

Cambridge Cyrenians Annual Review

2024/2025



CAMBRIDGE
CYRENIANS

Chair's Report

Liz Bisset – Chair of Board of Trustees



I was delighted to become Chair of Cambridge Cyrenians in February and have been inspired by the commitment of our staff, volunteers and trustees. Their hard work ensures we continue to offer not just homes, but vital wraparound support for people who have experienced homelessness.

We have been busy raising the profile of Cambridge Cyrenians, communicating with a wider audience about the valuable work that we do through an expanded social media presence, and by taking part in more local Cambridge events.

We're also preparing for a new regulatory regime for supported housing, which should come into effect in the coming year. In readiness, we're reviewing our policies, governance, financial reporting, training and development for staff and trustees.

Like many small charities, securing funding remains an ongoing challenge. While we've secured core support, applications for funding for our specialist support services continues to be time consuming and uncertain.

We'll be bringing staff and trustees together in the Autumn to develop a new Business Plan. This will capture the good work we're already engaged in and help shape our future ambitions.

Director's Report

James Martin – Director



The past year saw another period of stability for Cambridge Cyrenians with our core services performing well, maintaining occupancy rates of 97% and producing a steady flow of positive move-on from our supported housing service. None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff team and their tireless work making Cambridge Cyrenians the fantastic charity that it is.

Our Mental Health Service continued to help support the more vulnerable residents within our service survive and thrive in our accommodation. We are proud to have been able to secure additional funding through our Streets to Homes contract to expand our Brighter Futures counselling service. The service delivers free counselling across the partnership providing unlimited sessions to clients and staff of Cambridge Cyrenians, Wintercomfort for the Homeless, Jimmys Cambridge, Corona House and the Riverside Group.

Demand for our service continues to exceed the amount of accommodation we have available. During the year, we received 224 referrals for our accommodation service, and we managed to accommodate 71 people, showing the ongoing unmet demand for homelessness services in Cambridge. Our Older Homeless Service ensured people remained in their tenancies and our Therapeutic Allotment provided a natural and calming environment throughout the year.



Case Study: Mark

For more than 20 years, Mark's life has been filled with challenges; addiction, time in prison, rough sleeping and, more recently, a cancer diagnosis. But each time life got tough, Cambridge Cyrenians was there. Mark first came to us while sleeping rough. We were able to offer him a place in our supported accommodation, where he finally found safety, stability and routine.

"Being with Cambridge Cyrenians means you're safe and off the streets. It's fantastic... everything you could ask for," he says.

Thanks to that foundation, Mark began to rebuild. He started eating well, attending appointments, and focusing on his recovery. But it hasn't been a solo journey. Lucine, one of our Older Homeless Service project workers, has been by his side throughout, especially following his cancer diagnosis.

"She still comes round regularly. I can't get out much now, so she helps with shopping and just being someone to talk to. I couldn't do it without her."

Now, Mark is in his own home, cancer-free, and has reduced his methadone dosage significantly.

"Cambridge Cyrenians don't judge. They really understand what we're going through. They've helped me turn my life around."

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

To support anyone at risk of or experiencing homelessness, no matter their background or past, to have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Our Mission

To support and empower those who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness and to make a positive difference to the quality of their lives.

Our Core Values

Pioneering: Leading in new and innovative ways of supporting homeless people and finding solutions to the challenges of homelessness.

Inclusive: Open to all, valuing and respecting people for their differences.

Flexible: We are continually looking at ways to be innovative, to find solutions that will improve the quality of life of our service users.

Empathetic: We strive to understand and share the feelings of others.

Respectful: We believe in tolerance, acceptance, valuing diversity, and treating each other as equals.

Empowering: We believe in bringing out the best in people, equipping them to make their own decisions and reach their potential.



Accommodation and Services

Our supported accommodation provision provides different types of housing options, catering for a range of needs. This variety enables Cambridge Cyrenians to provide the right accommodation and a stepped pathway through the service, allowing people coming in from the streets to progress towards independent accommodation.

In addition to providing a pathway through to independence, Cambridge Cyrenians also has long-term supported accommodation for older people, specialist accommodation for offenders, female only accommodation, working houses with more affordable rent and two Housing First training flats.

