



WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES

Supporting people in need
in Wokingham since 1451

Impact Report 2021-2022

Charity No. 1107171



WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES



Our Vision

Wokingham United Charities envisions a community where those facing hardship are not only supported, but empowered to lift themselves out of poverty to break the cycle, creating a healthy, stable environment for themselves, their family and the community.



Our Mission

Wokingham United Charities mission is to relieve poverty and enhance the quality of life of older people, children, adults and young adults in need in our community.



Our Values

Community

Passionate about our diverse community, which drives us to find innovative ways to help tackle community issues



Opportunities

Proactively seeking opportunities to not only better ourselves as a charity, but finding ways we can present opportunities to our beneficiaries to enhance their life



Respect

Treating all we encounter with care and valuing each individual's perspective



Integrity

Building trust through open communication, sincerity and mutual respect, holding a high ethical and professional standard

About Us

Our origins can be dated all the way back to 1451, when John Westende gifted eight cottages to the poor and needy people in Wokingham. Wokingham United Charities is an amalgamation of some 21 local charities, some of which date back to being the oldest charities in England. In the present day, we still provide accommodation to those in need with our Almshouses and also manage a substantial Relief in Need fund which provides grant funding for both individuals, and local charities and organisations within the Borough of Wokingham.

Aims & Objectives

The charity's objectives are the relief of poverty, hardship, or distress of people resident in Wokingham Borough. Our work ranges from the provision of supported accommodation to the distribution of grant funding to help people in need. We have two separate but linked roles:

1. operating a sizeable Relief in Need endowment fund to assist Wokingham Borough residents who are in poverty, hardship, or distress
2. Running the Wokingham Almshouses at Westende

We strive to achieve this through the activities of the two funds the charity holds:

Almshouse Fund

The income of the almshouse fund is applied to maintain and improve the charity's almshouse at "Westende" and to benefit the residents' use and enjoyment of the property. Within this fund there are two designated funds — the cyclical maintenance fund (for regular repairs and maintenance) and the extraordinary repair fund (for major "one-off" repairs and improvements).

Relief in Need Fund

The charity has two main grant programmes for the benefit of the residents of the Borough of Wokingham. The Essential Item grant programme is for individuals and families living in crisis or hardship. We provide essential items, including household goods, laptops, and medical equipment (not available on the NHS) to help vulnerable and in-need adults, families, and children. The Relief in Need grant programme provides grants to local charities and organisations providing services in our area of benefit. Both these programmes provide targeted grants to help those who need it most.

Westende Almshouses

The single storey Almshouses originated as a gift from John Westende in 1451. The adjacent Queen Victoria Almshouses were built in 1887. All were demolished in 1974 and replaced by the Westende House and Queen Victoria House flats. The Almshouses were then renovated in 1987. The Almshouses consist of 27 modern, individual, and well-appointed flats, each with a spacious living room, a double bedroom, a modern fitted kitchen, and a bathroom with a walk-in shower; there is generous storage space, and each flat has its own front door. The Almshouses are semi-sheltered accommodation for older people and have a resident manager on site. Residents are charged a maintenance contribution for their flats, which is significantly cheaper than the market price for similar accommodation in the Wokingham area.

To qualify to become a resident, a person must:

- be unable to afford to buy or rent an equivalent sized dwelling in the area
- be able to live independently (which means they do not need help in the flat and can shop and cook for themselves).
- be in a financial or other significant need
- have a strong connection with Wokingham, ideally by having lived there themselves or have other connections
- be of retirement age or close to it
- understand that they are moving to a group of flats with a community ethos
- have no current accommodation or be in unsuitable accommodation

Last year, the charity commissioned a major upgrade of the central heating and hot water system. The new water heaters were installed in September 2021.

The refurbishment spec was reviewed by the Westende Committee and agreed that when a flat is refurbished it will include carpets and a cooker.

All flats were subject to their five yearly electrical inspection. With some minor updates, all flats passed and received their electrical certificates.



