



The Open Door
Annual Report
2009

Open Door

Annual Report for 2009

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Constitution

Open Door – Colchester is governed by a Constitution adopted on the 25th November 2003.

Open Door – Colchester was registered by The Charity Commission on 22nd January 2004 and given the Registration Number 1101675.

The objects of Open Door – Colchester are to advance the Christian faith and provide facilities, resources, and practical support for those in need in Colchester.

In carrying out our activities during the year, Open Door considered the guidance of The Charity Commission on public benefit (particularly the specific guidance for charities with the advancement of religion as part of their objectives). Open Door has always welcomed newcomers and our services have always been available to all who wish to use them regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Management

Open Door – Colchester is managed by an Executive Committee of between 5 and 12 members. The Committee includes a Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, elected by the members of Colchester Baptist Church at the Annual General Meeting, the Senior Minister of Colchester Baptist Church, and other members nominated by the Deacons of that church.

Members of the Executive Committee are trustees of Open Door – Colchester.

Membership during 2009 was:

- Fiona Prentice, Chair
- Ted Drake, Treasurer
- Graham Courtier, Acting Secretary
- Billy Campbell (Appointed January 2009)
- George Hay
- Isobel King
- Nick Lear (Senior Minister of Col. Baptist Church)
- Rob Urand
- Nicola Wickenden

No corporate trustees have been appointed.

Chairman's Report – 2009

It does not seem like a year since I was writing the last report. The year has flown past! We continue to work with those who need a listening ear and those who do not know where to turn for help and advice, and those who are lonely. The volunteers turn their hand to whatever is required to help those who come through the door. Because of our visitor profile we have undertaken to complete CRB checks for all our regular volunteers. This is a time-consuming task and we would like to acknowledge our thanks to Pam Simpson for her help in this area.

We are trying to encourage people who are shopping in Colchester to pop in for a coffee, to make them feel at home in Open Door. There are many people who walk past our door every day that are hurting and need a sympathetic ear, need some advice or just want a coffee! We would love you to come in and get to know us too.

Our thanks once again go to Essex Fairway Charitable Trust and Essex Community Foundation who gave us further grants for 2009 – we really do appreciate their support which goes a long way to allow the work of Open Door to continue. We also acknowledge the gifts from other organisations and individuals and also from the coffee mornings which are held each month to raise funds for the work. Colchester Baptist Church continues to support Open Door financially and by allowing us to use their premises rent-free, for which we are very grateful. Ted Drake, our Treasurer, continues to look after our finances and our thanks once again go to him for his untiring work on our behalf. Graham Courtier, our fund-raising Trustee, has been successful in securing grants and funds from various organisations to ensure the continued running of Open Door. Thank you, Graham!

We are grateful to God for His continuing provision of volunteers throughout 2009. One of our long-standing Team Leaders and Trustees, Graham Courtier had major surgery in the autumn but we thank God that he is back working with us again. The volunteers continue to come from churches around Colchester including Colchester Baptist Church, but if we had more helpers it would free up our Director, Anna Marsh, to publicise our work even more.

We continue to have good relations with the Police and Community Support Officers who work in the centre of Colchester, both parties appreciating the value of the other in working with people who have problems.

The Executive Committee meets regularly throughout the year to oversee the work of Open Door – Colchester, and my thanks go to those who willingly give up their time to help in this way.

Thank you again for your support and interest in the work of Open Door – Colchester.

Fiona Prentice
February 2010

Diresctor's Report – 2009

Dear All,

Amongst the presents my husband brought me for Christmas 2009 was a book entitled 'Who moved my Cheese?' by Dr Spencer Johnson which tells the story of two mice: "Sniff" & "Scurry" and two 'Littlepeople': called "Hem" & "Haw". These characters display the different parts inside each one of us and how we respond to change and 'Cheese' is a metaphor for what we might want in life – a good job, a relationship etc.

This book is well worth the 30 minutes or so it takes to read, because the thoughts & challenges last a lot longer. My husband had bought me the book because he often comments that ever since I became a Christian (some 6 years ago) I am more cautious generally (sometimes to the point of being indecisive) and certainly don't take to changes with the ease that I once enjoyed.

I don't want to spoil the book - as I'd definitely recommend it – but I admit that it got me thinking about the views I now hold with regard to change and how they marry with the views of those people with whom I come into contact – particularly in respect of Open Door.

