



# Annual Progress Report

## Off The Fence Trust

### 2016/17



Resisting poverty. Empowering people. Restoring hope.



**Off The Fence Trust Limited**  
Charitable Company No: 5300691  
Registered Charity No: 1108777



## Annual Progress Report covering 2016/17 to the Dominic Beer Memorial Trust

The Trustees of the **Dominic Beer Memorial Trust** generously provided a grant towards the work of **Off The Fence Trust's Antifreeze and Gateway** work with clients suffering from severe forms of mental illness. Here is the report of how we used your grant of £2000 for that period and an expression of the gratitude for the grant that was made.

This document provides the report in order to:

- Confirm that the grant has been spent on the purposes initially stated.
- Provide information on how well the targets stated in the original application have been met.
- The practical results that the area of the charity has produced.

The grant that the **Dominic Beer Memorial Trust** kindly made to our work has been vital in enabling the continued development of strategically planned and actioned support work among the most in need in Brighton & Hove. Your grant has enabled us to develop and grow the vital services we offer through two of the projects at Off The Fence, from long term solutions to immediate care in an emotional and practical way, because of your financial support.

Your grant has enabled us to continue providing essential resources to the surrounding local community and build further partnerships with the City's voluntary and statutory agencies- something that now more than ever, we want to increase. With Brighton now classed as being in a state of emergency, with mental health services and homelessness at an all-time high, change can only happen if we work alongside other organisations where possible, and by having the most efficient and professional leadership from within our charity.

### OFF THE FENCE TRUST

Resisting poverty. Empowering people. Restoring hope. Off The Fence is a charity founded twenty years ago with a vision to end poverty in all forms around Brighton & Hove. Since 1997, Off The Fence has worked in 3 areas: emergency outreach to those living on the streets and a homeless centre, Antifreeze which provides emotional and practical assistance for exiting homelessness; support for women facing times of crisis at Gateway women's centre and a Schools & Youth programme for pupils aged 5-18 in schools around the city. Off The Fence offers people hope, a way forward and the opportunity to live a new and transformed life.

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## BACKGROUND TO OUR REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM THE DOMINIC BEER MEMORIAL TRUST

**Gateway** has grown out of an overwhelming need in Brighton and Hove for a safe, non-judgemental and neutral space where women can come and seek support in a safe and friendly environment. Modern society has broken down many of the old structures and networks that would have formerly supported these women in a time of crisis. According to recent findings from Brighton & Hove's Health & Wellbeing Board, compared to the rest of England, more people in Brighton & Hove suffer from mental health problems. In the latest Preventing Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy & Action Plan from Brighton & Hove City Council, it is estimated that between 5,000 and 11,000 women experienced domestic violence and 2,736 women experienced sexual assault. Gateway numbers continue to grow across all areas of the programme and the centre is so inundated that many of the groups run at capacity and operate through a waiting list. This is a crucial service for women in the city

Gateway's weekly drop-in sessions received 1697 clients visits last year compared to 1492 at the end of 2015. The ladies can simply turn up to a drop-in session, make an appointment, or be referred to the centre through agencies such as Social Services and doctor's surgeries. Last year, a record 63 enquiries were made to the centre. Gateway also holds a number of weekly one to one sessions to support women needing to talk in a more confidential setting. In 2016, 609 of these meetings were held compared to 565 in 2015. The meetings include dealing with and supporting victims of sexual abuse, depression management, combatting self-neglect, long-term mental health issues, long-term care for vulnerable clients and suicide prevention. Drop-in sessions, outreach visits, themed talks I.T workshops, art, sewing, knitting and craft workshops are also held at the centre. During 2016, workshops were accessed 777 times by a growing number of individual clients- a 72% growth on 2015. This range of workshops is in place to enable visitors to learn new skills, increase self-esteem and enjoy a creative afternoon in community with others. For a number of the ladies, this is the only time during the week where they can talk to someone and enjoy time in their own community, as many live alone or in isolating circumstances.

