

## Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report to the Trustees of the Annual General Meeting on 5.6.24

LBF is a registered Charity with effect 31 May 2022

The finances are reported annually with reference to the following policies and procedures:

1. Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report to the Trustees of the Let's Be Friends on the accounts
2. Let's BeFriends Financial Controls Policy
3. Let's BeFriends Management Committee Minutes and Decisions

### Let's BeFriends Balance sheet

#### Let's Be Friends Balance Sheet as at 31/5/2024

Restricted Fund	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Awards For All	0.00	145.82
Bay ICC	0.00	803.50
Eric Wright	0.00	24.62
Lottery Covid Response	0.00	51.30
Population Health Fund	15,668.85	15,668.85
Street Aid	0.00	26.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	0.00	18,726.80
Urgent Response Fund	0.00	473.77
Rough Sleepers Initiative	11,669.58	12,772.87
UKSPF	-10,498.30	0.00
Mental Health Transformation	4,996.00	0.00
<b>Unrestricted Fund</b>	<b>20,998.48</b>	<b>746.67</b>
General Fund	1,082.09	0.00
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>43,916.70</b>	<b>49,440.20</b>
Current Account	19,390.55	25,607.94
Savings Account	24516.44	23,701.55
Petty Cash	9.71	130.71
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>43,916.70</b>	<b>49,440.20</b>

(Source: Attached Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Let's Be Friends Charity No. 1199161 on the accounts for the year 1st June 2023 to 31st May 2024).

Steve Hurst,  
Treasurer  
Dated 04.6.24

# Annual General Meeting Report

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to Let's BeFriends' second official Annual General Meeting.

It is a pleasure to introduce and welcome Rebekah Sutcliffe and Claire Richardson - the newest members of the staff team.

This year we have said goodbye to one of our trustees Nina Banks who was not only a member of the Management Committee, but also volunteered as a befriender: we are very grateful to Nina for all her contributions and would like to thank her for her commitment to LBF. We would also like to thank Julie Ridgway for her work as Treasurer for the past 12 months in keeping accounts up to date and processing and transferring staff wages and volunteer expenses.

We have welcomed Stephen Hurst who became a Trustee on the 12th of April 2024. Stephen comes from a recovery background and now teaches at Lancaster and Morecambe college and we are very grateful to him for volunteering to take on the role of Treasurer.

At the LDCVS Volunteer Achievement Awards on 7 June 2023 Hannah was presented with the accolade of "Volunteer of the Year" in a glittering ceremony at the iconic Midland Hotel in Morecambe. Dusty was also nominated in the "Trustee of the Year" category. Let's BeFriends volunteers were all recognized in the "Team of the Year" category.

## **Staff Team**

In 2023 Tracey Benson and Rebekah Sutcliffe joined the staff team as joint Volunteer Coordinators (on 23 August and 20th September respectively), each undertaking 16 hour contracts. We are very grateful for the 6 months of work completed by Tracey. Her resignation due to personal reasons gave the opportunity for Rebekah to take on a 30-hour contract commencing 4th March 2024.

Rebekah provides support to all volunteers in active befriending relationships providing guidance on referrals and signposting and responding to safeguarding issues as they arise. Behind the scenes she navigates the complex housing situations many of our beneficiaries are facing. She also provides practical and emotional support to the volunteers themselves to ensure they are in the right place to have an active befriending relationship with our vulnerable beneficiaries.

Claire Richardson joined us as Network Coordinator on 9th October 2023 and has been working 16 hours per week recruiting new volunteers by forging excellent connections with local treatment services, supported housing projects and Littleddale Rehab, delivering regular presentations at these venues in addition to attending health fairs and job fairs at Lancaster and Morecambe job centres.

Claire has also drawn volunteers into the organisation through her natural connection with the local recovery community due to her own lived experience and the journey she has shared with this pool of potentially valuable volunteers.

Claire and Rebekah have successfully supported our volunteers through DBS application, Safeguarding training, Induction training, and accessing other relevant training.

