



Friends for Life
— Bedford —

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023/24







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

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General information

Name	Friends for Life Bedfordshire
Registered Charity Number	1165730
Registered Company Number	7951058
Registered Office	43 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2AA
Directors (trustees)	Keyur Bhatt, Dominic Carter, Harjinder Singh Gosal, Terri Harrington (Chair), Nafiz Hasnat, Neil Khandke (Vice Chair), Sangeetha Nanda Kumar, Michael Ridley (Vice Chair), Sarah Walker, Helen Wheatley, Paul Wilson
Patrons	Rt Rev Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford, Rt Rev Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans and Susan Lousada, HM Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire
Independent Examiner	Ian Farthing
Banker	HSBC
Governance and Management	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.

67 volunteers reported visits to 83 residents		We received 55 resident referrals	
Our volunteers recorded 1083 visits in 2023/24	82% of residents were actively involved in their visits	93% of residents were happy to see their friend	Our volunteers visited 30 care settings
5 volunteers were involved in wellbeing visits		41 new volunteers were trained at 7 induction (Welcome) days	
22 wellbeing visits were recorded	270 residents were present at wellbeing visits	We hosted 7 coffee meetings for volunteers	We had a Christmas party and put on a specialist training day

Chair's Overview

I have been privileged to lead the charity since 2022, and in this time have seen some significant changes to the way in which we operate and the effectiveness of our partnerships with our stakeholders.

As a small charity that evolved gradually since its inception in 2007, some of the rigour of robust governance, evaluation of service provision and good data management was not as present as it is in larger charities. Since becoming Chair, I have therefore worked with my talented board and exceptional staff to make these areas a real focus and am now confident that our policies, processes and ways of working are more than adequate to ensure safe oversight and management of our services.



Due to the multi-year grants provided by funders, we have been able to bring on new staff, including a manager, and this has enabled us to form stronger partnerships with, and increase our understanding of, the care homes and residents we support. This in turn means we have tailored our service provision to better suit their needs.

Our work with schools and colleges especially excites me because bringing together the elderly and young benefits both groups and ensures our youngsters understand the importance of respect and community contributions. This will continue to shape their lives as they get older and take their place in society.

As the demand for our service continues to grow, we have ambitious plans to recruit more volunteers and form new partnerships to meet the need and ensure we can alleviate loneliness and social isolation for as many residents in our care homes as possible. It is very pleasing that the response to our recent survey has been so positive, demonstrating the significant impact our service has on elderly residents.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of our funders and the ongoing commitment of our existing volunteers, staff, trustees and partners.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved with or supported FFL in the last year and who continue to do so.

Terri Harrington, Chair

History

Friends for Life Bedfordshire (FFL) works to support residents in local care homes (primarily in Bedford Borough). We aim to help meet their needs by providing friendship for residents at risk of social isolation and facilitating activities to improve wellbeing. We achieve this through a programme of volunteer one-to-one befriending relationships and a wellbeing 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 charitable company in 2012 and was registered with the Charity Commission in 2016.

What is special about Friends for Life?

FFL is well known in Bedford as the provider of a unique and valued service to socially isolated residents in care homes for the elderly. 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 wellbeing activities is being well received.

We are the only befriending service supporting residents in care homes for the elderly 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, interests and language, this supports the building of real friendships which is of mutual benefit to both residents and volunteers.

Our developing wellbeing programme supplements our befriending service by bringing together volunteer individuals and organisations to provide activities within care homes for groups of residents.

In a recent survey one of our partner care homes summarised this well:

"FFL are wonderful! They provide an invaluable service to combat loneliness and spread positivity.

All the volunteers that have visited us have been kind, caring and respectful. The residents receiving the visits have been engaged and animated during the visits.

Matching people to their cultural needs has really supported the residents' sense of self and promoted their identity.

Providing volunteers who can speak the native tongue of the resident supports them to engage in a meaningful way and allows the Care Home to address any concerns or requests that the resident may have effectively.

Our FFL volunteers have helped create a mini allotment, supported with language difficulties, acted as interpreters for formal meetings, brought pets in, brought home-made Irish treats in and, generally, reduced distress and agitation in those they visit.

We would like to thank FFL and our visiting volunteers for the care and dedication they show to the people we look after." Care Home Manager

Our strategy

In the last 12 months the board of trustees has focussed on reviewing our strategic aims and values as well as developing a strategic framework to help support the delivery of activities of the charity into the future. Having a clear strategic framework is fundamental to delivering the charitable purposes set out in our articles of association.

Our Charitable Objectives (as defined in our articles of association) are:

To relieve the needs of people in care homes and other similar establishments within the unitary boroughs of Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton or any area previously defined as being within the county of Bedfordshire by any or all of the following:

- Developing schemes for befriending residents.
- Assisting such homes in meeting the spiritual needs of residents, in particular to help them in meeting the statutory requirements in this field.

FFL recognises the negative impact loneliness has and the harm isolation can cause to physical and mental wellbeing. As part of the development of a strategic framework the Board has developed a vision for the charity to complement our existing mission statement which was reconfirmed.

Our vision

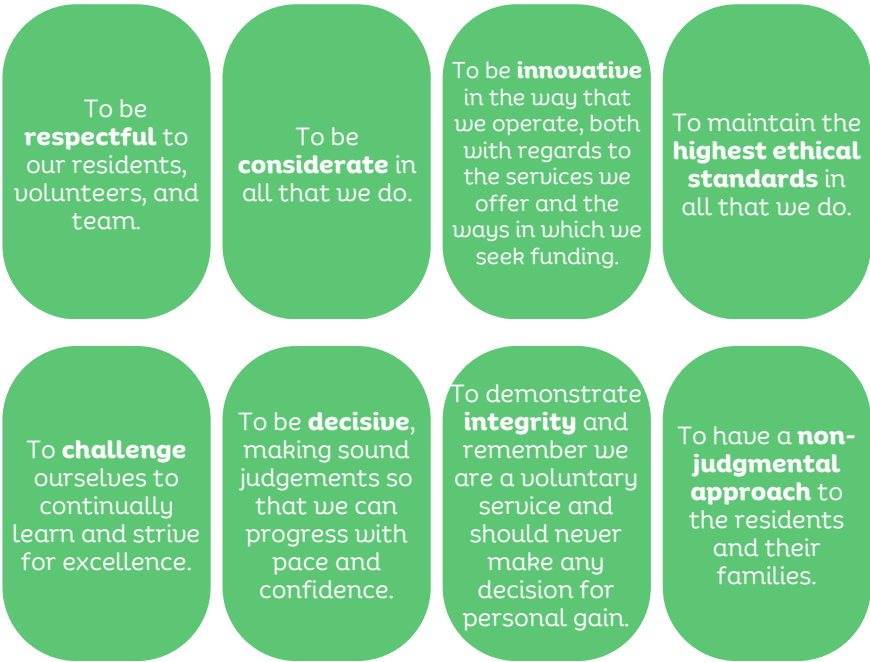
To shine a light on the impact of loneliness in care home residents in Bedford and ensure we enhance their wellbeing by keeping them connected to the community

