# Michael Roberts Charitable Trust

Developing lives, enriching community

## Annual Report

**2021-22**




MRCT Michael Roberts Charitable Trust

STORE HOUSE developing lives, enriching community

MAYBURY OPEN DOOR

Harlow foodbank

BOUNTY CLUB

bump to five






# CONTENTS & VISION


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ● | Our Vision Statement | 2 |
| ● | Introduction by Chief Executive Officer | 3 |
| ● | Thank you & farewell Michael Roberts | 4 |
| ● | Maybury Open Door | 5 |
| ● | Harlow Foodbank & Bounty Club | 6-7 |
| ● | Bump-to-Five | 8 |
| ● | The Changing Minds Project | 9 |
| ● | Tackling hardship in Harlow - A tough year | 10-11 |
| ● | Our collaborations | 12 |
| ● | MRCT Staff and Volunteers | 13 |
| ● | Our Community Partnerships | 14-15 |
| ● | Acknowledgements | 16 |


Our vision is that everyone can belong and participate in their communities, knowing that they are significant, valued, included and wanted.

Our vision is that no one should go hungry, or without the means to bring up their children, heat their homes or live in dignity.

In that position should know that they are supported by those around them until things are good again.

Our vision is fueled by the belief that nobody is excluded, unwanted or overlooked by God, whose love is revealed through Jesus.

**Guide to images on front cover:**
Left to right—Bounty Club pick up at Brakes | Foodbank recipient at St Paul's |SES Christmas Party at Paringdon Sports Centre | Bump to Five at HTS River Way receives a Christmas donation from The Rent Guarantee Company | Maybury Open Door welcomes newcomers to their Christmas Party in Momples Road | Bump to Five donations supporting newly arrived Afghan refugees at Harlow Hotel | M18 Foods accept a new donation point in East Road | Church of Pentecost donating food to the Store House at Housham Hall Farm | Church Langley Tesco Christmas collection | MRCT Sale of Stansted Airport donated items at North Weald Market.






# INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CEO

## This past year saw a slow and steady emergence from the shadows of Covid.

We report here on the actions we took to lessen its impact on those most vulnerable: whose livelihoods hit rock bottom or resilience struggled in lockdown. In this year we kept our focus to help those most affected.

As a result our projects, our work, and our budgets continued to grow. We hope you will be gladdened to see all we are now doing to help Harlow and the villages. It has been a truly collective effort thanks to our amazing supporters and partners. Thank you!

Our focus is relatively simple: we want people to live in dignity, knowing they are cared for and valued. And when they have got the strength to do so, we hope they might offer that back, creating a cycle of hope.

This cycle of care and hope came into sharp relief when Michael Roberts, the man whose name we bear, passed away in March this year.

Not many people knew who Michael was. Many assume that he was the wealthy benefactor behind our charity. But that couldn't be much further from the truth...

Michael was a man born with Down's Syndrome who had next to no money, was mostly brought up in care - needing institutional support for daily living. Michael's speech was hard to understand, and yet his warmth, empathy and unreserved appreciation of those around him left everyone who met him feeling good about life. His faith, optimism and cheeky humour regularly lit up a room, without the need for words.

We are proud to carry Michael's name forward through the impacts of our many projects. On the next page we profile his life and contribution to our ongoing work. We hope that our actions proclaim the values and beliefs that Michael held, and communicated... with or without words. We hope that we can be as infectious as he was in making this world a better place! Thank you for inspiring us so much, Michael Roberts, rest in peace.

MRCT may be growing, but our work continues to be delivered effectively thanks to the selfless giving of those who work alongside our small staff team every day. Like a well-oiled machine the support of around 100 volunteers a week makes it all happen. We and Harlow owe them a great debt of gratitude. Similarly our Trustees and wonderful Hon Treasurer Rob Carrington drive us forward with an inspiring consistency, dedication and vision. They ask all the tough questions that keep us sharp - thanks again!

But alongside that, it is hard to quantify just how many people help their neighbours through MRCT. The thousands of people who drop an item into the Foodbank basket, the Facebook supporters that pass on our requests for help, the hundreds of community partners, the businesses who give us surplus food, the advisors who come in to our settings to support clients and the amazing churches who lend us their premises and people: St Paul's, Harefield and the Salvation Army.

