

Annual Report

HELPING YOU FIND YOUR WAY



Lighthouse Counselling Trust
Annual Report 2023-24

Lighthouse
COUNSELLING

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Chair's Introduction

"It is a great privilege to present Lighthouse Counselling Trust's first report as an independent charity.

Kate, our CEO, and I set up what has become Lighthouse 6 years ago in response to the needs we saw in our local community, and beyond, for affordable high-quality counselling. Those needs have only grown since then.

Lighthouse exists to support people of all faiths and none.

All of our team of counsellors are Christians who work with Lighthouse, in (most) cases alongside their commercial activities because they believe in Lighthouse's mission. We are very grateful for them and their expertise. And to our central team who do a great job behind the scenes.



In the past year we delivered 1161 counselling sessions. Most of these were individual clients seeking our assistance. Alongside this core work, we focus on particular groups where there are needs which counselling can help address.

There is more detail in our report, but I am particularly pleased to highlight two examples:

- Our work with "rough sleepers".* This work has been carried out with the support of Gravesham Council and in partnership with the Sanctuary charity in Gravesend. People end up without permanent accommodation for many reasons. Often their prior experiences have left them with significant mental health challenges. Our counsellors have worked hard to build trust with these clients and we have seen very positive results from the support we have provided.
- Our Wellbeing Sessions (in effect a mental health "MOT"). This is a single session which allows individuals space to process issues with the support of a trained counsellor. In some cases, these clients go on to formal counselling, in others one session is sufficient. These sessions have been valuable in a range of situations including for staff at a charity where a number of the team were facing work pressures and health sector staff facing both work pressures and the lingering consequences of Covid. We are going to roll this out to other groups following a very positive reception.

* In this context, "rough sleepers" refers primarily to individuals in temporary accommodation.

One concerning trend we have seen over the past year is a rising number of individuals seeking assistance with the cost of counselling as a result of cost-of-living pressures. Part of our mission is to supply affordable counselling to help such individuals. We do this through surplus funds we generate, together with donations. We are particularly grateful to Eastgate Church for their generous support in the past year. Reflecting the need we are seeing we have increased the affordable counselling support that Lighthouse itself funds for the coming year.

Finally, we continue to be an active participant in the counselling “world”. We use regular sessions to inform and update the team, have helped sponsor additional training for team members and supported individuals training to become counsellors. We benefit from and are an active participant in discussions with other counselling services.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to Lighthouse’s journey. We are excited for what the future holds. If you would like to learn more about Lighthouse or wish to discuss how we can work together to support the wellbeing of people in North Kent and beyond, do get in touch.”

Donna King

Chair of Trustees

Lighthouse Counselling Trust’s objectives are to:

- Promote and protect the emotional wellbeing of people in our local community (and beyond) by providing affordable and accessible counselling, other mental health therapies and education. Such support is available to all regardless of faith, gender or race.
- Advance training and support for counselling and developing counselling resources for the public benefit.

Message from Our CEO

“This year has been a significant and special year for Lighthouse Counselling. While we have been operating as a counselling service for a number of years, in 2023 a dream came to fruition as our first year as a Registered Charity.

Our charitable status facilitates our raising funding so we can provide accessible and affordable counselling for those who need it. As a charity we are accountable to the Charity Commission so our clients and stakeholders can be confident we are administered correctly and funds are used for the purpose for which they are intended.

I began the year by identifying two areas of focus to further develop our mission to promote and protect emotional wellbeing. The first was to refine the systems and controls we need to ensure our counselling clients get the best service. I would like to pay a special tribute to Kim Baker, Christine Morris and David Joslin for all their work in setting up new financial, administrative and IT systems to make sure we are working as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The second focus was to develop our counselling team, through recruitment and training, to help us best meet the needs of our clients. This year we added 4 new counsellors to our team and provided training for the whole team on the topics of ADHD in the counselling room, creative counselling techniques, spiritual abuse, working with spirituality and religion, endings in counselling, working with anxiety and self-harm, and safeguarding. Individual counsellors have trained in couples counselling and single session therapy. Growing our wonderful team of counsellors in this way means that we can offer our clients a greater range of counselling approaches and specialisms, and ensure our counselling continues to be delivered in accordance with best practice.

Wellbeing has become a bit of a buzz word in recent years, but I believe this is a positive reflection of a cultural shift towards recognising the importance of looking after others, and ourselves. We are proud to be part of promoting and supporting wellbeing in our local community.”

