Michael Roberts Charitable Trust: **Inclusion Support Manager –** introduction to the post.

About MRCT

The Michael Roberts Charitable Trust exists to serve the needs of the people of Harlow and surrounding areas. Our mission is to promote the value and significance of every person, offering help through life's obstacles and empowering them to develop their potential and self-confidence. By giving support and encouragement we provide opportunities for community integration, enabling each individual to help meet local social needs in a positive and practical way.

Our interventions build confidence, increase resilience and generate hope through upholding people's dignity: when in crisis, overlooked, isolated, or facing long-term hardship.

We do this through:

1. Working in supportive partnership with all local voluntary and statutory bodies
2. Advocacy and campaigning on behalf of those we serve
3. Mobilising helpers across the town
4. Redistributing resources from neighbour to neighbour

Our work results in:

1. Crisis resilience: a quicker return from crisis back to stability
2. More robust households in periods of misfortune
3. More secure early years for families in hardship
4. Increased belonging, confidence and hope for those who are vulnerable to exclusion or isolation
5. Generating empathy and solidarity with those overlooked in the wider population
6. Challenging the boundaries of what is tolerable in a wealthy civilised nation
7. Stimulating more action and innovation in support of those in need

MRCT has been operating for 24 years. Emerging out of the Harlow churches, we are a Christian charity promoting inclusion, unconditional acceptance, practical expressions of justice and love without boundaries of culture, creed, class or race.

We currently run four projects: Maybury Open Door, Harlow Foodbank, The Bounty Club and Bump to Five.

We are running an open recruitment process to find a suitable applicant to manage our work supporting those vulnerable to long term isolation or exclusion, which includes the Maybury Open Door project [MOD].

The post will also involve interacting with local churches, developing pastoral expertise and recruiting volunteer support so that the work of MOD or similar projects (under your initiative) can extend the impact of our work in the local area.

About Maybury Open Door (https://mrct.org.uk/maybury-open-door)

Maybury Open Door was first established in Harlow in 1998 to encourage and support disabled people to serve their local community through a Supported Volunteer Scheme. They were encouraged to work alongside MRCT Community Workers to manage a project empowering them as part of the decision-making process. Due to the success of the initial project a second centre was opened in Harlow Town Centre in 2005. The drop ins now run 3 days a week: one from Harefield Church, and 2 days at St Paul's in the town centre.



The work of Maybury Open Door has grown and developed since it was established and is now a valuable community resource, working in partnership with other local and statutory organisations. Attendance at both centres can reach 150+ each week with many using the facility as a valuable support structure to build and develop their lives, helping them integrate back into the community.



The centres offer a range of informal services which can include art & craft sessions, painting, embroidery, card making, friendship bracelets & collages, music making, bring & buy and a range of afternoon activities including refreshments. The centres also encourage projects in support of people in need in the local community. Volunteers produce toiletry packs and help to sort out clothing for homeless and vulnerably housed people. They also help with seasonal initiatives such as Operation Christmas Child making up "Shoe Boxes".

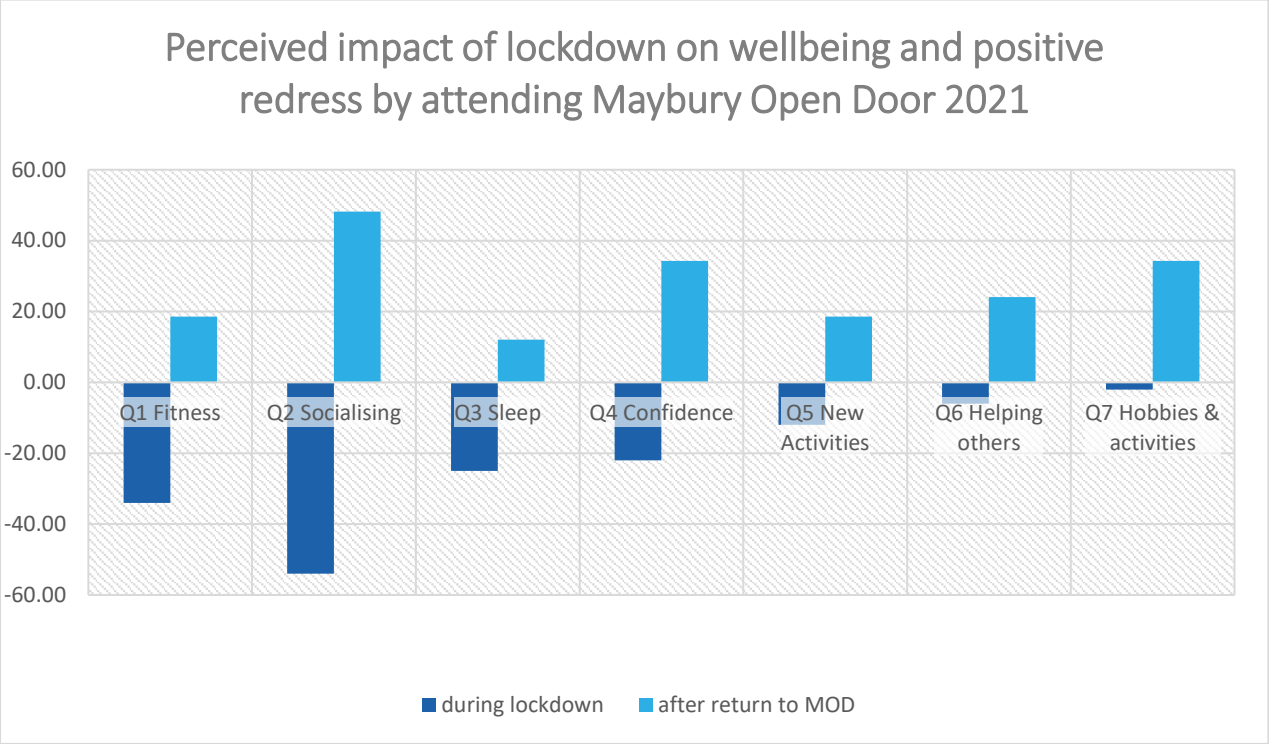
This supportive environment both implicitly and explicitly increases the confidence and skills of attendees to participate in regular community life. As well as offering friendship, pastimes and activities, the drop-ins invite regular visitors whose advice or stimulus adds value to the experience. Regular trips to places and attractions beyond Harlow extend the life experiences of those who might otherwise be quite insular.

