



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2023

General

LATH has settled in well to the St Mary's Caritas Centre and is a foundational partner with Caritas and the St Mary's parish as a community resource. The drop-in is well attended by homeless and disadvantaged people, with up to 30 clients at each session, who really appreciate the facilities and services offered.

How We Help Our Clients

We continue to collect surplus food from Greggs but have stopped collecting from Co-operative stores, as we cannot use food that has passed its 'use-by' date. We provide breakfast toast and hot drinks throughout the morning, and soup, sandwiches, and cakes at lunch time. Sometimes a kind volunteer makes a stew or pasta meal. Clients often take any surplus food home, and very little is wasted. Our takeaway leaflet showing all the local drop-ins where clients can get food during the week, with a map on the back, is given to all new clients, and other charities have also requested copies.

The collaboration with Pathways CIC, supported by a grant from Bentley's, has helped provide social prescribing to our clients. Pathways CIC is a social enterprise that delivers a range of pioneering health, work and wellbeing programmes designed to create sustainable change for individuals and for local communities, with a focus on enabling people to live happier and healthier lives. Pathways attend once a week and has provided advice to a total of 40 different clients, often on more than one occasion. In addition, Duncan Walker Welfare Rights Officer from the Disability Information Bureau, has assisted several clients with disability benefit and PIP claims. He attends on a weekly basis, and it is hoped that this will continue into 2024.

Our volunteers continue to provide advice on a range of subjects, including benefits, energy bills, debts, job searches, assistance with medical/dentist appointments and general translation help (especially Polish). We have enabled one client to be allocated a social worker, to obtain a learning disability diagnosis (and subsequent medication adjustment) and to get help from the mental health re-ablement team. We have assisted one client to get into supported housing by organising and paying for an ID card and passport, which had expired, and to obtain benefits. Indeed, one of main expenses this year has been assisting several clients with obtaining new, or renewing, passports and/or ID cards. Once they have an appointment with their embassy office, we ensure that they have enough funds to travel there, and pay for their new documents. This activity has assisted clients to claim the benefits and services to which they are entitled. In all, more than 70 individual clients have been helped by volunteers in various ways, either at the drop-in times or at other times of the week.

During the year, we have been liaising closely with the Cheshire East (CE) Outreach Officer to ensure that rough sleepers are on their register for accommodation, if entitled, and to provide them with tents, sleeping bags and warm clothing as required. We also liaise with the other charities in the area (Chance, Salvation Army, Lighthouse) who help the homeless, so that we each know the help we have given to a particular client. This avoids confusion and duplication of effort (and expense). We have had several liaison meetings, with the charity representatives, Emma Brierley (the Outreach officer) and Hazel Faddes (a CE councillor with a special interest in the homeless) that have been very helpful.



0800 508 8021



lathsecretary@gmail.com



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We continue to support other local charities with surplus clothing, which have been especially appreciated by those supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Our Trustees/Executives

Our President Bernard Potter has continued to act as temporary Chair, due to John McManus' illness. Just before the AGM in September, John decided to retire from his post as Chairman, although he remains a Trustee. Due to illness, Frank Lepisz also retired as Vice-Chairman and volunteer. These posts remain open.

Mick Tobin joined the Executive Committee in the summer. All of the other Trustees and Committee members have been re-elected for 2024.

Volunteers

During the year, Frank Lepisz, our Polish speaker, reduced his time at the centre, but was ably replaced by Anna Klyza, and more lately Agnieszka Kolasinska, who is a former client and now a much appreciated volunteer. Our Polish-speaking volunteers often help clients outside of the drop-in sessions. We have had new volunteers who provide advice and assistance to clients – Mick Tobin, Andrew Hendrie, Susan Barber, and Elizabeth Morgan. We also have new volunteers helping in the kitchen: Jacky Hui, Sheila Wong, and Josta Hopps.

We would like to thank all volunteers for their support and encouragement during the year, and special thanks go to the volunteers who have helped with various projects.

Many thanks to our Treasurer Pat Gardner who has kept our finances in order splendidly, and thanks to Barbara Francis, our Secretary, for supporting various clients in addition to her secretarial duties.

We recently made an appeal for new volunteers and several people will be followed up, hopefully to start in 2024.

APPLICATIONS FROM NEW VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS VERY WELCOME!

Premises

The St Mary's Caritas Centre works well for us, and we have recently purchased (with financial assistance from Caritas) a cupboard for clothing often asked for. We continue to use the garage store for more bulky items and clothing overflow.

Assistance Received

We have held a quiz night and concert during 2023 to boost our funds. We have applied for various grants recently to help with our financial commitments, and are waiting to hear the outcomes. In the last month, we have received a real boost to our financial situation, in that a local company, Beautonic Beauty of Crewe, has agreed to make a monthly donation to the charity. In addition, proceeds from a Christmas album from local musicians, organised by Mark Sheeky, will come to LATH. These donations are much appreciated. Various other donations from individuals and schools have been received and are much appreciated.

Our collection boxes situated in various retail outlets continue to provide further funds.



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Friends of LATH and Supporters

Now is a good time to acknowledge the invaluable steady and ad hoc income stream arising from our Friends of LATH – much of it being gift-aided.

New Friends of LATH are always welcome, either just by making regular donations, or joining our team of volunteers. A recent appeal to this effect has been very successful.

Thank you all so much!

Finally...

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact us on our Facebook page or at lathsecretary@gmail.com, or by contacting Bernard via Helena or in person. Your participation in these matters is highly valued.

Once again, thank you all for your continued support, and we wish you all a very happy and healthy 2024.

Bernard Potter **President and Acting Chairman**



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