Westende Almshouse in the 1950's
Wokingham A Pictorial History by J. and R. Lea



Westende Almshouse London Road 2021

Strawberry Tea July 2021

After two years, our resident Strawberry Tea returned. It was lovely to be able to invite the Trustees to join the residents for the annual strawberry tea. We hosted the event outside in our courtyard. Luckily, the sun shone and it was a warm day. A great opportunity to be together again, the first time since March 2020. For those residents who weren't up to attending, we delivered an afternoon tea in a box.



Christmas 2021

Covid guidelines allowed, we were delighted to host the RAG accordion players and enjoyed a feel-good christmas sing-a-long. It was a lovely afternoon with mince pies to get the residents in the christmas spirit! Another social highlight for Westende Almshouses that was missed during the covid lockdown was the annual Christmas lunch. Usually, it's a time when residents, Trustees and staff can get together and celebrate another year at Westende. This year, although fortunate enough to hold the Christmas lunch, conscious of covid, we made the decision to not invite trustees this year and hold a resident's only christmas lunch.



Partnerships

Through the year WUC developed its relationships with several partners in order to maximise our impact for the community.

- Continuing to work with Citizens Advice Wokingham to fulfil our essential item grant applications, providing additional holistic support. Funding their Advice At Home project and helping to fund its Mobile Advice Unit which has been out and about across the Borough providing support
- Establishing a relationship with Wokingham Borough Council by helping to distribute the Household Support Fund
- Being invited to work alongside Wokingham Borough Council and other charities to consult on the very first tackling poverty strategy and joining the Hardship Alliance
- Working with Berkshire Community Foundation to manage our fund of £80,000 'Breaking the Cycle of Poverty' programme



Household Support Grant

In September 2021, the government unveiled plans to distribute £500m to help vulnerable families across the UK with essential items needed over the winter months. Following the pandemic, this was very much needed. We were asked by Wokingham Borough Council to provide assistance in distributing the household support grants. This was a great opportunity to broaden our partnership working. Together with Wokingham Borough Council, Age UK Berkshire, Citizens Advice Wokingham, and First Days Children's Charity we worked to distribute the household support grants to provide financial support for food and gas and electric bills. During this round, we issued 698 household support grants. As the only local Borough to award the household support grants this way, it enabled clients to receive additional support from Age UK, Citizens Advice Wokingham and First Days as well as accessing our essential item grant programme.



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Berkshire
ageUK



FIRST DAYS
CHILDREN'S CHARITY



WOKINGHAM
UNITED CHARITIES

Hardship Alliance

Our work with the household support grants gave a further insight into the need across the Borough. Although Wokingham is a largely affluent borough,

and one of the least deprived authority areas in England, poverty is still present within the community. On the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, many voluntary, community and faith sectors are seeing an increase in individuals and families facing financial insecurity and hardship. Wokingham Borough Council wanted to prioritise this and highlighted the need for a Tackling Poverty Strategy. Due to the benefits the partnership working had shown, Wokingham Borough Council wanted to co-produce the strategy and asked members of the voluntary and community sector to join them and form the Hardship Alliance. As a hardship charity in the Borough, it was a great opportunity and we were pleased to be a part of the process. The newly formed Hardship Alliance consisted of Age UK Berkshire, Citizens Advice Wokingham, First Days Children's Charity and Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham United Charities. Its purpose, through working in partnership with members of the Hardship Alliance, is to promote an early intervention approach as part of the Council's role to prevent poverty. The strategy has been designed to support those in need, helping them to address the challenges they face in order to be better equipped to meet their own needs and aspirations for the future. The Tackling Poverty Strategy went out for consultation and several months of development with views from residents, colleagues in the voluntary and



Wokingham Borough

Tackling Poverty Strategy 2022-26

community sector and Wokingham Borough council members and officers with hopes it will be approved in June 2022. Knowing that liaising with the wider voluntary, community and faith sector is vital to the success of the strategy and supporting resident, the Hardship Alliance Action Group was established. The HAAG as it is affectionately referred to, is a two-way communication with the wider VCFS and the Borough Council. The HAAG provides frontline support has first-hand knowledge of what is a priority both in the short and long term. Being the voice for the clients receiving support, and a forum for information sharing, networking and collaboration on matters relating to poverty.

