



THE PORCH STEPPIN' STONE CENTRE

STEPPIN' STONE - "POSITIVE PATHS TO THE FUTURE"
"A PLACE OF SAFETY AND A PLACE OF CHALLENGE"

ANNUAL REPORT DECEMBER 2011



Mission Statement

We are a Christian based organisation whose mission is to help, in a totally non-discriminatory way, homeless, recently re-housed homeless or vulnerably housed people. We encourage our members to tackle the issues of apathy, addiction and unemployment, and to move forward towards a positive lifestyle. We provide healthy food, practical help, companionship, learning skills and opportunities for development.

“Steppin’ Stone - Positive Pathways to the Future”

We are - A place of change and challenge providing a safe, warm and welcoming reception

Ian’s Report

How many people have we helped in the last year?

Statistics	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-March 2011	April-June 2011	July-Sept 2011
Number of Members visiting	128	145	154	161
Regular Members	49	63	66	65
People who came to Steppin Stone but decided not to become a Member	24	24	22	19
Male	108	118	131	135
Female	20	27	23	26
Members who have improved their Housing Situation	3	7	10	7
Members who have obtained Part-Time Work or Voluntary work	3	6	6	4
Members working with us to improve their Life-Skills	12	20	22	22
Members who have contributed to the Running of Steppin’ Stone	16	20	17	24
Members whom we have helped improve their health	29	32	49	57

- Last year our visitor numbers remained constant per quarter. However this year we have seen a quarter by quarter increase in members with the highest numbers of visitors being seen for over five years.
- Approximately 17% of our members are female.
- We have around 65 regular members each week.
- The figures indicate the real and growing need for the Steppin’ Stone Centre and the importance of the service we provide.
- For the last quarter age breakdown: Aged under 25 recorded 3%. Aged between 25 - 55 recorded 75%. Aged over 55 recorded 22%.
- The 22% aged over 55 are very unlikely to move on by way of employment or volunteer work. Many are ex-homeless that have some form of accommodation and need support to live alone.

- Around 14% of members are classified as non-white, which is an increased percentage from last year's 8%.

Housing Profile	Oct- December	January- March	April-June	July-September
	2010	2011	2011	2011
Rough Sleepers	19%	19%	15%	15%
Tents	4%	4%	5%	5%
Sofa surfing	5%	10%	9%	10%
Hostel	10%	13%	13%	12%
Supported Housing	23%	18%	19%	19%
Vulnerable Housed	39%	36%	39%	39%

The Housing Profile statistics are based on the information available - a housing profile is not held for all Members

Company and Charity administration and management

Regular management committee meetings are held. The management committee consists of the five trustees, four volunteers, and three staff plus two or three members who are elected at the open meeting. We also have an Oxford City Council Councillor coming as an observer.

Quarterly open meetings are held - open to all and are a valuable source of feedback to the management committee and trustees and form a basis for future decision making.

Our Trustee team remains strong with representation from the financial and legal worlds and trustees who are very experienced in the homeless sector and a retired Deputy Headmaster.

Our Trustees are motivated, take an active role in developing strategic thought, regularly attend the Steppin' Stone to see first-hand the operation, and are supportive to the executive, the Finance and Operations Directors. Regular Trustee meetings are held and minutes taken.

The required reports for 2011 have been filed at Companies House and with the Charities Commission.

Staff

During the year we said goodbye to project worker **Ian** and welcomed **Jon** in his place. We have experienced regular changes to our casual workers and we currently have just one casual worker.

Ian - Director and Administrator part-time

Nigel - Operations Director part-time

Sian - Manager Steppin' Stone part-time

Jon - Project Worker full-time

Mike - Project Worker full-time

Sharon - Project Worker part-time

April - Banking and Cash Control part-time

Lorraine - Self-employed cook part-time

Strategic Comments

- ★ We continue to implement and operate support plans for members. We have 31 members on meaningful support plans and given the work required and the small staff numbers we will not be able to accommodate many more members in number unless we employ further staff.
- ★ The Steppin' Forward project has operated successfully throughout the year. Under our strategic plan we are planning to increase development and the number of members involved.
- ★ We plan to increase the production of our Porch Pickles, providing more members with the opportunity to learn very useful work related skills
- ★ We consider it very important that our premises are well maintained. The Steppin' Stone regularly has internal redecoration with the help of members and volunteers. All staff take particular care to ensure that the premises are kept clean and attractive and welcoming to members.

