

IMPACT REPORT 2022-23



WOKINGHAM
UNITED CHARITIES

CHARITY NO. 1107171





WOKINGHAM
UNITED CHARITIES

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose at Wokingham United Charities is to be a steadfast source of support and empowerment for those facing hardship in our community. We are dedicated to relieving poverty and improving the quality of life for our community. Through targeted initiatives and compassionate interventions, we aim to foster a community where everyone has the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, irrespective of their age or circumstances.

OUR VISION

Empowering Futures, Enriching Lives

A vision where our work serves as a catalyst for positive change, not just meeting the immediate needs but encouraging individuals and communities to thrive independently, fostering a brighter and more resilient future.

OUR MISSION

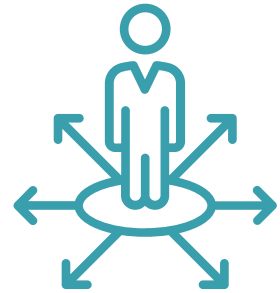
Wokingham United Charities mission is to relieve poverty and enhance the quality of life of older people, children, adults and young adults in need in our community.

OUR VALUES

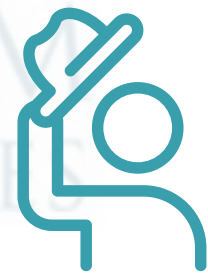
COMMUNITY Passionate about our community, which drives us to find innovative ways to help tackle diverse community issues



OPPORTUNITIES Proactively seek ways to improve ourselves as a charity, so that 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



OUR MISSION

Wokingham United Charities, WUC, is dedicated to a mission focused on alleviating poverty and enriching the quality of life for various cohorts of our community. Our primary aim is to extend support to older individuals, children, adults and young adults who find themselves in challenging circumstances. Through a variety of grant programmes, designed to support initiatives that provide support, we strive to address the diverse needs of our community, ensuring that they have the necessary resources and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives.

For older individuals, we are committed to providing assistance that enhances their well-being and fosters a sense of belonging. Alongside the Almshouse we may support initiatives to help combat social isolation, promote health and wellbeing, or can offer financial support when needed.

In the case of children, we want to help create a nurturing environment that fosters their growth and development, be that at home or at school.

We believe in investing in their education, health and happiness recognising they are the future of our community.

Similarly, for adults and young people facing adversity, our mission extends to providing a helping hand during challenging times. This could involve financial support through our Essential



WOKINGHAM
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Item Grant programme, offer assistance to support vocational development, or educational resources that encourage individuals to overcome obstacles and build a better future.

By actively engaging with and understanding the unique needs of our community, Wokingham United Charities aims to make a positive and lasting impact. Our mission is not just about addressing immediate challenges but also about creating a foundation for a more resilient, empowered community for years to come.



Westende Resident's enjoying Strawberry Tea

INTRODUCTION

Embarking on our charitable journey in 1451, Wokingham United Charities traces its roots to a benevolent act by John Westende who bestowed eight cottages upon the impoverished in Wokingham.

Today, we stand as an amalgamation of 21 local charities, some dating back to the oldest in England. In the present day our commitment endures and we continue to offer accommodation through our Almshouses and administer a substantial Relief in Need fund, extending grant support to individuals, local charities and organisations within the Borough of Wokingham.

Almshouse Fund

Our commitment to the well-being of our community is reflected in the Almshouse Fund. This fund's income is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the Westende Almshouse, ensuring residents benefit from a comfortable and well-maintained living environment. Within this fund, we

maintain two designated funds - the cyclical maintenance fund for routine repairs and maintenance and the extraordinary repair fund for major, transformative improvements.

Relief in Need Fund

Primarily two dynamic grant programmes define our Relief in Need Fund, directly impacting the lives of Wokingham Borough Residents. The Essential Item Grant programme focuses on providing vital support to individuals and families facing crises or hardship. This includes the provision of essential items such as household goods, laptops and non-NHS medical equipment. Simultaneously, our Relief in Need Grant programme extends support to local charities and organisations delivering vital services in our area of benefit. Both programmes epitomise our commitment to targeted, impactful grants, ensuring support reaches those who need it most.