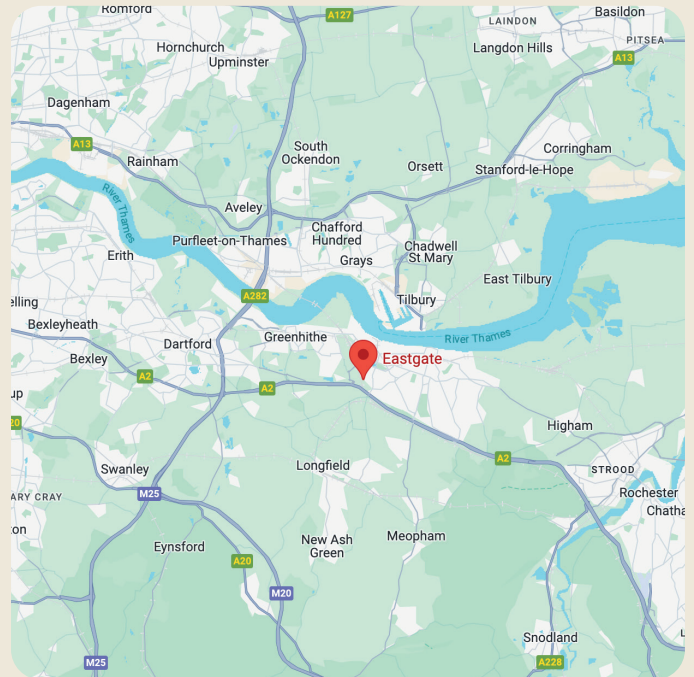


Kate Mendez
CEO

Our Working Environment

We are based in Ebbsfleet Garden City, a new development on the outskirts of Gravesend bordering the borough of Gravesham. Alongside the existing communities of Gravesham, we are fortunate to be located right in the centre of the Ebbsfleet development. Over time this will create 15,000 new homes and bring many new people into the area.

At Lighthouse we intend to be an active part of the developing communities in Ebbsfleet. We have connected with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, with whom we have a shared vision to prioritise and promote wellbeing in Ebbsfleet. They have been including our leaflets in their welcome packs for new residents.



Gravesham contains 13 of the most deprived areas in Kent. It has higher rates of people needing treatment for common mental health illnesses than all other Kent districts apart from Thanet, yet the percentage of people accessing primary care NHS counselling is the lowest in Kent.* People in Gravesham need improved access to mental health support and Lighthouse Counselling Trust has a role in making that happen.

In addition to specific issues in North Kent, we also see wider trends across the country being reflected in the local community:

- People reporting that they face mental health challenges.
- Individuals and couples facing relationship issues.
- Those self-diagnosing with mental health conditions.
- Stress arising from work and financial pressures.
- People struggling to pay for counselling as a result of cost of living pressures.
- An increase in self-referrals for counselling. The 'wellness' movement/culture has helped people see the importance of self-care and good mental health support.

* Source: Mental Health Needs Assessment for Adults in Kent: Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley CCG.

Our Work

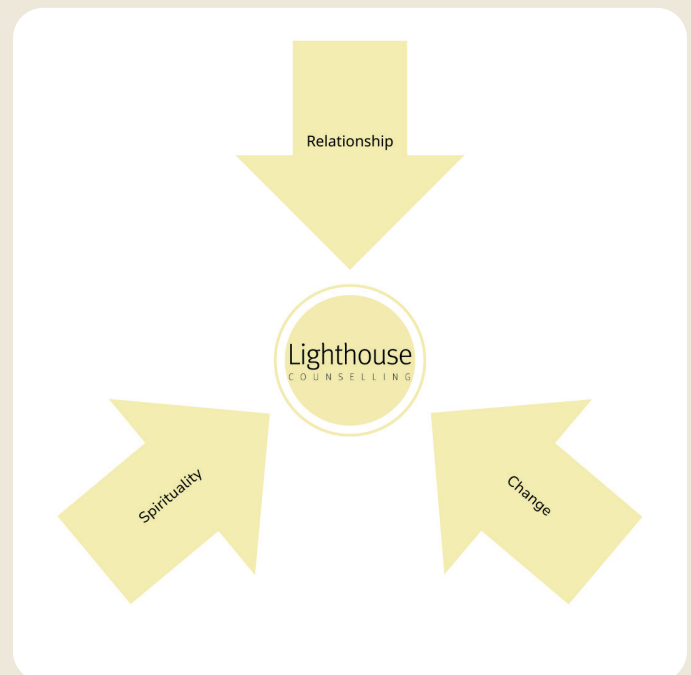
Themes

All clients are encouraged to give us feedback when their counselling finishes. We regularly review feedback to learn from and reflect on what clients place value on. Three main themes emerge; change, relationship and recognition of their spirituality.

