for others.
- We want to encourage, promote and celebrate those moments of connection between people that can protect and even save lives. To do this, we're working in schools, prisons, workplaces and communities, and in partnership with organisations like Network Rail.
- We campaign to make suicide prevention a national and local priority.
- Our staff and volunteers run nationwide and community campaigns to raise awareness and influence decision-makers.

Our values

We have five core values. They're supported by these behaviours, which we share within the Samaritans organisation: support, trust, aspirational and respect.

- **Listening** – Exploring feelings alleviates distress and helps people to reach a better understanding of their situation and the options open to them.
- **Confidentiality** – If people feel safe, they are more likely to be open about their feelings.
- **Non-judgemental** – We want people to be able to talk to us without fear of prejudice or rejection.
- **People making their own decisions** – We believe that people have the right to find their own solutions and that telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.
- **Human contact** – Giving people time, undivided attention and empathy meets a fundamental emotional need, and reduces distress and despair.

Fundraising

Fundraising and donations

In March 2020 we had a number of confirmed collections in our calendar, starting with Baldock MSA services and several Tesco superstores, together with 'pencilled-in' events at nine railway stations and street collections in Hitchin and Letchworth. National Covid lockdown prevented any of these taking place, and further restrictions meant that not one was undertaken for the whole financial year. This could have caused a serious impact on income. Many supporters of our charity, including both individuals and local organisations, came forward voluntarily wanting to support the branch. **Six Rotary Clubs** within North Hertfordshire and Stevenage made donations. This was a tremendous statement of the value of our branch to local people.

Towards the end of August, we ventured into new territory with a **Crowdfunder**. This was facilitated by **Aviva** and our connections with some of their employees. The Aviva Community Fund delivers funding and support for small charities all year round. Every three months, Aviva splits £250,000 among their UK employees, each of whom can donate their £25 voucher to the project that matters to them. Our **Crowdfunding page was widely advertised** and we know that many of our supporters donated and also encouraged family and friends to do so. **158 supporters**, along with the Aviva element of £1,675 and a donation from **Herts County Council's Community Innovation Fund** of £1,800, provided us with a worthwhile **£6,437**.

Hitchin Waitrose donated **£333** – a third share of the October Community Matters Scheme, and **John Lewis Cambridge** donated **£1,000**.

A couple of people took on the **Samarathon** in July 2020 and raised **£500** for the branch. This is a national event facilitated by Samaritans Central Office – a virtual marathon that's run around a person's life by simply walking, jogging or running 26.2 miles during the course of a month.

Hitchin's 'Fancy Dress Fundraiser', **Nicholas Jemetta**, ran a Fancy Dress Challenge of 'The 12 days of Christmas', which raised **£1,020** for our branch. Not only was this a great amount, but it also gave Samaritans and our branch exposure on BBC Look East, BBC1 and in the press. Over the year, **£4,000** has been received through **charitable donations**. This includes Nicholas's sponsorship but also other amounts.

Thanks to those who are taking a few extra seconds when ordering shopping on the internet to enable the branch to receive a contribution from many retailers. To do this, you can use:

Amazon Smile smile.amazon.co.uk/gp/chpf/homepage, or

GivingMachine www.thegivingmachine.co.uk

Web users have also donated via searching online for Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage.

Lockdown seemed to give people time to search for their **foreign and old UK** coins and notes. We sent two batches for exchange, which raised **£205**. Hopefully, when we have additional freedoms, we may get enough to do a further exchange.

Thank you again everyone for your tremendous support, which has enabled our branch to remain fully operational despite the challenges and restrictions of the pandemic.

Supporters (not individuals)

Businesses with collecting cans

- Biggleswade Station Book Library (GTR staff and passengers)
- Brickyard, Bancroft, Hitchin
- Doghouse Grooming, Arlesey
- Toni & Guy, Hitchin
- The Bull, Whitwell
- Village Shop, Whitwell

Donations

- Aviva (Crowdfunding)
- Hertfordshire County Council Community Innovations Fund
- Hinxworth & Edworth Soup Lunch Club
- Rotary Club of Hitchin
- Rotary Club of Hitchin Priory
- Rotary Club of Hitchin Tilehouse
- Rotary Club of Royston
- Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange
- SETTLE Housing Association

Grants

- Hertfordshire County Council (POhWER)
- North Hertfordshire District Council (Covid – discretionary government grant)

Providers of 'in kind' or enabling services

We are very grateful to all the organisations that help us to carry out the work we do. This can be by direct donation or by providing 'in kind' services or materials.

