

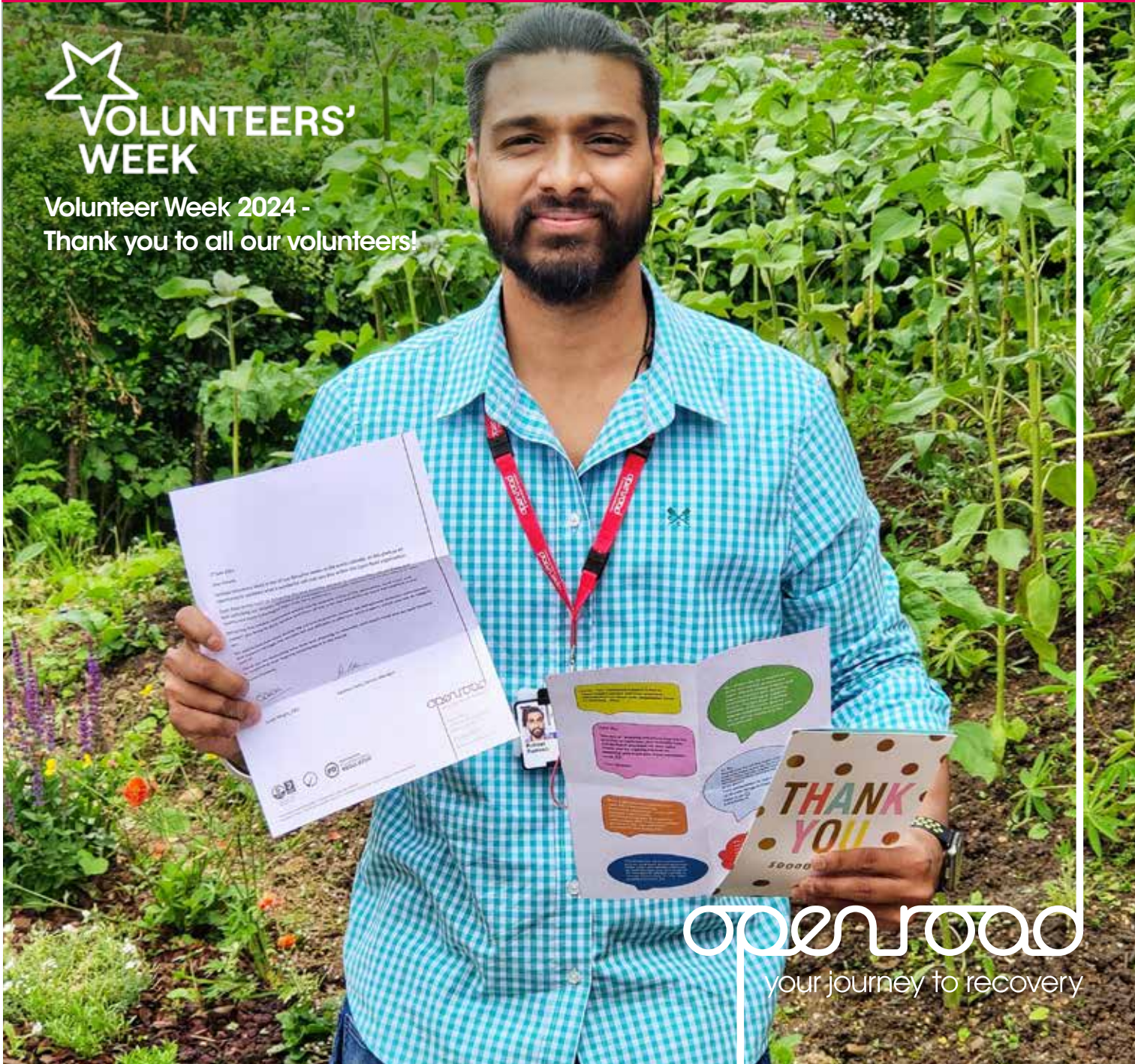
On the road

The newsletter of Open Road published for staff, volunteers, service users, partners and supporters

Medway High Sheriff Awards | Medway Centre Relaunch | Open Road Apprenticeships



Volunteer Week 2024 -
Thank you to all our volunteers!





Welcome from the Chief Executive

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2024.

After an exciting and busy start to our year, with project launches and a brand new Colchester SOS bus, summer 2024 has continued this theme; being an eventful and positive time for the charity.

Our Thurrock service, in partnership with Forward Trust, successfully launched earlier this year and our team is working hard, supporting vulnerable young people and adults. Thank you to everyone for your support.

We have been awarded Public Health Accelerated Bid (PHAB) funding for 18 months, which we will use to combat health inequalities in marginalised and rural North Essex. The SOS Bus will be an integral part of this service, with services by fellow organisations and agencies based on the bus which will travel throughout North Essex to reach more vulnerable people in their own communities.

Funding Spotlight – our spotlight this edition summarises recent successes. We thank all of our fantastic funders for their support and kindness to our charity – please see page 4.

Spotlight – thank you to Megan Benfield, our Colchester Engagement Worker for her article on what she does at Open Road – see page 3.

We recently said goodbye to one of our trustees, Bob Kilvington, and wish to thank Bob for all of his efforts in supporting us in our facilities and H&S work, which we greatly appreciate. One of the projects that Bob supported was our Chatham Wellbeing Centre in Chatham's High Street, which recently underwent a refurbishment as it was looking very tired. We are delighted that our clients are thrilled with their new-look, welcoming treatment space. We held an informal launch in June, where some of our partners were able to visit our centre to meet clients and our team including patrons, trustees, SLT, SMT, staff and volunteers. A big thank you to our funders for supporting this project.

In Harlow, due to lack of space for our team in the Derwent Centre-based centre, we located a new more spacious site in The Harvey Centre which the team have recently moved into. We will hold an informal launch on 9th August with some of our partners attending to see the centre and meet the team. A big thank you again to Bob Kilvington, who supported this project.

We were delighted to welcome the new High Sheriff of Essex, David Hurst, to Head Office in July to meet staff, Trustees, Patrons, Volunteers and Service Users. It was a really positive, informal gathering and we would like to thank David for giving up his morning to meet us all at Open Road.

