



preventing
homelessness
and improving
lives

Annual Report 2015/16

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The views expressed in this report do not necessary reflect those of The Project.

Introduction from the Chair

It is with even more pride than ever before that I write this introduction to our Annual Report. This year we celebrated 25 years of work supporting local young people and their families, this is a huge achievement. Thanks to the Old Hare and Hounds for hosting our celebration, putting on a great afternoon. My thanks also go to the staff and patrons for their support this year including working to transform The Project's front garden and outside space.



That is not the only change to the look and feel of The Project. We've changed our name and got a new look including a great new website. We now have a mobile advice centre, with thanks to the People's Postcode Lottery, taking the high quality support of The Project to new places. With our new brand, we're able to reach out and promote the work we do to an even wider group of local young people. We continue to see older people through a dedicated appointments system, keeping our open access drop-in centre available for our core group of users. The inside of The Project has had some further work too, ensuring we continue to provide a safe, welcoming centre for the wide range of support we provide. We've also received funding from Birmingham City Council for a new post in Northfield, in partnership with a range of other agencies through the Northfield Stakeholders Group.

I would like to thank these and our other funders the Big Lottery Fund without whom we would not be here, Birmingham South Central CCG and Birmingham Cross-City CCG who continue to provide vital resources for our work supporting health and well-being, Lloyds Bank Foundation who have provided a wide range of resources for new IT and our branding and

a wide range of Trusts and Foundations as well as generous individuals. Your contributions make a huge difference to the lives of local young people, adults and children.

Finally I must thank the staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication. The Project is going from strength to strength. As you read this report you will see the wonderful work they do to prevent homelessness and improve lives. I also thank my fellow committee members and Trustees for their time and commitment. The Project provides the highest quality services in sadly, ever more challenging times.

Thank you for your support.

Paul Mason
Chair of Trustees



Paul welcoming everyone to the 25th Anniversary Celebration



Staff and volunteers enjoying The Project's 25th Anniversary Celebration



Transformation of The Project's front garden

Project Manager's Report

This will be my first contribution to The Project's annual report following my appointment as Project Manager 12 months ago, and what a year it has been.



During the past year, the staff team, trustees and volunteers have worked tirelessly to transform SBYHP into The Project, I would like to thank Nicky, Wendy, Cat, Jo and Jorden for their hard work and dedication, thank you to the trustees for listening to our ideas and leading the drive for change and a huge thank you to our volunteers and partners for providing us with the support we needed.

This year the project has developed some amazing community links and partnerships, pulling together private businesses, statutory services and other third sector organisations to work together for the benefit of vulnerable citizens within our community. In the current funding climate charities cannot afford to function in isolation therefore we value each and every one of our partnerships and hope they continue and develop further in the future. Special thanks must go to The Old Hare and Hounds Pub and all the volunteers who transformed our front garden area and supported our 25th anniversary celebration, and thank you to Marks and Spencer Longbridge for their valuable fresh food donations.

Another achievement we are extremely proud to announce is that, once again we have passed our AQS Quality Audit, this certification reflects The Project's hard work and commitment towards delivering the highest standard of advice to individuals in need. The Project was

commended on the changes it has made over the past 12 months and many areas of good practice were highlighted.

During the past year, The Project has once again seen an increase in the number of people accessing its services, as you will see throughout this Annual Report the levels of support we have provided has increased in all areas, this reflects the current homelessness crisis Birmingham and the UK is facing.

Research carried out by Homeless Link reports that 5196 Homeless applications were made just to Birmingham's Local authority during 2015 with 3416 people being accepted as Homeless, couple this with the Government figures published in June 2016 showing that at the end of March 2016 there were 71,540 households across the UK



living in temporary accommodation it is not hard to see that homelessness is an enormous issue that can affect anyone of us.

This is the reason we will continue to work with citizens to prevent homelessness and improve their lives, we will support people in navigate the complicated benefit systems, we will support people to find suitable and secure accommodation, we will provide support to alleviate poverty and debt, we will provide support to people that want to work and improve their situations and we will continue to provide food and clothing for the most vulnerable.

Helen Sephton
Project Manager

Debt and Money Advice

It's been another busy year for debt advice at The Project with many clients finding their income reduced due to benefits cuts, low wages, insecure working conditions and their outgoings increased by the rising cost of living.



