

The first Annual General Meeting of Let's BeFriends

Wednesday 7th June 2023, 3pm-4pm



Room 2, The Cornerstone, Sulyard Street, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 1PX

In attendance: Dusty Thomas, Hannah Lodge, Caroline Jackson, Julie Ridgway, Grahame Legg, Louise Seacy, Isabelle Hart, Boz Wilson

Apologies: Nina Banks, Andrew Bryant, Catherine Corless, Paula Boland, Tom Disley

Agenda

Chair's Report

Finance Report

AOB

Chair's Report (Hannah Lodge)

Annual General Meeting Report

Wednesday 7th June 2023

Good afternoon everyone and a very warm welcome to Let's BeFriends first official annual general meeting.

Let's Befriends was set up during Lockdown by the Lancaster Homeless Lived Experience Group who wanted to build on the efforts of the "Everyone In" initiative (which offered practical

assistance to accommodate rough sleepers) by offering social support to address the stigma, isolation and lack of connectivity that can lead to / perpetuate homelessness in the first place.

We are a local charity which recruits, trains and supports people with lived experience of homelessness to befriend people who are currently homeless, about to become homeless or recently accommodated after a period of homelessness.

Our transformative project is underpinned by the ethos of working with our communities to co-produce solutions to local issues and bring about change.

We support beneficiaries to obtain / maintain tenancies and to engage in local services which help create / sustain healthy ways of living, whilst also providing volunteers with work experience, supervision, certificated training and reference's which can improve their access to the job market.

We have weekly meetings with the Council's Homeless Team and Calico's Accommodation Finding / Floating Support service and forged strong partnerships with other agencies such as Citizens Advice, Integrated Care Communities and Changing Futures. Our service builds trusting relationships and enables beneficiaries to improve outcomes in health (i.e. via engagement with GPs / hospitals / agencies treating substance misuse / poor mental health), wealth (i.e. via debt reduction / maximising benefits / energy efficiency) and opportunities to access employment, education or training.

The majority of referrals for our service come from partner organisations but beneficiaries can also self-refer.

We aim to break the cycle of homelessness by working in partnership with statutory / voluntary agencies and the marker of our success is two-fold: desired outcomes for befrienders (with historic lived experience) and their beneficiaries (with current lived experience) which is measured by:

- Improving connectivity by establishing befriending relationships which reduce isolation, build confidence and improve wellbeing and signposting / making referrals to community groups
- Supporting people to move into suitable accommodation / maintain tenancies
- Improving health by supporting beneficiaries to engage with Primary Care services; for example by registering with GPs, providing support to attend medical appointments, accompanying to wound-dressing /vaccination clinics, help to access detox/rehab, introducing beneficiaries to agencies addressing substance misuse (e.g., Red Rose Recovery / Inspire / the Well) and those which promote mental health (e.g., MindsMatter and Positive Futures) and making referrals to Adult Social Care
- Improving wealth by continuing to work in partnership with agencies such as the DWP / Citizens Advice to help reduce debt, improve budgeting, alleviate food and fuel poverty and to maximise benefits
- Enabling more people to access to training and education
- Addressing safeguarding issues

We support beneficiaries to obtain new homes and assist with tenancy set-up (i.e. by transferring benefits claims, setting up utilities and ensuring that properties are adequately furnished and have white goods). We ensure that beneficiaries facing eviction are provided with legal support and assist with applications to Ideal Choice Homes. Where necessary, we advocate for updated banding to improve access to council housing, support with homeless applications and request formal reviews of homeless decisions to ensure that people with priority need are given a duty of accommodation.

We were awarded charitable status in May 2022 and since then have been supported by Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission to launch our new website (www.letsbefriends.org.uk) which provides a platform to promote our work, and provide links to our referral and application forms, alongside publicising any upcoming job opportunities.