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



Active Minds Session at
The Link Visiting Scheme



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, we remain dedicated to our mission of making a meaningful difference in the lives of those facing adversity. Our commitment to providing financial assistance, fostering partnerships, and supporting local organisations underscores our belief in the power of community-driven initiatives to create positive and lasting change.

Jane C. Hollaway



WESTENDE ALMSHOUSES

Sheltering Dignity, Fostering Community

Almshouses provide more than just housing; they become nurturing communities where residents find dignity, support, and a sense of belonging, creating a living environment that stands as a beacon of care and compassion.

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 Westende 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, and each flat has its own front door. The Almshouses offer accommodation for people who are capable of independent living and value a being part of a close knit community. The Almshouses 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
- be in a financial or other significant need

- have a strong connection with Wokingham, ideally by having lived there themselves or by other close connections
- understand that they are moving to a group of flats with a community ethos
- have no current accommodation or be in unsuitable accommodation

Over the course of the year, 2022/2023, four flats become available as residents either transitioned to extra-care facilities or sadly, passed away. Each of these flats underwent a thorough redecoration. Notably, one of the flats necessitated extensive refurbishment, involving the installation of a new kitchen, replacement of flooring throughout and plastering work.

Once redecoration was completed we were able to welcome four new residents to Westende Almshouses.

Westende initiated a project to improve the expansive garden space, which serves as a connecting link between two of its blocks. Unfortunately, the presence of high concrete steps posed accessibility challenges for residents and visitors relying on mobility aids or wheelchairs. In response, a decision was taken to eliminate the steps and install mobility-friendly ramps accompanied by handrails.

Furthermore, the patio underwent reinstallation and the pergola also received a renovation as part of the garden improvement. Another great space for our residents and their families to enjoy at Westende.



Newly refurbished Almshouse flat 2022

“My friend said something was different about me, I said it was because I’m safe and happy to have my own home”

New resident, Westende



Garden refurbishment 2022

WESTENDE EVENTS

Westende events continued throughout the year, featuring cherished gatherings such as our delightful strawberry Tea, the popular Fish and Chips and bingo, and not forgetting the heart-warming Christmas Lunch. Additionally, our regular calendar of weekly coffee mornings and Thursday Crafternoons continued to provide engaging and communal experience for all. It was especially lovely to have our new residents join regularly.

In a special celebration, November 2022 marked the remarkable milestone of our Westende Manager, Lynda, commemorating 25 years of dedicated service to Westende. Throughout this quarter-century, Lynda has been a great support to the residents and a dedicated custodian of the building, contributing significantly to the well-being of the community here at Westende.



Lynda celebrating 25 years at Westende



Westende Christmas Lunch 2022



Queen's Coronation Celebrations

OUR 2022-2023 GRANTS OVERVIEW

Throughout this year, we have remained committed to our mission of supporting local charities and organisations dedicated to alleviating poverty, reducing isolation and combating loneliness. As we began to recover from the pandemic, the UK was thrown into a cost of living crisis that saw far more people struggle to cover the cost of the essentials such as food, warmth and shelter. Our efforts have been channelled into providing crucial funding to those who offer essential items and services, catering to the diverse needs of the individuals and families in our community.

Grateful for the opportunity to respond proactively to the needs of the voluntary and community sector, we were pleased to participate in a Crowdfunder campaign in collaboration with Berkshire Community Foundation and Wokingham Borough Council. In this joint effort, we not only matched public donations but also Wokingham Borough Council thus tripling the overall sum of public contributions.

