



Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24

Brecon Advice Centre is an independent organisation providing advice that is free, confidential and impartial. It is available for everyone regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, age or marital status.

**11 Bulwark
Brecon
Powys, LD3 7AE**

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2024

The Chair's Report

This is my fourth and, sadly, final annual report as Chair of the Trustees of Brecon Advice Centre. It has certainly been a rollercoaster of a ride over these past few years, but, for family reasons, I am moving home and away from the area, having lived here for over twenty years.

It has been well documented in my previous annual reports that when I took on the role as Chair, after the 2020-21 AGM, the Centre was in a period of transition. We were in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and, for a variety of reasons, needed to replace several long serving Trustees who had decided to move on. In addition to this, we also needed to engage a new Centre Manager and relocate our premises in the centre of Brecon.

I am pleased to be able to report that, as I step down from the role of Chair of the Centre, I am leaving it in a much stronger position than it was when I took over. It has not been an easy time, and there have been many times over the past four years when the outlook looked bleak and there was a real chance that the Centre would not survive. That we did was a result of the dedication and hard work of our new set of Trustees and Centre Manager, and, of course, we would be nowhere without our group of talented volunteers whose loyalty and determination helped see us through this difficult period. It has been satisfying to welcome new volunteers recently – Peter Jones, Sarah Benson, Mark Dempsey, Julie Burton and David Hendey, all of whom come to us with a variety of expertise, and who have proved to be valuable additions to the team.

Footfall has yet to return to pre-COVID levels, and realistically, it is unlikely to do so. The pandemic altered the way many of us lead our lives and the internet now provides us with many of the answers we need to be able to survive in the modern world. Numbers, however, are gradually increasing, and prove that there is still a need for our valuable help and advice. We like to think that that our face-to-face experience available to clients on a “drop-in” basis provides a unique service to the people of Brecon and the surrounding area.

To enable us to supply this free of charge facility from premises in the centre of Brecon requires finance, and the Centre relies entirely on external funding to be able to support this. We are grateful for the continued backing from our two local authorities, Brecon Town Council and Powys County Council, without whose support over many years we would probably not have survived. But, as important as this regular income is to our ability to function, we will always require additional financial support to continue to provide the level of service needed to meet our user's needs. For a couple of years after the pandemic, we found it very difficult to secure this funding, but I am happy to report that, over the last two years, we have been successful in obtaining the additional support required, and, as you can see from the accounts published on pages 10 and 11 of this report, our financial position has improved considerably in that time.

Much of the credit for this must go to our dedicated Fund Raiser, Jackie Boarer, who took on this very important role at the most difficult time possible, and who has done an amazing job in securing the vital funds needed to keep us afloat. I would also like to express my personal thanks to the organisations listed on Page 12 of this report who have generously donated to our cause over the past year.

It is pleasing, as well as a great relief, to be able to report that our financial stability enables the Centre to be able to look forward to the future and plan with some confidence. As I remarked earlier in this report, I feel proud to be able to say that, despite all the problems we have faced over the past four years, the Centre is now in a much stronger position than it was when I took on the role of Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to express my personal thanks to all who have made my time as a volunteer of Brecon Advice Centre so happy and memorable, and who, over the years, have supported me through some very dark times. It has been said that, in some ways, the advisers need the Centre as much as it needs them, and in my case this has certainly been true. So thank you to you all.

I cannot finish without remembering Beryl Griffiths, a trusted adviser and friend, who sadly passed away recently. Beryl really was one of a kind, always calm and unhurried, providing comfort and reassurance to many distressed clients at a time when they needed it most. She will be sorely missed, but remembered with great affection and love.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Palmer". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Sally Palmer

Chair of Trustees

June 2024

The Objectives

Brecon Advice Centre's Constitution states that:

The Centre is established for the promotion of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in Brecon and district by the advancement of education, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, sickness and distress.

In furtherance of the foregoing purposes, but not further or otherwise, the Centre may:

- a) provide centres for the supply of advice and guidance.
- b) obtain, collect and receive money and funds by way of contributions, donations, legacies, grants and any other lawful method and accept and receive gifts of property of any description (whether subject to special trusts or not),
- c) procure to be written, and print, publish, issue and circulate gratuitously or otherwise any reports or periodicals, books, pamphlets, leaflets or other documents.
- d) arrange and provide for, or join in arranging and providing for, the holding of exhibitions, meetings, lectures and classes.
- e) promote, encourage or undertake organised research and experimental work and disseminate the results of such research.
- f) affiliate or become affiliated to any institution having charitable purposes only and acquire and undertake all or any part of the assets, liabilities and engagements of any such institution which the Centre may lawfully acquire; and
- g) do all such other things as are necessary for the furtherance of the objects of the Centre.