Essential Item Grants

During 2021/2022, we continued our partnership with Citizens Advice Wokingham. Realising the value that this initiative has for clients is vast, providing much needed support to residents in a timely manner. It ensures that clients are being supported holistically and can receive support for any or all of their issues. Whilst we continue to support clients with white goods/cookers, the essential helps individuals needing specialist help (medical equipment, stairlifts, grief counselling sessions). We want to provide a helping hand, rather than a hand out.

60 cookers
were
awarded

45 fridge
freezers
provided

33 washing
machines
granted

Case Study One

We were contacted by a local school who applied for a grant for play therapy. The young boy was struggling after his mother died suddenly and unexpectedly. His school were working with him and providing support to the family and identified he would benefit from play therapy. The family were unable to afford the cost of the 12 sessions so we awarded a grant to cover the cost of the play therapy.



Case Study Two

After a stay in temporary accommodation, a client moved into permanent accommodation provided by Wokingham Borough Council. On benefits whilst he looks for work, he began attending the Salvation Army. Described a very humble man, it was only after several visits he divulged he didn't have a bed and that he washes his clothes in the bath. He also had no freezer to store food. We awarded a grant and purchased a bed, washing machine and freezer.



Over **£75,000** awarded via our Essential Item grant programme

225 - record number of essential grant applications

389 individuals benefitted from an essential item grant

15% increase in the number of Essential Item grant applications

Awarded over **£120,000** in relief in need grants to local charities and schools benefitting **18** organisations

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Awarded **29** debt relief orders, total award of **£2,610** that discharged over **£270k** worth of debt

New partnerships formed with **Berkshire Community Foundation & the Hardship Alliance**

Awarded **£4,760** in bankruptcy fees to discharge over **£250k** worth of debt

Distributed over **£135,000** from the household support fund

£70,000 awarded via Berkshire Community Foundation **Tackling Poverty Grant Programme**

£13,500 Christmas Cheer! Grants awarded to provide presents and food at Christmas

TACKLING POVERTY GRANT AWARDS

Partnering with Berkshire Community Foundation allowed us to award our Tackling Poverty grants to organisations whilst the team dealt with the increase demand of our essential item grants. Berkshire Community Foundation were able to promote, review the grant applications and will collect the grant monitoring. Our Tackling Poverty grant round was for organisations providing support or services with a primary aim of helping to reduce and/or support residents through hardship. During the year, the grants committee proposed several other grants which were subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees, this included are Christmas Cheer! 2021 grant programme.



Home Start Wokingham District £10,000

Grant awarded to provide funding towards core costs of running support services and groups. Many of Home Start clients struggle with poverty, isolation and mental health, the grant will enable one to one support and also the continuation of Mum's the Word family groups run across the Borough that provides peer support, reducing isolation and loneliness.

ASD Family Help £9,100

Funding to support core costs including staff costs, volunteer costs, activity costs and overheads. ASD Family Help provide information and direct assistance to people on the autistic spectrum and their families/carers.

The Cowshed £10,000

Awarded funding towards the salary costs of a Referrals Co-ordinator to assist in the dramatic increase in demand the service has seen. The Cowshed provides good quality clothes, bedding, curtains and toiletries for free to anyone in need.

Berkshire Vision £5,000

Funding provided towards their Five Ways to Wellbeing programme. Supporting visually impaired adults and children, providing a range of support services aimed at improving independence and resilience and confidence. The Five Ways to Wellbeing programme is tailored support to individuals needs.

Yeldall Manor £10,000

Funding provided towards their Good Samaritan Fund which enables those who don't have access to other financial support to access the residential rehabilitation, which provides support for addiction in a safe environment. The grant award covers the cost of 100 counselling sessions.

First Days £10,000

Funding to support delivery of core service: Sourcing, cleaning and redistributing essential items such as prams, nappies, high chairs, school uniform, coats and shoes. The award will support some of the most vulnerable in the Borough, those families living in financial hardship.