*£75k total £45k awarded in 22/23; remainder rolled forward to Winter 23



£445K

Total WUC grants awarded

£70K+

Awarded via Berkshire Community Foundation

£265K

awarded to local organisations

over

100%

increase in grants awarded to local organisations

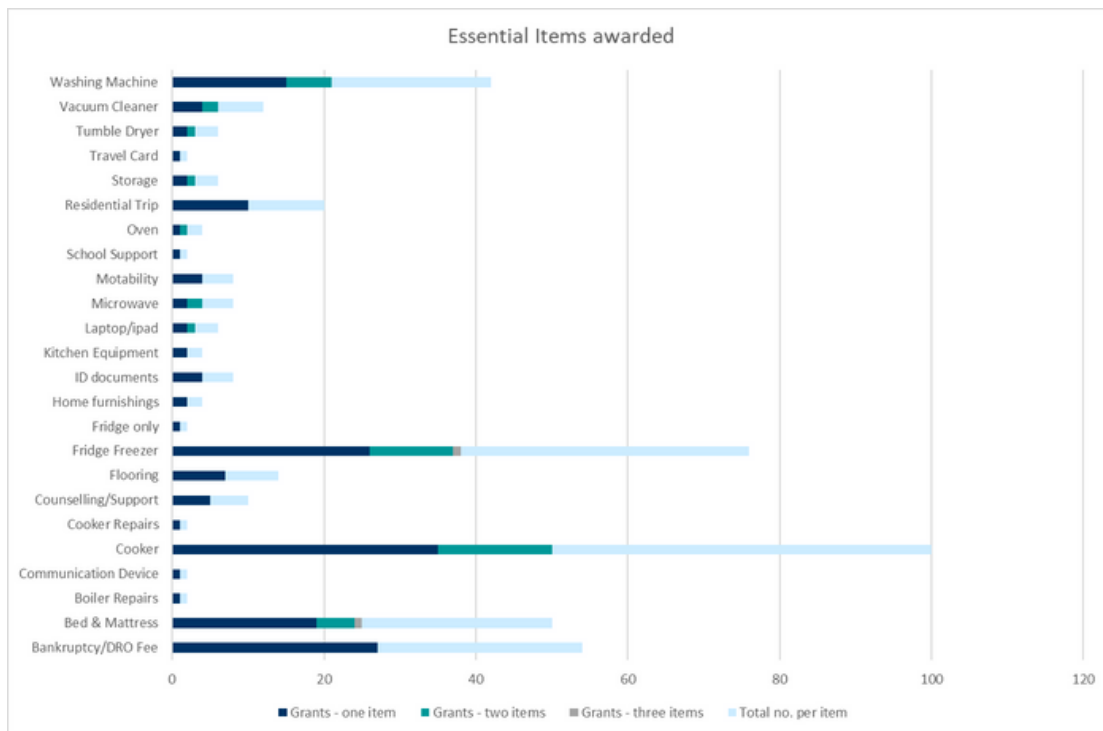
£25K*

Match funded towards Cost of Living Crisis grants

ESSENTIAL ITEM GRANTS

One of our flagship initiatives, the Essential Item Grant Programme, continued to make a significant impact by extending financial assistance for vital necessities. In instances where clients lack the financial means and have no alternative avenues to acquire these essential items or services, we step in to bridge the gap and offer meaningful support. We work with referral organisations who can provide on-going holistic support for their clients. Whether it's a new cooker or fridge-freezer for a financially struggling family or play therapy for a child coping with the loss of

a parent, our commitment to meeting essential needs remains unwavering. Near the end of the fiscal year, Wokingham Borough Council sought our assistance in facilitating their Local Welfare Provision. This programme, akin to our essential item grants, focuses on providing support for the essential needs such as beds, fridge-freezers, and cookers. We successfully allocated £2,186 from the Local Welfare Provision fund to six clients before the fiscal year concluded. Importantly, unutilised funds were carried over, enabling us to sustain this additional support in 2023 and beyond.



<h2 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">90%</h2> <p style="font-size: 14px; margin: 5px 0 0 0;">of Essential Item Grant applications received were awarded</p>	<h2 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">26</h2> <p style="font-size: 14px; margin: 5px 0 0 0;">Bankruptcy/DRO fee grants awarded</p>	<h2 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">£314K+</h2> <p style="font-size: 14px; margin: 5px 0 0 0;">of debt written off</p>	<h2 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">£86K</h2> <p style="font-size: 14px; margin: 5px 0 0 0;">awarded in essential item grants</p>
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BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Tackling Poverty

