

ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021

Message from our Chair Jane

I am delighted to report that we have had another positive and productive year in the Scheme, despite the difficulties and uncertainties of life in a pandemic. Whilst you will see in our Section Leader reports, we have had a quieter year in terms of the number of requests we have received from our clients for help, behind the scenes there has been a hive of activity.

Obviously, the pandemic has dominated our operations throughout the year. Just as we thought we were heading for some sort of normal service in the Autumn, we were plunged into Tier 4 and then a lockdown, but the Scheme continued to operate with ever changing guidelines. In May we were able to open up our services a bit more, with indoor befriending being possible and drivers over 70 returning to their roles, and then in July "normal" service

resumed, subject to the caveat of "caution, consent and mutual respect". We have our fingers crossed that this will continue indefinitely.

With the continuing absence of face-to-face meetings of groups of people, any necessary training for new volunteers could not be delivered in the usual way, so we had to be creative and instead used Zoom or YouTube to deliver Duty Officer and Safeguarding training. We plan to resume our informal training sessions at coffee mornings next year, where I will be delighted to meet all our new volunteers in person.

Mission

To be a dependable good neighbour to any St Albans resident in need, providing support quickly and informally.

To reach into our community, seeking out people in need, regardless of background or personal circumstances, to connect them with good neighbours, so we can support as many residents as possible in leading fulfilling, independent lives.

Values

As a trusted community charity, we provide "organised kindness" with:

- Respect valuing diversity, equality, inclusion, fairness and consideration, and respecting our natural environment

 Integrity maintaining strong moral principles and high standards of welfare, including health and safety, always in line with our procedures and policies

 Teamwork recognising and valuing the vital contribution of our volunteers and encouraging a culture of working together with

Charity No: 1074638 Company No: 03675149

Registered Office: 47 Woodland Drive, St Albans, England, AL4 0EL

Message from our Chair Jane

Work on our new website www.stalbansgoodneighbourscheme.org.uk continued until it went live in May. We are very proud of it, and we hope you find it interesting, informative, and engaging. We are so grateful to Tom for helping us with this project in response to a Facebook post appealing for help. He offered us his invaluable services without charge, and even completed this project after he had moved away from the area.

Another huge achievement has been the computerisation of the Duty Officer role. After many months of planning, preparation and practice we ran both the old and new systems for two months before going live with Optimise on 1 February 2021. Phew, another success which has been well received! Building on this "off the shelf" product, our IT team has developed a very impressive infrastructure to support the administration of the Scheme, more details of which are in the IT report. I didn't even realise all this was possible when I took over as Chairman, so it has been a steep learning curve, not only for me, but for the other Trustees and Section Leaders. Hopefully this time next year I shall be able to report that computerisation has brought greater efficiency to the Scheme as well as contributing to a greener environment, with fewer car journeys and a lot less paper.

The Charity Commission states that "good governance is not a bureaucratic detail - it underpins the delivery of a charity's purposes to the high standards expected by the public". Having made significant progress in this respect, we held our first ever Strategy Day in June to discuss the future direction and focus of the Scheme.

We agreed our Mission, Vision and Values and hope that they embody everything our volunteers are doing now and would like to achieve over the next few years.

Like all organisations we are very aware that we can't stand still and must continue to move with the times. We therefore decided that we will focus on two new strategic areas: sustainability and diversity & inclusion. We have started some preparatory work in both these areas; for example our post holders have taken part in a fascinating Sustainability Webinar which we recorded and hope to share soon, and we have signed up for "Supported Volunteer" training at Communities 1st as a first step towards a more inclusive volunteer base. We will be involving our volunteers in these projects as their ideas and experience will be invaluable.

I am delighted to report that we have been nominated for a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, by a recent Mayor of St Albans. Whatever the outcome, it is an honour to be nominated, and is a testament to the dedication and kindness of all our volunteers.

I am very fortunate to have an excellent team of volunteers to lead and that is why the Scheme goes from strength to strength. All that we achieve is only possible because of our willingness to help, our flexibility and our teamwork. Every volunteer deserves credit for a job well done in providing "organised kindness".