- Galasso Signs Ltd, Hitchin
- Phillips Digital Print, Letchworth
- Satchells Estate Agents, Hitchin
- TPS Visual Communications, Letchworth Garden City

Donating

If you would like to help us, you can make a donation:

By bank transfer

Account name: Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage

Account number: 63678547

Sort code: 20-05-73

Please quote your name as reference.

By cheque

Please make your cheque payable to 'Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage' and send it to our branch address: 5 Nun's Close, Hitchin, SG5 1EP.

By text message

Text SAMSLOCAL 3 to 70460 to donate £3.

Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS. If you'd like to give £3 but do not wish to receive marketing communications, text SAMSLOCALNOINFO 3 to 70460.

Caller support

In the year commencing April 2020, volunteers at Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage offered emotional support via **13,268 phone calls** and **1,874 emails**, which compares favourably to the previous year, given the inevitably reduced number of hours we were able to open the branch.

Unfortunately, given pandemic safety precautions, we were unable to invite any callers into the branch for face-to-face emotional support.

External relations

Outreach and talks

In October 2020 we provided an unmanned branch display of awareness on two days at **Stevenage railway station** for an event organised by **Great Northern Rail**.

In December 2020 Holy Saviour Church Hitchin managed to organise its annual **Christmas Tree Festival** in conjunction with Hitchin BID. This enabled 50 trees to be displayed in a trail around the town centre. Our tree, **'The Brew Tree'**, was on display in a shop in Portmill Lane, and the proprietor allowed the tree to remain there until the New Year.

Through the use of Zoom, we remotely delivered a limited number of talks. The first, in September, was to the local **U3A**. In October there was a joint presentation with the Warrington, Halton & St Helens Samaritans branch to **'Lifetime'** of the Warrington Housing Association. In December talks were delivered to **Hertfordshire Police**, and to **Hitchin Priory Rotary** at their breakfast meeting. In January 2021, as part of the Samaritans national campaign, **Brew Monday**, we held a virtual event with **SETTLE**, the Letchworth-based housing association.

IT and comms

Responses to the Covid-19 virus have, as with many organisations, forced us to think differently.

The presence in the branch of any member of the IT team had to be carefully choreographed to maintain the spaces required to manage potential infection, making physical attendance for IT issues somewhat tricky. We have in this financial year experienced bouts of poor line quality with the ops room phones, which we are working hard to resolve in order to maintain fault-free service to our callers.

Funding from various sources has not only helped expedite essential changes to **remain operational**, but we have additionally **updated most of everything** – not only in the ops room, but also in the middle administrations room, where we have better phones and a more resilient network infrastructure. All in all, the IT team has coped well with a number of challenges, helped by our volunteers' willingness to cope with and report any issues.

Leaders

The Leader team is made up of listening volunteers who are willing to be available at times throughout the week, to support other volunteers during and after their listening shifts. Their **role is vital** in helping all of our volunteers to feel supported in case of any issues or questions relating to the innumerable procedures we need to follow, as well as to **take offloads** from and **provide emotional support to volunteers** after every shift.

During this period, despite the Covid lockdowns, the number of Leaders in the branch stayed more or less constant at about 18. Whereas we lost a few to rainbow leave (Covid isolation), we managed to maintain our cover of roughly 32 shifts per week, thanks to the dedication and generous time commitments of all our Leaders.

Partnerships

We continued to build on the partnerships we have with Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire Police and POHWER, delivered by Herts Help crisis Intervention Service Direct Support). We were available to **receive telephone referrals** from these partners, **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

Discussions commenced in November 2020 with Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, to set up a **new partnership** with them to provide a complementary referral service for their service users who may be in emotional distress or experiencing suicidal feelings.

Herts and Beds police can still make referrals to us for **people who have been in custody** and who are experiencing emotional distress. After receiving messages on a dedicated phone line within the branch, our listening volunteers attempt three times to call anyone referred by the police, to offer emotional support.

Our partnerships enabled us to reach out to sections of the community that may not have come to us directly or been aware of the services Samaritans can offer. Building partnerships with like-minded organisations locally helped us reach out to groups at high risk of suicide.

