

The Gingerbread Centre

The
Gingerbread
Centre



'Supporting Vulnerable People'



Annual Report 2019-20

Since 1977, The Gingerbread Centre has held a key place in the community by supporting local families who are homeless and vulnerable.



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Future Goals

Maintain high levels of sanitation to keep the families and our staff safe throughout Gingerbread. Explore possible revenue sources to recover lost income from cancelled events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair's Report

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Wendy Hocking for her efforts and we look forward to welcoming our new Chief Executive in due course.

Securing the funding for the provision of supported accommodation for a further 5 years was a real positive for The Gingerbread Centre this year. This funding provides us with a strong foundation upon which we can enter a new strategic phase, focused on raising the profile of The Gingerbread Centre and generating additional revenue streams.

We have welcomed new trustees to the board and our fundraising has gone from strength to strength. In particular, our Ball held in November 2019 was very successful at raising £14K. Our fundraising money goes toward supporting the additional elements of our services, and enables us to provide emergency funds to assist our families when in crisis.

We continue to receive referrals for parents with complex needs, including; safeguarding, addiction, mental health, domestic abuse and parenting support. Staff at Gingerbread respond flexibly to meet the needs of each individual, offering additional visits or more intensive 1:1 sessions with the Well-being Worker as needed.

We have adapted the way we work by adopting some of the principles of Trauma Informed Care. These principles provide staff with an understanding of how to respond to the impact of trauma and avoid exacerbating the upset. The principles offer the opportunity for our service users to build resilience and build relationships that offer safety.

COVID-19 has brought significant challenges and delays to the charity recently and I would like to thank our staff for their commitment to The Gingerbread Centre and our residents.

There are still tough times ahead, but we will continue to ensure that we provide the support and guidance for those who need us and look at new and innovative ways of working to meet any challenges that may arise.

Ele Morrissey
Chairperson

Board of Trustees

Chair
Ele Morrissey

Treasurer
Anne-Marie Tierney

Secretary
Adele Wakefield

Voting Members

Adele Wakefield, Anne-Marie Tierney, Catherine Crockett, Ele Morrissey, Fiona Miller, Keith Davis, Leanne Kerry.

Chief Executive Report

I have stepped into the role of Interim Chief Executive, and would like to thank Wendy Hocking for her contribution to The Gingerbread Centre over the last few years.

I am very pleased to say that, following sustained excellent service delivery and the dedication of our staff, we successfully retained our contracts that will allow us to continue to provide supported accommodation and related support services for the next 5 years.

We participated in local groups, such as; Chairing the Homeless Forum, to keep abreast of local issues with homelessness, and continued to focus on building partnerships with other organisations.

We saw the recruitment of a Volunteer Coordinator, who is building a legacy for Gingerbread by helping to increase the number of regular volunteers. These volunteers can support our service and relieve boredom or loneliness for our families by holding additional activities, being a 'listening ear', or a helpful resource for further education and training. This year, we were pleased to be able to welcome a former service user back to Gingerbread as a volunteer.

Towards the end of the financial year, we faced the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak. Our main focus was to ensure that our families did not feel alone, unsafe or isolated. We worked rapidly to undertake risk assessments and implement suitable protective measures. We had to undertake new ways of working, both in terms of staff working from home for the first time and by meeting all the needs of our families.

With the loss of our communal spaces, our Activity Club needed to find a different way of working with the families. They created new activity packs for our children, which were delivered safely to each flat, and which the children enjoyed immensely. To keep within social distancing guidelines, Key Workers moved face-to-face meetings to telephone conversations and video calls.

The team have risen brilliantly to these challenges, in difficult circumstances, and pulled together to look after and support our residents, as well as each other, by creating a safe and secure environment. I would like to thank all staff, as well as volunteers and supporters, who showed great determination to help us through such an uncertain time.

Moving forward, we will continue to adapt as necessary and will find ways to support the ongoing well-being needs of our service users.

Adele Bryant

Interim Chief Executive

Financial Report

Our income for the financial year ending 31st March 2020 was £953,581 which is an increase on the previous year. The amount of donations we've received have continued to rise, which is very much appreciated by all the staff and Trustees of The Gingerbread Centre.

The breakdown of income for the financial year 2019-20 is shown in *Figure 1.1*.