Volunteer Coordinator's Report Nicky

It has been a busy year recruiting new volunteers especially in January and February when we were running an advertising campaign on Facebook and with Communities 1st. We have added 35 new volunteers in the year to the end of September with the busiest two-month period being in mid-Jan to mid-March when we added 15 new volunteers to our ranks!

We have been actively recruiting new drivers and new Duty Officers (DO) during the year and with all new volunteers who have not expressed an interest in DO volunteering already, I have spent some time explaining what a DO does (not necessarily transparent from the title) and encouraging them to consider this volunteering option.

During the course of the year, we have mainly conducted informal introductions by Zoom, as this enabled us to continue recruiting when face-to-face contact was not permitted. We are now mainly returning to in-person meetings, as the DBS now recommends that we view ID documents on paper rather than on screen.

With my past history as a recruiter, I find it very enjoyable meeting new volunteers (whether virtually or in the flesh) and bringing them onboard and many of them report back that they too are enjoying their volunteering for the Scheme once they are up and running. With a couple of young ex-volunteers I have helped with references and completing Duke of Edinburgh paperwork documenting their volunteering experience with us.

Due to the changing nature of people's lives in the pandemic, some of our new volunteers have returned to full-time work and have regretfully been unable to continue volunteering beyond the third lockdown. At the moment, we still need more drivers and DOs and perhaps the most successful way of recruiting these is by word of mouth, so do go out and spread the word about what a wonderful organisation Good Neighbours is!

Safeguarding Sarah

Ensuring the best possible welfare and safety of our clients and volunteers underpins so much of what we do at the Scheme. The past year has brought this into even sharper focus, with the need to conduct regular Covid risk assessments for all our areas of operation. It has been a tricky balance at times, as our natural desire was to continue providing our essential services; however, we had to remain very alert to the serious dangers associated with social contact, especially for vulnerable people. We hope we struck the right balance.

During the pandemic, we've continued to respond to any reports of concerns for the welfare of our clients and have liaised with Herts Adult Care Services when necessary. All our volunteers are provided with a copy of our Safeguarding Policy, which our Trustee Board reviews every year to ensure it is kept up to date. This year we have developed a Safeguarding Handbook setting out the strategic framework for delivering consistently high standards of welfare, health & safety and safeguarding provision within the Scheme.

All of our volunteers are given basic Adult Safeguarding Training either in person at one of our coffee mornings, or online via our specially tailored video presentation. As Designated Safeguarding Lead, I have attended external training courses for Levels 1 and 2 Adult Safeguarding and I brush up my knowledge every year by attending refresher courses. I'm very grateful for the support I get from everyone at the Scheme and thank all the volunteers for responding with such diligence and care to any signs of neglect or abuse that they notice.



Duty Officer Report Paul

When I took over as Duty Officer Section Leader in October 2020, Jane assured me there wasn't much to it and things largely ran themselves. I might be exaggerating slightly! To some extent she was right though. We have a great team of Duty Officer volunteers. They are caring, good communicators, and many of them have a wealth of experience, so not much guidance is required.

The thing that didn't quite run itself was what made the year particularly exciting. No, not Covid, although that certainly had its challenges. I'm talking about the computerisation of all our client and volunteer records, and of our entire process of matching volunteers to client needs.

Luckily for me, a lot of great work had been done preparing for this before I came along. My job was to take on the task of rollout, which included convincing as many DOs as possible to come along for the ride (even those who loved the old card and paper system), to complete the training program, and to get us launched.

We put a plan together, which, with the odd twist and turn along the way, worked out as we hoped. We launched the new system, in parallel with the old, in December 2020, and armed with the confidence from two successful months of operation, jettisoned the cards and paper on February 1, a momentous day for our team!

Sadly we said goodbye to 6 long-serving DOs who felt unable to continue in the new computerised world. Many more stayed with us, though and I am truly proud of some of the experienced DOs who stuck with it despite great nervousness, who have now learnt new skills, and cope with things just fine. No one now would choose to go back, and without fail, our recent new volunteers love the new system. It really makes our job a lot easier.

