



Friends for Life  
— Bedford —

# ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2022/23



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

General information	3
Introductions	4
Our organisation	5
Friends for Life in 2022/23	17
Our plans	18
Financial overview	19

# General information

<b>Name</b>	Friends for Life Bedfordshire
<b>Registered Charity Number</b>	1165730
<b>Registered Company Number</b>	7951058
<b>Registered Office</b>	43 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2AA
<b>Directors (trustees)</b>	Keyur Bhatt, Dominic Carter, Nafiz Hasnat, Terri Harrington (Chair), Sarah Walker (Vice Chair), Helen Wheatley, Paul Wilson
<b>Patrons</b>	Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford, Rt Rev Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans and Susan Lousada, HM Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire
<b>Independent Examiner</b>	Ian Farthing
<b>Banker</b>	HSBC
<b>Governance and Management</b>	The charity is a company limited by guarantee and registered with the Charity Commission. It is operated under the rules of its memorandum and articles of association dated 18th January 2012. It has no share capital.

# Introductions

I am delighted to introduce the 2022/23 Annual Report for Friends for Life Bedfordshire (FFL).

I joined the Board in February 2022 because I could see the urgent need for the charity to expand its service provision and meet the growing need of older residents in care homes in Bedford.

In my early days with FFL I was fortunate to accompany a number of befriending volunteers on their visits to care home residents and I was humbled by their commitment and passion to improve the lives of their "friends". I have been able to speak to managers about the residents who they worry have no friends or families to visit and to better understand how lonely and isolating this can be.



I have seen for myself the power of music and poetry when performed for care home residents. In one session I attended, I noted that one resident did not engage at all until we began to sing a song they clearly knew and not only did they join in but they were able to sing every word. This is why we are so committed to expanding the scope and reach of our outreach activities to bring this way of interacting and enjoyment to residents.

All of our trustees work very hard, contributing their time and expertise to ensure that FFL is fully compliant with all regulations and equipped to continue to grow our service in scope and reach. We have experts in a range of areas including HR, IT, communications, care home management and are served by an excellent and longstanding treasurer.

Overall, it has been a busy and challenging period but I remain confident that FFL provides an essential service and that collectively, those involved are very well placed to continue to develop the scope and reach to help more of those residents in need.

## Terri Harrington, Chair



It has been a privilege to join Friends for Life as the General Manager working alongside our team of dedicated volunteers, staff and trustees to address the social isolation and loneliness of residents in Bedford's care homes. The immediate focus, coming into role, was joining with the team and Board of Trustees in an Awayday to set our priorities for addressing this need and agree our Business Plan, which sets the direction of the charity for the next three years. Our energy has been focussed on building and supporting our team of volunteers; thanks go to our Volunteer Lead who has worked tirelessly to this end.

One of the main objectives during the year has been to embed our new impact tool, and we have seen a significant increase in recorded contacts with residents. Our Administrator has been key in supporting the embedding of the tool and our surveys. Our Interim Fundraising Lead has built on the work of our Fundraising Lead, to secure funding for maintaining our core service. We thank our supporters for allowing us to continue our work.

Our Outreach Worker set the foundations for our group activities and recruiting outreach volunteers. We are now working with local schools to facilitate new partnerships with care homes. We have connections with an increasing number of care homes and thank them for welcoming our volunteers and working with us to develop new activities for residents.

We have engaged in community events to raise awareness and participated in key networks so that our services are developed alongside partners in health and social care. Without our volunteers, we would not be able to provide our services and we give our thanks for their enormous contribution. We look forward to the next year with a clear roadmap for continuous improvement of our services, developing new partnerships and extending our reach to the residents of Bedford's care homes, confident in the value of our service.

## Jane Eimermann, General Manager

# Our organisation

## History

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

From small beginnings in 2007 as a charitable project organised by local churches, FFL became a limited company in 2012 and a registered charity in 2015.

## What is special about Friends for Life?

FFL is well known in Bedford as the provider of a unique and valued service to older residents in care homes. Since its inception in 2007, we have demonstrated resilience and flexibility by adapting our provision as required (particularly when face to face visits were not allowed during Covid) and our more recent development of outreach activities is already being well received.

We are the only befriending service supporting older residents in care homes in Bedfordshire and there are few equivalent services elsewhere in the UK. We have an ever growing team of trained and dedicated volunteers who we match to residents ensuring a tailored and personalised service. We match residents to befrienders as closely as possible by considering background and interests, this supports the building of real friendships which is of mutual benefit to volunteers and residents.