Our mission

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

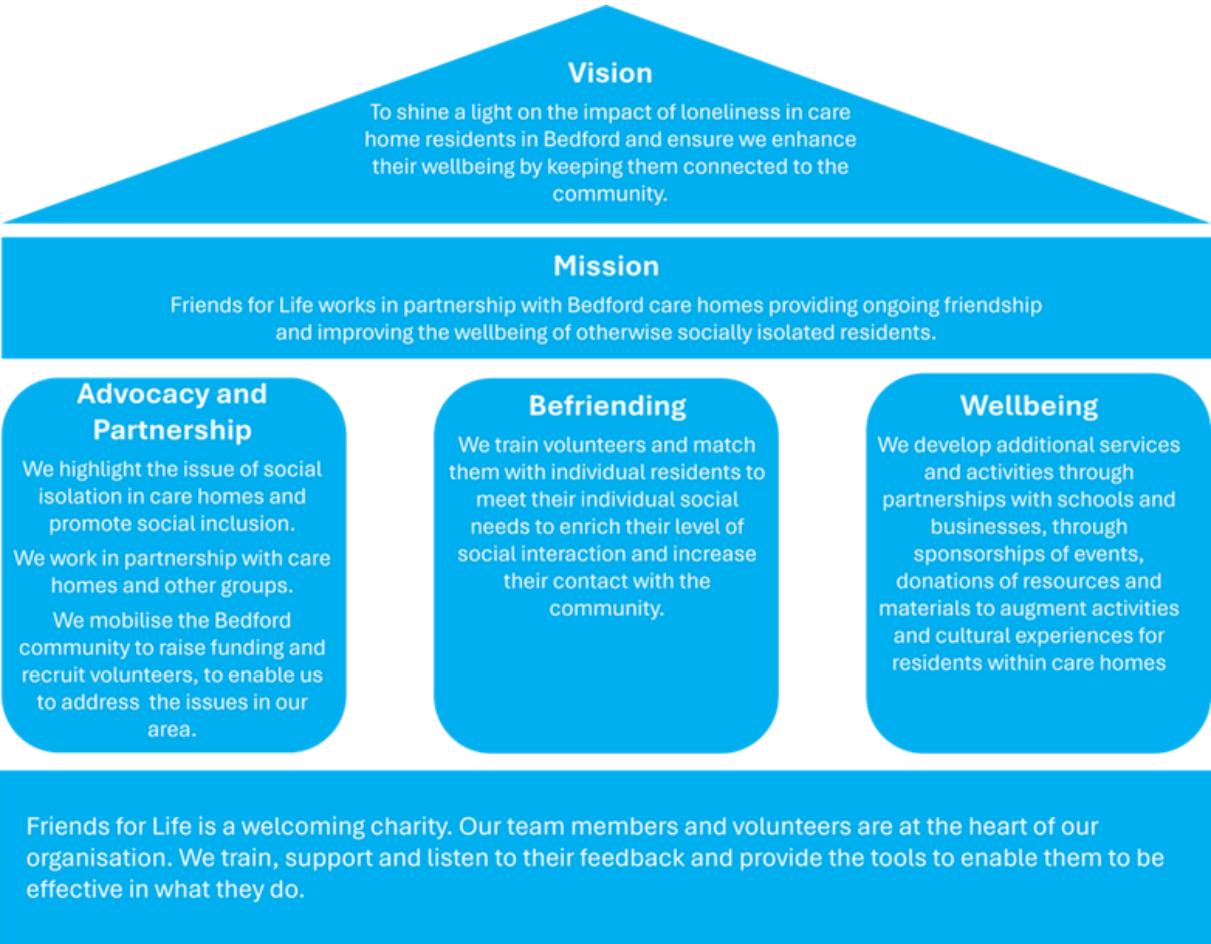
Our values

In 2024, the Board reaffirmed our values which are:



Our strategic framework

Our vision and mission are delivered through three strategic work areas defined in our strategic framework.



Befriending

At the core of our service is our unique befriending activity.

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 vet, 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 monitor the impact of our befriending through regular surveys and using an impact tool which our volunteers use to record each visit to their resident.

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.

In 2024 we carried out a survey across the care homes we support to evaluate the impact of our services, the results of which are presented later in this report.

Advocacy and partnership

By working with partners across the borough, our stakeholders and supporters and through our website we aim to highlight the issue of loneliness and social isolation in care homes. This activity is critical in obtaining the required funding and attracting the volunteers who are at the core of delivering our vital services.

Impact of Loneliness on the Elderly

To better understand the likely impact of our service provision on the residents we serve, during 2023/24, we commissioned a review of all published literature relating to loneliness and social isolation in the elderly and the observed impact of a range of interventions including befriending and group activities on improving wellbeing.

The resulting paper which is entitled “Understanding Loneliness in the Elderly: An Overview” has proven to be extremely helpful in the Board’s strategic planning for the development of our service. The paper has been posted to our website and can be found at [Impact of Loneliness on the Elderly: An Overview](#).

Our research confirms that “Loneliness significantly impacts both physical and mental health later in life, leading to an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, depression, dementia, anxiety, and cognitive decline, which in turn can raise the likelihood of mortality” (Ong et al., 2015; Luanaigh, 2008)”. This is what we aim to combat with our befriending and wellbeing services.