For the second consecutive year, we are proud to have collaborated with the Berkshire Community Foundation (BCF) to allocate some of our larger grants to deserving organisations. During the Tackling Poverty grant programme, an impressive sum exceeding £70,000 was disbursed to local organisations and community groups. Beyond sustaining

aimed to provide extra funding to local charities and community groups addressing the challenges of the cost of living crisis. With BCF's assistance, the Crowdfunder garnered public donations, matched not only by Wokingham United Charities but also by Wokingham Borough Council, tripling the impact of the public's generosity. The total funding pot reached over £75,000, with over £45,000 awarded



core functions, the programme is committed to breaking the cycle of poverty among individuals and families in the Borough. Through innovative approaches, it seeks to instil long-term resilience to residents and extend a helping hand to encourage and support them.

Surviving Winter Crowdfunder

In addition to our collaboration with BCF for our Tackling Poverty grant programme, we extend our appreciation for their support in facilitating the Crowdfunder initiative.

Launched in collaboration with Wokingham Borough Council, this effort

in the first round. Unspent funds are reserved for distribution next winter, ensuring sustained support for local showcases the strength of community partnerships and our shared commitment to efficiently leveraging resources for funding put reached £75,000 with effective support.



Winter Hardship

In a swift and responsive move to the challenges faced by the local voluntary sector and residents amid the cost of living crisis, WUC demonstrated proactive engagement. Recognising the urgency of the situation, WUC introduced an unplanned grant programme at the eleventh hour to channel crucial funds into the borough, helping to alleviate the strain brought about by the significant surge in demand.

GRANT FOCUS

Here is a more detailed overview of one of our impactful grant awards during the Winter Hardship grant programme. The Cowshed, a community-driven initiative, received a generous grant of £10,000 to address the escalating demand for winter clothing essentials within the Wokingham Borough. The grant, spanning from November 2022 to March 2023, aimed to provide timely support to vulnerable families enduring challenges of harsh winter weather. Recognising the pressing need within the community, WUC strategically allocated funds to The Cowshed to ensure meaningful impact. The primary objective of The Cowshed's project was to alleviate the burdens imposed by winter conditions on families in need. With a dedicated focus on providing essential winter clothing, the initiative sought to make a tangible difference in the lives of those struggling during the colder months. Throughout the grant period, The Cowshed distributed carefully curated winter clothing packs to 403 families and individuals, which are valued at approximately £380.

Notably, these packs were not just The impromptu grant programme stands as a testament to WUC's commitment to adaptability and community well-being during challenging times. The Winter Hardship grant programme, not only reflects our dedication to addressing immediate community needs but also showcases a resilience-focused strategy to navigate unforeseen crises.



THE COWSHED

The items were personally selected and beautifully packaged in handmade sacks crafted by The Cowshed's craft volunteers, using donated materials that couldn't be redistributed otherwise. The grant award covered all direct costs associated with this project. This financial support enabled The Cowshed to procure winter clothing items even when faced with stock unavailability, ensuring continuous and uninterrupted response to the community's needs. Wokingham United Charities takes pride in supporting initiatives like The Cowshed, where our grants are catalysts for positive change.



HELPING HAND GRANTS

ORGANISATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Chemogiftbags	£2,000	Funding support for providing chemogiftbags to beneficiaries within Wokingham Borough
All Saints SpaceforAll	£50,000	Contribution towards renovation costs to transform the building for community use
ARC Youth Counselling	£7,500	Financial support for extra training of youth counsellors
Citizens Advice Wokingham	£17,000	Ongoing backing for Advice at Home and Mobile Advice Unit
Growing Places	£199.60	Purchase 40 pairs of gloves for clients at the Acorn Centre in Wokingham
Age UK Berkshire	£1,000	Assistance with hospital transport costs when other options were exhausted
Wokingham Volunteer Centre	£2,140	Buying garden equipment for the Green 'n' Tidy initiative
CLASP	£5,000	Funding to contribute towards a dedicated Citizens Advice Officer to assist their members
Involve Community Services	£5,000	Support and events for those affected by cancer provided by the Cancer Support Network
Wokingham in Need	£200	Assistance with fundraising talent show costs

Growing Places, in partnership with Optalis Wokingham, is dedicated to fostering horticultural opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. This initiative empowers clients to engage in meaningful horticultural work, cultivating plants sold in a market garden. Recognising the need for proper equipment, Growing Places requested new gardening gloves, considering safety and enhance the well-being of their members.



BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANTS

ORGANISATION	AWARD	PROJECT
The Cowshed	£10,000	Funding towards administration support during the referrals process
First Day's Children's Charity	£5,000	Contribution towards cost of an additional Family Support Worker for the School Uniform project
ASD Family Help	£2,376	Funding to support two courses: Financial Benefits to Health and Home Harmony
Home Start Wokingham	£7,600	Financial support to recruit and train volunteers to provide a home-visiting service
Camp Mohawk	£10,000	Funding towards the Family Support Project enabling families to use facilities whilst supported
Berkshire Vision	£3,795	Eyes On Our Future employability programme supporting visually impaired people with work
Berkshire Women's Aid	£10,000	Financial support for the BWA's Rebuilding Lives service
Browns Community Services	£10,000	Funding to contribute towards 4Es Employability programme with 1-2-1 support
Parents & Children Together	£5,000	Support for PACT's Bounce Back 4 Kids domestic abuse recovery programme
Parents & Children Together	£5,000	Funding towards Wokingham residents at Alana House to help break the cycle of poverty
Freely Fruity	£5,000	Funding for 4 community gardens in Wokingham Borough with training for custodians



WINTER HARDSHIP GRANTS

ORGANISATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Citizens Advice Wokingham	£8,000	Financial support for a full-time Initial Checker for 4 months to assist with living expenses
Age Concern Twyford	£4,500	Reducing attendance costs for members and supporting additional running costs
Kimel Cafe	£6,300	Assistance for extra running expenses
The Cowshed	£10,000	Funding towards winter clothing essentials for clients in Wokingham Borough
Young People with Dementia	£6,000	£4k to cover transport costs for clients to attend support groups and £2k for core expenses
Dingley's Promise	£3,322	Assistance for transport costs to run family support sessions
First Days Children's Charity	£2,700	The cost of hiring a van for six months to manage increased demand
Wokingham in Need	£540	Assistance with purchasing bedding for 10 homeless people moving into temporary housing
CLASP	£4,670	Funding to cover increase in costs for core and activities for four months
Headway Thames Valley	£1,568	Funding to lower costs for members to attend sessions
All Saints Church	£400	Funding for a Warm Space on Tuesday Afternoons
Twyford District Youth & Community Centre	£300	Funding needed for supplies to create a warm space
Renova Trust	£2,500	Funding towards their supported housing services

WINTER HARDSHIP GRANTS

ORGANISATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Berkshire MS Therapy Centre	£6,071	New services to support clients with cost of living crisis and increased costs
Home Start Wokingham	£5,000	Request for funding to support ongoing support and new referrals
The Link Visiting Scheme	£9,398	Funding for a six-month Assessment Coordinator
Finch' C of E (Aided) Primary School	£10,000	Renovate outdoor area, add new play equipment and create a sports area

