

WINTER NEWSLETTER

2023

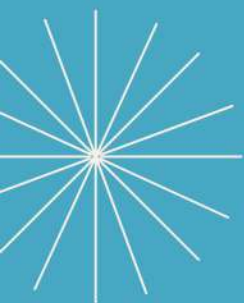


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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

As the days grow shorter and the weather gets colder, we're approaching what is always the busiest time of the year for our team at the Good Shepherd. We've seen some fantastic successes this year with people moving into their own accommodation, gaining employment, and achieving their goals, and at the same time we've seen more people having to access our services due to the ongoing cost of living crisis and the rise in homelessness.

Our food and crisis support services continue to be the first point of contact for people where #ItStartsWithaMeal, a safe space, and someone to listen, but we've expanded the services we offer to people experiencing poverty and homelessness in Wolverhampton and surrounding areas. Our Lived Experience into Action Project (LEAP) is in its second year and has offered training, volunteer placements, and level 3 qualifications for people who have experienced homelessness, mental health, addiction and other issues. We've worked with private sector landlords to support people experiencing homelessness and involvement with the criminal justice system into accommodation through our resettlement project, and our Housing First team continues to support some of the most disadvantaged rough sleepers in their own accommodation.

We also recently launched a new project to deliver a community shop in partnership with the Wolves Foundation and the local authority at the historic Queens building, and in January will be opening the Pomegranate café there which will offer job opportunities and training for people who've experienced homelessness and poverty.



In the first ten months of 2023 we've already supported over **1200 individuals** which is more than we supported in the whole of 2022. We've seen a **27% increase** in the number of people accessing our food and crisis support services, a **19% increase** in the amount of food interventions we've delivered for individuals and families, and a **60% increase** in the number of casework sessions we've delivered.

We couldn't meet this increase without our supporters so I want to start this newsletter with a massive **THANK YOU** to everyone that has been a part of our work this year, we really couldn't do it without you.

To everyone who has volunteered their time and expertise, donated, supported our harvest and miles into meals campaigns, fundraised, attended our events, shared our social media posts, or supported our work in any way, a heartfelt thank you on behalf of our team, the Brothers, and the people that access our services for being a part of our work to end homelessness, support recovery and create pathways out of poverty in Wolverhampton. By supporting our work you're a part of the Good Shepherd team and you're helping to give some of the most disadvantaged people in our community the opportunities that they deserve.

FOOD SERVICE

Ingredients

2 cups of awesome
1/2 tsp of fun
3 tbsp color
1 cup of kindness
salt and pepper to taste



There is much to look back on in the past 12 months of the Food Service - from our friends at B&Q spending the day with us to paint the dining room, the regular and ongoing support from our many amazing volunteers, the sheer breadth of our provision, support and advice services, to even the development of a flagship community shop.



The Food Service continues to provide hot meals on three days each week for which we have seen a significant increase of more than 20% in the last year. Our team of staff and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure we can meet the growing demand and that we can support those that need it most. This season's Harvest Donations were a welcome top-up for our food stocks and we remain incredibly thankful for the ongoing support from our community here in Wolverhampton, despite the increased financial pressures that everyone is facing.

You will have heard us use the term 'It Starts with a Meal' before - more and more so the Food Service is the place where someone's journey begins.



Whether it's advice from one of our own Key Workers, support from a partner agency, access to clothing or even a free haircut – the basement at Good Shepherd is more than just a dining room.



MESSAGE FROM THE BROTHERS

Christmas is here again! This special season which means different things to different people.

The true spirit of Christmas comes from the original story. The birth of Jesus, peace and goodwill, light in the darkness, forward-looking hope. The true Christmas spirit is normally experienced most easily in childhood with the child's simple and open view of the world. As we get older this ideal Christmas spirit finds expression in other good ways: concern for others, gifts, celebrations, joyful carols etc.