As a Christian organisation, one of our primary aims has always been to influence and equip people to live the best possible life they can – to see their life and circumstances changed for the better. However, some people can be fearful of change of any sort, whilst some can seem highly motivated to change but lack endurance when the going gets tough. Only a few seem to be able to set aside their fears and accept that change can lead to something better, and persevere beyond any difficulties.

This last year, with the economic recession, a lot of people had unwanted change thrust upon them, and their challenge was in how they responded. Open Door has seen a small but still noticeable change in the type of people using our services on a day-to-day basis, and our challenge has been to know how God wants us to respond, now that it appears that 'OUR CHEESE' have been moved!

We, at Open Door, must remember that we have been called according to God's purposes and not Man's! Therefore before any changes are made, we must be careful that it is not change for change-sake, but is timely and necessary - the old warning of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' springs to mind.

So what changes should we make whilst still being careful not to lose any of our core beliefs such as unconditional love & service? You see it can be very frustrating that whilst many hours perhaps have been spent getting a customer to acknowledge their need of change and supporting them throughout any decisions – it is usually another agency that benefits from those hours both financially and promotionally. Should it be enough that as it is our customer who benefits the most, we are satisfied with little or no acknowledgement of the huge part we have played or does this thinking ultimately hamper our ability to reach greater numbers of those in need of support? Do we need to radically change our modus operandi to ensure that we continue as an organisation to attract & then influence the townsfolk of Colchester to get the best out of life? Would we be missed if we were to close our doors for good?

I would like to think the answer would be an unequivocal: YES!

Next year Open Door will be 25 years old. Throughout that time we have reached out to countless numbers of people and have impacted their lives in ways that have never been measured because it is seemingly impossible to quantify our influence. To a few people we have just been a place to sit and have one cup of coffee and have been all too quickly forgotten. But for many more, irrespective of whether we have been just one of a number of agencies they once frequented or still use regularly, would happily acknowledge – if asked – the difference our organisation has made, or continues to make, to their lives!

Whilst plans are being prepared to celebrate our Silver Anniversary in a suitable way to also include past customers and staff alike, I acknowledge that it will certainly be harder to attract customers to any events. Many of these will not wish to be reminded of their 'old lives', some may have problems acknowledging the lack of change in their lives, whilst others may be reluctant to admit their continued reliance on our services.

I often ask myself why I do this job – it can be demanding, frustrating, and certainly I often question whether I bring enough to the party to justify my continuing presence. Some of my many critics would comment that I have not only changed Open Door but have also 'spoilt' it! They would argue that I am not as approachable or am more confrontational than other leaders have been. Perhaps they are right in lots of ways, but I would counter any criticisms with the comments that I am heavily influenced by a prayer once said by a very dear friend of mine that went something like this: "Thank you God for loving us just as we are, but loving us too much to leave us just as we are" – a prayer acknowledging the need of CHANGE if ever there was one!

For me personally the following is true; that to give up wanting a person's life to be changed for the better is the day that I give up believing that God loves them, you and me. Therefore it is my daily hope & prayer that God will continue to TOUCH & CHANGE many people's lives through every avenue & channel available to Him including.....

OPEN DOOR!

With Kindest Regards,

Anna

Introduction

In 1985, two members of Colchester Baptist Church in Eld Lane befriended two young drug addicts who were begging and invited them into the Church for coffee and biscuits. From these humble beginnings, the work began and has grown into what is today known as 'Open Door'. We are now a well established befriending centre, which because of its central location, is ideally placed to extend a warm welcome to ALL people regardless of their position in society.

The Open Door Drop-in Centre

Opening Times

Monday, Wednesday, & Friday 10am until 2pm
Tuesday ASK fc (until 13th May 2009) *
Thursday & Weekends Closed

* For details on Tuesday opening & ASK fc please see separate heading.

Prices

Tea & Coffee 10p
Squash 5p
Cereals 15p
Donated Foodstuff FOC
Fresh Fruit (per item) From 10p (subject to availability)

Staff

Last year the Staff consisted of the following:

Director **

3 Team Leaders

Senior Support Worker

8/10 Befrienders working one day a week

3/4 part-time Befrienders working half a day a week

** denotes paid, all others are volunteers

Our sincere appreciation goes out to the two volunteers who left our organisation during 2009: Debbie Miller and Derek Barker. We wish them both every blessing in their continued service of our Lord. We also acknowledge our deepest appreciation for the life of David Hunt, who went to be with his Lord in October. David was an example to us all in obeying God's will and call on our lives – we loved him and miss him dearly, but thank his family for sharing him with us.