There has been an increase in clients facing eviction due to rent arrears as a result of this and clients have sought assistance from The Project to prevent them from losing their homes. The majority of service users present with multiple priority debts as they do not have the available income to pay their essential household bills. I continue to work with clients, agreeing manageable payment plans, requesting holds on non priority debts and writing off debt where possible. The completion of personal budget sheets enables clients to manage their own finances, empowering them to face their financial difficulties.

“ I feel better in myself with my debt and income situation and I am trying to keep to a budget to manage my finances. ”



Cat Jarrett
Debt and Money Advisor

Debt and Money Support



Housing and Accommodation

2016 saw the closure of Northfield's Customer Service Centre's homelessness service. Those needing to make homelessness applications must now travel much further afield to New Aston House in Newtown to do so. At The Project we have been supporting our clients by supplying day tickets, enabling them to make this journey.



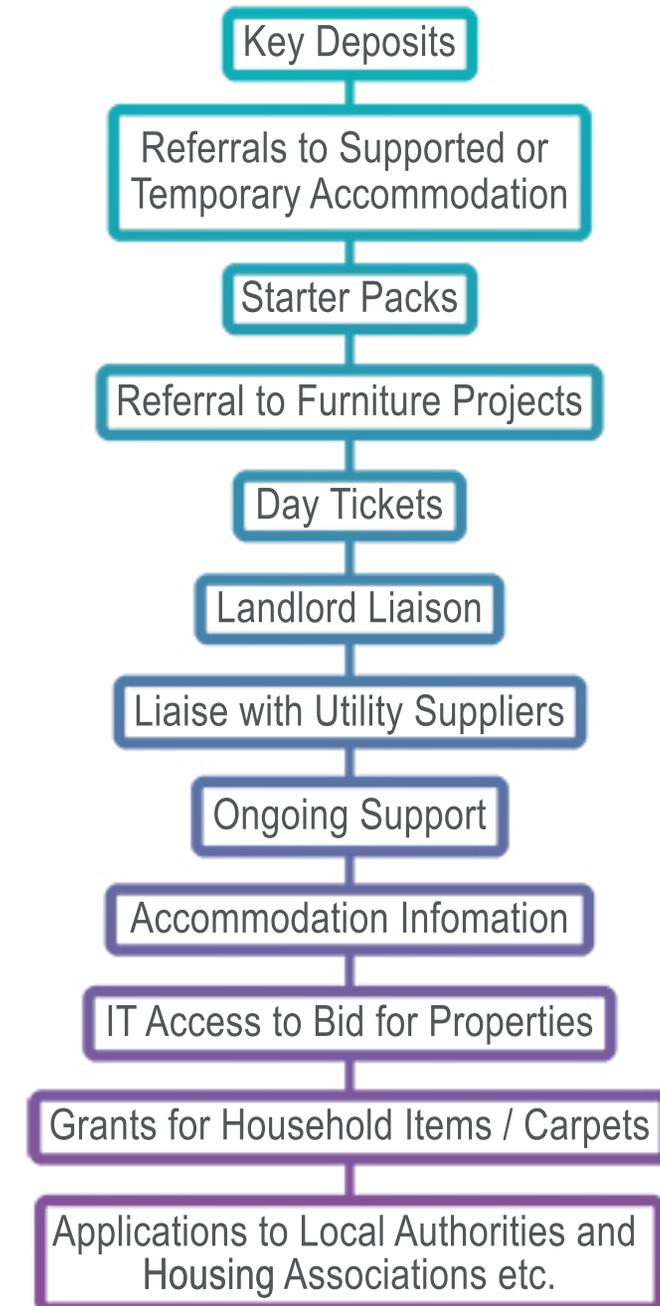
At The Project we have seen an increase in Birmingham City Council being unable to process housing and homeless applications. This is due to their inability to locate previously submitted applications and proofs. This has been very frustrating for our clients, so we have been supporting them by liaising on their behalf with the processing team at the Council.

Since the introduction of Universal Credits we have been finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate single people who are receiving this benefit, as most of our referral organisations struggle to claim housing benefit once someone is claiming Universal Credits. On a happier note, we have been working closely with Waterloo Housing Association and have managed to accommodate families and single people, both those who are working and those on benefits.

Wendy Smith
Housing and Accommodation Advisor

“ I now have a stable home. ”

Resettlement and Tenancy Support



Benefits and Appeals

With the DWP looking to decrease the number of claimants receiving both disability and sickness benefits, we have seen an increase in clients needing specialist advice and assistance with appeals to the Tribunal Services for Personal Independence Payments and Employment and Support Allowance. I have completed submissions for appeal hearings and attended the Courts to represent clients and thus far every decision has been overturned by the Judge and the benefits reinstated.