Highlights from the year

- ✓ Most important of all we see the tremendous challenges faced by our members, combating homelessness, addiction, mental health difficulties, loneliness, poor health and rejection by society AND we see the most heart-warming successes on journeys that lead to being an accepted part of society
- ✓ We continue to work closely with other agencies wherever possible. Currently we work with Oxford Homeless Pathways, Julian Housing, Simon House, Connection, Citizens Advice Bureau and Street Services.
- ✓ Prospective award - recommended by Simon House - We were delighted to be nominated for an award for continually supporting homeless people over a long period of time. Barclays Bank the sponsors deemed not to give us an awarded but we felt really proud to have received such recognition for the work we do from a colleague working in the sector
- ✓ We are proud of our website and Members' website, both of which are a source of income and volunteers, and which receive avid regular attention and positive comment. We now have Facebook and Twitter
- ✓ Members thoroughly enjoyed outings to, Kew Gardens, local museums and art galleries, the outdoor adventure centre at Youlbury and building a willow structure for summer shelter at the allotments
- ✓ We now have 35 members working at our allotments. They achieved tremendous success at the local Elder Stubbs Festival in August winning ten first prizes and eight second prizes - my we were all so proud
- ✓ The opening of the Porch Pickles Kitchen by Oxford Isis Rotary which had contributed substantially to the cost
- ✓ The very joyful celebrations by, members, trustees, staff, volunteers and members of the public in celebrating ten years of the opening of the Steppin' Stone centre
- ✓ The continued help of our very valued volunteers without whose help we would not be able to open

Financial Comments

- ✓ Our Trustees receive no remuneration
- ✓ We had a very successful financial year ended 31st March 2011 recording a surplus of £52720. Our reserves stood at unrestricted funds £222154 and restricted funds £30982. This was a good achievement.

- ✦ We own the freehold of the Steppin' Stone centre, 139 Magdalen Road, subject to a mortgage granted by The Society of All Saints Sisters of the Poor.
- ✦ Salaries and wages as a percentage of expenditure 61% (last year 70%) and of income 48% (last year 71%) This was quite exceptional due to the level of income achieved and the financial saving benefits from the redundancies made in December 2009. The Trustees and the Directors are aware of the need to control wages and salaries which is our major form of expenditure. However in the main staff costs are devoted to the members' welfare and benefit
- ✦ Income expenditure for the year on Charitable Purposes 92.8%. Governance costs 2.7%. Fund raising costs 4.5%. This is good showing that 92.8% (last year 92.6%) of our income is generated and spent for the benefit of members
- ✦ Our finances for the first six months of this year are not as healthy as last year. To date we have a net deficit of £15,000 as at 31 October 2011, which has substantially eaten into our last year's surplus
- ✦ We are very grateful for the continued support of Oxford City Council, for their support to us in our current partnership, which provides us with a grant of £55k per annum.

Overall

Last year continued to be a year of strategic change deliberately moving our emphasis further away from a place of comfort and more to a place of change and challenge. This important theme change has resulted in more members having support plans and positively moving forward in their lives. This means helping members to be more self-reliant and discovering that there is another way to live and there is no need to be dependent on continual hand-outs.

We are pleased that we now have a well-balanced staff team who are all devoted to members' needs.

The year as always has had highs and lows, some great achievements by both members and staff. Continuous vigilance is required to ensure that our future funding need is met.

Many thanks are due, especially to the following:

- ★ The tremendous support from the many of you who regularly donate to us on a monthly or quarterly basis with the money going directly into our bank account; no fuss - just regular and continuous discreet financial support
- ★ The valued recognition received from Oxford City Council and the Charitable Trusts that support us financially. Without such support we would not be able to operate at the level we do.