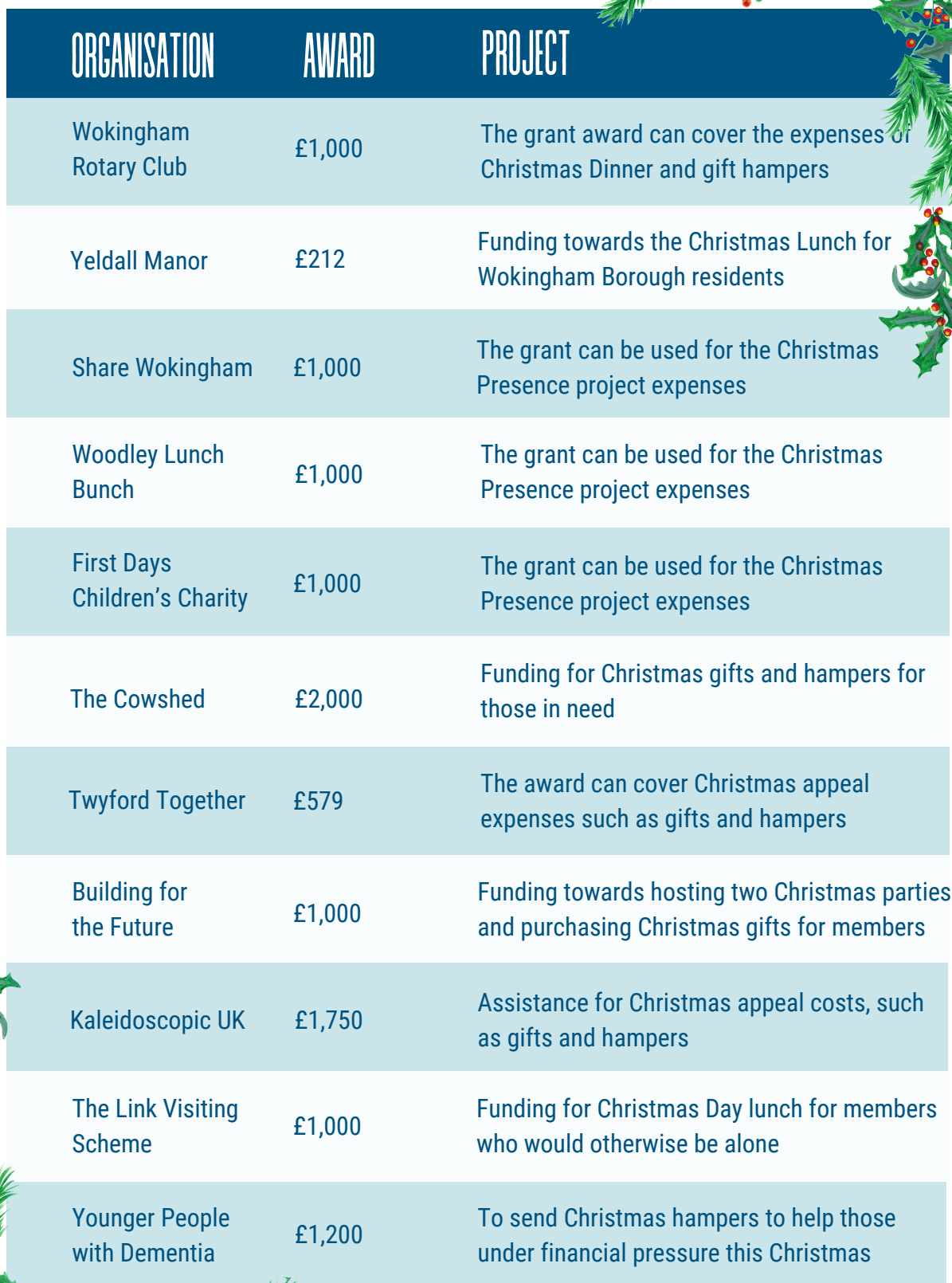
Young People with Dementia, YPWD, was awarded a grant of £6,000. The funds were strategically allocated to address two areas of support: core costs, contributing to the charity’s core costs invests operational stability. This includes covering essential aspects such as office rent, staffing, marketing and printing, often challenging areas to secure dedicated funding. Another aspect of funding was earmarked to help alleviate the transportation costs faced by YPWD members. With the cost-of-living crisis hitting, costs involved in attending support groups and activities was impacted. This support contributed towards the cost of over 50 return journeys for individuals with dementia, ensuring they were able to continue attending workshops and events. This support is vital in reducing social isolation, fostering improved confidence and providing much-needed respite for caregivers. Beyond the immediate benefits of



YPWD members enjoying their range of activities

attending activities, the grant has allowed families of members time to explore alternative transportation for the longer term. Recognising transportation will be an ongoing challenge, YPWD are exploring solutions to ensure sustained accessibility.