Services Available

- Befriending
- Encouragement and Support
- Advice on Benefits & Housing Needs
- Advice on Finding Employment
- Signposting to other local agencies
- Debt Management Techniques
- Prayer and/or Spiritual guidance
- Advocacy
- Reconciliation & Mediation
- Bereavement Support
- Prison Visiting & Support
- Prison Aftercare
- Travel Assistance
- Use of Telephone

We would again hope that, as in previous years, we continue to ensure that no-one enters the premises without having the opportunity to talk confidentially and unhurriedly to a member of staff, to be listened to without judgement. We are again fortunate to be in a position, arguably unique in Colchester, where targets and/or time constraints are not a consideration. The ability to befriend and convey God's love to those who have low self-esteem or who have suffered disappointment in their lives, by coming alongside them through both the ups and downs of their life, continues to be at the core of our existence.

Sometimes we simply offer encouragement alongside suggestions of possible actions, but know that finally the decision MUST be theirs alone. At times this can lead to frustration at their choices, and patience is needed, but often understanding & perseverance shown can lead to further opportunities to encourage & assist later. As an organisation we have sometimes been accused of up-holding the status-quo. However, we firmly believe that every person has free will & that lasting and sustainable change can only happen when a person feels that they are worthy of a different life – that for them change is not only possible but is desirable.

Furthermore, we firmly believe that our role within Colchester is to assist with any day-to-day problems that may arise e.g. in an advocacy role with other organisations (statutory or voluntary), assisting with negotiations for accommodation, sorting out queries regarding benefit claims, or even simply by making the money stretch further!

Changes & Updates to Services

There was only one significant change to our services – due to a shortage of staff it became necessary to close on Tuesdays during the latter half of the year, thereby strengthening the drop-in centre teams. A change of circumstances in the lives of some staff also meant that ASK fc was transferred to a Wednesday, to run alongside the drop-in centre (during Term time only). Despite a change of meeting day, ASK fc continues to develop as a small but friendly group. Although trips included visits to the coast, theatre, and shopping; the highlight (for the majority of members) was a three course meal on the River Thames followed by a flight on the London Eye.

Christmastime Festivities

We had the customary Yuletide activities: about 75 people sat down together to enjoy a tasty Christmas dinner and good company at the beginning of December, the 'Tree of Remembrance' was erected from which message tags were hung from its branches (as in previous years, this has proved both popular & therapeutic), and nearer Christmas, time was set aside to sing Carols and hear seasonal Bible readings. Thanks to the generous annual donations of gift parcels from ***The Mothers' & Ladies Union of All Saints Church – Maldon***, we were again able to hand out presents to those of our customers who are homeless, or who have no family or friends with whom to share Christmas time.

Selection of Case Studies

The following examples are intended to show the diverse situations in which our organisation's help and advice has been sought during 2009:

Mrs A: A disabled lady who had ignored warning letters from various companies concerning her increasing debts. We negotiated with her creditors on her behalf and instigated a repayment plan that was not only acceptable by them but affordable within her income. She continues to be monitored by us to ensure adherence to the plan and to eventually gain the necessary skills to manage her finances independently.

Mrs B: A pensioner who had become addicted to prescription drugs and had started to borrow money to try buying drugs illegally. We encouraged her to admit the extent of her problem to her family, and supported all whilst treatment was being sought and instigated.

Mr C: A visitor through Essex, who was hospitalised following his collapse on a train whilst on his way home. We were contacted when his discharge from hospital was imminent as he did not possess enough funds to return home. A train ticket was purchased on his behalf and a 3-day food parcel given to provide sustenance.

Miss D: A married Christian lady who was also a victim of domestic violence, who wanted to find out what her options were should she decide to leave her home and marriage. We arranged an appointment with a Solicitor, informed her of procedures with a Domestic Violence Unit, and supported and encouraged her throughout the decision-making process.

Mr E: Newly released from Prison for drug offences, and determined to turn his life around, but needing encouragement to stay strong when faced with temptation and the loss of his accommodation and other set-backs. We continue to work with other agencies whilst supporting and guiding him to make wise choices.