**"There is something different about Gateway – it's just so tranquil here." - Agency visitor**

Gateway clients, who come from many differing backgrounds, often suffer emotional distress, anxiety and depression, physical or psychological abuse, domestic violence, abusive relationships, and often become trapped in a downward cycle. We give advice, support, time to talk and be listened to, and sign posting to other agencies when appropriate. Women accessing our services often find a new direction in life, increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Gateway Women's Centre, through a team of 6 paid members of staff and a team of volunteers is providing a service to fill the gap that social erosion has left in the lives of so many vulnerable people and offer the chance to meet in community with others, receive practical support to help with difficult circumstances, or just receive one to one befriending. Gateway are continuing to develop their strategy and network with other professional bodies in order to meet a range of complex needs. An ongoing partnership with *MIND* charity has led to a series of themed talks covering topics relating to wellbeing, such as 'Mood Boosting Tips' and 'Mood & Food'. These talks emp

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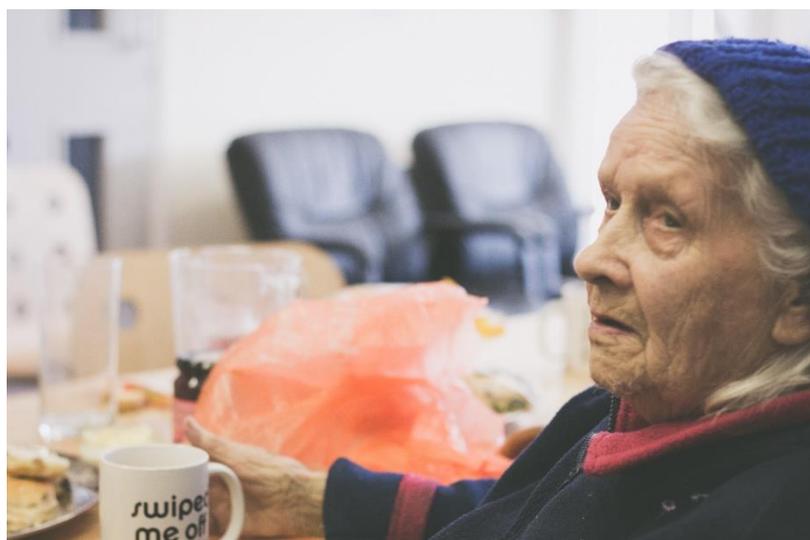
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hasise positive self-image, focus on restoring self-confidence and encouraging personal development. Positive feedback from these indicates that they have proven beneficial to many of the women in coping with mental health issues. Some of the other organisations Gateway work with are: Christians Against Poverty, West Assessment and Treatment Service (NHS Mental Health), Pavilions (Alcohol/substance misuse charity), Lighthouse (for people with personality disorder), Brighton & Hove Council, the B & H Community Food Partnership and RISE Women's services.

**"Somewhere safe to go and a wonderful place be where you are cared for and accepted for who you are." – Gateway Client**

**Antifreeze** gives life-saving support to homeless individuals around the City as well as those who, for many years, have struggled with addictions, mental health issues, job loss, violence and grief which have led to life on the streets. We listen to them and value them as people, offering motivational interviewing and one to one sessions with trained keyworkers. We provide access to a telephone, computers as well as foot care, healthcare, dental care, and legal advice. We offer help and alternative options to support those homeless individuals and prevent more clients from entering a life on the streets. We work closely with many agencies to ensure our clients get the best help and liaise on their behalf with issues such as housing, temporary accommodation, offending history and finances.



Antifreeze helps to restore client self-worth, independence and address financial issues. Open 4 days a week, the Antifreeze centre provides a safe space and welcoming place to connect with others in the community, and offers practical, emotional and spiritual support if desired, for exiting life on the streets. In 2016, Antifreeze was accessed nearly 8500 times, with in excess of 1000 individuals seeking services at the centre- over a 10% increase on

2015. The centre offers a place where homeless individuals can chat, find a sleeping bag, wash, get clothes and food, have a haircut, receive vital foot and dental care, and crucially begin to work with the team to get housed, back in employment and emotionally cared for.