We have a number of events coming up over the coming year; A performance "One Night Only" by Laura Wright, Soprano singer at The Mercury Theatre on 24th July; was a huge success, raising more than £7,000 – we will tell you more in our next newsletter. Our many thanks to Laura and everyone who supported this amazing event. This year, we are also delighted to host our annual Charity Ball at The Talbooth on 12th October and our AGM on Friday 1st November at Colchester United Stadium. For further information, please contact Nici Hardie – nici.hardie@openroad.org.uk or go to our website – www.openroad.org.uk. We do hope you will be able to support some of these events.

Our next newsletter will be published in Autumn so please do let Nici or myself have any articles you would like published.

Sarah Wright, Chief Executive

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
or please call: **01206 369782**

Open Road Spotlight - Megan Benfield, Colchester Engagement Co-ordinator

I began working with Open Road in September 2021 as an Opiate Recovery Worker. I later transitioned into the position of Engagement Worker for North Essex and, in January, I took on the role of Engagement Coordinator for Colchester.

I was motivated to join Open Road due to personal experience of my parents' struggles with substance misuse. I wanted to use the insight and knowledge I gained from those experiences to effect positive change in others. I wanted to help prevent other people from losing loved ones to addiction, working in substance misuse treatment services enables me to do this.

My new role as Engagement Co-ordinator gives me a great opportunity to look outside of the main treatment structure at what we can provide for clients. The role has enabled me to create groups, bring other organisations into the centre in order to improve accessibility for our service users and fill gaps in services. Other things I am proud to have been able to achieve so far in the role include:

- Creating contacts within and arranging for regular drop-in sessions with the Samaritans, offering face to face support. This has been very successful and has since been adopted in other centres.
- Created a regular drop-in session with the Terrance Higgins Trust to provide free sexual health advice and testing as well as visits from a health and wellbeing coach.
- Created an 8-week art course in conjunction with Colchester Arts Centre which we are currently 7 weeks through. Showcase pending!



- Applied for funding in partnership with a local art gallery to offer an advanced art course to commence in July.
- Created the social media pages for the centre, creating and publishing regular content to promote the service and increasing community awareness.
- Created a well-used book swap within our drop-in.
- Built a team of 10 Colchester volunteers, including trained therapists and peer mentors.

I am very excited for the future of this role and the impact that this could have on improving the service, as well as where my career with Open Road will go!

SOS Paw Patrol Dog Bandanas – Now in Stock!

Have the best dressed dog on the street and support Open Road! We are really pleased that our fantastic SOS Paw Patrol dog bandanas are now available for £8.50 (small) or £9.75 (large).

To get yours, please go to our website – www.openroad.org.uk or email us on Info@openroad.org.uk

Alternatively, please ring us on 01206 369782 for details. All sale proceeds help vulnerable people in local communities.



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: openroad.org.uk/donate
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Fantastic Funders and Supporters

Every so often in our newsletters, we like to give an annual overview of how things are going with funding, grant awards and fundraising. We continually look at fresh and innovative ways to raise funds to support our clients as well as how funding opportunities can support these goals. In 2023/24, we received fantastic donations, fundraising offers and secured funding from fantastic trusts and funders for various frontline services.

Our many thanks to all our funders and donors for their generosity, some funders and donors from this last year are listed below. 'Thank you' never seems adequate, but we do thank all of you and we are incredibly grateful. A few of the fabulous organisations are below.

- Colchester Community Safety Partnership
- Marsh Christian Trust
- Essex Community Foundation (ECF)
- The Joseph & Lilian Sully Foundation
- Sport England
- Titan Security
- Rotary Clubs of Essex

We have had a real variety of fundraising events and challenges take place - staff, volunteers and supporters did marathons, quizzes, cycle rides, sporting events, all raising funds for us throughout this last year. An SOS Bus volunteer, Liam challenged himself to a 50-mile bike ride. Colchester's Marquis of Granby pub held a charity football match. Neil McGuire completed the 2024 London Marathon with a personal best of 3 hours 39 minutes and supported us at the same time. Sarah Dufosee and four friends jumped out of a plane for us! Aside from fundraising, Titan Security donated a new generator to us for the SOS Buses and we continue to be supported by local businesses with donations of bottled water to hand out on the buses, meals for our SOS volunteers and so many other generous donations. Supporter, Laura Swash has written a memoir about supporting her brother, Colin who was a client with us. Colin sadly passed and Laura wanted to write a helpful guide for how to support a vulnerable family member. Laura says, "We all know someone like my brother and would all like some ideas on how to support them and ourselves." Laura's book is £6, all proceeds go to Open Road - please contact us on 01206 369782 to purchase a copy.

We were part of Santa's crew on his Rotary Club sleigh journey and generously invited to events where cheques were presented to us. We are very fortunate to be surrounded by kind and caring organisations and individuals - our thanks to every fundraiser and donor.

Our 2023 main fundraiser was our 'Afternoon of Poetry, Music and Magic', held at Essex's stunning Elizabethan Layer Marney Tower. It was a fantastic success and great fun, raising over £14,000 including a brilliant auction and raffle with many generous donations received. Huge thanks to John Cooper-Clarke, The Jentones, Nick Brown and Nick and Sheila Charrington, plus their event team lead, Sharon Willett. Thanks also to our volunteers who helped the event be a massive success.

In 2024, soprano Laura Wright hosted a fundraising concert evening at Colchester's Mercury Theatre and our annual Charity Ball takes place in October, please see more details in this newsletter and do come along if you can.

Thanks to all our amazing funders, fundraisers and donors, old and new, for supporting us, we're so grateful to you. All money raised funds our frontline services to some of the most vulnerable people in our local communities. We quite literally couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you.



Dr John Cooper Clarke takes the stage!



Martin Newell - image courtesy of Martin Newell



Mayor & Mayoress of Colchester, left; Claire & Tim middle right with Round Table members



Open Road team at Colchester Pride



Open Road Team with Father & Mother Christmas

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**

or please call: **01206 369782**

Our Fundraising

Our Fundraising Manager, Leah Slator tells us more about how funding helps Open Road's services and how we interact with fellow organisations. Leah also lets you know about Open Road's 2024 fundraising and how you can help us, sometimes without costing you a penny!

