

Living It Up

ANNUAL REPORT



Year Ending 31st December 2024

Charity Registration Number - 1199155

St Cuthberts Hall, Newnham Street, Bedford, MK40 3JR

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ORGANISATION PROFILE

Organisation History

Living It Up was originally founded in 2009 as a Community Group. We became a CIC (Community Interest Company) in 2016 and gained Charitable Status (CIO) 31st May 2022. A CIO is a legal structure regulated by the Charity Commission that was introduced to help simplify the process for setting up a charity.

Living It Up began fully operating as a charity on 1st January 2023.



Trustees

- Our Trustees are:
- Michael Collett - Chair
- Vicki Airs
- Gareth Wright
- Oliver Monks
- Sarah Neyland
- Sarah Fletcher (stood down October 2024)

About our Trustees

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. They can however recover expenses incurred directly as a result of their role.

There has to be a minimum of 4 serving trustees.

Trustees are recruited to ensure a diversity of relevant skills and expertise needed for effective governance of the charity. They must complete a skills audit and attend a meeting as an observer. We will always have at least 1 serving trustee who uses our services.

We'd welcome expressions of interests from potential new trustees!

TRUSTEE INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Induction

All trustees must complete an organisational induction.

This includes:

- Introductory meeting with Trustees and Co-CEOs
- Attending a Board Meeting
- Completing a Skills Audit so that we know what skills the new Trustee will be bringing to Living It Up
- Confirming reading of conflict of interest policy
- Signed declaration of interests.



Training

Training is routinely and regularly offered to all trustees, both new and existing

Networking opportunities through CVS are shared with the trustees.

Structure Chart

Please see the following page for our structure chart.



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



Mike Collett
Chair of Trustees



Gareth Wright
Trustee



Vicki Airs
Trustee



Sarah Fletcher
Trustee



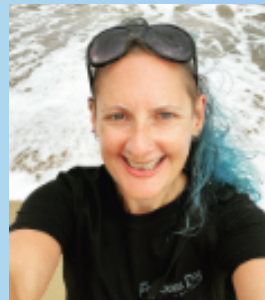
Sarah Neyland
Trustee



Oli Monks
Trustee



Claire Crawford-Smith
Co-CEO



Fizz Heseltine
Co-CEO



Carly Morris
Operations Manager



PAC Staff and
Volunteers



Gig Buddies Staff
and Volunteers



Gr8 Mates Staff
and Volunteers



Events Staff and
Volunteers



Hall Staff

WHAT WE DO

Living It Up provides social and educational opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and autism in and around Bedfordshire.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTS

The objects of Living It Up CIO are:

The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among vulnerable adults and children, with a physical or learning disability or autism who are socially excluded on the grounds of their disability, by providing:

1. Opportunities to learn new skills, education and training that are designed to assist them to integrate into society;
2. Social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.

OUR SERVICES

Performing Arts Centre - providing daytime sessions in performing and creative arts four days a week

Gig Buddies - a befriending service which provides trained volunteers to support participants to go out socially

Gr8 Mates - our friendship and dating service for people looking for a friend or partner

Events - holding bi-monthly club nights

St Cuthberts Hall - a wheelchair-accessible community centre

2024 IN NUMBERS

We achieved the following in 2024:

Performing Arts Centre

- We supported 72 learners
- We supported 9 volunteers
- An average of 1170 hours supporting our learners this year

Gig Buddies

- We recruited and trained 11 new volunteers
- We supported 43 participants
- We supported 30 volunteers
- We have supported 21 pairs of matched buddies
- An average of 756 hours of Gig Buddies matched pairs going out a year
- An average of 48 hours per participant supported at monthly socials a year



Gr8 Mates

- We supported 27 members
- We had 1 volunteer
- An average of 24 hours per member supported at bi-monthly socials a year

Events

- We recruited and trained 11 new volunteers
- We supported 559 attendees at our events
- We supported 34 Volunteers
- An average of 24 hours per member supported at our bi-monthly parties

St Cuthberts Hall

- For an average of 10.5 hours a week, the hall was hired out to regular community groups
- We hired out the hall for 119.5 hours of one-off bookings
- 665.5 hours hired out in total

