

IMPACT REPORT



2021 - 2022



*Improving quality of life
through friendship*



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"A father to the fatherless is God in His Holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families."

Psalm 68: 5-6

ABOUT LINKING LIVES UK

Linking Lives UK is a national Christian charity set up to address social isolation and loneliness particularly among older people.

Using a tried and tested approach, we build partnerships with churches and Christian organisations to enable befriending schemes to be established in local communities.

By the end of March 2022, there were 61 schemes making regular home visits, telephone calls or both to around 770 people experiencing loneliness across England, Scotland and Wales with our first affiliate partnership beginning in Northern Ireland. (See 'National Reach' for further details of locations).

Our Model

Based on a successful model established over 20 years ago, we engage with potential delivery partners to provide them with a blueprint to research, develop, launch and sustain a befriending scheme in their local area. This enables new projects to be up and running quickly, professionally, and safely at minimal cost. It also provides partners with the training their staff and volunteers need and ongoing support when required.

Awareness Generation

Alongside helping to set up befriending schemes, we engage with churches, Christian organisations, and individual Christians to make them more aware of loneliness and isolation, the impact it has and the challenges it presents for those affected. We run webinars and an annual conference which brings people together to discuss and learn how they can become part of the solution to the loneliness epidemic in the UK.



WELCOME

Thank you for reading Linking Lives UK's Annual Impact Report for 2021-2022.

We are privileged to be continuing to reach and serve the many older people across the UK impacted by our work, both directly and indirectly. Last year we outlined the way in which we responded quickly and effectively to the huge challenges which all of us faced as a result of Covid-19 and various degrees of lockdown.

This year has been a further year of challenges for many organisations adjusting to 'life after lockdown' and assessing their priorities and resources available in coming months and years. We have consistently come across a sense of 'project fatigue' leading, at times, to a hesitancy in setting up new initiatives.

At the same time, new and existing community projects which had recruited volunteers and secured funds during the pandemic have often since lost these volunteers and funding. We have therefore been responding to these circumstances as far as we can to ensure that our work is both effective and relevant on a local level.

We are always encouraged, however, by the determination and heart of many individuals and organisations to explore ways of making a difference in the lives of those around them. This is displayed in the generosity of time and resources required to develop new initiatives which impact the lives of older people and this then inspires others to play their part as well.

We have also valued the partnerships that have developed during this year. Our approach has always been to explore options to work together where this adds value, and this has proved to be an effective strategy in many ways.

We continue to participate in the coalition, Christians Together Against Loneliness and this has provided a valuable opportunity to share ideas and information with other similar charities. We also engage with various regional 'Together Network' bodies and collaboration with their many 'Places of Welcome' groups represents a powerful synergy with much of our work. We also very much appreciate the ongoing partnerships in place across the country with churches and other organisations running befriending schemes within their communities.

As we move forwards, we will continue to adapt our approach to ensure that our work is having a positive impact on the lives of those experiencing loneliness on a day to day basis. This will include continuing to work with other organisations where helpful, as well as continuing to ensure that every effort is made to improve standards and experiences on a local level.

If you would like to discuss any element of this report in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Jeremy Sharpe
National Director



2.1 million men & 2.2 million women aged 45-74 live alone in the UK.

Source: ONS. Families & Households 2021



LONELINESS AFTER COVID

In April 2020, 5% of the adult population reported that they often or always felt lonely (similar to pre-lockdown levels). In the period of Sept-Nov 2021, 3.7 million people (7.2%) continued to say that they were chronically lonely & felt lonely often or always.

It is therefore clear that levels of loneliness continue to be higher than before Covid-19. Further studies have also found that, within this, more women than men (56% compared to 43%) are likely to report feeling lonely.