This ideal can be overshadowed by the inevitable concerns and worries of ordinary life, not to mention issues of war and peace in the wider world. Some expectations around Christmas can be a problem for many of us: thinking that we have to be always cheerful at this time, that we need to be surrounded by family and friends, that we need to do the 'expected' Christmas things successfully. For a large number of our service users poverty, homelessness and other difficulties can prevent any experience of good things at Christmas (as throughout the year).

It takes a real effort to recover that original spirit, to realise what really matters. But it is possible, God is with us.

At Good Shepherd at Christmas time we try to remember the 'true meaning' of Christmas. All of us make an extra effort to show kindness and hospitality to our service users. We want them to experience the peace and joy of the ideal Christmas.

LEAP

Lived Experience Action Project

LEAP has been very busy during 2023 supporting the residents of Wolverhampton to remain in accommodation and preventing street homelessness.

During 2023 the LEAP team have completed 1,112 actions during interventions with service users of which has consisted of food service registrations, housing support, benefits advice, wellbeing checks and employment, training and education interventions.



LEAP has been working very closely with partner services in Wolverhampton such as the NHS and Wolverhampton council which has led to some very positive outcomes for our service users. A few of those outcomes include securing accommodation, preventing homelessness, access to training, support into employment and support to engage with relevant services.

LEAP has also provided opportunities to 14 individuals this year that have a lived experience of either homelessness, addiction, criminal justice, mental health, or similar issues by providing a recovery/career focused volunteer programme.



2023 really has been a great year for our team of lived experience volunteers and they have gone from strength to strength with their professional development. There has been 1 volunteer that has completed a level 3 health and social care diploma as part of the volunteer programme and 5 further volunteers have now started the diploma. We have also had 4 LEAP volunteers secure employment in their desired areas of work.

During September 4 more volunteers have joined the LEAP team and are now working their way through a structured induction. All are doing extremely well and have really fitted in with the team.

ur volunteers have attended and supported with numerous events during 2023 such as DDN, SJOG conference, Wolverhampton Council annual rough sleeper count, sharing lived experiences with university students, supporting services to recruit senior members of staff and that's just to name a few.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone one of the LEAP team for all their hard work and commitment to supporting residents of Wolverhampton to achieve/maintain a better way of life. You are all amazing people and I enjoy watching you all grow into experienced professionals that put the service users at the heart of the support provided to them. Thanks Team!

Please do look out on the Good Shepherd website and social media platforms as we have a lot to shout about!



ACTIVITIES

Funding this year has helped us to run weekly groups of boxing, fishing, art and counselling.

The groups have had a massive impact on our clients.

The boxing was a great success with access to a local boxing club and professional coach.

Exercise has such a positive impact on our clients. One former rough sleeper surprised us all with her physical prowess and loved the weekly boxing sessions. Another former rough sleeper has been leading the fishing sessions and helped purchase all the necessary equipment. The groups create a sense of belonging and provide routine and purpose to our clients.

All this has been possible through funding and we begin our funding applications again next year. All donations are gratefully received towards running the groups.





JOHN'S STORY



John, one of the Good Shepherd's service user volunteers, who gives up his time to support the charity by doing some cleaning and other work within the dining service, has made some fantastic progress over the last couple of years.

Having previously grown accustomed to a life of rough sleeping and drug addiction, he has managed, with support both from the Good Shepherd and other agencies around the city, to thrive in his own accommodation, as well as give his time to support the charity

At the age of 11, he suffered serious burns to his legs after petrol leaked from a motorbike, requiring substantial skin grafts and a nine-month stay in hospital.

Already struggling at school, he was then sent to a special school instead, and when later becoming an adult and landing a job and his own flat, the breakdown of relations both with his partner and his parents was the catalyst for minor tampering with drugs which became far more serious.

Over the years he has not only endured long spells of rough sleeping alongside the drug use, but also been detained in a psychiatric unit and spent time in prison after being involved in disorder.

But those who knew him from Wolverhampton, and from the Good Shepherd, could always see a warm and caring personality beyond his addiction, signs of a person who wanted to change, and so they never, ever gave up.

"I first got to know John when I started volunteering with the Good Shepherd," recalls Housing First Key Worker Paul Burns.

