

LIFECRAFT ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Lifecraft, as this annual report shows, goes from strength to strength. Four years ago when I took over as Chair of Trustees we faced large financial problems and questions about how we could carry on. This last financial year our income stream is nearly double 2018/9, and this is because of the continuing success of Lifeline and our growth in services, for example in opening weekly in Ely and strengthening suicide bereavement services across our region. Lifecraft will continue to stay flexible and responsive to the needs and opportunities which arise in different parts of the region, and deliver services where they are needed most.

Since the last annual report, quite a lot has happened for me as well as Lifecraft! In January this year I moved to Scotland and so sadly I am leaving my role as Lifecraft Trustee, and this is my last report for a Lifecraft AGM. I continued as Chair of Trustees throughout this year whilst we recruited my replacement, which we did in late Spring when Fiona Kerr joined the trustee team. She has been getting involved in Lifecraft work and functioning – and some of you may have met her at the Lifecraft 30th Birthday celebration event in early September this year.

I feel sure Fiona will find it as rewarding as I have to be the Chair of Trustees for Lifecraft. In times of change there will always be challenges to face and issues to address, but for any organisation it is the people who belong to it who make it what it is. Lifecraft has a wonderful staff and volunteer team, who are dedicated, caring and resourceful, and a strong and committed trustee team who have so often gone that extra mile to keep everything secure and progressing.

Most of all though, we are a user-led organisation with Lifecraft members at the heart of it, making significant and valuable contributions at every level of the work we do. In the new Lifecraft Strategy staff, trustees and members produced a vision statement which encapsulates our shared goal: ‘a society where people with mental health difficulties receive the support they need, where they are at the centre of service and support design and delivery, and where there is no stigma or discrimination attached to mental health issues of illness’. I have every confidence that Lifecraft will continue to lead the way towards this goal, and to demonstrate what it can look like.

Troy Cooper, Chair of Board of Trustees

IMPACT REPORT

Compared to the previous couple of years, this was a relatively 'normal' one and allowed us to spend time making sure that the charity is fit for purpose, developing our already excellent services and introducing additional services to better support people at times when they need it. As always, our focus has firmly remained on promoting self-help for mental health and supporting local people who are struggling with their mental health.

We hope that the information in this impact report clearly demonstrates the breadth of support we have given, how we're working with other organisations and the opportunities that we are continuing to develop.

"Lifecraft has really helped me over the years, to rebuild my mental health and confidence. I honestly think that without the support of Lifecraft I wouldn't still be here. It's a great place, with great supportive people who look after each other and simply just care."

Melissa

As always, we greatly appreciate the time that our volunteers freely give, the dedication and commitment of our staff and the donations we receive from generous people, businesses and trusts. The support we receive from our statutory and voluntary sector partners continues to be substantial and they also help us to make the best use of all our resources for those living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Thank you to everyone who continues to support us so we can continue doing the amazing work we do.

Overview of the Year

April

- Launched new five-year strategy

May

- Bowling fun at Tenpin in Cambridge
- NEW s136 follow-up service began supporting people
- Expansion of the Suicide Bereavement Support Service with the appointment of a second Liaison Worker

June

- Our first Expressive Writing Course in partnership with the Royal Literary Society
- Fun, games and cake at our Platinum Jubilee Fun Day

July

- Paddling, fairground rides and ice-creams in Clacton
- Relaunch of our employment and volunteering service

August

- Awarded the countywide contract for delivering suicide bereavement counselling

September

- Launched Lifecraft in Ely with drop-in afternoons

November

- Our Annual General Meetings

December

- Doors open and lots of fun at Mill Road Winter Fair
- Christmas karaoke, festive food and games

January

- All Lifecraft assets transferred from the 'old' Lifecraft charity to the 'new' Lifecraft charity
- Suicide Bereavement Counselling Service began supporting clients
- Our Crisis and Support Helplines Manager won Employee of the Year at the National Helpline Awards 2022

February

- Ely hours extended to include morning groups as well as afternoon drop-ins
- Afternoon tea for staff and volunteers to say thank you for their dedication and hard work

March

- Staff Support Line and webchat contract ended

Value of Volunteering

Across the charity, we had 68 wonderful people volunteer for us during the year. Together, the volunteers generously gave us 4,296 hours of volunteering, which equates to a monetary value of approximately £51,232¹. Whilst this is one way to demonstrate the value of Lifecraft's volunteers to our local mental health system, we know that the skills and experiences that these individuals bring are also vast.

