

Some Centre stats

We had football equivalent to 6,163 visits in the last 12 months. The number of overall visits were similar to last year but the increase in the use of the Community Fridge has risen significantly. This involved providing more than 15,510 food bags (in the year to July 2023). This is a 36.76% increase from last year and equates to approximately 62,040 meals (if each bag contains 4 meals) - bread and other goods being provided separately.

We work with FareShare and Neighbourly and collect from Tesco, M&S, Sainsbury's, Greggs, Nandos, KFC and Lidl

Working with organisations & agencies

We continue to work with the Area Foodbank, Community 360 and Essex County Council. We have been working with all other local agencies to ensure that we sign-post clients to the most appropriate help- where we cannot offer that assistance. We belong to: Braintree Community Tree, the Horizon Project, the Community Safety Hub, other crime prevention strategies and other community mental health services.

Last year we offered clients advice on 3,582 occasions, an increase from the previous year of 937 (over 26% more) With Community 360 we provided 40 bags (2 for each person) of provisions for those lacking support leaving hospital.

More Centre stats

Our education, through the Essex Learning Partnership Fund, continues to provide learning to the most isolated and vulnerable in Essex. In 22-23 we have provided learning opportunities to over 540 individuals. We continue to be 1 of only 4 providers working in partnership with Adult Community Learning Essex (through ELPF). We also have partnership working with other organisations, such as the WEA and Good Things Foundation.

Even more Centre stats

Since working with FareShare alone we have:

- Collected 1,455 donations to date
- 46,125kg of food has been received
- The equivalent of 127,165 meals have been distributed
- 169,479g of CO₂ savings have been made to the environment (data provided by FareShare) We continue to work with Neighbourly (M&S and Sainsbury's), 2 Lidl stores, Greggs, Nandos, KFC and The Cornish Bakery.

Our work with Braintree Village

We have continued to work with Braintree Village, as part of their Community Partnership Programme. They have been remarkable in their ongoing support. They have supported our clients in so many ways:

- By allowing us to provide bespoke learning & support opportunities for our clients and enabling progression for them
- By linking us with their Christmas 'Giving Tree' (where in 2022 we were again their chosen charity) We supported clients, care homes and vulnerable people who are housebound throughout the district
- By collaboratively sponsoring, with Tesco, Lidl and Iceland we supplied full Christmas dinner hampers- from sprouts to crackers and Christmas puddings!
- By funding much needed work of our charity

And by just 'being there' for us. By being available at the end of a telephone, Zoom calls (now part of everyday life) and face-to-face meetings. To boost us and lifting our spirits. Providing us with support to continue to provide help for the disadvantaged throughout our community.



FIRST STOP CENTRE

Charity no. 803170

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Tel: 01376 346535 E-mail:

firststopcentre@btconnect.com

www.firststopcentre.com

Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the Centre's Annual report for 2022/23.

As mentioned in last year's Report, the Covid 19 pandemic caused us to change many of the ways we were helping our clients. Those changes were consolidated in the year under review. We no longer provide a canteen service providing hot meals on a drop-in basis, but have expanded our provision of food parcels through the Community Fridge Initiative. We have been able to assist clients who are struggling to feed their families and themselves, as a result of the financial crisis that has been with us throughout the year, by providing food parcels. We are sure that this has been of greater assistance to those affected, than just providing hot meals to those who come to the Centre. We are very grateful to the supermarkets and stores who provide us with the foods that enable us to help our clients.

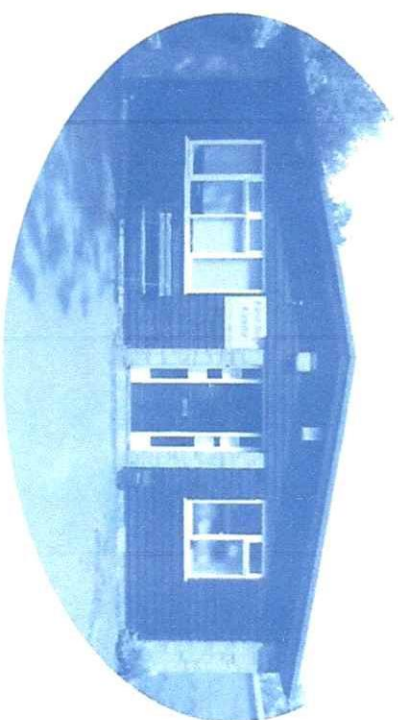
Our other major initiative is the increase in the number and variety of training courses we provide, and our thanks go to the Essex Learning Partnership Fund for their support and, of course, their grants.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the continuing support we receive from Braintree Village, we are immensely grateful for their very generous grants.