Louise Seacy has been Project Coordinator since the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021. In recent months, due to the expansion of the organisation, the requirements of the role have increased to the point that they can no longer routinely be accomplished within 16 hours per week. The board agreed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2024 to allow Louise to continue working the toil necessary to complete tasks for 6 months when the situation will be reviewed.

Due to increasing numbers of complex referrals waiting to be matched whilst we train new befrienders, Louise will collaborate with Dusty on a funding bid to secure paid hours to recruit an unmatched beneficiary coordinator, but in the interim, on 28th May 2024 Hannah kindly agreed to donate 6-hours of her time each week to support unmatched beneficiaries.

We also have a pressing need to recruit admin personnel and are grateful to the two volunteers who support befrienders through mandatory safeguarding training. Other forms of volunteering which we greatly value include translators and speakers in languages such as Polish, Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Ukrainian and Russian and a van driver.

Dusty has continued line managing all staff throughout the year. He has co-written all funding bids with Louise. The on-call availability Dusty provides in the evenings, at weekends, on bank holidays and most especially appreciated over the Christmas and new year period have provided a valuable system to deal with out-of-hours support and safeguarding issues. All of this time is donated voluntarily.

To ease the pressure on Let's Befriends Louise has also had conversations with other agencies (Stanley's, Lancaster City Council and Calico) about how to improve the process for newly referred people in housing need and updated our Referral Form to ensure referrers have completed their Duty to Refer obligations, making the council's homelessness team aware of beneficiaries requiring their support.

### **Website, Social Media and Promotional Material**

Thanks to funding from the Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission and the design of Phil Sykes the LBF website [www.lets\\_be\\_friends.org.uk](http://www.lets_be_friends.org.uk) provides a platform for promotion, links to referral and application forms and publication of upcoming job opportunities.

The volunteer and staff WhatsApp groups have provided valuable flow in communication between staff and volunteers. Claire also regularly updates our Facebook page.

Louise designed our leaflet and has liaised with a local printer to ensure that promotional T-Shirts and pens have been designed, produced and distributed.

Stephen Hurst's students at Lancaster & Morecambe college have very kindly offered to design and produce a LBF banner.

Claire will be setting up an in-person meeting with Steve at CVS with regards to adding funder's logos to our Twitter and Facebook accounts.

### **Volunteer Recruitment**

Claire has delivered many recruitment presentations this year including:

- Lancaster & Morecambe job fairs
- Walter Lyon House
- Littledale Therapeutic Community Rehab

- Oaktree House
- Health festivals

Recruitment presentations are planned to be delivered at:

- Social Ease Presentation, Lancaster
- CVS volunteer Fair this Friday
- Lancaster Health Festival in July
- Social Justice Group at Lancaster Methodist Church
- Lancaster and Morecambe College's 200th birthday / Community Open Day

### **Volunteer Training**

Due to the significant increase in the number of volunteers recruited, our Induction Training has been increased to a monthly rather than quarterly event - the next being on Wednesday 12th June. Rebekah and Claire now jointly deliver this training.

Mandatory Mental Health & Suicide Awareness training was last delivered by Lancashire Adult Learning on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The next training will be delivered by Positive Futures on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July and Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August.

Louise has implemented a rolling programme of non-mandatory training delivered via partner organisations (i.e. Lancashire Adult Learning and The Hep C Trust) on the 3rd week of each month and has asked Rebekah to set up and deliver monthly in-person Boundaries training on the 4th week of the month.

### **Staff Training**

Staff have benefited from training provided by external agencies such as LDCVS, Shelter, Lancashire Adult Learning and the National Homelessness Advice Service, for example: Claire has attended Mental Health Awareness and Equality & Diversity training, Louise has attended Supporting Autism and Neuro Inclusion in the Workplace and Writing Funding Bids training whilst Rebekah has completed Introduction to Housing Status and Understanding Homelessness and Housing courses and will attend designated Safeguarding Lead training on the 12th July.