The groups most likely to experience loneliness have been the under 25's and over 65's; those going through transitions such as relationship breakdown, bereavement or

moving to a new house; those already disadvantaged. This is highlighted in the report 'Loneliness Beyond Covid' (Campaign to End Loneliness July 2021) which explains that 'There are strong links between loneliness and other drivers of exclusion including poverty, poor mental or physical health, disability, and being part of a marginalised community.'

"Alongside the ongoing need for direct loneliness support, there's an opportunity to build up infrastructure to facilitate connection. We're calling for action and investment into strengthening community capacity, green spaces, high streets and meeting places, as well as transport and digital connectivity, to ensure a connected recovery'. ('Loneliness Beyond Covid' Campaign to End Loneliness July 2021).

A black and white photograph of a woman in silhouette standing by a large window, looking out. In the foreground, there is a desk with a vintage-style alarm clock, a glass, and some books or papers. A blue text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

3.7 Million
of adults often or
always felt lonely at
end November 2021

OUR 3-YEAR STRATEGY

At our 'Dreaming Big' vision day in March 2019, our trustees and core team agreed Linking Lives UK's 3-year strategy. Our aims and progress 3years on, are shown below.

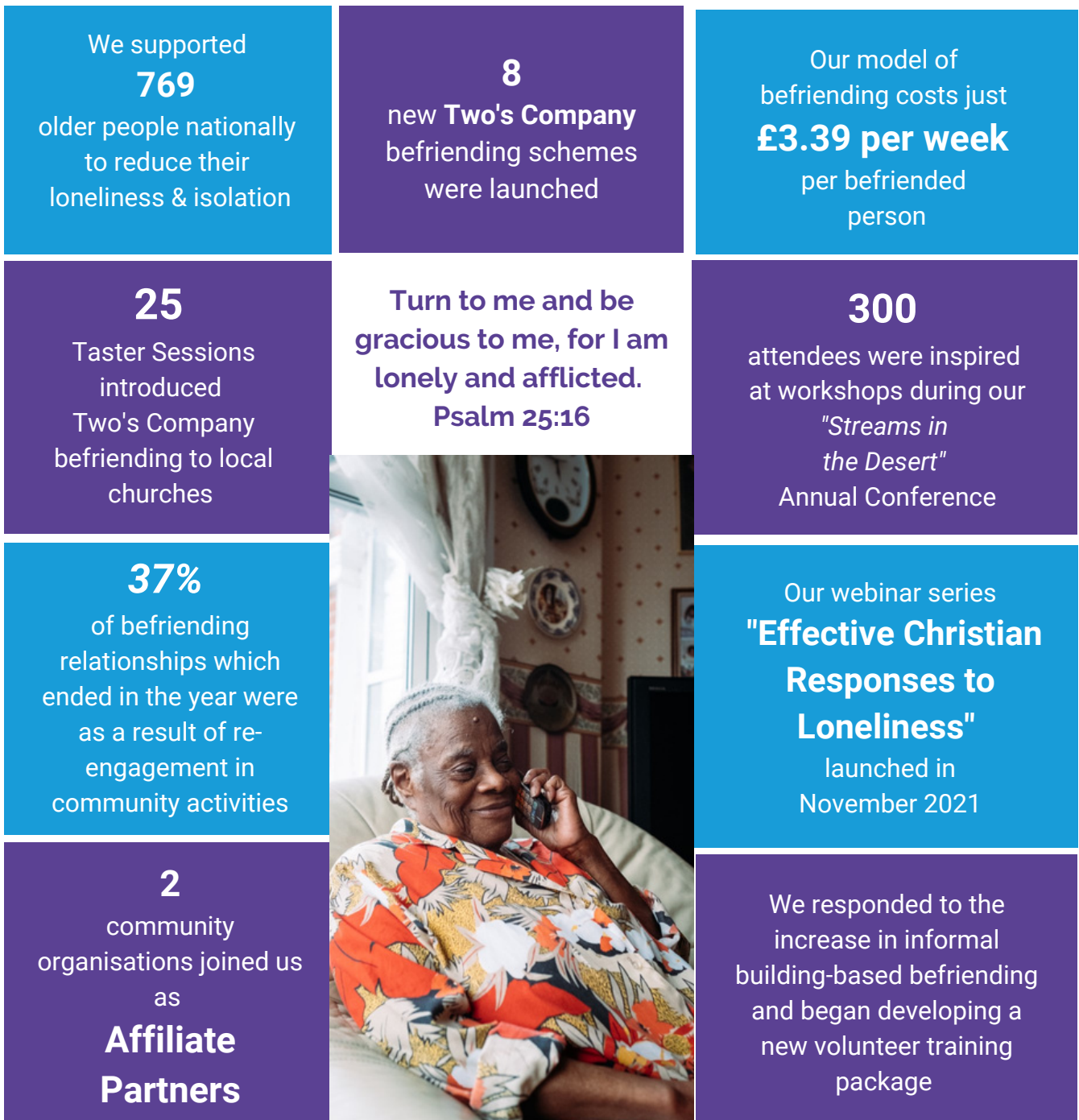
FOCUS	AIMS	PROGRESS MARCH 22
PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 - 100 befriending schemes operating • Most new projects established through existing networks • Develop strong and sustainable projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 62 in operation • 10 new projects from existing networks • 88% of schemes successfully continued during the year.
FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure increased funding to meet strategic aims • Broaden financial base to include regular personal donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 142% increase in income from 2018 to 2022 (21% 2021-22) • Developing an income diversification strategy
PROFILE RAISING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish advocates on a regional and national level • Recognised at government level as key organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively engaging with 12 regional and 20 national organisations • Engaging with government departments and multi-disciplinary groups
OPERATIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards full time employees • Provide funding advice and support to local schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased employees from one to three • One to one support now available

