

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2023

LEIGHTON LINSLADE HELPERS



Serving our community in the relief of those in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other social or economic disadvantage

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LEIGHTON LINSLADE HELPERS

July 2021 – July 2022

Albion Chambers
High Street
Leighton Buzzard
Beds
LU7 1DP

July 2022

Community Fridge
Waterborne Walk
Leighton Buzzard
Beds
LU7 1BL

Emergency Telephone No 1: 01525 837 219

Emergency Telephone No 2: ~~07517 851 382~~ No 3 07543 540 997

Email: help@leightonlinsladehelpers.org.uk

Web: www.leightonlinsladehelpers.org.uk

Community Fridge Opening Hours

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday	Closed	14.00 – 17.00pm
Tuesday	11.00am – 15.00 pm	Closed
Wednesday	Closed	Closed
Thursday	Closed	14.00 – 17.00pm
Friday	11.00am – 15.00 pm	Closed
Saturday	10.00am – 13.00pm	Closed
Sunday	Closed	Closed

OUR SERVICE OFFER



Leighton Linslade Helpers is a collective of volunteers who formed during the Covid 19 lockdown period. We very quickly grew into a large charity of over 60 volunteers. We continue to provide a community food bank to our town and surrounding villages. As well as providing food parcels, prescription deliveries, welfare checks, and personal shopping, we embarked on an exciting development of opening the first community fridge in our town in October 2021, and in October 2022 we started project working in collaboration with a much loved and established Community Centre on Meadow Way a local housing estate.

We are mentored through BLEVEC, BLRF, CVS, and CAB (Bedford Local Emergency Volunteer Executive Committee, Bedford Local Resilience Forum, Community Voluntary Services and Community Action Bedford). Two of our Trustees are BLEVEC Commanders, with our group providing Emergency Response when called upon by BLRF and BLEVEC.

We continue to assist our local agencies, schools and our local authority and other foodbanks, with a range of requests including responding to emergencies across Bedfordshire in our own right and in collaboration with other groups and charities. We are now established in our new Community Fridge premises and will continue to support our community, agencies and our local authority.

OUR PEOPLE

During the period of 1 April 2021 to March 2023, we had at anyone time 70-75 volunteers giving up their free time to volunteer in various roles within our organisation. We have a team of drivers, who collect the supermarket surplus for our green initiative the Community Fridge, prescriptions, personal shops and anything else that can fit in their cars. We also have a charity Van for larger collections and deliveries. We have a team of Fridge Fairies, who oversee the daily operations of sorting food and opening the fridge to the public. We have a team of Meadow Way Minions who run our warm space check in and chat café at the Community Centre and oversea the distribution of food parcels.

Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds, communities and with a range of abilities. We pride ourselves that we support and encourage volunteers with special needs. People volunteer with us for various reasons, including to:-

- Make a positive impact on their own and other people's lives
- Gain new skills and knowledge and build experience for employment
- Improve health, wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem
- Meet new people from a range of backgrounds and ages and make friends
- Get to know the local community and give something back
- Experience support and to feel part of a team

We are extremely grateful to have such a dedicated, knowledgeable and friendly team of volunteers.

We have a core management team of 4 full time people
We are also supported by the following teams

Web Team x 2

Press and PR x 1

Social Media Team x 3

Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers x 4+

OUR COMMITMENT

We have 1 emergency telephone number that is manned 7 days a week 7 hours a day by a duty officer. We have a separate line for BLEVEC emergencies. We can respond to emergency requests from BLRF within 1 hour and local requests within 2 hours. We also have a website where the public can make a self-referral through our online form, or they can call or email our help desk, which is also manned 7 days a week.