It has been a brilliant year for bringing our teams together for fundraising – we held a very successful quiz in Colchester's Mercury Theatre early Spring and more recently our Vange team held a fundraising quiz, led by our Engagement Coordinator, Jamie McLennan. An update about the event from Jamie is in this edition. Thank you to everyone who supported the quizzes, they were such great fun and raised lots of money for our frontline services. If you would like to organise a quiz or similar event, do please let me know as we would be happy to support any fundraising events.

Tim Young's Quiz Team

Quizzing in action



Spring and Summer have been a busy time too for networking and submitting funding award applications, which is a big part of my role. There are a lot of charitable Trusts and Foundations, plus corporate charitable foundations but each has specific criteria for the type of charities and work they can award grants to; as you can imagine, we sometimes fit that criteria and sometimes we don't, so there's a lot of research and background work done prior to applications being submitted. We recently had some brilliant news that HSBC's charitable arm for good causes has awarded us £20,000 capital fund which we will use towards our Harlow Centre – we thank HSBC for their generosity which will make a massive difference to our frontline service. We have also received funding awards from the following amazing funders, and we thank them all for their kindness:

- Clacton Flow Fund £250
- Community Safety Initiative Fund £1,881
- Screwfix £4,815

Upcoming Fundraising Events

Come and join us, it would be great to see you!

Charity Ball

Saturday 12th October 2024
Le Talbooth, Dedham

Tickets from Open Road, please ring 01206 369782 or email info@openroad.org.uk

Other ways to help Open Road?
There are lots of options - some won't even cost you a penny!

Essex Lottery is BACK!

The Essex Lottery is an exciting weekly lottery that raises money for good causes in Essex. Tickets for the lottery cost just £1 per week, with 60p going to your chosen local charity. Top prize of £25,000!
www.essexlottery.co.uk/support/open-road



www.openroad.org.uk donation page

Scanning the QR code will take you directly to our website where you can make a one off donation, or set up a monthly direct debit



www.easypundraising.org.uk

Donate for free as you shop online with hundreds of brilliant High Street and well-known retailers. It's easy to download the EasyFundraising's app. Just chose 'Open Road' as your charity of choice and, without any cost to you, Easyfundraising will donate a percentage of each purchase to your chosen charity. It's as easy as that!



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
Online: openroad.org.uk/donate
or please call: **01206 369782**

www.forgoodcauses.org

This is a great site where you can donate your retail reward vouchers to your chosen charity, which could be us! On their website, just click the 'Donate My Rewards' button and search for 'Open Road'.



www.makingadifference.cards/supporting/Open-Road-Visions



Making a Difference charity cards is an online card shop where you can purchase all your celebration cards while raising funds for the charity.

www.charity.ebay.co.uk/charity/Open-Road-Visions/



ebay for Charity has partnered with the PayPal Giving Fund to make it easy for sellers to donate anything from 1% to 100% of your item's final sale price to a certified charity. Or you can make a one-off donation when you make a purchase.

Donate £3 by texting 'OPENROAD' to 70085

Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS. If you'd like to give £3 but do not wish to receive marketing communications, **text OPENROADNOINFO to 70085**

How can you help?

Giving back to your community, either time or money can boost your self-esteem. There is nothing more self-affirming than knowing you are doing something good and supporting others. You and your loved ones can give back by either making a monetary donation, host a fundraising event, or volunteer your time.

• Volunteering

There are many volunteering opportunities within Open Road, such as...

- Supporting the night-time economy on the SOS Buses.
- Becoming an Appropriate Adult within the criminal justice system.
- Become a Digital Fundraiser or Events Champion.
- Become a frontline volunteer with our centres across Essex and Medway.

• Hosting a fundraising event

Create a fundraising event where you can set yourself a challenge or arrange a coffee morning to raise funds for Open Road, get in contact with our fundraising team for your fundraising pack today.

• Monetary donations

Donations are our lifeblood. We rely on donations to continue providing support to those in need. You can either give a one-off donation, set up a direct debit for monthly donations or leave a gift in your will, which is called a Legacy donation. To donate, simply scan the QR code, log into our website, visit our JustGiving page or pop down to your local Open Road centre.



www.openroad.org.uk

<https://www.justgiving.com/openroad>

A massive thank you from us to all our supporters, funders and donors - you are amazing and are a vital part of our charity.

For anyone who would like to fundraise for us, hold an event or support our charity in any way, we would love to hear from you - please contact Leah on Leah.Slator@openroad.org.uk. If you are a business who would like to help us, please do also contact Leah - we are always keen to discuss opportunities and embrace new partnerships.

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: openroad.org.uk/donate

or please call: **01206 369782**

Open Road

Charity Ball

Saturday
12th October 2024

Join us for an evening of excellent fine dining,
followed by a charity auction and raffle,
winning some top of the range prizes.
Then dance the evening away to The Jentones.
Reception drinks start at 7pm

See you there!

Drinks Reception 7pm Carriages at 1am

Le Talbooth, Gun Hill, Dedham CO7 6HP

**£90 per ticket / £900 for a table of ten or
£1080 for a table of 12**

Contact us for information on individual tickets

Dress Code: Black Tie

To book your tickets contact:

01206 369782 / info@openroad.org.uk

12 North Hill, Colchester, CO1 1DZ

All proceeds will go towards supporting Open Road's projects
to reduce the harmful impact of drugs and alcohol

Registered Charity No. 1019915

open road
your journey to recovery

Bright Colours and Sunshine in Harlow

As always, it's a busy time for our Harlow Walled Garden project volunteers. Volunteers from various organisations support the Harlow Council parks and gardens team, including Open Road's dedicated team.

One project that has been taking place within the park is a fantastic painted mural at the paddling pool with the help of local artists - it's a beautiful eye-catching display of positive messages such as 'Be kind' to bring a smile to everyone's faces as they pass. The park's bees also feature as Harlow Park takes care of several hives and promotes and actively uses bee-friendly planting to help their colonies thrive.

