

The Gingerbread Centre

Annual Review 2018-19



*'The Gingerbread Centre is a wonderful charity
and I am proud of the work we do here.'*

Michaela Byatt, Administrator

An Overview of The Gingerbread Centre

The Gingerbread Centre was established in 1977 and became a Charity in 1985. Over the years, as the need for The Centre has grown so has the range of support we provide.

Today, The Gingerbread Centre has two accommodation sites and a total of 33 units of accommodation. Rothesay Court in Normacot, provides 22 self-contained flats, with 24-hour support for families in need. Catherine Court in Hanley, offers 7 units of supported accommodation, which is staffed 24-hours a day, as well as 4 move-on properties nearby for young families who are ready to take their next step towards independence.

As part of our support, we deliver activities to provide residents with guidance, training and meaningful activities, including a place where we promote playing together, for parents and children to develop and bond. We help residents to engage with other services, to better manage their mental health, maximise income and reduce debt, improve confidence and self-esteem, and their ability to have a choice, control or involvement. We also assist our service users to find settled accommodation.

Rothesay Court provides 24-hour supported accommodation to single mums and dads, mums to be and couples with children. We have an Activity Club on site where children can play, take part in daytrips, be creative, and much more. We provide a variety of support and activities to our families, such as; online training courses, cook and eat sessions and creative workshops. The skills our residents learn while they are at Gingerbread can be used when setting up their new home, when they move on from Gingerbread, and in the workplace.

Catherine Court is an accommodation based service that opened in 2002 to provide housing related support specifically for teenage mums. Today we provide our support to; expectant teenage mothers, vulnerable teenage couples with children and lone teenage parents who need to develop the necessary skills to live independently. We work in partnership with various agencies to provide the highest quality of support. The support we offer our families is varied, in-depth and includes; parenting skills, activities and craft sessions.

Additional to our supported accommodation, we provide support to our families when they move-on from Gingerbread, into their own home.



Now in our 42nd year, The Gingerbread Centre holds a key place in the community by supporting homeless and vulnerable families from Stoke on Trent and the surrounding area.

CONTENTS

Page 2	An Overview of The Gingerbread Centre
Page 3	Table of Contents
Page 4	Chair's Report
Page 5	Chief Executive's Report
Page 6	Financial Report
Page 7	Rothsay Court
Page 8	Catherine Court
Page 9	Activity Club
Page 10	Mental Health Project
Page 11 & 12	Case Studies / Fundraising
Page 13, 14 & 15	Fundraising / Supporters
Page 16	Head Office Address



Gingerbread's Future Aims

The objectives of the Charity are to provide counselling, support, advice and help in Stoke-on-Trent and surrounding counties to those who are in need, hardship or distress, with powers to;

- provide information and advice
- provide short-term, supported accommodation to parents and children of vulnerable families and single pregnant women

Chair's Report

I have stepped in as Chair following Adele Bryant's resignation. She did a wonderful job in a short space of time, motivating the Board, and initiating good governance procedures.

This year has brought some financial difficulties upon the Board, with the Council planning to cut our support funding by 25%. Our Senior Management Team, worked closely with an expert and our Finance Manager to successfully find solutions to the potential cut, whilst keeping communications open with the local authority and searching for alternative revenue sources. We secured support from the Lloyds Bank Foundation, who also supported us with skills and knowledge. We have found both invaluable.

We have taken on a new Fundraiser to increase our profile in the City, and to raise funds to support the families and the children in our accommodation and the wider community.

We find that more of our service users have complex needs, such as; mental health, drug and alcohol, learning disabilities, and over 25% of our residents have experienced domestic abuse. They can require a high level of support, often throughout the night to ensure the parents and their children are safe. Our staff all have Safeguarding Training and are vigilant in the protection of our vulnerable residents.

The Board has recently taken on some new members bringing their enthusiasm and skills with them for another challenging and exciting year ahead, which I am proud and happy to support.

Ele Morrissey

Acting Chair

Board of Trustees

Chair

Adele Bryant

Treasurer

Anne-Marie Tierney

Secretary

Alex Herbert / Claire McQuillan

Voting Members

Adele Bryant, Alex Herbert, Anne-Marie Tierney, Catherine Crockett, Claire McQuillan, Ele Morrissey (*Vice Chair*), Nigel Howle, Paul Dobson and Peter Thorpe.