Despite the challenges facing many charities in the wake of Covid-19, we have made progress in most areas of our work.

We have broadened the scope of our work to address loneliness in preparation for the coming years' focus on training volunteers and inspiring individuals within their day to day lives. We have continued to build new strategic partnerships with national and regional organisations where this is beneficial.

2021- 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

Responses to loneliness during a pandemic.



"One of our previous scheme members has become a volunteer and a valued member of our team."

Nottingham (NG9) Two's Company

2021 - 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

Responses to loneliness post-pandemic

Our Launch of Two's Company Befriending



Following the development of 'Two's Company' as our initial telephone befriending scheme in response to Covid-19 lockdown, we have this year launched Two's Company Befriending as our primary model for all new befriending schemes in future. This will include those operating home visiting, telephone befriending or a 'hybrid' approach. We also enabled existing befriending schemes set up during lockdown to convert their processes from telephone befriending to home visiting where requested.

We were also encouraged to see a good number (60-70) of those previously receiving regular calls or visits no longer requiring volunteer contact by the end of the year as a result of engaging with community activities or becoming more confident. This is an extremely positive outcome.

Development of Modular Training

A further key development was the creation of our modular training package used to support local schemes to set up a Two's Company Befriending scheme. There are now 5 modules delivered through a combination of online interactive sessions, self-service videos and expert panels. Key modules cover: **setting up schemes; preparing a team; receiving referrals; beginning activity, monitoring and signposting.**

Conference & Webinars

We held our 2021 conference from 13th-17th September using the theme of 'Streams in the Desert' following the previous challenging months of the pandemic and this was attended by almost 90 people. We were pleased to be joined by keynote speakers Debra Green OBE - Executive Director of Redeeming Our Communities and Baroness Diana Barran MBE - Minister for Civil Society.



We ran a wide variety of conference workshops including:

Using Music in Befriending

Supporting Informal Carers

Intergenerational Participation

Overcoming Anxiety

We also ran 24 webinars during the year focusing on addressing loneliness through Linking Lives UK and on a more informal and individual level.

