



# FIRST STOP CENTRE

Charity no. 803170  
29 Bocking End, Braintree, Essex. CM7  
9AE  
Tel: 01376 346535  
E-mail: [firststopcentre@btconnect.com](mailto:firststopcentre@btconnect.com)  
[www.firststopcentre.com](http://www.firststopcentre.com)

## Chair's Introduction

I am pleased to introduce our Annual Report for 2024/25, a year in which the demand for our services has grown significantly. From providing thousands of meals through our Community Fridge and food projects, to supporting over 190 individuals with education and skills development, and strengthening partnerships across our community, the First Stop Centre has continued to deliver vital support where it is most needed. On behalf of myself and the Board of Trustees, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners whose commitment makes this work possible. At a time of increasing hardship for many, our services remain essential in offering both practical help and hope for the future.

**Michelle Lee**  
Chair of Trustees

## Manager's Report 2025

A huge welcome to our report in what has turned into an incredibly busy year, with numbers up for all interventions. My thanks and gratitude to all the staff, committee and volunteers who make up our amazing team and all the organisations who support us and work alongside us to provide support and help to clients in the district. It's so important to make sure we are making the best choices on where the gaps in support are, as funding becomes evermore competitive for a shrinking pot of money.

## Treasurer's Report

### Annual Report 2025

We have worked hard this year to continue to deliver our well attended projects. We have continued to secure funding for future products to be delivered across the local community.

As with other years we always remain alert to the changing economic landscape.

I am able to report we are on a favourable financial standing.

I would like to say a massive thank you to our funders and also to the dedicated team, for all of their hard work.

## FIRST STOP CENTRE

### ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

#### Charity details

##### Name

First Stop  
Centre

##### Registered charity number

803170

##### Principal address

29 Bocking End  
Braintree  
Essex  
CM7 9AE

#### Trustees

Michelle Lee

Chair  
Vice Chair/  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Trustee

Tracey Radley

Emma Reid

Moia Thorogood

#### 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 Objectives

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 Objectives:

- 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.

(Signed) Michelle Lee  
September 2025  
Chair of Trustees



### Some Centre Stats

We had footfall equivalent to **7,691** people fed in the 6 months- March 2025. The number of overall visits was significantly up from last year showing a 64.37% increase in use of the Community Fridge.

We work with FareShare and Neighbourly and collect from Tesco, M&S, Sainsburys, Greggs, Nandos, KFC, Lidl, Pret and Cornish Bakery. Making over 32 pick ups per week.

Recently we have partnered with Bon Culina who make ready meals and we collect from there. So far we have distributed over 2,000 meals, which were surplus, and would have ended up being thrown away.

### Working with a range of 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, homelessness prevention and support and community mental health services.

### More Centre Stats

Our education classes, through our work with Landsec continues to provide learning to the most isolated and vulnerable in Essex. In 24-25 we have provided learning opportunities to over 190 individuals.

We offer confidence building through to employment courses, and maths/English support. Learn my Way through the Good Things Foundation and the opportunity to engage on courses that really can change lives.

### Even more Centre Stats

Since working with FareShare alone we have:

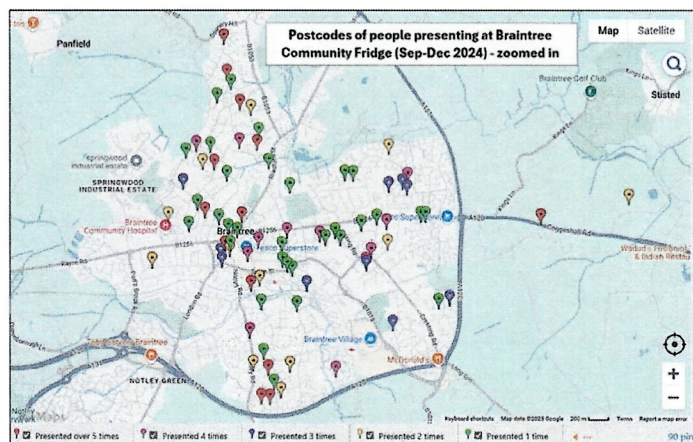
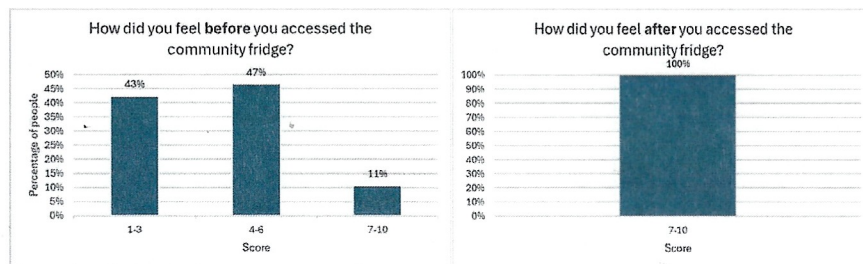
- Collected **2,188** donations to date
- **72,514kg** of food has been received
- The equivalent of **173,670** meals have been distributed
- **214,389kg** of CO<sub>2</sub> savings have been made to the environment (data provided by FareShare) We continue to work with Neighbourly (M&S, Sainsburys, 2 Lidl stores, Greggs and Pret and The Cornish Bakery as well!