“ My PIP was cancelled and taken off me, I had help to appeal against this. Nicky also attended the appeal with myself and my wife to advocate for me. ”

In hand with this, several clients presenting at The Project have not been receiving their full entitlement to welfare benefits, I have been working with them to rectify this. From April to August I have assisted clients with accessing £175,941 in unclaimed benefits and will continue to do so.

“ I came to the homeless project and had help with sorting all my benefits out. I have now had some of my benefits and this has allowed me to buy clothes and food for my children. ”

This year has also seen an increase in issues with Housing Benefit claims and errors in awards, which have led to eviction notices. I have made formal complaints to Revenues and Benefits regarding these

issues, which have happily been resolved favourably. In one case a client had a backdated award of over £9000 and was able to remain in her property.

With the introduction of Universal Credit and the migration of claims due in 2017 I look forward to another busy year here at the Project.

Nicky Armstrong
Benefit and Appeals Advisor

Benefit and Appeals Support



Crisis Support

Many of our clients come to us in crisis and we know from experience that quick fixes either don't work or are only effective in the short term. So we work with our clients to provide lasting improvements to their lives. Unfortunately this is not always a speedy process, so when a client's washing machine breaks and they are unable to clean their children's clothes, or when a sanction leaves a mother unable to provide a healthy meal for her family, when new housing is given to a client but their children are having to play on concrete floors, when a young vulnerable person doesn't have the money to pay the bus fare to attend important hospital appointments, when an unpaid phone bill leaves someone isolated from their friends and family and unable to make essential calls.... Then The Project provides crisis support that can make a real difference.

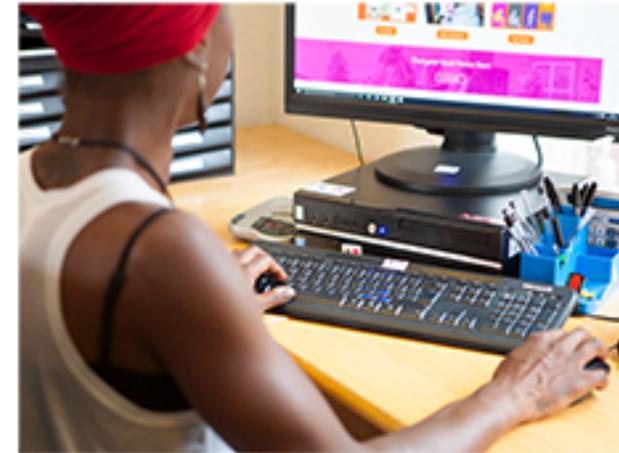
Fresh Food Project

Our partnership with Marks and Spencer has seen The Project take possession of huge amounts of fresh food that cannot be sold but that is still within its best before date. Many of our clients have benefited from this healthy boost to their diet as well as other local charitable organisations. The Fresh Food Project is actively improving our clients health, helping them meet their five a day fruit and veg target and reducing food waste.



Computer and Phone Access

The Project has four PCs and a dedicated phone for the use of our clients. This is an essential part of our service for many people, allowing them to search the internet for information, write and update their CVs, bid for housing, complete online forms and make important phone calls. The computer and internet access also allows clients to use social media which can be important for clients who feel isolated and marginalised because of their situation.

