

The 3rd Annual General Meeting of Let's BeFriends



Wednesday 11th June 2025, 1pm-2pm

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

In attendance: Stephen Hurst, Dusty Thomas, Caroline Jackson, Jane Attfield, Rebekah Sutcliffe, Claire Richardson, Sam Hannon, Hannah Lodge, Louise Seacy, Andrew Mcmenamin, Ashkan Rezaee, Robert McCaffery

Apologies: Agnes Novakovska, Stacey Sweeting, Joanna Sliwicka

Agenda

Chair's Report

Finance Report

AOB

Chair's Report

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome. I'm delighted to open this year's Let's beFriends Annual General Meeting Chair's report and to have the opportunity to reflect on the past year with you all. Thank you for taking the time to be here — whether you're a trustee, consultant, volunteer, partner, or supporter, your presence and ongoing commitment to our work means a great deal.

As Chair, I want to take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to the incredible people who make our work possible. This past year has once again shown how vital our charity is to those experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness or recently rehoused after a period of homelessness. It's the dedication of everyone involved with Let's BeFriends that enables us to meet their needs with compassion, dignity, and determination.

To our consultants — thank you for the professionalism, insight, and heart you bring to your work. As self-employed specialists, you bring not only expertise but also a deep understanding

of the complex challenges facing those who access the service. Your flexibility and commitment allow us to deliver life-changing support in a way that is responsive, respectful, and rooted in real compassion. Your impact is significant and truly valued.

To our trustees — I'm grateful for your steady guidance and thoughtful leadership. The time, experience, and oversight you provide ensures that we remain accountable and focused, always acting in the best interests of the people we serve. Thank you for your support, challenge, and vision in helping steer the charity through another important year.

And to our volunteers — you are at the heart of the Let's BeFriends community. Whether offering a warm welcome, lending a hand with practical support, or simply being there to listen, your presence brings humanity and hope to those we support. Thank you for giving so generously your time and energy. Your contribution makes a profound difference in people's lives.

Before I go any further, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the sad loss of our long-standing trustee, Grahame Legg, who passed away earlier this year. Grahame was with the charity from day one and played an instrumental role in shaping who we are today. Beyond his strategic input and leadership, Grahame was someone who always made time to support others. Often offering guidance, encouragement, and genuine care to both colleagues and those we serve. His commitment, wisdom, and compassion were at the heart of our work, and his presence will be deeply missed. We are incredibly grateful for everything Grahame gave to Let's BeFriends. His legacy lives on in the work we continue to do.

Over the past year, the organisation has navigated periods of challenge, change, and achieved meaningful growth, all the while continuing to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Within this report I will attempt to focus on the mentioned topics of challenge, change and growth to give an overview of the year and a vision of the year ahead.

In relation to changes to the Management Committee, the board has welcomed three new members this year: Agnes Novakovska has joined the board, and we thank her for the valuable contributions. Joanna Sliwicka has also joined as a trustee, bringing fresh insight and energy to the team. Jane Attfield has stepped into the important role of Treasurer after a short spell as Administrator. We are grateful to them all for their ongoing commitment and expertise.

In addition, Hannah Lodge has taken on the role of Unmatched Beneficiary Coordinator, and Sam Hannon has joined us as our new Administrator. Both have already made a positive impact in their respective roles. Each of these individuals brings unique strengths and experience, and we're delighted to have them as part of the team.

We're also pleased to note that some consultants have increased their hours this year; this is a reflection of both the growing needs of our work and their ongoing commitment to it. We're grateful to all of the consultants' continued hard work, flexibility, and professionalism, which

have made a real difference during a demanding period that has seen an increase in demand for a service we provide.

Also concerning change, the organisation is currently reviewing its systems, structures, and processes to ensure full compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Just as importantly, we are committed to making sure that everyone working with us, including our consultants and volunteers feel supported and valued. Their welfare is at the heart of what we do, and these reviews are a key part of strengthening our foundation for the future.

As the year has passed we have encountered a number of significant challenges that have tested our resilience and adaptability. This includes:

Recruiting male volunteers. This is an area where greater balance would strengthen our team and help us better reflect the diverse needs of those we support. We recognise the value that male volunteers can bring, and we continue to address this by actively networking, promoting the work we do, and finding new ways to make volunteer roles more visible, welcoming, and appealing to a wider range of people.

Securing sustainable funding continues to be a significant challenge, particularly in light of ongoing economic pressures and wider national and regional uncertainties. These external factors have impacted the availability and competitiveness of funding opportunities. In response, we are placing greater emphasis on identifying and submitting strong funding bids, as well as exploring new income streams to support the continuation and development of our services.

We have also seen a noticeably low number of female referrals this year, which remains a concern. It's important to us that our services are accessible and welcoming to all who need them, and we are actively exploring the reasons behind this trend. Moving forward, we aim to strengthen our outreach efforts and work more closely with partner organisations to ensure women feel safe, informed, and encouraged to access the support we offer.