We want to thank all of our volunteers, especially Anita Bailey who is our Walled Garden project lead volunteer - you all do amazing work on this project. We also thank Tom Smith, who is the new Harlow Town Park manager, for all his support and encouragement to our team.



Local Visitors



Potting up on a grand scale



Artwork in progress



Spring Colours



Gorgeous artwork



Hardworking gardeners



Harlow's bee friendly gardens

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**

or please call: **01206 369782**

My life Story - By Tracey E

The Beginning

When I was just 14, my parents thought it would be good idea for our family to move from London all the way to Norfolk to give us a better start in life. By the late 80s, London was getting unsafe and my parents thought the cleaner air and a lot slower pace of life we would all benefit from. Well, it did not really go to plan like that, whatsoever.

Growing up, I was always the new girl at school as we moved a lot due to my dad's job. I never felt settled in school and got bullied a lot for being overweight, it got so bad I didn't attend school for the last year.

At 17, I met the man I went on to marry (now divorced). My boyfriend was 5 years older than myself, he smoked and the very first time, I actually saw drugs was when he started making a cannabis joint. I was shocked but so naïve to the whole drug scene. He convinced me to try it but as I did not even smoke cigarettes, I did not like the feeling it gave you.

The Middle

So fast forward a couple of years. I had a job and my boyfriend was in prison for violence. On his home leave from prison, we got married and at the age of 22, I had my daughter but was very unhappy with how I looked, with the weight gain. A friend suggested taking amphetamines so I secretly did. Eventually, I told my husband and, to my surprise, he had already tried it in the past so we both started using this drug together. This came with major consequences; as amphetamines suppress your appetite and you don't sleep and with a very young baby at the time, my life became very chaotic. This is when my husband started to get very violent to me. One day, we couldn't get amphetamines and tried heroin. I did not like it but it suppressed how I was feeling; the violence and emotional abuse did not seem so bad. I didn't know that heroin was so addictive and had no knowledge of addiction. Eventually, after some weeks of 'using', we had no money but I was so physically unwell and physically addicted, I started shoplifting which carried on for a few years to fund the habit. Slowly, I became entrenched in crime and drugs and eventually I was put in prison for the first time. This carried on for a few years and my addiction grew; I also started using crack cocaine as well.

Social Services took my daughter into care of the age of 8 years old, and this totally destroyed me. I had already lost my son at the age of 18 days old and lost both parents, all within a few months. So that's when I wanted to die myself.



The New Beginning - My Way Forward

In 2009, I was introduced to a new key worker, and she helped me see hope again. I started to try and put my life back together - she planted a seed regarding relocation and going in to rehab. I jumped at the chance as I just thought I was a lost cause. So, fleeing an abusive marriage I turned up to Hertfordshire with just the clothes I wore on my back and a black bag with everything I owned in the world. After completing a whole year in rehab and 3rd stage, I started to volunteer for the rehab. I was also granted local housing, so now had my own space.

I then went from being a volunteer to working as a support worker and then recovery practitioner; this gave me my self esteem, self-worth and my life back. I worked in the rehab for 7 years.

I now work as a Targeted Opiate Worker for Open Road. I have a beautiful relationship with my daughter today, who is now 31 and I have 2 beautiful grandchildren. My life has never been so complete and happy.

So the moral of my story is to keep on trying and never give up on recovery.

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
 or please call: **01206 369782**

SOS Buses – Supporting Communities Day & Night

In Spring, our SOS Bus supported Braintree Council with their ongoing objective of Community Safety Impact Nights, which is coupled with Safer Streets funding we receive.

On the evening, we joined partner agencies who we support with the SOS Bus, plus a Drug & Alcohol worker, to engage vulnerable people in need of these services. The police also attended to support community relations, providing assurances of community safety.

We are proud to support this initiative and have already engaged and referred several people in need of drug & alcohol intervention.

Open Road has also received Public Health Accelerated Bid (PHAB) funding for 18 months and this will support combatting health inequalities in marginalised and rural North Essex. The SOS Bus will be an integral part of this service, with services by



SOS Bus - Braintree Community Safety Impact Nights

fewer organisations and agencies based on the bus which will travel throughout North Essex to reach more vulnerable people in their own communities. Please see the poster on page 11 for more information.

Please keep an eye for our buses out and about. If you see them based in your local community, do please pop on board to say hi, the team would love to see you and tell you more about the amazing work they do.

Medway High Sheriff Awards

On our last edition, we let you know about 2023/24 High Sheriff of Kent, Mrs Nadra Ahmed DL visiting us in Medway centre to meet the teams. Mrs Ahmed presented awards to several members of our teams and the certificates winged their way to us after the event.

Please see gorgeous photos of Katie and Lucy from our Medway Young Person's and Wellbeing Adult teams, with their certificates, and from Mrs Ahmed's visit, our third award winner, Kelvin with Mrs Ahmed and Lucy.

Well done to Katie, Lucy and Kelvin for your very well deserved awards. Thanks also to Mrs Ahmed for her kindness to our charity.



Award Winners, Kelvin & Lucy with Mrs Ahmed, middle



Katie and Lucy

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Public Health

Accelerator Bid

18-MONTH PROJECT IN NORTH ESSEX



Offering free use of the Open Road S.O.S bus to partners and local groups and charities with the aim to address health inequalities in rural and marginalised areas within North Essex.



Driver with training in drug and alcohol awareness will be provided for all booked sessions.

*Please send any enquiries to :
stacey.banner@openroad.org.uk
claire.beacham@openroad.org.uk*

Open Road Visions is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under number 2606113 and registered as a Charity number 1019915

Registered office : 12 North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1DZ Tel: 01206 369 782

open road
your journey to recovery

Mary Francis – a tribute to a much missed trustee

Earlier this year, Open Road had to say a very sad farewell to retired trustee, Mary Francis, who passed at the age of 80.

Mary was a trustee, part of this time as Chair, with Open Road for 20 years and retired in 2016. With a strong faith and being a very community spirited person, as well as supporting Open Road and other local causes, and being a Justice of the Peace, Mary was also involved with the Scouts for more than 60 years, becoming a Cub Scout leader at 18. In 2006, Mary was presented with the Silver Wolf award by the Chief Scout Peter Duncan (of Blue Peter fame), the highest award for an adult Scout leader, given "for services of the most exceptional character".