Demand for the service outstripped our capacity; referrals for our supported accommodation were oversubscribed, as they are every year. In total we received 236 referrals however we only had enough capacity to accommodate 71 of these with 13 residents moving through our stepped accommodation model.

The service remained stable over the year, providing 93 bedspaces, and because of the hard work of Cambridge Cyrenians staff, maintained an occupancy rate in excess of 97%. This level of performance not only kept our tight budget on track, but more importantly ensures that rough sleepers can access a bed as soon as it's available and spend less time sleeping on the street.



Case Study: Geoff

When Geoff was around 38, his housing fell through and he found himself without a place to stay. That's when Cambridge Cyrenians stepped in, offering him a place in our supported accommodation, and the start of a new chapter.

Before that, Geoff had spent 15 months in a psychiatric ward and has accessed ongoing mental health support ever since. "On my own, I fall down... I need people around," he says.

Now 76, Geoff has been with Cambridge Cyrenians in supported accommodation for over 30 years. For him, it's been life-changing. "Company is crucial," he says. "Cambridge Cyrenians helps build your strengths, skills and independence. Having a stable base really matters."

He stays closely connected with our Mental Health Service and values having someone to talk to. He also appreciates our volunteers, saying, "I hope they get as much out of it as we do."

He's enjoyed many group activities, including a memorable trip to the Imperial War Museum Duxford, and when he's not out and about, you'll find him writing poetry, often inspired by his journey.



Older Homeless Service

This past year, the Older Homeless Service (OHS) has supported 56 individual clients. We were able to accept over half of all new referrals in to the scheme, and we saw an increase in the number of referrals to our service due to a decant and closure of one of the City Council's Sheltered Schemes. Unfortunately, most individuals referred to us didn't meet the criteria for the OHS service, however signposting and assistance to the referring agency was provided.

Lower numbers were supported in the past year, due to staff absence and cover, which led to a decrease in the number of individuals we were able to accept during Q2. I am pleased to say that our team member has fully recovered and we are back up to full strength. Existing staff were supported by other members of the team, and we also were fortunate enough to be able to recruit at that time a wonderful agency worker, who has now moved on to the Housing First team covering the county.

Although this change in the team proved stressful to manage at that time, it did highlight a need for change in the way in which the OHS operates, looking at how we provide support. We have since looked at working with individuals based on specific areas of support that they would like assistance with and then when we have reached a desired outcome, stepping back until the client wishes to look at other areas that they may need direction or assistance with. This has meant that outcomes have been more targeted on achievements and small steps for client progress, which in turn has a positive effect on the clients outlook and perspectives.



Personalised Budgets Trial

This year, our organisation played a pivotal and uplifting role in a groundbreaking UK trial jointly led by King's College London, the Centre for Homelessness Impact, and Greater Change. This first-of-its-kind randomised controlled trial explores whether personalised budgets of up to £4,000 can empower individuals experiencing homelessness to rebuild their lives through tailored financial support.

We referred 79 residents – surpassing our target of 35 – of whom 52 completed baseline surveys, and 27 were ultimately assigned to the intervention group, resulting in our residents collectively accessing £108,000 in personalised support. In collaboration with each person, we carefully co-designed spending plans that included one-bed flat rent, driving lessons, 3D printers, music equipment, and even a celebratory skydive (pictured above).

One participant, Andrew, summed up the impact with one unforgettable word: “Miraculous.” Living in supported accommodation and hoping to move by Christmas 2024, he was able to secure his own home shortly after receiving his budget.

Though managing this trial required substantial time and dedication from our team, witnessing residents embrace newfound hope, creativity, and agency has been the highlight of our year.

Meaningful Activities

Our Meaningful Activities Manager, Shanice Jones, supports residents on a one-to-one basis to understand their interests and personal strengths and identify courses and activities to increase their skills and experience in preparation for meaningful employment.

During 2024/25, Cambridge Cyrenians supported 71 individuals with 29 people finding sustainable employment, 36 people engaged in education or training and 6 people undertook regular voluntary work.

Over the year, Cambridge Cyrenians were able to work closely with Moore Networking who continue to work on two new sites within the city. Multiple residents earned their CSCS cards to allow them on site, as well as skills courses such as bricklaying. A veteran within our service was able to refresh his labouring skills, and found his first meaningful employment since 2018.