Maybury Open Door is well known in the town and has regular referrals from social workers and occupational and mental health professionals. For some attendees it is the chance to get out of the home and mix with others, overcoming anxieties and facing new challenges; others build confidence to become voluntary leaders in the community. In the big picture Maybury seeks to help people identify themselves as an asset to the community, rather than people who need help. This is a founding principle of the project.



During the recent pandemic MOD was forced to close and staff went on furlough. In the second year of the pandemic we reopened by running Maybury Support Groups, which invited longer term attendees into sessions with strict social distancing guidelines (maximum number 15). We were deeply concerned that the facility, which exists to reduce isolation, should offer something to those whose sense of isolation was

exacerbated by lockdown. These were supported by a DCMS grant and informal research with attendees showed the importance of coming to Maybury.



How we help individuals:

The drop-in centres are run by staff and volunteers, many of whom have become volunteers after attending for a while.

Attendees are helped by personalised support in an environment that cultivates positivity towards each other and the wider community, encouraging further action. These include:

Staff & volunteer support to:

- Recognise strengths
- Develop skills and confidence
- Overcome difficulties through advice and support
- Identify personal development goals
- Signpost to other support agencies

Collective outward looking / positive environment

- Supportive ethos pervading all activities
- Emphasis on sharing /generosity / helping /trust
- Valuing openness to challenge and the rewards of giving to others
- Sharing positive experiences of helping others / the community

Cultivating experiences and opportunities for action

- In-house volunteering & leadership in activity planning
- Discussing pathways for positive volunteer experiences
- Reporting new opportunities, meeting others with volunteer experience
- Engaging in other activities that develop a sense of self-worth such as mutually supportive relationships

In coming to MOD no one is expected to do anything, just to come along. In showing up they should know that they are valued as they are.



In finding a place to belong, people become more ready to take next steps.

Staff and volunteers are careful to discern what an attendee might benefit from. It is more important that people find their 'home' in Maybury than they are 'processed' into any kind of programme.

Developing our Work

MRCT was funded and developed by an extraordinary couple, Gary and Teresa Knott.

They both had significant experience of working with people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities as well as others who found it hard to find a place in conventional society. Indeed, our charity was named after one of the early participants, Michael Roberts, who was a man with Down's Syndrome who exemplified all the qualities and values that the charity stands for.

Sadly, Gary passed away in October 2019. He has been replaced as CEO by Andy Thornton, who by his own admission, does not have the experience of Gary and Teresa in this area.

This is why we are seeking somebody with that level of experience to come into a senior role and help develop our work in this area.

We have no fixed ideas as to what would serve the town in this respect, although we have been envisioning an ever-greater integration of the strands of our work such that we might one day have a single building / hub where much of our work is delivered. This hub might then incorporate the 'home' for Maybury alongside other initiatives, creating a place of loving acceptance and outward-looking care to energise the town's work with those needing support.

As we journey forward the insight and participation of this postholder will be integral to that development.

About this role

This is a demanding but thoroughly enjoyable role for the right person.

You will be a reflective practitioner, experienced in working with people of all types including those with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health and other socially inhibiting issues. Preference will be given to those with expereince in managing activites that support the building of confidence and integration. You will care deeply for their dignity and sense of belonging in continuity with our current work. We are also looking for someone with vision and motivation, who enjoys the creativity of innovation in response to the needs of others.