In considering the impact of moving into a care home, our research finds “Elderly individuals transitioning to nursing homes often confront emotional challenges, particularly when this move follows the loss of a partner. This significant change in their living environment can result in decreased family support and fewer visits from friends, leading to a decline in the intimacy of these relationships. Consequently, these individuals may experience heightened

feelings of stress, vulnerability and loneliness” (Sya’diyah et al., 2020; Russell et al., 1997; Pitkälä, 2016).

The research also highlights that individuals with dementia are particularly prone to loneliness and, when this is linked to our survey data which shows c 75% of residents in our care homes suffer from some sort of cognitive impairment, this further highlights the hidden crisis in our community and the need for our services to reduce the impact of loneliness in care homes.

The research on befriending interventions has shown promising results across a range of studies, including elderly people in care homes, individuals living with dementia and diverse older populations. The key benefits identified in these studies include enhancement in overall wellbeing, reduction in feelings of loneliness, and alleviation of social isolation. Additional benefits include regular social interaction, breaking up daily monotony, enhancing life purpose and community connectivity. It also usefully highlights some ways to enhance the benefit of befriending which have helped us consider how we ensure our befriending relationships have the optimal positive impact.

The overall conclusion of the research is unsurprisingly that a varied provision of interventions aimed at reducing loneliness is likely to be more successful than just focussing on one area. This supports FFL’s plans to continue to develop our range of wellbeing activities including intergenerational engagement, to ensure we can meet the needs of a wider proportion of care home residents at risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Wellbeing

During the year we have piloted several approaches to delivering wellbeing activities to residents in our care homes. We have been evaluating each of these pilots as we have delivered them to enable us to identify those which have the most positive impact on the residents involved.

The pilots include:

- Individual volunteers visiting care homes to play instruments or read poems to groups of residents. This has proven very popular with increasing numbers of residents taking part in the activities as the weeks have progressed.
- Corporate volunteering where a group from National Highways visited a care home to do some gardening went down well.
- A “Drop In” project ran from July to August where pairs of volunteers visited short-stay residents weekly. This engagement with those residents only expected to stay temporarily in the home and hence have limited time to form close relationships was very successful.
- The Schools Project: during the period we worked with several schools and colleges:

Almost 100 students from Bedford College worked in groups to nurture a peace lily for an individual named resident in a care home. The students sent the residents letters, pictures and cards using the knowledge they had of the residents’ interests and past lives, and then visited the resident to present the plant and chat to them. This was an extremely successful pilot, and we have already begun planning a successor, including opportunities for students to have much greater ongoing engagement with residents.

Around 40 boys from Bedford School visit residents in 3 care homes on a weekly basis where they took part in organised activities/played music and generally engaged with the residents. This pilot has also been very successful with positive feedback from the care homes involved – for instance one care home staff member said: *“The home is extremely impressed by the maturity of the boys. Their communication skills are very good, they have*

high levels of empathy and can tune into the needs of the residents. They are very respectful and portray themselves as keen to give back to the community and are prepared to get stuck in. The residents enjoy their visits, and it is evident that residents and students find the engagement a positive experience”.

This pilot is being expanded from January 2025 and we are also looking to train and match 3 pairs of boys with individual residents as “befrienders”.

Biddenham School – a visit was organised for one group of students to a local care home. This went very well with positive feedback from both the school and the care home. We are now developing a much broader opportunity for 6th formers from the school to visit local care homes weekly and for one group of students to have regular engagement with a home to support their Health and Social Care curriculum.



“There was a great deal of excitement when receiving letters and gifts and the fact it was for them was very positive and made them feel valued. One resident said he couldn't believe how many letters he got and it provides a window to the outside world”. Care Home Manager

“How nice it was to be able to converse with people of a different generation. It was nice to hear the differences between our lives and our resident but also that after all those years between there were still similarities. It was enjoyable to watch how different groups interacted with their pen pals and how connections can be made through simple conversations”. Student

“There way everyone connected on the visit was lovely – residents really benefited from the students visiting. They were surprised the younger people would want to come and spend time with them – one of the residents said “so kind the younger generation took the time out to visit”. Activities Co-ordinator

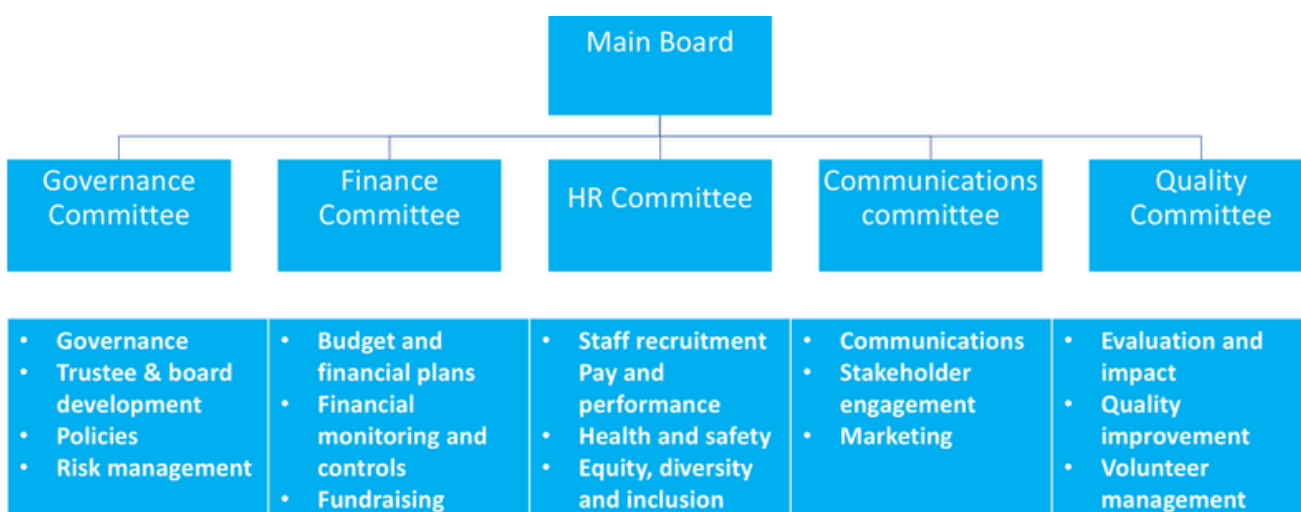
- We have ambitious plans for expanding our wellbeing activities including a collaboration between FFL, Tibbs Dementia Foundation and The Place Theatre. Our joint aim is to alleviate loneliness and social isolation through a programme of “Music for Memory” and “Timeless Tales” for residents in at lead 6 care homes per year. We are currently seeking funding for this activity.