More details of our work are set out elsewhere in this Report. My personal thanks go to Rachael Stone, the Centre Manager, and Jan Russell, her deputy, for keeping the show on the road throughout Covid and subsequently, and to them and all the staff and volunteers at the Centre for their dedication to helping those who need help in Braintree District.

September 2023

Ian Wardrop
Chair of Trustees



FIRST STOP CENTRE

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity details
Name
Registered charity number
Principal address

First Stop Centre
 803170
 29 Booking End
 Braintree
 Essex
 CM7 9AE

Trustees

Ian Wardrop
 Michelle Earey
 Tracey Radley
 Emma Reid
 Moira Thorogood

Chair
 Vice Chair
 Treasurer
 Secretary
 Trustee

Structure and governance

The charity is a Trust and its governing document is a Constitution. Trustees are appointed by fellow trustees who, together with the Centre Manager, comprise the Management Committee. All trustees are subject to re-election at the Annual General Meeting.

The day-to-day running of First Stop Centre is the responsibility of the Centre Manager who reports to the Management Committee.

Charity's Objects

First Stop Centre is established for the public benefit with the following objects:
 To relieve the condition of disadvantaged persons in mid-Essex experiencing difficulties with

- homelessness
- joblessness
- financial pressures
- substance misuse
- physical and mental health and related problems
- learning disabilities

by the provision of support services for such persons to assist them in maintaining normal relationships with and within the community in which they reside.

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in setting out below the main activities undertaken in furtherance of First Stop Centre's Objects:

- education services, including Skills for Life, numeracy, literacy, IT
- counselling, including anger management
- drop-in facility, including access to a Community Fridge and food parcels, support on form filling, housing support, "care-of" address, general support from staff.

Main achievements

Details of First Stop Centre's achievements and performance are set out in the Annual Report.

Financial review

The Independent Examiner's report is contained in the main body of the Annual Report. A reserve fund of approx. £50,000 is maintained as contingency in order to deal with any unexpected major expenditure.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Annual Report as set out in this document.

September 2023

(Signed) Ian Wardrop
 Chair of Trustees

Manager's Report

First Stop has had a very busy year, and I would like to thank all the team for all they do to support those in the Braintree district. They adapt to client need, and with the support of our management team and other agencies, they have helped buffer what has been a very difficult time for so many, always thinking outside the box to offer the best they can. A massive thank you to all those who help fund the work we do, together we will try and be the voice of those often unheard, and support them where we are able.

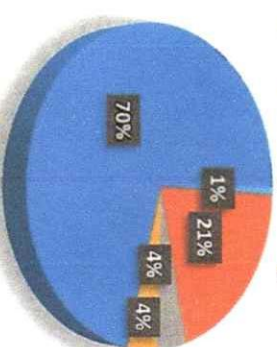
Treasurer's Report 2022-23

We continue on a strong financial footing having planned, and have met the economic challenges we had prepared for. Delivery of projects large and small has been successful and this again is due to our very dedicated team and their continued hard work.

As some funding changes we can report that we have successfully engaged with alternative funding streams, which allows us to continue developing and delivering projects in the wider community.

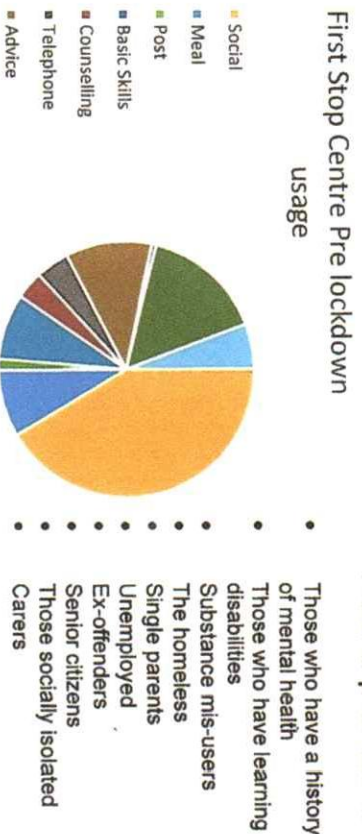
Tracey Radley

Usage of First Stop without the Community Fridge

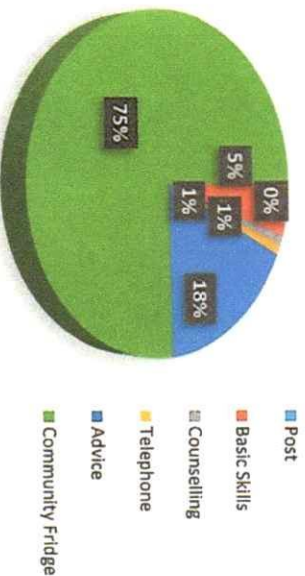


- Post
- Basic Skills
- Counselling
- Telephone
- Advice

Who might benefit from First Stop services?



