

Some Centre Stats

We had football equivalent to 9,364 visits in the last 12 months. The number of overall visits was significantly up from last year showing a 51.94% increase mainly due to the use of the Community Fridge.

This involved providing more than 25,989 food bags (in the year to July 2024) This is a 67.56% increase from last year and equates to approximately 103,956 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, Lidl, Pret and Cornish Bakery. Making over 32 pick ups per week.

Working with organisations & agencies

We continue to work with the Foodbank, BDC and ECC. 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 Community Safety Hub, other crime prevention strategies and community mental health services.

Last year we offered clients advice on 4,338 occasions, an increase from the previous year of 756 (over 21% more)

More Centre Stats

Our education, through our work with Landsec continues to provide learning to the most isolated and vulnerable in Essex. In 23-24 we have provided learning opportunities to over 120 individuals, who completed 965 sessions. We offer Learn my Way through the Good Things Foundation and the opportunity to engage on courses that really can change lives.

Once person we have helped has progressed onto a counselling course and says that without our help this would not have happened.

Even more Centre Stats

Since working with Fareshare alone we have:

- Collected 1,813 donations to date
- 62,199kg of food has been received
- The equivalent of 149,110 meals have been distributed
- 193,424kg of CO₂ savings have been made to the environment (data provided by Fareshare) We continue to work with Neighbourly (M&S, Sainsbury's, 2 Lidl stores, Greggs and Pret and The Cornish Bakery as well)

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 2023 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 to 80 families!
 - By funding much needed work of our charity
- And by just 'being there' for us. By being available at the end of an e-mail and telephone. Providing us with support to continue to provide help for the disadvantaged throughout our community.



FIRST STOP CENTRE

Charity no. 803170

29 Bocking End, Braintree, Essex. CM7 9AE

Tel: 01376 346535 E-mail:

firststopcentre@btconnect.com

www.firststopcentre.com

Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the Centre's Annual report for 2023/24.

Chair's Introduction: First Stop Centre Annual Report 2023/2024

As the new Chair of First Stop Centre, I'm honoured to present this year's report, highlighting remarkable efforts and achievements of our charity in a challenging yet rewarding year. I'm incredibly proud to be part of an organisation that continues to make a significant difference to those in our community.

This year saw a substantial increase in football (51.94%) from last year, testament to the growing demand for our services. Our Community Fridge, one of the vital services we offer, has been instrumental in keeping individuals and families fed during these difficult times. The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated, providing not only sustenance but also a sense of security for those who rely on it.

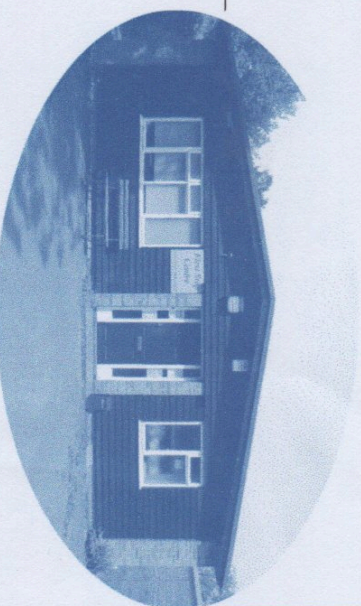
We are also proud to have provided education courses to 120+ participants, helping to equip members of our community with skills and knowledge to improve their prospects and confidence.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Braintree Village for their generous grants and initiatives, which enabled us to offer additional support in the most deprived areas of our community. Their partnership has been invaluable, we are truly grateful for their ongoing commitment.

On behalf of myself and the trustees, I would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to Rachael Stone, our Centre Manager, and Jan Russell, our Deputy Manager. Their dedication, alongside the incredible work of our entire team—our food collectors, counsellors, and volunteers—has been nothing short of amazing. Your commitment to supporting the local community during these trying times is deeply appreciated.

Together, we have made a real difference, and I look forward to what we will continue to achieve in the year ahead.

Michelle Lee
Chair of Trustees



FIRST STOP CENTRE

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity details
Name
Registered charity number
Principal address

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

Trustees

Michelle Lee
Tracey Radley
Emma Reid
Mola 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 2024

(Signed) Michelle Lee
Chair of Trustees

Manager's Report 2024

A big welcome to our report highlighting some of the work we have done in the last 12 months. The statistics help to emphasize the massive increase in help we have been able to provide, with the 50 % rise in numbers proving this point. I would like to thank all the staff and volunteers who make up our amazing 'First Stop Family' and all the other organisations who support us and work with us, we couldn't do what we do without this. We are a small charity which means we can react quickly to local need, filling the gaps in provision without duplicating. We try and work as closely as possible with others to provide the best we can for those in the district, with very limited funds.