Case Study: Siobhan

After receiving a cancer diagnosis and facing serious mental health challenges, Siobhan found herself in one of the most difficult times of her life. Moving into supported accommodation through a partner housing project marked a turning point, one that eventually led her to Cambridge Cyrenians' community allotment.

Our six-plot allotment is more than just a green space. It provides therapeutic horticulture, work experience, and most importantly, a safe, welcoming place to connect and heal. Siobhan has now been part of the allotment community for six years and has since moved into her own private flat, "a really gorgeous one," she says with pride.

"My psychiatrist said I'm doing really well, and a big part of that is thanks to the allotment. It gives me purpose and keeps me grounded."

She describes the space as freeing and holistic: "It's good for you emotionally, physically, and mentally."

Siobhan also receives counselling through Cambridge Cyrenians, which she calls a "massive help."

For Siobhan, the allotment has been more than a garden, it's a lifeline...



Allotment

What a wonderful year we have had at the community allotment, supported as always by Whitehills Allotment Society. In the Spring, we held a traditional Beltane celebration during Good to Grow Week, which is connected to the Wheel of the Year, with the turn towards to fertility and the abundance of summer. In the summer season, we held our first Apple Day (August) where we made our own apple juice alongside Robin who runs Cam Home and Gardens in Chesterton, and a Plant Dyes Workshop led by our very own permanent volunteer Cerys.

In the Autumn, we celebrated Halloween with a wonderful cook out on the fire making pasta served alongside our own allotment chutney and a visit to Darwin Nurseries where we had a tour, met the workers and animals on site, and enjoyed a festive drink in the Café. Post our annual festive celebrations, thoughts turned to the plans for this coming year, and spent our tie preparing the plots, weeding and much needed mulching.

We did manage to squeeze in a trip to the Botanic Gardens Winter Walk as well as a celebration for the Spring Equinox that included a cook out of foraged food on the fire.



Mental Health Service

It's been a busy and rewarding year for the Mental Health Service. We received 31 referrals and 32 discharges. Two individuals made significant progress: one moved into independent accommodation after being successful in the HARP process, and another was awarded an A band for social housing.

Thanks to successful funding, we expanded our counselling provision and launched the Streets to Homes Counselling Service, offering support to both service users and staff across our partner organisations. Anthony, our Lead Counsellor, has done an incredible job speaking to other services and recruiting counsellors as well as counselling individuals. We have also been able to offer our counsellors group peer supervision, which is fundamental to learning and development.

We were also delighted to host a trainee art therapist, Seb, who ran sessions for both residents and staff. The feedback was incredibly positive, with many expressing how beneficial the experience was.

Additionally, we've supported four ARU nursing students through placements. Many were able to complete independent working with individuals, such as supporting them to attend new wellbeing and support groups. On the training front, I've been fortunate to complete courses in Graded Exposure Therapy, ADHD, OCD, trauma-informed care, addiction, clinical supervision and TRiM (Trauma Risk Management), strengthening our ability to support both residents and staff across the Streets to Homes partnership.

A photograph of two young women standing in front of a light-colored brick wall. The woman on the left has dark hair pulled back and is wearing a black top under a light-colored cardigan. The woman on the right has short blonde hair, wears glasses, and a blue hoodie. They are both smiling at the camera. A teal speech bubble containing the word 'Volunteers' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Volunteers

Our volunteers enrich the lives of our residents by providing practical support and positive social interactions. We continue to recruit international volunteers who support our Older Homeless property and assist our residents with shopping orders, making healthy choices, and facilitating new experiences and connections.

This year at one of our supported houses, our volunteers helped a resident who has been struggling to accept and understand their diabetes diagnosis for some time. Taking the time to understand our resident's thinking, our volunteers have helped to build a regular routine which has resulted in less hospitalisations and a much healthier, happier gentleman!

Cambridge Cyrenians also benefit from newly qualified volunteer counsellors who offer their time under the guidance of the Brighter Futures project, providing free counselling sessions for those within the Cambridge's homelessness partnership. We are also lucky to have a regular team of volunteers who help support our allotment service. Cambridge Cyrenians are thankful for all the time contributed by volunteers over past year.