In December 2016, it was stated by the local council that Brighton & Hove is in a state of emergency. The City now has the worst rate of addiction and homelessness outside London, with one in every 69 residents sleeping rough or in temporary accommodation. Nightly our outreach teams monitor the welfare of those sleeping rough and locate newcomers. Teams of up to 40 volunteers, interact with homeless individuals wherever they may be seeking refuge around the City. In 2016, 1044 visits were made to those sleeping

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rough in the City. The teams provide toiletries, first-aid, food, seasonal clothing and sleeping bags. Crucially, the team spend time with the individuals they meet and take time to build a relationship of trust and value. This is often the only opportunity a homeless client will get to talk to someone during the day. On outreach, individuals are also given a Street Sheet, a bi-annually updated leaflet put together by Antifreeze. This comprises a map of the City, all available services, where to find food, and where to seek help with specific areas, for example medical & addiction or specialist support for women. With this, individuals are invited to the Antifreeze centre where as well as food, hot drinks and provision of clothing, there is access to phones, computers, healthcare, and hairdressing, one to one welfare planning and individual emotional support.

A core element of Antifreeze is the referral services and advocacy work carried out for clients so they can be housed and supported throughout the process of coming off the streets. In 2016, we saw an increase in successful housing referrals as 90 people were supported into accommodation, with a number indirectly housed through working alongside other agencies able to specialise in accommodation options and solutions.

One to one meetings look at the three areas that are most challenging for those sleeping rough; housing, health & wellbeing and employment. The time spent assisting clients requires a good listening ear and often involves intensive one to one support over a long period of time in order to prevent relapses or a return to rough sleeping. In 2016, 1088 individuals received one to one support around benefits, housing and substance misuse, as well as other emotional needs. For these crucial areas, a step by step approach plan is put together to protect clients from any problems on their road to independence.

One client, R, was incredibly vulnerable when she first accessed Antifreeze; she was addicted to crack cocaine, was being used for sex work, regularly subjected to domestic violence, stayed in unsafe environments and had not been engaging well with services. Thanks to work with one of the female keyworkers, Rebecca is now off drugs, housed and looking to move on to lower support accommodation (next stage move on). She says "You saved me when I was at my worse, I'd never been so low. Without you I wouldn't be where I am today."

**"You saved me when I was at my worse, I'd never been so low. Without you I wouldn't be where I am today." –RS, Antifreeze Client**

## YOUR GRANT

In this time of economic uncertainty, **Off The Fence** maintains the need to utilise a number of funding streams and maintain as low costs as possible. In the last year, the number of vulnerable women, homeless individuals and young people accessing our services has grown significantly and with it, the financial need. We applied to the Dominic Beer Memorial Trust for funding towards the work carried out by keyworkers supporting clients suffering from severe mental health issues at our Antifreeze and

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way projects.

## **ANTIFREEZE:**

The majority of our clients with mental health issues self-medicate and so become dual diagnosis clients and we then work to address mental health and substance misuse simultaneously. When working with those with severe mental health issues it is the case that they should not be homeless as they should be housed by the state on health grounds so our work is often more of a case of trying to help them maintain tenancies by offering and organising appropriate support. Or it is a case of getting them into the accommodation through the council by proving their diagnosis and helping them to move and settle into their emergency accommodation until more suitable supported accommodation is available.

With issues of mental health our role is very much emotional support and support in co-ordinating everyday things. For example, we have worked over a longer period with a young woman who has Schizophrenia and helped in gathering evidence to show she is eligible for housing benefit as her mental health condition impeded her ability to co-ordinate the relevant information herself. One day last autumn, we had 48 people come through the doors and 12 of them had definite diagnosed mental health conditions. It is likely more do as well. Of those 12, 9 we have actively done 1:1 work with to support their needs.

We are continually growing our work with those suffering from severe mental health issues, particularly with clients who are housed but struggling to maintain accommodation. Lots of our work with these clients is focussed around emotional support and co-ordination of important things in their life which they are often unable to do. (E.g. missing benefit and medical appointments, paying rent on time, paying service charges, behavioural boundaries in accommodation etc.). This has led to our role being much more preventative around clients with Severe Mental Illness too, because it is often at that point that their regular support networks and mechanisms become displaced. Much of our work still focuses on the areas below:

- Low mood and suicidal thoughts
- Bipolar
- Schizophrenia and hearing voices

The preventative work with housed clients has however, a heavier weighting towards those with bipolar, schizophrenia and borderline personality disorders. To give a comparative statistic on a Monday afternoon in April (24/04) we again had 48 clients access our service, of these 48, 11 (23%) had known severe mental health conditions. Of these 11, 6 had been working with us recently and an additional 3 had done work with us in this year. This is not to mention others who either haven't engaged sufficiently to be diagnosed, engaged well, or whose mental health needs are not known.