Fundamental to that comes the support of those who regularly donate money, whether monthly or annually, small or large, many anonymous, many collective like churches and businesses. At the end of every year our books balance and our faith increases. Thanks everyone!

This is the generosity that we hope Harlow will recognise as essential to building a strong and prosperous town, with kind and welcoming neighbours, friendly villages, safe places for our children to grow up and good-hearted governance .

All of these things take warmth, generosity, trust, hope and optimism: a faith that the goodness in others and the goodness in ourselves belong together, and can overcome.

For being part of this we thank our God and You.

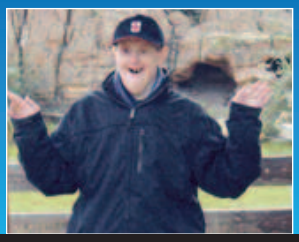
**Together we make love and dignity happen.**
**What a great thing!**



**Andy Thornton**
Chief Executive Officer








# THANK YOU & FAREWELL MICHAEL ROBERTS

## The Michael Roberts Charitable Trust, has been running for nearly 25 years now.

In that period we have achieved things that could never have been imagined when our Co-Founders Gary & Teresa Knott stepped out in faith to establish the charity.

Typical of Gary & Teresa was their decision to name it after one of their inspirations: someone whose generosity and openness had inspired them hugely: Michael Roberts.

We are often asked who Michael Roberts is? People assume he was a rich man who generously gave money to those in need: the type that more normally have a charity named after them.

But in some ways Michael was the opposite.

He was a man born with Down's Syndrome, with no significant money to his name. His speech was quite unclear, but in his own way he generously handed out much more than money: he beamed out love, joy and happiness – in unreserved quantities. In him Gary & Teresa saw the image of the God that they all loved, emblematic of what the charity would go on to do.

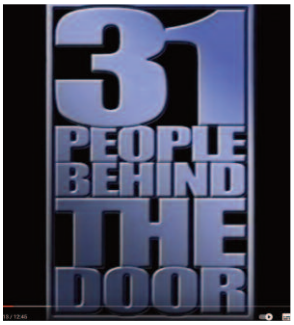
In March '22, we are sad to say, Michael died at the age of 62.



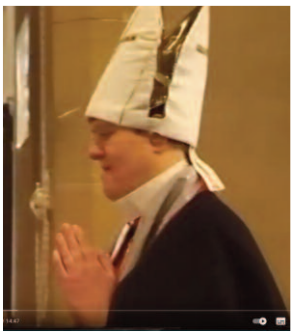
Michael shared much of the journey of MRCT and we are forever grateful to him.

The picture here shows him in Poland in 1999 where at aged 40 he accompanied a delegation from MRCT to visit facilities in Poland. Care centres were being set up after that country had tragically failed the needs of those orphaned and discarded. So many with learning difficulties and severe physical disabilities were found neglected, deprived of sensory stimulus. Michael's presence transformed the visit as his vitality showed what was possible for those overlooked and considered incompetent with Down's Syndrome there.

MRCT joined in the response to thatby setting up an activity programme and sensory room in an existing residential home, not a new centre and employing and training Polish care workers to run it. This initially helped 'The 31 people behind the door' but the ethos then spread further to help hundreds find their way.




We made a video of that journey – '31 People Behind the Door' – revealing the disturbing situation that was given a significant boost through our earlier work. You can watch it here. (QR)



Michael was also a core member of our Living Stones Drama Group. He loved acting, relishing his role as the snooty Bishop in the parable of the Good Samaritan. You can see this here (QR) in another archive video which captures this extraordinary group in the 1990s.

Michael went on to become a founder member and regular attendee of Maybury Open Door He is remembered with great fondness by those who recall his effusive thankful speeches to guests who came to the centre – even though the content was very hard to discern. He was just 'a very kind, happy man'.

We are proud to keep Michael's name alive; honouring the joy that he brought to the world. He was the kind of person that easily gets overlooked. Yet so many were moved to tears when they met him, discovering something very precious through his immediacy and uninhibited empathy for them.