This Coming Year

James Martin – Director

The coming year will see challenging times as we prepare for the National Supported Housing Standards come into effect. We welcome the reforms and are confident that our services are already in great shape for the new framework being produced. We hope that this will take the first steps to eliminate the provision of substandard supported accommodation.

We have a roadmap to reduce our carbon footprint and have already taken huge steps to make many of our homes more energy efficient and environmentally friendly. This is a journey we are continuing, looking at our working practices to eliminate waste and working with our landlords to ensure the housing we provide is of good energy efficient standard.

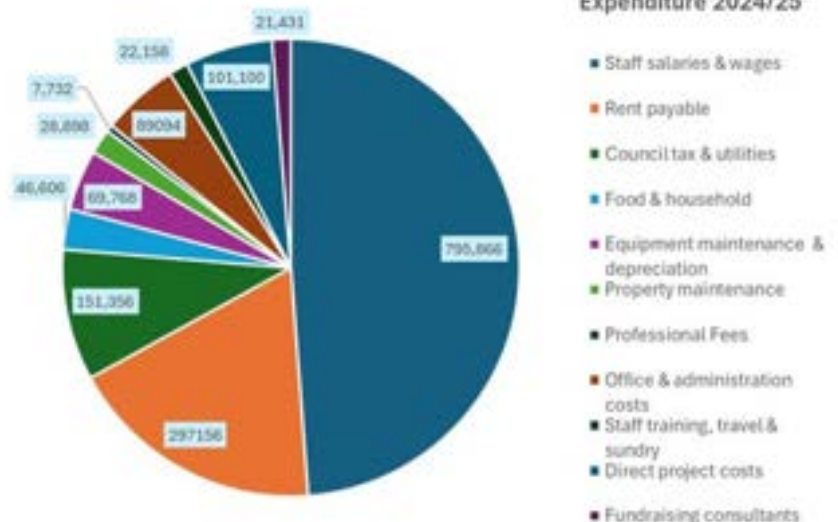
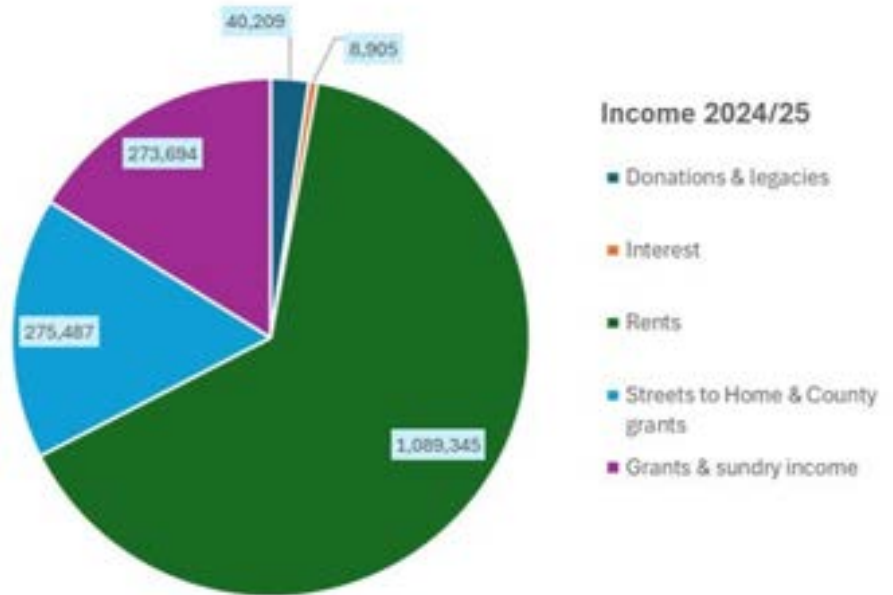
Looking forward, we are still hopeful to develop more housing including options in South Cambridgeshire. Plans are already underway for a new community of modular housing, providing more accommodation for people who have been affected by homelessness in Cambridge. While the funding landscape is ever more challenging for charities, I am confident that Cambridge Cyrenians committed team of staff, volunteers and trustees will make every success of the year ahead.