1. Change

One of the big themes that underpins counselling is change. We are excited about counselling because we can see lives changed in extraordinary ways. In their very first meeting with us, a question we ask every client is what changes they would like to see in their lives as a result of counselling.

We then have the privilege of accompanying and supporting people while they make positive changes in their lives. When they finish their counselling, each person is invited to reflect on what has changed for them. Here are some of the changes and benefits of counselling that our clients have told us about this year:



“Completely helped change my mindset and outlook of my life for the better and learned so many new things that I carry with me every day to continue to move forward and be happy.”

“I feel more stable and robust. I am not beating myself up in reaction to stress and I have shed some unhelpful thought habits. I have a healthier perspective on my life and feel better prepared for the next stage.”

“Counselling has made me much kinder towards myself.”

“Counselling has made a huge difference in my life. I can process things now and am less reactional.”

2. Relationship

Another theme that comes up in client feedback is the importance of the relationship they develop with their counsellor. We aim to offer each client a safe and non-judgmental space and it is through the therapeutic relationship that the counsellor develops with the client that healing begins. Here is what some of our clients have told us about the relationship they formed with their counsellor:

“My counsellor took time to build a safe relationship and asked the challenging questions needed. I can’t thank her enough for her support and guidance.”

“I felt heard and understood through every session with my counsellor. She gave me space to share as I needed to and challenged me with helpful questions when appropriate. I had so many little revelations throughout the year I saw her. She helped me come out of a dark time and deal with grief, anxiety and insecurities and although there is always work to do, I feel hopeful for the future. Those conversations changed my perspective on so many issues I have had and I came away feeling so much better about myself! I will hold those hours spent in counselling dear to my heart in years to come.”

3. Spirituality

All our counsellors are trained and experienced at working with issues of spirituality and faith. We offer a holistic approach to counselling, providing clients with the opportunity to incorporate their spiritual needs and life as part of the counselling experience as they wish. We are client-led, so, if someone wants to discuss aspects of their faith, they are welcome to do so. We offer regular training for our counselling team on working with issues of faith and spirituality, however, as counsellors we do not impose our own beliefs and values and are sensitive to each individual's worldview. Lighthouse offers counselling to those of all faiths and none.

Focus 2023-24: Activities & Impact

In the past year, we have focussed on three main areas of activity:

- Delivering high-quality and affordable counselling to those needing assistance.
- Programmes aimed at offering assistance to groups who may particularly benefit from counselling
- Deepening existing relationships with local stakeholders and building new ones.

Delivering high quality affordable counselling

We exist to offer a professional and accessible counselling service to our community and beyond. All our counsellors are registered with national accrediting bodies. We want anyone coming to us for counselling to feel listened to and supported. We offer a range of different types of counselling, including talking therapy, creative counselling, CBT, solution-focused counselling, couples counselling, grief counselling, counselling for anxiety and depression, and more. We offer both face-to-face counselling in one of our comfortable and private counselling rooms at Eastgate or online. Our standard fee for individual counselling is significantly below common commercial charging rates in our local area. During the year we delivered 1161 counselling sessions. In the next section, 'Helping Specific Groups', there is a breakdown of the impact of counselling for some of the specific groups who have benefited from counselling.

Programmes aimed at offering assistance to groups who may particularly benefit from counselling

- Subsidised counselling for those on low income
- Rough Sleepers project
- Couples counselling
- Wellbeing sessions for healthcare workers
- Wellbeing sessions for employees of local charities

Subsidised Counselling for Those on Low Income



At Lighthouse we aim to make counselling as accessible as possible and we understand that many people are facing financial challenges at present. We try to make all our counselling affordable by keeping our fees below market level and we have additional support for those on a very low income. We use donations and funds generated from our activities to further reduce the cost of counselling for those facing particular financial challenges.

Subsidised counselling means that each person benefitting from this scheme pays what they can afford towards the cost of their counselling and the remaining cost is covered by our subsidy fund. Maintaining (and increasing over time) our ability to provide this sort of support is an important objective. We allocate our subsidy funding on a basis of need. Our heart is to enable all who would benefit from counselling to be able to do so. In general, we aim to assist individuals receiving means-tested benefits but we review each case on its merits reflecting the circumstances and needs of the person.