We have carried out some training specifically about understanding borderline personality disorders

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(also



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known as Emotional Intensity Disorder -EID). One of the key things to come of this training is to understand that for those suffering with EID they experience all sorts of emotions, but they are only able to present at intense ends of the emotional spectrum so often all emotions are either presented as intense anger or intense joy. It can also lead to other traits such as addictive personalities. Understanding this has increasingly enabled us to better understand the needs of the clients that a particular key worker has and will continue to work with.

**Case Study on Client 2 – Mental Health (Diagnosis Unknown combined with Adult Learning Difficulty). For the purpose of this we have anonymised the name of the gentleman involved.**

K has been known to Rough Sleeping services on and off for 15 years he has been a very high profile Rough Sleeper because of his vulnerabilities and his difficulty in holding down any form of accommodation due to his aggressive and explosive behaviour. As a result of these vulnerabilities he is priority need under the Local Authority which means between Housing and Adult Social Care there is almost always a duty to house him. This means he has been through nearly 40 accommodation options and is at a point where the local authority has less and less options available to offer him. The other problem is he often gets evicted but through various reasons linked to a heavy drug habit he won't engage with services sufficiently in order for them to be able to address his accommodation needs.

K started to access our services on a regular basis about 7 months ago in October 2016. His initial need was that he has his money managed for him and an allowance given to him each day. The residue then builds up and the idea is it offers a savings pot for larger purchases. However this frustrated K as he would often withdraw this extra money in dribs and drabs, so it was not serving a purpose as a savings pot but frustrated him that he didn't have ready access to his money (as the extra had to be requested). This would often lead to him becoming very agitated and in turn acting out not specifically against staff but just in temper at the situation. What we then worked with him to do was contact Macs who managed his money and arrange for the additional money to be transferred weekly on a Monday into his account. This was he was able to adapt to this pattern and the immediate response was his behaviour was much calmer in the centre environment. As he no longer carried the anxiety that he wasn't being allowed access to his money.

K then continued to maintain his accommodation for a short period of time, we worked with him to address some of the things that made him anxious such as furniture and food provision. However after about 3 months he was evicted after the television in his room (belonging to the property) went missing. He claims it was stolen, but it is most likely that it was taken by associates that K had allowed to stay in his property likely as a payment for drug debt.

After this K behaviour began to become very agitated and aggressive in the centre however we were keen to maintain a relationship with him as he was banned from almost all other services, and we had made a small amount of movement in supporting K to better manage his emotions when he became frustrated to avoid losing accommodation and being banned from services. We were also aware that he had actually built up a very trusting and respectful relationship with our team and liked that we were willing to engage with him through his shouting and aggressive behaviour as we

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comfortable it was not focussed on us.

Overtime we were beginning to see less and less of K, and we were aware he was becoming involved heavier with drug dealers and his engagement with services was declining. In conjunction with the street outreach service for the city we called for a case conference for K involving homeless services that worked with him, a representative from the Learning Disability Team, his Social Worker and a lead figure in council housing. The purpose of this meeting was to look at a concrete plan for K, as at that point housing and adult social care were struggling to find suitable options to house him.

What came of this was a concerted effort across all those working with him to try and sit him down with housing to discuss what options were available, but also to try and get a mental health assessment completed as until now he was supported through his learning disability rather than his mental health. The current result is that those both those assessments, are either scheduled or have taken place and working in K they have identified over the summer the most suitable option with his request is to pay for him to stay on a local campsite for the next few months during the warmer weather with support from local agencies to find a longer term solution before winter. (K out rightly says he prefers to be camping as he doesn't feel confined in the same way he does in accommodation and can up and leave at his convenience when he needs space to get away).

#### **GATEWAY:**

Gateway Women's Centre is not a 'mental health service' as such and is for all women experiencing times of difficulty or crisis. However, over 60% of current clients could be described as having 'severe mental health problems', and 40% low level mental health needs. We have a keyworker who in particular has experience of mental health issues and has worked previously in the mental health sector, including for MIND charity. Some of the female clients worked with include (but are not limited to):

- PTSD including complex PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) – a number of women experience PTSD and the symptoms associated eg flashbacks, dissociation.
- Dissociative Identity Disorder
- Personality disorders
- Bi polar disorder
- Schizophrenia/ psychosis – support includes offering support with managing symptoms eg managing voices.