We were left in January with 25 DOs, and set about rebuilding the team so as not to rely on people to do more than one duty per month. From January to March, we had a big recruitment push and trained 11 new DOs; it's now 17 for the year. We have had some turnover, mainly new lockdown recruits who have gone back to paid employment, but we now stand at 38 which is huge progress, though it's a continuing effort.

We had some quiet days during the lockdown, albeit broken up by the vaccination rush early in the year. In the last month or two client requests have picked up, and we have had some very busy

days. In almost all cases we have been able to help out with what's been needed, which feels very rewarding for all of us.

I believe that our DOs make a high performing team. They are very supportive of each other, and have a great desire and capability to help others. You never quite know what kind of a day you will have on your duty day each month, and people seem to enjoy the variety, the feeling of helping others, and of being part of the team. We are looking forward to continuing that work over the next 12 months!

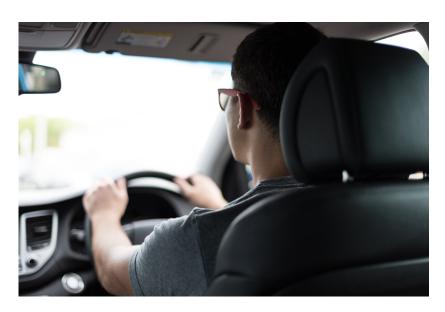




Transport Report Trevor

What a strange couple of years this has been, all our lives have been turned upside down but this is now probably the new Norm. We have had lockdowns, the committee has had to sift through everchanging Government regulations to ensure we met our Duty of Care towards our Volunteers and Clients.

As a result of the Pandemic the number of requests the scheme has received has halved. Transport jobs were reduced from 1,075 to 789 during the year ended 30 September 2021. Initially we had to concentrate on emergency Medical requests and Hospitals, recently we have been able to reintroduce Social visits as well.



This year the majority of requests were to Hospitals 431 versus 593 last year. Medical visits 297 versus 273 last year. Social visits were 61 versus 204 whilst there were 5 jobs in the previous year that we were unable to complete, this is usually due to insufficient notice being given.

During this year in line with Government advice our vulnerable drivers were asked to step down until the situation improved (myself included) so that at the peak of the Pandemic our pool of drivers went from around 80 to about 20. I am so proud of all our volunteers who have assisted the scheme in one way or another to function during this period.

As you know, last February we went live with the new computer system Optimise which records details of all journeys made by the scheme. I was surprised to find that in the year to September there were 76 volunteers who carried out almost 800 transport jobs. That equates to just over 10 jobs per annum each on average. Not wishing to cause embarrassment to the volunteers, the highest number of jobs was 57 followed by 44 and then 34, there were 24 volunteers who completed between 10 and 30 jobs during the year.

Well done and thank you to all those who have participated in the Scheme to help us to achieve such wonderful results.

My thanks also to my colleagues who throughout this time have been developing our computer systems, updating Policies, and creating a sound infrastructure for the scheme to progress in the future.

We now look forward to seeing an increase in the number of requests next year, a sneak peek at October shows requests so far are over 100.



Shopping Report Dana

Eighteen months ago who would have thought that a simple task like shopping would become something that was no longer a pleasure (for some) but only to be done out of necessity and would require the wearing of masks, using hand sanitiser, paying by credit card to a lady behind a screen and even queuing around the supermarket car park for an hour before you could even get into the shop. Then, when you finally made it into the shop loo rolls, pasta, eggs and flour were rationed or hard to come by, reminiscent of war-time conditions.

While taking clients to the shops during the pandemic was not possible and some of our volunteers were unable to shop due to their age or health others were able to step in and shopped for those who had no other way of getting food. Some people who were temporarily furloughed from their jobs found they had more spare time and kindly offered their services.

Out of adversity sprang invention and internet shopping took off like never before. Family members were able to place food orders for their older relatives, ensuring regular supplies while putting nobody at risk.

For some clients this arrangement worked so well they have continued with it and no longer need our services.

