

Phoenix Farm Open Door Project

Annual Report 2021



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Registered Charity: 1098333

Chair of Trustees Report

The Ark's status as a 'Place of Welcome' is well earned as it continues to provide a haven for people in difficulty. The Friendship, Craft, Job Club, and cafe have made a strong comeback. We have also been kindly awarded a three-year funding grant from the Methodist Church which has very much helped with our salary costs.

We are planning to refresh and expand our community café. This will provide an even better resource for locals and further develop our community engagement.

Grants from the National Lottery Community Covid Response and the Thomas Farr Funds enabled us to appoint Jenni Cragg as our Job Coach and Mentor. Jenni certainly 'hit the ground running' and is making a superb impact in supporting job seekers.

In further response to loneliness and isolation issues magnified by the Pandemic, The Ark has become a member of the 'Linking Lives – Two's Company' telephone befriending scheme. Please ask one of us if you would like more information about referring someone or volunteering as a befriender.

The Ark would not exist without the fantastic support of its volunteers. We presently rely on the help of 15 volunteers who help in a variety of ways. It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of two cherished Ark members: Chris Fryman and Jules Taylor. Both very valued volunteers. Chris was also a founder member of The Ark and devotedly led our Prayer Group over many years. We pass on our belated condolences to all their families and friends.

Trustees are a legal requirement of a charity such as The Ark. However, their role goes much deeper than this. They provide stable support for the workings and wellbeing of The Ark and together the Centre Manager Joel, plans for its future development. Trustees also help with volunteering duties on a regular basis. We give our thanks to Denise Mear, who has stepped down as Treasurer and wish her every blessing in her move to Chesterfield. We warmly welcome her replacement, Adam Corbett along with Deacon Helen Snowball as trustees. We are always on the lookout for folk interested in helping either as a volunteer or trustee. If you are interested in helping in any way you can, please contact either Joel or one of the trustees.

Continuing the strong legacy of support for the work of The Ark established by Vernon Coaker, we thank our new MP Tom Randall for the help he has already shown to us.

The Ark would not exist without the kind generosity of the many donations and grants it receives and I would like to thank all who have contributed over the past year, in particular our Family of Churches, Gedling Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. If you would like to contribute financially to the work of The Ark on a regular basis our just giving details are included in the report.

Finally, without the firm faith foundations that underpin The Ark, it would not thrive, and I leave the final words to Holy Scripture from the Book of Micah: 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?'

John Tattersfield – Chair of Trustees

Local Churches that support The Ark

**Phoenix Farm
Methodist Church,**
Wollaton Avenue,
Gedling

**Gedling Road
Methodist Church,**
Gedling Road,
Carlton

**Westdale Lane
Baptist Church,**
368 Westdale Lane

**All Hallows Church
of England,**
Rectory Drive,
Gedling

**St James' Church of
England,**
Marshall Hill Drive,
Mapperley

The Aims of the Ark

To increase the feeling of community in the area and decrease social isolation.

Enable people to take more control of their lives

Enable people to get employment.

The Activities at the Ark

Provide an advice service open to all.

Provide basic skills training

Provide a meeting place with café facilities with a safe friendly environment

Undertake social activities, and support activities of other organisations, to increase a sense of community.

Provide a base for other advice agencies that would contribute to a sense of community

Project Manager's Report



Last year's annual report was written just as the first March lockdown had come into effect. At that time the major question on my mind regarding The Ark was "what does The Ark do now?" Or to put it another way "how do we continue to serve our community in the face of such great adversity? How can we still be there for people in need when the level of need is much greater than before?"

That wasn't a question with an easy answer but I felt at the time with continued tireless endeavour and a willingness to serve The Ark could continue to make a positive impact in the community even in the face of adversity. And so, here are some headlines about our activities in the last year:

- Over 900 welfare benefit appointments given to people in need of advice.
- Over £4000 in supermarket food vouchers distributed to households in urgent need of provision, the funding for which was provided by Gedling Borough Council.
- Over £50,000 of disability benefit reclaimed for disabled benefit claimants through support with benefit appeals.
- For the first time in The Ark's 19 year history we have found funding to employ a second member of staff. A dedicated "employment coach" has been employed.
- We run a weekly job club supporting people into employment.
- Support with Universal Credit claims has helped those made redundant during the pandemic find the financial support they need to make ends meet.
- Linking Lives telephone support has been set up to assist the most isolated members of the community.
- Through partnering with ACTS435 we have been able to provide cookers, washing machines and fridge freezers to those in need.
- By referring to the Mother's Union we have given opportunity to families who haven't had a holiday in years to finally get a break.
- We have continued to provide foodbank vouchers for those people in urgent need to the local foodbanks for emergency provision.
- The activity groups at The Ark have rebounded after lockdown successfully, even being able to add a new Art Group.
- We continue to have a café that can be considered a "place of welcome" operated by fantastic volunteers.
- Our involvement with other services has increased, with closer links being developed with Gedling Borough Council, Gedling Mental Health Team, Framework and a variety of other local services.