Volunteer Recruitment

This year we have delivered recruitment presentations at:

- Oak Tree House
- The Well Morecambe
- Walter Lyon House
- Lancaster User Forum (LUF Lounge)
- Lancaster Job Centre job fair

- Lancaster Library job fair (LDCVS)
- Morecambe Library job fair

The next recruitment presentations are to be delivered:

- Lancaster Job Centre job fair Thursday 22nd June 10:30am
- Lancaster District Health Festival at Dalton Square Saturday 8th July 10am
- Littledale Hall Therapeutic Community targeted at: Participation & Citizenship stage of treatment as this group are close to leaving treatment and preparing for their lives in the community; Aftercare as this group have left treatment so are living in the community whilst still actively engaged with Littledale Hall. Dates to be arranged for this Summer in conjunction with the new Network Coordinator

In addition, volunteers have been recruited through word-of-mouth, mainly due to the connections formed via the Recovery Community. This will be ongoing and we expect this to become even more successful as we strengthen our links with recovery organisations such as Red Rose and The Well. We are also interviewing tomorrow for the post of Network Coordinator, whose role will revolve around active recruitment and also delivering presentations to our wider network of partners to inform them more about what we actually do as an organisation. We hope this role will see an active increase in the number of our volunteer befrienders. With them in post we hope to speed up the recruitment of volunteers and the process of preparing them for a befriending relationship to get closer to achieving our goal of having 40 active volunteers.

Active Befriending Relationships

We currently have 8 volunteers active in 17 befriending relationships.

The length of befriending relationships is varied to the extent that they range from

- One of our first beneficiaries who has been supported for 2 and a half years through her roller-coaster addiction/recovery journey
- 3 days of intensive support recently which concluded with a positive outcome in that this lady was housed safely in a refuge out of the area.

One of our volunteers provided valuable ongoing support to a beneficiary through their end-of-life journey.

So far none of our beneficiaries have lost a tenancy. This suggests that we are achieving one of our founding objectives which was to stop the revolving door of homelessness.

Not every beneficiary is homeless or about to become homeless (many referrals are for people who have already been accommodated after a period of homelessness), but since our project launched in 2020 we have supported 18 people into their own tenancy, 4 people into supported accommodation and 5 people into interim accommodation.

We have supported 6 beneficiaries into detox or rehab. The support to these individuals has not ended with their admission as befrienders have visited the detox or rehab and were involved in Aftercare support when the beneficiary left residential treatment.

A beneficiary was supported on leaving hospital after 4 months of psychiatric treatment to settle back at home and reintegrate in the community.

Volunteers in Training

We currently have 4 volunteers who have completed all aspects of compulsory training (Induction and Online Safeguarding) and 1 who has completed the Induction and will be supported with the online training. All require clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) before they can commence volunteering.

The length of time DBS checks have been taking to come through has been a major obstacle to starting befriending – with some taking up to 3 months (due to understaffing of police admin staff). We have been very fortunate that so far, the affected volunteers have patiently stuck with us. During this waiting period we provide shadowing opportunities, Peer Support, ongoing training, regular phone and face-to-face contact and the chance to support with other volunteer tasks such as IT support and moving furniture.

We have 2 further volunteers waiting for Induction Training and to complete online Safeguarding Training.

Volunteers on Pause

We currently have 4 volunteers on pause. This is due to either physical or mental health reasons, personal life circumstances, employment or family commitments.

Whilst volunteers are on pause, we keep contact with the volunteer appropriate to the individual. For most this is a very occasional check in phone call. For some it includes providing support to get them through the personal circumstances or physical or mental health struggles they are facing.

This ongoing support fits with our ethos to look after and value our volunteers as much as our beneficiaries.

It has also proved rewarding that in some instances volunteers on pause have made it to a place where they can start volunteering again.

Progression into Employment or Education

Our project further supports the health inequalities agenda as we enable volunteers to gain experience, confidence and renewed self-esteem that supports them in their own recovery journeys (26% of our volunteers have moved on into paid employment whilst 7% moved on into education).

Holistic Working

We would not have achieved successful outcomes working in isolation.

Weekly Referral Pathway online meetings with Lancaster & Morecambe Council Homelessness Lead, representatives from Calico's Floating Support and Accommodation Finding Service help us to secure emergency, supported, social or private housing for our beneficiaries. This communication also provides an opportunity to deal with issues such as anti-social behaviour, rent or bill arrears, maintenance to increase the quality of our beneficiaries' lives and help them sustain their tenancies.