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES FROM LAST YEAR & RESULTS

Service	What we hoped to achieve by end of 2024	What we actually achieved by end of 2024
Performing Arts Centre	Recruit additional experts to increase range of opportunities	We did not increase the experts in 2024 but we worked hard and got funding for this to happen in 2025
	Have facilities to offer services to more learners	We looked at additional venues and were lucky enough to secure The Basement at Bunyan from 2025
	Improve and evolve shop project	We were successful in getting this funded and now have a shop website and pitches at Bedford Flea Market
Gig Buddies	Recruit and train more volunteers	We were able to recruit, train and retain more volunteers. 1 volunteer left in 2024 due to work move to Manchester
	Continue to support the advisory board to plan monthly socials	We have continued to support the advisory board to plan socials - in 2024 these included a Gig Buddies Gig at the Hall, Bandeoke at the Standard
	Continue to support existing pairs of matched buddies	We have continued to support existing pairs of matched buddies to do excellent things like watching Arsenal play football at home, going to Winter Wonderland Hyde Park, visiting the Tate Modern, theatre and gigs and many other fun things

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES FROM LAST YEAR & RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Service	What we hoped to achieve by end of 2024	What we actually achieved by end of 2024
Gr8 Mates	Establish LGBTQ+ element of this service, if wanted by our members	In 2024 there was no interest in a LGBTQ+ service from our members. We will keep this plan in order to be able to be responsive to need
	Recruit and train more volunteers	We have recruited 1 person and we were able to employ someone on an ad-hoc basis to support at socials if the numbers in attendance require this
	Find funding for increased staffing hours	We have not to date been successful in these funding applications
	Recruit more female members	We recruited 1 more female member to the service in 2024. It follows the national trend of similar services where recruitment of female members is more challenging
Events	Find and recruit more volunteers	We recruited an additional 12 volunteers in 2024
	Hold regular bi-monthly events	We held 6 club nights in 2024 which aligns to our commitment of bi-monthly club nights
St Cuthberts Hall	Market as a community hall/community centre	Whilst we haven't held a marketing campaign, we have still increased the revenue by £2500 in this financial year - without increasing the fees to hire the hall
	Establish as an independent venue	This is still a work in progress, thanks to funding from Bedford Borough Council we now have a new door, flooring and lighting that were needed to progress this.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMING YEAR

For year ending 2025 we hope to achieve the following:

Performing Arts Centre

- Recruit additional experts to increase range of opportunities
- Have facilities to offer services to more learner
- Secure additional funding to continue shop project for another year



Gig Buddies

- Recruit and train more volunteers
- Continue to support the advisory board to plan monthly socials
- Continue to support existing pairs of matched buddies
- Find continuation funding

Gr8 Mates

- Establish LGBTQ+ element of this service, if needed by our members
- Recruit and train more volunteers
- Find funding for increased staffing hours
- Recruit more female members

Events

- Find and recruit more volunteers
- Continue to hold regular bi-monthly events

St Cuthberts Hall

- Market as a community hall/community centre
- Establish as an independent music venue



ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

This year we have noted the following key impacts on the people that we work with:

Performing Arts Centre

- Our theatre show 'Guitars to the Stars' in January 2024 was a huge success and got [a 5-star review from the Bedford Independent](#). Our performers gained a massive amount of confidence and enjoyment in showcasing their drama skills to the local community.
- We held our very first Living It Up Movie Awards night
- DJ Spoony featured as a guest on Living It Up Radio - our DJs were absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to interview such a radio legend
- Living It Up Radio hit 20,000 listens
- Thanks to funding from the Frank Branston Charitable Trust, our shop The Arty Giraffe has moved online and we've also sold artwork at the local Bedford Flea market.

Gig Buddies

- We went on some brilliant socials - including bandeoke at The Standard, and visiting Bletchley Park Museum
- We put our own gig on - headlined by Megson a Radio 2 Folk Awards winning band and supported by Deltasonic from the Performing Arts Centre
- We were interviewed on BBC 3 Counties Radio and Bedford Hospital Radio
- We supported Headfest run by BBC 3CR
- We launched our new logo
- We obtained free tickets to take participants to see Nile Rogers at Bedford Summer Sessions
- 5 pairs of Gig Buddies ventured into London to go to a mixture of Arsenal Home games, gigs, art galleries and Winter Wonderland

Gr8 Mates

- We held a consultation event to find out from all the members what activities they would like as part of this service. As a result of all the brilliant ideas we then consulted on increasing the cost of membership in order to make these ideas more achievable. This was unanimously agreed.
- We all went and played indoor crazy golf at Putt Putt Noodle and we had lunch at Slug and Lettuce

Events

- We celebrated the 15th birthday of our Events service in September 2024 with a regular club night that doubled as a massive party!
- Our bi-monthly club nights continued to be really well-attended, and have a hugely beneficial impact on our members' wellbeing, confidence and mental health.

St Cuthberts Hall

- Thanks to funding from the Bedford Borough Council Infrastructure Fund, we were able to fix some uneven flooring at the hall, making the space much more accessible and appealing.

Organisation-wide

- Bedford Running Festival was a brilliant fundraiser for us and we had over 10 amazing runners raising vital funds

Living It Up