Networking

We continue to encourage all inter-agency interaction that benefits our customers. Special mention is included for Beacon House, NEEDAS, Open Road, The April Centre, The Night Shelter, Matrix, Colchester Borough Council (Welfare & Housing Depts.), Colchester Borough Homes, Out for Good, The Korban Project, The Community Mental Health Team, CHAC, Social Services, Essex Police, The Probation Service, The Chaplaincy Teams at Chelmsford, Holloway, and Wayland Prisons, MIND, Colchester General Hospital, Fisher Jones & Greenwood, The surgery teams of: Dr. Baldwin & Partners, Castlegardens Medical Centre, and Hawthorn Ave.

I would also encourage any agency who feels that our charity may need further inspection, to contact me by telephoning 01206 769436 or by simply dropping in!

In Thanksgiving

Once again Open Door was the grateful recipient of harvest produce from various schools and churches. Special mention is given to North Primary School of Colchester, Heathlands C.E. Primary School of West Bergholt, St Mary the Virgin Parish Church of West Bergholt, St Margaret & St Catherine Parish Church of Aldham, and Bures Baptist Church. We have been able to provide generous food packs to countless numbers because of your generosity, and we would like to sincerely thank you on their behalf.

In addition to those previously mentioned, our thanks also go to Essex Community Foundation – Chiron Fund, Essex Community Foundation – Grassroots Grant, Essex Fairway Charitable Trust, The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, Plume Avenue URC, Maldon Road Chapel, Kingsland Church, Maldon Baptist Church, Glover & Howe, St Nicholas' Church in Tolleshunt D'Arcy, and last but by no means least, to the many individuals, schools, colleges, and churches who continue to give money, goods, time & prayer. Without your invaluable support we could not have continued to touch as many lives as we did – I pray that God will continue to bless you for your generosity!

Final Thoughts

At Open Door, we believe that our God-given purpose in life is to enhance the life of ALL those who come through the door, regardless of their past or what the future seems to hold, and certainly regardless of what's in it for us!

We firmly believe that only God can truly change a person because only God can truly see what is in that person's heart. Our approach is to put aside any fears and preconceptions & simply to be of service: to God & to our customers, in whatever way seems wise & necessary. Our sincere & heartfelt thanks to all those who support this work.

Financial Policies

Investments

The funds possessed by Open Door – Colchester are relatively small and it has been considered appropriate to hold funds not immediately needed for current expenses to be placed on deposit. These funds are placed in an account with the Affirmative Deposit Fund for Charities (ADFC) operated by Epworth Investment Management (associated with the Methodist Church) in order to obtain as high a rate of interest as practicable in current markets.

No other investments are held.

A current account (which earns nominal interest) is held with the CAF Bank.

Reserves

The question of what reserves (if any) should be held was considered early in 2005. The Executive Committee decided that it would be prudent to aim to hold a balance of funds of around six months' expenditure. This would allow for an orderly winding-down of operations should this ever prove necessary. The balance of funds at the end of 2009 was rather higher than this.

No reserves for particular contingencies are held.

Grants

Open Door – Colchester does not normally make large grants to individuals or to organisations. Small gifts and loans are made to individual Visitors in appropriate cases at the discretion of the Director to assist with living expenses, travel costs, etc...

Treasurer's Report

The Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2009 follow this Report and should be read with the accompanying notes.

The increase in funds over the year was rather unexpected and arose because grants and donations were higher than anticipated. The substantial grant received from the Essex Fairway Charitable Trust had a major impact on the finances of Open Door and this impact continued in 2009 with the receipt of a fourth grant from that source. Open Door is very thankful for this generosity. The two substantial grants from the Essex Community Foundation were also very much appreciated. So is the continuing support of Colchester Baptist Church (through a donation and allowing the use of their premises without charge) and other Churches in Colchester and district.

We are once again grateful to Michael Baker FCCA for his work in examining the Accounts.