Board of trustees and governance

To be effective in our work we rely on a small, dedicated part time staff team who carry out fundraising, manage our volunteers and residents, set up our group activities and undertake our administration. Our dedicated board of trustees helps to oversee the running of the charity and work closely with our team members to optimise the skills and experience across our combined team.

In January 2024 the board conducted a self-assessment of its effectiveness against the Charity Governance Code. This was used to identify priorities for actions to help develop and strengthen our governance. Reflecting those priorities, we have:

- Updated and strengthened the induction process for newly appointed trustees, including revising our Trustee Induction Guide, and offering support through mentoring. New trustees also undertake our volunteer training and shadow a volunteer on a befriending visit.
- Ensured that all trustees have recently undertaken external training to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities, through training offered by CVS Bedfordshire and ICAEW.
- Arranged two strategy days for trustees, to provide additional time for more in depth strategic reflections and discussions
- Introduced a formal scheme of delegation, empowering and enabling timely and effective action by trustees, volunteers and staff working in partnership for the benefit of the charity and its beneficiaries.
- Established five committees of the Board with delegated powers to oversee and support specific functions, working closely with staff. The committees are:
 - Finance, Budget, and Resources
 - Quality, Training and Evaluation
 - Communications, Marketing, and Stakeholders
 - People and Human Resources
 - Governance, Risk, and Policies



Funding

FFL can only provide services in Bedford because of the income we receive from our generous funders and supporters. We are very grateful for all support we receive as this is fundamental in enabling our befrienders to provide company to socially isolated care home residents and to fund the development of our wellbeing activities.

94% of our income comes from grants (48% Restricted and 46% Unrestricted), awarded by Trusts and Foundations. Membership fees, individual donations (including GiftAid) and online Giving Funds, such as, PayPal Giving Fund, also contribute.

During 2023/4 we were supported by the following Trusts and Foundations:

William Butterfield Trust	Souter Charitable Trust
St John's Hospital Trust	Bedfordshire Charitable Trust
Wixamtree Trust	Albert Hunt Trust
Prince of Wales Charitable Fund	Allan Lane Foundation
Gale Family Charity Trust	The Harpur Trust
Marsh Charitable Trust	The House of Industry Estate
Municipal Charities	Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation

During 2023, we also took part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge which raised £2000.

We are also grateful for more recent funding from:

The Connolly Foundation	McCarthy Stone Foundation
Postcode Places Trust	The John Apthorp Charity
National Lottery Awards for All	Care Home Volunteers
Wixamtree Trust	

The income we received during the financial year 2023/24 allowed us to cover the costs of our dedicated part-time staff team, who are instrumental to the delivery of our service.

It has also allowed us to pay for our associated service costs, which includes office accommodation and equipment, publicity, website, volunteer training, DBS checks, resources and travel. These are essential for the every-day running of our service.

The continuation of multi-year grants in 2023/24 enabled our Manager and Activities Lead to continue developing their new roles within the charity. This has allowed FFL to become more robust in its working practices and governance, refine its service delivery and increase its partnership working with local schools, further education colleges and other local services.

To secure longer term sustainable sources of funding and secure our financial future our fundraising strategy includes:

- Submitting applications for larger amounts of multi-year funding.
- Examining how our fundraising can be expanded into other areas of giving.
- Looking at ways in which FFL's profile can be raised further within the local community to allow more people to become aware of our services and hopefully support us with fundraising initiatives.

Challenges

Friends For Life is a small charity which has a big impact on those its supports. Our small, dedicated team work tirelessly to ensure we are able to help as many residents as possible through both our befriending and wellbeing activities, and our volunteers are supported in carrying out their roles.

The tough economic conditions make fundraising hard and also impact the availability of volunteers to support us. However, we were successful in obtaining the required funding for 2023/4 and in obtaining sufficient funding for 2024/5 early in this year.

Currently we have a waiting list of residents requiring a befriender because we have insufficient volunteers to meet this need. We continue to attract and train volunteers because of natural wastage, but with almost 70 volunteers we are at the limit of what our team can manage. We are, therefore, exploring routes to obtain further multiyear funding to cover the costs of a Volunteer Coordinator to work with our volunteer lead, utilising new ways to recruit volunteers, expanding the capacity of our volunteer management capability and enabling a step change in the scale of support we can offer.

Evaluation of our service

We take our need to demonstrate the effectiveness of our service very seriously and to better understand whether they meet the need of the residents we serve we have undertaken 2 surveys of care homes since the last Annual Report.

Initially we focussed on a small number of care homes with our Needs Survey and more recently we issued a more general survey to a broader range of care homes and all our volunteers.

Care home survey

In response to our question about the impact of befriending on residents, 100% of care homes reported that this was either positive or very positive as shown below. 100% of care homes also said that they would recommend our service to other care homes.

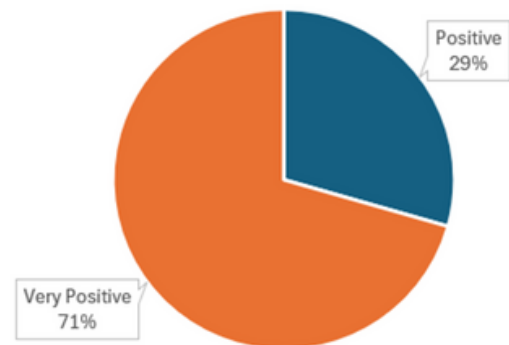
For the homes where we are currently providing wellbeing activities, 100% said they would recommend this service to other care homes. All homes were very keen on FFL working with Tibbs Dementia Foundation and The Place Theatre to enable us to offer "Music for Memory" and

"Timeless Tales" sessions. It is evident from their responses that this type of specialist, tailored intervention is understood to be extremely beneficial to residents but some of the care homes do not have sufficient funding to directly pay for its delivery.