Impact: In the past year, we provided 151 reduced-cost sessions to people who would not otherwise have been able to afford counselling.

Rough Sleepers Project

We partner with the Gravesham Borough Council's Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) team to provide counselling to those who are in temporary housing. Most of these clients have never had an opportunity to process difficult and traumatic life experiences. Our counsellors work alongside these clients to help them to make long-lasting positive changes. Counselling has helped clients to be able to begin to lead a healthier lifestyle and maintain a tenancy.

Our counsellors have taken time to engage with the community by offering drop-in sessions with tea and cake so those who are unsure about counselling can first become comfortable with the counsellors in a more informal setting. Once someone is ready to start counselling our counsellors work creatively, sometimes playing board games or using toys, art or music as alternative ways of processing trauma.



Impact: During the year, Lighthouse has provided 291 counselling sessions for 18 clients who are homeless or in temporary housing in our local community. Clients who would otherwise be unlikely to be able to access regular counselling due to a lack of appropriate provision. We have also offered 14 drop-in sessions over the last 18 months.

Testimonies: As sessions are confidential, it is sometimes hard to illustrate the life-changing impact of the counselling experience. We asked our counsellors working on the project to share some feedback they have had from clients, with permission from those individuals.

“The client has grown in confidence and has a greater capacity for making good decisions and looking after himself. We have used creative ways of working together which help him to focus and add interest to the sessions. He says that he always feels better about life and about himself after the sessions. His relationship with his partner has improved because he has discovered that it is better to talk things through with her than to bottle them up.”

Someone who had never done counselling before said:

“It has really helped me, I thought counselling would be like torture but I wouldn't want to miss a session now.”

Wellbeing Sessions for Healthcare Workers

A survey of healthcare professionals carried out in late 2022 by Practitioner Health discovered that 98% of respondents felt their mental or physical health had been adversely affected in the previous year. A grant has enabled us to offer Wellbeing sessions for healthcare workers impacted by working in healthcare following the COVID-19 pandemic. We identified a need for support as we were hearing from healthcare workers that, working through the pandemic had a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing (affecting sleep, eating, exercise and general functioning).

For healthcare workers who work long hours, often in irregular shift patterns, finding time for ongoing counselling could be difficult. We therefore developed a model of 2-hour one-off Wellbeing sessions, using the 'single session counselling' approach. Thanks to a grant we received from Eastgate Church we have been able to offer these at a very low cost (£10 per session) to anyone working in healthcare in our local community, as an opportunity to debrief and take stock of the experience of working in healthcare during the last 4 years.



Impact: To date, we have delivered 99 wellbeing health-checks and counselling sessions for healthcare workers. In total 19 healthcare professionals had a wellbeing health-check and of these, 7 people went on to have follow-up counselling sessions. If you are interested in benefiting from this programme, please get in touch.

Testimonies:

"Thanks so much for the support you provide to health workers - it's so appreciated and makes a real difference."

"Counselling helped me to be able to articulate/put language to some of what I have been struggling with/the experiences of the last year - it's also helped me to be kinder to myself, to be more compassionate and to be more patient"

Wellbeing Sessions for Charity Workers



We have offered wellbeing sessions to the staff of two local charities. Those working in the caring professions and/or the charitable sector can be at a greater risk of burnout.* Our Wellbeing tool can benefit those who may not have the need or time for regular counselling but would benefit from a one-off extended counselling session.

Impact: A total of 12 charity workers were provided with Wellbeing sessions.

* Source: <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charity-leaders-increasingly-concerned-about-employee-burnout-research-finds.html>
<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2015/feb/01/charity-sector-care-work-stress-burnout-support>
<https://www.alliancemagazine.org/blog/from-passion-to-pressure/>

Growing & Deepening our Community Relationships

Lighthouse exists to further the promotion and protection of the emotional wellbeing of people in our local community. One of our priorities this year has been building connections within the developing community in Ebbsfleet.

We have spent time reaching out to local residents, letting them know about our counselling service. We have written articles in the free local magazine, distributed leaflets on the service, advertised on local social media pages and built our relationship with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.

As a result, we have seen an increase in engagement within our local community this year, with people reporting that having a counselling service close by makes it more accessible for them instead of having to travel to another town. We have noticed a rise in local word-of-mouth referrals – in other words, people benefitting from the counselling are now recommending us to friends and family.