CHRISTMAS CHEER! GRANTS



ORGANISATION	AWARD	PROJECT
Wokingham Rotary Club	£1,000	The grant award can cover the expenses of Christmas Dinner and gift hampers
Yeldall Manor	£212	Funding towards the Christmas Lunch for Wokingham Borough residents
Share Wokingham	£1,000	The grant can be used for the Christmas Presence project expenses
Woodley Lunch Bunch	£1,000	The grant can be used for the Christmas Presence project expenses
First Days Children's Charity	£1,000	The grant can be used for the Christmas Presence project expenses
The Cowshed	£2,000	Funding for Christmas gifts and hampers for those in need
Twyford Together	£579	The award can cover Christmas appeal expenses such as gifts and hampers
Building for the Future	£1,000	Funding towards hosting two Christmas parties and purchasing Christmas gifts for members
Kaleidoscopic UK	£1,750	Assistance for Christmas appeal costs, such as gifts and hampers
The Link Visiting Scheme	£1,000	Funding for Christmas Day lunch for members who would otherwise be alone
Younger People with Dementia	£1,200	To send Christmas hampers to help those under financial pressure this Christmas

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Hardship Alliance

In June 2022, Wokingham Borough Council's highly anticipated Tackling Poverty Strategy was approved. This initiative was the result of collaborative efforts within the Hardship Alliance, the dedicated partnership committed to address poverty within the Borough.

The Tackling Poverty Strategy, co-produced and co-delivered, symbolises a collective commitment to combat poverty at its root. With Age UK Berkshire, Citizens Advice Wokingham, First Days Children's Charity, and WUC, the strategy's first year action plan was crafted to address the needs of the community. This signifies a crucial step forward in the local fight against poverty

but also underscores the power of community-driven initiatives in effecting positive change.

In year one, key roles were recruited to support the objectives of the first year's action plan. These included the Tackling Poverty Project Coordinator at Wokingham United Charities, an extra Debt Adviser at Citizens Advice Wokingham, and a Community Coach at First Days Children's Charity.

An online support hub was created to provide a centralised area of information and resources along with the distribution of 75,000 Cost of Living leaflets across the Borough.



Household Support Fund

Recognising the ongoing need, we were pleased when it was confirmed that the Household Support Fund, HSF, would be extended for a further 12 months. As part of our commitment to support this we recruited a dedicated HSF Administrator.

WUC continued to distribute the Government's Household Support Fund, providing crucial assistance for essential needs such as food, bills, and household items. Through partnership with Age UK Berkshire, Citizens Advice Wokingham and First Day's Children's Charity, we collectively facilitated household support grants to eligible residents, ensuring that assistance reached those who needed it most.

Comprising of two elements to accommodate varying needs, families eligible for means-tested Free School Meals receive support in the form of Holiday Food Vouchers, facilitated by First Day's Children's Charity. For all other residents, access to HSF grant awards is applied through Citizens Advice Wokingham and Age UK Berkshire, and issued by WUC, ensuring equitable access to vital assistance across the community.



Grant Funders Forum

In a concerted effort to deepen our partnerships and foster collaboration within our community, we recently convened our inaugural Grant Funders Forum (GFF). Recognising the pivotal role of peer support and networking in advancing our collective goals, this forum served as a platform for meaningful dialogue and strategic planning. This is an opportunity for local grant funders to discuss and address emerging issues, sharing innovative ideas and best practices, identifying opportunities to promotion and efficiency enhancement. fostering partnership to maximise impact.



Learn, enlighten and create



Connect, encourage and support



Collaborate, partner and joint-fund



OUR BOARD

Charity trustees and committee members play a pivotal role in steering the direction and ensuring the effective governance of Wokingham United Charities. As stewards of the charity's mission and resources, trustees are entrusted with crucial responsibilities such as strategic planning, financial oversight and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Their leadership and decision-making directly impact the organisations ability to fulfil its objectives and make a positive impact on the community.



From L to R: Jake Morrison, Simon Price, Jane Holloway, David Auger, Mark Hall, Dennis Eyriey, Janet Rogers, Anne King, Ian Hossack, Gordon Veitch, absence from photo Graeme Hobbs, Jane Hartley

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 mission. They share a great deal of knowledge and experience.



WOKINGHAM UNITED CHARITIES

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