Prisons

As part of our activities we identify, and try to work with, groups that have a high risk of suicide and self-harm. Prisoners are an **extremely vulnerable group** and the incidence of suicide and self-harm in prisons generally is on the increase. Prisons can be lonely, stressful, intimidating and scary places for some inmates, who need emotional support to get through.

Samaritans work **in conjunction with the safer custody teams** in most prisons in the UK, offering support by speaking to prisoners both in person, by way of a free to use Samaritans phone, as well as via a free and confidential correspondence service.

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that our **visits to prisons were curtailed**, and this has highlighted that we cannot be there all the time to support prisoners. This is why we train and carefully select prisoners to be Listeners so that they can offer listening support to fellow inmates in person when they are in need. Listeners are unpaid, available 24/7 and give up their time freely to help those less able to cope with life inside. Together with colleagues in Samaritans Cambridge branch, some of our volunteers visit **Littlehey Prison in Cambridgeshire**. We support the Listener team on a weekly basis, helping them do their job as well as promoting the work we do jointly with them.

This has been a difficult year for us as Samaritans, frustrated that we have been unable to help, but also for the Listeners working under really difficult circumstances. We look forward to **resuming our regular visits** to the prison and to rebuilding a strong support team for vulnerable prisoners.

Publicity

We have had some **good press coverage** of events and activities over the year thanks to local media outlets, including the celebration of one of our volunteer's 50 years volunteering at the branch recognised publicly through the Dedication Award in the North Herts District Council's Chair's Volunteers Achievement Awards.

Our website is regularly updated and is worth perusing: www.samaritans.org/branches/hitchin

We also have a social media presence on Twitter. Follow us at twitter.com/NorthHertsSams

Recruitment

The process to recruit and select volunteers needed to be reconsidered when the first restrictions happened due to the pandemic. The selection team quickly moved to hold both **information evenings and selection interviews** online, using Zoom. Initially, there were concerns about whether interviewers would be able to select as carefully as they had been used to when they met potential volunteers face to face. However, the team quickly found that selection decisions were very similar to as they had known them.

New recruits to the selection team undertake the central office training, which particularly helps challenge potential volunteers' underlying preconceptions and supports a broad view of their suitability. Selectors always work in pairs. This helps new selectors and ensures careful consideration of each applicant.

Potential volunteers are invited to an information evening where the role of a volunteer is explained, alongside the approach of the organisation to important issues of self-determination and volunteers avoiding both self-disclosure and offering advice. A particularly important part of the process at this stage is making clear the time involved in being a listening volunteer, i.e. four shifts every four weeks, including a night shift.

Following the information evening, potential volunteers are invited to submit a simple application form that leads to an interview. For successful applicants, two references are then taken up alongside a DBS check. There is generally a wait of a few months for the next training place.

During this financial year, **30 new listening volunteers** were recruited.

Recruitment of specific roles as support volunteers took place via recruitment websites. This led particularly to the successful recruitment of a health and safety expert to oversee our premises.

Rota

Samaritans are proud to provide a **24/7 telephone listening service** across the UK and ROI. Not all of the 201 branches are open all the time but our phone distribution system means that every caller should have their call answered whenever they call.

In the Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage branch we have a strong and reliable team of up to **90 volunteers** available for listening duties. There is a tremendous support mechanism and illustrates how we can make our rota work for us and our callers.

We operate a shift system, dividing each 24 hours into seven shifts of between three and four hours. We do not have enough volunteers to cover every shift, but on average each of our listening volunteers will do at least three hours on duty each week. This enables us to cover **30 or more shifts per week**.

During lockdown, Samaritans was classed as an essential volunteering service so our branch was able to open with a maximum of two volunteers in the premises at any one time and subject to all necessary hygiene precautions. A number of volunteers had to shield or isolate during that period so some hours were reduced but we did maintain the service as much as we were able.

Volunteers 'self-rota', i.e. select their own shifts, using our online system. This enables them to choose their own shifts about three weeks before the start of every four-week rota period. They are expected to do one overnight shift, a weekend shift and two other shifts within any rota period. If a volunteer becomes unable to do a shift, we have an excellent online facility for swapping a shift with another volunteer, so losing as few as possible.

Our volunteers come from very different backgrounds and occupations, but we all are comprehensively trained and are **working together as a team** to produce the best service we can to those in need of our help.

Training

Prior to the pandemic, our initial training for new volunteers was always delivered face to face, so Samaritans faced a new challenge nationwide from March 2020. Thankfully, our SCO (Samaritans Central Office) training team soon created **new Core training** (initial training for new volunteers) to be delivered virtually.

