



December 2021



End of the year..

What a year it has been! As we come to the end of the year we reflect on what has been a year of change for the charity. We now have a staff team of 10 and our volunteer team is growing, which is amazing! It's be great to see our creative sessions expand and to see the enjoyment that it is bringing to those that attend.

With all the change that has gone on we still remain focused on our vision as a charity, 'everyone to have a place they can call home and hope for the future.'

We are looking forward to being able to offer our guests a Christmas dinner again this year and are incredibly grateful for Ian Bremner and family who are coming in to cook and serve this for us!

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year!



Investing in Volunteers achievement!

We are so proud to have been awarded the Investing in Volunteers accreditation in November this year.

The Investing in Volunteers award shows the value and commitment we have for our volunteers

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organisations involving volunteers. It aims to improve the quality of the volunteering experience for all volunteers and shine a spotlight on the enormous contribution they make to charities throughout the country.

We were assessed against six quality areas, including the charity's vision and plans for volunteers, their recruitment and support, through to helping them reach their full potential. The charity proved to excel in all aspects of working with its volunteers.

Thank you to all that were involved and a big thank you to JoJo who worked tirelessly over the last 18 months to ensure we achieved this accreditation!

Further information about the Investing in Volunteers standard can be found at www.investinginvolunteers.co.uk.

Training Opportunities

Emma is delivering Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) training for all new and returning volunteers. It's a great opportunity to talk about our guest's experiences and explore the best ways to support them.

If you would like to get involved then please contact us on volunteering@bridgeleicester.org

Successful Fundraiser

On Sunday 21st November we held our sell out fundraiser 'Access all Areas 2' in Duffy's bar, Leicester. The day was a great event where local acts of musicians and spoken word artists came together to put on an amazing performance for all those that attended!

We raised an incredible £1,268.75!!

A HUGE thank you to Luke Broughton, our Creative Session lead, and Gemma Orton, Hub Co-ordinator for all the hard work you both put into making the event such a success!

Thank you also to everyone who came and for those who purchased tickets to forward on, for those who donated raffle prizes and Bakkavor deserts for the amazing cakes!

We can't wait to start making plans for the next one already!!



Amazon Smile

Just a quick reminder that we're registered with [Amazon Smile](https://smile.amazon.co.uk).

You can raise money for The Bridge every time you order through Amazon. Just follow this link to take part.

smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/113192

Our Services

We recently have extended our opening hours for our guests and are now open from 9:30pm- 2:30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and we currently average 40-50 guests on a daily basis. Our new Photography and Cooking on a Budget sessions have been a great hit and have been popular with our guests.

We look forward to the new sessions that are in the pipeline in the new year, our Self Harm Peer Group and Creative Writing to name a few!



Grandad and Grandson Volunteering team!

We wanted to take this opportunity to recognise two of our amazing volunteers, Mike and Mikey. The Grandad and Grandson duo have been volunteering with The Bridge since the very beginning are both so passionate in supporting The Bridge!



Mike (Left) & Mikey (Right)

Mike is an incredible reliable volunteer who attends our Thursday sessions provides a warm welcome for all of our guests with his great sense of humour! Mikey is more behind the scenes and is our fabulous Social Media Co-ordinator Volunteer ensuring that all website enquiries are picked up and directed accordingly.

Why do you volunteer?

Mikey Personally, I volunteer as I wanted a hobby which resulted in something positive and made a difference, giving back to someone who is in a sticky situation and getting to know and working with people that are different to me. I can sleep at night knowing I have used my time productively and have at least tried to my best to help others.

Mike Because I'm a Christian and Jesus said "love your neighbour as yourself". And I enjoy being part of The Bridge.

What do you enjoy about volunteering?

Mikey I enjoy volunteering as you can often see that the relatively small amount of work you put in, can make a big difference. Whether that is providing a hot drink, finding someone warm, dry clothes that actually fit, or signposting them to a service they didn't know about. The guests are, more often than not, very grateful and thankful for what we provide. To me, that's the thrill and not something I have experienced doing anything else.

Mike The enjoyment, the company, the sense of being 'useful'.

Why The Bridge?

Mikey I first volunteered with my family (and Grandad included) at The Case for Christmas dinner in 2007-2008. Our family circumstances had changed, so we wanted to do something different over the Christmas, giving back to others. We all thoroughly enjoyed it. A handful of volunteers that organised the Christmas dinner, began to form The Bridge as we now know it. My Dad, Grandad and I then began going to The Bridge every Thursday and I have never really lost touch with it since then - either at the sessions, fundraisers, in the office and helping with the technical/media side.

I fell in love with the charity, the guests and the values. I have seen the difference The Bridge has made and continues to make in Leicester, which is amazing.

I thoroughly enjoy the community and family spirit of The Bridge and I think that is an intangible asset that is hard to quantify unless you are involved.

Mike As Mikey says there were Christmases years ago when things were a bit bleak, so we were glad to be doing something different on Christmas Day. It happened to be helping at what became the Bridge and it sort of became a habit.

We think you are both AMAZING, thank you Mike and Mikey for all you do!!!

Mentoring

There has been some outstanding work since the last newsletter and we wanted to share some quotes from mentees who gave feedback about The Lighthouse Project during this period:

“Without my mentor and The Bridge’s support I couldn’t have done any of the positive things I have done. You’re so accessible. I know you’re right there if I need you”

“I couldn’t have asked for a better person to be matched with, I now have something to look forward to each week”

“Just talking to my mentor eased a lot of the pressure I felt over moving”

“It made a difference having someone else to talk to as family members didn’t agree or understand about my situation”

“I didn’t realise the impact that sharing with someone who had had the same experiences would have, they helped me understand how people function who suffer with my illness”

2021 has been another tricky year, impacted by covid and a hand over between Lea and JoJo but the mentors and the mentees have been immensely resilient and continued to be great at what they do.