For the first time we enquired about the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents and those for whom English is not a first language. This is to enable us to target appropriate volunteers to support the diverse population of residents in local care homes.

As expected, we confirmed that the proportion of residents with dementia was more than 75% in most care homes and that at least 15-20% of residents are at risk of loneliness and social isolation as they are without family or friends to visit them.

Impact Befriending has on residents



FFL are wonderful! They provide an invaluable service to combat loneliness and spread positivity


FFL is an amazing voluntary service - befrienders make a real difference to the lives of the residents.

All the volunteers that have visited us have been kind, caring and respectful. The residents receiving the visits have been engaged and animated during the visits.

Volunteer survey

It would not be possible to provide a service to residents without our loyal, committed and hardworking volunteers. The purpose of their survey was to establish whether they find working with FFL rewarding and if we provide the training and general help and support, they need in what can be an emotionally challenging role. The survey provided the following information:

- The majority of individuals volunteer to “give back” to the community and help others.
- 84% of the volunteers find that working with FFL and the residents increases their feeling of self-worth.
- 100% find the training provided by FFL helpful or very helpful.
- Most volunteers would recommend volunteering to their friends.



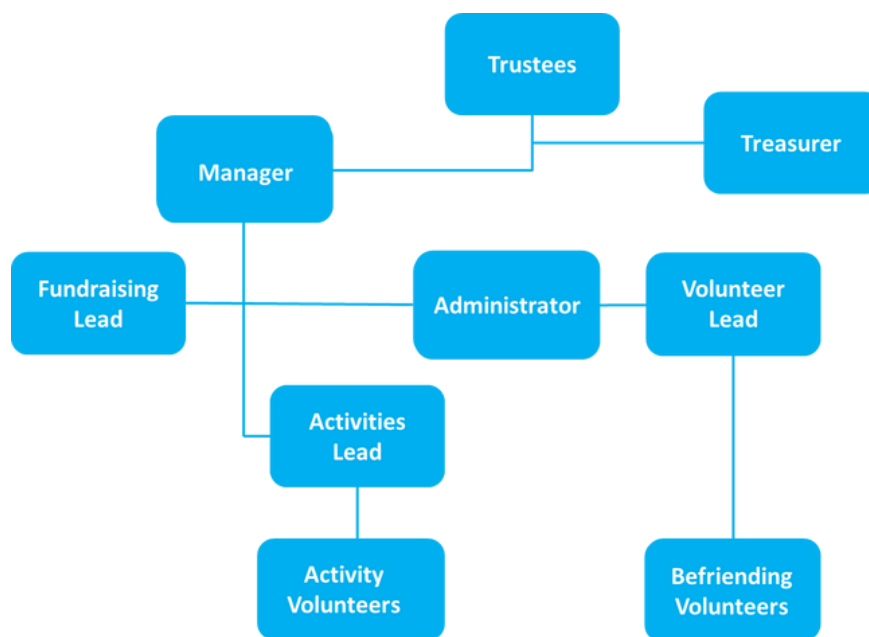
I know this is such an important service for people in residential care and in my experience, it can make a real difference.

There's always support at the end of the phone - it's easy to communicate and find support if needed.

Being able to speak to a knowledgeable staff member about any concerns or issues and knowing that they will respond, support, advise, and take action.

Our people

Organisation



Volunteers

FFL could not function without our volunteers. We continue to grow the number of befriending volunteers and are also recruiting individuals to support our developing wellbeing service. During 2023/24 we recruited and trained 41 new volunteers, but still need more to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for our services.

It is important to FFL that our volunteers also feel the benefit of working with us. This is an example of feedback we have received from our volunteers:

"Thank you for the amazing work that you do and for providing me with an opportunity to be part of Friends for Life. I have been very fortunate to have been well matched with my residents and built friendships with them that have affected my life as much as made small improvements to theirs." FFL volunteer

Volunteers have fed back that they would appreciate further training beyond the induction training they all take part in. As a result, we recently ran a session on dementia, which was well attended and received. We are planning additional training sessions in the coming year.

Meet Pat and Clare

Resident, Pat, and befriender, Clare, enjoy time together every week. They have kindly agreed to share their befriending story with us.



Pat was referred to Friends for Life by her Care Home. She was matched with trained befriender, Clare, who decided to volunteer with Friends for Life because she befriended two older people who lived alone when she was a teenager, and enjoyed the experience.

Clare visits Pat weekly and Pat is always pleased to see her. They sit and talk in the care home lounge. Pat has a weekly newspaper delivered and they look through it together, whilst enjoying a cup of tea and biscuit.

Pat is happy to share memories of her life with Clare and they look up places of interest on Clare's phone, such as pictures of Dagenham where Pat grew up. They also enjoy completing jigsaw puzzles, whilst chatting. Most of the jigsaws take them just over an hour to complete.

"Clare is so kind and looks for the smaller jigsaws to bring in for me, as she knows they will fit on the table next to my chair." Pat

"Clare's visits mean a lot to Pat. She really values the time they spend together." Manager at Pat's Care Home

Meet Toby



Toby has become a friend of Leroy. He visits Leroy once a week for 30 minutes or so, and they endlessly reminisce about the Bedford of old (driving the younger care staff from Leroy's room). The indulgent nostalgia brings back good memories for Leroy and leaves him feeling cheered at the end of the visit.

"As Leroy gets more chipper, it raises my own spirits, and with each visit I feel that I am making a small, but positive difference to another man's life."

Treasurer

FFL has a very longstanding Treasurer, Mike Elliott, whose contribution to the charity cannot be overstated. He has worked tirelessly for many years preparing accounts, budgets and financial reports as well as ensuring all our returns to the Charity Commission, HMRC etc are fully in order. He also brings to the board significant historical knowledge of FFL's development which is invaluable in our business planning and strategy development.

Staff

We are extremely fortunate to have a dedicated and highly professional part time team to run our operation. This comprises of Manager Gillian Basnet (appointed in July 2024), Activities Lead Beth Parkinson (appointed in August 2024), 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.