It was challenging to adjust to this entirely new way of delivering training, but our training team coped amazingly well with the changes. Following a brief pause, we resumed Core training, delivered over Zoom. Indeed, we have found a number of advantages of training online, and we had a total of 16 new volunteers fully trained and ready to start listening shifts during this year, with a further 8 starting training in March 2020. This helped to **clear the backlog** of new recruits, with numbers having risen since the start of lockdown.

Ongoing training had to be paused temporarily due to the pandemic. But as soon as possible, and just before the end of this financial year, our new deputy director for training delivered four sessions via Zoom, using breakout rooms for smaller group discussion and skills practice. This was offered to all listening volunteers, the vast majority of whom signed up to refresh their knowledge and skills on the vital subject of safeguarding. We look forward to running more of these sessions on various topics in the next financial year.

A huge thanks to every member of the training team who has made all of this possible.

Volunteer support

Covid-19 brought many new challenges in supporting our volunteers. In line with NHS and government guidelines and restrictions, everything possible was done to ensure our branch was made '**Covid safe**' so volunteers felt safe to be in the branch and deliver support to our callers. This included full sanitisation equipment to reduce risk of transmission, more frequent cleaning of the branch, and the requirement for volunteers to maintain two-metre social distancing while in the branch. One of our volunteers arranged for us to have a clear plastic barrier installed at one of our duty stations, to increase spacing and safety for new volunteers and their mentors on duty together. Also, following instructions from SCO, we introduced a 30-minute gap between shifts in order to reduce contact between volunteers; those who were able to continue with listening shifts within the branch saw only their shift partner while on duty, before thoroughly sanitising duty stations, etc, and leaving the branch before the next volunteers arrived.

Around 20% of our volunteers needed to go on '**rainbow leave**' – temporary leave due to Covid health concerns. Since March 2020, this was **actively encouraged** for anyone who needed to shield or felt unsafe. Volunteers on rainbow leave still received emails and other communications from the branch, helping them to feel connected, and they were contacted regularly to see how they were coping. Similarly, we kept in touch with volunteers on longer-term leave of absence. We experienced an average number of leavers from our branch in this financial year – 11, with 2 moving to other branches – balanced by the number of new recruits.

Supporting the volunteers in the branch is vitally important so that we all feel **valued and appreciated**, which in turn helps with **retention** and, ultimately, optimum levels of support for our callers. Volunteers are encouraged to ask for support whenever they need it, and we do all we can to enable them to do this easily.

Financial review

The financial statements cover the 12 months to 31 March 2021. Total income amounted to £60,908, compared with £39,243 in the previous year. Despite a drop in self-generated income due to the restrictions imposed by Covid, we benefited from a significant increase in donations, for which we were very grateful in such a challenging year.

Income specifically from grants was £29,440 in 2020/21, compared to £6,000 in the previous year. This comprised a grant of £11,840, representing generous funding from The Pears Charitable Trust and £6,100 in grants from North Herts District council. The total of £17,940 was used to create a great new work area, adding two new stations for listening and chat volunteers and making the branch safer during the lockdown period. POHWER contributed significantly, increased grants totalling £11,500 in the year.

Total expenditure of £41,532 has also increased against the previous year of £35,101. Costs were incurred in making the branch safe for volunteers during lockdown and in establishing a second operations room for online chat. The increase in expenditure was less than it might have been because we did not incur costs that we would expect to in a more normal year for our outreach and other activities. Governance costs of £17,990 include £14,888 of contribution to SCO, due under our operating agreement with them.

The operating surplus for the year, before gains on investment, amounted to £19,376 compared with £4,142 in 2019/20. £5,220 of the surplus relates to funds designated for the creation of a new operations room. This work was completed and funds spent at the time of writing this report.

The accumulated general reserves, which exclude fixed assets, amounted to £84,915 (19/20: £102,126), which, in representing more than one year's normal expenditure, is considered by the trustees to adequately meet the needs of the branch for the foreseeable future. The total net assets of £129,340 is held in both bank deposits and investments (the latter valued at £80,118 at 31 March 2021). The trustees are mindful of a need to move to premises when a suitable property becomes available and are maintaining reserves for this purpose (see 'Future plans' below).

The title to the freehold premises is held by Samaritans as custodian trustee and the charity to subject to a trust deed in respect of these premises.