Mary's ambition for people, whether they came before her as a JP, she was visiting our centres and meeting clients, staff and volunteers, or if she was leading a pack of Cubs or Scouts on camping adventures, was for everyone to be the best they could be. Mary was a force for good, she had an infectious positive energy and was full of fun. Our charity balls would never have been the same without Mary and her husband, Michael in attendance. Mary could also be quite formidable but always ensured to the best of her ability, that Open Road was doing its utmost for its clients, staff and volunteers.



Being a trustee is a voluntary role, no money ever changes hands, and we never lose sight of the dedication that our trustees give to the charity. 20 years is a very long time to be a trustee and Mary never failed to vigorously and fully discharge her role throughout this time.

We will all miss Mary, both as a friend and as an ardent supporter of our charity – it is safe to say the mould was firmly broken with Mary and we will always think fondly of her. We send all best wishes to Michael, all her family and all her many friends.

You've Got To Be In It To Win It!

The Essex Lottery is giving everyone the chance to win up to £25,000 and support our amazing local charity at the same time. Tickets are just £1 per week, 50% of all ticket proceeds bought on our page go to us, with 10% also going to other worthwhile local charities. It's a WIN WIN!! To get your tickets, please go to –

<https://www.essexlottery.co.uk/support/open-road>



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**

or please call: **01206 369782**

Southend Family Support – A Case Study

Our incredible Southend team, in partnership with Forward Trust, provide a fantastic service to young people and their families. Below is a case study of how we helped PA and her family; to show the brilliant work that we do and what can be achieved, to support a young person in crisis to see there is hope.

Background

Earlier this year, we began supporting PA, a 17 year old who was using ketamine almost daily for the past 6 months. She had presented at A&E after a decline in her mental health, the family desperate for some support. Due to PA's substance misuse, there was a breakdown in relationships within the family, positive communication was declining, and the younger siblings' mental well-being and behaviour was being negatively affected.

The family were at a crisis point. The two younger siblings became withdrawn, and their behaviour was becoming noticeably concerning both inside and outside of school. A whole family approach was agreed as necessary to achieve a positive outcome. The family support worker worked mum and dad, whilst the Hidden Harm worker supported the two younger siblings. PA was allocated a Recovery worker within structured treatment and offered education and harm reduction advice.

PA's journey

Her key worker explores the journey....

When I first met PA she was using Ketamine almost daily in her bedroom, which she shared with her younger sister. PA would often mention that she feels that she uses Ketamine to prevent the thoughts she has associated with ADHD, she felt it helped her to calm her thoughts.

PA's misuse would often cause arguments and disruption in the family home, and it would upset her younger siblings. The relationships between PA and the rest of the family were deteriorating and there was a lack of effective communication and understanding.

We began by looking at the effects that Ketamine has on the brain and body. We would often have our sessions in the local community, so it was easier for her to feel comfortable opening up. We would set achievable goals each month and work towards them, which showed PA that she was making progress.

Once PA's use had reduced, we focused on relapse prevention and career support. We discussed medication for ADHD and whilst this can be helpful



Posed by model

for some, it was important for PA to learn coping strategies to help her manage her thoughts. PA is now working full time and attending the gym regularly. She has been able to sustain longer periods of abstinence by using coping strategies to help her. She understands that lapses happen and not to allow guilt and shame to consume her but to start again tomorrow.

Her relationships with her family have improved and feels they understand her better now, which has relieved the pressure at home. She has enjoyed a family holiday and days out, which she would not have attended in the past. She is proud of the steps she is taking to improve her well-being and is feeling more positive about her future.

PA's says of her journey, "I have more belief in myself now, a lot more confidence & knowledge to be able to work through my substance use. I am now not secluded to my bedroom and isolating myself away from my family and life in general and just using drugs. I now am motivated to have a better focus on my career and relationship with my family have improved so much since engaging with Open Road. My Family now understand addiction and substance misuse."

"I really enjoyed the interventions and feel that the frequency was just perfect timing for me, especially the check in calls and contact from my key worker. It was great feeling no pressure especially from a professional, as I always thought seeking professional support would be intimidating and this experience was not, my recovery worker has put my mind at rest. The whole experience of the support my whole family have had is amazing and made many positive changes within our family."

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Medway Centre Relaunch

Following a refurbishment, our Chatham High Street centre which offers adults wellbeing and recovery services recently relaunched in June. We invited some of our partners, local agencies and staff, volunteers and clients to join us to celebrate the reopening. The centre looks amazing and our clients are delighted with their new look space. Our Medway Manager, Laura Hammond tells us more about the event.

The event was extremely well attended, approximately 30 in all. Guests included professionals from our partner agencies including Medway Job Centre, mental health services, MVA, Sunlight Centre, AMAT, Clarion House, Pathways and the treatment team. Not forgetting our own SLT and trustees.

There were several peer mentors and clients that were able to chat with all of the services and we were able to arrange several dates with our partners to attend their services to introduce ourselves to their staff and service users.

We were also joined by the family of an ex-service user named Stella who passed away 1 year ago. After her passing, the family created a Go Fund Me page for donations to Open Road and took a donation bucket to her funeral. In total, they raised nearly £4,000 for the service which went towards renovating our kitchen. The family were amazed at the changes and would like to work with us in the future for more awareness / fundraising events. We wish to say a massive thank you to all of Stella's family and friends for their generosity and kindness to Open Road, we are incredibly grateful to you and are so pleased that you could join us at the launch.

The staff and volunteers worked hard over the week to prepare for the event. We were all exhausted by the end of the day but it was great!

Thank you to everyone who attended, as well as to our fabulous funders and Stella's family, who supported the refurbishment. We hope everyone enjoyed their time with us. Thanks to Laura and the Medway teams who hosted the event, it was a brilliant event and we are grateful to you for all your hard work.