In a recent survey one of our Volunteers summarised this well:

*FFL is a local charity, tackling an otherwise unmet need in the community. If interacting personally with other people is your thing, building a rapport with someone you did not know previously and providing company to that person, then give it a try!*

The focus and commitment of our volunteers, staff and trustees is recognised and we have an excellent reputation for caring and providing high quality support. In our survey, one of the care home managers said:

*FFL are an invaluable service that provide vital services to those within care settings who may not have the opportunity to engage with the outside/local community. The organisers/management team at FFL are so friendly and helpful, they really care about the role they play in enhancing people's lives. ... A huge "thank you" from us all !!*

## The need for our service

FFL aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness, which are prevalent issues for older people, particularly in care homes. This is supported by research as shown below.

- When considering loneliness in old age the NHS website states: *“Older people are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation – and it can have a serious effect on health, ...it's shockingly easy to be left feeling alone and vulnerable, which can lead to depression and a serious decline in physical health and wellbeing.”*
- *“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.
- In their 2021 publication ‘Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older People: Advocacy Brief’, the World Health Organisation state: *“Social isolation and loneliness among older people are growing public health and public policy concerns which have been made more salient by the COVID-19 pandemic.”*
- A 2021 article in the British Medical Journal concluded: *“The prevalence of severe loneliness among older people living in care homes is at least double that of community-dwelling populations: 22%–42% for the care population compared with 10% for the community population”*. It goes on to say, *“But the evidence highlighting this issue is limited and a neglected area of research”*.

### Increase in need

The number of residents in need of our services is growing. Age UK estimates that the number of older people who often experience loneliness will increase to two million by 2026 (All the Lonely People – Loneliness in Later Life – 2018)

To better understand the extent of the problem locally, in 2021 FFL undertook a survey of the care homes we support. This suggested that 1 in 3 of their residents have few or no visitors and, consequently are at significant risk of being lonely and/or feeling socially isolated. This ties in with the British Medical Journal research outlined above and the findings from a Freedom of Information request to Bedford Borough Council which stated that there are 1600 residents aged 65+ in local Care Homes of which 465 are deemed to be in need.

The residents we target for support include those who have no family, have family living a long way away or, have family who do not visit them. Their hearing and/or sight may be less than perfect and some will be on the pathway to, or suffering from, dementia. The increase in care services to enable people to stay in their own homes as they grow older means that the residential care sector is increasingly coping with those who have higher support needs at a time when recruitment is difficult and staff turnover is notoriously high. Care homes are busy places, staff may have limited time to sit, listen and engage with residents, which is where we come in.

## Our mission

FFL recognises the negative impact loneliness has on a person's wellbeing and the harm isolation can cause to physical and mental wellbeing. We work to alleviate this through our mission which states:

Friends for Life works in partnership with care homes in Bedford providing ongoing friendship and improving the wellbeing of otherwise socially isolated residents.

## Our strategic aims

The Board and staff of FFL have spent time considering our strategic aims as we move towards expanding the scope and reach of our service provision.

To highlight the issue of **social isolation** and **collaborate** with care homes, partners, community groups etc to reduce the disconnect between older residents in care homes and the community.

To be **inclusive** in delivering befriending to all socially isolated care home residents in Bedford (referred to us) to decrease their isolation, provide intellectual stimulation, broaden their social circle and enhance their wellbeing.

To recruit and maintain a **diverse and dedicated** team of volunteers who are trained and matched with individual residents to meet their individual needs to enrich their level of social interaction and increase their contact with the community.