Harvest cake from Watlington Methodists

- ★ All those that have donated to us throughout the year
- ★ All the Harvest festival deliveries we receive from the many Groups, Churches and Schools



- ★ Janet, Lisa and Lucy for our Counselling, Christine for our Podiatry care, Sasha for our Acupuncture, Phillipa for our Bowen Therapy, Andrea for Art, Kim for the Allotments and driving the mini-bus, Margaret for administrating our Friends database and Victoria for her unstinting help with the annual report and the three times a year newsletter. All of whom contributed so much to help our Members in their own individual ways.
- ★ Our Trustees and Management Committee
- ★ The regular prayer support that we receive from so many of our supporters
- ★ Salters boat yard for the free boat ride home, from Abingdon to Oxford, after our annual sponsored walk
- ★ Our patron the Bishop of Oxford - Bishop John

Women's Pampering at the Steppin' Stone Centre

The group has been meeting regularly once a month on a Saturday from 2 - 4pm. We have had some ups and downs regarding a regular masseur and beautician but have, with the help of members, maintained face packs, hand massage and some nail therapy as well as being able to chat in a non-male environment and enjoy tea, coffee and home-made cake. Occasionally, female volunteers have been able to join us. On one occasion, we made biscuits for a Steppin' Stone coffee morning and on others we have knitted. My focus has always been to allow women, at some time within that two hours, not to be dependent on being alert to men's needs but to treat it as 'me time' for looking after their own wellbeing.

At the last session, Jess and Serena joined us, Jess is a qualified masseur and beautician, Serena is a trainee at college at the moment. It was a fabulous session with members being able to ask for specific treatments and some lovely conversation. Jess and Serena both interacted with the members in a professional and caring manner. It is a recipe that can work, as with regular commitment from the beauticians, I will feel confident to advertise this service across the network and hopefully draw in new, hard-to-reach lady members. In addition, Jess and Serena have suggested that, each time they come, they do a short demonstration/workshop so that members can learn how to practise treatments on themselves within the safe environment of the group. This would be hugely beneficial in women connecting with and supporting each other. We have also arranged with a local doctor to provide contraception advice.

Through our work at Steppin' Stone, and the establishment of trust, we have been able to support female members in many individual and personal ways. Just spare a moment to think how this activity can boost morale and self-esteem and improve well-being.

Sharon

Porch Pickles - donations of vinegar requested

We have recently made more of an effort to push our Porch Pickles Project forward. We have sought advice on the packaging and labelling and have now brought our presentation up to a much more professional standard. We have found three different outlets to place our concoctions and plan to sell them to the general public.

Our members are taking the leading roles in the project and are not only manufacturing our jams and pickles but are accompanying us to meetings where we pitch to sell them.





As always we have to be mindful of cost. Although we plan to recoup all of the money that we spend it is vital that we keep expenditure down to the minimum. With this in mind we would like to ask for donations of pickling vinegar.

Jon







Reflections from Nigel - Operations Director

The past year has seen a growth in members attending, members eating and members moving on - indeed I feel it has been our best year yet. Our excellent staff all complement each other and have a can-do approach to most tasks. We have made trips to Kew Gardens and Youlbury outdoor activity centre, as well as to Oxford to appreciate the museums and gardens. We have a new therapy (Bowen) on offer and have increased our counselling to three sessions a week. We are also running a spiritually focussed session each week for members.

We have plans to step up or introduce:

-  An additional Porch Pickles and Preserves session has started on a Thursday
-  The juicing project - making fresh fruit juice for the centre and to sell has started and with our new freezer (from an award from the Co-op) we are storing more produce
-  Purposeful activity course - Open College Network
-  Even more contracts and support plans for members

We have once again been overwhelmed by the support and kindness shown to us by our supporters, and their generous gifts. We are building on success and hope this next year to:

-  Decorate our upstairs with help from Springhill prison.
-  Work with Crisis skylight and in particular build upon our successful art collaboration with them.
-  Celebrate VM who through our assistance is now a self-employed electrician and is able to maintain himself doing PAT testing and electrical work.
-  Continue to receive gifts from the Oxford food bank and indeed to continue to give back! This year we have been able to give to the food banks as well as gratefully receive from them.
-  Develop our volunteers to enable the staff to focus more time on helping members.
-  Work with Elder Stubbs to sustain our gardening enterprise.

We look forward this year to an increased emphasis on challenging our members; challenging them to develop skills, get involved in helping the running of their centre and to create Steppin' Stones for themselves.