Officers and Trustees 31 March 2021 – 31 March 2023		
Sarah Cursons	Chair	
Andrew Cursons	Treasurer	
June Tobin	Secretary	
Karen Cursons	Trustee	
Steve Jones	Trustee	
Esther Baron	Trustee	
Chris Richardson	Trustee	
Avis Fowler	Trustee	
Candys Hunter	Trustee	
Ryan Battams	Trustee	
Adam Fahn	Trustee	
Chris Lockett	Trustee	

Independent Accountant
<p>Simon Cyna 48 Gateshead Road Borehamwood WD6 4NQ</p>

Bankers
<p>Barclays 28 George Street Luton Beds LU7 2AE</p>

CHAIR'S REPORT - Sarah Cursons

The LL Helpers provides a much needed service to our community and surrounding villages. We honestly thought that our group would wind up after Covid restrictions were lifted, however we were soon plunged into the cost of living crisis and the demand for our services only increased.

We have had a successful 2 years with the impact of the cost of living crisis presenting our group with unprecedented challenges. We have seen an increased demand from homeless and temporary homeless within our community and we have had to learn new skills and make new connections with the right organisations to deal with these challenges.

We helped more than xxxx clients during this period

The success and growth of our organization, which is an independent charity and an independent foodbank, is largely down to the dedication of our wonderful teams of volunteers, who on average give over xxxx volunteer hours a week.

None of this could be achieved without the level of generosity from members of the public, organisations, and businesses who make regular donations, and of course grant funding from our local councils.

We are looking forward to the next year with continued growth and to meeting all challenges head on.

So it's a massive thank you to all who help Leighton Linslade Helpers and to be part of a wonderful asset to our community.



SECRETARY'S REPORT - June Tobin

Since our first report of our first year in operation, we have grown beyond recognition and in ways that we never envisaged. We are now successfully registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission and we have successfully opened a charity bank account with Barclays.

We have moved twice, after funding for our local authority warehouse was withdrawn but we are now settled just off the high street in our wonderful green environmental initiative of Leighton Buzzards first Community Fridge. Volunteers have received training and are fully Level 2 Food Hygiene qualified with our first and second visit from our local authority's environmental health department giving us a 5 star Food Hygiene rating

We have also started to work closely with another local charity, Meadow Way Community Centre, which is a long established community asset. We are very proud to be working in collaboration with this charity and we are excited to get started on future projects bringing us closer to our community.

We are proud of our collaboration work with other organisations, such as Community for Veterans, Afghanistan and Ukrainian Refugee Councils as well as setting up an Independent Foodbank United Group, working with all independent foodbanks in Herts Beds and Bucks. We share ideas and resources as well as redistributing surplus food.



We continue to develop our processes and policies as we grow in size and take on new buildings and projects and we are proud of how far we have come in just a few short years. It's a huge team effort and without our volunteers and the support of our community none of this would be possible.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers both past and present.

Treasurers Report (2021-23)

This report is for the period 29 October 2021 to 31 March 2023 and covers the first reporting period required by the charity commission. A separate report has been produced for the normal year of April through March. The period covered by this report saw us move out of the warehouse provided to us by Central Bedfordshire Council during the Covid-19 pandemic and into High Street premises enabling us to branch out into the provision of a Community Fridge in support of a reduction of food waste in the local community. We also had to purchase a vehicle as the vehicle lent to us by the town council during the pandemic had to be returned and the members vehicle we had been using failed. The committee decided to purchase a van but at the time vans were in short supply and we had not been in existence long enough to take out a loan. One of the group members offered a loan over 4 years at an interest rate of 4% (approximately half the figure of a commercial loan at the time). Additional funding was available from CBC councillor personal grants. This loan proposal was put before the committee and discussed and agreed. A suitable vehicle was located and purchased.

The charity has grown significantly during this period, largely due to significant effort being put into our online social media presence. The post pandemic period enabled us to obtain our own bank account which enabled us to apply for grants from a number of grant awarding institutions. Having branched out as a community fridge with High Street premises we were able to raise significant income from cash donations from our clients. In addition we started hold regular can drives at the local supermarkets, these helped raise public awareness of our charity as well as raising funds and collecting food in support of the foodbank operation. The result of these efforts was that we achieved a doubling of our income over the previous year.