We continue to face the familiar delays in DBS processing, which can slow down the onboarding of new volunteers. However, we are committed to keeping prospective volunteers engaged and informed during this waiting period via regular contact and training, ensuring they feel connected and prepared to step into their roles as soon as clearance is received.

In parallel with the challenges we have seen substantial meaningful growth that strengthens our ability to support those who rely on us. We currently have 44 volunteers either matched or in training and ready to be matched. Over the year volunteer intake has continued to grow. In their respective roles both Claire and Rebekah's tireless and efficient effort to recruit, successfully support our volunteers through DBS application, Safeguarding training, Induction and overseeing shadowing.

It is evident that our partnership working has both grown and strengthened over the past year. The charity has continued to build a solid reputation rooted in professionalism, passion, and hard work. These qualities have helped us develop meaningful relationships with a wide range of organisations and stakeholders. We have worked with numerous statutory, regulatory and third sector services, which includes but is not limited to: Walter Lyon House, Little Dale Hall, Oaktree House, Social Ease, Lancaster and Morecambe College, CVS, Calico, Citizens Advice north Lancashire, Lancaster Bay Health Festival, Lancaster and Morecambe library, Red Rose Recovery, Global Link, RAIS, EggCup, Green Rose, Addullam, The Olive Branch, Lancaster City Council's Homeless Team, Stanley's Community Centre, Lancaster District CVS, The new Well work, Acorn Recovery, Safenet, Bay and Lancaster ICC's and Beyond radio.

Monthly Peer Support groups continue to take place on the 1st Monday of the month in The Cornerstone accompanied by a guest speaker invited to each of these sessions which has proved popular and adds great value to the service. We are very grateful to Claire Niebieski, a holistic practitioner who offers Wellbeing sessions to our volunteers on the second week of the month.

We require all our befrienders to complete Mental Health & Suicide Awareness training and this is delivered in partnership with Positive Futures. We support volunteers to gain qualifications, increasing social capital and enhancing their knowledge by continuing to offer a variety of vocational training sessions on the third week of the month, delivered by Lancashire Adult Learning, The Hep C Trust and later this month by Inspire's Community Educator.

Our Project Coordinator Louise has continued to work tirelessly, playing a key role in linking together our systems, structures, and processes. Her dedication, passion, and commitment to maintaining strong, effective relationships — both internally and externally, have been vital to the smooth running and continued progress of the organisation.

We have received the majority of our funding via UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund), which we have been granted a further year's extension, (despite stiff competition) we have exceeded our targets, though this will not cover our full costs. We were granted a small pot of £5000 from the Mental Health Transformational Fund due to our ongoing work in helping people to access Mental Health services. We were fortunate enough to receive an Awards for All pot, hence the creation of two new roles i.e. Unmatched beneficiary coordinator and Administrator. Also the funds enabled us to increase a consultant's hours.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on building a stronger, more resilient organisation — one that continues to adapt, grow, and respond to the needs of those we serve. We aim to strengthen our partnerships, increase access to our services, and ensure our internal systems continue to support the people who power this work.

With the passion and dedication of our team, trustees, consultants, and volunteers, I'm confident that we're well-placed to meet the challenges and opportunities the coming year will bring. Thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission. As without it we simply

couldn't facilitate the positive change that so many people — those who need it most — rely on. Whether through time, expertise, or partnership, every contribution helps us continue making a real and lasting difference in people's lives.

Stephen Hurst

Let's BeFriends- Chair

Finance Report

Cut and Paste Jane's report once finalised

AOB

Motion raised:

Louise Seacy proposed that Jane Attfield formally take over from Stephen Hurst as Treasurer as of 11 April 2025: this motion was seconded by Caroline Jackson and voted for unanimously by a quorum of trustees.

Questions asked:

It was stated after the Chair's report was read that there has recently been an increase in female referrals due Safenet reaching out to see if we could assist those which they are supporting.

Andrew asked why there was a backlog on getting DBS checks for volunteers - it was explained that as this is an outsourced service and due the length of the process (the longest stage being that of the police checks) and the fact that the local area has two large Universities each submitting a high volume of applications there is consequently a lengthy turn-around. However, we continue to work on getting volunteers to sign up for the update service once their DBS comes through to help to overcome the time and cost implications when the time comes to renew DBS checks.

Caroline asked if there was anything which would help in the recruitment of male volunteers - Claire suggested that having male volunteers attending the various male support groups would offer current befrienders the chance to say what they get from volunteering and this may aid recruitment.

Louise mentioned that due to Let's BeFriends having recruited people with a wide range of heritage and skills we now have a bank of volunteers who are able to act as interpreters.

Andrew asked about the restructuring of the current policies and procedures and why this was happening. It was explained that this is being done as a matter of due diligence and making sure the organisation is operating in compliance with all laws and regulations.

Hannah asked whether the Management Committee would be open to considering a move towards an employment model for staff - it was explained that due to limited pots of funding we currently have available and the difficulty in securing future grants in the current financial climate it is not possible to change the model at this moment in time.