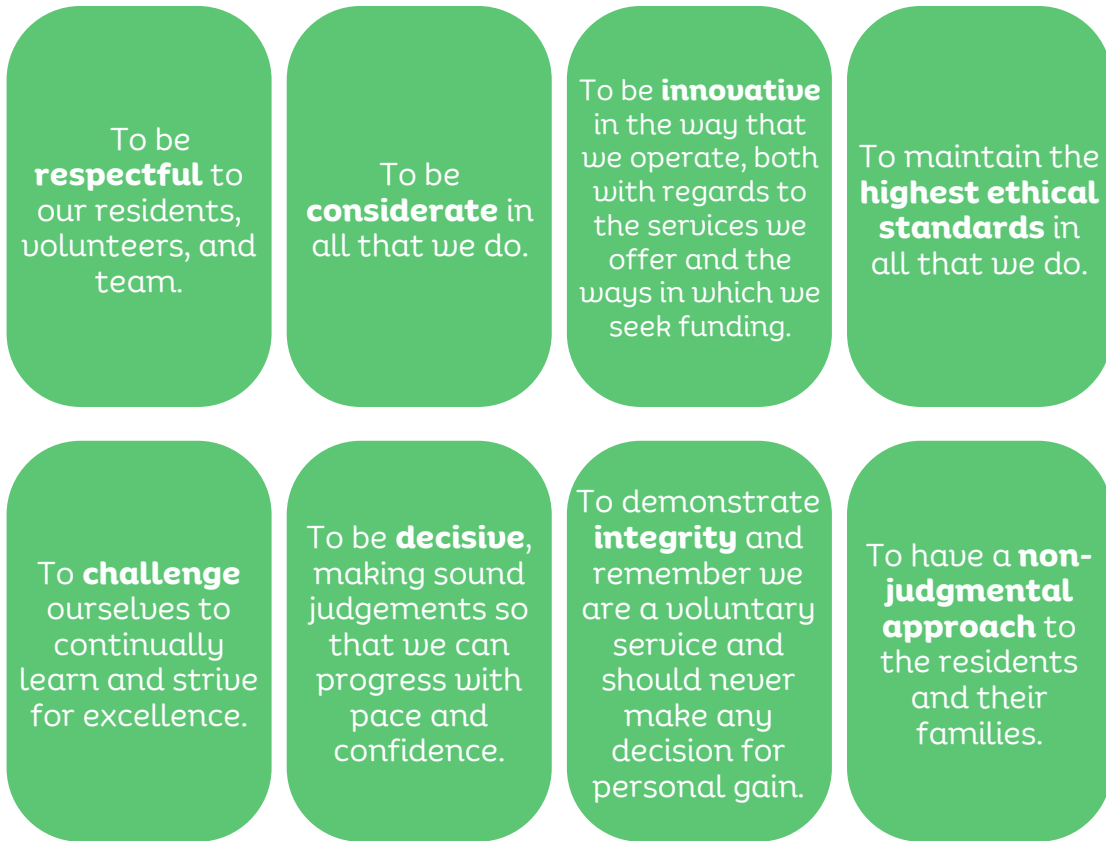
To **promote and support** additional services and activities through **partnerships** with schools, colleges and businesses, through sponsorships of events, donations of resources and materials to augment activities and cultural experiences for residents within care homes.

To **continuously improve our services**, whilst ensuring they are fully compliant with the latest regulations.

To provide our volunteers, staff and trustees with ongoing **learning opportunities** and maintain a high level of **communication** across our community to promote engagement and provide ongoing support.

## Our values

Staff and trustees have also developed a set of values which underpin the delivery of our service:



## Challenges

It is a tough time for everyone in the charity sector given the high cost of living, limited funding for multiple important causes and everyone's increasingly busy lives.

FFL is competing against other important causes (both locally and nationally) for funding and directly demonstrating the positive impact of our service is complicated by a high proportion of our recipients having cognitive challenges. Consequently, it may not be possible to ask many of them directly how valuable the support we provide to them is and must rely on feedback from others to demonstrate this.

Demonstrating impact is essential to be successful in bidding for grants so we have been working hard to find ways to show why our service is so important. We have been extremely fortunate in receiving several grants to support expansion of our service.

Our target population are older residents, sometimes close to end of life. Strong friendships form between our volunteers and the residents they befriend and following the inevitable passing of residents, there is a direct and lasting impact on the volunteers. Our volunteer numbers also vary as often a sabbatical (or time out) is needed before the befriender of a resident who has died is ready to offer friendship to someone new.

We plan to expand our service as currently we are only able to befriend around 1 in 4 of the estimated number of residents who would benefit from befriending. To support an increased number of residents we need to recruit, train, match and support an increasing number of volunteers and this requires additional staff resource which in turn requires additional funding.



## Service provision

We provide the following suite of services.

