

On the road

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

Frontline News | Open Road Welcomes the Mayor of Chelmsford | Recovery in Action





Welcome from the Chief Executive

Welcome to our latest newsletter of 2024

We have had a busy time with some exciting fundraising events throughout the summer and autumn, commencing with "One Night Only" in July with the renowned Soprano Singer, Laura Wright and amazing recovery stories from three of our service users, Pinky, Sara and Anita, which left the audience on the edge of their seats and many in tears. We raised a magnificent £7,500. This was followed by our Charity Ball at The Talbooth in Dedham in October with over 100 guests in attendance, hosted by our very own Tim Young and auctioneer Martin Lucas, Senior Probation Officer. We raised over £10,500 during the evening – an outstanding success.

In November we held our AGM with guest speaker Paul Jeffries from Pebbles Associates who is currently our Open Road team coach. Paul presented our second evaluation impact report, which was undertaken by Charlotte Fitzgerald, who was unfortunately unable to attend the event. The evaluation covered a number of interviews with staff, volunteers, service users, commissioners and supporters, highlighting the magnificent work that our frontline recovery workers and organisation does in local communities, improving the lives of our service users and their families. This was followed by a presentation from Sara on her own recovery journey and where she is today. Although her account reminded our guests of the struggles people go through to achieve recovery, it was also an amusing and entertaining account of life whilst using drugs and alcohol and life now being drug and alcohol free. The event was attended by over 120 guests, which included The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Jennifer Tolhurst and the Mayor and Mayoress of Chelmsford, Cllr Janette Potter and Cllr Jackie Galley, who had recently spent time visiting our Chelmsford Centre.

We were delighted to receive a direct award for our main Essex contract – AARCS – All Age Recovery Co-ordination Service, by Essex County Council, Public Health by our Commissioners Ben Hughes, Head of

Wellbeing & Public Health, and Neale Thomas, Public Health & Wellbeing Manager. A big thank to them for all their support.

Funding Spotlight – a big thank you to Sharna Allen, Procurement Lead for Southend Young People's Service – please see page 4.

Spotlight – thank you to Kayleigh Leach, our Quality & Business Support Co-ordinator for her article on what she does at Open Road – see page 3.

Following on the heels of our October Charity Ball, we held a fundraiser on Monday 2nd December – A Christmas Carol, recited by Anthony Roberts with Piano by Jamie Cunliffe at St Leonard-at-the-Hythe Church, Hythe Hill, Colchester. It was a fantastic success raising more than £1,300, more details will be in our next newsletter covering Winter/Spring. Thank you to Anthony and Jamie, our team who worked on the event headed by our Media, Communications & Partnerships Manager, Tim Young and everyone who generously donated and supported the event. Also, thank you to everyone who volunteered at the event, which was hugely appreciated.

Our next newsletter will be published in the early part of next year so please do let me have any articles you would like published.

With best wishes,

Sarah Wright, Chief Executive

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Kayleigh Leech, Quality & Business Support Co-ordinator

Since joining Open Road in April of this year, I feel I quickly became part of the team, everyone here has always been so welcoming and friendly. In my role, I oversee the Needle Exchange Programme and Naloxone services within pharmacies, both of which are essential in promoting public health and preventing drug-related harm, across Essex.

I am responsible for managing our Needle Exchange Programme, which currently spans over 56 pharmacies in Essex — a number that continues to grow. This initiative plays a critical role in reducing the spread of blood-borne infections and lowering the rates of drug-related deaths. By providing a safe, accessible service, the programme not only supports the health of individuals but also helps create a more supportive and non-judgmental environment for people who use drugs.

In addition to the Needle Exchange Programme, we are currently trying to expand our Naloxone service across pharmacies. Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose. Through this service, pharmacies across Essex are being equipped with the tools and training to prevent overdose deaths, further extending Open Road's commitment to harm reduction.

As part of these services, we work closely with Monique at exchange supplies who provides in house training to the pharmacists. My role involves regular check-ins with pharmacies, ensuring smooth operations and providing ongoing support to ensure both services meet the needs of clients.

Currently I am working on a project to simplify our incident reporting system, using Vantage Software. The goal is to make it easier and more accessible for everyone at Open Road to report and track incidents, ensuring that the system is user-friendly and efficient. As well as finding my feet with Vantage, I have been



diving into design projects using Canva. From creating reports to designing marketing materials, I'm excited to see how these projects help improve our communication.

Before joining Open Road, I worked in administration at a beauty training school. While the role was different in focus, I was pleasantly surprised to find how much previous experience would help me in my current position. From setting up a new clinical waste company to using new software like SharePoint, I have applied transferable skills, as well as learning new systems.