Let's BeFriends Treasurer Report 2025

Accounting period 1st June 2024 - 31st May 2025

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 Financial Controls Policy
2. Let's BeFriends Management Committee Minutes and Decisions

The starting balance for this year was £43,916.70 with our end balance coming in at £59,485.03.

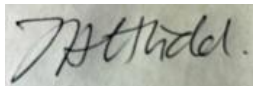
Our main income for this year has come from Awards for All which has enabled us to recruit much needed admin support along with additional hours for volunteer recruitment and training. We also remain grateful to UKSPF for continued support covering our core activities this year.

Our expenditure has remained stable with a few rises in costs for our room hire due to additional befriender induction sessions run this year.

Our budget for the following year remains similar to this year though this will be dependent on forthcoming funding applications and will need to be monitored with forward projections.

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 2024 to 31st May 2025.

Jane Attfield

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Attfield', on a light-colored background.

Treasurer
14th November 2025

Let's Be Friends
1/06/2024 to 31/05/2025
Statement of Financial Activity Income & Expenditure Account

INCOME	June - 2024 to May - 2025			June - 2023 to May - 2024		
	Restricted Income	Unrestricted Income	Total Income	Restricted Income	Unrestricted Income	Total Income
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Awards For All	20000.00	0.00	20000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bank Interest	0.00	842.30	842.30	0.00	734.89	734.89
General Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	854.45	854.45
Mental Health Transformation	21.00	0.00	21.00	4996.00	0.00	4996.00
UKSPF	54840.91	0.00	54840.91	36940.78	0.00	36940.78
Unrestricted Fund	0.00	210.93	210.93	0.00	20251.81	20251.81
Total Income	74,861.91	1,053.23	75,915.14	41,936.78	21,841.15	63,777.93

EXPENDITURE	June - 2024 to May - 2025			June - 2023 to May - 2024		
	Restricted Expenditure	Unrestricted Expenditure	Total Expenditure	Restricted Expenditure	Unrestricted Expenditure	Total Expenditure
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Awards For All	6479.48	0.00	6479.48	145.82	0.00	145.82
Bay ICC	0.00	0.00	0.00	803.50	0.00	803.50
Eric Wright	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.62	0.00	24.62
Lottery Covid response	0.00	0.00	0.00	51.30	0.00	51.30
Street Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00	26.00	0.00	26.00
LCC Self Isolation Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	18726.80	0.00	18726.80
Urgent Response Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	473.77	0.00	473.77
Rough Sleepers Initiative	0.00	0.00	0.00	1103.29	0.00	1103.29
UKSPF	49807.84	0.00	49807.84	47439.08	0.00	47439.08
General Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	507.25	507.25
Mental Health Transformation	3842.26	0.00	3842.26	0.00	0.00	0.00
Unrestricted Fund	0.00	217.23	217.23	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Expenditure	60,129.58	217.23	60,346.81	68,794.18	507.25	69,301.43
Surplus/(Loss)	14,732.33	836.00	15,568.33	-26,857.40	21,333.90	-5,523.50

Expenditure	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £	Restricted Expenditure £	Unrestricted Expenditure £	Total Expenditure £
Accounting Software subscription	60.00	0.00	60.00	0.00	60.00	60.00
Audit Fees	300.00	0.00	300.00	250.00	0.00	250.00
Computer Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	17.18	0.00	17.18
DBS checks	590.00	0.00	590.00	665.00	0.00	665.00
Equipment	0.00	0.00	0.00	468.99	0.00	468.99
Insurance	477.47	0.00	477.47	436.36	0.00	436.36
Purchase of equipment	34.99	0.00	34.99	0	0	0.00
Phone and Internet	300.00	0.00	300.00	183.00	6.00	189.00
Printing and Stationery	566.10	0.00	566.10	696.62	0.00	696.62
Promotional Material	0.00	0.00	0.00	893.40	0.00	893.40
Publicity	24.00	0.00	24.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Room Hire	1165.00	0.00	1165.00	742.50	0.00	742.50
Salaries	52714.11	0.00	52714.11	40979.03	91.25	41070.28
Training Expenses	265.95	0.00	265.95	214.50	0.00	214.50
Travel & Accommodation	3400.74	0.00	3400.74	2735.83	0.00	2735.83
Website	231.22	0.00	231.22	159.96	0.00	159.96
Other Cost	0.00	217.23	217.23	0.00	350.00	350.00
Total	60,129.58	217.23	60,346.81	48,542.37	507.25	49,049.62

Let's Be Friends
Balance Sheet as at 31/5/2025

Restricted Fund	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Awards For All	13,520.52	0.00
Population Health Fund	15,668.85	15,668.85
Rough Sleepers Initiative	11,669.58	11,669.58
UKSPF	-5,465.23	-10,498.30
Mental Health Transformation	1,174.74	4,996.00
Unrestricted Fund	21,834.48	20,998.48
General Fund	1,082.09	1,082.09
Total Funds	59,485.03	43,916.70
Account	34,116.58	19,390.55
Savings Account	25358.74	24,516.44
Petty Cash	9.71	9.71
Total Funds	59,485.03	43,916.70

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 2024 – 31st May 2025

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
12th November 2025.