It is a comfort to picture Michael and Gary having a good catch-up in heaven, now that Michael has found his voice. Michael out of his wheelchair, talking effusively about those great years, and how The Maybury Open Door continues to bring to life their shared belief that everyone has something great to bring to this world. We all have a light to shine and share!

**Thank You for a life beyond words, Michael Roberts.**
**We celebrate you – at home now with the God you loved so much: fully free.**






# MAYBURY OPEN DOOR

## Maybury Open Door is our drop in centre which operates 3 days a week in two church venues in the town.

Maybury supports a wide range of adults including the elderly, people with a disability or learning difficulties, homeless, isolated people and others who just need to venture out and meet new friends.

In a year dominated by Covid restrictions Maybury slowly got back to some of the old routines. We could open for longer hours, operating not just as support groups, but as a drop-in again. Christmas Parties were held at Harefield Church and St Paul's with guest singers and a communal meal - just before the new variant arrived and closed us down again for January.

Towards the end of March facemask regulations could be slackened and visitors could circulate more. All the regular games and pastimes could return, and though life in general had been harder, with attendees unable to talk face-to-face with Doctors, Psychiatrists or others in a position to help them, the Maybury team provided a place to feel safe and belong.

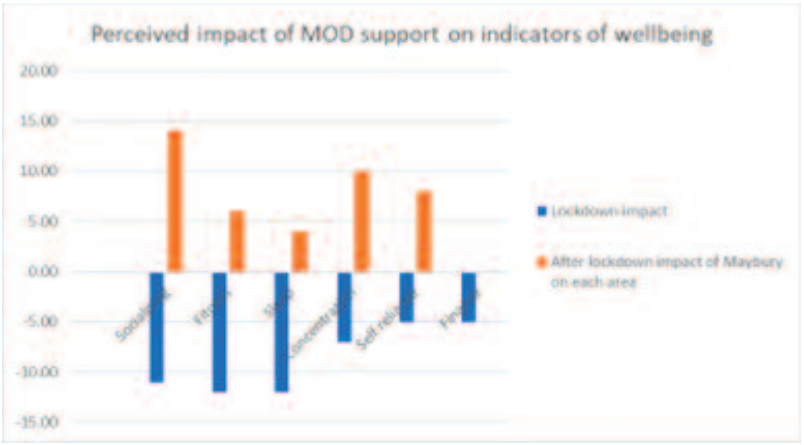
Our research throughout the year, when regulars returned after being confined to home, showed strong indications of the part Maybury previously played in their lives. Regular attendees felt that the lockdown had affected their sleep patterns, concentration levels, fitness and confidence to socialise. These lost faculties bounced back over the weeks they returned to Maybury although for some the impact is slower than others.

After a second disrupted year we would particularly like to thank our staff team and our regular volunteers for their dedication and flexibility. This project more than any other has needed to respond to the changes in our national life, and their constant concern for our regular attendees has been outstanding.

Similarly the funders who helped us create extra resources: The All Churches Trust, Harlow Health Centres Trust and partner churches at Harefield and St Paul's have been wonderful.








*This has been great ,I will definitely come back, thank you.*

***Glad to be back again.***

*The Team help me to keep things going in the right direction.*

***Coming here helps me with my routine, I don't know what I would do without the club.***

## Special thanks...

Our thanks go again to the amazing staff and volunteers who have made Maybury such a special place for old friends and new, every week.







# HARLOW FOODBANK & BOUNTY CLUB

## 2021-22 saw our food projects work closer for the benefit of households in need.

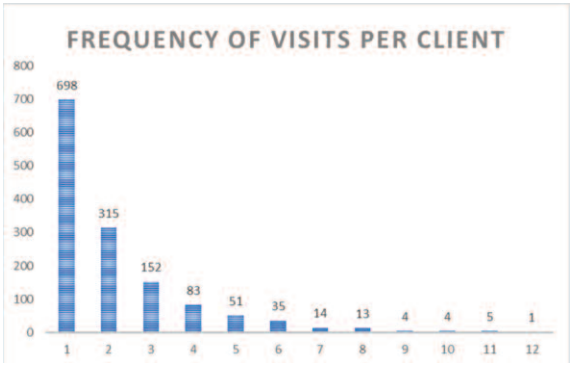
In the year previous to this, we saw an unprecedented hiatus with the complete lockdown at the arrival of Covid.