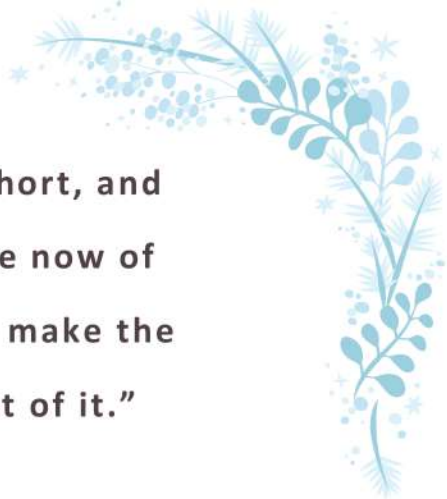
"I would say he was probably the most prolific mamba user that we have ever seen".

"It's not a nice experience at all, being on the streets and addicted to drugs, actually it's terrible," says John





**“Life is short, and
it’s a case now of
trying to make the
very most of it.”**



“I see people taking mamba now and it was me once, I was just like them.

It’s an addiction that just takes over you and it left me so vulnerable as well.

“It feels like a different life, and when I do look back now, I actually think: ‘was that really me?’”

After John was persuaded to engage with support agencies across the city, and go into accommodation, he then progressed to becoming a service user volunteer at the Good Shepherd.

For three days a week he works within the dining service, cleaning, distributing food and helping with collections and deliveries, and has become a trusted and valued member of the team.

Although it has been – and will continue to be - vital to have support networks in place, and to have people ready to help him overcome the obstacles of which there will still be plenty ahead, John’s transformation owes far more to his own strength and desire to turn his life around.

“I think it’s willpower, that’s what’s important,”

John reflects.



“You can go and have counselling and people to talk to and that is needed to help you onto the right track but then you need the willpower to do it yourself and move forward.

“This is the longest time now I have been out of trouble, and it’s so nice to do normal things like a day out in Birmingham, or going fishing or to the football.

“And I really enjoy the volunteering here.

“I really appreciate the help that people have given in getting me into the Good Shepherd, and giving me a focus and a feeling of independence.



H.O.P.E FORUM

The H.O.P.E forum stands for homeless, opportunity, prepare, engage and is a group that meets every last Friday of the month at the Good Shepherd.

It gives a voice to those who access the service in many ways, including how the Good Shepherd shapes services going forward, ways out of poverty, how to improve our mental health and all-round wellbeing, plus many other issues.

The forum is run by Leon and Neil who talk of the power of our voice in making change happen in our lives. and the motivation that brings to those who attend the forum.

Guest speakers and representatives from agencies around the city are a big part of the forum and long may it continue to thrive and give a voice to the sometimes voiceless.

It is widely acknowledged by the clients who attend the forum that the hot healthy meal the Good Shepherd provide is just the starting point of their journey through the service.

The meal opens the conversation into different aspects of their lives and alerts staff to the support that can and will be put in place for them through the journey of change. For some this means going from social exclusion to social inclusion.

The positivity and togetherness that comes from the H.O.P.E forum can only be a positive force as we move forward.

FROM WEST PARK TO THE LAKES!

The Good Shepherd now has a Miles Into Meals fundraising campaign, encouraging people to take part in any sort of activity, whilst raising funds to support the work of the charity.

The highlight of this year's campaign came when CEO Tom Hayden, Housing First Key Worker Paul Burns, Good Shepherd volunteer and Jask Creative Agency Lead Photographer Stuart Manley and Project Manager (Food & Advice Service) Lucy Cox took on the Lakeland 3000s.

In a nutshell, the challenge involved climbing the four highest peaks in the Lake District across 36 hours, with Scafell Pike, Scafell, Helvellyn and Skiddaw all conquered!



It was a tough challenge, but thanks to some generous donations, the 'fab four' raised over £2,000 towards Miles Into Meals.

Another slightly less formidable challenge – but equally worthwhile – came with a series of walks around West Park during Thursday lunchtimes in June where staff, volunteers and service users joined up with members of the community to spread the word about the Good Shepherd's work.