How First Stop has been used in the last 12 months



How can the individual make contact with the centre?

- A person can be referred through a third party, such as: JCP, Social Services, NHS, GP surgeries, BDC, Probation Service, CAB or self-referral
- A person can use the centre for the fridge as soon as they wish and any specialised programmes (subject to availability)
- A person now needs to make an appointment to see a member of staff as the drop-in service is no longer available

Mission Statement

To work with people who are disadvantaged, in a non-judgemental way, in order to improve their lives

The Impact First Stop Centre has had.....

A Case Study- How First Stop continues to evolve

We continue to explore how we can continue to change our service to meet the needs of our diverse client group. Two of the initiatives we have worked on this year have been focussing on helping our clients with the continuing struggle with the cost of living rises. This has involved working collaboratively with partnerships and agencies to deliver slow cookers (in sizes to meet an individual's need) and following on from this air fryers.

With the slow cookers we showed people how to use them and provided links to recipes and packs of food in the form of starter packs. We took these into the community and lots of people, including supported housing- and the same with air fryers. All have been a huge success.

Case Study Two.....

We have been helping a growing number of people with digital skills. We have been able to offer approaches for people. One initiative is Learn my Way- a recognised programme where we are an accredited centre for the Good Things Foundation. This has helped people get involved and in control of their learning.

We have helped Carol to use IT, something she was reluctant to do. The programme supports people through the training and we have staff supporting them as well. Carol had suffered a bereavement and wanted to make changes. She persevered and is starting work in September.....

Case Study Three.....

Whilst we have not been able to open the doors, in the same way we did pre-Covid, we provide a warm space- offering classes, a hot drink and reducing social isolation. We opened our doors for crafting sessions on a Saturday.

This has been very popular with people making all sorts of craft items- Cacti being one such item- made from paper-mâché. Sheila has been isolating during covid and this had continued. She was very nervous about coming out but was recommended to come, as it is a friendly group. She has made many friends, had access to the Community Fridge, made a splendid, if not large, cactus which she is rightly very proud of.....

Other news.....

Our famous (or possibly infamous!) Learners' Celebration and raffle (the infamous part) at Christmas has not yet returned, as we believe that people are still nervous of gatherings. As soon as they are ready- we will be back! However, through a huge number of partner organisations and people's generosity, including the huge support from Braintree Village we have been able to support old and new clients, including those socially isolated who live alone. People are still talking about the food hampers, gifts and all the support they received last Christmas many months on- and this gives us hope for the future. We have continued to evolve our learning experiences for more people to be able to take part, gently easing people back into a more inclusive society- including working with those who want to volunteer or work. These events are only able to happen through everyone collaborating together- and we are so thankful for this. It's the reason we do what we do and working together has been such a positive thing.

First Stop Centre Mid Essex Branch
1st April 2022 - 31 March 2023

<u>Income</u>	<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2021/2022</u>		<u>2020/2021</u>
	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	
ECC / Essex Learning Partnership Fund	41,680	0	31,689	0	25,410
Essex Community	0	0	25,000	0	7,500
Community 360	2,000	0	8,600	0	4,200
Other Funding	0	0	0	0	0
Braintree District Council	4,100	0	31,326	0	17,286
Landsec	10,000	0	17,000	0	15,000
Phoenix Futures	720	0	0	0	0
Neighbourly	2,800	0	400	0	0
Interact	0	1,050	0	560	280
WEA	0	7,280	0	4,760	2,800
FSJ Charities	0	0	0	0	0
Braintree Lions	0	1,000	0	0	0
Other Donations	0	31	0	1,949	6,777
Essex Association	7,000	0	23,000	0	5,000
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)	0	0	0	0	2,200
Census	0	0	980	0	5,568
Fundraising Events	674	0	0	0	0
Gift Aid	0	0	0	0	0
Counselling Income	0	3,391	0	3,826	1,850
Canteen Income	0	0	0	0	0
Pool Table Takings	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Income	0	337	0	74	0
HMRC JRS GRANT	0	0	6,832	0	6,665
Covid-19 Response Grant	0	0	0	0	21,906
Supplier Refund of Overpayment	0	0	0	45	490
Bank Interest	0	111	0	5	14
	68,974	13,200	144,806	11,219	
Total Income		82,175		156,025	122,946

Expenditure

Payroll	73,992	63,404	51,720
Maintenance	948	1,456	482
Copier	0	0	144
New Equipment	434	6,420	1,686
Travel	672	347	311
Supervision & Training	1,127	538	228
Insurance	308	950	950
Utilities	3,780	1,977	2,584
IT Costs	2,114	2,113	1,371
Office expenses	926	471	266
Cleaning	4,160	4,110	0
Food collections & deliveries	448	890	0
Sundry Expenses	386	323	44
Shopping Vouchers	6,450	10,000	0
Xmas Hampers	555	422	0
Cooking Equipment	5,188	0	0
Accounts Audit	60	60	60
Census	0	1,080	0
PPE / Covid19 expenses etc	305	204	13,300
Craft materials	294	0	0
Printing/Stationery	558	258	79
Total Expenditure	102,683	95,021	73,227

