



## **Trustees Annual Report 2023**

The year that was 2023 was a year where we saw many of our projects embed for the longer term, as well as the arrival of new projects including summer project, a relaunch of our work on the street of the community and a cooking project with the Police, among others. It was also a challenging year where many of the families we work with faced huge challenges through the significant rise in the cost of living, lots of physical and mental health challenges and as a Charity we too faced some key challenges on funding. One of the great strengths of all those involved has been their resilience and commitment that despite all the many challenges in the belief that together (with God) we can make a difference and that we keep going – loving and serving those who we have the privilege of working alongside.

Our gratitude, as ever, goes to that incredible team of staff and volunteers (many under 18) who keep going and bring so much fun and joy to all we do. To all those on the ‘front-line’ doing the face-to-face work but to all those who do stuff behind the scenes that is hidden and unseen. A big thanks also to the partner organisations who we work together with, all the amazing Diocesan staff, the individual donors, or the foundations, companies and trusts that have given so generously towards the work. Thank you!

### **Holiday activities**

Over the last years providing positive activities during the school holidays has been really important in providing safe spaces for local young people. This summer we took part in the Holiday Activity Funding (HAF) providing 4 weeks of daily activities which include providing a hot meal. Each day we had up to 50 young people who came for a range of activities inc. sport, craft etc. at the Beach Hut and then our amazing Chef extraordinaire, Nathan (17), provided some delicious meals – bearing in mind this was in the middle of the Circle with no gas or electric this was no mean feat! In fact during the summer Nathan cooked over 450 delicious meals.

Alongside this we were very grateful to receive funding as part of the Governments 'Million Hours' initiative which helped us run various trips to Go Ape and Aquaventure, take the young people camping, run 'fake-away' cooking and extra football sessions on the Astroturf and our inflatable football pitch as well as provide for those who weren't eligible for HAF funding.

Despite the really wet weather we have experienced during the holidays we have been able to run activities every single holiday this year which has been brilliant and made a huge amount of difference and impacted over 300 young people and their families.

### **Schools**

Our work in Nova Hreod and Swindon Academy continues to grow from strength to strength. Some of the highlights including leading a whole school act of remembrance at Swindon Academy, Assemblies at Nova on Remembrance and Christmas, and Gunge the teacher, Karaoke and Mario Kart for Children in Need.

We were asked to support Nova's Our World Week where we worked with the whole of year 7 to helping them think about their community and the importance of volunteering. We then took groups of young people out litter picking around the streets of Moredon and Rodbourne Cheney which was hard work but fun! We had loads of positive feedback from the school, the local community and the students. The following week we did it all over again with Year 7 at Swindon Academy this time, alongside the litter picking we supported groups preparing for the fun day, working in the community forest and running a 'holiday at home' with St. Peters Church for older residents. Sadly the fun day had to be cancelled due to gale force winds but it was still good to work together to plan even if we have to save it until next year! A big thank you to Wiltshire Community Foundation for funding this through #iwill funding.

We continue to provide bereavement support to the schools. Sadly there were a number of children who lost parents during the year and we were able to provide some care and support. On the anniversary of the death of Harry Parker we supported Nova providing a 'safe space' for students to come and get support for the week. It was really

sad but also a privilege to support so many of Harrys friends who continue to find his passing really hard. Sadly, we also provided support for students too after one of their former students took his own life just a few months before. Again, a really hard time for the students and staff and glad we have been able to work with Jamie, Anna and Nick to provide the support to Nova especially.

### **Shine Church**

We continue to meet outside the Beach Hut for shinebreakfast each fortnight. There were only two weeks that we had to cancel due to weather but we were able to gather together for all the other weeks – come rain or shine! Being outside continues to give the young people lots of opportunity to help serve by making drinks or cooking the breakfast and the flexibility of being outside has been really beneficial for those young people who are neuro-diverse or who might find sitting for any length of time difficult.

On the Easter weekend we had a mini-fun day down at ‘Woodchip’ Park with lots of egg based games, an Easter Egg Hunt and even a visit from two Easter Bunnies! Then on Easter Sunday after a sunrise service we had 80 people of all ages join together for our Easter shinebreakfast which included Jodie and Whitney reading out the Easter Story and lots of party poppers, music and then more easter eggs and another visit from the Easter Bunny!