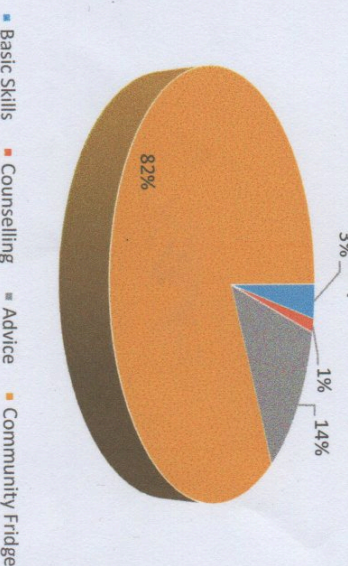
Treasurer's Report

Following some reported funding changes in the last annual report. I am able to say that we have not seen any issues and have therefore continued to deliver well subscribed projects to the local and wider community.

We are on a steady financial footing and as with previous years we will continue to remain vigilant of any possible economic challenges arising and will be ready to adapt and meet them when necessary.

I would like to give a big thank you to all of our funders and also to our small but strong team for continuing to work so very hard for another year.

How is First Stop Centre Used



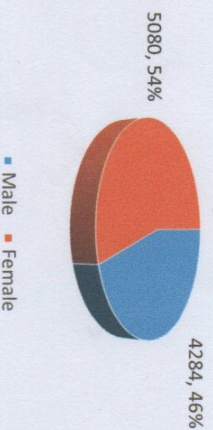
Who might benefit from First Stop services?

- Those who have a history of mental health
- Those who have learning disabilities
- Substance mis-users
- The homeless
- Single parents
- Unemployed
- Ex-offenders
- Senior citizens
- Those socially isolated
- Carers

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- this is being monitored but continues to work well and target those most in need
- There is a separate form on the website to complete for counselling and classes

Split of Men- Women using the centre



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

A Case Study- How First Stop continues to evolve

We continue to explore how best to continue 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 financial struggle caused by the cost of living rises.

This has involved attending meetings and working collaboratively with partnerships and agencies to deliver Numeracy and Budgeting courses through Multiply. We have done this alongside teaming up with Santander, giving clients potentially more knowledge and choice.

Case Study Two.....

We have been continuing to help 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 allowed them control of their learning. We are putting on extra sessions in order to meet increasing demand. The programme supports people through the training and we have dedicated staff supporting them as well.

Case Study Three.....

During colder months, through our learning provision, we provide a warm space- offering classes, a hot drink, cake 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- including a nativity scene. In the spring the group welcomed Grace into their sessions. She was put at ease by their inclusivity and was soon contributing to their art and designs. The group worked with Essex University students and produced a 3D tree- which welcomes everyone into the centre, as soon as they come into the main room. Two of the group project managed the tree 🌲

This year we supported 300 individuals with items to keep warm. This included hats, scarves and gloves. These were provided by Braintree Village. It was an initiative to help more people in the community than previously possible. Including the:

- homeless,
- clients
- young people

It was very successful. It took less than 3 weeks to find homes for each set to be given out- and considering they went to more people in the whole of Braintree district.

We were part of the Lidl initiative to provide toys to children who may not have been able to receive a gift. Also we were part of the Salvation Army and Braintree Police Toy Appeal. These collaborations worked very well as we accepted toys- but were able to support others as well by donating duplicated toys- so everyone won!



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
FIRST STOP CENTRE MID-ESSEX BRANCH

On accounts for the year
ended

31st March 2024

Charity no
(if any) 803170

Set out on pages

1-10

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

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: 05/09/2024

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.