Impact Measurement and Reporting

We received a grant in kind to cover the costs of consultancy support as part of The Dunhill Medical Trust's capability scheme in January 2022. We began working with consultants to better understand and quantify the impact of Linking Lives UK on its delivery partners and the impact of their befriending activities on beneficiaries.



The project completed in our 2022-23 financial year and will be presented in our next Impact Report.

IN THEIR WORDS...

Our Partners

"As an affiliate partner we have really benefitted from online resources and volunteer training. It has been very useful signing volunteers up for online training. Thank you for all the work you have done to make this available."

"We appreciate the support from Linking Lives UK. We can't always engage fully with everything, but appreciate what is accessible to us. All our scheme members have indicated how valuable the scheme is to them and has helped alleviate loneliness"

Our Volunteers

"I really love volunteering. It gets me out and about, keeping active and meeting people. Since I started, I have made new friends and this has been very positive for me."

"Volunteering has helped my well-being. It has improved my life and the social condition. It is one of the best things anyone could do with their spare time."

Our Beneficiaries

"Just having someone not involved or connected with this difficult situation I am in, is helping me. I am feeling better about things."

"Just a friendly hug feels like the world is embracing me! It makes feel like God is here"

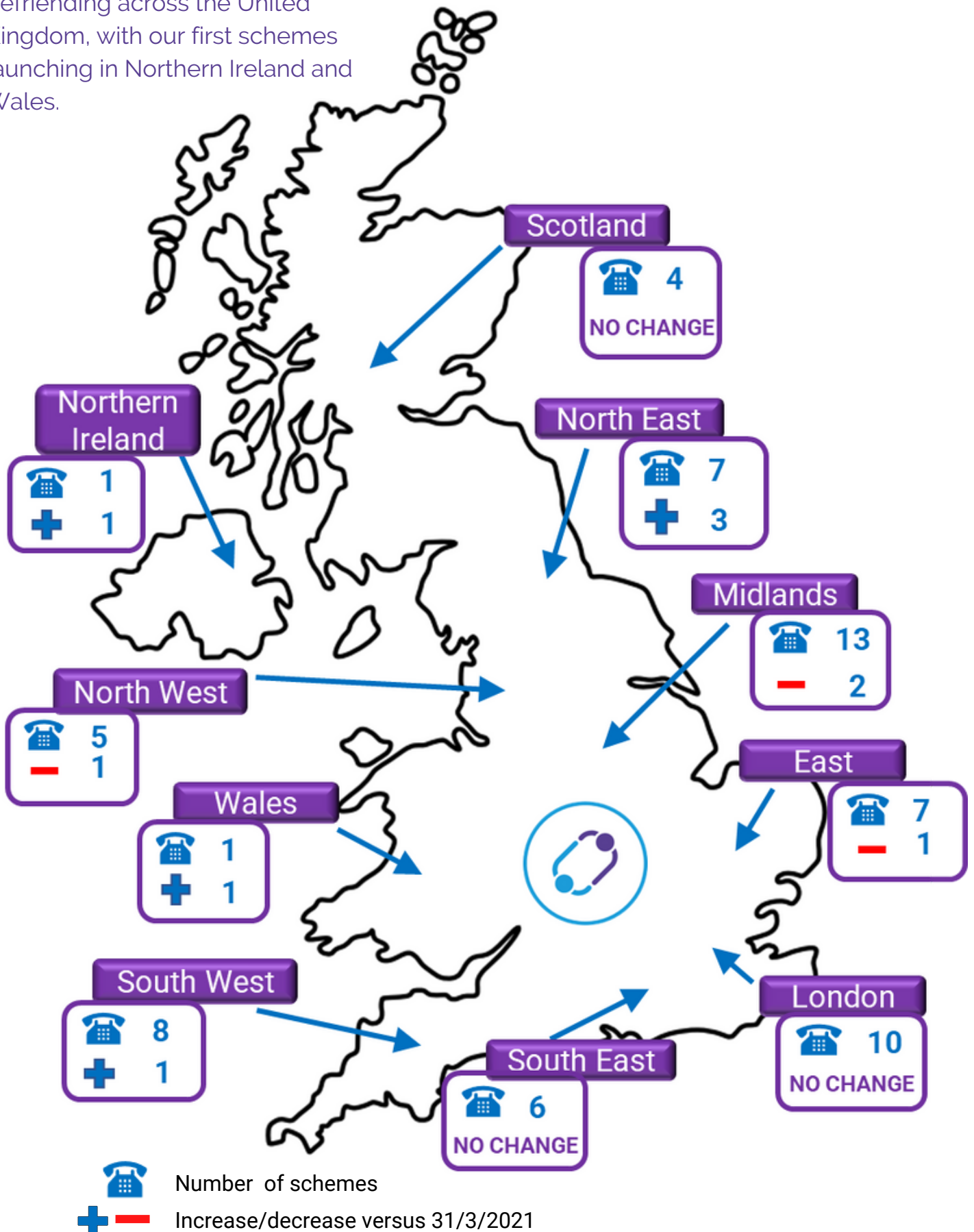
"The excitement felt by one scheme member when she was able to go out for a drive with her volunteer after 2 months in isolation was infectious. Our volunteer compared it to having her young child in the car. Just lovely!"