### What our clients say about First Stop

Lovely staff  
Brilliant  
Life changing  
People are so friendly  
I don't know what I'd do without it  
Very helpful  
Fantastic  
A helping hand when life is tough

### Impact

This year we have tried a different approach to get to the core of our impact on our community. We compiled a survey and asked for comments. Here are a selection of our findings.



### 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 2024 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 for 90 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.





# 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

Charity Name

FIRST STOP CENTRE MID-ESSEX BRANCH

On accounts for the year  
ended

31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Charity no  
(if any)

803170

Set out on pages

1-14

(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:

18/08/2025

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 2024 - 31 March 2025**

<b>Income</b>	<b><u>2024/2025</u></b>		<b><u>2023/2024</u></b>		<b><u>2022/2023</u></b>	
	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding	Restricted Funding	Unrestricted Funding
ECC / Essex Learning Partnership Fund	0	0	20,440	0	41,680	0
Community 360	0	0	9,500	0	2,000	0
Braintree District Council	10,000	0	1,000	0	4,100	0
Landsec	27,400	0	25,000	0	10,000	0
Phoenix Futures	0	0	1,560	0	720	0
Neighbourly	510	0	6,055	0	2,800	0
Interact	0	0	0	175	0	1,050
WEA	0	0	0	1,820	0	7,280
Braintree Lions	0	0	0	200	0	1,000
Talk Listen Care	0	1,126	0	0	0	0
Other Donations	0	2,792	0	2,372	0	31
Essex Association	7,000	0	7,000	0	7,000	0
Fundraising Events	0	0	0	0	674	0
Counselling Income	0	5,437	0	2,749	0	3,391
Miscellaneous Income	0	0	0	0	0	337
Essex CC - MULTIPLY	26,000	0	24,000	0	0	0
Supplier Refund of Overpayment	0	1,731	0	0	0	0
Bank Interest	0	767	0	726	0	111
	<b>70,910</b>	<b>11,854</b>	<b>94,555</b>	<b>8,043</b>	<b>68,974</b>	<b>13,200</b>
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>82,764</b>		<b>102,598</b>		<b>82,175</b>

<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>						
Payroll		94,210		88,316		73,992
Maintenance		855		1,660		948
New Equipment		1,362		6,349		434
Travel		631		1,759		672
Supervision & Training		339		589		1,127
Insurance		302		299		308
Utilities		3,204		4,666		3,760
IT Costs		108		153		2,114
Office expenses		512		1,469		926
Cleaning		3,210		3,722		4,160
Food collections & deliveries		8,102		4,944		448
Community fridge expenses		429		1,339		105
Sundry Expenses		14		80		281
Shopping Vouchers		1,805		3,308		6,450
Xmas Hampers		795		441		555
Hospital Bags		0		650		0
Cooking Equipment		0		5		5,188
Accounts Audit		70		60		60
PPE / Antibacterial / Covid prevention		55		29		305
Craft materials		60		104		294
Client Refunds		10				
Printing/Stationery		0		365		558
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>116,073</b>		<b>120,308</b>		<b>102,683</b>
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus</b>		<b>-33,309</b>		<b>-17,710</b>		<b>-20,509</b>
Fund B/F		175,499		193,210		213,719
<b>Fund C/F</b>		<b>142,190</b>		<b>175,499</b>		<b>193,210</b>



## **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 2024/245 of £82,764. Of this amount £70,910 was restricted and £11,854 Unrestricted. Total expenditure in the year amounted to £116,073.

This resulted in an overall deficit for the year of -£33,309 (2023/24 deficit -£17,710) deficit is reflective of changes to funding streams and a continued increase of our food collection/distribution project. The charity has total reserves at end of 2025 of £52,500 (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 £21,000 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 £52,500 is currently appropriate for the charity. The amount of free reserves remain at financial accounting 2025

## 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.

We are confident in our ability to continue offering our well-established service to the most diverse demographic possible across the local population. We continue to incorporate as many routes as possible into our projects whilst working with local partners to support progression for service users.

## 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 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 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.

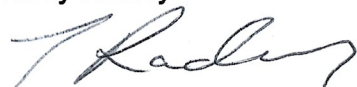
The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the charity maintains an adequate system of internal control designed to provide reasonable assurance that assets are safeguarded against material loss or unauthorised use and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

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 2025

Signed on their behalf by

Tracey Radley



Chair