Its main aims are:

- (i) To provide a quality generalist advice service that is free, confidential, impartial and accessible for all people in Brecon and its neighbouring communities
- (ii) To ensure the local provision of specialist legal advice
- (iii) To use clients' experiences to influence legislation and its administration
- (iv) To manage the organisation and its service with due regard to probity and inclusiveness; and
- (v) To co-operate with other agencies and participate in collaborative endeavours intended to benefit existing and other potential clients

The Centre Personnel

Management Committee & Trustees: (* - Denotes Trustee)

*Sally Palmer – Chair - Volunteers' Representative

*David Burden – Treasurer

Nikki Alderslade – (Resigned May 2023)

*Jackie Boarer – Secretary & Fund Raiser

*Tina Alwyn

*Keith Lawson - Centre Manager (Ex officio)

Cllr. Robert Thomas – Nominated Representative of Brecon Town Council

Centre Staff:

(a) Volunteers:

Sally Palmer

Beryl Griffiths

Surinder Kaur Price

Tish Jack

Tess Russell

Sarah Benson

Julie Burton

Mark Dempsey

Peter Jones

(b) Employees

Keith Lawson - Centre Manager

Janice Prentice - Administrator (Debt Advice)

The Structure, Governance & Management

Constitution

The Centre is a registered charity (Reg. No. 510226) and was set up by constitution in June 1981, which was subsequently amended in October 2002 and December 2008.

Principal Office

The principal office of the Centre is: -

11 Bulwark

Brecon

Powys

LD3 7AE.

Tel: 01874 624595

Email: breconadvicecentre@outlook.com

www.breconadvicecentre.org.uk

Method of appointment or election of Trustees

Trustees are either elected at the Annual General Meeting or co-opted in line with the constitution. The Centre Manager is an ex officio Trustee.

Policies adopted for the induction and training of Trustees

The Centre places a specific emphasis on the governance issues of running a charity. Trustees are recruited who are committed to the objectives of the Centre and who possess specific skills which support the effective running of the Centre. All Trustees undergo an induction process.

Organisational structure and decision making

The Trustees comprise the Management Committee which is responsible for the management of the Centre. In undertaking this role, they are supported by the Centre Manager.

Risk Management

The risks facing the Centre fall, broadly, into two categories, financial and operational. The more serious of the two is financial, and the management of this risk is dealt with in the following section on the Reserves Policy.

Operational risks are managed on an on-going basis by the Centre Manager and are reported to the Chair and Management Committee depending on their severity. At each Committee Meeting, the Centre Manager reports formally on any concerns that he might have in this area, together with any proposed plans required to mitigate them.

Reserves Policy

The Centre is entirely reliant upon external funding and, as a result, the level of income varies annually. Financial reserves are built up in years when income exceeds expenditure and are, in general, retained to mitigate those years when expenditure exceeds income. Responsibility for monitoring the level of reserves lies with the Treasurer, who will keep the Trustees informed of the financial situation on a regular basis. Consideration of reserves should be made beyond the forthcoming year, as the levels of income, for a charity such as BAC, are variable year-on-year and are dependent primarily on the funds available from grant providers.

The first call on the reserves is to meet any liabilities should the need arise to close the Centre, and these are designated reserves which are ring-fenced. Designated reserves will cover redundancy payments to staff, any outstanding rent at the time of closure, together with any specific one-off liabilities identified at the time of initiating the closure procedure.

The level of designated reserves in place is determined annually by the Trustees once an expenditure budget for the financial year has been agreed. Because of the uncertain situation regarding income, the Trustees have decided that the level of designated reserves should be set at six months budgeted expenditure, plus an additional 20% to cover the one-off contingency payments set out above. For the coming year, **2024-25**, the expenditure budget is **£25,500**, so the level of designated reserves is set at **£15,300**.

In terms of financial risk mitigation, the Treasurer will advise on the status of available reserves to the Trustees on a regular basis so that grant/fund applications can be timely, and ensure sufficient financial stability without compromising future applications, which are often impacted by the level of reserves.