During the year our landlord decided to sell the High Street premises we were operating out of, so once again we were on the move. This time however we considered ourselves to be financially stable and it was decided to look for a more permanent solution. Premises were identified just off the High Street and a 5 year lease was signed on these to house the Community Fridge. This left us with the problem of the foodbank storage, a local community centre was identified which had fallen into disuse. We put forward a proposal to use the building for storage and bring the community centre back into community use. This was accepted and so we began a synergistic relationship with the Community Centre. This upheaval lead to a significant expenditure on setting up the new community fridge as new fridges were required along with signage and furniture.

Upon leaving the High Street premises we managed to resolve our issues with Pozitive Energy, however the increasing energy prices meant we had a large closing bill from EDF Energy. At the time they were offering extended payment terms so we made them an offer of regular monthly payments to clear the bill over a period of 15 months, this they accepted. This accounts for the Electricity Bill still being a liability at this year end. Given the charities aim of helping in the local community it seems appropriate to call out the fact that a little over 10% of our income was returned to the community directly. This was through the provision of heating support, cost of living support, foodbank provisions and other initiatives. In addition, the value of the community fridge to the community is of course not directly measurable in a meaningful financial manner. However the rental costs and of the building could be factored into the benefit to the community category along with a portion of the electricity costs.

In summary the group had a good year and has continued to deliver on its support to the community. Our third year has shown a healthy level of grant and donation based income with a significant increase on the previous year. This has enabled us to continue running the foodbank and community fridge whilst bringing a local Community Centre back into use. The Community Centre is handled as a separate charity but we have a synergistic relationship. We enter the 2023-24 year with sufficient in the bank to cover our liabilities (debts + restricted funds).

Andrew Cursons – Treasurer Leighton Linlade Helpers

Leighton Linslade Helpers Consolidated Accounts for the period March 2021 to 31 March 2023

Accounts 2021-2023 (see note 1)

Income and Expenditure

As at 31 March 2023

	2022-23
Income	
General donations	£19,933.36
Credit/Debit card	£5,101.80
Small cash donations	£14,861.28
Cheque donations	£3,002.80
Online donations	£5,857.52
Sale of goods	£2,531.27
Regular giving	£2,425.00
Uncategorized (21/22)	£12,189.42
	£65,902.45
Events Income	£2,086.51
Can drives	£1,370.39
Grants/Corporate income	£39,310.84
Food parcel sponsorship	£4,593.21
Miscellaneous	£529.40
Grants for vehicle purchase	£4,000.00
Vehicle Loan (note 2)	£10,100.00
Room Rental	£400.00
Total Income	£128,292.80
Expenditure	
Check-in-chat	£228.36
Foodbank provisions	£4,187.53
Client direct support	£1,614.21
Heating support	£1,635.00
Cost of living support	£2,160.00
	£9,825.10
General Expenditure	£4,506.08
Moving expenses	£5,151.73
Community Events	£484.70
Warm Space initiative	£2,312.00
Community Fridge against restricted funds	£4,076.41
	£16,526.92
Utility Expenditure	£9,627.35
Rental Expenditure	£17,729.44
Vehicle Purchase	£15,240.00
Vehicle running costs	£5,956.89
Liability Insurance	£788.92
Sundries	£209.68
Reimbursements	£1,697.32
Publicity	£1,509.15
Loan repayments (Vehicle)	£3,156.58
Building Maintenance	£543.05
Total Expenditure	£82,814.40

I and E balances

Excess of income over expenditure	£45,478.40
Balance brought forward previous year	£2,514.26
Balance carried forward	£47,992.66
Actual balance c/f	£47,992.66
Difference (note 3)	£0.00