This year saw some let up in the first few months, until winter when numbers at the Foodbank slowly rose again. The activity in our Store House was very different from the previous year. We were inundated in 20/21, yet in 21/22 donations to us decreased but the demand increased.

Unlike the previous year when we were able to help out many other charities around the town, we had to stay focused on maintaining our stocks to ensure that the Foodbank honoured its commitment to voucher holders. We supplemented this with an increasing amount of fresh food from the Bounty Club, so that recipients received the standard package plus a choice of fresh fruit and vegetables - thanks to Brakes and Bidfood who continue to give us the pick of fresh items with around a week's dates left on them.

Our voucher count at the end of the year was around 83% on the previous (thankfully fewer needed our support) although it has subsequently risen to the same level in the 22/23 financial year as we report.

For the second year we were affected by the restraints on schools and businesses: where fewer attendees and restrictions on handling items led to lower giving at Harvest. We were grateful to many who responded to our




special appeal and used their ingenuity to gather food for those in need, despite the restrictions.

By Christmas the message was getting through that we were regularly having to buy food to support the dwindling levels of stock in the Store House, and our appeals in the town's supermarkets received great support at what turned out to be a highly demanding Christmas period.

We want to thank our volunteers (young and old) who gave their time over the year to gently persuade their shoppers to remember their neighbours at that time. Our ongoing thanks to Tesco and ASDA for welcoming us into their stores, and more than anything, the people of Harlow who have dug deep in support of their neighbours.




STORE HOUSE
developing lives, enriching community

**What does 182 tonnes of food look like? Here is our Storehouse. When full it will hold around 40 tonnes on 110 palettes stacked to 4 foot high. We are emptying it around once every 3 months.**










# HARLOW FOODBANK & BOUNTY CLUB

## How many times do people use the foodbank in a year?

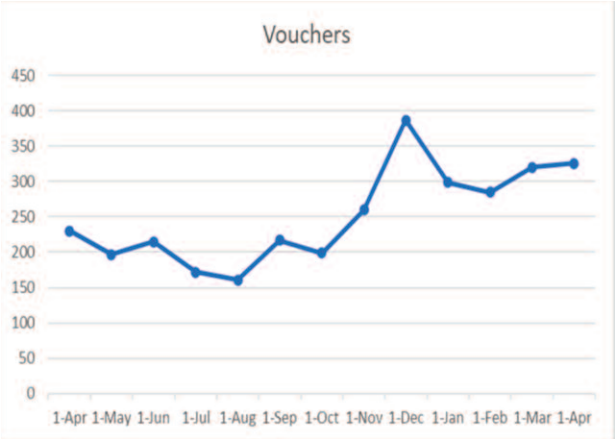
This is a question we are often asked. Some think that people become dependent on us—getting food from us and spending the equivalent money on the 'wrong kind of things'. Others think we will refuse to give any more food after they have been three times.

Our philosophy is that we are here to make sure that people can remain resilient and feel supported in times of crisis. Every food parcel is literally a gift from their neighbours, saying 'we're on your side'. Our job is to pass that on in the spirit it was given...

On the left here is our analysis of number of vouchers given per client: broadly similar to previous years.

As you can see, for most people the number of times they visit is one. Some (a tiny percentage) come over ten times , though seldom in a row... usually because they have hit hard times more than once in the year.

**And for those who do numbers...**
**the average is 2.16 times.**




**Foodbank food given out 2020—21**

**108,000 kg**

**7,045**
**individuals fed via 3,620 packages**

**83%**
**of food given in the previous exceptional year**

**74,000 kg**
**fresh food to the Foodbank, Harlow schools & charities**

**2,932**
**children getting 4 days' food portions**





## From fresh, to fridge, to Foodbank

Our ability to extend the work of the Bounty Club got a boost this year with a grant from the Sainsbury Foundation for a new industrial fridge, followed by two smaller recycled ones from Phoenix Resources.