E A Drake
Honorary Treasurer
January 2010

OPEN DOOR – COLCHESTER

Accounts for the Period 1st January to 31st December 2009

1. Receipts and Payments: General Fund

<i>2008</i>		<i>2009</i>
<i>£</i>		<i>£</i>
	Receipts	
	Donations and Grants	
1250	Colchester Baptist Church	1000
1169	Other Churches	1032
7622	Other Bodies	8450
2748	Individuals	967
0	Bequest	2000
12789	Total Donations and Grants	13449
	Receipts from Activities	
1967	Refreshments	1611
495	Saturday Coffee Mornings	368
941	Fund raising	0
548	Loans refunded by Visitors	438
3951	Total receipts from Activities	2417
609	Interest on Deposit and Current Accounts	259
395	Income Tax refunded on Gift-Aided Donations	790
17744	Total Receipts	16915
	Payments	
	Direct costs of supporting Visitors	
893	Payments and loans to or on behalf of Visitors	606
1801	Food and Refreshments	1363
330	Counselling Fees and supervision	0
3024	Total Direct Costs	1969
	Costs of running Open Door	
9652	Director's remuneration and National Insurance	9796
449	Staff travelling expenses refunded	456
100	Staff training costs	0
504	Telephone line rental and calls	464
665	Insurances	468
12	Annual Report, etc.	0
131	Administration materials, etc.	59
178	Miscellaneous costs	401
11691	Total Running Costs	11644
14715	Total Payments	13613

3029	Increase in Funds over the Period	3302
8185	Balance brought forward from previous year	11214
11214	Balance carried forward	14516

2. Receipts and Payments: ASK Friendship Club

2008		2009
£		£
	Receipts	
10	Donations	12
260	Payments by Members	198
490	Receipts from Saturday Coffee Mornings	262
313	Fund raising: Sponsored Walk	0
50	Sales	0
0	Tax Refund on Gift-Aided donations	36
1123	Total Receipts	508
	Payments	
169	Food and refreshments	
82	Retreats	0
359	Net cost of outings	345
131	Craft materials	173
57	Miscellaneous costs	0
798	Total Payments	577
325	Increase in Funds over the period	-69
0	Balance brought forward from previous year	325
325	Balance carried forward	256

3. Loans from Visitors

2008		2009
£		£
	Receipts	
0	Loans received from or on behalf of individual Visitors	7102
0	Total Receipts	7102
	Payments	
0	Payments made on behalf of individual Visitors	5134
0	Expenses incurred	30
0	Total Payments	5164
0	Net increase in Loans over the period	1938
0	Balance brought forward from previous year	0
0	Balance carried forward	1938

OPEN DOOR – COLCHESTER

Accounts for the Period 1st January to 31st December 2009

4. Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the end of the Period

Assets at the end of the Period		
2008		2009
£		£
1347	CAF CafCash Account	2665
200	Co-operative Bank Current Account	163
9983	Deposit with the ADFC	13736
9	Cash held	146
11539	Total Assets	16710
	<i>Less</i>	
0	Outstanding Loans from Visitors	1938
11539	Net Assets	14772
Representing		
Balances on Receipts and Payments Accounts:		
11214	General Fund	14516
325	ASK Friendship Club	256
11539	Total Funds	14772

E A Drake
Honorary Treasurer
February 2010

Notes on the Accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2009

1. **Accounting Policy** As Open Door has a low turnover, the Accounts are presented on a "receipts and payments" basis and accord with S.42(3) of the Charities Act 1993.
2. **Status** Open Door – Colchester became a Registered Charity (No 1101675) on 22 January 2004.
3. **Donations and Grants** Large amounts include £1000 from Colchester Baptist Church (2008: 1250), £5000 from the Essex Fairway Charitable Trust (2008: £5000), and "Grass Roots" grants totalling £3300 from the Essex Community Foundation (2008: £2000 from the Chiron Fund). At the end of the year, there were three individuals making donations on a monthly basis (2008: four).
4. **Legacy** Early in 2009, a legacy of £2000 was received (none in 2008).
5. **ASK Friendship Club** This group was started in May 2008.
6. **Loans from Visitors** These have been provided by individual Visitors as part of assistance with their personal budgeting and are expended entirely for the benefit of those Visitors.
7. **Income Tax refunded** A number of individual donations have been made under the Gift Aid Scheme. Tax refunded relates to the year to 31 December 2008 under the current repayment arrangements imposed by HM Revenue and Customs.
8. **Insurances** As an independent entity, it is necessary for Open Door to have a range of insurances. Insurances held include Public and Employer's Liabilities, Trustee's Indemnity, Legal expenses and Professional Liability for Counsellors. Insurance for risks associated with buildings and contents is held by Colchester Baptist Church, in whose premises Open Door operates.

E A Drake
Honorary Treasurer
January 2010