I have honestly learnt so much in such a short amount of time here at Open Road, it's been such a welcoming environment, and I love how every challenge I face helps me grow. I've been able to bring fresh ideas to the table and contribute to improving how we present our reports and services.

- Kayleigh Leech, Quality & Business Support Co-ordinator



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Funders and Supporters Spotlight

In supporting local communities, we work in partnership with our commissioners who share our values and desire to support vulnerable people in local communities. We are delighted to welcome Sharna Allen, Leads Commissioner for Prevention at Southend-on-Sea City Council as this edition's funder in the spotlight

As the Lead Commissioner for Prevention in Southend-on-Sea, I sit within the local council, and my role predominantly looks at how we design, deliver and develop key public health services in Southend. Prior to working in Southend, I spent time studying for a bachelor's degree in psychology, followed by a Masters in Anthropology and Development, and then secured a place on a graduate scheme in Public Health at Suffolk County Council back in 2015. Having initially wanted to go into global health, I quickly grew to love the closeness of working at a local level, with local people, and began to build my experience and portfolio of work developing local health and social care services. I have now been working in public health for nearly 9 years, and Southend for just over 2 years, and I absolutely love it!



My portfolio in my current role is broad...covering sexual health, drugs and alcohol, healthy lifestyles and complex needs, but what I like most about it is the opportunities it presents to speak to all different people about real, relatable experiences, and then use this insight to grow initiatives which go on to make a real difference.

How did you find out about Open Road?

When joining the team in Southend just over 2-years ago, I took on the strategic responsibility for the development of substance misuse services in Southend. In our area, Open Road delivers the young person's treatment and recovery service, so I was introduced to the organisation during the very early days of my role as I began to understand the landscape of support, and the key organisations involved in delivering some of our core services.

Which projects have you been involved in/helped us to fund?

Open Road delivers the young person's substance misuse service in our area through a sub-contracting arrangement with our adult service. Southend Council fund these services via the public health grant provided by central government. Over the past 2 and a half years we have also received additional grant funding to support the expansion

Open Road have been a pleasure to work with, and we hope to continue to showcase the positive impact they are having for the people of Southend!"

of our services. This has enabled us to fund some new and exciting roles within the Open Road service which has in turn provided the platform to really grow and embed joint working with families, criminal justice and education settings.

Did anything unexpected happen?

Just last week I got to meet with Sarah your CEO and your Operations Director Anna to talk about the wider work of Open Road. We talked about some of the wider initiatives being driven by Open Road in the areas of health, public health and prevention, and I was really inspired by the breadth of work the team were engaged in, and the opportunities it could bring for more holistic prevention work in the community. I definitely left with some food for thought as to how we can shift from focussing predominantly on the substance misuse needs of our client group, to looking more broadly at opportunities to improve overall health and wellbeing through improved access to dental care, health checks, cancer screening and more!

What impresses you most about Open Road?

Open Road have been in operation in Southend for around 2 and half years, and during this time I have been able to see them successfully mobilise the service, quickly building engagement and proactively working with communities and organisations in Southend to get their name out there and build some good and lasting relationships. I have been really impressed with the team and have thoroughly enjoyed seeing them expand and adapt the service. They continue to show innovative approaches to the challenges we face locally, and I hope to continue to work in collaboration to support the residents of Southend.

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Funders & Supporters Spotlight, continued...

What do you envisage is next for Open Road?

Just from a purely local perspective and reflecting on some of the challenges we face in Southend, it would be great to work with Open Road to look at opportunities to address emerging issues surrounding youth vaping and increasing risks with contaminated

vapes. It would also be great to celebrate and showcase the work that they do, and use this to continue to build vibrant recovery communities, and champions in our local system that can work in force to support positive public health and prevention efforts.

Successful Charity Ball

In October, we were thrilled to host our Charity Ball. Over 100 guests were treated to incredible food and wines, in the stunning surroundings of Milsom's The Talbooth in beautiful Dedham, North Essex. A key supporter, Dr Laura Swash attended the event with family where copies of her memoirs, *Holding my Breath* about supporting her brother, Colin who was a client with Open Road, were available for a donation. One of our founders, Bridie Ashrowan also attended.

Our evening included a charity auction and raffle where our donors outdid themselves this year; with the top prize being a sumptuous dinner at Layer Marney Tower. Bidding was fierce and lively, and the ball raised over an incredible £10,500!

We thank every one of our guests for supporting our fundraising, and a massive vote of gratitude goes to our evening's volunteers who made sure the raffle and auction went smoothly. Finally, thank you to the planning committee whose hard work ensured a great time was had by all. Every penny raised by the ball supports our vital, frontline services and so everyone's support has made a real difference to the work we do.