### Providing one-to-one befrienders

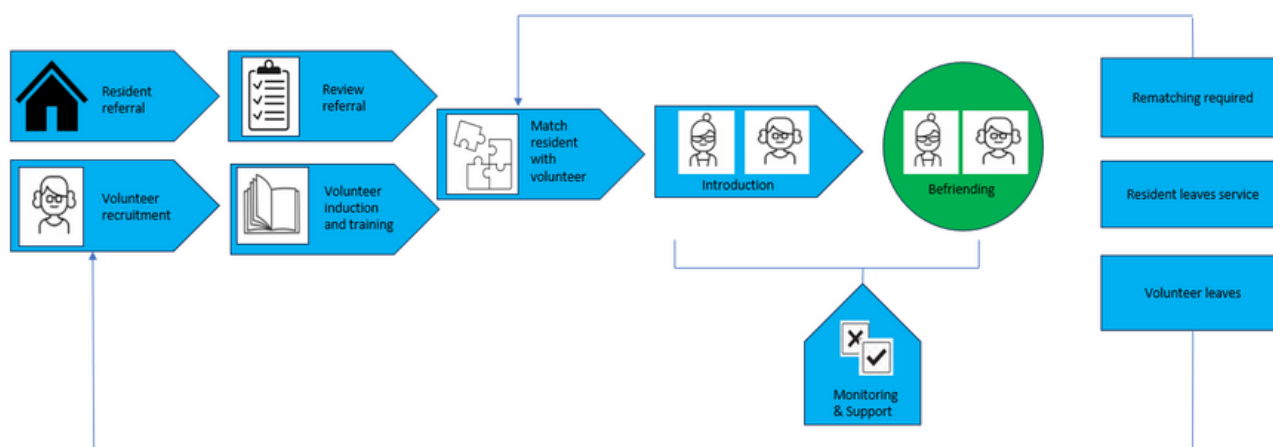
We **recruit and train** volunteers to offer friendship and company to residents who would otherwise have no or few visitors.

We **match** volunteers to residents by considering their backgrounds, interests, health conditions etc - this is essential to encourage close friendships to develop.

We **develop** and maintain a close relationship with care home managers who identify residents at risk of loneliness and provide us with ongoing guidance, support and feedback on the friendships we provide.

We have **comprehensive insurance** to cover our volunteers during their visits and to allow residents to be taken on short trips outside of the homes where appropriate.

We **support** our volunteers with ongoing training, support, social interaction and by encouraging the development of a strong network. Our coffee mornings, Christmas and Summer parties and training events are all very well attended.



### Outreach provision

- Following the successful outreach activity of providing “robopets” and supplying craft materials to care homes, new partnerships with care homes have emerged. For example, we supported the Place Theatre in the provision of “Timeless Tales”.
- Provision of group wellbeing activities: Some care homes are fortunate to have space and resource to organise a programme of activities. Others do not have the resources (staff or money) to invest so our outreach service is even more crucial.



- FFL outreach volunteers: we recruit and train outreach volunteers to undertake activities with residents which could include activities such as music (instruments and singing), spoken entertainment (poetry and literature readings).
- Working in partnership: we link up with local businesses to tap into their “corporate volunteering”. We facilitate partnerships and connections between schools, colleges and care homes.
- Pilots: we pilot new activities and partnerships in response to the need identified by care homes.

## Evaluating our service

The staff and trustees of FFL understand the importance of assessing the value of the service we provide. This is particularly important in support of our grant applications.

The Mercers Co. produced a report in 2021 entitled “Understanding Befriending – A Study of Befriending Schemes for Older People”. This concludes that organisations involved in befriending for older people should be confident in the value of the befriending relationship in and of itself and make this the focus of their work. The report found that befriending makes those involved feel better by providing a meaningful and ongoing personal relationship. This was backed up in our recent survey when, for example, one of our care home managers said:

*“The service offers the elderly some comfort and meaningful relationships and is a wonderful organisation”.* Care home manager

The report also concluded that evidence remains limited about the significance of the impact on loneliness, in part because of the time limited nature of the befriending relationships. It also emphasises the use of case studies and feedback from those involved to capture the beneficial impact of befriending.

To start to address this lack of evidence, FFL staff and trustees have been working collaboratively with an academic from the University of Manchester and a benefits expert to develop a view of the areas where we want our service to have the most impact. These are:

- **Promoting wellbeing** – this is the essence of the service we provide – encouraging increased social interaction with residents to improve the wellbeing of both residents and volunteers.
- **Promoting social responsibility** – our team of volunteers which includes, befrienders, outreach volunteers, trustees, and others (for instance a volunteer supports our social media) all demonstrate a high level of social responsibility through their work with FFL.
- **Credible delivery** – FFL is a professional “not for profit” organisation that must demonstrate the need for and positive impact of our services as well as ensuring we have all the necessary policies and procedures in place to support our staff and volunteers.

To begin to demonstrate our impact in these areas we have introduced several ways of assessing our service provision:

## Impact Tool

FFL introduced a phone-based impact tool in October 2022 to record befriender visits and enable us to understand how often each resident received a visit and the extent of their engagement with the volunteer during the visit.