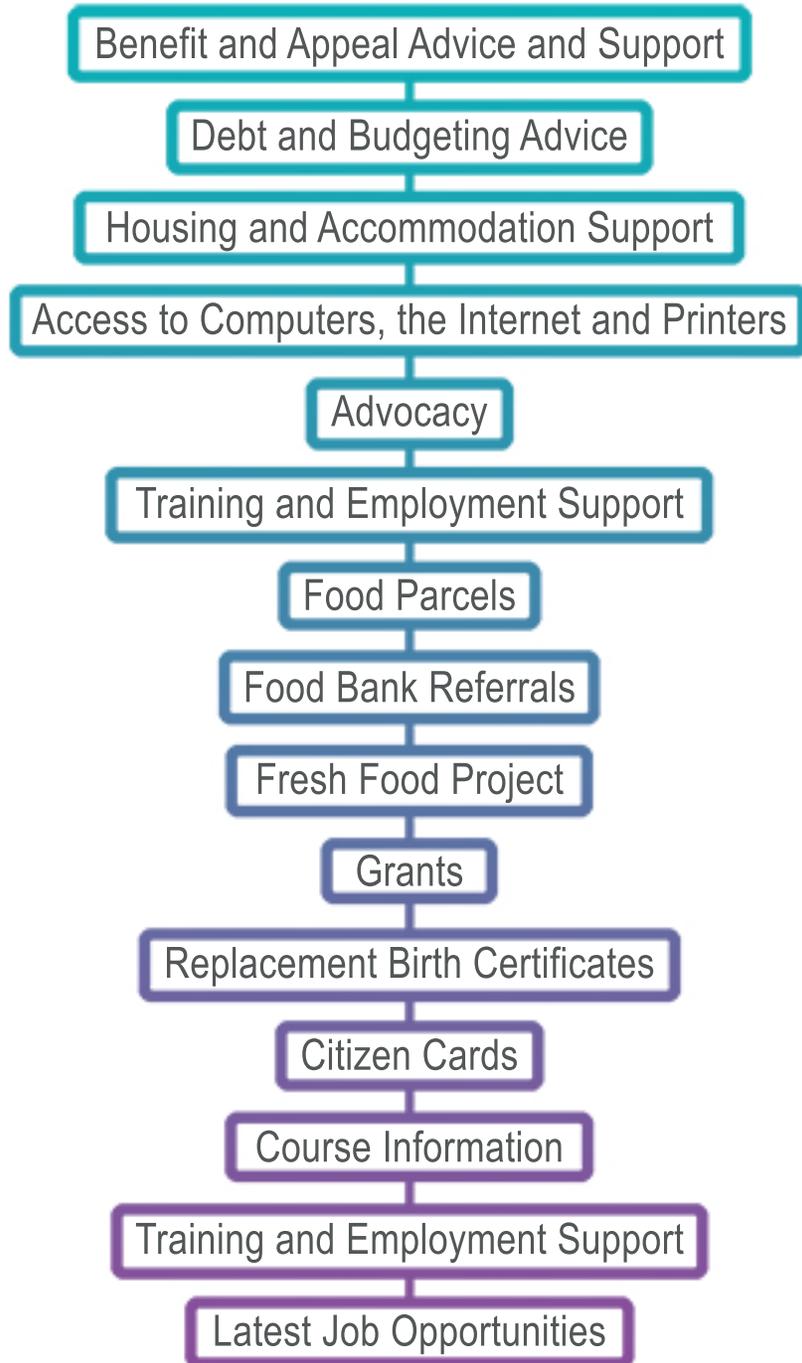


“ The Project assisted with the LWP for my white goods and beds. This has helped me to set up a stable home and made me feel less stressed. ”



Grants

Our Advisors at The Project can, where appropriate, apply for grants on behalf of clients. Although not everyone is eligible, where grants are awarded they are a huge help to people struggling on low incomes who are faced with unexpected expenses like a broken washing machine or cooker. Those setting up independent living may apply for a grant towards carpeting or essential furnishings.



Always a Warm Welcome

Along with the excellent quality of service we provide, one of the things we are extremely proud of at The Project is the welcoming and friendly environment we have created here. Our clients really appreciate this too, they know that they can come to The Project, make a cup of tea in the kitchen, check their emails and talk to an advisor who not only has an excellent knowledge of their area, but also keeps up to date on other local services that are available.



Here's what a few of our clients have to say about The Project...

“ I have lots of support in place now to help with all my problems. ”

“ I'm so thankful for this service. ”

“ Only way I can truly relax is here. My second home! ”

“ This project always makes me feel welcome and I feel like I'm being productive. ”

Garden Transformation



Before



After



Before



After

Volunteers

For the past two years I have worked closely with The Project. First as a college student, accumulating two hundred hours voluntary work for my course. After achieving my qualification I continued to volunteer and have enjoyed every moment, from the work I do, to the people I meet.



As part of my role at The Project I am responsible for the collection and distribution of fresh food donated by Marks and Spencer. Many people benefit from these donations, from our vulnerable clients to other charities working hard to support those in need in the Birmingham area.

I find this work extremely inspiring and rewarding. The Project is a great charity to be part of and I appreciate the opportunity it gives me to help those in need in my community.

Natasha Bigby
Volunteer



Liam Walsh
Volunteer

Charlotte Dunn
Volunteer



"Tucking in" at the 25th Anniversary Celebration

The Future of The Project

We've made a lot of changes during 2016 but that's not going to slow us down in 2017, we have some bigger and better plans in the pipeline.