We currently have 12 clients being shopped for regularly by 14 volunteers, mostly fortnightly but some weekly. To date only one client has returned to being taken to the supermarket by a volunteer.

As Christmas approaches similar scenarios are developing in the shops with empty shelves and rumours of shortages. Perhaps mince pies and sage and onion should be on the shopping lists before they run out!





Befriending Report John

The last two years have certainly been difficult for all of us, being in and out of lockdown and now a surge of infections which forces us to make our own decisions whether to come or go.

- For our befriending clients there have been particular difficulties. Our befriending pairs were telephone befriending as home visits were too risky. Some of the friendships were effectively on hold because the client friend couldn't manage phone calls due to either difficulties with hearing or maybe dementia. Then outdoor visiting was allowed, but the weather was far from kind.
- For our befriending volunteers it has been equally challenging coping with all the changes, and for new volunteers there was the wait because we were not taking on new clients.
- What we have all learned from this is that personal face to face contact beats the telephone and zoom any time, though we have been grateful for these aids while little else was available.
- As a result of deaths and several of our clients moving into Care Homes, together with the pause on accepting new Befriending clients, the Section is consequently running at lower than usual numbers. There are currently about 24 pairings, which is considerably down on the usual average of about 35 during recent years. As new referrals come in that will quickly change. Recently it has been a case of playing catch-up.
- It has proved difficult to find a replacement for Sarah, whose awe inspiring leadership of the befriending section for the last three years has proved a challenge to us lesser mortals. Now we have a new team of myself and Serena, and we are running as fast as we can just to stand still. New befrienders and clients here we come.





Practical Help Report Tessa

This past year we have only received 50 referrals and for a variety of reasons only 32 were completed. Several were refused during lockdown when we only dealt with those practical help requests considered to impact on the health and safety of our clients; some were cancelled by clients; some were requests for services that we don't offer eg regular gardening or cleaning; and some were postponed by the client for a variety of reasons.

Of the ones where we were able to help, the largest number, as usual, were requests for gardening. The next largest category was for help with TVs, mobiles, printers and other such items, followed by requests for help with replacing light bulbs. The latter requests are often urgent and may mean visiting the client, finding out what sort of bulb is required, going to buy the necessary bulb and returning to fit it. With a bit of luck the client might be persuaded to buy a couple of bulbs so they have one ready next time round !! Other jobs have included putting up blinds and curtain rails and installing a keysafe.

With regard to gardening, it means so much to our clients to have their gardens looking tidy but Good Neighbours' volunteers are only able to offer a one-off tidy. What most of our clients really want is a reasonably priced regular gardener, particularly during the summer months. In the past I have always had a list of at least 6 local gardeners whose contact numbers we have been able to give out but sadly I now only have one on my list. Some have left the area, some are so busy they can't take on any new clients and some have given up for health reasons.

I would like to say a big thank you to our band of practical help volunteers who have been there to support our clients throughout the last difficult 12 months. Some have no specific skills but are willing to help within a team and others have very specific skills which they are happy to share and I can draw on. Some have limited availability and others are willing and able to react very quickly. They are all key to the service we provide and although some may not be contacted for months on end it is very helpful for me to know that they are only a phone call away.





IT Support Andre



What a year for IT Support since last year's AGM (16/11/2020)! Exactly a year ago detailed plans for giving up paper and relying on Optimise were being drawn up, the Intranet and Intranet website were still in a state of development, all Trustees, Section Leaders and Duty Officers had a Scheme Gmail account and as things were working rather well we assumed we would carry on adding new Gmail accounts indefinitely.

Having made this initial progress with computerisation, we were able to start planning how our "virtual office" could be expanded, both to include more volunteers, and to help us work more efficiently and securely. It became apparent that our system, based on individual Gmail accounts, would not cope well with the addition of increasing numbers of volunteers; nor would it provide the levels of security we ideally needed, to protect our volunteers' and clients' data, as required by GDPR.