The tool records basic information such as date, time, participants' names but also asks the volunteer to record, using our "smiley face" scale of 1-5, how the resident appears to be feeling at the start and end of the visit. We are then able to establish the number of residents who appear to be happier at the end of the visit and their level of engagement.

Given some of the residents who have befrienders have some type of cognitive impairment, it may not be possible to ask them whether they enjoy their visits and whether it makes a difference to their wellbeing.

A similar approach is used in some care homes to assess how their residents are feeling and use of the Impact Tool allows us to see if the visits have a positive impact. There is also a narrative box which allows the volunteers to record how the visit went.

We analyse data from the tool to identify trends in numbers of Volunteers who are active, frequency of visits as well as whether the visits appear to be having a positive impact.

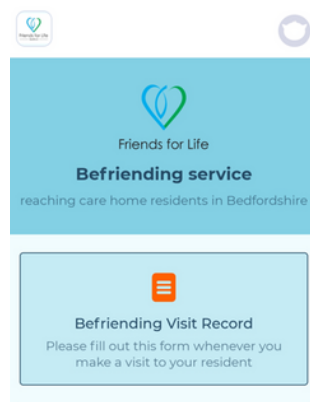
We provide a monthly summary of the percentage of residents who appear to be happier at the end of their visits which is consistently higher than 50%. When considering some of the residents are very happy to see the volunteer when they arrive this is an excellent indication of the value of the visits.

The monthly report also records the extent of engagement by residents which can vary due to individual circumstances and the health conditions of the residents. In the majority of cases, however, the residents are recorded as being actively involved in conversation.

## Surveys

To demonstrate the positive impact of our service provision, FFL worked with an expert in assessing benefits and an academic from the University of Manchester to develop and implement a survey of volunteers, care home managers, staff, and trustees. Careful consideration was given to whether to ask residents to complete the survey as well (where they were able) but it was decided that this wouldn't be appropriate for ethical reasons.

The first survey took place in May 2023. We plan to repeat every six months to map our progress over time. We had a reasonable take up of the first survey and learned a great deal from the process about which questions worked best and how to adapt in the future to better derive the information needed to continue to improve the service.



Please record how your resident was feeling at the beginning of your meet using the smiley face tool \*

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please record how your resident was feeling at the end of your session using the smiley face tool \*

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Tell us about the engagement with your resident today. Were they...

- Actively involved - conversing
- Quiet - listening but not necessarily engaging
- No engagement

The survey responses clearly show that we are having a beneficial impact on residents and volunteers, with over 70% of volunteers experiencing a slight or significant increase in their wellbeing because of their visits.

*"I think I get as much out of this as the lady I visit".* FFL volunteer

*"Volunteering will make you feel like you are making a contribution to society and brings a little joy to the person you visit!"* FFL volunteer

All care home managers agreed that one-to-one befriending has a positive impact on their residents.

*"Our involvement with FFL has had a very positive impact with many of our residents. We hope to continue working with FFL in the future".* Care home manager

A large proportion of our volunteers reported they were satisfied or very satisfied and no one is dissatisfied with the support provided by the FFL team. The support individuals found most useful varies, but includes the coffee mornings, training sessions, talking to other befrienders and the help available from the FFL team whenever needed.

*"I enjoy being part of the organisation. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have the necessary training which has been very helpful to develop my role as a befriender. I enjoy the autonomy, managing my own time, and space to be creative. Thank you to the kind, friendly staff for their support."* FFL volunteer

Most volunteers also said they would recommend volunteering for FFL to others. When we asked them why they volunteered we have a range of responses including:

*"For me, after retirement, volunteering gave me a purpose coincident with helping society at large."* FFL volunteer

*"Just to say thank you to everyone who set up and maintains the charity, as this enables people (like me) to do the Befriending in a safe and supported way."* FFL volunteer

We are very pleased with the output from our first survey and the suggestions which we will use to continue to improve our service. This will help us as we continue to expand our scope and provision.

## Funding

FFL is wholly reliant on the financial support we receive from a variety of sources, without which we would be unable to offer our services. We are very grateful for all grants and donations received and make sure 100% of these are used to support as many residents as possible.

Most of our funds are used to pay for our small, part-time, highly trained and resilient core staff team who are responsible for identifying volunteers, vetting and training them and matching them with the residents who need support. We also have a fundraising lead to ensure we attract the money required to pay for our service. Most people involved with FFL are volunteers and receive no payment for their time. We also need funding for the associated costs such as office accommodation, as well as room bookings for training, staff and trustee meetings.