Assets and Liabilities

As at 31 March 2023

	2022-23
Assets	
Cash at Bank	£47,331.24
Cash in hand	£372.69
Paypal pending	£271.02
SumUp pending	£17.71
	£47,992.66
Capital Assets (Vehicle)	£15,240.00
Less depreciation	-£4,000.00
Capital assets (Fridges)	£3,400.00
Total Assets	£62,632.66
Liabilities	
Outstanding Loan on vehicle	£6,875.05
Electricity Bill (see note 4)	£2,479.93
Restricted Funds	
Food parcels	£655.68
Meal in a box	£5,500.00
MW Community Fridge	£688.00
Community Fridge	£2,160.37
Restricted funds	£9,004.05
Total Liabilities	£18,359.03
Excess Assets over Liabilities	£44,273.63

Note 1: This set of accounts was prepared to cover the initial account period as defined by the Charity Commission – 29 Oct 2021 to 31 March 2023 (17 months). Annual accounts have been prepared in addition.

Note 2: During the period of these accounts the van the charity had been using became unusable. Due to the newness of the charity it was not possible to obtain a commercial vehicle loan. One of the group members offered a 4 year loan at an interest rate of 4% (approximately half the figure of a commercial loan at the time). This was accepted by the trustees. A suitable vehicle was located and purchased.

Note 3: Difference between value based on current assets and the start position modified by the excess of income over expenditure.

Note 4: The Electricity Bill for the initial supplier at Albion Chambers was paid off when a valid bill was received. The figure outstanding was due to a payment plan being instigated for our closing bill.

KEY STATISTICS

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Food bank	168	220	211	189	267	254	308	321	392	406	268	268	3220
Prescriptions Welfare check/CBC Ref	21	13	25	32	22	21	39	37	27	27	29	32	325
Personal shop	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	130
Volunteer Hours	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	25,350
Shop Footfall	1,265	1,217	1,416	1,098	1,088	1,298	1,375	1,385	1,341	1,378	1,398	1,386	15,645

APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Food bank	268	326	219	267	219	278	314	310	421	463	302	327	3714
Prescriptions Welfare check/CBC Ref	0	0	0	0	0	13	16	22	19	17	26	23	136
Personal shop	0	0	8	17	23	14	0	18	15	0	0	0	95
Volunteer Hours	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	33
Shop Footfall	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	2,112	25,350
	1372	1253	1472	1120	1142	1389	1462	1420	1562	1445	1406	1442	16,465

FOODBANK AND FUEL POVERTY

The demand for the foodbank has seen a steady increase over the last 2 years, mainly due to the cost of living crisis, with significant increases in food and fuel prices.

We have also seen a steady decline in donations of food at our donation points across the town as everyone is feeling the squeeze in their weekly shop.

The increased demand in support with food and the decrease in food donations, has meant that we are having to top up our foodbank supplies and purchase food every month to ensure we meet all requests for support. On average we are spending between £1,000 to £1,400 per month.

We are also more and more getting requests for help with Water, Gas and Electric bills, mainly for those on pre-paid meters. Those in hardship are having to choose between Heating and Eating.

There has been a real shift in the demand for services we provide and we are having to adapt each month to that demand.



COMMUNITY FRIDGE

In October 2021, Leighton Buzzard gained its first Community Fridge when we opened our shop in Albion Chambers in the high street and then in Waterborne Walk just off the high street in Leighton Buzzard. We were able to do this via 3 organisations Hubbub*, Neighbourly* and FareShare*. They gave us all the tools and processes necessary to get ourselves started in this ever growing and popular nationwide Environmental Green initiative of saving food and preventing landfill. ([Hubbub - Home](#) www.neighbourly.com www.fareshare.org.uk)

We were also fortunate to be awarded several grants totaling £8k which enabled us to kit the shop out with brand new commercial fridges. And promote this new initiative to our community. It was a slow process at the beginning as most people thought the Fridge was a foodbank and you needed to be in hardship to access the service. And whilst the Fridge definitely benefits those in need, it is open to everyone in the community to prevent food waste. It is vital that all members of our community use the Fridge and make a small donation towards our running costs, as we are not funded by our local authority, so without these donations from those that can afford to, we would struggle to pay our overheads of rent, utilities, insurance.