We have worked in partnership with a local school providing counselling for their staff members as we recognise that those working in the education sector are reporting extremely high stress levels.* We have also partnered with Gravesham Borough Council's Rough Sleepers Initiative to provide counselling to rough sleepers and those in supported accommodation in the borough. Additionally, we have connected with Gravesham Sanctuary, a charity supporting the homeless community and used their Day Centre as a venue for some of our work.



* Source: Teacher Wellbeing index 2023, www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/0h4jd5pt/twix_2023.pdf

Operations & Finance

Our Team



At the end of 2023-24, our counselling team comprised ten qualified counsellors together with three counsellors-in-training.

One of our objectives as a charity is to “advance training and support for counselling and developing counselling resources for the public benefit”. As an organisation, we support counsellors-in-training by offering student placements to counsellors in their final years of training. This enables students to gain the client hours needed to achieve their qualifications. We want to give counsellors in training the best possible start to their counselling careers and we support those on placement, providing them with clinical supervision and a mentor to support them through their first years of counselling. We are proud to have been part of their journey and counsellors often choose to continue working as part of our team post-qualification.

This year, seven members of our counselling team have been studying towards different levels of qualification. We have seen two students gain their counselling diplomas, one counsellor completing a BA in counselling, and another member of our team was awarded a Masters degree in counselling. Each counsellor enhances our team by bringing their own approach, life experiences and special areas of interest to our team.

Something that is really important for us at Lighthouse is that each counsellor feels part of a team, working towards the same mission. To build and strengthen relationships within the team, we come together once a month to connect and support each other and ensure that all counsellors are up to date with our wider activities. Each counsellor is expected to continue developing their professional skills once qualified and so we offer our counsellors a training

session each month as part of our team meeting. We invite guest speakers who are experts in their field of work to share best practices with us. Additionally, we have supported individual counsellors in undertaking specialised training in areas such as couples counselling, single-session therapy and safeguarding.

Our Controls

We have reviewed our financial controls during the year and made some changes to minimise fraud risk. We contract out our IT services to Eastgate Church. Our core IT systems are segregated within Eastgate’s platform to ensure client and other data privacy requirements are met.

Our Safeguarding Lead, Tracy Jarvis, attended training with Safeguarding specialists Thirtyone:eight in the areas of safeguarding children, and adults, safer recruitment and safeguarding for trustees. Tracy shares her expertise in this area by delivering regular safeguarding training for our team.

Our Governance

Our Trustees are listed below. We benefit greatly from their commitment and expertise.

During the coming year, we will be looking to appoint at least one additional Trustee who can contribute to the work of the Board and Lighthouse generally.

Trustee	Role	Date Appointed
Donna King	Chair	April 2023 - Present
Tracy Jarvis	Safeguarding Lead	April 2023 - Present
Stuart King	Treasurer	April 2023 - Present
Martin Stokley	Whistleblowing Champion	April 2023 - October 2024

We would like to thank Martin Stokley for his contribution to LCT and for the knowledge and expertise he brought. Thank you Martin, we will miss you!

Kate Mendez, Lighthouse’s CEO, attends all Board meetings. Kate has a standing invite to all Finance Committee meetings.

Lighthouse Counselling Trust acknowledges and has paid due regard to its requirement to ensure that its charitable purposes and activities are for the public benefit. Details of how the charity has achieved this are provided in this report.

Our Finances

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the Charity's Constitution and the Charities Act 2011.

Lighthouse Counselling has operated within Eastgate (Kent) Ltd (charity number 1102206) since 2022 until the formation of the CIO on 6 April 2023, however, a charity bank account was not opened until October 2023. The activities will be fully undertaken within the CIO from 24/25.

These accounts reflect the financial transactions which took place within the CIO's own account as activities began to be transferred.

Our reserves policy is calibrated such that, were Lighthouse to suddenly cease trading, we would be able to pay our obligations to our employees and be able to run off the counselling programmes of existing clients. We review our reserves approach annually.

Where we have received external funding which relates to activities over more than one financial year, we ring-fence those funds to ensure that they will be available when required.

Our objective is to generate profits from our activities to enable us to provide subsidised counselling and invest in the service and its team to ensure it can continue to provide high-quality counselling to our clients.

In 2023-24 we generated operating profits* of £9457.57. While retaining some of these funds while we gained experience running Lighthouse (including the additional costs we incur as a separate entity) we have set aside funds for bursary counselling, replaced our website and allocated funds to the training and development of our counselling team.