FFL operates a professional service which ensures all required checks and balances are in place to protect both the residents and volunteers. Safeguarding is of primary importance when providing services to vulnerable individuals and it is our staff team who ensures everyone involved understands their responsibilities and has the support they need when potential issues arise.

During the year we have been grateful for grants and donations from a range of sources including:



We also received gifts from individuals, groups and “members” of FFL, as well as local churches, care homes, and businesses.

All these generous donations represent a pattern of support that goes back to our formation in 2007 and remain essential.

Of particular note during 2022/23 was the receipt of a grant of £64,000 from The Harpur Trust to fund the post of General Manager for 3 years, the receipt of £25,000 from the House of Industry (Bedford Borough Council) to fund an Outreach Worker for 2 years and £30,000 from the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation to support our ongoing work.

These grants have enabled us to increase our staff provision and, as demonstrated in the data in this report, begin a shift change in the number of residents we are able to support through befriending and outreach activities.

### The Big Give

For the first time this year, we’re taking part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge, the UK’s biggest match funding campaign.



We have already been successful in attracting pledges (promises of funds) and champion funding status, and will be seeking online donations from our supporters and the wider public when the campaign goes ‘live’ at the end of November.

## Our people

### Volunteers

FFL could not function without our volunteers. At the start of the period, we had only befriending volunteers, but we have now begun to attract others to support us in a range of roles, including outreach activity and developing our social media content. This has been essential to help FFL grow and expand our service provision.

We have feedback on how volunteering benefits not only our residents but the volunteers themselves.

*"What do I bring...? 1 hour a week where she can express her feelings freely, we can have a chat and a laugh, including sharing recipes with me in the hope that one day I might be a good cook! What do I get from the visits? A good laugh, fabulous recipes and tips and just a feeling of doing some good in life. Loneliness is the scourge of the 21st Century and we must invest and make time to ensure people are given hope."* FFL volunteer

We are increasingly attracting younger volunteers (<25 years old) to support our more mature team and are delighted that they are starting to develop their own network to provide friendship and support to each other.

### Ann and Leslie's friendship

*"I look forward to seeing Lesley, our friendship has grown and is very strong. She doesn't have any other visitors and I know how much she looks forward to our time together. When she laughs or holds my hand or tells me I'm her best friend and she loves me, I feel I'm making such a huge, positive influence to her day and I wish more lonely people could have the same."*



### Meet Richard



Richard is semi retired, still working part time and also volunteers as a mentor in local schools. His volunteering takes up 4-5 hours each week.

*"My visits to the care home for FFL gives me a good feeling of selflessness and I feel worthy about what I do there...it just gives me a 'warm glow' to know that I'm 'giving back' and making a difference to someone else's life through a very small sacrifice of my time. I feel very strongly that my visits have a positive effect on my friend's emotional well-being...a sort of calm contentedness, which will endure much longer than the memory of the visit."*

## Staff

We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated and highly professional part time team, who run our operation. This comprises of a General Manager Jane Eimermann (appointed in January 2023), a Volunteer Lead Pauline Carter, Administrator Alison Flashman and Fundraising Lead Kathryn Hughes.

Our thanks are due to them for their diligence, enthusiasm, and loyalty throughout the year. We particularly want to thank an outgoing member of the team, Charlie Fay, who was instrumental in providing our marketing and communication support and in beginning the work which is now part of our Outreach activity. We thank our Outreach Worker Alice Jennings (who supported out outreach activities between February and June 2023).

During the period, our Fundraising Lead took maternity leave and was temporarily replaced by George Ruston who not only kept the essential work going but also identified new and different approaches to raising the funds we require to maintain our business. Our thanks to him for his commitment and hard work.

## Meet our Volunteer Lead



Pauline Carter has been our Volunteer Lead since 2017. She has a professional background which includes 35 years as a qualified nurse, where she worked the majority of her career in district nursing and palliative care at St John's Hospice, Moggerhanger.

At the hospice, Pauline worked first as a nurse, and later as practice educator, providing both generic and specialist training for internal and external healthcare. She also gained significant experience of working with, and training, volunteers.

She has degrees in both Psychology and Community Nursing, as well as a PGCE, qualifying her as a teacher. Her community nursing roles brought her into close contact with local care homes and their residents, many of whom were socially isolated. For the past 5 years she has also been a Samaritan's Listening Volunteer, which has given her considerable experience and training in supporting and befriending the lonely, sad and marginalised. Pauline has been able to bring many transferable skills and experiences into her FFL role to ensure her current volunteers are well trained, supported and valued for their vital work.