If you would like a copy of Dr Swash's memoirs, *Holding my Breath*, do please contact our head office on 01206 369782. The cost is just £6 and again, every penny funds our frontline services.



Founder, Bridie Ashrowan, middle, and her guests



Laura Swash and family enjoying the ball

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

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Harlow Walled Garden – Another Busy Season!

Our walled garden volunteers, led by project lead Anita Bailey, had a lovely summer and autumn but needless to say, there's always work to do in a garden. Crops included chillis and apples, as well as ground crops. With a gorgeous shady pergola to enjoy too, when the sunny weather hit Harlow, it's been a fantastic time to visit Harlow and its stunning park.

Huge thanks to Anita and all of our client volunteers for all of your hard work – thanks also to Harlow Parks team and all the other dedicated volunteers who help to keep the park looking so fantastic.



Big Crop of Chillies



Sunny Sunflowers



More crops



Shaded space to enjoy the garden



The team grow fruit too

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 yet again been a busy time 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. Many thanks to the incredible funders and trusts who have supported us recently, including:

- **The National Lottery** - Awards For All awarded us £20,000 towards the Engagement worker role in Clacton.
- **Screw Fix** provided us with £4,815 to go towards the Harlow centre refurbishment within the Harvey centre.
- **HSBC** also awarded us £20,000 towards the Harlow centre.
- **PFCC** awarded us £19,000 towards the SOS Bus in Chelmsford.
- **First Give** and Southend High School for Boys awarded us £1,000 to go towards the young people's service in Southend.
- **Community Safety Initiative Fund** from **ECC** awarded us £1,881 to go towards our anti spiking campaign for the Chelmsford SOS Bus.
- **Clacton Flow Fund** awarded us £250 to go towards the Clacton centre.

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ASDA and Tesco - Local Community Generosity

The Clacton community champion at ASDA has very kindly donated pots, soil, and plants for our Clacton centre's outdoor spaces, used by clients and staff especially in the glorious summer weather this year.

Our engagement worker Jamie, from Basildon has created strong working relationships with the community champions at Eastgate ASDA and Pitsea Tesco. They have donated food and drink for the drop-in and to many groups that we provide within the centre. 'BAKE' a bakery shop based in Southend will also donate goods when available. These items help to provide our clients with refreshments while working on their recovery. We thank you all!

Fundraising Events – we have had a busy summer and autumn of fundraising and already have some events coming up in 2025. Come and join us, it would be great to see you!

Recent fundraising

Colchester Kings rugby club hosted a quiz night to raise fund for Open Road on 6th September – thanks to everyone involved for such a fun night!

Our annual charity ball took place on 12th October at Maison Talbooth. We raised over £10,500 – it was a great evening, thank you to all of our donors, supporters, guests and our volunteers to helped on the night.

'A Christmas Carol' we held a spectacular fundraising performance of the ultimate Christmas story in Colchester at St Leonards-on-the-Hythe Church on 2nd December. Thank you to Colchester Arts Centre's Anthony Roberts for his incredible rendition, accompanied by Jamie Cunliffe on piano. We raised over £1,300 – thank you to everyone who came and supported the event. We will tell all in our next newsletter, covering winter 2024/25.



Upcoming Fundraisers

Sky dive – Laura Swash and her husband are taking on the challenge of a sky dive in Australia on the 7th January 2025 in memory of Laura's late brother Colin. To donate, head on over to their JustGiving page <https://www.justgiving.com/page/laura-swash-skydiveforcolin>



Laura, husband Uwe and family

Fundraising Events continued...

Stella-fest 1st March 2025 and the London Marathon 27th April 2025.

Kirsty is running the London Marathon and is hosting 'Stella-fest' in memory of her mum Stella who was a client of Open Road. More info to follow.

Beth Chatto Gardens Event – 12th May 2025

This is a lovely wellbeing event hosted at the Beth Chatto Gardens where you will have private access to the gardens with a guided tour, as well as a cream tea. More info on how to purchase tickets to follow.

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.easypfundraising.org.uk

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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.

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Recovery in Action

Our Essex All Age Recovery Coordination Service (AARCS), in partnership with The Children's Society, support vulnerable people throughout Essex. The team offers accessible, confidential support and advice to young people and adults who need help with drug or alcohol problems, to get their life back on track. Our clients work incredibly hard to turn their lives around, engaging with our team and seeing that positive change is possible.



Model

Client AD has been involved in Open Road since 2017. She has a history of class A use, but in recent years has reduced her use to only cannabis. She has a history of social care involvement. There had been concerns around domestic abuse and

her daughter not going to nursery, where social work services became involved. This year, the family have worked well with social care and have completed healthy relationship work. Their daughter has attended nursery and is getting into the routine of this, and her speech is improving.