In this initial year, our accounts show external donations of £32,078: this figure includes surplus funds carried forward from last year's operations, grants ringfenced for 2024/25, and counselling income received before our bank account opened in October.

* We define operating profit as the surplus generated from our counselling work. It ignores funds donated to provide subsidised counselling (which are ringfenced) until they are drawn upon to fund counselling sessions and surplus funds carried over from previous years, etc.

Looking Forward to 2024-25

Looking Forward to 2024-25

Our mission for the future is transformative change through enhancing community wellbeing. We are committed to dismantling barriers that prevent access to counselling and mental health support—whether they be financial hurdles, time constraints or societal stigma.

One way we intend to do this is by **expanding our wellbeing session offering**, so that those who may not have the time or finances to engage with ongoing counselling can benefit from a model of counselling that is accessible for them. We also plan to **increase Lighthouse's contribution to our Subsidised Counselling Fund** so that we can expand provision for those on a low income.

Additionally, we aim to identify and reach out to any other groups within our community who may find it difficult to access counselling services, ensuring that no one is left without the support they need. We will do this by **forging strong partnerships with other local businesses and like-minded organisations**.

We will build capacity in our team by **recruiting more counsellors** to join our team and by continuing to **support counsellors in training**. We also want to strengthen our charity's governance and strategic capability by **adding at least one Trustee to our Board**.

Together, we will create a supportive and caring community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Reference & Administrative Information

Reference & Administrative Information for 2023-24

Charity Number	1202653
Charitable Status	CIO. Registered within the charity commission on 6th April 2023
Governing Document	Constitution, Foundation model
Registered Office	Lighthouse Counselling Trust, Eastgate, 141 Springhead Park Way, Northfleet, Gravesend, DA11 8AD
Email Address	hello@lighthousecounselling.org.uk
Phone Number	07522 058447
Website	www.lighthousecounselling.org.uk
Bankers	CAF Bank
Independent Examiner	Caladine Ltd, Chantry House, 22 Upperton Rd, Eastbourne, BN21 1BF
Employees	LCT has two employees. Neither paid more than £60,000
Trustees	LCT's trustees are listed in the report. None of our trustees are paid.

The Independent Examiner's Report

Lighthouse Counselling Trust Independant Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Lighthouse Counselling Trust

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Lighthouse Counselling Trust ("the CIO") for the period ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 20 to 21.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the CIO you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act')

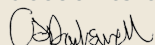
I report in respect of my examination of the trust's financial statements carried out under section 145 pf the 2011 Act. In carrying out my examination I have following all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the CIO as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Colin Dadswell FCA FCCA DChA
Caladine Ltd
Chantry House
22 Upperton Rd
Eastbourne
BN21 1 BF

Dated: 26 November 2024

Lighthouse Counselling Trust Receipts & Payments Account For The Period Ending 31 March 2024

Receipts from:	£
Donations	32,078
Counselling	11,655
Bank Interest	223
Total Receipts	43,956

Payments on:	£
Counsellor sessions	7,665
Hospitality	202
Training	40
Counsellors' supervision	310
Bank charges	357
Licenses and subscriptions	195
Staff costs	6,490
Total Payments	15,259
Net of receipts (payments)	28,697

	£
Transfers between funds	-
Cash funds at 6 April 2023	-
Cash funds at 31 March 2024	28,697

Lighthouse Counselling Trust Statement of Assets & Liabilities for the Period Ending 31 March 2024

Cash funds	£
Cash at bank and in hand	28,697

Debtors	£
Funds due from Eastgate (Kent) Ltd	14,124

Liabilities	£
Accountancy	800
PAYE/NIC	190
Pension	105
Total Liabilities	1,095

Lighthouse Counselling Trust Notes to the Financial Statements for the Period Ending 31 March 2024

1 Accounting Policies

The Financial Statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with Section 133 of the Charities Act 2011.

1.1 Donations

Income is recognised upon receipt.

1.2 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised in the period in which it is paid and allocated to the appropriate cost centre. Expenditure includes irrecoverable VAT.

1.3 Unrestricted funds



The Charity operates a General Fund, representing the funds of the charity that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use and are available for application on general purposes.

Trustee's Declaration of Approval

Trustee’s Declaration of Approval

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees’ report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity’s trustees.

Signature(s):		
Full name(s):	Donna King	Stuart King
Position (e.g. Secretary, Chair, etc.):	Chair	Treasurer
Date(s):	20/11/24	20/11/24