CLASP £5,000

To fund a trained Citizens Advice role to provide outreach specifically for the members of CLASP, Caring Listening and Supporting Partnership. The role provides outreach support services to members assisting in financial and emotional hardship.

Dingley's Promise £5,458

Awarded funding to support costs involved in providing support to families who utilise their service who are in financial hardship. This includes accessing eligible hardship funds and associated administration. This award also included funds for transport costs to ensure that the families can continue to attend heavily relied upon support groups.

ARC Youth Counselling £7,500

Continuation funding for ARC to provide additional sessions for their youth counselling. This funding covered the cost of an extra ten young people a week being seen, therefore reducing the waiting times and supporting the increase demand.

School Support

We continued to fund school residential trips for students who otherwise wouldn't be able to go. Following the postponement of school trips during the pandemic, great to see school residential trip applications coming through. We awarded grants to two local schools to help three students join their peers on the residential trip. We also awarded a grant for a Farm to Fork workshop to support on-going learning.



Citizens Advice Wokingham £12,000

Further funding to Citizens Advice Wokingham's for their Advice at Home project. The outreach programme allows those who may not be able to access the traditional services of Citizen's Advice the opportunity to seek support via the Outreach Worker. This project has seen a positive impact on those clients who otherwise couldn't access support, often supporting them in. One client who has health issues and struggles with her memory and cognitive function as a result. The Outreach Worker built up a rapport with the client, who is vulnerable and isolated, and begin tackling these problems. Having consistent support has been beneficial and now she is actively engaging with other organisations who can help.

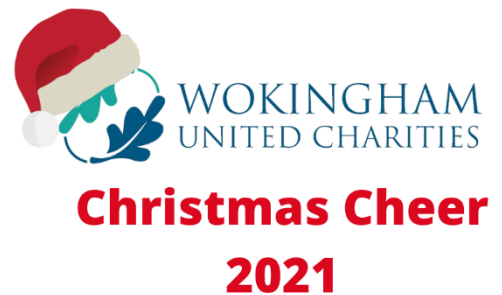
The Salvation Army Homelessness Booklets £545

Following the launch of the Salvation Army Homelessness booklets in 2020, we were approached and ask to provide further funding to print a second bath. Given the impact and use the first batch of booklets had, we awarded a second grant. Printed on waterproof card, the homelessness booklets contain useful contacts and information, like where you can get help and support.



Christmas Cheer

A number of local charities wanted to provide Christmas support to residents of the Borough. The Board were pleased to be able to help with the Christmas Cheer! 2021 grant programme. Grant awards were given to local charities who were providing assistance to residents over the Christmas period by providing food hampers and gifts. Christmas Presence project ran by First Days, Share, Our Community First were awarded £2,000 to help their Christmas Presence which help families in need at Christmas by providing food hampers and Christmas gifts. The Cowshed Christmas were provided £2,000 to provide Christmas hampers to their clients. We also gave the Link Visiting Scheme £2,500 to provide food and gifts to their elderly clients. The Rotary Club Wokingham also received £1,000 for their Christmas efforts in providing food hampers and gifts.



From the Grants Chair – Jane Holloway

The financial year began with Covid restrictions still in place but gradually reduced through the year with Schools reopening in March 2021.

The Office Team underwent an organisation half way through the year - AG becoming Office Manager and the addition of a Grants Administrator- Susanna Jennings. Meetings had to be held online using Zoom for most of the year. Despite these difficulties the Team performed well working from home when necessary. The Grants Committee invited local councillors Jane Hartley (Charvil) and Beth Rowland's (Woodley) to join the team.

The Charity is fully aware that the consequences of the Covid Pandemic will continue impact daily lives of all residents for a long time. In particular, schoolchildren will suffer from early years through to tertiary education.



WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES

Our trustees

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our trustees and committee members for their time. We are very fortunate to have a Board of Trustees who are passionate about Wokingham United Charities and its objectives. They share a great deal of knowledge and experience.



WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES



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