Working closely with Inspire, Red Rose and The Well (most recently the Changing Futures project) gives us a better chance of navigating Recovery.

Several of our beneficiaries have been supported to attend Positive Futures with the successful outcome that they regularly attend independently and have built a social circle.

We help to alleviate poverty and have been able to provide beneficiaries with invaluable financial support by assisting them to apply for pots of money via the council's Household Support Fund and Street Aid.

Working with mental health services has proved most challenging - due to issues with waiting times, communication and continuity of care we have struggled to build effective working relationships with the Specialist Triage Assessment and Referral Team (START), Minds Matter and Initial Response and Care coordinators. We have therefore found it more useful to refer and signpost to local community initiatives like Positive Futures and Red Rose.

Staff Team

Since we set up, 3 members of part time paid staff have left us to move on into full time employment.

Louise Seacy has been Project Coordinator since 6th October 2021.

Isabelle Hart has been in post as our Volunteer Coordinator since 31st March 2023.

My role has evolved into supporting the rest of the staff team as required and we have funding available to make this a paid role once I have left supported accommodation.

Volunteer Support System

Monthly Peer Support group (1st Monday of each month)

In addition to this being a chance for volunteers to share ideas, information about the community, discuss dilemmas and seek support we have now introduced a guest speaker each month. So far Grahame Legg has presented on his work with LDHAS, Alex Campbell on his work with Changing Futures, Emma Pratt has informed volunteers about Red Rose Recovery and Sue Edwards has presented a talk from HealthWatch.

Monthly training (3rd week of each month)

We are in the process of setting up monthly, non-mandatory training sessions which volunteers will be invited to. Training will be delivered through various providers such as Lancashire Adult Learning and Positive Futures.

IT Support (last Wednesday of every month)

Red Rose have kindly allowed us space to hold an IT support drop-in where volunteers can come along for support with online Safeguarding training, completing their Contact Hours and Expenses Claim forms and anything else they may need help with.

Lastly, I would like to thank all our volunteer Trustees for their unwavering support, the current staff for the care and diligence they give to all and also to the most important people of all, our present and past volunteer befriender's for their unwavering loyalty to the organisation, the deep care they show to our Beneficiaries and the relationships they work hard to build. You are the bedrock of Let's BeFriends and we couldn't produce the outcomes we do without your willingness to help turn people's lives around. Thank you.

Finance Report (Julie Ridgway)

Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report to the Trustees of the Annual General Meeting 3pm on 7.6.23

LBF is a registered Charity with effect from 31st May 2022.

The finances are reported annually in the following ways:

1. The Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report to the Trustees of the Let's BeFriends on the accounts for Year 1 (1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023)
2. The Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Let's Be Friends on the accounts for Year 1 (1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023). This report is to follow.

Let's BeFriends Balance sheet as at 31 May 2022

Savings Account	34,612.29
Petty Cash	48.40
Balance of Total Funds	34,660.69

(Source: Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Let's Be Friends on the accounts ended 31 May 2022)

Let's BeFriends Funding Receipts for Year 1

Rough Sleepers Initiative Year 1	12,000.00
Population Health Investment Fund	15,004.00
Rough Sleepers Initiative Year 2	6,000.00
Balance of Total Funding Receipts	33,004.00

(Source: Savings Account Bank Statement)

Let's BeFriends Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2023

Savings Account	23,701.55
Current Account	25,607.94
Petty Cash	52.94
Balance of Total Funds	49,362.43

(Source: Saving and Current Account Bank Statement and Petty Cash book)

Julie Ridgway
5.6.23

AOB

Motion raised:

Julie Ridway has been acting as deputy treasurer since October 2022.

Caroline Jackson proposed that Julie Ridway take over from Dusty Thomas as Treasurer. This motion was seconded by Grahame Legg and will take immediate effect.

Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report to the Trustees of the Annual General Meeting 3pm on 7.6.23

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Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Let's Be Friends

Charity No. 1199161

I report on the accounts for the year

1st June 2022 – 31st May 2023

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Shweta Pankhadiwala

C/o Lancaster District CVS, The Cornerstone Sulyard Street Lancaster LA1 1PX
21st December 2023.