AD attends the women's Hope group and has thoroughly enjoyed it. She is utilising cravings management resources and dream journaling and has now been able to complete abstinent days from cannabis. AD is now closed to social care, she is on recovery support and is proactively working on her recovery to successfully complete her treatment path this year.



Model

MH came into treatment in 2019, following a transfer from Southend STARS. He has a long history of drug and alcohol use. Started smoking cannabis as a teenager, before going on to try cocaine, amphetamine IV use and ecstasy. He started

heroin and crack use at 24 years old and injecting from 26 years old. MH has been sober from drugs since 2018, but found his alcohol use increased since stopping drugs.

In December 2023, he made the decision that he was now ready to face his alcohol use and get the support he desperately needed within a residential setting. He was assessed and accepted by Passmores House for detox from alcohol and methadone and Kenward Trust for 12 weeks rehab and move on project. MH did everything asked of him for his application to be accepted for rehab. In June 2024, this application was agreed by the panel and he went to Passmores House this summer. Sadly, MH lost his brother to a heroin overdose, and he is over the moon to have this chance to gain recovery from alcohol and process his trauma and bereavements in a safe place away from Essex. He says he cannot wait for his recovery worker and frontline team to meet the 'real me'.

A massive well done to AD, MH and all of our clients for what you are achieving on your journey to recovery. We are really pleased to be able to support you in making the positive changes you have, thank you for trusting us. A massive thank you too to our amazing team members who constantly go the extra mile to support our clients to be the best they can be.



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Frontline News

North Essex Team News

We have been donated some beautiful flowers and pots by the Community Champion Amy Openshaw from ASDA, the back yard has been weeded and tidied and is starting to look more welcoming with the beautiful flowers that were donated. Each supermarket has a Community Champion which it is a link between the store and the local community it serves. They are a store colleague who cares about the community and supporting local charities. They are able to advise about food collections, community grant schemes, and can help with filling in grant application forms and can give contact information about charity partners. The Community Champion can also give donations to support local events. I was signposted to the Community Champion by another Engagement Worker and have struck up a rapport with Amy who is passionate about helping charities such as Open Road.

The Breakfast Club has been popular with some of our clients, this is giving clients the chance to come in, have a chat and enjoy a nice breakfast from the local café. Throughout September we have combined the Breakfast Club with the IT course that has been provided by WE Are Group. This course has enabled some of our clients to learn IT skills and at the end of the course they will be able to keep the device they have been learning on. This course has been so successful we will be running it again in October.

Some of the team at Open Road Clacton have attended the Operation Grip Project with the police and the local council who were operating a safe space in the town centre, this was a great opportunity to give advice and signpost people to our Clacton centre.

Clacton is now on Facebook and Instagram – please follow us at [openroadclacton](https://www.facebook.com/openroadclacton).

Medway Team News

The Shutdown Under 18's rave!!

During the summer, Medway Youth Service ran a simulated nightclub called "shutdown" for young people 13-17, to create discussions around safety on nights out when they start going to clubs and pubs.



Medway Rave

Supporting services included Open Road Young Persons' Service delivering harm minimisation advice and raising awareness around substance misuse. Clover Street sexual health service, Southeastern railway safeguarding team and the missing and exploitation team from Medway Council.

We found this was a very successful night bringing over 200 young people with DJ's, free food, reduced drinks etc. Due to the success of the first Shutdown event, we are going to be supporting the running of another one during the October half term with the theme of safety.

Southend & Thurrock Team News

Southend Young Person's Service – A thank you

Sam in our Young Person's team in Southend recently received a heartfelt thank you from a family and young person, SP who our team supported –

"Sam, I knew this day had to come eventually and I am grateful to you both that you hung on in there for us until now. The past year you've been supporting us is a time in my life I will never forget.

Your kindness, patience and time was a saving grace. I'm sure you felt like you were banging your head against a wall at times trying to educate me on boundaries. I did listen, it took some time to sink in and luckily the tools you gave me have been in place for a few months now. Whether it will help SP make better choices in the future only time will tell. Hang on to my number please. If ever you need me just give me a call. I owe you. THANK YOU, SAM."

Our Southend Manager, Natalie says of the service and her team, "All the staff here are amazing and the service wouldn't work as well as it does without them, their passion and dedication to help the local community is so admirable."

We are always in awe of the amazing work our frontline teams do – thank you to every single one of you!

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Southend Young Person's Service Peer Mentor Programme

Southend Young Persons Service is dedicated to helping individuals in recovery advance to the next stage of their journey. We collaborate with First Place Housing, which assists people who are abstinent from drugs and/or alcohol with their housing needs. Together, we offer opportunities for residents of First Place Housing to become peer mentors within our service.