Whilst there can be no doubt that the level of need in the community has reached levels that I have not seen before, what is also true is that people have risen to the challenge and a compassionate and cooperative response has been evident. We have found that we cannot meet all the needs ourselves and other agencies have experienced the same, by working more collaboratively and in partnership with other services we have been able, in my opinion, to mount a formidable response to hardship within Gedling.

None of this would be possible without the fantastic support of our volunteers who are genuine gifts from God to this charity. A heartfelt thanks goes out from me to each volunteer. I would also like to thank everybody who has donated to The Ark this year, whether that be food parcels, 25p for a cup of tea, a monthly standing order or a grant from a trust or grant making body we are very grateful for your support—you keep us going. Thank you.

Joel Baldry – Project Manager

The Ark's 2020 –2021 Activities



Welfare rights service

Through the welfare rights service we are able to give advice on a variety of social issues, including employment related benefits like universal credit or disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance or PIP. We can also offer advice on housing and employment. These services help to protect the people who are unemployed, or likely to become unemployed and those on the lowest income (or no income at all) from the most severe financial hardships. In the last year, The Ark was able to provide over 900 appointments to people in hardship or distress.

Disability benefit support

Frequently people contact The Ark enquiring about disability benefits. An enquiry could be a new claim, an appeal against a benefit decision or just general advice around entitlement and how to manage a claim. People with disabilities will often contact The Ark distraught that the financial support they require to manage their conditions has been stripped. Local GP surgeries and mental health teams refer many people to The Ark, although people are free to self-refer. Throughout 2020 The Ark managed to recoup, through making appeals against DWP decisions, over £50,000 worth of disability benefits for people who are living with ill health or disability.

Universal Credit

More people than ever are applying for universal credit and for many people this is a daunting process and one they do not feel capable of undertaking alone, even if they have access to technology. Through our service we are able to walk people through the application process, including assessing their eligibility and payment rates. Universal Credit has become infamous for being plagued with issues and where these arise we can intervene and advocate on a claimants behalf.

Advocacy service

There are times when advice and assistance is not enough to ensure that people's rights are protected and they are supported in the way that is most correct. In these times a person will sometimes need a third party with more expertise to take up their case.

Employment Coach

In September 2020 we were able to secure funding to employ an "employment coach". Through the forces of serendipity we were able to employ Jenni Cragg for this role. Each week Jenni supports dozens of job seekers in their search for work. Jenni provides advice and assistance with CV writing, job searches, applications and interview skills. Jenni has also developed good contacts with a network of agencies so she is often amongst the first to hear about opportunities in the area. We are delighted to say that this role has already seen multiple job seekers find employment and training opportunities.

Job Club

As part of her role every Friday afternoon Jenni runs a job club at The Ark. Assisted by volunteers advice, support and encouragement is given as well as help using computers.

Computer Course

Jenni partnered with Inspire libraries to deliver a computer course to people without even the most basic computer skills. In the present climate Computer skills are more essential than ever and for some people this was the first time they have ever learned how to switch a computer on.

Linking Lives

The Ark has become a member of the 'Linking Lives - Two's Company' telephone befriending scheme. This scheme is a support for people who are lonely, isolated or housebound. The scheme also takes referrals from social prescribers easing pressure on statutory services whilst maintaining support for the individuals who need it.

The Ark's 2020-2021 activities



Community Café

We provide a community café, staffed by volunteers which provides tea and coffee free of charge (taking only donations), and gives away a significant volume of biscuits each year. The main aim is to provide a warm and welcoming environment and by encouraging people to use the café we have a significant impact in overcoming social isolation for people. The Café is part of a national initiative known as "places of welcome" (www.placesofwelcome.org). Volunteers have also been giving computer assistance to people who are not computer literate.

Friendship Group

We have a group that meets every Monday afternoon for friendship, games, laughter and learning. During these times the café area is a hive of activity and liveliness with many cakes and biscuits consumed as well as plenty of thoughtful conversation topics discussed and debated.

From time to time specialists in their field come to enlighten and inform the group. At other times the group will arrange for somebody to come and teach them a specific skill. It is open to all and everyone is welcome.

Art Group

On a Thursday afternoon we are host to an art group. Open to anybody the group provides an outlet for people's creativity and an opportunity to experiment with different artistic approaches. This group attracts total novices to experienced painters for what is a relaxing and therapeutic afternoon.

Craft Club

This is a group where anyone is welcome to bring along their own craft activities and do it in conjunction and community with others. Nobody need craft alone. This is a popular group that has lots of fun and discussions as well as making excellent craft items.

Community Garden

The community garden is a reflective space in which people can enjoy a spot of tranquility and peace. It is maintained by volunteers.