Messy Saturday continues to go really well with up to 80 people attending. This year we explored topics including David & Goliath, Making a fresh start, Incredible Women, Joseph (and his coat) and a green themed ‘The Grinch does Christmas’!

### **Away Day**

Over the last months we have been working with John Wheatley from Frontier Youth Trust to help us think about our values and the future. As part of this John lead an ‘away day’ in December where 28 children, young people, parents and adults who are at the core of shine joined with the Trustees to meet together to listen, to play, to plan and to eat together. We had a great day looking at our hands (what skills we bring), our brains

(what knowledge we bring), and our hearts (what we are passionate about) as well as what is going well (WWW) and what would be even better if (EBI). A great day and we are looking to repeat it soon!

## **Youth work**

### **Youthie**

Early in the year Youthie, our open-access youth club each Wednesday, had gone really quiet partially due to the weather but also parents worried about safety with some of the knife incidents in the community. Having been in split ages for a number of years we took the decision to join the age groups together to enable a longer session. Ever since numbers have begun to creep up and confidence from parents and the young people has increased. One of the highlights of each session is when the main hall is open and there are sports activities – the favourites being dodgeball and also the bleep test!

### **Shineyouth**

It was great to relaunch shineyouth – our Friday night sessions exploring faith and discipleship. Over far too much food there were loads of fun and games exploring what Jesus means to us. We are really grateful to Pinehurst Gospel Hall for the use of their building.

### **The Beach Hut**

Three years after its arrival the Beach Hut continues to be a central part of our work in the community. Open several afternoons after school and then throughout the school holidays it provides a much valued resource for local families. On top of the great success of the summer programme Youthie moved out to the Beach Hut between June-September to make the most of the weather and additional space. Plans are underway to extend what we can offer from the Beach Hut going into 2024!

### **Detached Work**

We were really pleased to receive some funding as part of the Governments Safer Streets initiative – providing safer communities – especially for young women. As part of the funding we relaunched our detached work around Penhill, Pinehurst and Moredon as well as increasing the detached work in the schools and after-school provision at

The Beach Hut. We were able to engage with lots of different young people – especially during the summer months and its been great to see some of the challenges around young peoples engagement with criminal activity or being exploited currently on a downward trend.

### **Wonky Pizza Project**

We are really grateful to Sovereign Housing for their support getting the Pizza Project off of the ground. Named the ‘Wonky Pizza Crew’ by the young people the project has trained over 40 young people in the skills around pizza making and been able to visit various areas of the community to give away free pizza – many of the local kids joining in making their own pizza – taught and supervised by the young people. At Christmas we were invited to take the project out to a couple of Christmas events which went really well and something the young people would like to do more of.

### **Cooking Project**

With the Pizza Project and moving to providing a hot meal at Youthie we are really conscious of how much young people love cooking. As part of our Safer Streets work we worked with Mani, our local PCSO, and Aaron from Central Swindon North Parish Council (CSNPC) and the Early Intervention Team from Wiltshire Police to set up a weekly opportunity to work with young people at risk to cook together. Split over two sessions on a Friday lunchtime the young people have cooked everything from Tacos and Bolognese through to Chilli and also Breakfast Quesadillas!

### **Sportswork**

Friday Football continued every Friday evening, sometimes with over 100 young people attending for an hour of football, or meeting and chatting with the youth workers. Its been great to see different groups of young people from across North Swindon come together to enjoy playing. A number of those who attend are considered ‘high risk’ in terms of their involvement with activities out in the community – but we rarely have any issues at all – as they value it so highly.

The inflatable football pitch paid for by a High Sheriff grant continues to help provide positive activities where young people want them. So we have regularly taken it to The

Courts, Pinehurst, outside St. Peters Church and also the top of the Valley, Penhill. Its been great to see some of the older young people now able to set it all up and run it without any direct need for the staff.