Our peer mentors are highly respected by both staff and service users. They provide invaluable support through their lived experiences and participate in professional training, educational workshops, and group activities. Their personal experiences greatly enrich the support we offer.

One such mentor is Chelsea, who has been an active peer mentor for Southend's young person's team since July 2024 and has been an asset to the team and service users. Here's Chelsea's story in her own words:

Chelsea Woods – Peer Mentor – Southend Young Persons Service

"It was finally time to get honest, get vulnerable and change my life, so here I am my name is Chelsea and I am alcoholic.



Peer Mentor, Chelsea

My alcoholism took me too four walls that got smaller and smaller, scared of my own shadow, in despair, not knowing what to do, so four rehabs, 1 geographical and a near death experience, I finally surrendered. A deep look inside me and a journey of self-exploration of the 12-step AA program, I looked at the reasons why I thought I drank and swallowed some hard truths about myself. But what came out of it was everything I was not, so I put in the action and changed my life.

My life went from dark to light, a vision of hope and surrender. After hearing a presentation given by Open Road about what they do as front-line services and volunteering opportunities available, I sat back and knew it was something I would be interested in.

I am now a peer mentor at Open Road. Very quickly I found that my lived experience was a fantastic way to give clients hope and direction. During this time here I have shadowed many colleagues in family support, hidden harms, and recovery services. In each area of what Open Road services provide I have been a

part of 1-1 sessions, group sessions, educating and discussing minimising harms, personal discussions and much more. I have been able to contribute to the education of what addiction is and what prevention measures are available.

Peer mentoring has given me purpose and a new found direction."

Thank you, Chelsea for telling your story and for being such an amazing asset to our Southend Young Person's team. Thanks also to Chelsea and our Southend team for the amazing work you do and support you give to vulnerable people - we couldn't do what we do without you all.

UK Recovery Walk and Festival

On Saturday 14th September, our Southend and Thurrock Manager, Natalie Amos attended the UK recovery walk and festival, held in Crystal Palace, alongside our partners, Forward Trust. She tells us more...



Natalie and Forward at Crystal Palace

The walk aimed to both celebrate and promote recovery. The event saw impressive turnout, with over 2,000 participants joining in, including various partnership agencies and community members. Following the walk, attendees enjoyed a substance-free festival featuring a diverse lineup of musical acts and comedians, all of whom were in recovery themselves.

The walk itself was hosted by FAVOR UK (faces & voices of recovery). Their aims are:

1. To save and improve lives of people affected by alcohol and other drugs by providing a voice of conscience.
2. To encourage and promote a more balanced investment into treatment services by public bodies and other funders.
3. Increase society's understanding of the link between trauma and the use of alcohol and other drugs, promoting the values of patience and empathy.

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4. To influence and shape public policy, removing the tokenism around the way that the voices of living and lived experiences are heard.

5. To celebrate and promote a culture of hope through the UK Recovery Walk, and inviting communities to walk with us through towns and cities across the UK.

It was a wonderful day filled with sunshine, celebrating the recovery of everyone who attended.

We shared a stand with SETDAP, Changing Pathways and Phoenix Futures.



Basildon Team Celebrating Pride

South Essex Team News

Client Feedback Forum

In September, Jamie (Vange Engagement Coordinator) and Holly (Vange Recovery Volunteer) co-facilitated the Client Feedback Forum. The 2 hour session was integral to gain as much positive and constructive feedback that will be used to improve the service.



Holly & Jamie ready to welcome clients

Jamie said of the event, "As the Engagement Coordinator for Open Road Vange, I am extremely passionate about improving the service as well as having a positive impact on the community that I've been a part of my whole life. I'm always striving and looking for ways to make our service, drop-in and groups better. I believe there is always room for progress and improvement, and that involving our clients in this process is absolutely imperative to achieving this goal".



Many thanks to Jamie and Holly and all our clients who attended the forum - we are incredibly grateful for your time and valuable input to ensure that Open Road fully supports vulnerable people and meets identified needs. We hope everyone enjoyed the event and found it interesting.

Michael becomes a Recovery Champion

Client Michael Swift becomes a Recovery Champion at Basildon Vange. Michael reached out to Open Road Vange in Oct 2023 and the next 11 months were some journey for Michael (affectionally known in the centre as Mikey).



Michael Swift

Michael has been passionate and consistent with his Recovery and always attended his appointments with his Recovery Worker, working on reduction plans and psychosocial goals. In time Michael regularly attended all the groups the centre had to offer and also won Gardner of the Day in our gardening group. This sparked a passion for gardening in Michael and through the spring and summer months he volunteered to continue the maintenance of our two gardens, in turn adding imperative structure and purpose to Michael's week.