Gedling Borough Council–Food Voucher Scheme

Through funding provided by Gedling Borough Council The Ark was able to use its knowledge of local people and local problems to provide over £4000 worth of supermarket food vouchers for the people most in need throughout Gedling. At a time, during the Pandemic when food poverty was in the public eye in conjunction with Gedling Borough Council we were able to meet the needs of the worst affected members of our community.

Foodbank

If a person comes to us in state of emergency and will not be able to provide their next meal. We are a referring agent for all the local foodbanks (as well as those further across Nottingham) and through this avenue we can meet their immediate need and we can then help them find more stability in the long term.

ACTS435

Acts 435 is an online giving charity, directly connecting those who want to give with those who are in genuine need of their help, through a network of local churches and charities. In the last year through this initiative we have been able to provide cookers, beds, washing machines, fridge freezers and other essential items to people who due to unfortunate circumstances could not afford them otherwise.

Away From it All - Mothers Union Holidays

A Holiday scheme primarily funded by members of Mothers' Union, to help people who wouldn't otherwise be able to have a holiday. The Ark has been able to refer a number of local families for their first holiday in years.

Finance



Treasurer Report

I would like to extend my gratitude to all of the people who have helped provide funds for the work of The Ark this year. Whether as individuals or as members of Churches or as trustees of charitable trusts or foundations, it is your donations and grants that have enabled The Ark to provide services this year. Where would we be without you? Your generosity gave us real moments of encouragement in the sometimes dark and difficult days of 2020.

I would like to extend my gratitude also to all of the people who have volunteered their help to The Ark this year. You are such a blessing to the project! Your welcome, hospitality and love: you make a terrific contribution and enable many things to happen which would be impossible otherwise. I am grateful to Denise Mear – who served as Honourary Treasurer for several years until mid-October 2020 – for her work in accounts preparation and for providing me with a comprehensive introduction to the role.

My especial thanks to Joel and Jenni (a splendid recruitment) for their commitment and flexibility in the often stressful moments/days/weeks/months of 2020. Well done both of you!

I record my grateful thanks to R. Ian Clarke for his Independent Examination of the Accounts. Turning to these Accounts we can see broadly that this has been a period in which costs have been well-controlled and that we have been in receipt of an unusually large amount of income. Several particularly large – and to a degree unexpected – grants and donations were received in addition to an increase in the amounts given by regular givers and individual fundraising. An appendix of the largest funders is available on request.

At the year-end (31st December 2020) we carried forward a very fluent balance of £49,659.56. I can assure you that we are putting these funds to good use in 2021 – and our cost control remains as vigilant as you would wish. Taking Jenni on has, naturally, meant a rise in the core costs of The Ark and a full treasury does not stay full for long. At the time of writing (July 2021) we hold funds to cover the equivalent of 9 months' running costs.

The current Trustees are actively discussing the possibility of using the services of more ethical banks in keeping with the Christian values of The Ark.

Adam Corbett
Treasurer

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Donations

Just giving: Just giving is a quick and easy way of making donations towards the work of The Ark. Donations can be made as one off payments or set up as longer term standing orders. If you would like to make a donation by this method please visit;

<https://www.justgiving.com/phoenixfarmopendoorproject>.

Thank you.



Finance — Account Statement



The Ark Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020			
2019			
£		£	£
	Receipts		
7668.52	Charities and foundations	34862.00	
7813.38	Church donations/collections	5030.00	
	COVID Grant	10,000.00	
2471.00	Regular standing orders	2726.00	
7379.47	Irregular individual gifts	12,336.30	
616.33	Fund Raising	908.61	
4,296.48	Shop takings	438.99	
3,136.59	Sundries (interest, gifts and refunds)	1831.82	
33,401.77	Total Receipts		68,133.32
	Payments		
6,481.64	Rent, utilities, phone, internet, & insurance	6,423.96	
7266.83	Repairs and building costs	1,790.00	
1400.74	Equipment, fixtures and fittings	1,447.78	
20,223.97	Salaries and personnel costs	23,185.70	
565.50	Insurances	574.84	
4344.65	Sundries	2,203.63	
40,283.43	Total Payments		35,625.91
(6,881.66)	Excess of Receipts (Payments) for the year		32,507.41
	Balance brought forward at 1 January		
18,221.82	Barclays Bank Current Account	12,354.62	
1,500.20	Barclays Bank Business Premium Account	120.17	
4,283.16	COIF Charities Deposit Fund	4,307.54	
28.63	Cash in hand	369.82	17,152.15
24,033.81			49,659.56
	Balance carried forward at 31 December		
12,354.62	Barclays Bank Current Account	49,353.09	
120.17	Barclays Bank Business Premium Account	120.26	
4,307.54	COIF Charities Deposit Fund	—	
369.82	Cash in hand	186.21	
17,152.15			49,659.56
	D E Mear	R I Clarke	
	Hon Treasurer	Accounts Examiner	