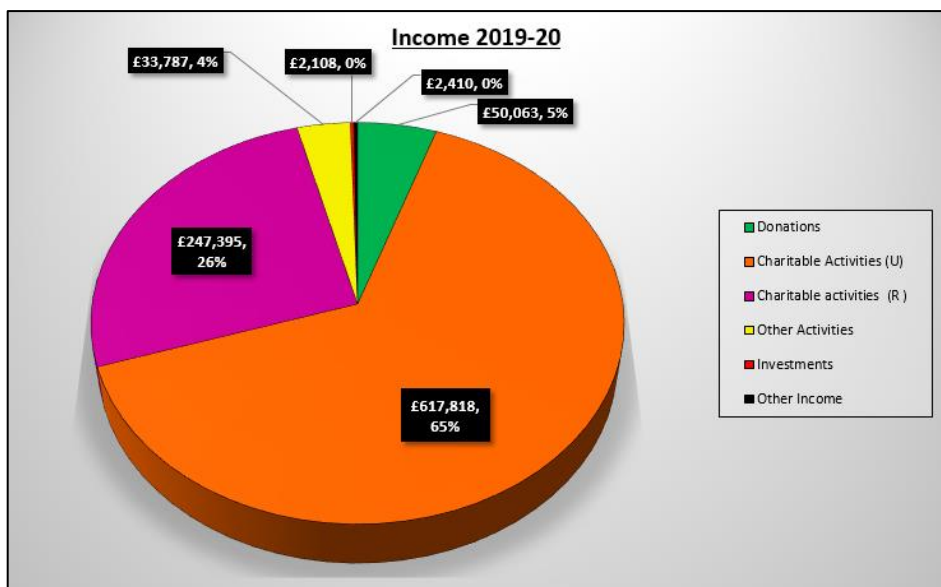


Figure 1.1

Our Balance Sheet remains healthy with an increase in reserves of £4,863. 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.

Our main referrers to the service are Housing Solutions and Children's Services. From April 2019 to the end of March 2020, 58 parents were given support. We supported 63 children. The average age of residents who lived at Rothesay Court was 18-34.

Some examples of support needs at the point of admission: 47% of service user's support needs were with mental health and 29% were at risk of domestic violence. 18% of service users had been staying in bed and breakfast before coming to Rothesay Court.

We continue to develop our approach following learning about Attachment Theory, and the impact of trauma. In line with our Values; Respect, Empowerment, Guidance, Success and Stability, this has led us to look at being more innovative and to begin changing our model of support to be based around Trauma Informed Care and Physiologically Informed Practice.

"If I had a problem, I could go to any member of staff at Gingerbread. There wasn't one person that I didn't feel able to talk to if I needed to. You can trust everyone there. You know they won't judge you and they'll help you if they can. That's what talking to people at Gingerbread felt like - no judgement."

So that residents have a sense of belonging in the wider community in which they live, we support them with registering at the local Children's Centre, where parents are encouraged to see the Health Visitor and attend group sessions. Some residents also accessed Adult Learning at Blurton Community Hub and we signpost to local places of worship/faith groups so residents can practice their faith and meet other people.

"My Key Worker has been amazing and helped me to know the local mosque and I was helped with a prayer mat. All the staff have been very friendly"

Catherine Court

Catherine Court's accommodation provides 7 units of intensive support, 4 units of semi-independent support and 4 units of floating support for teenage parents aged between 16 and 19.

From April 2019 to March 2020 we supported 23 young parents and 27 children. Our source of referrals was; Young Parents Support Service 53%, Children's Social Care 30%, Self-Referrals 13% and other Voluntary Agencies 4%. The young parents primary support needs included; domestic abuse, mental health, staying safe and learning disabilities.

Together with Rothesay Court we are moving towards Trauma Informed Care based support and staff are working towards more formal training in this area. Staff work flexibly within our support model as we recognise that we have to adapt our methods for each individual parent, whilst keeping in mind that they are still teenagers themselves.

"Able to phone staff at any time if I'm feeling low or want to share good things with staff, makes me feel less isolated"

We work with young parents to access health services, benefits, budgeting, tenancy management, emotional well-being, relationships, basic parenting skills, education and training. A number of the young people accessed courses at Stoke-on-Trent College and we supported them with accessing funding for nursery places. One young person has now gone on to University.

When asked how we had impacted on their life, one young parent said:

"I have moved into my own home now but I feel Catherine Court impacted on my life in a positive way as I could speak to staff about anything, which made me not feel alone. Also they did lots of activities which helped as it gave me and my son something to do together"

Activity Club

Activity Club is funded by BBC Children in Need, to support quality fun-time for the families at Gingerbread. The activities and trips provided are designed to;



- Increase children and young people's social interaction with others.
- Support greater levels of pride that children and young people show in their achievements.
- Improve confidence in children and young people.