Over time, Michael's reduction turned into full abstinence and continued his journey by entering Sharp's 9 week rehab programme. Michael is now nearly 5 months abstinent of substances and has taken on the roll representing our centre as Recovery Champion - making recovery visible for all our clients in our centre.

Huge congratulations to Michael for representing Open Road as one of our amazing recovery Champions - we are glad to have you on board!

Basildon Pride!

Open Road were in full force at Pride this summer. A brilliant day was had by all. Many thanks to Jamie (Vange Engagement Coordinator), Sian (Vange Recovery Worker), Nicky (Vange Recovery Worker) and Lauren (Chelmsford Senior Recovery Worker).

Make a donation!

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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

Open Road Welcomes the Mayor of Chelmsford

We were delighted to recently welcome the Mayor of Chelmsford and Mayoress to our Mansard House centre. Our Recovery Worker / Engagement Co Ordinator, Amy Castles tells us more.

On 11th September, we had the pleasure of the Mayor of Chelmsford and Mayoress visiting the centre alongside Open Road Trustee, John Aldridge and our Chief Executive, Sarah Wright.

The visit allowed our guests to meet everyone informally over tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits, to hear more about Open Road and our vital work. We showed our guests around the centre, discussing the different services we offer and plans we have for future service development, in reference to workshops and recent open access. We showed them the Needle Exchange programme here and the Naloxone Kits we have been issuing.

The Mayor and Mayoress also had the chance to meet the cohort of clients in The Hope Course run by the Big Love Group and the amazing work they do. We finally concluded the tour with one of our inspiring service users who spoke about his journey and his amazing plans for the future. A very informative and wonderful morning at the centre getting to show The Mayor and Mayoress the excellent work we do at Open Road!

A massive thank you to our Chelmsford Manager, Shannon Bundock, Amy and all the Chelmsford team for all their hard work in planning and hosting this visit. It was a really lovely morning which we hope everyone enjoyed.



Open Road Manager Shannon, Mayor and Mayoress, Trustee John Aldridge



A wonderful visit by the Mayor and Mayoress of Chelmsford





WE'VE LAUNCHED OUR LOTTERY PAGE

Buy Your Tickets From Our Page - We Get 50%

- We now have a page on The Essex Lottery!
- Support local causes and win prizes of up to £25,000!
- 50% of all tickets sold from our page go to us!
- PLUS 10% goes to other good causes in Essex!
- Tickets only cost £1 per week!
- Support us and win prizes - WIN WIN!

To Start Supporting, Visit:

www.EssexLottery.co.uk

And Search For:

Open Road

Supporters must be 16 years of age or older



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>



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New Southend Criminal Justice and Complex Needs Service – Client Success

We have a new Criminal Justice and Complex Needs service in Southend which is already successfully helping clients to get their lives back on track. Employment Specialist, Harry Gates-Brown tells us more.

A bright new chapter has begun for one of our Southend clients who has recently enrolled in a Level 2 Hairdressing course, setting their sights on a career in the Aesthetics industry!



Harry Gates-Brown

I received the referral from the Probation team in Southend, and met with the client to complete their vocational profile. We spoke in depth about their interests in gardening and how that could be carried over into an employment setting. We discussed local colleges opportunities and apprenticeships to train in the horticultural industry. Being of a more mature age, my client was shocked that they were eligible for an apprenticeship!

With their vocational profile completed, we discussed an action plan for us to work towards. In passing, I mentioned about an apprenticeship I recently sourced with a local barbershop. The client laughed and mentioned that their lack of hair may discourage potential clients!

And so with talk of barbering was put to one side, a rapid horticultural job search began, speaking to local colleges and training providers and to local employers about potential apprenticeships. Soon enough, I presented our client with horticultural training opportunities. Although happy with these, our earlier discussions about barbering had really struck a chord and they now wanted to explore this further. The client was so keen that they had found a course at a college offering a level 2 barbering qualification. We discussed and researched funding options agreed that we would submit an application for the Barbers

apprenticeship just in case training funding could not be sourced. With an action plan agreed, I completed the apprenticeship application and reached out to the College that offered the course, in hope to source funding.

Unfortunately, the barbership apprentice position became filled, but good news then came that the college funding team were able to provide funding for a one year course! The original level 2

barbering course did not have enough applicants to go ahead so the college tutor offered my client a place on a level 2 hairdressing course. They amended the syllabus to include a module on barbering for my client as well as increasing his skills with hairdressing training. The Level 2 Hairdressing course is recognised for its comprehensive curriculum and will provide more employment opportunities once the client has completed the course.

I have spoken to both my client and the tutor of the course to offer 'in work support', providing assistance to my client if they need it, but also allowing their tutor to contact me if they have any questions or issues with my clients' work. I have agreed with my client that in-work support will remain in place until they feel that they are ready to become independent.