Chief Executive's Report

What an exciting year this has been for us, although it has brought its challenges too.

We have been raising our profile with the residents of Stoke on Trent, after recruiting Fundraiser, Paul Deakin, who was previously our Senior Project Worker at Catherine Court, our teenage parents unit. His passion for Gingerbread and his bright personality have enabled him to be a regular Radio Stoke lunch-time guest, bringing fun and entertainment into this serious situation. His strength lies in events, helping us to hold a successful Gingerbread Ball in the autumn of 2018, which brought in over £6,000 towards funding our then, Mental Health Project Worker.

The challenges this year were, once again, with funding. The City Council, who fund the support staff, advised that they were intending to cut our funding by 25%, which was a huge risk to our residents and to our Charity as a whole.

We took advice, kept communication open and found efficiencies, whilst searching for extra grants to help fund the potential deficit. By the end of the financial year, we were in a good position to cope with the Council cuts and were able to keep the high level of services that we are proud to deliver to our residents.

It is clear to us that increasingly more of our residents have a high level of complex needs, requiring a higher level of support, with such things as; safeguarding, parenting support, money management, relationships, addictions and making the right choices. Our staff understand that our residents' lives are complex and that it can take a while for them to engage with us, but we provide the patience and support they deserve along the way.

The parents we support need a safe and secure environment, free from fear and oppression, in order that they can bolster their skills, confidence, self-esteem and resilience, which will help them do their best for their children.

Wendy Hocking

Chief Executive

Financial Report

Our income for the financial year ending 31st March 2019 was £858,120, which is an increase on the previous year. Donations have continued to increase this year, which is very much appreciated by all the staff and trustees of The Gingerbread Centre.

The breakdown of income for the financial year 2018-19 is shown in *Figure 1.1*.

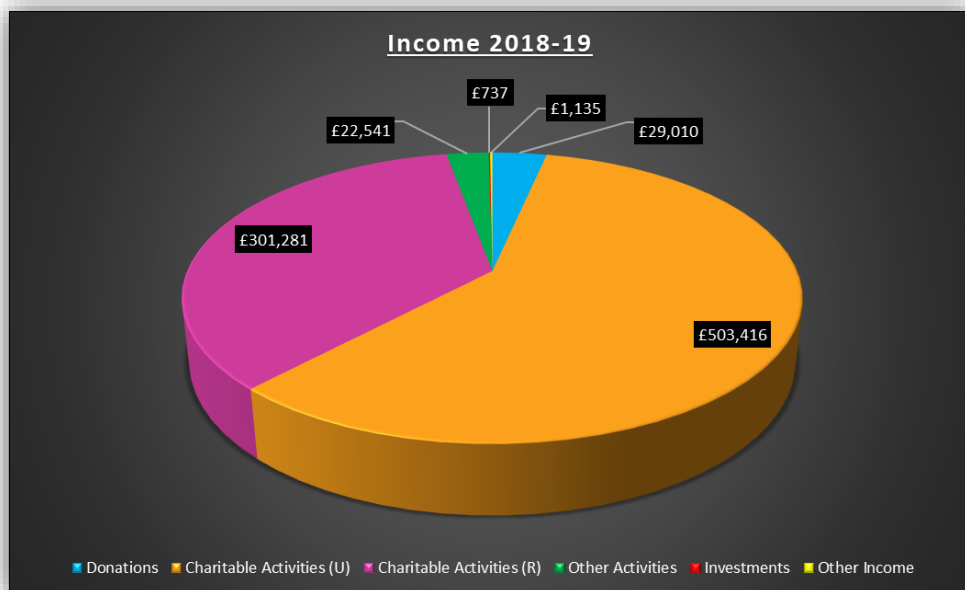


Figure 1.1

Expenditure has increased this financial year by £23,386, which is mainly due to staffing costs. Our balance sheet remains healthy with an increase in reserves of £6,650. This enables us to continue the excellent service we provide to our service users.

A full report of the accounts is available for inspection if required.

Anne-Marie Tierney
Treasurer

Rothesay Court

The support delivered at Rothesay Court assists families to address personal crisis, whilst achieving family stability and life-long independence. Several residents have received support with money management as well as working closely with the CAB, who come in to the Centre once a month. Numerous residents have completed the Changes Programme and attended the Adult Learning Confidence Course.