Ready to welcome guests



Guests at our busy launch



Some of our amazing Medway team



Raise FREE funds
for us every time you
Shop online



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Open Road Apprenticeships

We champion learning and Continuing Professional Development at Open Road and a part of this has been to offer our staff the chance of apprenticeships and study, leading to formally recognised professional qualifications. Some of our staff who have grabbed this opportunity let us know how they found the experience...

Natalie Amos, Southend and Thurrock Manager

In November 2022, I began the Level 3 Team Leader/Supervisor apprenticeship course with Seetec. This program has provided me with the opportunity to explore various theories related to management tools and techniques, which I can apply to better support my team and enhance my services.



The course has also emphasized self-awareness, decision-making, financial aspects of an organization, and effective communication with professionals to ensure that the services I am involved in are regarded as highly professional and well-respected. I have completed and continue to work on my own CPD plan to ensure that I consistently apply the methods and tools I have learned throughout this process.

I believe this course has been beneficial to my personal development and am confident that what I have learned will help support my teams and improve the services moving forward.

Leah Slator, Fundraising Manager

When I first became Fundraising Manager for Open Road, I had limited knowledge of the many ways in which a charity fundraises. The fundraising apprenticeship course has given me tools, knowledge and confidence to raise vital funds for Open Road using a range of different methods; from events and community fundraising to online campaigns and social media engagement.



On a personal level, the apprenticeship has significantly boosted my confidence and skills. I have learned how to effectively engage with supporters, understand their motivations to donate. This allows me to build stronger and more meaningful relationships with them, while improving communication skills and fundraising strategies to better align with donors' interests and passions. Professionally, the course has equipped me to identify and approach Trusts and Foundations with confidence. I can craft compelling grant proposals and present our case persuasively, which has led to several successful grant applications.

I hope that the benefits of this apprenticeship will extend beyond my personal and professional development; and have a positive impact on Open Road as a whole.

Lucy Trewin, Medway Team Leader

Over the last year, I have been completing an accredited course in Level 3 Team Leadership with Seetec. Doing this course enabled me to learn new management styles and how to adapt these on individual team members.



Some of the tools I was taught allowed me to develop my team leadership skills further and identify my own strengths whilst developing skills that could be improved. At the beginning of the course, I set myself goals in my own personal development plan and on reflection I have succeeded in them all.

Overall, I am a much more confident and efficient leader for my team.

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Southend Mayor's Summer Tea Party

In July, our Southend and Thurrock Manager, Natalie Amos was invited to attend the Southend Mayor's Parlour's Tea Party. It was a glorious summer's day and Natalie was joined by lots of fellow agencies and organisations in Southend.

Natalie explains, "The event was organised by Volunteering Matters. They are a mentor support service that assists families in the Southend Borough who are involved with social care. Their mission is to support these families, helping to prevent and de-escalate issues to reduce the number of children entering care."

"While Southend's Mayor wasn't able to be there, Deputy Mayor Nigel Folkard hosted the event. Nigel will be stepping into the role of the Mayor in May 2025. I spoke to Nigel about our service in Southend, the support we provide to the local community, schools and partners. I will look to invite Nigel into the service, along with the Mayor at some point this year."

Our many thanks to Volunteering Matters and Southend's Mayoral Team for their generous invite to Open Road, it was really kind of you and we are grateful to you.



Tea Party Guests in the summer sunshine



Natalie with Southend's Deputy Mayor, Nigel

Open Road welcomes Mayor of Chelmsford and Bishop of Chelmsford



Mayor of Chelmsford and Bishop Guli, centre, with Open Road team

In Spring, we were delighted to welcome Mayor of Chelmsford, Cllr Linda Mascot and Bishop of Chelmsford, The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani on a visit to our Chelmsford centre.

The visit took place only a few weeks after International Women's Day and so we were thrilled that the Mayor, with her consort, and Bishop Guli, two very prominent and inspiring women in Chelmsford, were able to give us their time.

Over teas and coffees (plus the obligatory cake!), our guests met with our frontline team as well as patrons,

trustees and senior management team, hearing all about our work and how we support vulnerable people in local communities.

It was a very positive and inspiring morning, which we very much enjoyed. We thank the Mayor and Bishop Guli for giving us their time, during very busy schedules. We hope that you found the visit of interest and enjoyed your time with our team.

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**

or please call: **01206 369782**

High Sheriff of Essex Visits Open Road

In July, on a beautifully sunny summer's day, we were delighted to host a visit by 2024/25 High Sheriff of Essex, David Hurst DL to Open Road's Colchester head office.

Over coffee and cake, David met Open Road Patrons, Trustees, Senior Team, frontline team, head office team and clients, to hear more about our work and how we support vulnerable people in local communities.

It was a busy, lively morning and everyone had a good chance to mingle and chat. Our many thanks to David for giving his time to visit us, as part of a very busy year of visits and events as David champions Essex's voluntary sector in his role as High Sheriff. Thank you also to everyone who attended including Patrons, Sir Bob Russell and Lorna Role DL. We hope you all enjoyed the morning as much as we did.



High Sheriff Visit catering



Leah, Joni and Megan



John, Ellen, Pinky and Open Road CEO Sarah



L-R, Matt, Judy, and Amanda



L-R facing; Sir Bob Russell, High Sheriff David Hurst, Regional Manager Matt Gauden

Donate £3 by texting 'OPENROAD' to 70085

Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS. If you'd like to give £3 but do not wish to receive marketing communications, **text OPENROADNOINFO to 70085**



Temi



L-R, Megan, Pinky and Ellen

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
or please call: **01206 369782**

Volunteer Week Celebrations

As with any charity, Open Road can only do what we do because of the support from our incredible volunteers. Our charity is supported by volunteers in every area of the organisation, from our Patrons and Board of Trustees who are all volunteers, through to all of our services with volunteers based on the frontline, our SOS Buses and Appropriate Adult Services, to name a few.

Every year during Volunteers Week, as well as attending celebrations, we write to our volunteers to thank them for all the support that they give to us. During Volunteers Week, two of our Harlow volunteers, media volunteer Roheet Ramesh and Walled Garden Project volunteer, Anita Bailey met with Harlow Engagement Coordinator, Emma Luck in Harlow Park's Walled Garden to work in the gardens and have a photo opportunity!