By completing this course, my client will be well-equipped with skills and knowledge to make their mark in the industry. This journey serves as an inspiration to others who may be considering taking the leap into a new career.

Who would have thought that a simple passing comment can spark a change that transforms the entire course of someone's life?!

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**

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Summer Centre Launches – Medway and Harlow

Medway

Our Recovery Hub in Medway has been running for a number of years and has been a safe space for our clients and peers to socialise, receive support, celebrate success and walk forward in their recovery Journey. Last year, we were successful in retaining the Recovery Service in partnership with Forward Trust, we were excited and honoured to continue providing the service that we are all very passionate about.

As part of the new contract, funding was provided for a much-needed renovation for the Hub. This prospect excited us no end. On reflection, maybe the team weren't quite ready for what was about to come....

It was a complete overhaul, knocking down walls, ripping out the kitchen and replacing all of the flooring. Despite this, the team pulled together and worked hard to keep the hub open every day for our clients. From creating a temporary refreshments stall, to boarding off parts of the hub to create a group space, the team made it work.

After over 3 weeks of chaos, the refurb was finished. The transformation was outstanding and completely worth it. The hub, with its new café style area, is now an amazing space for our clients, peers and partner agencies. Goodbye to the old carpet and furniture covered in hazard tape, hello River Recovery Hub.

Earlier this year, we held a very positive launch event and welcomed everyone in to see all the changes. Thank you to everyone who came along, we loved seeing you all.

Harlow

Open Road's team was based out of Harlow's Derwent Centre at the Princess Alexandra Hospital but we outgrew the space very quickly and needed somewhere that could welcome clients to a friendly drop in space and facilitate group working.

We found the ideal place in the Harvey Centre in the heart of Harlow. Our SLT, supported by trustees and the frontline team set about planning the move. This involved a full refurbishment of the Harvey Centre Unit to meet our needs. It was a lot of work but the day came for the team move and everyone helped out.

This summer, we held our launch event which was a very busy and celebratory afternoon, where we welcomed commissioners and partnership organisations as well as Open Road's SLT, board members, patrons and friends and supporters of the charity.

Thank you also to our funders who supported these refurbishments, which have made a massive difference to our clients on their journey to recovery, as well as our staff and volunteers at the centres.



Medway interior



Busy Harlow Launch



Some of our Harlow team ready to serve up!

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Colchester Purple Flag Win!

Open Road was delighted to support Colchester BID's work to ensure that Colchester has retained the city's Purple Flag award. This standard launched in 2012 and is to celebrate and reward excellent management of the night time economy. 70 towns and cities across the UK and Ireland have achieved this national performance standard.

It allows members of the public to quickly identify town and city centres that offer an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out. Our SOS team is integral in guaranteeing that visitors receive a very warm welcome and assist any visitors and members of the public if they are in difficulty or become unwell.

Well done to everyone involved and to Colchester BID for all of your hard work.



SOS Bus's Nicky Best, far right with Colchester BID team

SOS Bus supports World Diabetes Day

Our team was delighted to support this year's World Diabetes Day, where the Colchester bus was based at Tesco Highwoods in Colchester. We and our partners met the public to create awareness around diabetes.

Brioni Maker, Health Systems Engagement Manager with Diabetes UK East of England said, "We had such a brilliant day. HCPs from NEEDS did not stop all day so thank you so much Becky and Debbie! We carried out 44 HbA1c tests and 44 Lipids tests in total which is brilliant."

"Thank you also to Rob from Abbott for all your help and managing to get the spare analyser up and running by hugging it to get warm enough and also helping to encourage members of the public onto the bus for their health checks."

"Also, a big thank you to David and Metin for all your support on the day and speaking to so many people coming in and out of the store. We lost count but it was well over 100 people we engaged with over the course of the day which is fantastic, and everyone was very receptive and happy to see our presence at the store. We signposted to our services, the local type 2 education course run by NEEDS, the NDDP, talked about the importance of annual reviews highlighting the 9 CPs and handed out our materials helping to support self-management."

We are delighted that the event was such a success. Our many thanks to Brioni and her team, our SOS team led by Stacy Banner and Nicky Best and everyone there on the day who made it the success that it was!



Diabetes UK team ready to greet shoppers



World Diabetes Day nursing team

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Open Road 2024 AGM – A Celebration of Recovery



A very busy AGM / Keynote Speaker, Paul Jefferies

We were delighted to welcome over 110 guests to our 2024 AGM on Friday 1st November at Colchester Stadium. After a very busy and successful year which, as with any charity, also brought many challenges, it was very much a positive AGM, celebrating our year with commissioners, funders, supporters, patrons, trustees, staff, volunteers and clients in recovery. Special guests included The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Jennifer Tolhurst; the Mayor and Mayoress of Chelmsford (Councillor Janette Potter and Cllr Jackie Galley) and Open Road Patron, His Honour Charles Gratwicke.