Reserves

The trustees reviewed and updated the Financial Reserves Policy in the year since the last report and agreed a minimum level of 6 months and a maximum of 18 months of free reserves, to allow the branch to continue operating without financial income for that period without releasing long-term reserves or requiring assistance from SCO. This has been monitored on a regular basis. The trustees will continue to review the reserves policy on an annual basis.

In the period from March 2020, the trustees have taken full account of the Charity Commission advice on the use of reserves. Cash flow projections indicate that Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage will end the financial year (2021/22) with unrestricted funds above the minimum reserves level.

Risk management

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed. At their meetings, they carry out this duty and ensure appropriate controls are in place and any necessary action is taken to mitigate such risks.

At the beginning of March 2020, the trustees followed guidance from SCO to enable us to remain operational as an essential service during lockdown. Arrangements dealt with risks and issues relevant to the early stages of the Covid-19 situation. This specifically addressed:

- health risks to service users and volunteers
- protocols to avoid infection in the work place
- defined and Covid-19 risk assessments completed for our branch

As the situation developed over the following months, trustees received regular updates and responded to these changes. A risk register was put in place early in the 2021/22 year to build upon this planning in respect of operational risk.

We are pleased to report that we were able to deliver training remotely. Although we had to cease face-to-face support and outreach activity, we have maintained priority shifts and a high number of normal listening shifts throughout the year. Our safety measures continue to include the measures for Covid safety and for people who need support.

Future plans

Cash flow estimates indicate Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage will maintain the minimum reserves level throughout 2021/22 whilst meeting all financial commitments.

At the time of writing, all restrictions had been lifted in England since 19 July 2021. Trustees continue to monitor the situation and implications for Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage through regular (online) meetings and with guidance from SCO. We hope to be able to gradually resume face-to-face support, our outreach activities and fundraising over the coming months, when it can be done ensuring the safety of both service users and volunteers.

The trustees have begun discussing the need to find a property more suited to the long-term growth of the branch. At the time of writing this report, no suitable property has been identified; but the level of reserves reflect the recognition that additional funds will be required to make such a move and to ensure it is adapted to the needs of volunteers and callers.

Structure, governance and management

Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage became a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), governed by constitution, on 22 June 2017. Trustees have a limit of six-year terms, except the director, who serves a three-year term, which can be extended by up to 12 months by the approval of SCO's board of trustees.

The day-to-day operation of the activities of the branch are controlled by the director, with the support of deputy directors. The director serves a term of three years and is appointed by the branch committee, under the recommendation of a consensus of the members of the branch and with approval from SCO.

The trustee committee is responsible for fundraising, the approval of expenditure, and the maintenance of the branch premises and equipment. Committee members/trustees are either elected or ex officio and serve as trustees for a period of no more than six years. Ex-officio committee members are appointed or stand down at the annual general meeting each year.

The trustees normally meet five times a year. However, since the beginning of April 2020, the trustees have ensured that the branch has remained current with the changing advice and legislation around Covid, the impact on Samaritans activities and the operational implications. All trustee meetings since January 2020 have used Zoom, initially because the interim director lived too far away to make face-to-face meetings possible, and then because of Covid restrictions and precautions. However, all meetings met constitutional and legal requirements.

Recruitment

Hilary Ashley ceased her role as interim director on 1 January 2021 and Ilsa Hawtin was appointed as branch director and chair of trustees on 1 January 2021.

New trustees are identified either through an open recruitment from the membership base, or by recommendation or selection for their particular skills and abilities. Appointments are subject to the approval of a quorum of members. On appointment, new trustees are provided with the information recommended by the Charity Commission and have Samaritans-specific training as well as access to general trustee training, provided as part of their induction.

Governance

Over the 12 months of this report, the trustees carried out regular reviews of Samaritans standard policies as required by SCO and were able to advise to SCO that we are adhering to central guidance regarding governance, finance, data protection and health & safety.

Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage does not employ professional fundraisers in any capacity and did not carry out any face-to-face fundraising in the year. No complaints regarding fundraising were received for the period of this report.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom accounting standards. The Charity Commission requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the principles in the Charities SORP 2019
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity to enable them, as a matter of good practice, to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2019) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Statement FRS 102. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Reference and administration – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage – registered charity number 1173578

The committee members who served as trustees in the period were as follows:

Hilary Ashley	Director	Term of office ceased 1 January 2021
Ilsa Hawtin	Director	Appointed 1 January 2021
Peter George		Resigned 3 September 2020
Graham Sutton	Treasurer	Appointed 31 January 2020, Re-appointed 6 October 2020
Barbara Haines		Re-appointed 6 October 2020
Steven Harrison		Re-appointed 6 October 2020
Valerie Docking		Re-appointed 6 October 2020
Alan Chaney		Appointed 6 October 2020
Ian Gosling		Re-appointed 6 October 2020
Pat Salmon		Resigned 31 July 2020
Jude Brooks		Appointed 1 November 2020
Sandra Oakes		Appointed 1 November 2020

Charity bank account	Barclays Bank, Leicester, LE87 2BB
Independent examiner	Jayne Whitfield, 5 Luard Close, CB2 8PL (Appointed 6 October 2020)
Charity registered address	5 Nun's Close, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1EP
Contact telephone number	N/A
Website	www.samaritans.org/branches/hitchin

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report on pages 2 to 11.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signed:



(Signature of authorised person)

Date:

1/12/21

Ilsa Hawtin, chair of trustee board

(Name and position of authorised person)

Signed:



(Signature of authorised person)

Date:

27/11/21

Graham Sutton, treasurer

(Name and position of authorised person)

Independent examiner's report

to the trustees of Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage, charity number 1173578

I report to the trustees of Samaritans of North Herts & Hitchin on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Respective responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the charity'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 Commissioners 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 did 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:

Date:



7/12/21

Jayne Whitfield, 5 Luard Close, CB2 8PL

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2021

	Note	Fixed asset cost or fund £	Designated general fund	Unrestricted general fund £	2020/21 total funds £	2019/20 total funds £
Incoming resources from generated funds						
Voluntary income						
Prison Income	22			-1,040	-1,040	1,812
Donations	22			22,928	22,928	8,176
Generated income including from Friends of Samaritans				9,580	9,580	23,285
Grants income	23		17,940	11,500	29,440	6,000
Total incoming resources from charitable activities			17,940	42,968	60,908	39,243
Resources expended						
Costs of generating funds				2,440	2,440	1,795
Charitable activities	3		17,720	8,382	21,102	19,358
Governance costs	4			17,990	17,990	14,008
Total resources expended			17,720	28,812	41,532	35,101
Net (outgoing) incoming resources for the year			2,220	14,156	19,376	4,142
Gain on investment	24			1,202	1,202	2,484
Net movement in funds			2,220	15,358	20,578	6,626
Funds brought forward		17,601	6,246	84,915	108,762	102,126
Funds carried forward		17,601	11,466	100,279	129,340	108,762

Balance sheet at 31 MARCH 2021

2020-2021 Annual report and accounts

	Note	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2020 £	31 March 2020 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	6	17,601			17,601
Listed investment funds	7	80,118			78,916
			97,719		96,517
Current assets					
Prepaid expenses		0		2,327	
Sundry debtors		6,867		4,521	
Short-term bank deposits (at 31/3/2021)		44,366		15,686	
		51,233		22,534	
		19,612		10,289	
Creditors: amounts falling due within year					
			31,621		12,245
Net current assets					
Net assets					
			129,340		108,762
Represented by :					
Unrestricted funds					
General funds			100,273		84,915
Designated funds			11,466		6,246
Fixed asset cover fund			17,601		17,601
			129,340		108,762

These financial statements were approved by the trustees on 8 November 2021 and signed on its behalf by:

 (Ilsa Hawtin, chair of trustees)

 (Graham Sutton, treasurer)