Meet our fundraising lead



Kathryn Hughes has been our Fundraising Lead since 2014. She is passionate about working for organisations which make a difference to the lives of people living in the local community. She finds a real sense of fulfilment in her fundraising role, helping to support the work of Friends for Life. Prior to working for Friends for Life, Kathryn worked as a Family Worker for Action for Children supporting children aged 0-5 and their families.

Kathryn has a BA (Hons) in Primary Education and, through life circumstances, unexpectedly found her way into fundraising. It turned out to be the perfect job for her!

Outside work Kathryn enjoys crafting, baking, interior design and spending time with her young family.

Meet our manager

Gillie joined Friends for Life as Manager in July this year. She comes to us from a nursing background, having previously worked as a clinical nurse specialist and Matron. After leaving nursing in 2016 she moved to the Dordogne in France and ran her own gite business. Now living in Stewartby, she has spent the last year renovating her home and enjoys making wedding cakes, gardening, and playing with her grandchildren.



Gillie's initial priority has been to grow our volunteer numbers and expand our wellbeing activities, enabling us to interact with more residents in Bedford's care homes.

Trustees

The trustees of FFL oversee the governance and strategic direction of FFL, attending both board and committee meetings. They each bring a unique set of skills and experience to the charity which they apply in hands on voluntary support to the staff team. This support includes stakeholder management, fundraising, HR, financial oversight etc.

Special thanks are due to our outgoing Trustees during this period – Paul Wilson, Dominic Carter, Sarah Walker and Harjinder Singh and we extend a grateful welcome to our new Trustees who are working hard to ensure their excellent work is continued.

Meet our vice chairs



Neil Khandke is married with 3 children and 3 grandchildren. He had a career in Quality Assurance/technical management, working for some of the biggest brands such as Unilever, Cadburys and Dairy Crest, where he led large global teams. Most of his roles have involved driving significant change.

Having had to spend a lot of time away from home during his working life, Neil now enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and on his hobby of photography. He has a guilty pleasure, which is playing PC games! Neil also enjoys building and upgrading PCs with his 2 sons.

Michael Ridley has lived with his family in Bedford for over 20 years. He brings with him 27 years of experience within the civil service, most recently at the Department for Education where his policy responsibilities included governance within the further education sector.

He has previously been a trustee at a local academy trust, and is looking forward to new challenges and opportunities in his role as a trustee with Friends for Life, improving the quality of life for residents in local care homes. Outside of his trustee responsibilities, he enjoys cycling, sailing, and swimming, and is also trying to improve his French.



Partners, supporters and patrons

We are very fortunate to have established excellent relationships with a range of partners and local businesses including:

Tibbs Dementia Foundation

Bedford Academy

The Place Theatre

Older People Partnership Board

National Highways

Queens Park Community Organisation

Bedford School

Bedford College

Biddenham International School

Great Denham Primary School

With these partners we are developing new approaches to reducing loneliness and facilitating intergenerational engagement which is of benefit to both young and old. One example of a very successful partnership is with Bedford College where we have been trialling ways to support the development of students whilst benefiting our elderly residents.

Meet a partner

Nicola Shortland is Head of Department for Care, Childcare, Access and Counselling at Bedford College. She has collaborated with Friends for life on community projects aimed at bringing together young people and the service users that Friends for Life support.

We have had huge success in the projects so far and have plans for the growth of the community project to have a breadth and depth that will positively impact all those involved.



"Terri and team have been supportive and beyond accommodating in helping to shape and mutually drive our vision of engaging our young people with community responsibility and direct involvement. We are excited about where our collaboration will take us and our students in the coming year."

Patrons

We are grateful for the support of our Patrons, the Rt. Rev. Alan Smith the Lord Bishop of St Albans, Rt. Rev. Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford for their support and for highlighting the important work of FFL across the Bedford Deanery and Susan Lousada, the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, for championing our work wherever possible.



Our plans

The staff and trustees of FFL have updated the existing 3-year business plan to create a 5-year plan covering budget forecast, targets and key priorities. This will help us to deliver against our commitments to funders and service users.

We have set ourselves targets for both our befriending and wellbeing activities to extend our reach to more residents at risk of loneliness or social isolation. We are focusing on 7 core areas across our strategic framework to enable the delivery of our business plan.

Advocacy

1. Drive advocacy using FFL research and insights through improved external visibility, engagement and social media activities to recruit volunteers and attract further funding.
2. Further Develop our fundraising strategy to build upon current successes and by focusing on applications from national Trusts and Foundations for multi-year grants which provide certainty and stability for ongoing activities.
3. Continuous improvement of service delivery through monitoring the impact of the work we do to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
 - Regular surveys to seek feedback on service provision from volunteers, care home managers and staff.
 - Volunteer and partner records of their visits using the FFL impact tool.
 - Working with care homes to ensure we capture other input from residents as appropriate (including case studies).

Befriending

4. Extend our one-to-one befriending service, reaching more residents through the recruitment and retention of more volunteers.
5. Develop our volunteering opportunities and standards to cover a broader range of activities.

Governance

6. Further develop our governance and board effectiveness, embedding our five new committees.

Wellbeing activities

7. Further develop our group activities by developing new partnerships with schools, colleges and other organisations to reach more residents through the deployment of a range of activities in care homes.

Targets

Befriending

Our target for 2024/25 is to increase our volunteer numbers by 10% to 77 and to have 67 active befriending partnerships. If we are successful in sourcing funding to recruit a Volunteer Co-ordinator, we plan to increase this target as this role will allow us to manage additional volunteers as well as having an increased focus on marketing and recruitment to find them.

Wellbeing activities

With our developing programme of wellbeing activities we plan to support 300 residents during 2024/25 but hope that this number will be greatly exceeded as our partnerships continue to grow.