The morning began with a delicious light breakfast for guests, enjoyed by all, prior to the main AGM. The AGM itself was opened by our Chair of Trustees, Nick Alston who gave an overview of the charity's year from the Board's perspective, with our Board having met prior to the AGM to undertake regulatory and legal business of the day, such as accepting the audited annual accounts and voting on board members. Nick introduced our keynote speaker, Paul Jefferies of Pebble Associates, who presented the findings of our evaluation report commissioned from independent consultant, Charlotte Fitzgerald, who had had to give her apologies for the event. For the evaluation,

Charlotte interviewed staff, volunteers, commissioners and clients, to provide a thorough assessment of our work. The independent report showed that we are incredibly valued by those we support, underlined the proactive work we do as well as the successful results we have achieved in our services.

Charlotte separately noted to Open Road, "I want to thank all those people who gave their time, experience, insight and stories to make this evaluation possible. This was an eye-opener for me too; it's not often so much positivity comes across in an evaluation."

Our second speaker was our amazing client in recovery, Sara who took our guests on her journey to recovery and spoke passionately about the positive changes in her life since. Our AGM finale was the premier of our 2024 AGM film, where clients in recovery tell their story and explain what Open Road means to them.

The whole morning was one of positivity - celebrating our people, our clients, our supporters and our charity. We thank Colchester Stadium's event team and a special thank you to everyone who attended; we hope everyone enjoyed the morning as much as we did.

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!

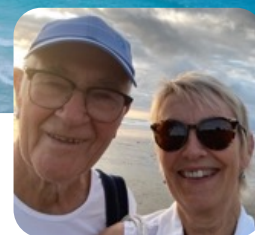
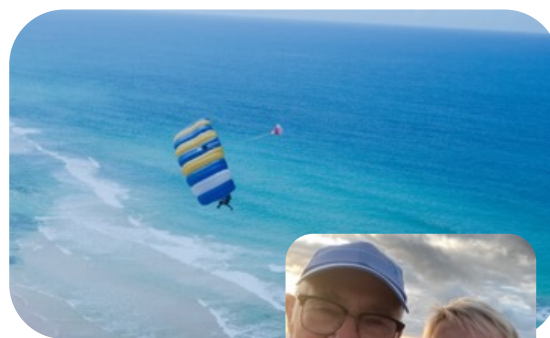
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Fundraising Tandem Skydive

Amazing fundraiser, Laura Swash tells us more about her and her husband, Uwe taking a skydive in 2025, raising money for Open Road

Since my son Andy moved to Australia, my husband Uwe and I have been planning a visit 'down under.' Sitting talking about our plans, we realised that we both had skydiving on our bucket list, and where else to do it apart from Noosa beach in Queensland? We decided that this would be our biggest fundraiser yet for Open Road. We started our Just Giving page at the end of August and three weeks later the amount stood at £1150. Such generous donors and lovely messages! We had already bust our £1000 target, so we raised it to a new high of £1500. Every penny goes to Open Road Visions, as they are the ones who helped my brother Colin for so many years.

We're jumping on January 7th, so there's plenty of time to donate. We're both scuba divers but this will be my second sky dive and Uwe's first! Once you see the pics you will realise we're not in our first flush of youth, so it really is time to get on with the exciting stuff.



Please donate if you feel able, by scanning the QR code or the link which will take you to the Just Giving page, and Colin's story. Every little helps!

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/laura-swash-skydiveforcolin>

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!

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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



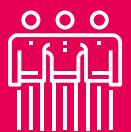
- **We help people in recovery to get that dream job** with a network of dedicated, local employers



- **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

openroad

your journey to recovery

Registered Charity No. 1019915



Forthcoming Events with Open Road:

Beth Chatto Gardens Wellbeing Event
12th May 2025

Open Road AGM
7th November 2025
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
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01206 369782

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New starters

We would like to extend a warm welcome to:

- Bonnie Jarman
- Jayne Denham
- Christiana Nicolaides
- Natalie Clarke
- Phoebe Brown
- Aimee Hayter
- Esme Sawyer Mitchell
- Lisa Eastman
- Elena Wilmot

Our Leavers

We bid a farewell and thank you to:

- Amy Brown
- Brittany Richmond
- Evelyn Ogle
- Claire Hallett
- Priya Ramesh
- Grazia Tuscano
- John Mills
- Helina Patel
- Chloe Mills

The next issue of On the Road will be published in Spring 2025. Please send any articles, ideas and comments to sarah.wright@openroad.org.uk

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