### **Volunteer Support System**

Monthly Peer Support groups continue to be held on the 1st Monday of the month in Cornerstone. Here volunteers can share ideas and information about the community with one another, discuss dilemmas and seek support. Louise introduced the idea of regular guest speakers and over the past 12 months these have included Red Rose Recovery, Food Futures, Healthwatch, The Birchall Trust, Green Rose, Social Ease and Out in the Bay. There will be a speaker from the Adullam Programme next month and there are plans to invite the Samaritans, Positive Futures and Inspire.

This week was National Volunteers Week, so on Monday's Peer Support we provided a buffet and handed out volunteer certificates at the Cornerstone. This was well attended by volunteers, staff and trustees alike. Thanks to Claire and Jess for doing the buffet and Rebekah for organising the quiz.

Lancaster Inspire have offered a room to be used for Introduction meetings as have several places in Morecambe and Heysham. We would also like to thank Green Rose for letting us hold Peer Support and Christmas Party there.

Wellbeing sessions are held on the 2nd week of each month. Initially we had a holistic therapist donating Swedish massage to reward our volunteers for their contributions; these sessions were extremely popular but sadly came to an end when the practitioner no longer had capacity to deliver them. We have been grateful to the council's Jill Brayshaw who offered chair-based mindfulness / yoga to our volunteers from November 2023 through to May, and are now welcoming offers from new providers who can deliver these monthly sessions.

There has been a shift from volunteers completing their own contact sheets to being supported with these (and with expenses claims) by Rebekah, so the final "IT drop in" (which used to be held on the last Wednesday of the month) ran in April, and support to complete the online Safeguarding training will instead be arranged on an as and when basis for any volunteers who need assistance.

## **Outcomes**

We currently have 12 active befriending relationships, 9 beneficiaries due to be matched and a further 2 referrals on pause (i.e. as the person on the waiting list may move out of the area).

We have 18 fully trained volunteers, a further 18 in training and 3 who are on pause due to personal reasons. Not all of our volunteers wish to / are able to become befrienders - some would like to donate their time in other ways (i.e. offering only admin support) and

others are unable to be matched for other reasons (i.e. not being able to provide reinvent documents for DBS due to refugee status).

We have worked with Lancaster and Morecambe Council to access emergency accommodation for beneficiaries in urgent need. For some this has brought an end to their time street sleeping. Some fleeing domestic violence have been supported to access refuge. Referral Pathways meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month with Calico (the Council's Accommodation Finding/Floating Support service) help to make this possible.

We have supported beneficiaries into supported housing projects, social housing and independent living. Our volunteers have helped them to settle in these homes. Our volunteers and staff act as advocates communicating with landlords and letting agencies. We still haven't had any failed tenancies.

We have helped to alleviate poverty by accessing funding through Household Support Fund and Street Aid and food parcel referrals. Our beneficiaries are referred to Citizens Advice for financial advice and debt management when appropriate and volunteers have supported beneficiaries with budget planning.

Volunteers have helped beneficiaries with life skills - for example signposting through to 'Cooking on a Budget' with the Abdulam Team

As some of our beneficiaries experience substance misuse issues it has been crucial to work closely with Inspire, Red Rose and The Well to navigate recovery. We thank these services for their outstanding communication and teamwork with us. In some instances a volunteer has been able to support a beneficiary through their journey through detox, rehab, aftercare and reintegration into the community.

## **Challenges**

We are currently seeing an increase in Section 21's (no-fault evictions) - some having reached court enforcement for eviction dates and several on their way to this.

The shortage of social housing, private rents and most recently beds in supported housing mean that moving on progress can be extremely frustrating. The work of staff and volunteers is therefore often in managing expectations and being an ear for beneficiaries to offload to.

Working with mental health services has proved challenging. Despite our attempts we have failed to build effective working relationships with the START Team, Talking Therapies and Care Coordinators due to waiting times and failure in communication and no continuity of care. Most disappointingly we have been unable to access the mental



health Peer Support workers with Red Rose due Care Coordinators gatekeeping. This has meant some of our beneficiaries are being denied NHS and community mental health support. We thank Positive Futures for being a hub open to all - the crisis evening cafe has been a haven for some of our beneficiaries and volunteers.