## **Residentials**

### **Big Weekender**

In February we took 25 young people from Pinehurst, Penhill and Moredon to the Swindon & Gloucestershire YFC Big Weekender. Meeting with about 100 other young people we had a fantastic time with endless games of manhunt, laser tag, sports, workshops, a movie night, and marshmallows around the bonfire, as well as the opportunity to think about faith and sing and chat together. A great weekend!

### **Satellites**

One of the things we hope to do is have three residentials for young people to attend each year. This summer we had a small group attend the Satellites Festival at the Shepton Mallet Showground. Despite the wind and rain and flooding tents we had a great time with learning more about and joining with 2000 other young people worshipping God as well as workshops, sports and a massive late night silent disco!

## **Team**

As mentioned before all our work is only made possible through the incredibly dedicated team of staff and volunteers. This year we were joined by the lovely Josie, who came as a volunteer from Germany with us for three months March-June (and even came back for more to help with the summer program!) and then the fantastic Hannah and Hannes, who were on a University placement with us, again from Germany. It continues to be a fantastic privilege to have young people join us from Germany to come and learn about youth work and the UK and we are so grateful to Josie, Hannah and Hannes for all their individual skills and hard work they brought with them.

Sadly, due to some of the financial challenges we faced at the beginning of 2023 we had to make Amy redundant at Easter but we are really pleased to be able to continue to

work with her as she now works with SMASH based at Pinetrees Community Centre. Simon continued to lead the team as Pioneer Minister and in June we were really pleased that he was licenced on behalf of the Bishop into the post for the longer term – a real answer to prayer!

One of the things we feel really important for our future is ‘home grown’ workers and leaders and it was great to have Tyler and Jodie join the team full-time through July and August and was great to have Rain, Ade and Asha – all local young people, join the summer team! We are really grateful to the incredible Rowan who continues to be a key member of staff helping provide leadership support across many of the activities as well as providing lots of support and encouragement to the staff team as well as the young people.

### **Partnerships**

Working partnership with other organisations and agencies is a really important part of what we do. It continues to be great to have Aaron, Jo and Amy from CSNPC be part of the Youthie and Friday Football teams; for the friendship and support from the SMASH team; to the fantastic Jamie Reeves and team at Nova and Moredon; the staff at Swindon Academy and Nova; Rev. Nick Lines and Rev. Lydia Morey for their support, encouragement and prayers. It has also been good to continue to support Owens World Foundation in their work in reducing the effects of Knife Crime after the sad death of Owen, who attended Youthie, last year.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding of all those we have the privilege of working with is core to all we do. Throughout 2023 the trustees have overseen the work highlighted in this report to ensure high standards of practice inc. safely recruiting new staff and volunteers as well as DBS checks and a continuous programme of professional development and training. Safeguarding features as a standing item on all trustee meetings and we carried out an annual Safeguarding audit using the Diocese’s Safeguarding Dashboard and

implementing the resulting action plans. Due to the nature of our work with those at risk and on the margins, we continued to ensure proper recording of concerns and referring significant issues to statutory agencies through Contact Point Swindon.

## **Trustees**

We are grateful to all our Trustees for all their wisdom, support and work they do behind the scenes. At our AGM last year we said goodbye to the lovely Chris Pope who has acted as our Treasurer for the last 10+ years. Chris did a great job at keeping the ‘books’ in order but was such a source of wisdom and encouragement on so many other areas as well so will be very missed – enjoy your retirement!

It has been great to welcome Ian Coulson as our new treasurer. Ian was a regional finance director with a national care trust so has the double challenge of getting used to navigating our new accounting system through Quickbooks but also getting used to Charity finance and making little stretch a long way! Alongside Ian the other Trustees include Andie Halls (Secretary), Heather Blandford, Becky Lafford, Phil Ashby, David Blandford and Simon Halls (Pioneer Minister).

## **Thanks**

We are so grateful to the following organisations for their kind support:

Beard Construction

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Central Swindon North Parish Council

#iwill

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Microsoft

Million Hours

Sovereign Housing

St. Johns, Haydon Wick

Swindon Academy



Swindon Borough Council (Safer Streets and HAF)

Swindon Community Church

Swindon Youth for Christ

Wiltshire Community Foundation

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and to all those individuals who have given so generously to the work!