Thank you to every single person who gives their time to us – the very nature of being a volunteer being an unpaid role means no money changes hands, you all just help our charity to help vulnerable people and make your local communities a better place. You are all amazing. Thank you!



Harlow - Anita - Walled Garden Lead Volunteer



Anita Bailey and Roheet Ramesh



Open Road's Walled Garden Project



Anita reading her thank you card from all at Open Road.



Harlow Engagement Coordinator, Emma Luck with Anita Bailey and Roheet Ramesh

You can make a difference!



Did you know you can donate on our website?
It's really easy to help us help a vulnerable person in your community.

Scanning the QR code will take you directly to our website where you can make a one off donation, or set up a monthly direct debit.

www.openroad.org.uk

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**

or please call: **01206 369782**

Colchester Poetry Recital

Sara attended Open Road Colchester's recent art group at Colchester Arts Centre and discovered a love of poetry during our poetry week. On the 12th June, Sara performed 2 poems, which we have shared below, that she had written about her recovery during the group, at a poetry event in town. Sara reported that were it not for the group, she would not have found this passion and was immensely grateful for the opportunity that we gave her. Sara plans to continue writing and performing poetry and is already signed up for the second art course.

Thank you to Sara for sharing her amazing poetry with us and for an inspiring recital, which was enjoyed by everyone who attended.



Sara's performance

A poem by Sara

*In the depths of despair, the bottle calls my name,
a refuge from reality, fuelling the inner flame.
I drown my sorrows in spirits cold and clear,
but the numbness fades, replaced by fear.
Each glass a prison, each sip a chain,
a cycle of chaos, of loss and pain.
I chase the high, but it always slips away,
leaving me alone at the break of day.
Haunted by demons, consumed by shame,
I drink to forget, but only remember the same.
A slave to the bottle, a prisoner of my mind,
searching for solace, yet never peace to find.
Alcoholism, a shadow that never fades,
a constant battle, a war of serenades.
But hope lingers on, a flicker in the night,
guiding me towards the dawn's first light.*

A second beautiful piece of poetry by Sara

*In the wreckage of my past, I found a path to heal,
a journey of redemption, a chance to finally feel.
Through the haze of addiction, I glimpsed a new dawn,
embracing sobriety, a strength reborn.

Each day a battle, but also a victory won,
choosing clarity over chaos, the damage finally undone.
I walk with purpose, guided by a steady hand,
facing my demons, reclaiming the land.

No longer a slave to the bottle's cruel embrace,
I stand tall, a warrior in this sober space.
With courage as my shield, and hope as my guide,
I navigate the challenges, with newfound pride.

Recovering from darkness, embracing the light,
I forge a new path, leaving the past out of sight.
Through struggles and triumphs, I learn to thrive,
a testament to resilience, to being alive.*

Donate £3 by texting
'OPENROAD' to 70085

Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS. If you'd like to give £3 but do not wish to receive marketing communications, **text OPENROADNOINFO to 70085**

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
or please call: **01206 369782**

South Essex Councillors' Visit to our Basildon Centre

Pitsea South East Councillor, Ben Westwick recently reached out to our South Essex Engagement Coordinator, Jamie via our Vange Facebook Page. Jamie invited Councillor Westwick to the centre as Ben wanted to acknowledge the hard work we do in the centre as well as what we do to empower volunteers. Ben visited with Pitsea North West Councillor Emma Callaghan and Basildon Councillor Pat Reid.

Following the visit, Jamie said, "We spent a couple of hours showing our guests around the centre, meeting the staff, and giving them the lowdown on how the centre works. We also spoke about the drug problem we have here in Basildon. Going forward, I'm going to work with the Councillors with the hope of getting the Centre as much exposure as possible."

Thank you to Ben, Emma and Pat for your time and efforts to support and further the important work that our frontline centre in South Essex does. Thanks also to Jamie for arranging this visit.



Councillors with our South Essex Essex team



Councillor with South Essex team

Make a Difference - Be The Difference!

Open Road's goal is to improve the lives of people in our local communities, free from addiction, offending behaviour and disadvantage. Every one of our funders, donors and supporters help to fund increasingly vital services and support for our clients. We can't do what we do without donations and fundraising. Can you help?

- **Fundraising** - Whether running a half marathon, holding a sponsored sporting event, coffee morning, quiz or other amazing event for Open Road, we would love to hear from you. Please email us on - info@openroad.org.uk.
- **Donate Online** - You can donate a one-off amount or set up a regular donation via our secure online form on our website - www.openroad.org.uk/Appeal/donate. Setting up a regular donation provides a steady income for Open Road to provide help and support to individuals and families affected by drugs and alcohol.
- **Donate £5 by Text** - So simple to do - just text OPEN00 £5

Regular donations help Open Road to provide sustained support to individuals and families towards full recovery from the many problems they face. They also save on administration costs - so that more of your money can be spent on crucial services.

One Person can make all the difference to Open Road!



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
 Online: openroad.org.uk/donate
 or please call: **01206 369782**

Basildon Fundraising Quiz

On 21st July, our Basildon Team hosted a fundraising quiz night at Belfair Golf Club. Our Vange Engagement Co-ordinator Jamie McLennan was the evening's host, ably assisted by Quiz Master, Vange Recovery Worker Nicky Justice.

The evening was very well attended and the teams were ready to win, so it was all fun competition. The evening included a raffle where top prizes included Luxury Hamper, Signed Paul Gascoigne Euro 96 Football Shirt, Adventure Island Wrist Bands, Various Gift Sets.

The evening raised an incredible £594.97 for Open Road, Basildon Vange! Thank you to Jamie, Nicky and all the team, and everyone who came along for a night of quizzing and fundraising. You are all winners and Open Road is really grateful to everyone for your support.



Quiz Night



Quizmaster Nicky



Prizes galore



Quizzing in action

easyfundraising
feel good shopping

Raise **FREE**
funds
for us every
time you
Shop online

Uswitch Argos M&S
EST. 1884

JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS ebay sky

TOPSHOP Viking

Expedia SCREWFIX

150 Sainsbury's Boden

ASOS Booking.com

GoCompare **JUST EAT**

Ways to support Open Road – many options are free ways to support us as you shop, at no cost to you!