Aug-Dec Outcomes

9 New relationships
13 current relationships

Finances/Skills

2 debts cleared/repayment plan in place
1 gained new skills
1 completed voluntary work
2 increased benefits/income

Health/wellbeing

6 engaged with medical services
2 gained permanent housing
1 gained temporary housing
7 improved mental health
6 Improved physical health
1 Engaging with drug alcohol recovery program
10 Reduced feelings of loneliness

Social Activity

6 Improved wellbeing through accessing hub services
2 Increased confidence
6 Reconnected/maintained contact with family/friends

Congratulations Lea!

Lea, our mentoring co-ordinator, and her husband Ben welcomed a gorgeous baby boy, Elijah Joseph, into the world in August!

We’ve had lots of beautiful pictures and we can’t wait for his visit to the office! 😊

Easyfundraising

We are now using a great website called **easyfundraising** to help raise money for The Bridge Homelessness to Hope - simply by shopping online!

easyfundraising turns your everyday online shopping into FREE donations when you use them to shop with over 4,000 retailers such as eBay, John Lewis, Argos, ASOS and Booking.com.

Retailers then make a small donation to say ‘thank you’ and **easyfundraising** gives those free funds to the cause.

Please register using this unique link – just click to sign up –

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/X028TR/>

Plus, once you’ve signed up and raised **£5** in donations, **easyfundraising** will give us an **extra £5** donation.

There’s no catch or hidden charges and The Bridge Homelessness To Hope will be really grateful for your donations.

Once registered, the easiest way to raise money for The Bridge is by installing the **easyfundraising** extension to your computer’s toolbar, which will appear on the top right-hand side of your webpage



Meet the Trustee

Name:
Simon Gribbon

Role:
Trustee

How long you've been in post?
Since 2017

What attracted you to your role at The Bridge?

I was asked to join as a Trustee after delivering a pro bono PR project through Leicestershire Cares to publicise the move to Melton Street. The charity applied for PR support to announce the move and after achieving widespread media coverage of the opening event, I was asked to join the board.

What skills and experience do you bring to The Bridge?

I run my own Leicester-based marketing and PR agency so bring around 27 years of experience in media relations, marketing, communications, social media, stakeholder engagement, copywriting/editorial, web content management and other related fields.

What do you like about being a trustee?

After finding out more about the charity during the Leicestershire Cares project, I was honoured to be invited to join the board of Trustees. The Trustees team bring such knowledge, leadership and a diversity of expertise, and as well as making a contribution of my own, I've learned a great deal from them.

I'm so proud of the work that the charity, its staff and volunteers do, and the difference that we (as a whole) are making to people's lives.

Your message to our volunteers:

Thank you for all that you do to work with our homeless guests. Your efforts are recognised and appreciated.

Meet the guest

Name: Nathan

How long have you been coming to The Bridge? On and off 7 years

How did you hear about us? Action Homeless/ No.5 Project

How long have you been homeless? 7 years

How does The Bridge help? Providing food and referrals to other services. Staff and volunteers are able to help and offer advice.

Message for the volunteers: 'Thank you!' Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

Meet the volunteer

Name: Jo

Volunteer Role: Reception /General Volunteer

How long have you been volunteering? 4 months

What attracted you to The Bridge and what skills and experience do you bring to The Bridge?

Friendly and generally interact well with other people. Patient and amenable (I don't mind what I'm asked to do- within reason!! 😊)

What do you like about being a volunteer?

Working with a great team of people, who were friendly and welcoming from the beginning. I feel valued as a volunteer.

What have you learnt about yourself while volunteering? That I am OK when I step out of my comfort zone!

We asked a guest, a volunteer, and a trustee the same question: *'What's the best advice you've been given?'*

Simon- Trustee

Don't ever take your knowledge, intelligence, experience, skills or expertise for granted, or underplay them. We all have different strengths, and you never know when you'll need them in your life or career.

Nathan – Guest

Caring for someone is the best thing you can do for them.

Jo- Volunteer

Be Brave and try new things!!



Women's Bingo Event!

In partnership with Action Homeless we held our first women's bingo event on Wednesday 8th December. It was a great success with a lovely atmosphere of laughter and chat!

We hope to be able to host more events like this in the New Year!

A special mention to Ella who not only worked hard to make this event possible but for all the amazing work she is doing to work with women who have been or are facing homelessness.

Volunteer Lead Panel

Our Volunteer Lead Panel (VLP) was set up this year with the purpose of giving our amazing volunteers a voice and someone to refer to with suggestions. The group meets every 6 weeks or so and is a chance to have a catch up and discuss how things are going.

Currently on the VLP we have Vinod Patel representing the kitchen, Loki Amber, representing the arts & crafts group, Neil Mattson, representing mentors.

We are currently looking for new members to join the VLP so if you are a current volunteer/mentor and would like to get involved then please get in touch with Emma volunteering@leicester.org we would love to have you involved!

Thank you to our current VLP members, we appreciate everything you do!



Loki Amber



Neil Mattson



Vinod Patel

If you have anything that you would like to include in our next newsletter then please contact Emma Smart on volunteering@bridgeleicester.org