During 2019-2020, Activity Club was accessed 221 times by families who live at Gingerbread.

Families who attend Activity Club enjoy a variety of activities such as, painting, clay modelling, sand and water play, dancing, games and movie nights. Families will also come together to celebrate festivals like, Chinese New Year, Easter, Christmas, Diwali and much more.



"I like bringing the kids to activity club after they have been school so they can have some fun"

Between 2019 and 2020, Activity Club planned trips for the families. We visited the National Forest Adventure Farm, Alton Towers, and the theatre, and had a great time at Ten Pin Bowling. Families also enjoyed a Christmas outing to Oakley's Farm.

"My favourite part was seeing Santa and his reindeer"



Well-being Practitioner

Gingerbread is aware that moving into supported accommodation is a huge and often daunting step for many of our families. They may have already experienced many periods of instability, and may have a varied and complex history.

The aim of the Well-being Practitioner, therefore, is to support families with their well-being so that they feel well while they are at Gingerbread. We know that residents can feel isolated and alone when they first come to Gingerbread.

The support offered can range from attending doctors' appointments or hospital appointments with the resident, if required, to accessing secondary mental health services if a crisis occurs.

The Well-being Practitioner continues to develop working relationships with various services, which gives residents easier access to the services they provide. For example; the Sutherland Centre, Harplands Hospital, CDAS, and New Era, for domestic violence services. The Well-being Practitioner will liaise with the professional, provide updates on the resident's progression and attend multi-agency meetings when required.

The approximate number of well-being sessions that families have been supported with is **1,215**.

The Well-being Practitioner gained the support of Changes, the mental health service, to deliver a six-week course, three times a year to increase each resident's well-being. Courses included; 'Living Life to the Full' and 'The Making Changes Programme'. The Mother Project also came in and delivered 'creative writing' and 'stretch and move' sessions, to support families with their overall well-being.

"The support here has been fantastic, especially around my mental well-being, I can now manage my life much better. I've put pictures up on my wall, as I now think of my flat as home, it's been great. I will miss the support when it stops"

Case Study

Becky: "There's no judgement at Gingerbread - they just get it"

I didn't really know what to expect when we went to stay at the Gingerbread Centre. It ended up being a home. My daughter, Ayla was 12 months old when we moved into Gingerbread because of an unexpected change in circumstances. The first thought I had when I walked through the door of our new living space was "Oh, it's not just a single room!" It was a whole flat, with a bedroom, little living space and bathroom.

I looked at it like we were living in a normal, residential flat, and I wanted to make it feel homey for my daughter. We put our pictures and photos up and had a little rug on the floor.

I made it like home, and that's exactly what it became.

Becky: "It's so much easier to talk to someone who gets it"

I think most families are at Gingerbread for near enough similar reasons, and it's not always something you want to share with the world. There's certain things you might not want people knowing - you might feel ashamed, or embarrassed, or worried about what people might find out. It's so much easier to talk to someone who's been through what you've been through, rather than someone who's just pretending to understand.

If I had a problem, I could go to any member of staff at Gingerbread. There wasn't one person that I didn't feel able to talk to if I needed to. You can trust everyone there. You know they won't judge you and they'll help you if they can. That's what talking to people at Gingerbread felt like - no judgement.

Becky: "Time to move on"

We've since moved out of the centre into our own home, and while I loved our time at Gingerbread I was excited to be moving on.

Having lived by myself since I was 17 years old, I'm used to being independent. They understand that, and helped me secure my new home.

Gingerbread supports you the whole way through, from the day you arrive to after you begin living how you want to, as a family and together as family is exactly how it should be.

Fundraising

First and foremost we would like to welcome our new Fundraiser, Chris Belyavin, to the team. Chris joins us from The Donna Louise where he was fundraising for more than 5 years.

Chris stepped into the Fundraiser role after Paul Deakin decided to follow a new path. We would like to thank Paul for all of the work he did for us while at The Gingerbread Centre and we wish him all the best in his new job.



The fundraising highlight of the year was undoubtedly the Greatest Showman Ball at Keele Hall on 16th November, which raised an amazing £14,000 for the charity. A massive thank you to everybody who supported and took part in the event.