'My Key worker has already helped with so much getting the girls registered at nursery and school which I feel so good about. I definitely feel safe living here and know my children are safe.'

Rothesay Court Resident

Families have had the opportunity to visit Ruff and Ruby and have taken part in numerous art and craft sessions, including glass painting and embroidery, to aid their wellbeing. The Fire Service have also delivered sessions on Fire Safety. Two residents took advantage of the opportunity to do some external volunteering.

Our main referrers to the service are Housing Solutions and Children's Services. From April 2018 to the end of March 2019 58 families were given support. During this year, we also supported 30 children.

Some examples of support needs at the point of admission include: 48% of service user's needed support with their mental health, 29% were at risk of domestic violence, 16% had more complex needs and 17% had been staying in a bed and breakfast.

We are pleased that our Service Review in March 2019 was assessed as Compliant in Support Planning, Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Service User and Staff Consultation.

'All staff are extremely friendly, approachable and supportive. It was a big change moving to Stoke... staff have been very helpful with recommending, shops and social places where I can take my son. Emotionally I was in a really bad place... but almost 3 months later I am happy, confident and excited for the future.'

Rothesay Court Resident

Catherine Court

Catherine Court is an accommodation based service that provides housing related support for expectant teenage mothers, vulnerable teenage couples with children and lone teenage parents who need to develop the skills and ability to live independently. We work in partnership with a variety of agencies to provide the highest quality of support.

'Staff have always been very supportive; my Key Worker always helps when I need it.'

Catherine Court Young Parent

We have supported 27 young people during this year; 58% referred by YPSS, 27% by Social Services and 15% consisting of self-referrals and referrals from other Voluntary Agencies.

A number of residents have accessed educational opportunities with Stoke College, NACRO and Juniper Training, attending courses such as Cookery, Maths & English and Health & Social Care. Happily, one resident is going on to Keele University to study to become a Social Worker.

Residents have been able to access in-house training on fire safety and have attended activities such as; messy play, crafts, baking, and Rhyme and Story Time. Residents also had the opportunity to go the pantomime, Cinderella, and attend a trip to Wheelgate Theme Park.

Staff Blog Excerpt

'As a Senior Project Worker at Catherine Court, every day is different as we face new challenges and new milestones whilst we help support and prepare them for independent living.'

'One thing that remains the same is the person centred way in which we work. Undertaking weekly key work sessions comprising of emotional, educational, parenting support etc. or a general conversation to provide a listening ear, which is sometimes just what is needed to help lift spirits.'

*Katie Johnson - Senior Project Worker
Catherine Court*

Activity Club

Activity Club is funded by BBC Children in Need for three years and works towards the following outcomes;



Supported by

BBC

**Children
in Need**

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and Scotland no. SC039557

- Children and young people increase their social interaction with others
- Children and young people have a greater level of pride in their achievements
- Children and young people have improved confidence

During 2018-2019, 120 children and young people age 0-18 years benefitted from attending Activity Club.

Families get to spend quality fun-time together in the Activity Club, as well as when they attend trips. They have been to Wheelock Farm and Chester Zoo where the families got to meet their favourite animals and enjoy new experiences together.



'I love animals'



**'I'm going take
mine school to
show my teacher'**

Mental Health Project

The Project aims to promote awareness of mental health issues to all families who reside at Rothesay Court and Catherine Court.

The Project:

- Encourages service users to attend internal and external activities, and group sessions; thus promoting confidence and reducing isolation.
- Supports individuals to attend mental health appointments which will subsequently improve a person's wellbeing.
- Seeks specialist mental health support from external agencies for parents and/or children, should it be required.
- Gives one-to-one visits with residents, giving them the opportunity to talk, and be listened to.

Residents can feel isolated and alone when they first come to Gingerbread, and stress levels can increase. Having the worker in place gives residents the opportunity to have someone who is able to give time to their needs, to ensure the best outcomes are reached so they can continue with their journey to live independently. 93% of residents who came to Gingerbread between April 2018 and the end of March 2019 met with the Project Worker. 36% of those were referred to specialist mental health services.