## Trustees

The trustees of FFL are also volunteers and those who have been in post since April 2022 have had to spend a great deal of their personal time introducing a broad range of changes so FFL was able to begin the process of expanding the scope and breadth of our service provision.

Until the appointment of the General Manager, Trustees directly oversaw the day-to-day operation of FFL as well as introducing a new payroll and pensions scheme for staff, moving FFL onto a more sustainable IT system, developing, and implementing new policies and procedures and engaging with a broad range of third parties to support fundraising.

Special thanks are due to our outgoing Trustees during this period – Frances Parry, Ray Reed and Ken Barber and we extend a grateful welcome to our new Trustees who are working hard to ensure their excellent work is continued. We would also like to thank Mike Elliott, our Treasurer who has been with FFL for many years and who manages our finances with efficiency and rigour.

### Meet a trustee

Sarah Walker is one of our Trustees and has a background in communications, engagement and media and public relations. She brings this expertise to the Board where she's served for 18 months, and now fulfils the role of Vice Chair.

Living locally, she has been keen to improve FFL's image and reputation with stakeholders, develop the fundraising support and promote the charity's activities on new social media channels.



### Partners and Patrons

We are fortunate to have established relationships with a range of local businesses, schools and other organisations and thank them for working with us and with care homes in Bedford.

We are grateful to our local MP, Mohammad Yasin who joined FFL volunteers, trustees and staff on a visit to Southway care home in April 23.



We are also grateful to our existing patrons (Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford and Rt Rev Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans) for their continuing support and to Susan Lousada the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, who has kindly agreed to give her support as one of our patrons.





# Friends for Life in 2022/23

<p>8 induction (Welcome) days</p>		<p>53 residents were matched with volunteers</p>	
<p><i>"It has improved my confidence learning about the care home system and communicating with residents using an empathetic approach"</i></p>	<p>22 new volunteers trained</p>	<p><i>"Our friendship has grown and is very strong. She doesn't have any visitors and I know how much she looks forward to our visits"</i></p>	<p>There were 345 contacts between residents and volunteers</p>
<p>41 residents were referred to FFL</p>		<p>We hosted volunteer coffee mornings, held a Christmas Party and a social/training event</p>	
<p><i>"FFL can hugely enhance the lives of people through their befriending and support"</i></p>	<p>We visited residents in 24 care homes and 2 sheltered housing complexes</p>	<p><i>"we complete jigsaws, play noughts and crosses...and our favourite activity is to bake together"</i></p>	<p>75% of residents were observed to be actively engaged in visits</p>



# Our plans

## Our plans

The staff and trustees of FFL have been working together to develop a Business Plan which sets out our ambitions for the next 3 years. This is to underpin our commitment to expanding the reach of our service as far as possible.

In this plan we set challenging targets for increasing the number of befriending volunteers and the residents they are able to support, extending the scope of the outreach services we are piloting and developing a broader range of volunteering opportunities to make these as inclusive as possible. We also want to increase the number of care homes to which we provide services as we currently support only half of those in Bedford Borough with older residents.

We are continuing with our work to understand the impact of the work we do and making our evaluation more meaningful. We will be conducting a “survey of need” with care homes to better understand how we can target our resources as effectively as possible. We will also be working with researchers to add to the literature in relevant topics such as the impact of befriending on loneliness and social isolation. This will enable FFL to demonstrate the need for our service and help others to better understand this.

We are working very hard to identify and target new funders to ensure we can continue to grow our staff team to support the increasing numbers of volunteers and residents.

Our Business Plan is challenging and ambitious but underpins our commitment to continuing to expand the scope and reach of our crucial service and enable us to fulfil our mission.

## Summary

Since the 2021/22 Annual Report, FFL has continued its post-pandemic recovery, grown and improved its service and further strengthened its fundraising, and governance.

Like all charities, it's been a challenging couple of years for FFL, for the care homes, and older residents we serve. This report demonstrates the progress we have made in increasing both our staff team and the scope of the fully safeguarded service we provide. The evaluation work we've carried out, the improved governance, and rigorous work on policies and procedures are further evidence of an increasingly robust approach.

With the ongoing support of our funders, we are confident we can continue our journey to help reduce loneliness and social isolation for older residents in Bedford's Care Homes.