Meanwhile comedian and Good Shepherd ambassador Jack Kirwan also reached for his running shoes by completing a mile a day during the month, adding further fundraising to the campaign.



OUR VERY OWN UNSUNG HERO

Everyone connected with the Good Shepherd were thrilled in September as Housing First Key Worker Paul Burns landed a prestigious national award.

Not long after his 60th birthday, Paul was presented with the 'Unsung Hero' accolade at the Third Sector Awards held at London's Royal Lancaster Hotel, celebrating the outstanding impact and achievements of individuals and organisations throughout the country.

The summing up from the judge's panel which saw Paul crowned winner from hundreds of entries read: 'Paul Burns is someone who continually goes above and beyond in his unstinting desire to help others.'

Well done, Paul! Fully deserved and everyone is so proud of you!

VOLUNTEERS

We have had continuous fantastic support throughout the year from our committed team of volunteers. With new volunteers joining the team this now takes us to 48 active volunteers.

With the rising numbers of people accessing our services our volunteers are an essential part of the team and give such a valuable contribution to the Good Shepherd. Our volunteers work together as a great team and will go the extra mile to ensure they give an excellent service.

We receive numerous requests from corporate organisations who wish to offer us support and volunteer for the day; the feedback after spending the day with us is very positive. They always feel that everyone is very warm, friendly and welcoming and are often astounded by the services we offer.

We'd just like to say a very big **THANK YOU** to all our volunteers



Here are some of our volunteers and volunteer coordinator Karen decorating a 'Good Shepherd themed' Christmas Tree which has been included in the Christmas Tree festival at St Peter's Church.

WAYS TO DONATE

Make a food donation which will be passed on via our free-to-access food service at the Good Shepherd. These can be taken to our Centre at 65 Waterloo Road between 8.30am and 2.30pm, Monday to Friday, or via one of our collection boxes at Sainsbury's at St Mark's, Sainsbury's on the Compton Road, Spar at Compton, Aldi on Howard Street, Co-op at Great Wyrley or Lidl at Finchfield.



Donate

Make a financial donation which will be used to purchase items to be passed on via our food service. This can be made at our fundraising page on the Enthuse platform, where you can also set up a regular monthly donation if you are able to support us over 2024. Link is here -

[- https://gsmwolverhampton.enthuse.com/cp/520a8/fundraiser#!/](https://gsmwolverhampton.enthuse.com/cp/520a8/fundraiser#!/)

Support our Christmas Big Give campaign. Between November 28th and December 5th, any donations made on the Big Give Platform for the Good Shepherd will be **DOUBLED**. One donation, twice the impact from 12 noon on November 28th to make a donation. Visit the BIG GIVE website -



<https://donate.biggive.org/campaign/a056900002RGLO5AAP>



Hold or take part in a fundraising event for the Good Shepherd. Maybe, in 2024, you can hold a fundraiser for us whether it's a coffee morning, cake or samosa sale or a physical challenge? Or take part in an event to raise funds for the Good Shepherd such as a fun run, 10k, or even longer?! Our Miles Into Meals campaign will be running all the year around. Email office@gsmwolverhampton.org.uk if you are considering a fundraising event and we will see how we can provide support!

<https://gsmwolverhampton.enthuse.com/cf/miles-into-meals>

Share our stories and highlight our work to raise awareness. We are on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - @gsm_wolves. If you can share our posts and fundraising appeals we can hopefully reach more people which will, in turn, ensure we can continue to support people experiencing homelessness and vulnerabilities across Wolverhampton.



Good Shepherd Christmas Shopping List

- Long life milk
- Tinned meat
- Tinned vegetables
- Gravy granules
- Tinned fruit/custard
- New hats/gloves
- Festive treats
- Jam
- Sugar
- Coffee
- Men's Toiletries
- New socks

**Items can be dropped at:
65 Waterloo Road
Monday to Friday 8.30-11am or 2-3pm**

Thank you for your support





Hospitality

Truth

Compassion

Respect

Justice



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