Accounts 2023/24

Notes to the Accounts

- 1) Friends for Life Bedfordshire (FFL) is, since 2012, a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Board of Directors/Trustees and since 2016 also a Registered Charity.
- 2) March 31st is the agreed Year-End of this the twelfth 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. SORP FRS 102 guidelines for charities have been applied where appropriate.
- 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 2024. As our income exceeded £25,000, there is a requirement to also file the accounts with the Charity Commission by January 31st. 2025.
- 5) Accounts were not filed this year with HMRC due to our 3 year exemption. We 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. From 1st Jan 2022, the account has incurred a £5 monthly fee plus charges for handling cheques and cash. An additional savings account, Business Money Manager, is linked to the current account to separately hold the Reserves Fund and any short term surplus. A small amount of interest (currently 1.93%) 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) FFL insurance cover is provided by Q Underwriting Services Limited (Aviva Insurance Limited). Our broker is Howden UK Brothers Limited.
- 9) At the start of the year there was some payment to Contracted Staff but the majority of wage costs has gone to our salaried staff. The calculation of the monthly payroll remains in the hands of Haines Watts who in turn use the National Employment and Savings Trust (NEST) for employee pension provision. The actual payment of salaries to the staff, and that due to HMRC, remains the responsibility of FFL.
- 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. As a registered charity, which met certain financial criteria, it was exempt from Non-Domestic Rates.
- 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 fundraising events.

Michael Elliott

Hon Treasurer – Friends for Life Bedfordshire

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of FFL

For the year ended 31 March 2024

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of FFL for the year ended 31st March 2024 which are set out in the Notes to the Accounts and which comprise the Balance Sheet, the Income and Expenditure Account, Reserve Account details and the related notes.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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

The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under the Charities Act 2011, s.144(2) (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

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 all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I can 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:

- the accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of the financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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 to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Ian Farthing



Dated:

11/10/2024

Balance sheet for the year ended 31st March 2024

Note: Debit balances are shown in parenthesis

	2023/24		2022/23	
	£	£	£	£
Tangible Assets				
Office Equipment, furniture & computers	1,200.06		2,098.90	
Non-tangible Assets				
Cash in hand	53.31		0.00	
HSBC Business Current a/c March 31st	5,719.79		17,643.30	
HSBC Business Money Manager a/c March 31st	31,870.89		26,364.44	
Other Assets	0.00		0.00	
	<u>38,844.05</u>		<u>46,106.64</u>	
Add debtors, loans and prepayments	0.00		0.00	
Less: creditors and provisions	(4,460.66)		(395.45)	
		<u><u>34,383.39</u></u>		<u><u>45,711.19</u></u>
Represented by:				
Brought forward from previous year	45,711.19		39,931.04	
Plus: excess of income over expenditure	(11,327.80)		5,780.15	
		<u><u>34,383.39</u></u>		<u><u>45,711.19</u></u>

Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31st March 2024

	2023/24 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2022/23 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
Income		
Membership Fees (1)	315.00	340.00
Unrestricted Grants (2)	34,336.00	24,450.00
Restricted Grants (2)	35,822.00	28,072.00
Donations (3)	1,391.90	2,916.90
Gift Aid & GASDS	496.00	-
Fundraising Events	187.10	337.29
Interest on Reserve Account	506.45	73.31
Other Income – Big Give	2,151.73	-
Total Incoming Resources	75,206.78	56,189.50
Expenditure		
Contractor Fees	1,983.75	10,641.25
Staff Salaries (net)	57,801.18	24,272.25
Employee Deductions (PAYE, NIC, Pensions)	9,190.31	1,578.26
Employer Costs (Payroll, Pensions, etc) (5)	2,944.11	1,373.63
DBS and Trainer/Welcome costs (6)	1,503.50	937.00
Publicity/Website/IT	3,255.62	913.90
Insurance, HSBC Fees and Other (4)	1,024.30	1,268.67
All Travel	444.45	484.50
Resources and Miscellaneous Expenses (7)	937.84	1,151.42

Office Rent, Phones, Stationery, Postage etc	5,366.99	4,616.17
Non Budget Expenses (9)	438.00	1,829.20
Depreciation of Assets (8)	1,397.84	1,343.10
Cash withdrawals	246.69	0.00
Total Resources Expended	86,534.58	50,409.35
Income less Expenditure	(11,327.80)	5,780.15
	75,206.78	56,189.50

Notes

1. Comprised 13 Individual, 3 Church and 1 Corporate Memberships.
2. i.e. Funds from a Grant making body following an application process
3. Usually from individuals, companies, churches, voluntary groups etc.
4. Includes NCVO and Companies House Fee.
5. Also includes payroll support and recruitment fees.
6. Includes the Trainer salary & costs.
7. Includes - Office equipment, Badges, Volunteer & Trustee expenses.
8. Only one Capitalised item in this FY.
9. Unused grant repayment and BG funds reimbursement.

BMM Account - balance and transfers

for the year ended 31st March 2024

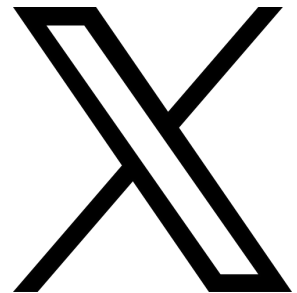
(This account is classed as Designated but Unrestricted)

	2023/24 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2022/23 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
Income		
Net Transfers from General Account (1)	5,000.00	10,000.00
Interest Added (2)	506.45	73.31
Other Income	0.00	0.00
Total Incoming Resources	5,506.45	10,073.31
Expenditure		
Net Transfer to General Account	0.00	0.00
Total Resources Expended	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Income less Expenditure	<u>5,506.45</u>	<u>10,073.31</u>
Previous Balance Brought Forward	<u>26,364.44</u>	<u>16,291.13</u>
Total Funds (3)(4)	<u><u>31,870.89</u></u>	<u><u>26,364.44</u></u>

Notes

1. Comprising one long term and two short term transfers.
2. Currently 1.93%
3. Includes designated Reserves (£16,384)
4. Includes temporary funds from the Current account earning interest.

hello@friendsforlife.org.uk



www.friendsforlife.org.uk



Friends for Life
Bedford

Patrons

Susan Lousada – Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire
The Rt. Reverend Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St. Albans
The Rt Reverend Richard Atkinson, OBE, Bishop of Bedford