Other successful events during the year included a Night Under the Stars, the Snowdon Challenge, Kadi's 17-mile walk and the fundraising efforts of the NCS (National Citizen Service). Specific thanks also to the Star Bikers who, in addition to collecting toys with their Christmas Toy Run and Easter eggs through their Charity Egg Run, made a fantastic donation of £2000 to the charity.

Our corporate supporters have also continued to make generous donations to the charity over the year. Special thanks to Synectics Solutions, The Outdoors Company, Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce, Water Plus, TCS John Huxley, Seddon Construction, North Staffs Health and Safety Group, Marley Limited, Co-operative Bank, Prestwood Builders and Arnold Clarke. We look forward to continuing to work with these companies in the future and hope to develop new relationships with other businesses. There are many ways that companies can support us to mutual benefit. Please contact Chris on the details below, if you would like to discuss supporting our charity through your business.

Email: Chris.Belyavin@gingerbreadcentre.co.uk

Telephone: 07889 565 265

Chris would also like to hear from individuals and social groups who would like to hold their own fundraising event or take part in an event arranged by The Gingerbread Centre.

Our work with schools, through a project highlighting how homelessness can affect mental health, generated an income of £4895. So thank you to everyone who supported or took part in this project, in particular the Co-operative Community Fund. Thanks also to the crew at the Mitchell Arts Centre in Hanley where the bucket collection at the Christmas pantomime raised £928.

A list of events for 2020 was drawn up but our fundraising plans were disrupted at the end of March by the lockdown due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We will not be able to hold many fundraising events or a ball in 2020, which will have a significant impact on our income. Hopefully, we can get our flagship ball back onto the calendar as soon as possible.

It is clear that physical events may not be possible for most of 2020, but we will be looking at what fundraising can be put in place for the rest of the year with a view to reintroducing a calendar of events as soon as possible for 2021. What is clear is that the support provided by The Gingerbread Centre will continue to be in demand and that will increase as hardship grows as a result of COVID-19.

Ways You Can Help

As many of our events for 2020 were cancelled due to COVID-19, our need for donations has increased. Here are a few ways you can help.

Cash / Cheque

If you would like to donate money to The Gingerbread Centre, you can do so through our website or directly to one of our centres. More information can be found on our website.

<https://gingerbreadcentre.co.uk/donate/>

easyfundraising

To help us without putting your hand in your pocket, you can sign up to use easyfundraising and raise money each time you shop online.

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/sotgingerbread

easyfundraising is free and easy to use. Once you have signed up, simply log in to shop with your favourite retailers and shop as you usually would. The Gingerbread Centre will receive a percentage of what you spend at no additional cost to you.

Gifts

You can donate new gifts, such as home ware, to help us create move on packs to help our service users when they move in to their own property.

You can also donate new gifts at Christmas, chocolate eggs at Easter and sanitary items, or tinned and dried food, all year round.

Charity of the Year

Nominate us as your Charity of the Year!

Nominating The Gingerbread Centre as your business' Charity of the Year is a great way to support us. It is a great opportunity to unite your staff behind a worthwhile cause they can feel passionate about. Contact our Fundraiser, Chris, to discuss making Gingerbread your Charity of the Year.

The Swan Inn with Easter Eggs



Supporters and Funders

We would like to express our deep appreciation to every business, individual and group who has provided our charity with a donation to help the families receiving support and accommodation through our service, over the last 12 months.

We consider ourselves very fortunate for having so many generous and dedicated supporters. Your patronage makes it possible for our charity to continue.

Our wonderful supporters have helped us by donating time, money, goods, services, or by holding their own fundraiser. We are grateful for the support and contributions that each of you have provided. Furthermore, we would like to say that every donation we receive, no matter how big or how small, makes a positive difference to the parents and children who access our service.

Our main contributors are Stoke on Trent City Council, Children in Need, Lloyds Foundation, Community Foundation and Woolcool.

We would like to say an extra thank you to all the children who support us. The wonderful children who support us share their toys and clothes

with the children in our service, donate their birthday presents or Christmas gifts, save their pocket money so that they can give it to those less fortunate or fundraise for us so they can help the families who live here. Some do this every year and have done so for several years. Each child who supports us in this way is extraordinary.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the last 12 months. We hope that you will continue to support us throughout the year ahead.



Gifts from Noah (Noah has been donating his birthday presents for the last 5 years, since he was 4 years old.)

Supporting Homeless and Vulnerable People in Stoke on Trent Since 1977



The Gingerbread Centre Head Office

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