One of the biggest challenges is that even when a befriender has completed their mandatory training (i.e. half day Induction / Safeguarding / Shadowing / Mental Health and Suicide Alertness training) in some cases we are unable to match them with a beneficiary due to lengthy DBS waiting times - in some cases this has caused a delay of up to 3 months! We are looking into options to obtain cheaper DBS checks, hopefully with a faster turn around.

## **Funding**

Thanks to UKSPF for 2 years funding and The Mental Health Transformation Fund

**Let's Be Friends**  
**1/06/2023 to 31/05/2024**  
**Statement of Financial Activity Income & Expenditure Account**

INCOME	June - 2023 to May - 2024			June - 2022 to May - 2023		
	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Awards For All	0.00	0.00	0.00	49.29	0.00	49.29
Bay ICC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Eric Wright	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lottery Covid Response	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Population Health Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	15004.00	0.00	15004.00
Street Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Donation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	320.00	320.00
Urgent Response Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rough Sleepers Initiative	0.00	0.00	0.00	18000.00	0.00	18000.00
Bank Interest	0.00	734.89	734.89	0.00	154.88	154.88
General Fund	0.00	854.45	854.45	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mental Health Transforma	4996.00	0.00	4996.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
UKSPF	36940.78	0.00	36940.78	0.00	0.00	0.00
Unrestricted Fund	0.00	20251.81	20251.81	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>41,936.78</b>	<b>21,841.15</b>	<b>63,777.93</b>	<b>33,053.29</b>	<b>474.88</b>	<b>33,528.17</b>

## EXPENDITURE

June - 2023 to May - 2024

June - 2022 to May - 2023

	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £
Awards For All	145.82	0.00	145.82	3182.30	0.00	3182.30
Bay ICC	803.50	0.00	803.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
Eric Wright	24.62	0.00	24.62	794.08	0.00	794.08
Lottery Covid Response	51.30	0.00	51.30	210.00	0.00	210.00
Population Health Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	9335.15	0.00	9335.15
Street Aid	26.00	0.00	26.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	18726.80	0.00	18726.80	0.00	0.00	0.00
Urgent Response Fund	473.77	0.00	473.77	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rough Sleepers Initiative	1103.29	0.00	1103.29	5227.13	0.00	5227.13
UKSPF	47439.08	0.00	47439.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
General Fund	0.00	507.25	507.25	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>68,794.18</b>	<b>507.25</b>	<b>69,301.43</b>	<b>18,748.66</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>18,748.66</b>
<b>Surplus/(Loss)</b>	<b>-26,857.40</b>	<b>21,333.90</b>	<b>-5,523.50</b>	<b>14,304.63</b>	<b>474.88</b>	<b>14,779.51</b>

Expenditure	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £
Accounting Software su	0.00	60.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Audit Fees	250.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Computer Expenses	17.18	0.00	17.18	70.00	0.00	70.00
DBS checks	665.00	0.00	665.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Equipment	468.99	0.00	468.99	0.00	0.00	0.00
Insurance	436.36	0.00	436.36	0.00	0.00	0.00
Legal & Professional Fe	0.00	0.00	0.00	1177.43	0.00	1177.43
Phone and Internet	183.00	6.00	189.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Postage and Stationery	696.62	0.00	696.62	78.67	0.00	78.67
Promotional Material	893.40	0.00	893.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
Refreshment Purchases	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.29	0.00	3.29
Repairs & Maintenance	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Room Hire	742.50	0.00	742.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
Salaries	40979.03	91.25	41070.28	15405.15	0.00	15405.15
Training Expenses	214.50	0.00	214.50	0.00	0.00	0.00
Travel & Accommodati	2735.83	0.00	2735.83	1976.37	0.00	1976.37
Volunteer Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Website	159.96	0.00	159.96	37.75	0.00	37.75
Other Cost	0.00	350.00	350.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,542.37</b>	<b>507.25</b>	<b>49,049.62</b>	<b>18,748.66</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>18,748.66</b>

**Let's Be Friends**  
**Balance Sheet as at 31/5/2024**

<b>Restricted Fund</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
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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 2023 – 31st May 2024

## **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  
6th February 2025.