Scanning the QR code will take you directly to our website where you can make a one off donation, or set up a monthly direct debit

www.openroad.org.uk

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: openroad.org.uk/donate

or please call: **01206 369782**

Story of Recovery

Engagement Coordinator, Jamie McLennan tells us about Michael, a Basildon client who has agreed to share his story and photo.

Meet Michael. Michael started smoking Cannabis at the age of 11. His usage escalated to 12-15 joints daily as addiction set in. Michael reached out to Open Road in January 2024 for help with his substance misuse.

During this time Michael has engaged with his Recovery Worker Claire, attended Counselling sessions within the Centre and went through the 12 week Relapse Prevention Programme with Jamie to which he still attends. Group facilitator Jamie stated "Michael's growth during his journey with the group has been nothing short of phenomenal. Michael's commitment to the group has given him the freedom and knowledge to gain the ability to take accountability, to understand his triggers and support others within the group. His endeavour and passion to help others has given me the confidence and absolute pleasure to select him to become a Peer Mentor representing our Centre. Working with people like Michael is one of the many reasons that make working at Open Road so fulfilling".

Michael has just recently started his Peer Mentor duties and in a short time is already becoming someone that our clients can look up-to.

Whilst working with Claire, Michael managed to reduce his use to a very small amount eventually giving himself a goal-date to go cold-turkey and stop smoking. Michael is currently on his 25th Day of Abstinence and will shortly be entering the Sharp Rehab Programme, eventually moving on to Aspirations.

Michael states that now he's clean he can aim for new goals such as learning to drive and starting



Engagement Coordinator, Jamie McLennan with Michael

regular employment with the aim of bettering the life of his family. Michael would love to Volunteer fulltime at Open Road with the view to eventually having a paid role.

In March, we held a Gardening Day at our Centre and Michael was awarded The Gardener of the Day. Since then, Michael has been maintaining and improving our garden in his own time, off his own back. Everyone at Open Road Vange is so proud of Michael and overwhelmed with appreciation for what he does for us. He has officially become our Resident Volunteer Counsellor.

Michael stated that he feels the huge support from everyone at Open Road has given him the encouragement to stay clean and help him achieve the goals he has set for himself in life. In typical "Mikey" fashion, with his happy-go-lucky witty charm and sense of humour Michael wanted to finish this Recovery Story by saying - "I would now rather rip up weeds than smoke it". Everyone at Open Road absolutely loves you Michael. You make us proud and inspire us every single day. Keep doing what you are doing - you are amazing!!!



Raise **FREE** funds
for us every time you
Shop online



Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5
Online: **openroad.org.uk/donate**
or please call: **01206 369782**

EVERYBODY! *knows* SOMEBODY!

Life is challenging and everybody knows somebody who is struggling. For over 30 years, Open Road has helped thousands of people in Essex, when things get tough. We love to help people be the best they can be, in work and in life, and are really successful at what we do.



- **Businesses work with us to help their people;** with training, advice, one to one staff support



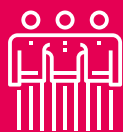
- **We help people in recovery to get that dream job** with a network of dedicated, local employers



- **We walk with people as they journey to recovery,** to healthier, happier lives. Our teams support families too, as substance misuse affects everybody.



- **We keep people safe at festivals** and community events



- **We support people who have lost their way in life,** helping them maintain productive, non-offending lives in their local communities



- **Plus our SOS Buses are in local communities** providing welfare advice services and at weekends in Colchester and Chelmsford, helping vulnerable members of the public

Our IPS employers network can help fill those vacancies. Our other services could also proactively support your business. Or are you looking for ways to directly give back to your local community?



Make us a part of your Corporate Social Responsibility goals – Corporate Volunteering lets your staff volunteer with us. We have lots of opportunities, offering a fantastic chance to give back, meet new people and learn new skills, all benefitting the local community.



Charity of the Year – be a corporate fundraiser and choose us as your charity of the year. We would be delighted to work with you, to proactively champion your fundraising events and goals.

'Everybody knows Somebody!'

Team Open Road needs your help! We would love to have a chat about what we do and how we can do more by working together - **01206 369782** or **info@openroad.org.uk**

Find out more about us

01206 369782 / info@openroad.org.uk

12 North Hill, Colchester, CO1 1DZ

www.openroad.org.uk

open road

your journey to recovery

Registered Charity No. 1019915



Forthcoming Events with Open Road:

Charity Ball

Saturday 12th October 2024
Le Talbooth, Dedham

AGM

Friday 1st November 2024
Colchester Community Stadium

We are planning various fun and exciting events throughout 2024, please follow our social media platforms for more details.

Head Office

12 North Hill, Colchester
Essex, CO1 1DZ
01206 369782

Open Road is a trading name for Open Road Visions
Registered Charity No. 1019915
Registered in England No. 2806113

Open Road Solutions – Trading Arm
Registered in England No. 08417728

www.openroad.org.uk



Certificate 12058
ISO9001: 2015



New starters

We would like to extend a warm welcome to:

- Shannon Bundock
- Hannah Rushforth
- Harriet Isherwood
- Amy Spivey
- Kayleigh Leech
- Lauren Mallion
- Wendy Tant
- Julie Bishop
- Peter Tugwell
- Larib Naeem
- Harry Gates-Brown
- Nifemi Esan
- Belle Bird
- Lilli-Mae Himfen
- Sean Hilton

Our Leavers

We bid a farewell and thank you to:

- Luke Mayo
- Loren Harvey Smith
- Nicholas McGregor
- Rebekah Lane
- Clare Brookes
- Lottie Weston
- Laura Craig
- Claire Hallett
- Stuart Braybrooke
- John Mills
- Anjali Verman
- Mark Bateman

The next issue of On the Road will be published in Autumn 2024. Please send any articles, ideas and comments to sarah.wright@openroad.org.uk

Make a donation!

Text: **OPENROAD 70450** to donate £5

Online: openroad.org.uk/donate

or please call: **01206 369782**