OUR NATIONAL REACH

Scheme numbers and locations across the UK

62 schemes were offering befriending across the United Kingdom, with our first schemes launching in Northern Ireland and Wales.



CASE STUDY

Keswick Two's Company Launch

Two's Company Keswick launched in early September 2021 as a partnership between Churches Together in Keswick (CTiK) and Keswick Rotary Club with support from Age UK West Cumbria.

Our journey started at the end of 2020 when we made contact with Linking Lives UK nationally and the befriending scheme already operating in Cockermouth, Cumbria. We had heard the inspiring things they were doing and recognised there was a similar need in Keswick.

Over the next six months the partners set up a working group, and with great support from the local and national Linking Lives team, put the necessary infrastructure in place, registered with Linking Lives, secured funding from local sources for the first year and developed a communications and publicity plan.

A paid part-time coordinator and a volunteer coordinator were in place by July 2021, and we formally launched on 8 September as a visiting and telephone befriending scheme. A steering group oversees the day to day running of the scheme along with trustees from the partner organisations and which is now registered with the Charity Commission. Referrals were coming from a range of sources and the word was getting out that the Two's Company Keswick befriending scheme was here to help reduce loneliness and social isolation in this area. By the end of March 2022, we had recruited 18 volunteer befrienders and 7 scheme members were receiving regular home visits with 3 receiving phone calls.

One scheme member said, 'I feel in very capable hands with Two's Company Keswick' and another, 'I am really getting a lot out of this friendship.'

As we look forward to the future our hope and prayer is that there will always be the right volunteers to meet the needs of those referred.



Just 7 months after launching in Keswick,
we had

18

volunteer befrienders, who were supporting

7

older people with regular home visits and
another

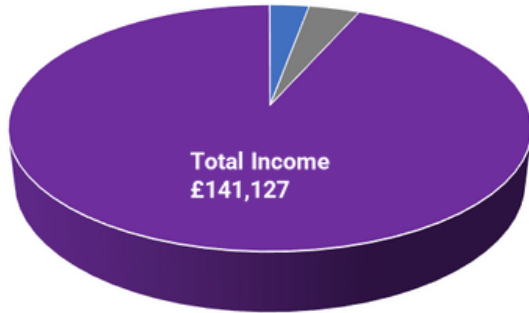
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older people with regular phone calls.

PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

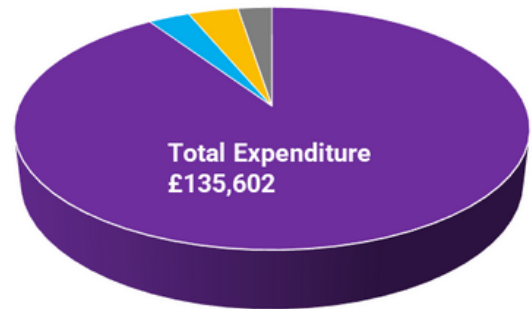
2022 Financial Performance

2021 - 2022 Sources of Income



■ Donations ■ National Project Fees ■ Grants ■ Other

2021 - 2022 Expenditure

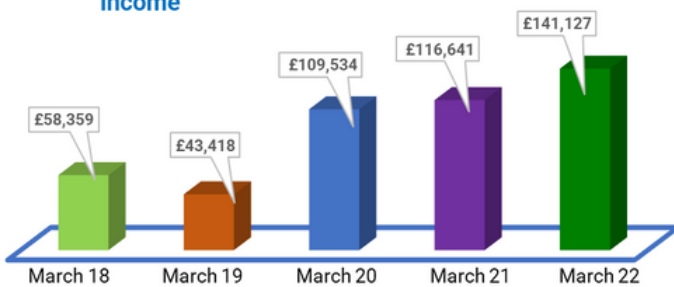


■ HR Costs ■ IT & Office Costs ■ Marketing ■ Other Costs

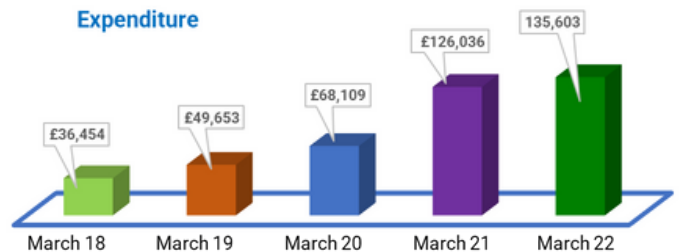
Our Progress since 2018

Financial Growth

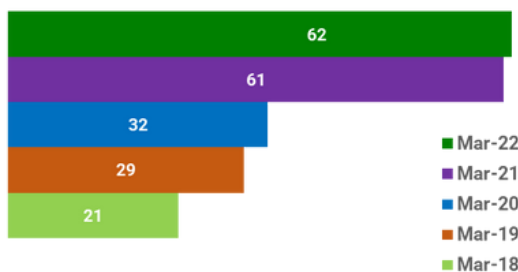
Income



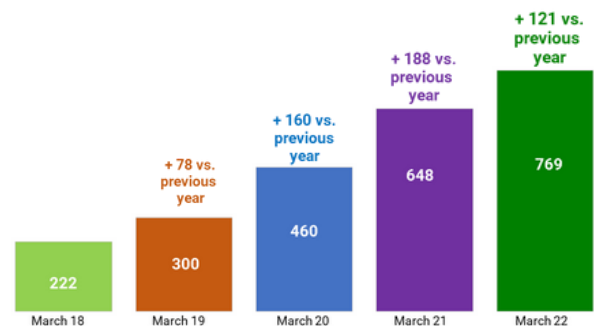
Expenditure



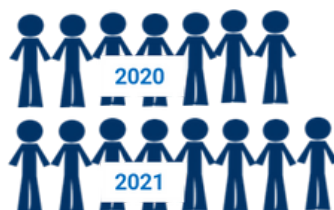
Growth of Befriending Schemes



Growth in Befriending Calls and Visits



Growth in Staffing



OUR THANKS TO GO...

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our volunteers across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland whose dedication at the frontline makes all of our impact achievable.

We would also like to thank our delivery partners and project coordinators for their commitment and motivation to make a difference in the lives of so many older people.

Finally, and very importantly, thank you to our supporters, donors and funders. We are privileged to receive your kind support without which Linking Lives UK would not be able to reach out to those most in need at the margins of society.



Loseley Christian Trust ♦ The R S Brownless Charitable Trust
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust ♦ SMB Trust

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