Gateway offers a service that is not time limited or defined by 'targets', but is led by the client's needs. Client's set the agenda and use the services as long as they would like, and how they would like. Many women comment this is a very different experience to other mental health services. Gateway continues to work closely with local NHS mental health services. The team receive many referrals from local GPs and NHS mental health services and have established a strong reputation among these services for working flexibly and in a highly supportive and caring manner. As a result, these services feel confident in referring women with very complex, severe mental health needs to

the

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## Gateway Women's Centre.

Many clients (and NHS mental health services) see Gateway Women's Centre as an invaluable 'stop gap' service while waiting for NHS or other mental health services. Many continue to use Gateway Women's Centre even though they have a place at other mental health drop ins/ centres or have started treatment. Many use Gateway Women's Centre as a place to get away from formal mental health services – a place where they don't have to talk about their mental health but can relax and be themselves. Also a place where they can find a supportive, listening ear without judgement or agenda.

Thanks to your financial support, Gateway Women's Centre's activities, led by a keyworker with experience in this area, have been able to provide support for those with severe mental health issues by providing distraction, reduction of isolation and improved wellbeing in general. This is something women often highlight eg coming to the drop-in workshops, and enjoying company, community and being creative. Well researched and secure safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure appropriate services are alerted to client's needs, including in times of crisis. This includes discussing suicidal ideation with clients, providing information and support, supporting clients to contact their mental health workers, notifying appropriate services etc when a client's behaviour changes or takes a turn for the worse. We have continued to act as an advocate on a client's behalf, to ensure appropriate care is provided and to ensure communication is maintained between clients and professionals. This has involved supporting clients to make phone calls, attending psychiatric reviews and other meetings, letters and phone calls to mental health professionals and social services departments.

A number of Gateway clients each year, including in the last year and in the past 5 months, experience inpatient admissions to a psychiatric hospital. Our professional keyworkers, particularly the individual with a background in mental health work, visits clients on the ward, and to work with the client to offer the necessary practical support when discharged, alongside the mental health teams.

**"They have helped me immensely. Without their help and support I don't know what I would have done. They have changed my life around."** -RL, Gateway Client

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Without the commitment and financial support of the Dominic Beer Memorial Trust our many service users and clients would simply not have had the opportunity to even think about changing their lives for the better. With your support many of our clients are now able to think more about a new and better future, managing their everyday lives better or simply in a safer environment to receive more of the care they need.

During 20 years of supporting vulnerable individuals on the edge of society, **Off The Fence** has been acknowledged nationally with nominations for the “Queen’s Award for Charity” and the Prime Minister’s “Big Society Award”. Local partnerships with the Mayor’s Office, Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, Sussex Country Cricket Club and Absolute Magazine Brighton have provided fantastic opportunities for highlighting the plight of poverty in the City. The fact remains however, that Brighton & Hove is still one of the most deprived Cities in the UK; homelessness, substance addiction, mental health issues and suicide rates are exceptionally high. Deprivation in the City has steadily worsened due to local governmental cuts to services, the rising cost of living and the long-term repercussions of economic uncertainty. Thank you for standing by us and investing in our vision.

## OFF THE FENCE PLANS FOR 2017/18

- Increase the drop in facilities on offer at **Gateway** and **Antifreeze** and connections with other local organisations
- Build on the range of tailored services and monthly activities programme on offer
- Continue to reach out and support individuals at Gateway displaying severe mental health issues in whatever way is best, tailored to their situation.
- Continue to develop more schemes and training to best understand the individuals supported at Antifreeze and the effects of mental health on their behaviour- and how they can best be assisted safely.
- Increase the number of advocacy visits and outreach we are able to support less mobile ladies and vulnerable homeless individuals with
- Explore opportunity of beginning a safe house for previously homeless and vulnerable clients from **Antifreeze**

**Your** commitment to us has been incredibly valuable us and the hundreds of clients we serve and have served over the years. Your help has enabled **Off The Fence** to effectively reach those in great need who are supported by us on a daily basis. On their behalf, thank you. With a well-equipped and professional HR team under the guidance of the CEO and our Board of Trustees, we can guarantee that your money has been carefully spent as initially intended and has gone straight back into bettering and building on the work we were already doing and the positive outcomes we were already looking to achieve.

Signed Paul Young CEO \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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