

Directors Report

This year has been an eventful year here at Leeks Samaritans.

Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Dave Lewis, who stepped down after two years as Interim Branch Director. I think this was at least a year longer than he bargained for and his contribution was immense. The branch might not have survived without his cheerful, steadying presence. However, one thing I won't thank him for is the moving anecdote which he told at the last AGM. Some of you will remember it. Fortunately for you all, I'm not going to attempt to compete by doing something similar, although I will let you in on a secret. When I congratulated him on the story some weeks later, he gave me that big Dave Lewis smirk and said, 'I pinched it from a book. It was too good to resist'. The scoundrel!

This year we have brought forward the AGM date so that we have more time get the accounts into the Charity Commissioners. The accounts have to be presented to the volunteers before they can be submitted and the old September date meant there was very little time to get them in before the annual deadline. So this means that Leek Samaritans 2024-2025 was a shorter than usual year and mercifully for you (and me), there is less for me to report on.

November saw the replacement of our old 'Connect' system with Listening Centre, which uses the internet to connect instead of the traditional phone lines. This was a necessary change – the old lines were supposed to be switched off this year, though that keeps slipping – they'll be gone by the end of the century for sure. After a few teething problems it has proved quite stable and the sound quality is certainly better than it used to be using the old BT lines.

One event I would especially like to mention was the Christmas meal at Chennai's in the High Street. The food was good, the company was excellent, the service was great and I've received absolutely no commission from them for this plug. Thanks to Pam 553 for arranging the event. Also thanks to her for organising the Christmas raffle. We raised well over £500 and probably could have sold a few more tickets. People were actually asking her for more books in the end.

In February, we also held the first Power of Listening event at the Foxlowe Centre. This was a big success. Whilst turnout was modest we gained a great deal of experience from the event and are adapting it to be used as an Outreach 'Roadshow'. I think it was also a very good exercise in building on the wonderful Leek brother(and sister)hood of Samaritans. So many of us were involved whether in the presentation or in attendance. Thanks especially to Steve 603 for his tireless enthusiasm and hard work in developing and hosting the presentation, to David 593, the Wise to Steve's Morecombe, and all those who told their moving stories during the event. Thanks also to those who help book the venue, distribute the posters, talk to the press and other media and did all the rest of the work needed.

Also in February, we received a grant of £15,200 from the National Lottery. Thanks, both to them and to Tracy 512 who made this happen.

I'd also like to mention our Branch Secretary, Margo, who in most years beavers away diligently in the background, but this year, thanks to the horrors of initiating the new DBS system, has become one of our most well-known volunteers. She got us ALL through it in the end – a superb achievement. Thanks also to my Deputy, David 593, our Treasurer Mick 499 and the rest of the BTM who put in so much work behind the scenes.

Leek Samaritans is a team and I think something of a family. Many volunteers have been with us for many years and are old friends, and, in my opinion, they are unfailingly welcoming and supportive to new volunteers, making the Leek Office a happy place to be – even after a difficult call. I'd like to pay tribute to all of my predecessors for building this atmosphere.

Nonetheless, some of the same challenges that existed last year still persist. The biggest challenge is our lack of numbers. We are down to about 30 listening volunteers and when holidays, sicknesses and other absences are taken into account, that number drops to the low twenties at any particular moment. This can make it difficult to fill shifts and does mean that sometimes people sign up for a shift but cannot find a partner. We do need to fill more shifts in order to continue to make a good contribution to Samaritans as a whole. Our donors who keep us going with their grants, bequests and fivers in the tin rightly expect that we will be manning the lines, helping those in need. We do need to avoid a situation where SCO starts to question whether it's worth having a branch in Leek. I'd ask that you all be as flexible as you can be in order to get the number of shifts worked as high as possible. A night shift has also been reinstated and I'd encourage everyone to try to do one as often as they can – these are the hours when our help is most needed.

As many of you know 2026 is our 60th anniversary and Pam and her team are planning some exciting stuff for us. This is going to be a celebration for ourselves as much as a fund-raising or profile-building thing. I'm sure we're all going to have a great time. Personally, I'm not going to do any parachute jumping, though I'm very happy to come along and help scrape up the remains of those who are. There's still time to get a few more recipes into our book – let Pam know if you have one.

Starting soon, almost immediately I hope, our old friend Bertie will be laid to rest and replaced by 3 Rings, which you have all been getting to know. Vic 485 has been Bertie's dedicated carer for many years now and will be transferring his attentions to a hopefully more vibrant patient. I think 3 Rings is just about as easy to use as Bertie and it does allow us to store, and make available for volunteers to read, a host of documents than have historically been stored in ring-binders scattered around the Ops Room or just generally mislaid!

Dave Lewis gave four priorities in his report last year and these remain to the forefront:

- Continue to recruit, train and increase our volunteer team
- Reduce the number of leavers with short service at the branch
- To increase Samaritans presence in the local community
- To encourage volunteers to regularly undertake night shifts

We have certainly been active in pursuing these objectives and have managed to recruit some really promising new volunteers, though, of course, we need more.

The Power of Listening Event certainly raised our profile and we are in discussions with the new leader of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council with regard to becoming one of their two favoured charities for the coming year. Hopefully this will help us raise our profile (and a bit of cash). Thanks to Andrew 615 for liasing.

So, in conclusion, and as usual, I'd just like to thank all of you for all you do.

Leek & District Samaritans
Receipts and Payments Account
for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund Welfare	Restricted fund Outreach	2024/25 Total funds	2023/24 Total funds
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Donations	20529	0	0	20529	6572
Fundraising	176	0	0	176	7887
Bank & Building Society interest	0	0	0	0	156
Total receipts	<u>20705</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>20705</u>	<u>14615</u>
Payments					
Property overheads & maintenance	21461	0	0	21461	11369
Governance costs	6979	0	0	6979	5504
Total payments	<u>28440</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>28440</u>	<u>16873</u>
Net of receipts/(payments)	-7735	0	0	-7735	-2258
Opening cash funds	41637			41637	43895
Closing cash funds	<u>33902</u>			<u>33902</u>	<u>41637</u>

Leek & District Samaritans
Statement of assets and liabilities
as at 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted fund Welfare	Restricted fund Outreach	2024/25 Total funds	2023/24 Total funds
	£	£	£	£	£
Cash funds					
Unity Trust Bank	24613	0	0	24613	32347
Leek United Building Society	9290	0	0	9290	9290
Cash in hand	0	0	0	0	0
Total cash funds	33903	0	0	33903	41637

Assets retained for the charity's
own use

	Unrestricted funds Cost £
Equipment	25000