



MISSION STATEMENT

The Leave A Light On (LALO) support group was founded on the 23rd March to provide much needed aid, virtual help and a 24-hour form of support through the Covid-19 Pandemic up until we recover as a Nation. The group was initiated by the coordinator Richard Francis who, in his regular position was a chef by trade, but after almost a decade of charity work, is making the current transition to a paramedic and is now in his final year of training.

Richard is by no means a novice when it comes to organising support groups, back when Storm Desmond devastated Cumbria and parts of Lancashire, Richard began the support group 'The Big Cumbrian Christmas Day Get Together' which was initially setup in the hope of providing venues for those that had lost their homes to have somewhere to spend Christmas Day and still have the magical day despite all the devastation around.

The project though grew and grew in size (as the LALO one is now) not only in providing 7 venues across the county to open their doors on Christmas Day including pubs, restaurants, cafes, soft play areas and school halls. The project also ran a much needed aid group from the Milton Hilltop Hotel, Carlisle providing families with present provision and wrapping on a mass scale, full Christmas Day food family boxes (so should they not feel safe to leave their home they could still enjoy their day) along with many magical treats such as a pantomime or event tickets in the area (even organising many favourite Disney characters and superheroes to gift continually to affected areas). Following on from this, Richard, with the help of teams of volunteers, has ran projects such as 'Cumbria's Very Own Santa' and the '999 Emergency Christmas Meal Appeal' leading to very kind accolades from the CN Group of Person of the Year, to an invitation to Downing Street to celebrate the work of volunteers in the North West region.

Richard is very passionate about helping others ensuring no one in need is ever left with a feeling of misfortune even when difficult times approach. Every time he is able to inspire wonderful teams of volunteers to get on board and his emphasis is very much on "without their support and such a giving community" none of the above would be at all possible. As of yet none of the projects above have had charity status, there has been many calls for them to become a regular founded support, but Richard commonly states he likes to be able to diversify the support that is needed whenever and wherever this may be. There is almost that aspect of Richard, based on his own historical experiences of the community, to provide when family were not in a position to. It is his wish to never say no! Yes, there will always be those dubious receivers of goods but Richard, with his vast experience of providing support, is able to, rather than say no, empower those people in this category to self-help.

Leave a Light On

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The Leave A Light On project (LALO) has diversified from initially a virtual signposting platform providing free educational, counselling, financial or recruitment support with trained expert volunteers to now, which has seen the project house over 100 NHS staff, keyworkers and those in emergency situations into stunning free of charge accommodation across the county. The project has provided an abundance of emergency food hampers via referrals from the social services, child protection and domestic violence charities who almost immediately put their trust in Richard's project. The basis of their support being what the groups have provided before with discretion, confidentiality and data protection always at the forefront of any help we provide where vulnerable people are involved.

Richards' projects, alongside and with the continual support from his partner Marina, have always involved stunningly wrapped and presented hampers and again this time is no different. A big aspect of the group, providing community hero hampers and enrichment hampers, are firstly to celebrate our community heroes from as young as 2 years old to 92 and beyond. The group is very passionate about not only supporting and inspiring our next generation of volunteers but also feels it is equally important to celebrate the work of those going the extra mile in the community or family support within difficult times. The project, as you will see from the attached poster, has also grown and grown to aid with DIY repairs, continual practical and emotional support and even specialist treats for people who have faced some dark times throughout the pandemic.

Ultimately, that leads us to the Mission Statement of the group and where the name was founded..

"The Leave A Light On Group is there to provide a continual light day or night throughout what has been, for many of us, a dark time."

As the group is not a registered charity managing finances is a very key aspect of importance to Richard, he has setup an account specifically for LALO, because of the current climate and the time factor, this has been completed via PayPal and registered on their site as a non-profit organisation. Richard, even if he receives private donations through his own bank account (as not everyone has PayPal) then forwards all funds that are LALO related to the account so income and expenditure forms can be completed with all costs and donations accounted for.

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Richard welcomes donators on any scale, to view the income and expenditure forms at any time and any donation received, where consent is given, awareness is shared to not only show thanks but also let the people in need know that as a collective group we now have more funds available.

The likelihood (going forward and when the volunteers can separate their focuses onto it) is that this project shall become a registered charity. Richard envisages many recovery and support groups on face-to-face terms when this is allowed in future times.

Finally, we just wanted to say thank you for taking the time to read this and we fully appreciate you may not be able to support the project because of restrictions and limits as to who you can support but should you be able to, Richard, Marina and their fantastic team of volunteers would like to personally thank you, your business or organisation in helping us make a difference in our community.

You can find more information on Facebook or our website, and you're welcome to ask anything via email lalorecovery2020@gmail.com (which is also the PayPal account).

Yours sincerely,

Richard Francis

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