¹ www.volunteerscotland.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Calculating-the-economic-value-of-your-volunteers-Guidance.pdf

Membership Services

As part of the move to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, all members wanting to remain as members of Lifecraft needed to re-register with us. We made the process as straightforward as possible and supported anyone who needed our help. The number of active members has remained steady and we continue to receive multiple new membership applications on a weekly basis.

**“Lifecraft really is an encouragement to me. It’s my safe haven.
Now I have a social life that I can look forward to.”**

Melody

One of our strategic priorities is to strengthen our membership offer. Our programme of groups and activities continue to be led by what our members feel would be useful to them, and through utilising research into what works. During the year we hosted a variety of social activities, groups and courses. Some of the groups are run on an ongoing basis and others are run on a short-term basis.

Here's a snapshot of information about our membership from the year:

- 42 new members
- 279 group or activity sessions held
- 108 members attended at least one group session
- Members from all districts in the area, including an increase in members from East Cambridgeshire
- Average of seven to ten people attending each of our regular ongoing groups each week



The biggest change to our membership services was the introduction of in-person groups, activities and counselling in Ely. We are delighted by the way the drop-ins and more structured groups have been received by people in the area and it’s been wonderful to see the impact we have already started to have on the lives of those who have found us. While we are currently only open in Ely one day per week, we have already had to move venues to accommodate the number of people attending and our membership figures are showing a significant increase in members from outside the Cambridge area. We had 18 unique people access our Ely groups and activities, with an average of seven people a week at the drop-ins.

“When Lifecraft started in Ely, I decided to give it a try. I’ve never been a group person and, in fact, I would actively avoid them. However, it’s turned out to be a lifeline for me – I’ve actually made friends who I look forward to seeing every week. I’ve gone from a very solitary and isolated person, to someone who can go to a safe place, learn new things in a supportive environment and am the most sociable I’ve been for 20 years or so.”

Joanne

The groups wouldn't be possible without the support of the members who volunteer or engage in short-term paid employment at Lifecraft. However, our Member Employee Scheme isn't just about enabling the groups – it's main aim is to help members grow in confidence and gain new skills.

- Nine member employees or volunteers working for us via the member employee scheme.
- Average of 2.2 work hours per week provided by each member employee or volunteer.

Counselling Service

We have continued to offer up to two years of counselling to our members, providing additional support alongside our groups and activities. Most sessions are being delivered in-person, however, we are still able to offer online or telephone sessions where this is most beneficial. Priority is usually given to members who regularly attend other Lifecraft groups and activities, which are designed to support them and help them to better support themselves, but we understand that this isn't always possible. We are pleased to now be able to offer in-person sessions in Ely as well as Cambridge.

- 12 clients entering treatment
- 35 members on waiting list
- 13 assessments carried out
- 40 members supported during the year
- 87% available appointments attended
- 18 members completing treatment
- 9 new counsellors trained

Employment and Volunteering Support

In addition to the nine members who worked for us through our Member Employment and Volunteering Scheme, we re-established our Careers and Employment Service during the year. The service is open to anyone living in Cambridgeshire who is 18+ and is struggling to gain employment or remain in employment due to struggles with their mental health. Through 1-2-1 coaching, training and both employment and mental health support, we help people get to the point where they have the confidence to work or volunteer and have the skills and knowledge to be able to stay in the role. Our support is tailored to the needs of the individual.

Since relaunching in July, we had:

- 27 referrals.
- Helped nine people into work or start a new job and one person into volunteering (37% of referrals).
- Supported another six people to move towards their employment goals.