The constant monitoring of reserves is an important financial tool. How the level of reserves changes during the year can be a good indicator of the underlying financial health of the Centre and can also be a good indicator of potential problems.

Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and accounting standards. In undertaking these responsibilities, the Trustees have ensured that: -

- Suitable accounting policies have been applied consistently
- Judgements and estimates are reasonable and prudent
- The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis

The Trustees confirm that the financial statements comply with current statutory requirements and the requirements of the charity's constitution.

Approval

This report was approved by the Trustees on 13th June 2024, and signed on their behalf by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Palmer". The script is cursive and fluid.

Sally Palmer

Chair

Independent Examiners' Report to the Trustees of Brecon Advice Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st March 2024.


As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

	Date:	20 th May 2024
Julian Rabjohn CPFA		
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy		
Cwmffrwd, Wales		

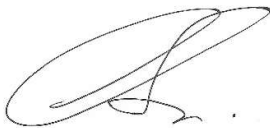
Receipts & Payments Account for the year 2023-24

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>2023-2024</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>
Grants	£40,768.00	£20,325.00
Local Community Councils	£150.00	£925.00
Donations (including Gift Aid)	£599.72	£599.33
Bank Interest	£350.27	£21.01
<u>Total Receipts</u>	<u>£41,867.99</u>	<u>£21,870.34</u>
<u>PAYMENTS</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>	<u>2020-2021</u>
<u>Employee Costs</u>		
Salaries & Associated Employee Costs	(£11,913.24)	(£10,706.46)
Total - Employee Costs	(£11,913.24)	(£10,706.46)
<u>Premises</u>		
Rent	(£5,875.00)	(£5,500.00)
Cleaning and Maintenance	(£158.65)	(£55.29)
Total - Premises	(£6,033.65)	(£5,555.29)
<u>Office Expenses</u>		
Stationery & Other Office Expenses	(£29.99)	(£49.23)
Insurance	(£694.32)	(£667.78)
Photocopying & Printing	(£768.00)	(£870.00)
Postage	(£32.15)	(£54.62)
Telephone & Broadband	(£1,718.25)	(£1,504.78)
Computer Costs	(£408.99)	(£79.99)
Foodstuffs	(£46.75)	(£43.57)
Total - Office Expenses	(£3,698.45)	(£3,269.97)
<u>Miscellaneous Expenses</u>		
Professional Membership	(£342.80)	(£274.30)
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	(£582.24)	(£101.00)
Total - Miscellaneous Expenses	(£925.04)	(£375.30)
<u>Total Payments</u>	<u>(£22,570.38)</u>	<u>(£19,907.02)</u>
<u>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</u>	<u>£19,297.61</u>	<u>£1,963.32)</u>

Balance Sheet at 31st March 2024

	<u>31st March 2024</u>	<u>31st March 2023</u>
<u>Reserves</u>		
Balance Brought Forward	£16,836.64	£14,873.32
Difference Between Receipts and Payments	£19,297.61	£1,963.32
	<u>£36,134.25</u>	<u>£16,836.64</u>
<u>Funds</u>		
Current Account	£736.26	£820.98
Deposit Account	£35,355.58	£16,005.31
Petty Cash	£42.41	£10.35
	<u>£36,134.25</u>	<u>£16,836.64</u>

The Trustees have pleasure in presenting the above financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024. The statements were approved by the Trustees on 13th June 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



David Burden

Treasurer

Appreciation

Brecon Advice Centre would like to acknowledge all the support that it receives from individuals, statutory bodies, charitable trusts and other voluntary organisations. During 2023-24 the following grants, donations and contributions were gratefully received from the Foundations, Trusts and Councils listed below:

Powys County Council	£13,825.00
Di Walker Foundation	£10,000.00
NFU Mutual	£6,443.00
Brecon Town Council	£5,500.00
Arthur & Audrey Silkin Charitable Trust	£3,000.00
Community Foundation Wales	£2,000.00

Llanigon Community Council	£50.00
Llangynidr Community Council	£50.00
Talgarth Town Council	£50.00

The Centre maintained formal reciprocal arrangements with other organisations that provide advice. These included: -

Shelter Cymru

Woodland Davies Partnership LLP

Brecon Food Bank (seeded by the Trussell Trust)