This meant that a new solution was needed. A proposal to use Google Workspace, the logical upgrade to the current setup, the state of the art cloud-based platform was initially put forward to the now defunct Computerisation Sub-Committee (RIP Sub-Committee!) and thankfully accepted by the Trustees. The Scheme successfully applied to Google for a "Nonprofit" licence which is free of charge and in March 2020 we were granted the licence.

The Scheme purchased a new sagns.org.uk domain name to host Workspace and allow each volunteer to have a Scheme email address which acts as a Workspace account. The process of learning how to use Workspace and planning for the migration had started.

At the time of writing this report most of the Trustees and Section Leaders have or are in the process of completing their migration. The plan is for all the Duty Officers to migrate to Workspace the first week in November. All spreadsheets have been migrated and the migrated Intranet website is ready. The move to Workspace enables us to improve our GDPR compliance and protect the volunteers and clients identity by using a new email format.

There is no doubt in my mind that Workspace will power the Scheme for many years to come, although it may be named differently (it used to be called Google Apps in its first incarnation, then, more recently G-Suite!).

The search for building a team of IT Supporters carries on, so spread the word around you in your travels!

Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped and put up with me during this busy year! I promise: things will get easier... eventually...

Some facts and figures from the last twelve months...

- We have ditched the old sagns.org domain name sagns.org.uk (Intranet website, SAGNS Workspace domain) and stalbansgoodneighbourscheme.org.uk (Public website) domain names have been registered for a 10 years period
- At the time of writing this report the Intranet contains well over 500 folders, 400 spreadsheets and 800 documents, yet we've only used 1.22 GB (0.11%) of the space available on Workspace: so there's plenty of room for the Scheme to grow... However this is not an invitation to accumulate unnecessary documents!
- There are 58 users on Optimise





Treasurer's Report Trevor

Year End 30 September 2021

The financial results for the year reflect the effects of the pandemic on our activities, where both Income and Expenditure were down compared to last year.

Income fell from £15k to £7k the reduction of £8k was represented by Grants (£3k) Legacy (£4k) and Donations (£1k)

Expenditure fell from £9k to £6k the £3k reduction represented by reduced Mileage and IT Expenditure.

Surplus This year's Surplus therefore stands at £1k versus £6k last year.

Balance of funds carried forward amount to £38k

Our administration costs have been kept low due to the fact that we do not have any employees or premises. Our fortieth anniversary was postponed from last year due to Covid, and we were hoping to celebrate at this years AGM, however with the current uncertainty regarding Covid, we have put the celebration back to next March.

The accounts have again been independently examined by Peter Harrison free of charge.



St Albans Good Neighbour Scheme

Registered Charity No. 1074638

[A Company (No. 3675149) limited by guarantee and not having a share capital]

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 30 September 2021

;	30/9/20	%	Income		30/9/21	%
	£2,000	13%	HCF Grant	Note 1	-£1,197	-18%
	£5,288	35%	Legacy		£1,558	23%
	£7,767	52%	Donations		£6,281	95%
	£15,055	100%			£6,643	100%
			Expenditure			
	£4,692	31%	Mileage		£3,210	48%
	£270	2%	Phone		£218	3%
	£521	3%	Insurance		£663	10%
	£158	1%	Stationery		£202	3%
	£176	1%	Stamps		£156	2%
	£321	2%	Meetings		£70	1%
	£1,767	12%	IT		£573	9%
	£264	2%	DBS		£168	3%
	£151	1%	Gifts / Cards		£304	5%
	£161	1%	Training		£60	1%
	£65	0%	Subs		£138	2%
	£14	0%	Sundries		£18	0%
_	£613	4%	HCF Claim	Note 1	£190	3%
	£9,173	61%			£5,969	90%
£	5,882	39%	Surplus for the year		£ 674	10%
_;	30/9/20		Balance Sheet as at		30/9/21	
	£31,483		Balance b/f		£37,365	
	£5,882		Surplus		£ 674	
_	£37,365				£38,039	
_	£37,365		Cash at Bank		£38,039	

Note 1 HCF Restricted Grant A551189

On 24 April 2020 we received a restricted grant from Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) in respect of additional costs incurred as a result of Covid. In the y/e September 2020 we spent £613 plus £190 in y/e September 2021 a total of £803 leaving an unspent balance of £1,197 The unspent balance of £1,197 was returned to HCF on 25 March 2021 as agreed



Trevor Fake Treasurer 21/10/2021



INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE ST ALBANS GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME ("THE SCHEME")

Charity number 1074638

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Scheme for the year ended 30th September 2021, which are attached.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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

You consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Act and that an independent examination is needed.