You will be joining a great MRCT team of supportive people who will have your back all the way. MRCT is a hugely positive workforce who know how to work and play hard in the service of others. We are surrounded by brilliant volunteers, Trustees, partners, businesses and a community of well-wishers who respond to our requests for help, making us feel valued and important to Harlow.

This role has no finalised working hours and could be flexible to the needs of the postholder. We envisage it being 3 to 5 days a week. The day-length could be fewer than 7 hours.

The postholder has a desk in our Store House office alongside the Director of Operations, and CEO. The Store House is a busy barn on the edge of town. Our team are well linked into services across the town. There is usually someone on hand to help you make things happen quickly.

Your supportive team…

MRCT attracts amazing local volunteers whose generosity is the backbone of our work. We expect you to be great at engaging and involving those who come to help in this way, treating them as valued equals in the project.

The MOD team are hugely experienced in running the drop-in centres and have maintained them well in the absence of direct management for the last 2 years, during which they were furloughed for much of the time. Alongside these are an enthusiastic group of volunteer leaders who are highly loyal to MOD. A recognised need is to publicise the drop-ins better and increase the number of attendees, particularly after the loss of momentum during the pandemic.

You will have the ongoing support of MRCT's central staff:

- Our CEO – developing project plans; overseeing longer-term vision; raising funds to secure progress; mentoring in any areas that are new for you
- Director of Operations – ensuring the day to day running goes smoothly; supporting recruitment of volunteers; buying in what you need; supporting your use of our vehicles

About your skills and experience

We are conducting an ongoing recruitment process for this post as we recognise that it fits no single career pathway and we are keen to meet a range of people who are attracted to its many facets. We would expect the right candidate to have a mix of some of the following skills and experiences:

- Occupational therapy
- Supportive work with adults who have long-term medical, intellectual, developmental or physical conditions.
- Voluntary sector projects that enable full participation in communities for vulnerable adults and older people
- Pastoral care roles in communities based on Christian social concern
- Community organising supporting dignity and inclusion

Occupational requirement / particular characteristic for this post

Unusually for us, this post is looking for a pastoral dimension in keeping with our Christian ethos, and as such we are looking for a committed Christian. All other aspects of the post will be considered under Equal Opportunities guidelines - showing no discrimination against people of any protected characteristics.

Particular to this post, in the context of our principles as a Christian based charity, we are looking for somebody who can understand and integrate the three dimensions of our work with clients:

- The physical,
- The mental / emotional
- The spiritual

The first two of these aspects are recognised in conventional Western science. The third needs some definition from us, as we expect the post holder to be conversant with this when relating to others within

the local churches, and when providing elements of Christian devotional life as options to those who take part in MOD.

We know that the word 'spiritual' is a wide-ranging term that holds different meanings for different people: of no religious belief, in different religions from outside Christianity, and within the Christian community.

Our use of the term sees spirituality as fundamental, profound and connecting – an element of our humanity that unites us all and recognises our intrinsic value to God and to each other.

We have no fixed orthodoxy on this, but would broadly see 'the spiritual' as an aspect of how we orientate ourselves and live our lives in relation to:

- Where we belong - the confidence that we are wanted just as we are, children of the Maker, welcomed by God, called into loving relationship;
- Open to grace - when we find assurance that we belong with each other and with God, we are gifted the confidence to let go and move forwards in life;
- People on a journey - our lives are never fixed or final, they can be transformed and renewed through experiences and encounters that bring us to life in relation to others and God;
- Authentic - the truth sets us free: living true to ourselves, true to others and seeking truth (and avoiding untruth) is the way to find freedom, enjoying our lives no matter what others think of us;
- Ready to participate - we were created to live in community, with others and with God, doing this with openness and trust leads to joy, peace and hope.

MRCT operates from the historic Christian mainstream: trinitarian, Bible-based, inclusive, Christ-centred, spirit-led with no denominational bias. We do not see attending to people's spiritual needs to be the same as converting people to Christianity. Guided by love we respect the views of others as much as we honour and share our own faith, supporting people to recognise themselves as precious, capable of a purposeful and fulfilling life as their birth right, as revealed in Christ.

Practical details about the post

The salary is £26 – 28,000 per annum pro rata with 28 days pro rata annual leave (including bank holidays when they are your working days). We usually give the team time off between Christmas and New Year in addition to that allowance. We have an in-house pension policy that you will be added to.

This is a three-year contract with a 6-month probation period. The post-holder works at our offices on the edge of Harlow and will also be mobile within the town. This will be significantly easier for a car/ bike driver.

Recruitment process

In keeping with our intent to find the right person with an occupational requirement as a Christian believer, we intend to circulate this document to networks and invite interested candidates to call / visit for an introductory chat to evaluate your fit with us on a mutual basis.

With that in mind we ask potential applicants to consider themselves to bring considerable experience and skills, and also have two referees, one from their church, who can attest to this when the time is right.

Please check out our web site on www.mrct.org.uk for further background to the charity.

Feel free to call 01279 724515 to discuss the post or write to andythornton@mrct.org.uk.

Thank you for your interest in this post and our work.