



Friends for Life
— Bedford —

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2021/2022



*Promoting wellbeing and reducing social isolation
for care home residents in Bedford
and the surrounding area*

"It's such a joy to see the interaction of residents once they can connect with something they remember or something they enjoy"

Friends for Life volunteer befriender

Overview of our organisation

Friends for Life Bedfordshire (FFL) works with socially isolated older residents in care homes primarily in Bedford Borough, providing friendship and facilitating improved well-being. We achieve this through a programme of one-to-one befriending relationships and a social activity programme that brings local schools, community groups and businesses in to care homes.

Starting off in 2007 as a small charitable project organised by local churches, Friends for Life became a limited company in 2012 and a registered charity in 2015. Our Companies House registered number is 7951058 and our charity number is 1165730.

According to the Age UK report *"All the Lonely People: Loneliness in Later Life"* (2018) older people are over 5 times more likely to be often lonely if they don't have someone to befriend them. In addition, the right to participate in social and public life is enshrined in international human rights law, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. However, we know that, exacerbated by the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, meaningful participation in a social life is often missing in care home settings.

We recognise the negative impact loneliness has on a person's well-being and the harm isolation can cause to physical and mental wellbeing.

We work to alleviate this through our Mission:

"Friends for Life works with care homes primarily in Bedford Borough providing friendship and facilitating improved well-being to otherwise socially isolated residents through a programme of one to one befriending relationships and a social activity programme."

Our Mission is realised through a suite of practical activities, including:

Providing one-to-one "befrienders". We recruit and train volunteers to offer friendship and company to residents at risk of loneliness, who would otherwise have no or few visitors. For those residents for whom it is appropriate our volunteers are insured so that residents can be taken out of their care home on short trips.

Providing specialist resources to residents with dementia which have been designed to reduce anxiety and enhance well-being. These include therapeutic robotic pets, creative art packs and one touch button radios.

Working in partnership with other local services including Tibbs Dementia Foundation, The Place Theatre and local schools to provide residents with opportunities to socialise and participate through programmes such as Music4Memory and Timeless Tales.

"Marvellous. Absolutely marvellous. Thank you for coming to see us."

Diane, Salvete Care Home resident, after joining in all the songs in a social activity session.

At 31st March 2022 Friends for Life was working with 49 active volunteers (“befrienders”) who were linking up with 52 care home residents face to face. 70% of these residents have some form of cognitive or sensory disability and most are over 65.

We have befriending partnerships in 20 of the local care homes and links with 32. There are currently 52 care homes in Bedford.

Through a combination of one-to-one befriending, the provision of well-being resources and our partnership projects we were able to support 372 older care home residents in Bedford Borough in the year ending 31st March 2022. We estimate that this represents about 25% of the residents in need of support in the Bedford Borough.



Friends for Life's strategic aims are to:

Highlight the issue of social isolation and develop a comprehensive support network which, through collaboration and partnerships, breaks down the disconnect between elderly and vulnerable residents in care homes and the wider community

Be inclusive in the delivery of befriending services to all socially isolated care home residents in Bedford Borough, increasing social interaction, providing intellectual stimulation, broadening the social circle of residents and enhancing their well-being

Provide a diverse and dedicated team of volunteers, trained and matched as “befrienders” with the resident’s social needs and their interests

Promote and support additional services and activities, through partnerships with schools, companies and other voluntary sector organisations, that will provide life- enhancing activities, cultural experiences and social interaction for residents

Create a model for best practice in the delivery of befriending support to care home residents, both in one-to-one and group activities.

“I don’t know who this benefits more, me or the residents!”

From a volunteer who has commented on the fact she enjoys her involvement so much.

Our activity this year

This year has been one of trying to establish a “new normal”. Whilst it has been terrific to get back into the homes with our range of activities, we have naturally needed to adapt our approach, with Covid and the safety of residents very much at the forefront of people’s minds. We were all looking forward to the day when we could sit next to residents and hold their hands again.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact adversely on Friend for Life’s face to face activity with residents during the year to 31 st March 2022. Care homes remained cautious about allowing residents to have direct contact with visitors due to the danger of infection. In addition, guidelines around social distancing and visiting changed frequently throughout the year, and their application differed between care homes. Care home residents were undoubtedly disproportionately affected by the pandemic and those who were already socially isolated were particularly harshly affected.

