

## **Devizes Opendoors** **Annual Report 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023- 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

### **Introduction and general overview**

It has been another busy year at Opendoors as our 50 volunteers supported over 190 guests at our 4 weekly sessions between January and to December 2024, culminating in our popular Christmas meal celebrations. Of our guests, 35 were rough sleeping.

Our specialist support provided by our staff and supported by our volunteers works alongside guests as they address acute issues such as having no place to sleep, no access to benefits, and long-term health, medical, drug and alcohol problems.

Trust and safety are key to creating an environment where long standing issues can be addressed to achieve significant changes. We have strong working relationships with 12 specialist agencies including the Rough Sleeper Team (RST), Turning Point, Nelsons Trust, council housing, probation, debts agency, Foodbank, Nationwide and the NHS.

We are often the “connection” in a multi-agency approach for guests with multiple issues/needs. Turning Point send a Connect van and two outreach workers to the centre weekly and we have outreach workers from RST for emergency accommodation, Nelsons Trust, as well as Housing First, to secure permanent housing for guest and an outreach worker from Nelsons Trust for vulnerable female guests.

Royal Bath Hospital sends a mobile unit on a regular basis for liver screening and general health checks. We attend RST meetings on both a practical weekly level, together with the police and similar organisations and a more strategic leader forum quarterly. We also attend the fortnightly HOPE Public Health meetings involving RST, housing, police, Turning Point, NHS, Nelsons Trust and Wiltshire homeless services like ourselves.

There are other services that we access to meet specific needs e.g. The Dog's Trust HOPE programme offering free vet access for animal companions (including micro chipping and neutering.)

### **Financial update**

Attached

### **Developments 2024 and looking ahead**

Following a PCC award of £5k, we have invested in a bespoke version of Inform, the industry gold standard of case management for homeless and/or complex need individuals. This means we are able to gather high quality reliable data, enable us to mediate and track multiple agency interventions to benefit all parties involved, and provide better data gathering for reports for fundraising, and networking with stakeholders.

The Inform system has been a major change for us and staff and volunteers have put in great efforts to make this work. Using the new system, our hub manager is now able to produce monthly reports for Trustees and includes anonymized case studies which provide detailed accounts of progress.

We have started offering some new services through new partnerships e.g. the anti-Smoking initiative which has proved popular and helps guests rebuild a sense of control and self-confidence. We have put effort into building new working relationships and have met with various agencies as well as with the housing and wellbeing specialists at Wiltshire Council.

Volunteers continue to receive onboarding training and support from staff and experienced volunteers and we have started an enhanced debrief process at the end of each session to support

volunteers with issues that arise. Our Christmas volunteer party was wonderfully well attended and kindly hosted by the Bear in Devizes.

We have had a major review of all of our policies and have updated many in particular our safeguarding and lone working policies. Staff receive support via an external specialist counselling support and we are looking to develop ongoing supervision support, as well as more mental health provision which remains hard to access and a gap in external provision.

The Operations and Training and Development Committee meets several times a year and is well supported by volunteers and staff.

The Fundraising Committee has recently relaunched and has been very successful in the past two years or so in applying for larger multi-year grants as well as more local and small to medium sized grants. We have fantastic support from the local community through donations of all sizes – every donation whatever the size is most valued and appreciated. We have recently submitted a new application for a multi-year grant to Lloyds Banking Foundation – we await the outcome in May 25 with fingers very much crossed!

The Trustee group has a new Chair and has been successful in appointing another new member. Several Trustees will be coming to the end of their tenure next year so we will be continuing to look out for new members.

Rachael Ross, January 2025