First Stop Centre Mid Essex Branch

1st April 2023 - 31 March 2024

<u>Income</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>		<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2021/2022</u>	
	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding
ECC / Essex Learning Partnership Fund	20,440	0	41,680	0	31,669	0
Essex Community	0	0	0	0	25,000	0
Community 360	9,500	0	2,000	0	8,600	0
Braintree District Council	1,000	0	4,100	0	31,326	0
Landsec	25,000	0	10,000	0	17,000	0
Phoenix Futures	1,560	0	720	0	0	0
Neighbourly	6,055	0	2,800	0	400	0
Interact	0	175	0	1,050	0	560
WEA	0	1,820	0	7,280	0	4,760
Braintree Lions	0	200	0	1,000	0	0
Other Donations	0	2,372	0	31	0	1,949
Essex Association	7,000	0	7,000	0	23,000	0
Census	0	0	0	0	980	0
Fundraising Events	0	0	674	0	0	0
Counselling Income	0	2,749	0	3,391	0	3,826
Miscellaneous Income	0	0	0	337	0	74
Essex CC - MULTIPLY	24,000	0	0	0	0	0
HMRC JRS GRANT	0	0	0	0	6,832	0
Supplier Refund of Overpayment	0	0	0	0	0	45
Bank Interest	0	726	0	111	0	5
	94,555	8,043	68,974	13,200	144,806	11,219
Total Income		102,598		82,175		156,025

Expenditure

Payroll	88,316	73,992	63,404
Maintenance	1,660	948	1,455
Copier	0	0	0
New Equipment	6,349	434	6,420
Travel	1,759	672	347
Supervision & Training	589	1,127	538
Insurance	299	308	950
Utilities	4,666	3,760	1,977
IT Costs	153	2,114	2,113
Office expenses	1,469	926	471
Cleaning	3,722	4,160	4,110
Food collections & deliveries	4,944	448	890
Community fridge expenses	1,339	105	34
Sundry Expenses	80	281	290
Shopping Vouchers	3,308	6,450	10,000
Xmas Hampers	441	555	422
Hospital Bags	650	0	0
Cooking Equipment	5	5,188	0
Accounts Audit	60	60	60
Census	0	0	1,080
PPE / Antibacterial / Covid prevention	29	305	204
Craft materials	104	294	0
Printing/Stationery	365	558	256
Total Expenditure	120,308	102,683	95,021
(Deficit)/Surplus	-17,710	-20,509	61,005
Fund B/F	193,210	213,719	152,714
Fund C/F	175,499	193,210	213,719

1.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees have the pleasure in presenting their annual report and the financial statements for this financial year 2023/2024. 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 report 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.

For the safety of all staff and service users all current covid-19 public health/government guidelines will continue to be regularly reviewed.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

See pages 2 & 3 of Annual Report – Graphs

4.FINANCIAL REVIEW

Outcome for the year The transactions of the charity are summarised on page 4 of the financial statements.

The charity had total incoming resources for the year 2023/24 of £102,598. Of this amount £94,555 was restricted and £8,043 Unrestricted. Total expenditure in the year amounted to £120,308.

This resulted in an overall deficit for the year of -£17,710 (2022/23 deficit -£20,509) deficit reflective of later running projects and increase to workforce on our food collection/distribution project. The charity has total reserves at end of 2024 of £51,900 (see reserves policy).

Reserves Policy

The level of free reserves held seeks to strike a balance between managing risk and providing ongoing running costs of between 3 to 9 months this is in the case of a possible folding event and maintaining the level of resources necessary to safeguard the continuity of the charity (including vulnerable service users) for the immediate period following.

Following on it is also calculated that £19,000 of the total sum would cover redundancy (at current staffing level and calculated around service duration, age and rate of pay) the remainder would cover any costs incurred in closing down 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 the order of £51,900 is currently appropriate for the charity. The amount of free reserves remain at financial accounting 2024

5. FUTURE PLANS

We will continue to deliver our varied educational and support projects, counselling services, advocacy. (See - charities Objects) to service users while continuing to look towards any diversifications within these areas so that we can further develop our working model.

This continues to offer best value and wider access at the same time. With direct help from funders we are happy to be looking forward to being able to provide more inclusive facilities for our service users. Our aim to renovate our WC area within the centre, gained agreement from our landlord and is moving forward at this time. We are confident in our ability to offer our very well established service to a more diverse demographic across the local population.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

For the purposes of charity law, are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs 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 and principles in 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, and
- (e) prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND DIRECTORS

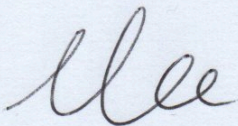
The Trustees are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006.

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 and 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 special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act relating to small entities.

Approved by the Board of Trustees 2024

Signed on their behalf by



Michelle Lee— Chair