(Deficit)/Surplus

-20,509

61,005

49,719

Fund B/F

213,719

152,714

102,995

Fund C/F

193,210

213,719

152,714



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

**Independent examiner's
report on the accounts**

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

FIRST STOP CENTRE MID-ESSEX BRANCH

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2023

**Charity no
(if any)**

803170

Set out on pages

1-12

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2023.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed: Lisa Brown

Date: 19/08/2023

Name: Lisa Brown

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

ICB Level 1 Manual Bookkeeping
ICB Level 2 Manual Bookkeeping
ICB Level 3 Computerised Bookkeeping
ICB Level 2 Certificate in Bookkeeping
ICB Level 3 Certificate in Bookkeeping and Accounts

Address: 5 Charnock Close

Frinton on Sea

Essex CO13 0RT

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

1. REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The trustees have the pleasure in presenting their annual report and the financial statements for the financial year 2022/2023. The financial statements comply with the charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the memorandum and articles of association and accounting and reporting by charities: Statement of recommended practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102). Trustees (see page 2 annual report).

The directors of the charity are its Trustees for the purposes of charity law and throughout this are collectively referred to as The Trustees.

2.OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

See page 2 (Charities Objects)

To promote sustainable development for the benefit of disadvantaged in the community.

To continue to adhere to COVID-19 safety for all staff and service users. this continues to be reviewed alongside government guidelines.

3.ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

See page 3 of annual report - graph's

4. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Outcome for the year, the transactions of the charity are summarised in the Independent Examiner's report 2022/23 in the financial statement pages. The charity had total incoming resources for the year 2022/23 of £82,175. Of this amount £68,974 was restricted and £13,200 unrestricted. Total expenditure in the year amounted to £102,683 this resulted in an overall deficit of the year of £20,509 (2021/22 Surplus £61,005) reflective of longer running projects. The charity has total reserves at the end of 2023 of 51,000 see reserves policy.

RESERVES POLICY

The level of the reserves held seeks to strike a balance between managing risk and providing ongoing running costs of between three to nine months, this is in the case of a possible folding event and maintaining the level of resources is necessary to safeguard the continuity of the charity (including vulnerable service users) for the immediate period following.

It is also calculated that £20,000 of the total sum would cover redundancy at current staffing level and is calculated around service duration, age and rate of pay. The remainder would cover any costs incurred in closing existing contracts in full. Finally we may access this reserve in the event of action needed if income falls below expectations or if there are unexpected or unforeseen operational costs.

The trustees consider that a target level of free reserves in order of £51,000 (including interest) is currently appropriate for the charity. The total of free reserves remains at financial accounting 2022/23.

5.FUTURE PLANS

We will continue to deliver our educational and more recently crafting projects, counselling services, advocacy, postal holding (See Charities Objects) to service users while looking towards previously mentioned diversifications. We wish to be continually able to further grow and develop our working model. This will aid us in delivering best value and leave us able to continue with wider access as already demonstrated.

We are looking forward to utilising our direct funding to start work on our WC area as soon as possible and after successful discussions and agreement with our landlord this project is due to begin thus providing the much needed and fully inclusive facilities needed for our service users. This improvement will mean we will be able to more comfortably offer our growing services to our already wide demographic in the locality.

FUTURE PLANS Continued

We are planning some changes to the location/access point to our community fridge facility. It has been discussed and agreed that this would allow for easier access out of centre hours for deliveries and also it would erase the disruption often caused to groups or courses running within the main area in the centre. This is a much needed plan of action as this service has seen a significant increase to access across the year. We look forward to updating this progress in our next report.

6.RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

For the purposes of charity law, trustees are to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the situation of the charity and of the surplus or deficit for the year. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- (a) select appropriate accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- (b) observe the methods of the charities SORP
- (c) make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- (d) state whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed and explain where they have not been followed
- (e) prepare the financial statements on an ongoing concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND DIRECTORS

The trustees are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records, these must disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to insure that the financial statements comply with the charities act 2011 and the companies act 2006.

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that the charity maintains an adequate system of internal control, designed to provide reasonable assurance that assets are safeguarded against material loss or unauthorised use to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the statement of recommended practice, accounting and reporting by charities and in accordance with the the special provisions of part 15 of the companies act relating to small entities.

Approved by the board of trustees

Signed on their behalf by



Michelle Lee - Chair