Notes to the accounts

Accounting policies

- (a) These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of investments to market value and in accordance with applicable accounting standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting by Charities ("the Charities SORP").
- (b) Voluntary income received by way of donations and gifts is included in the statement of financial activities (the "SOFA") when received. Gifts in kind are valued and brought in as income.
- (c) Gross fund-raising income from events organised by the charity itself is included in the SOFA when received. Where deemed material, fund-raising proceeds not yet received by the charity at the year-end have also been taken to income at the trustees' estimate of likely receivable amount.
- (d) Covenant, gift aid and other income received by the charity in respect of which a claim for payment of tax has or will be made is grossed up for the tax recoverable and the gross amount recognised in the SOFA.
- (e) Income from legacies is included in the SOFA when received or when the trustees are satisfied the charity has a legally enforceable right of receipt of a conservatively measured sum.
- (f) Revenue grants for immediate financial support and assistance are recognised in the SOFA on receipt and on satisfaction of pre-conditions.
- (g) Net fund-raising income raised by Friends of Samaritans of North Herts & Stevenage is recognised in the SOFA on receipt by the charity as part of the Friends overall contribution, and the associated fund-raising costs separately disclosed in a note.
- (h) Premises overheads are aggregated and allocated to the various functional activities of the charity on a percentage basis determined by the trustees and disclosed in a note.
- (i) Any costs which cannot be specifically identified to another functional activity of the charity are included in the management and administration function.
- (j) Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets of material value held by the charity for its own use on a straight line basis so as to write off their cost over their estimated useful lives as follows:
- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Freehold property | Nil |
| Building renovation costs | 20% p.a. |
| Office equipment and furniture | 20% p.a. |
- (k) No provision for taxation is included in the accounts as the charity is entitled to the exemption from tax afforded by Section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.
- (l) Funds held by the charity are either :
- *unrestricted general funds* - these are funds that can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the trustees.
 - *Designated funds* - these are funds set aside by the trustees out of unrestricted general funds for specific future purposes or projects.
 - *Restricted funds* - these are funds than can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021

	2020/21	2020/21	2019/20
	Unrestricted	Total	Total
2. Premises overheads	£	£	£

Rates and water rates	325	325	435
Power and heat	2,761	2,761	2,936
Repairs and renewals	7,266	7,266	5,735
Cleaning and housekeeping	3,794	3,794	2,106
Equipment repairs and replacements	3,903	3,903	1,022
IT Support	5,315	5,315	1,623
Office telephone and postage	222	222	2,871
Insurance and legal costs	813	813	818
	-----	-----	-----
Total for the year	24,400	24,400	17,546
Allocated to :			
Costs of generating funds	2,440	2,440	1,755
Charitable activities	19,520	19,520	14,037
Governance costs	2,440	2,440	1,755
	-----	-----	-----
Total allocations for the year	24,400	24,400	17,547
	-----	-----	-----
3. Costs of generating funds	£	£	£
Share of premises overheads (see note 2)	2,440	2,440	1,755
	-----	-----	-----
Total for the year	2,440	2,440	1,755
	-----	-----	-----

4. Charitable activities	£	£	£
Emergency telephone	534	534	547
Volunteer travel expenses	686	686	518
Volunteer training	326	326	1,668
HMPP Recoverables	37	37	0
Outreach	0		0
Conference fees	0	0	2,568
Visitors expenses	0	0	0
Share of premises overheads (see note 2)	19,520	19,520	14,037
	-----	-----	-----
Total for the year	21,102	21,102	19,338
	-----	-----	-----
5. Governance costs			
Printing, stationery and photocopying	0	0	0
Contribution to Central Office support costs	14,888	14,888	11,336
Gifts and sundry expenses	663	663	917
Share of premises overheads (see note 2)	2,440	2,440	1,755
	-----	-----	-----
Total for the year	17,990	17,990	14,008
	-----	-----	-----

6. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold property	Building renovation costs	Office equipment & furniture	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost				
At 1 April 2020	17,601	14,808	13,173	45,582
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
	-----	-----	-----	-----
At 31 March 2021	17,601	14,808	13,173	45,582
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2020	-	14,808	13,173	27,981
Charge for the period	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
	-----	-----	-----	-----
At 31 March 2021	-	14,808	13,173	27,981
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value				
At 1 April 2020	17,601	-	-	17,601
	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 31 March 2021	17,601	-	-	17,601
	=====	=====	=====	=====

7. Listed investment funds

	Cost	Market value
	£	£
At 1 April 2020	48,148	78,916
Purchases of investment	0	0
Change in market value	0	1,202
	-----	-----
At 31 March 2021	48,148	80,118
	=====	=====

8. Trustees' remuneration and expenses

None of the charity's trustees were directly or indirectly remunerated in any way. It is the policy of the charity to reimburse in full all expenses properly incurred by its volunteers in connection with its charitable activities. During the year, the total amount reimbursed to the trustees and members of the charity's management committee in respect of travel costs for attending meetings, telephone, postage and similar expenses is included in note 4.

9. Indemnity insurance

Samaritans has centrally effected professional indemnity insurance to protect employees, trustees, members of the charity's management committee and other