## Accounts 2022/23

### Notes to the Accounts - 2022/23

- 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 eleventh year of the Company's operation. Assets from the Company's forerunner (an Anglican/Methodist joint project) were transferred to the new Company on 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 December 2023. As our income exceeded £25,000, there is a requirement to also file the accounts with the Charity Commission by January 31st 2024.
- 5) Accounts were filed this year with HMRC, our 3 year exemption having terminated. We now have a further 3 year exemption and 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 Jan 2022. An additional savings account is linked to the current account to separately hold the Reserves Fund and any short term surplus. A small amount of interest (currently 1.5%) 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) As a result of discussions with our broker FFL insurance cover was put into the hands of Q Underwriting Services Limited (Aviva Insurance Limited).
- 9) During the year most contract staff opted to transfer to employee status. The calculation of the monthly payroll was put in the hands of Haines Watts who in turn use the National Employment and Savings Trust (NEST) for employee pension provision. Some support work is still bought-in on a contract basis.
- 10) Since 2019 an office has been rented in the CVS building at 43 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2AA. This is also our Registered Office.
- 11) The Company Directors/Trustees 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 2023

Note: Debit balances are shown in parenthesis

	2022/23		2021/22	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Tangible Assets</b>				
Office Equipment, furniture & computers	2,098.90		3,442.00	
<b>Non-tangible Assets</b>	0.00		0.00	
Cash in hand	17,643.30		23,032.14	
HSBC Business Current a/c March 31st	26,364.44		16,291.13	
HSBC Business Money Manager a/c March 31st	0.00		0.00	
	<u>46,106.64</u>		<u>42,765.27</u>	
Add debtors, loans and prepayments	-			
Less: creditors and provisions	(395.45)		(2,834.23)	
		<u>45,711.19</u>		<u>39,931.04</u>
		<u><u>45,711.19</u></u>		<u><u>39,931.04</u></u>
 Represented by:				
Brought forward from previous year	39,931.04		34,562.69	
Plus: excess of income over expenditure	5,780.15		5,368.35	
		<u>45,711.19</u>		<u>39,931.04</u>
		<u><u>45,711.19</u></u>		<u><u>39,931.04</u></u>

# Income and expenditure account

for the year ended 31st March 2023

	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
	<b>Examined</b>	<b>Examined</b>
	<b>(Accruals Acct.)</b>	<b>(Accruals Acct.)</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Membership Fees	340.00	295.00
Unrestricted Grants	24,450.00	41,000.00
Restricted Grants	28,072.00	10,200.00
Donations	2,916.90	5,239.64
Fundraising Events	337.29	400.00
Interest on Reserve Account	73.31	1.85
Other Income	-	-
Total Incoming Resources	<b>56,189.50</b>	<b>57,136.49</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Contractor Fees	10,641.25	27,435.00
Staff Salaries	24,272.25	-
Employee Deductions (PAYE, NIC, Pensions)	1,578.26	-
Employer Costs (PAYE, NEST etc)	1,373.63	-
DBS and Trainer/Welcome costs	937.00	898.53
Publicity and Website	913.90	906.81
Insurance, HSBC Fees and Database	1,268.67	1,090.71
All Travel	484.50	160.45
Resources and Miscellaneous Expenses	1,151.42	686.52
Office Rent, Phones, Stationery, Postage etc	4,616.17	4,573.95
Non Budget Expenses	1,829.20	15,447.07
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>50,409.35</b>	<b>51,768.14</b>
<b>Income less Expenditure</b>	<b>5,780.15</b>	<b>5,368.35</b>
	<b>56,189.50</b>	<b>57,136.49</b>

## Reserve account - balance and transfers

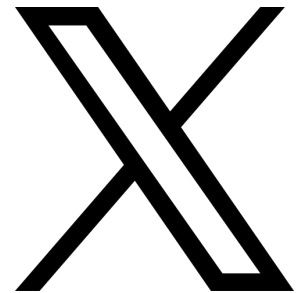
### for the year ended 31st March 2023

(This account is classed as Designated but Unrestricted)

	<b>2022/23</b> <b>£</b> <b>Examined</b> <b>(Accruals Acct.)</b>	<b>2021/22</b> <b>£</b> <b>Examined</b> <b>(Accruals Acct.)</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Transfers from General Account	10,000.00	-
Interest Added	73.31	1.85
Other Income	0.00	0.00
Total Incoming Resources	10,073.31	1.85
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Transfer to General Account	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Income less Expenditure</b>	<b>10,073.31</b>	<b>1.85</b>
<b>Previous Balance Brought Forward</b>	<b>16,291.13</b>	<b>16,289.28</b>
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>26,364.44</b>	<b>16,291.13</b>



[hello@friendsforlife.org.uk](mailto:hello@friendsforlife.org.uk)



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