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 2023/24

- 1) Friends for Life Bedfordshire (FFL) is, since 2012, a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Board of Directors/Trustees and since 2016 also a Registered Charity.
- 2) March 31st is the agreed Year-End of this the twelfth 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. SORP FRS 102 guidelines for charities have been applied where appropriate.
- 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 2024. As our income exceeded £25,000 there is a requirement to also file the accounts with the Charity Commission by January 31st. 2025.
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- 8) FFL insurance cover is provided by Q Underwriting Services Limited (Aviva Insurance Limited). Our broker is Howden UK Brothers Limited.
- 9) At the start of the year there was some payment to Contracted Staff but the majority of wage costs has gone to our salaried staff. The calculation of the monthly payroll remains in the hands of Haines Watts who in turn use the National Employment and Savings Trust (NEST) for employee pension provision. The actual payment of salaries to the staff, and that due to HMRC, remains the responsibility of FFL.
- 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. As a registered charity, which met certain financial criteria, it was exempt from Non-Domestic Rates.
- 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.
12-May-2024

FRIENDS FOR LIFE BEDFORDSHIRE (FFL)
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF FFL

For the year ended 31 March 2024

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of FFL for the year ended 31st March 2024 which are set out in the Notes to the Accounts and which comprise the Balance Sheet, the Income and Expenditure Account, Reserve Account details and the related notes.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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

The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under the Charities Act 2011, s.144(2) (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

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 all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

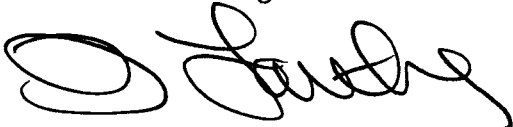
I have completed my examination. I can confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of the financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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 to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Ian Farthing



Dated:

11-10-24



Balance Sheet
for the year ended 31st. March 2024

Note: Debit balances are shown in parenthesis.

	<u>2023/24</u>		<u>2022/23</u>	
	£	£	£	£
Tangible Assets				
Office Equipment	1,200.06		2098.90	
Non-Tangible Assets				
Cash in hand.	53.31		0.00	
HSBC Business current a/c Mch. 31st.	5,719.79		17,643.30	
HSBC Bus.Money Manager a/c Mch. 31st.	31,870.89		26,364.44	
Other Assets	0.00		0.00	
	<u>38,844.05</u>		<u>46,106.64</u>	
Add debtors, loans and prepayments	0.00		0.00	
Less: creditors and provisions	(4,460.66)		(395.45)	
		<u>34,383.39</u>		<u>45,711.19</u>

Represented by:

Brought forward from previous year.	45,711.19		39,931.04	
Plus: excess of Income over Expenditure	(11,327.80)		5,780.15	
		<u>34,383.39</u>		<u>45,711.19</u>

Audit Exemption Statement

For the year ending 31 March 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies

Directors Responsibilities

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provision for small companies under part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by : -

..... 

Theresa Harrington (Chair)

Dated 11-11-24

Friends for Life Bedfordshire



Income & Expenditure Account **for the year ended 31st March 2024**

	2023/24 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2022/23 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
<u>Income</u>		
Membership Fees (1)	315.00	340.00
Un-Restricted Grants (2)	34,336.00	24,450.00
Restricted Grants (2)	35,822.00	28,072.00
Donations (3)	1,391.90	2,916.90
Gift Aid & GASDS	496.60	-
Fund Raising Events	187.10	337.29
Interest on Reserve Account	506.45	73.31
Other Income - Big Give	2,151.73	-
Total Incoming Resources	<u>75,206.78</u>	<u>56,189.50</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Contractor Fees	1,983.75	10,641.25
Staff Salaries (Net)	57,801.18	24,272.25
Employee deduct's(PAYE,NIC,Pensions)	9,190.31	1,578.26
Employer Costs (Payroll,Pensions,etc.) (5)	2,944.11	1,373.63
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All Travel	444.45	484.50
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Office Rent, Phones, Stationery, Postage etc.	5,366.99	4,616.17
Non-Budget Expenses (9)	438.00	1,829.20
Depreciation of Assets (8)	1,397.84	1,343.10
Cash withdrawals	246.69	0.00
Total Resources Expended	<u>86,534.58</u>	<u>50,409.35</u>
Income less Expenditure	<u>(11,327.80)</u>	<u>5,780.15</u>
	<u>75,206.78</u>	<u>56,189.50</u>

Notes

- 1 Comprised 13 Individual, 3 Church and 1 Corporate Memberships.
- 2 i.e.Funds from a Grant making body following an application process
- 3 Usually from individuals, companies, churches, voluntary groups etc.
- 4 Includes NCVO and Companies House Fee.
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- 6 Includes the Trainer salary & costs.
- 7 Includes - Office equipment, Badges, Volunteer & Trustee expenses.
- 8 Only one Capitalised item in this FY.
- 9 Unused grant repayment and BG funds reimbursement.

Friends for Life Bedfordshire



BMM Account - Balance & Transfers **for the year ended 31st March 2024** **(This account is classed as Designated but Unrestricted)**

	2023/24 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)	2022/23 £ Examined (Accruals Acct.)
<u>Income</u>		
Net Transfers from General Acct. (1)	5,000.00	10,000.00
Interest Added (2)	506.45	73.31
Other income.	0.00	0.00
Total Incoming Resources	<u>5,506.45</u>	<u>10,073.31</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Net Transfer to General Acct.	0.00	0.00
Total Resources Expended	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Income less Expenditure	5,506.45	10,073.31
Previous Balance Brought Forward	26,364.44	16,291.13
Total Funds (3)(4)	<u>31,870.89</u>	<u>26,364.44</u>

Notes

- 1 Comprising one long term and two short term transfers.
- 2 Currently 1.93%
- 3 Includes designated Reserves (£16,384)
- 4 Includes temporary funds from the Current account earning interest.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE BEDFORDSHIRE (FFL)
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF FFL

For the year ended 31 March 2024

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of FFL for the year ended 31st March 2024 which are set out in the Notes to the Accounts and which comprise the Balance Sheet, the Income and Expenditure Account, Reserve Account details and the related notes.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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Independent examiner's statement

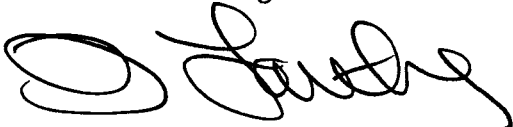
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- the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of the financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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 to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Ian Farthing



Dated:

11-10-24