

## The Lantern Trust and the Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Lantern is an independent registered charity that was founded in 1983 to help vulnerable and marginalized people in the Weymouth & Portland area. The Lantern aims to bring a lasting change in people's lives through a dedicated service meeting people's practical, emotional and specific aftercare needs. The ethos is one of social inclusion and Lantern aims to break cycles of disadvantage and dependency. Central to all that Lantern does are their Coffee Bar sessions that run Monday to Friday 10am-2pm. These sessions are open drop-ins and act as a hub to the rest of their services. Lantern provides hot meals each day and feeds on average over 80 people per week as well as providing a safe space for people to begin to rebuild their lives. Average attendances during coffee bar sessions range between 15-42.

Working closely and professionally with other agencies is a key aspect to the Lantern's work which has been established over several years. Customers have a varied range of personal concerns including mental health problems, offending behaviour, addiction, homelessness and all personal crises. Lantern aims to meet these needs through a wide range of services including advocacy, crisis response, front line practical assistance and welfare benefits, housing and accommodation support and help through the Lantern's assisted rent deposit scheme. The Lantern's main funding is through local authority grants and charitable trusts, such as Lloyds Bank Foundation.

The ethos throughout their work is to empower the individual and at all times encourage personal choice and responsibility. The building of lasting, trusting relationships with customers is the foundation on which all work is built. The Lantern is a place where laughter, friendship and hope are very apparent. The Lantern takes a holistic approach to helping its customers and in this way contributes to the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

### **Connecting People**

Lantern prides itself on the warm welcome that it provides for all its customers. The drop in advice and support sessions are run at the Lantern Coffee bar. It is a well-presented, comfortable and cosy venue where staff and customers alike contribute to the friendly front room atmosphere. Everyone who calls is welcomed personally at the door and everything starts with that first, very human interaction. In the opening chat staff can find out what each visitor's needs are and provide the advice and support required. The Lantern saw 351 new referrals in 2015, in addition to current and regular clients. 132 were ex-offenders, 134 were homeless and service



users at the Lantern have a range of serious and enduring mental health issues including Bi-Polar Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The extra informal support provided by other customers who have come for a meal or a coffee and who have experience of similar situations makes all the difference. People who have felt vulnerable and excluded in other settings can make connections here.

"The Lantern is like a family to me, knowing their support is not limited for periods of time but constant means I don't always have to access it. Knowing it is there can be enough."

### **Keep Learning**

Upstairs at the Lantern there is an internet and training room where service users can develop their IT skills. The aim is to provide a family environment where people can help each other. Frugal Cooking courses are run by volunteers as a five week programme about three times a year. Sessions are a bit like Ready

Steady Cook and free ingredients are provided to help re-educate clients about eating. The learning is made easier because it is in a supportive atmosphere where people already feel safe and part of the community.



Lantern also gives small loans to support education related costs and assistance with C.V.s and job searching. Christians Against Poverty deliver money management courses and debt support sessions to Lantern customers to help them develop skills that will make a difference to their futures. Support and advocacy are also provided around benefits and housing and this enables clients to gradually learn how to deal with the often confusing systems that can support them as they get back on track. "Knowing that I could begin to rebuild in a safe and secure environment enabled me to take more risks knowing there was a capture net to fall back on"

### Being Active

As new customers become part of the community they are encouraged to volunteer themselves and that includes being involved in the upkeep of the Centre- lending a hand with cleaning, cooking and tidying so that the welcoming environment is maintained and developed. Around seven clients help each week. These everyday domestic chores have proved an effective way to promote a sustainable level of activity among the clients, although other projects such as football and working on an allotment have sometimes taken place.



### Taking Notice



Taking notice of each other and each other's needs is how new visitors become part of the Lantern community. Staff may sometimes introduce people and occasionally facilitate interactions between customers, but in general new people get a feel for how customers interact with each other and they soon get into that welcoming habit

themselves. Customers vary in gender, age and background: Ages range from 17 upwards to well over 55 and may be ex-Services, have mental health or substance misuse difficulties, have offending behaviour or be ex-prisoners. The atmosphere that greets them is informal but clients and volunteers see their own life experience reflected in others and it is this understanding helps people fit in and start to feel safe.



## Giving

As trusting, lasting relationships are built with Lantern clients and they begin to find their feet, they may want to volunteer to help at the project. This may be helping as part of the kitchen crew with cooking or cleaning or at the Lantern Charity Shop. The majority of the staff at the Lantern were originally customers, who then became volunteers and then were able to develop their skills and move into paid roles. In this way, the Lantern has given its clients a holistic support package which enables them to share their journey with others.



The trust is also an opportunity for the public to give. Volunteers help in the shop and with work in the café. The Lantern currently has 12 volunteers. Specific fund raising is carried out for certain projects like new computers for customers via grant making trusts, and

salaries are covered by a Council Contract. This means that all donations go straight to front-line work and enable the Lantern to be completely transparent. Donations of clothes are given to the shop and Tesco and local churches donate food to the project.

“The lantern has acted for a launch pad for my life”.

At the Lantern laughter, hope and sadness all have a place. They constantly strive to find more ways to better assist their customers. To do this they work closely with local agencies and local government and in partnership with organisations including Christians against Poverty and the Royal British Legion. *The Lantern remains a truly special place where people can begin to rebuild their lives in a safe environment.*



Bournemouth CVS and Poole CVS are working with Public Health Dorset to support local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver better public health outcomes. This project is to help the sector measure and demonstrate the impact their work has on health and wellbeing in their communities. These case studies are designed to highlight the varied and substantial impact VCSE organisations have on the Five Ways to Wellbeing. The Five Ways to Wellbeing is a tool comprising of a set of five, evidence based public health indicators about the kinds of activities that individuals can do that are known to improve their health and wellbeing: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

To learn more about the work of the Bournemouth and Poole VCSE sector please contact  
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