“Older people who are frail and living with long-term health conditions are particularly at risk of experiencing social isolation and loneliness if cut off from social networks and community activities. On the flip side the value of social connection, a sense of purpose and belonging for mental health is immense.” - “Social isolation, loneliness and the mental health of care home residents – lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic”, May 2022, ARC social care researcher Dr Caroline Emmer De Albuquerque Green.

Friends for Life is proud of the way in which we adapted our activities to maintain contact and reach residents who were most at risk of loneliness. Befrienders wrote letters and made phone and video calls and we put 27 robotic pets and almost 100 creative art packs into the homes. In this way, throughout the pandemic, we continued to provide emotional support to our residents.

Towards the end of 2021/22 social distancing restrictions eased and our befrienders started to resume visiting the residents they support face-to-face and our Outreach activities recommenced.

In order to reinvigorate the work of Friends for Life following the lifting of restrictions our Volunteer Training Lead has instigated a programme of re-engagement activities with our befrienders, including a diary of popular local walks and meet and greet activities. Interest in, and commitment to, volunteering as a befriender is beginning to increase again. By September 2022 the number of befrienders had risen to 49 with 55 residents being visited.



During this period, to ensure we retained contact with the residents and the care homes whilst direct befriending was proving difficult, we also piloted two new projects. Both were aimed at supporting and increasing the well being of care home residents. The first project was carried out in partnership with Tibbs Dementia Foundation and provided care home residents with 30 Music4Memory workshops.

These workshops, led by music therapists, provided residents with a safe space to find expression in a range of emotions, many of which could not be expressed through words. This was particularly valuable for residents with dementia who were less able to express their thoughts and feelings through speech and were particularly confused by the restrictions put upon visitors by the pandemic:

"It [the session] enhanced social stimulation and sense of belonging...It also eradicated boredom and lethargy as residents were encouraged to take part."

Care Home Manager

"I enjoy every bit of the Music for Memory sessions."

Care Home Resident



The second project, Timeless Tales, was carried out in partnership with The Place Theatre, Bedford and was funded by East London NHS Foundation Trust Community Fund Programme. This delivered weekly sessions (including to residents who are bed bound) featuring performances from actors from the theatre and providing residents with the opportunity to write and perform their own work. 68 residents were reached, most of them receiving ten sessions each. They were supported by 9 volunteers. 42 hours of poetry, songs and prose were delivered across 4 care homes. By the end of the sessions 86% of the residents were engaged – clapping, commenting and joining in. Even those residents who found it difficult to focus on poetry for instance would often join in with the singing.

"We don't get to do much like this now. You know every day is the same really. It's nice you come in your day to see us and it's nice to listen and see some different things going on here."

Care Home resident

We found it more difficult to recruit volunteers in the year to March 31 st 2022. We think this is likely to be because potential befrienders were apprehensive about visiting care homes, particularly under restrictions. A high number of our volunteers have experienced the person they have befriended dying during the pandemic. We have been mindful of the distress felt by befrienders and have provided them with additional support. Sometimes the befriender has not felt ready to start a new befriending relationship just yet. More recently volunteer recruitment is rising.

Friends for Life has learnt much throughout the pandemic about the support needs of our residents, our volunteers and our care homes. Our major learning point is that a "one size fits all" approach does not work best and our ability to adapt to circumstances and to the individual needs of residents and care homes is what will have the maximum impact and ensure a successful future for Friends for Life.

Our plans for 2022/23 and beyond

The Covid pandemic has had the unintended consequence of highlighting, quite dramatically, the loneliness experienced by many, and especially of older people living in care homes. Loneliness has consequently become more “relatable” and easier to discuss. We have all had a taste of what it feels like to be alone, to be regimented, to not be able to go out and about our business freely.

The shock of the pandemic continues to resonate amongst our residents. The number of residents in need of our services is growing. Age UK in “*All the Lonely People – Loneliness in Later Life*” (2018) estimates that the number of older people who often experience loneliness will increase to two million by 2026. We observe more residents who have no, or few, visitors. Families are moving away for “fresh starts”. The number of residents exhibiting symptoms of withdrawal is increasing. Even the continued wearing of masks in care settings creates a distressing barrier, keenly felt by residents. Staff shortages and turnover and regulatory rule changes in the homes are challenging for residents, and for volunteers. All these factors cause distress to older people who are already vulnerable and do not generally respond well to change. Friends for Life is determined to build our service provision to support more residents and counter the issues described. To this end we have set a programme of strategic change targets for 2022/23 that will enable us to build upon the lessons we learned during the pandemic, and to increase the numbers of care homes with which we work and residents we befriend:

We have sought and been awarded funding (from the Harpur Trust) for a new post of General Manager which will be central to developing support for residents. They will lead and manage our small, professional and dedicated, staff team.