Mobile Advice Centre

We have now launched our Mobile Advice Centre, thanks to the People's Postcode Lottery Community Trust we have a fully equipped vehicle that will enable us to take all our support services out into the community. The Mobile Advice Center will have internet access and IT facilities that people can use to claim benefits, apply for jobs or bid for properties. Our housing, benefit and debt workers will also be on hand to offer high quality advice and support. For more information about dates and locations of the Mobile Advice Centre please check our website.



Employment and Volunteering Support

This year we will focusing on supporting more people into employment and volunteering placements, we will be recruiting a specific employment adviser who will be based at The Project. We understand the importance of having paid employment and the impact it can have on a person's self-esteem and wellbeing.

Treasurer Report

Partnership Work

This year we will be looking to develop even more community partnership links, we would like to invite anyone who feels they may be able to support us and our aims to get in contact with us. This could be through volunteering your time, offering resources such as food or furniture, becoming a trustee, you may be a business that can help us with fundraising or a specific project, or be another charity that wants to work in partnership. All levels of support are greatly appreciated so please get in contact.

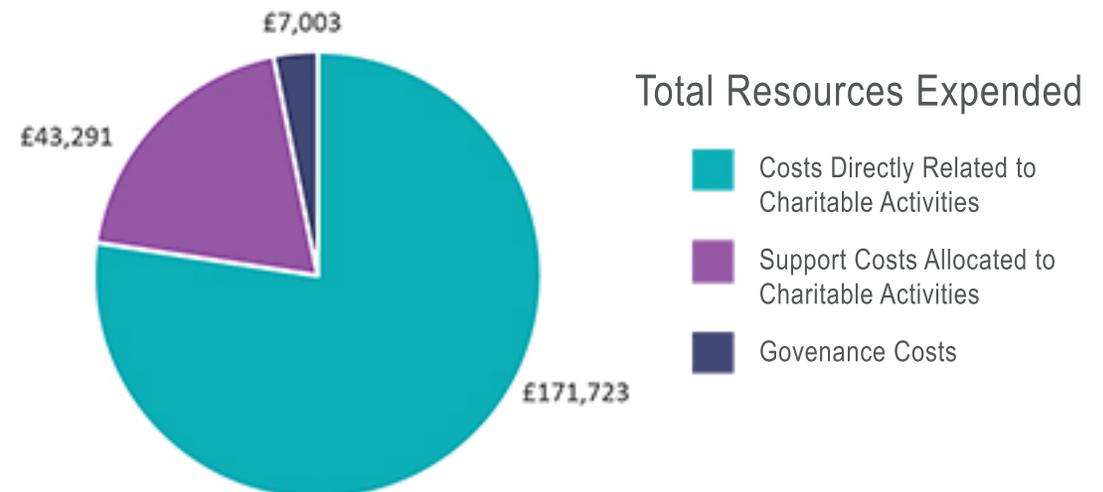


Two Pages of the accounts are included in this report, a final set is available from the Project Manager upon request. On page 24 is the Statement of Financial Activities and on page 25 is the Balance Sheet. The Project's total resources fell by 5% due to the ending of the Community Chest, Seven Trent and Hilden Trust grants. However new funds have been secured from Awards for All and the People's Postcode Lottery. The resources used also fell by over 10%, mainly from reduced salary costs due to new staffing structure and a reduction in Starter Packs.

There has been an overall net increase in resources of £27,000 so the project now stands in a much healthier position.

My thanks as always to those who do most of the work in keeping the finances of The Project in order.