Let's Be Friends
1/06/2022 to 31/05/2023
Statement of Financial Activity Income & Expenditure Account

INCOME	June - 2022 to May - 2023			Sep - 2020 to May - 2022		
	Restricted Income £	Unrestricted Income £	Total Income £	Restricted Income £	Unrestricted Income £	Total Income £
Awards For All	49.29	0.00	49.29	10000.00	0.00	10000.00
Bay ICC	0.00	0.00	0.00	2981.00	0.00	2981.00
Eric Wright	0.00	0.00	0.00	1000.00	0.00	1000.00
Lottery Covid Response	0.00	0.00	0.00	10000.00	0.00	10000.00
Population Health Fund	15004.00	0.00	15004.00	10000.00	0.00	10000.00
Street Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00	2697.00	0.00	2697.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	20000.00	0.00	20000.00
Donation	0.00	320.00	320.00	0.00	271.79	271.79
Urgent Response Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	2000.00	0.00	2000.00
Rough Sleepers Initiative	18000.00	0.00	18000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bank Interest	0.00	154.88	154.88	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Income	33,053.29	474.88	33,528.17	58,678.00	271.79	58,949.79

EXPENDITURE	June - 2022 to May - 2023			Sep - 2020 to May - 2022		
	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £
Awards For All	3182.30	0.00	3182.30	6721.17	0.00	6721.17
Bay ICC	0.00	0.00	0.00	2177.50	0.00	2177.50
Eric Wright	794.08	0.00	794.08	181.30	0.00	181.30
Lottery Covid Response	210.00	0.00	210.00	9738.70	0.00	9738.70
Population Health Fund	9335.15	0.00	9335.15	0.00	0.00	0.00
Street Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00	2671.00	0.00	2671.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	1273.20	0.00	1273.20
Urgent Response Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	1526.23	0.00	1526.23
Rough Sleepers Initiative	5227.13	0.00	5227.13	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Expenditure	18,748.66	0.00	18,748.66	24,289.10	0.00	24,289.10
Surplus/(Loss)	14,304.63	474.88	14,779.51	34,388.90	271.79	34,660.69

Expenditure	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £
Advertising	0.00	0.00	0.00	188.96	0.00	188.96
Computer Expenses	70.00	0.00	70.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DBS checks	0.00	0.00	0.00	417.00	0.00	417.00
Equipment	0.00	0.00	0.00	802.89	0.00	802.89
Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00	816.80	0.00	816.80
Legal & Professional Fees	1177.43	0.00	1177.43	0.00	0.00	0.00
Phone and Internet	0.00	0.00	0.00	114.37	0.00	114.37
Postage and Stationery	78.67	0.00	78.67	140.82	0.00	140.82
Refreshment Purchases	3.29	0.00	3.29	21.55	0.00	21.55
Room Hire	0.00	0.00	0.00	56.00	0.00	56.00
Salaries	15405.15	0.00	15405.15	17292.00	0.00	17292.00
Street Aid Fund Transfer	0.00	0.00	0.00	2000.00	0.00	2000.00
Sundry Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	637.00	0.00	637.00
Training Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	280.00	0.00	280.00
Travel & Accommodation	1976.37	0.00	1976.37	86.86	0.00	86.86
Volunteer Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	1434.85	0.00	1434.85
Website	37.75	0.00	37.75	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	18,748.66	0.00	18,748.66	22,854.25	0.00	24,289.10

Let's Be Friends
Balance Sheet as at 31/5/2023

Restricted Fund	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Awards For All	145.82	3,278.83
Bay ICC	803.50	803.50
Eric Wright	24.62	818.70
Lottery Covid Response	51.30	261.30
Population Health Fund	15,668.85	10,000.00
Street Aid	26.00	26.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	18,726.80	18,726.80
Urgent Response Fund	473.77	473.77
Rough Sleepers Initiative	12,772.87	0.00
Unrestricted Fund	746.67	271.79
Total Funds	49,440.20	34,660.69

Current Account	25,607.94	0.00
Savings Account	23701.55	34,612.29
Petty Cash	130.71	48.40
Total Funds	49,440.20	34,660.69