I report in respect of my examination of The Scheme's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Scheme and a comparison of the accounts presented with the records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

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

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Peter Owen Harrison ECA

Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

9 Marshal's Drive, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 4RB.

25 October 2021



Reserves Policy

Background

The Charity Commission for England and Wales describes reserves as that part of a charity's unrestricted funds that is freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. The starting point for calculating the amount of reserves held is the amount of unrestricted funds held by the charity. However, some or all of the unrestricted funds of a charity may not be readily available for spending. This is because spending those funds may adversely impact on the charity's ability to deliver its aims. The items that should be excluded from reserves are:

- tangible fixed assets used to carry out the charity's activities, such as land and buildings
- programme-related investments held solely to further the charity's purposes
- designated funds set aside to meet essential future spending, such as funding a project that could not be met from future income
- commitments that have not been provided for as a liability in the accounts

Purposes for holding Reserves

The Trustees of the St Albans Good Neighbour Scheme (the "Scheme") take the view that sufficient reserves should be maintained to cover the following purposes, in order to ensure the continued operation of the Scheme in accordance with its charitable objects:

- repair and replacement of equipment necessary to carry out the Scheme's objects. (These items are written off at purchase and therefore considered as zero value assets.)
- increased volunteer demand for reimbursement of expenses
- payment of contractors or professionals for unanticipated, yet essential, operational duties and professional services that cannot be performed by available volunteers
- the premium required for essential insurance (including public liability insurance) in the absence of sufficient income
- unforeseen expenditure
- unexpected reductions in sources of income, for example, client donations or grants not renewed
- unanticipated financial commitments, if any

Level of Reserves

The Scheme's Trustees have resolved to maintain reserves at a level equivalent to the Scheme's average annual expenditure over the preceding three years. They have made this decision on the basis that they consider this is an appropriate level to meet any unforeseen expenditure or reduction in income, whilst not restricting availability of funds to meet clear charitable need within the objects of the Scheme.



Structure, management and governance

The Directors of the Company are also Charity Trustees for the purposes of Charity Law and are also known as members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Articles of Association, the Directors are elected to serve for three years after which they may be re-elected at the next AGM.

Management Committee (known as Members/Directors/Trustees):

Jane Burstow, Chair
Andre Bottin
Serena Dicks (resigned November 2020)
John Dixon
Trevor Fake
Sarah McAlister
Sue McElroy

Secretary: Dana Cox

Post Holders:

Volunteer Coordinator: Nicky S Duty Officer Section Leader: Paul M Deputy DO Section Leader: Ali B DO Rota Coordinator: Anne H

Befriending Section Leader: John D (from September 2021; previously Sarah M until July 2021, and

Christina A from July-August 2021)

Deputy Befriending Section Leader: Serena D (from July 2021; previously Christina A)

Practical Help Section Leader: Tessa P

Deputy Practical Help Section Leader: Helen W

Shopping Section Leader: Dana C (from February 2021; previously John D)

Transport Section Leader: Trevor F

Deputy Transport Section Leader: Colleen W

Bag Transfer Coordinator: Sheila P (until January 2021; this role is no longer required)

Helpline Administrator: Jacqui R

IT Advisor: Andre B

IT Support Team: Leena M; Mark H

Branding, Social media and Website Coordinator: Sue M

Project work: Kate B

Independent Advisors:

Accounts Examiner: Peter Harrison Legal Advisor: Niall McAlister

All members of the Management Committee give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the Charity. Any expenses reclaimed are included in the Accounts.



Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Annual Report.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature	Jane Burstow
Name	Jane Burstow
Position	Chair
Date	22/11/21