Summary of Accounts

Grants and rents fully covered the costs of our core housing services. Additional grant funding of £89k was received for the Personal Budgets Trial, however grant income for some of our other special projects reduced and donations for general purposes fell to £40k.

The loss of income from unpaid rents and empty rooms was kept down at 6.1% (£67k) of £1.09m. Core housing costs have reduced following the closure of the Carlyle Road project in 2023/24.

The accounts for 2024/25 show a strong financial performance resulting in income over expenditure of £56.5k (3% of our income). This result has allowed us to build our general reserves back up to £361k which is within our target range to give us financial resilience.



Summary of Accounts

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INCOME	2024/25	2023/24
Donations & legacies	40,209	43,358
Interest	8,905	4,430
Rents	1,089,345	1,079,002
Streets to Home grant & County grant to support residents	275,487	258,185
Grants & sundry income	273,694	205,094
Total Incoming Resources	1,687,640	1,590,069

EXPENDITURE		
Staff salaries & wages	795,866	758,165
Rent payable	297,156	301,525
Council tax & utilities	151,356	151,691
Food & household	46,606	65,517
Equipment maintenance & depreciation	69,768	59,642
Property maintenance	28,898	36,456
Professional Fees	7,732	7,991
Office & administration costs	89,094	95,514
Staff training, travel & sundry	22,158	15,573
Direct project costs	101,100	6,858
Fundraising consultants	21,431	25,841
Total Expenditure	1,631,165	1,524,773

Acknowledgements

Cambridge Cyrenians would like to thank all trustees, staff and volunteers for their hard work during the year:

Cambridge Cyrenians Staff Team

James Martin – Director
Emma Hooton – Head of Services
Min-Hui Bird – Finance Manager
Kristian Claxton – Services Manager
Rikke Jensen – Services Manager
Shanice Jones – Meaningful Activities/Volunteer Manager
Louisa Hallisey – Mental Health Practitioner
Kayleigh Wingate – Community Fundraiser
Anthony Browne – Counsellor
Sheila Smith – Administrator
Victoria Howell – Administrator
Alison Green – Financial Assistant
Anna Hunt – Trusts & Funds Fundraiser

Amy Foster – Lead Project Worker
Kate Duckett – Project Worker
Kevin Walshe – Project Worker
Rachel Savage – Project Worker
Andrew Pash – Project Worker
Bea Dawkins – Project Worker
Katherine Rodgers – Project Worker
Clare Bruges – Project Worker
Ruth Hazel Wood – Allotment Co-Ordinator
Lucine Harrison – Older Homeless Project Worker
Lizzy Martin – Older Homeless Project Worker
Mick Crossley – Maintenance
Frank Kohak – Maintenance

Board of Trustees

Liz Bisset – Chair
Richard Robertson – Treasurer
Oli Daffarn – Trustee
Nicolas Sheppard – Trustee
Christina Alexander – Trustee
Rachel Hayden – Trustee
Mariella Giancola – Trustee
Helen Mcallister – Trustee
Tim Cracknell – Trustee (until 05.06.2025)

Live-In Volunteers

Chantal Bruder (Shaun)
Charlie Scoones
Leni Thieme

Acknowledgements

Cambridge Cyrenians thanks the following organisations and individuals for their support:

Barnabas Oley Trust (Clare College)
East of England Co-Op Community Fund
Albert Hunt Trust
VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme
Streets to Homes Innovation Fund
National Lottery Community Fund- Awards For All
Cambridgeshire Community Foundation
Cambridgeshire City Council
Embrace Cambridge
Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner

South Cambridgeshire District Council
Henry Smith Charity
Evelyn Trust
National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities
VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme
Socktopus
The Liberation Cycle
Sustainable Tech 4 Good
PEM Accountants
City & University Masonic Trust

Partner Landlords

Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Housing Society
Peabody Trust
The Dawe Trust
Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
Chorus Homes - Places for People

Thank you all for your continued support



Cambridge Cyrenians
3 Signet Court
Cambridge, CB5 8LA

Registered Charity Number 261994
Company Number 992199

Tel: 01223 712501

Email: office@cambridgecyrenians.org.uk

Web: cambridgecyrenians.org.uk

Find us on social media: @cambridgecyrenians



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