Philip Osborn
Treasurer



Statement of Financial Activities

as at 31st March 2016

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2016 Total Funds £	2015 £
Resources					
Grants receivable	9	90,873	169,732	260,605	255,351
Donations	10	1,360	6,220	7,580	5,994
Bank interest		325	-	325	131
		<u>92,558</u>	<u>175,952</u>	<u>268,510</u>	<u>261,476</u>
Resources Used					
Salaries and national insurance		74,175	70,150	144,325	160,878
Rent		3,000	2,000	5,000	5,000
Council tax		234	156	390	380
Heating and lighting		319	213	532	691
Insurance		1,309	873	2,182	2,085
Travelling expenses		183	656	839	853
Printing, stationery and postage		2,635	1,763	4,398	5,859
Telephone		2,878	1,920	4,798	5,789
Subscriptions and publications		880	958	1,838	1,166
Training courses (net cost)		160	60	220	1,676
Volunteers' training		937	625	1,562	1,675
Petty cash and sundry expenses		539	378	917	1,319
Bank and professional charges		1,600	795	2,395	4,189
Recruitment		58	0	58	2,307
Equipment		540	1,429	1,969	5,066
Grants paid		-	33,127	33,127	30,242
Consultancy		400	-	400	-
Bus passes and tickets		-	818	818	2,790
IT support		3,234	1,439	4,673	-
Repairs and maintenance		1,370	888	2,258	5,174
Other		315	-	315	135
Depreciation		53	-	53	53
Health related activities		-	5,867	5,867	557
Welfare and leisure fund payments		-	205	205	77
Bank charges		351	234	585	601
Starter packs		-	1,632	1,632	6,131
Internet line rental		651	434	1,085	1,404
Publicity		-	-	-	665
Key deposits		-	50	50	722
ID Costs		-	594	594	965
B/B		-	50	50	229
Reimbursement		-	(1,118)	(1,118)	(232)
		<u>95,821</u>	<u>126,196</u>	<u>222,017</u>	<u>248,446</u>
Increase / (Decrease) in Resources					
		(3,263)	49,756	46,493	13,030
Balance at 31 March 2015		<u>26,979</u>	<u>23,043</u>	<u>50,022</u>	<u>36,992</u>
Balance at 31 March 2016		<u>23,716</u>	<u>72,799</u>	<u>96,515</u>	<u>50,022</u>

Balance Sheet

as at 31st March 2016

	Notes	£	2016 £	£	2015 £
Fixed Assets	5		154		207
Net Current Assets					
Current assets					
Debtors and prepayments	6	19,110		-	
Balances at bank		<u>111,865</u>		<u>105,063</u>	
			<u>130,975</u>		<u>105,063</u>
Current liabilities					
Creditors and income in advance	7	<u>34,614</u>		<u>55,248</u>	
			<u>96,361</u>		<u>49,815</u>
			<u>96,515</u>		<u>50,022</u>
Represented by					
Unrestricted Funds			23,716		26,979
Restricted Funds	11		72,799		23,043
			<u>96,515</u>		<u>50,022</u>

Thanks

We would like to say a big thank you to our many supporters. From those who make generous donations of both money and resources, to the charities we work hand in hand with, to the volunteers who give so selflessly of their time, to the companies whose services we use. The value they add to The Project is immeasurable, helping us to help those in need. Our gratitude goes out to...

Advice UK	Birmingham Churches Together
Advice Quality Standard	Clare Blackshaw
Baron Davenports Charity	Colmers School & Sixth Form College
Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs	Colmers Farm Primary School
Birmingham CrossCity CCG	Cotteridge Church
B30 Food Bank	Cotteridge Quaker Friends
Norton Foundation	Cllr. Andy Cartwright
R L Glasspool Charity Trust	Gemma Cartwright
Jelly Babies Nursery	Cllr Peter Griffiths
Rapid Relief Team	Elizabeth Court
Severn Trent Trust Fund	Eveson Trust
Waterloo Housing	Heather Rogers
W E Dunn Trust	Hilden Trust
Weoley Hill United Reformed Church	Longbridge Methodist Church
Vicar's Relief Fund	Marks and Spencer
The Hilden Charitable Trust	Longbridge Old Hare and Hounds
Anne Ullathorne	Our Ladies Church Rednal
Boots	Park Hill Primary School
Birmingham Methodist Circuit	Premier Inn

Rednal Hill Junior School
Sara Jones
Selly Oak Quakers
St. David's Church
St. John Baptist Church
St. James's Place Foundation
St. Laurence C of E School
West Heath Primary School
ACE Copying Equipment

Angel Springs Ltd
CK Chartered Accountants
Emily's Best Sweet Shop
Fairytale Party Planners
johnhoey.co.uk
leothexplorer.com
PHS Group
Pitney Bowes
Viking Direct



Management Committee

Paul Mason - Trustee, Chairperson

Rowan Coles - Trustee, Vice Chair

Philip Osborn - Trustee, Treasurer

Cllr. Andy Cartwright - Committee Member, Local Councillor

Staff

Helen Sephton - Project Manager

Joanne Earp - Project Administrator

Nicole Armstrong - Benefit and Appeals / Senior Advisor

Catherine Jarrett - Debt and Money Advisor

Wendy Smith - Housing and Accommodation Advisor

Jorden Crawford - Homelessness Advisor

Chartered Accountants

CK Chartered Accountants - No. 4 Castle Court 2,
Castlegate Way, Dudley, DY1 4RH

Bankers

Lloyds Bank PLC - 1401 Bristol Road South,
Longbridge, Birmingham, B31 2SU





THE PROJECT

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and improving
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