How Does It Work

Every night and early mornings teams of volunteers visit all of the supermarkets and shops that are part of the scheme. They collect dry goods, fresh produce, meats, fish and dairy. This food is then taken back to the Fridge for quality sorting and freezing where necessary. Members of the public then access the Fridge 6 days a week at different times. We have a fair usage policy that allows you to visit twice a week and take one regular size shopping bag of food. So far its proving very popular with people queuing to get in. The super markets are also enjoying being part of the scheme as this helps to reduce their waste costs too.





MEADOW WAY COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Leighton Linlade Helpers have always taken great pride in working in collaboration with other organisations and charities. And during the last two years we have formed a great working relationship with another local long standing charity, Meadow Way Community Centre. The community centre is situated on a large housing estate and has served the community for over 40 years. During Lockdown the centre was closed and fell into disrepair. However the Meadow Way Charity worked hard to refurbish the main parts of the building and got it open again in October 2021.

The centre is now back at the heart of the community and is utilised by the Leighton Linlade Helpers as a base to carry out many of our projects and to help our organisation to get closer to the community. Projects that have taken place at Meadow Way are, Graffiti Workshops, Music and Rap Sessions, Cooking Lessons for Families, Mum and Tots Play Groups. We have hosted the Community Pay Back Team, Ground Works Charity, Central Bedfordshire Housing Team, Central Bedfordshire Health and Wellbeing Team, Central Bedfordshire Community Safety Team, and in a Town Wide initiative, we have run a Check in and Chat Café Warm Space, providing free hot meals, clothing and a safe social space to participate in activities such as Knit and Natter. We intend to build on these successes in the future, and we thank all the organisations we have worked with in helping to provide much needed services to the community and the community for using the centre, keeping it alive.



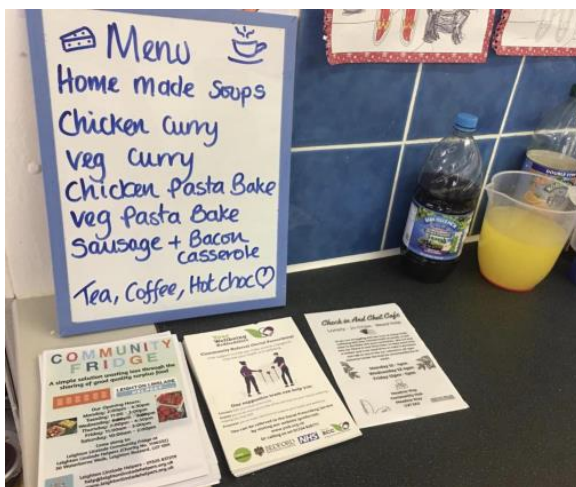
7 volunteers have transformed Meadow Way Community Centre over the past 10 weeks.
Help us celebrate their achievements!



Celebration Event

To confirm attendance please email
jane.mills@groundwork.org.uk

12pm June 16th 2023
Meadow Way Community Centre,
Leighton Buzzard





ROUND UP

We have come so far in the last 3 years and none of us who volunteer with the Leighton Linslade Helpers ever envisaged how big we would grow and how diverse the services we provide would get. More importantly we didn't know how much our community would need us to help them face new challenges after Covid, like the Cost of Living Crisis. This Crisis has challenged us in ways that we didn't think we would end up supporting, like homeless people , or providing free meals and a warm safe space to spend the day. We have also found that we are sign posting people more and more to services and organisations for help and support. Its not just about food anymore.

Day after day and week after week, our volunteers turn up and give their time, energy and support to ensure that the wheels of our organisation keep turning.

The same can be said of those that donate to us regularly and through one off events. We are often surprised when another organisation turns up with a large cheque as they had chosen to support our work. All of which is gratefully received and put to good work.

Then there are our service users. They are so humbled by our support and very grateful too. We receive wonderful messages via cards, emails, text messages and sometimes a baked cake or two made with ingredients from the Community Fridge of course!

Thank you to everyone involved.