The GM will contribute to the development of services and activities, nurture relationships with other care home providers with whom we can partner, liaise regularly with 6 care homes and develop new care home relationships.

They will be tasked with the management of our monitoring and evaluation procedures, ensuring that these are consistent and robust and enable us to state with confidence 'what works, why and how.'

We are continuing to strengthen the Board with a recruitment drive seeking Trustees with expertise in Charity Fundraising, Personnel, Change Management, IT, Social Media and Communications

We will write, and commence implementation of, a comprehensive business plan for the 3 years 2022-2025

We are seeking funding for the new post of Outreach Worker which will build upon the group sessions in care homes that have proved so successful in increasing wellbeing.

We will write, and commence the implementation of, a fundraising strategy to support the aims and objectives of the business plan.

“How lovely that you've come back. You have made my day.”

Care home resident

Our people

We are fortunate in having a dedicated and highly professional part time team to support our operation. This comprises of a Volunteer and Training Lead, a Fundraising Officer, a Communications Lead and an Administrator.

Our thanks are due to them for their diligence, enthusiasm and loyalty throughout this year. The later stages of the pandemic remained challenging, requiring flexibilities around work practices which the team rose too. We extend our thanks also to Lorraine Gunther who took up the reins as the new Chair from Brian Belcher, and to Mike Elliott our Treasurer, who has continued to manage the charity's finances with efficiency and rigour.

We would like to thank those Trustees who retired in this period - Brian Belcher, Carol Solaiman and Pauline Panter. Friends for Life is grateful to them for their commitment and support of the charity.

In the next period we will be changing the contractual arrangements of our team, ensuring that their allocated hours are adequate to meet our objectives, and moving them to the status of employees.

We wish to thank all our partners, without whom our activities would not have been possible, in particular Tibbs Dementia Foundation , The Place Theatre, East London NHS Foundation Trust and Bedford School.

Lastly the Trustees wish to thank our volunteer befrienders. Friends for Life could not function without them. Their dedication throughout a particularly challenging period is especially appreciated and is best articulated by this resident:

Oh lovely to see you again. Thank you so much for coming. I love you coming to see us...Please come back and see us next week.”
Maggie, Elcombe Care Home



Our fundraising

We are very grateful for the financial support we have received. Friends For Life is only able to help older people living in local care homes if we continue to receive gifts and grants from a variety of sources.

During the year grants were received from the Harpur Trust, William Butterfield Trust, Gale Family Trust, Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation, Bedford Borough Council Infection Prevention Control Fund, Arnold Clark Community Fund, Bedfordshire Charitable Trust and the National Lottery. Bedfordshire Borough Council has also provided funds which helped us through the Covid period. Gifts were made by individual and group members – local churches and a care home – and these, as with some of the grant-making trusts, often represent a pattern of support that goes back to our formation over ten years ago. Some of these gifts enabled us to buy the Robocats – animated pets – that proved to be invaluable ‘company’ for care home residents. Local businesses such as the Peach Pub Company have also supported us.

As this Annual Report was being prepared we received news that the Harpur Trust had awarded us over £64,000, spread over 2022-5, for the recruitment of a General Manager. This will enable us to plan for a step change in activity and demonstrates to other potential donors that they can have confidence in Friends for Life.



Thank you to everyone who has supported us financially and, also, to those who have recommended us for support.