Referrals into the service came from a variety of channels: self-referral (6), CPFTs Individual Placement and Support Service (6), Lifecraft (5), Red Balloon in the Air (4), primary care (3) and other (3). The average age of those referred to the service was 36.

Helpline Services

We had another successful year of juggling commitments and conjuring workable rotas to enable Lifeline to continue to operate 12 hours a day, every day during the year. We also managed to introduce a further call-back service, supporting people who are discharged following detainment under s136 of the Mental Health Act. It was great to work with our colleagues from the Integrated Care Board, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council and SUN Network to make this a reality.

The number of calls taken by Lifeline increased by an astonishing 38% on the previous year, which was already a 4% increase on the year before. Including the call-back services, this was 12,383 calls made and received.

As with the previous few years, most calls to Lifeline were from people living in Cambridge or Peterborough. We have continued to promote the line across the whole county and have seen an upward trend in calls from Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire. Adversely, we have seen a downward trend in calls from Fenland and Cambridge. Call numbers from East Cambridgeshire remain fairly stable. We will use these figures to help us target our geographical marketing of the service.

Unfortunately, after a year and ten months of delivering the dedicated health and care support line, including a webchat service, we were given notice that the Integrated Care Board didn't have the funds to continue the service after 31 March 2023. It was a honour to be able to support our health and care workers in this dedicated way and we will continue to support those who are eligible via Lifeline.

Lifeline

- 8,749 total calls taken
- 710 people calling the line for the first time
- 18 new volunteers trained
- 2,904 hours given by volunteers
- 4,015 number of opening hours
- Top reasons for calling: Anxiety 14% (1,223) / Isolation 19% (1,668) / Distress 7.6% (667) / Depression 6.7% (585)

Health and Care Support Line

- 280 cases
- 46.8 hours of support provided
- 40% worked in critical care during pandemic
- 67 NHS call-backs booked
- Top reasons for calling: Information (116) / Relationship issues (35) / Anxiety (54)
- Calls from a wide variety of health and care organisations

Health and Care Proactive Calls

- 11 cases
- Approximately two hours of support provided

Sanctuary Aftercare Service

- 1,349 referrals into the service
- 877 unique people supported
- Over 329 hours of support given
- 1,129 signposts made
- 12 safety plans updated
- 70 safety plans created

Missing from Home Service

- 74 referrals into the service
- 48 cases (46 people)
- Over 20 hours of support provided

S136 Follow-up Service

- 51 referrals into the service
- 38 people supported
- Over 22 hours of support given

Suicide Bereavement Support Service

Our suicide bereavement services have grown significantly over the past year, meaning that we've been able to increase the amount and type of support available to those bereaved by suspected suicide. We are now supporting more people and supporting them for longer, which has been important because the time between the death and the inquest has become longer.

As well as doubling our specialist emotional and practical support, we have been working to reintroduce our peer support groups and have established a new suicide bereavement counselling service that provides up to 14 sessions of free therapy. This has all been possible thanks to additional public sector contract funding.

- Average of 60 people actively supported each month
- 110 individuals supported during the year
- 83 referrals into the service
- 88 new clients supported
- 1,344 contacts with clients
- Approximately 380 hours of support provided
- Relationship to deceased (% of those actively supported over the year):
 - 26 people (24%) spouse or partner,
 - 18 people (16%) child (adult children),
 - 32 people (29%) parent,
 - 17 people (15%) sibling,
 - 6 people (5%) friend,
 - 3 people (3%) former partner,
 - 8 people (7%) other or unknown
- 9 clients receiving specialist counselling (January-March)
- 59 hours of counselling provided (January-March)

Looking Ahead

Over the coming year, we are hoping to be able to continue delivering all the services we are currently providing, whilst also enabling more in-person support at locations across the county. There is definitely a lot of demand for our services and this will give people more choice about the support that is right for them and the opportunity to become involved in all aspects of Lifecraft.

We'll also be celebrating our 30th birthday in 2023, so I'm sure they'll be a certain amount of reminiscing and cake eating!

Gemma Barron, Chief Executive

**Carole Morgan and Cathy Fusniak, Joint Operations Managers
and The Lifecraft Staff Team**