“Leanne always listens without judgement, she is easy to approach and talk to. I've always found it hard to open up to professionals but with Leanne I felt comfy straight away. She talks to you like you matter instead of talking down to you.”

Rothesay Court Resident

Group sessions have included: 'Time to Talk' coffee mornings, Changes, arts and crafts, Ruff and Ruby parent and baby group. 80% of residents who attended groups said the sessions had helped improve their confidence and self-esteem, with 100% saying the support they received improved their wellbeing and made a positive difference to their lives.

Case Study 1

'I moved into Gingerbread in 2018 due to domestic violence. I suffer with depression and I am pregnant. My baby is due in three months' time and I need to keep my baby safe which I didn't do with my other children. The domestic violence has been going on for many years but it felt difficult and very scary to leave my home.

When I first moved in I thought I would be on my own. I didn't know what to expect and I was feeling stressed and in a dream. I didn't want to leave my home but the staff are really helpful and sorted out things that I couldn't bring with me including toiletries and food. I was supported to register with a local GP and supported preparing for my baby to arrive.

I attended activities and group sessions at Gingerbread and I got to meet other families so I didn't feel so alone. That helped me a lot.

I am glad I came and everything has been really positive. I am a much more settled now with my life. My depression is much better and I feel safe. It's strange but I miss my partner but I realise how he controlled me and unless he changes I know there is no future for us which does make me unhappy at times. My focus is on my baby and I do feel more confident and the staff have been great. I am having the support I need and understand more what domestic abuse is and how it can affect your life.'

Rothesay Court Resident

Case Study 2

'I was referred to Catherine Court by my YPSS Worker, I was pregnant when I moved in and had been living with family but was unable to stay there any longer. I had a Social Worker who wanted me to move into Catherine Court but I really didn't want to be here when I first moved in. I thought the staff just wanted to tell me what to do all the time, as I got to know the staff I saw that they were trying to help me rather than order me about.

They helped me to get my benefits and helped me get everything ready to go into hospital to have my daughter. They showed me things like making a bottle, changing and bathing my baby, even though I felt a bit silly trying it on a doll. They also showed me how to keep my flat clean and safe for my daughter and helped me to start NACRO and get my daughter in nursery.

I am a lot happier now at Catherine Court but still have times when I forget to do things when I should and staff have to tell me about it. I'm a teenager and still don't like being told when I've done something wrong but I know it's only because they care about me and my daughter and want me to be able to move on and live in my own home.'

Catherine Court Young Parent

Fundraising

We now have a full-time Fundraiser whose employment started in September, this has led to a dramatic increase in the amount of money the charity is able to generate from fundraising activities. It has also meant that we have been able to increase our presence in the city and countywide, through a variety of media and events including; the local newspaper, radio stations and online social media platforms, allowing us to connect with a variety of local businesses.

Annual Ball

The first job of our Fundraiser was to ensure the smooth running of our annual ball, this was hugely successful and the amount of funds raised saw an increase from the previous year. The Ball took place at Stoke Town Hall and saw the premiere of our first Gingerbread film, which has since been used to promote the service and encourage potential funders and community groups to get involved with us. Next years' Ball will take place at Keele Hall on the 16th November and has already sold out with over a 200% increase in ticket sales.

Autonet Insurance and Schools Programme



We were lucky enough this year to receive £10,000 funding from Autonet Insurance to help sustain the Mental Health Project Worker post and to set up our Schools Programme. The Programme will see a number of local schools take part in drama workshops and create theatre pieces regarding homelessness and how to

show empathy. In return, the schools will sign up to raise at least £500 for the Charity. It is hoped that this will be rolled out to secondary schools and become a city wide partnership with educational establishments.

Grants and Community Funds

Additional to the support we've received from Autonet Insurance, we have been successful in receiving support from two separate Co-Op Community Funds. Other funding applications are being explored and research is being completed on possible funding sources. At this time of uncertainty, statistics show that it is more difficult than ever to be successful in applications to potential funders. Training and research time is vital if we are to continue being successful in the current climate.

Promotional Events

To raise the profile of the charity, the local media has been key. We have had a number of events covered by the local newspaper and local radio stations.