Financial overview

Accounts 2022

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 2021/22

- 1) Friends for Life Bedfordshire is a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Board of Directors/Trustees and is also a Registered Charity.
- 2) March 31st is the agreed Year-End of this the ninth year of the Company's operation. Assets from the Company's forerunner (an Anglican/Methodist joint project) were transferred to the new Company in April 1st 2012
- 3) The Accounts have been drawn up on an Accruals basis. This is a requirement of Companies House and is applied regardless of turnover.
- 4) The accounts are examined at the end of each year by an Independent Examiner. Being classed as a 'Small Company' no audit is required (Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006) unless requested by the members. The accounts need to be filed with Companies House by 31st.Dec 2022. As our income exceeded £25,000 there is a requirement to also file the accounts with the Charity Commission by January 31st. 2023.
- 5) Accounts were filed this year with HMRC, our 3 year exemption having terminated. We now do not have to file until March 2026; for the 2024/25 financial year.
- 6) The Company's liquid assets are held in an HSBC Business style account which, hitherto, had been free of charges. The account now incurs a £5 monthly fee as of 1st Jan2022. An additional savings account is linked to the current account to separately hold the Reserves Fund. A small amount of interest is paid on this latter account.
- 7) Major office equipment (e.g. furniture, software and computers) are declared as assets on the balance sheet if their value exceeds £250. Depreciation is linear. Smaller resource or training materials are written off in the year of purchase.
- 8) During the year Virgin Money Giving, which had enabled supporters to donate online, ceased operation. A similar account has been set up with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). FFL has also signed up to use Charitylog, as a data resource, and which incurs a monthly fee.
- 9) The Company received several grants during the year to be used in making purchases which directly supported Bedford care homes during the Covid19 pandemic. This expenditure is shown as Non-Budget items.
- 10) The Company has no Employees though certain tasks are 'bought-in' by means of 'Contracts for Services' agreements. Invoices arising from these are settled monthly. Since 2019 an office has been rented in the CVS building at 43 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2AA.
- 11) The Company Directors/Trustees, Secretary and Treasurer receive no remuneration as result of their office.
- 12) All income was derived through Grants, Donations, Membership Fees and fund-raising events.

Michael Elliott
Hon. Treasurer – Friends for Life Bedfordshire.

Balance Sheet for the year ended 31st March 2022

Note: Debit balances are shown in parenthesis

Tangible Assets

Office Equipment, furniture & computers	3,422.00	4,011.10
---	----------	----------

Non-Tangible Assets

Cash in hand	0.00	0.00
--------------	------	------

HSBC Business current a/c March 31st.	23,032.14	16,611.93
---------------------------------------	-----------	-----------

HSBC Bus. Money Manager a/c March 31st.	16,291.13	16,289.28
---	-----------	-----------

Other Assets		0.00
--------------	--	------

42,765.27

36,912.31

Add debtors, loans and pre-payments

Less: creditors and provisions	(2,834.23)	(2,349.62)
--------------------------------	------------	------------

39,931.04

34,562.69

Represented by:

Brought forward from previous year	34,562.69	19,496.32
------------------------------------	-----------	-----------

Plus: excess of Income over Expenditure	5,368.35	15,066.37
---	----------	-----------

39,931.04

34,562.69

Reserve Account - Balance & Transfers
for the year ended 31st March 2022
(This account is classed as Designated but Unrestricted)

<u>Income</u>	2021/22 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2020/21 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
Transfers from General Acct. (1)	-	6,253.00
Interest Added (2)	1.85	5.11
Other income	0.00	0.00
Total incoming resources	1.85	6,258.11
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Transfer to General Acct.	0.00	0.00
Total Resources Expended	0.00	0.00
Income less Expenditure	1.85	6,258.11
Previous Balance Brought Forward	16,289.28	10,031.17
 Total Reserves (3)	 16,291.13	 16,289.28

Notes

- 1.No transfers made in this Financial Year
- 2.Currently 0.01%
- 3.Current Reserves Policy is to hold 6 months expenditure or at least 10,000

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March 2022

	2021/22 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2020/21 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
<u>Income</u>		
Membership fees	295.00	270.00
Grants	51,200.00	38,934.87
Donations	5,239.64	2,502.58
Fundraising events	400.00	1,362.71
Interest or Reserve account	1.85	5.11
Other income	-	-
Total Incoming Resources	<u>57,136.49</u>	<u>43,075.27</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Fundraising lead	6,495.00	5,060.00
Volunteer trainer	420.00	120.00
Volunteer coordinator	7,350.00	6,870.00
Media & marketing lead	9,900.00	5,872.50
Office admin assistant	3,690.00	1,835.00
DBS & misc training costs	478.53	403.70
Website support & phone	222.18	385.39
Publicity and events	906.81	234.95
Insurance, fees & legal	1,090.71	847.86
All travel	160.45	29.50
Printing, post & stationery	209.73	150.56
Resources & misc, expenses	686.52	670.91
Office rent	4,142.04	4,142.04
Non - budget expenses	15,477.07	0.00
Depreciation of assets	569.10	1,386.49
Total resources expended	51,768.14	28,008.90
Income less expenditure	5,368.35	15,066.37
	57,136.49	43,075.27

We want to keep in contact. You can find us at:



@friendsforlifebedford



@friendsforlifebedford



@FFL_Bedford



hello@friendsforlife.org.uk



www.friendsforlifebedford.org.uk

Room 1, 2nd Floor
CVS
43 Bromham Road
Bedford
MK40 2AA

07460 575410

