

Lewes Open Door Annual Report January 2024 to December 2024

We have continued to support guests who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, or in emergency or temporary accommodation, or who have recently been in such accommodation. As previously reported the majority of our formerly homeless guests are in private rented accommodation in the centre of Lewes. However, the future of this as a facility is uncertain. Unfortunately, due to lack of available housing, most of our guests, being single men, are very unlikely to be offered accommodation by the council.

At any one time we are still supporting around 20 people on and off during the year with food, clothing, toiletries and home comforts. We also conduct outreach work to help people to find appropriate advice and services including health and dental services. We have continued our work helping people to access and attend hospital or GP appointments and dental treatment. On a weekly basis we attend the Malling Food Bank which is hosted at Kings Church in Lewes on a Monday, and it is widely known in the Lewes community that if someone needs our services, that is where they will find us.

Having suspended our drop-in service as it was not being used, we held a number of discussions among the trustees and others to consider our strategy. We concluded that our charity was doing work that no other service in our area is doing. For example, when the temperature falls below zero the council is obliged to provide emergency accommodation for the street homeless – this is called SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol). In January the council had ignored the pleas of one of our regular rough sleepers, so we paid for several nights in a hotel until we were able to persuade the council to accept their responsibility. The needs of our guests are increasingly complex and increasingly unmet by statutory services. This has led us to conclude that our services are essential to our guests. We review this on a monthly basis.

We strengthened our relationship with Fitzjohn's Community Food, a local charitable organisation, and held two community celebration events with them during the year at which our guests mingled with the local community and church members and enjoyed the food and entertainment on offer. This was an opportunity to reduce the social isolation which is often experienced by those who experience homelessness and housing insecurity.

We have also strengthened our contacts with those at the local authority who are responsible for housing issues, including the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) who specialise in helping rough sleepers. We have managed to help a number of our guests into longer term accommodation. This has been an opportunity to help them create a new home as we sourced kitchenware and furniture for them and assisted with home decoration.

For example, we helped one of our guests to fight the council's refusal to accept 'duty of care' and he has now moved into a lovely social housing flat in Newhaven, where he can entertain his grandson and has something to live for.

We also supported a long-term rough sleeper, to prevent him being discharged from hospital back onto the streets when he had suffered a life-threatening illness. He has now moved into a Guinness Trust Flat and has changed his life around.

We instigated a joint meeting between local developers, the council housing department, ourselves and members of the homeless community who were in danger of eviction due to the planned development of their sleep sites. It was a very constructive meeting, giving the homeless community an opportunity to voice their wants and needs. We continue to liaise with all parties.

We have made a number of donations to the Acts 435 charity which is an online platform that hosts requests from people in need who are suffering a financial crisis. We restrict our donations to those in the immediate Lewes area to ensure we comply with our charitable objectives. We have helped with needs for carpets, washing machines and beds during the year. We also made donations to Fitzjohn's Food Club for their hardship fund and for the community celebration costs.

We have 2 designated volunteer outreach workers who visit people in temporary accommodation and on the streets, to offer additional emotional and practical support. We also supply food & drinks if and when needed – one pregnant homeless lady could only eat white bread cheese sandwiches so one of our outreach workers made them for her daily for some weeks until she moved on. We also recruited 2 new volunteers, following an open meeting.

We continue to benefit from many charitable donations of clothing and bedding from the local community, which requires sorting and storing. We lost our storage - based in council premises - at very short notice due to a dangerous building, but the aforementioned local developers offered us a dry, secure facility at a peppercorn rent. This arrangement will come to an end during the coming year, and we will shortly be moving our stock into a more appropriate, long term storage facility. We have supplied tents, sleeping bags, warm coats, boots, socks and underwear as well as toiletries to our homeless community. We have also provided kettles, microwaves and bedding to guests in temporary accommodation.

As well as helping with the cost of transport we are now able to acquire and renovate donated bicycles which we make available together with bicycle helmets and locks. These have proven to be of great benefit to people whom we are helping, both in cutting the cost of transport and enhancing their independence.

We continue to be members of East Sussex Homelessness Forum, whose aim is for all partners to work with the local authority, statutory and commissioned agencies with a vision "To work collaboratively to bring an end to rough sleeping in East Sussex and prevent people

from rough sleeping in the future". We continue to take an active role in quarterly meetings, and believe we are helping to formulate improved strategies, and enabling the voices of rough sleepers and the homeless to be better heard. We also regularly, sometimes weekly, attend online meetings with council, healthcare and RSI representatives to help voice the needs of designated priority homeless

We support some of our clients with train tickets to an alcohol and drug support agency in Eastbourne. We have helped our guests open Bank Accounts, apply for copies of missing Birth Certificates and apply for Citizens Cards.

The help we provide varies greatly. For example, we are currently supporting a man who has no recourse to public funds whilst he awaits renewal of his visa. Not only do we help with food, tent, bedding, camping stove and gas, but also with advice and support for him to obtain help for his visa renewal and his other legal issues.

Another of our guests was moved into social housing but couldn't emotionally detach themselves from the van which had been their home for many years and still contained most of their worldly goods. We helped them to empty it, arranged for it to be transported close to where they now live, and where it still stores some precious memories for them.

Sadly, we also helped to arrange a funeral for one of our regular vulnerable guests. Although the council could pay for a very basic funeral, we contacted her estranged family, arranged and paid for an Order of Service and flowers, arranged transport to the crematorium, and with advice from her friends selected her favourite music.

A quote from a previous rough sleeper whom we supported to move into accommodation:

"I appreciate everything you and Open Door have helped me with this year. I've turned my life around feel happy in my place and very close to a full year without heroin mainly because of Cassie (his dog) lifting my spirits and getting me out stopping the boredom which leads to finding wrong things to occupy my hours also even though I can't run about I'm spending hours out and about. So thanks for the support"

A quote from one of our guests whom we regularly support:

"Lewes Open Door has been an emotional support to me, through very hard times of loss and illness, and have gone the extra step to help me. They're so hard working and understanding and non-judgemental, that it's refreshing, and definitely needed. I don't know if there is any other support mechanism like this, but I'm soooo grateful that they were there when I needed them!!! Thank all of you, and God bless."



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name	No (if any)
Lewes Open Door	1185742

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/01/24		31/12/24

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Gifts and donations	7,772	-	-	7,772	10,436
Loan repayments and refunds	40	-	-	40	300
Golders Green Foundation	-	-	-	-	1,000
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	7,812	-	-	7,812	11,736
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
Disposal of laptop	100	-	-	100	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	100	-	-	100	-
Total receipts	7,912	-	-	7,912	11,736
A3 Payments					
Insurance	440	-	-	440	414
Telephone and internet	609	-	-	609	562
Expenses	9,174	-	-	9,174	10,213
Premises rental	25	-	-	25	-
Storage	14	-	-	14	-
Refunds and corrections	75	-	-	75	-
Training	-	-	-	-	12
Penalty	-	-	-	-	100
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	10,337	-	-	10,337	11,301
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	10,337	-	-	10,337	11,301
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 2,425	-	-	- 2,425	435
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	30,139	-	-	30,139	29,704
Cash funds this year end	27,714	-	-	27,714	30,139

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	General funds	27,714	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	27,714	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	A, B. Buxton	Andrew Buxton	26/02/25	