The Fundraiser has given a variety of talks across the city at locations such as; Keele University, the Rotary Club, Stoke on Trent College, Tunstall Men's Group, Leek United Building Society, Staffs University, Arnold Clarke and Stoke City Football Club. We would like to thank everyone involved in arranging these talks.



Corporate Engagement

Currently, we are the named charity of the following businesses: Stoke Audi, Leek United Building Society, Autonet Insurance, Seddon Constructions, TLC Productions, Stagecoach Uttoxeter, Drama School Stoke, Fine and Country Estates, Co-op Keelings Road, Co-op Ubberry Road, and Arnold Clarke.

We are pleased with the successful relationships we have made with these companies and are grateful for the support they have given us. We hope to build on these relationships going forward.

Looking Towards the Future

We hope we can build on the foundations laid by the Fundraiser and move forward. We are hoping to create a whole year of events to encourage businesses to engage with us and choose us as their 'Charity of the Year'.

A new Fundraising Strategy will need to be developed as our Fundraiser has provided a new way of thinking in regards to what we can achieve to fulfil our sustainability goals.

We will continue to promote the charity by creating new relationships with supporters, building on existing relationships and through events and activities.

Supporters and Funders

We would like to thank everyone who has supported The Gingerbread Centre over the last 12 months by donating time, money, goods, services or by holding their own fundraiser. Furthermore, we would like to extend our thanks to all those not already mentioned.

We are grateful for the support and contributions that each of you have provided.

Alison Barnett
Alsager Lions
AMB Insurance Services Ltd
Amy Chaplin
Animals in Need
Asda Wolstanton Superstore
Asmir Begovic & Mary Howard
Asmir Begovic Foundation
BBC Radio Stoke
Becky Deakins
Belgrave Medical Centre
Beryl & Dily's
B-Hygienic

Mrs T Stevens
Mrs Vicky Hopkins
NCS (National Citizen Service)
Noah Fry Jones
Parish Church of Saint Mary & All Saints
Primark Stores Ltd – Hanley
Prince's Trust Team
Queen's Park Partnership
Red Two Apps
Richard Jacobs Pensions
Richmond Street Allotments Association

Black Lion – Trent Vale
Boots – Festival Park
Boots – Hanley
Boots – Newcastle
Catenian Association Stoke-on-Trent
Circle 13
Cathy Bower Photography
Chloe Wilson
CID North
Commercial Networks
Diane Dunion
Dicky Bow Entertainment
Dunelm Distribution Centre
Elizabeth Steele
Environmental Essentials Ltd.
FWB
Georgia Jepson
GRG Public Resources
Innerwheel Club of Stoke on Trent
Jane Sutton
Jason & Sophie Ward
Jody Perry
John Gould & Cath Allsop
Katy Hulson
KMF Group
Lee Wheeldon
Lin & Adrian Pointon
Linda Beasley
Lord Mayor's Office
Maureen & Don Wood
Mitten Clarke
Moore Stephens
Morrison's – Newcastle
Mr and Mrs Robson
Mrs Francis
Mrs Morgan

Rydale Roofing
Sarah Croft
Sarah Dodd
Shanita Dixon
Sheila Colclough
Sheryl Wheeler
Skin Jase Tattoo Studio
Sports Direct
St. John's C.E. Primary School
St. Joseph's College
Staffordshire Housing Association
Staffordshire Living Magazine
Staffordshire Police
Staffordshire University
Star Bikers
Stoke College
Stoke on Trent Lions
Stone Rural Parish Council
Subway – Longton
Sure Fire Media
SVP at St. Gregory's Church
Swan Inn @ Bignall End
Tesco – Meir
The Rowley Trust
The Salvation Army Hall (Longton)
The Salvation Army Hostel
The Staffordshire Clinic
Titanic Brewery
Toby Carvery
Victoria Baker
Vodafone – Festival Park
Water Plus (IT Team)
Well Pharmacy HSC
Winter Moon Crafts UK
Weight Watchers @ the Tollgate

We would like to thank our supporters who have supported us over the last 12 months but have chosen to remain anonymous. Your contributions to our charity are greatly appreciated.

*'Homelessness can happen to anyone. That is a scary thought isn't it?
I believe it is 'Shelter' who says one in three working people are only
one pay cheque away from homelessness.'*

*Jean Lawton - Operational Manager
Rothesay Court*



The Gingerbread Centre Head Office

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