Alongside our refrigerated pick-up van we can now keep temperatures low throughout, storing fresh meat as well as fruit and veg. This has helped us extend our fresh food offering into a new kind of Bounty Club in 22/23 operating for non-Foodbank families who can pay a £2.50 weekly membership for a large bag of food.









# BUMP TO FIVE

## What an amazing year unfolded!

Last year we reported on our preparatory work to launch a facility to support families by collecting and redistributing essential items for children: newborn to five years of age.

After our first appeal for items to redistribute we quickly filled the area in the Store House assigned for the project. The public were unceasingly generous with items, and it was clear that we needed more space as requests for support started coming in.

To our great delight HCT, Harlow's environmental service company who had helped us to store overflow food during Covid, agreed that we could operate from a large area in their premises. All items were shipped down to there and sorted to be packaged up by our volunteers.

We officially launched in September and by the end of March we had dealt with 200 referrals. These came from a number of agencies and professionals around the town as well as some self-referrals: either people who had found our service through the grapevine, or been given information on how to get support when they attended the Foodbank. Figures have since stabilised at around 50-60 referrals a month: three times our initial forecast.

The most common items that we are asked for are clothes, nappies and other small items—but as the table here indicates, by June this year we have given out a huge variety of items in hundreds of bundles

All of these items have been donated to us by members of the public, often from well outside Harlow, wanting to help other families.

Some of these items are surprisingly large, and can be a complete game-changer for families. An example would be the day we dropped off a cot and other items to a man who was separating from his wife and moving into a permitted development in the town. We learned that unless he had that equipment his baby would not have been able to come and visit him. But now we had helped keep the family together. What started as a physical item became a child knowing their two parents...




| Most requested items: | |
|---|---|
| Clothes | 200 |
| Nappies | 171 |
| Toiletries | 90 |
| Formula | 65 |
| Buggy/ pushchair | 44 |
| Cot | 37 |
| Shoes | 25 |
| Bedding | 24 |
| Bouncy chairs | 22 |
| Highchair | 21 |
| Moses basket | 15 |
| Blankets | 13 |
| Stair gate | 12 |
| Feeding bottles | 12 |
| Steriliser | 10 |
| Changing mats | 9 |
| Toys | 6 |
| Changing bags | 6 |
| Slings/ carriers | 5 |
| Bath | 4 |
| Play mat | 2 |
| Bed | 1 |
| Bunk bed | 1 |
| Walker | 1 |
| Chest of drawers | 1 |
| Baby monitor | 1 |
| Bibs | 1 |
| **Grand Total** | **799** |








Bump To Five launched in September 2021 supported by HTS







# THE CHANGING MINDS PROJECT

## The Trussell Trust exists to end hunger, not run Foodbanks: what's the difference?

Supported by Trussell Trust we have embarked on a 3 year project to 'Change Minds' about the need for Foodbanks.

You may think this means we want to get more food out to people. Of course, if they need it we do. But we would prefer people to not be going hungry.

We want to end hunger. If that means helping feed people, as a last resort we will.

So the Changing Minds project has begun its 3 year plan by simply collecting the stories of people coming to the Foodbank. "What has led to you coming here today", our researcher Emma asked hundreds of people.

Around 70 sat down with her and told their stories in detail. We can't tell you who they are, but we can give you a flavour of common threads. The stories are painful if you have the heart to put yourself in their shoes.

In that sense, we hope people will begin to wonder how a rich country like ours can tolerate leaving people so vulnerable?

*I make some clothes and I love cooking. I stretch everything I get as far as I can. I'm hoping to sew some Christmas bits and sell them on Facebook, to help out, but at the minute I've added up my bills and I either pay my direct debits or my children have a Christmas. I've got £33 after they're all paid. I don't know what to do, really.*

***"Despite being terminally ill, even if I've been hungry, and even if I have to go out to work through it all, my children and my family will be fed and warm. The trip to the foodbank has saved us."***

*Travelling in Harlow is really expensive. It's £5.60 for a day ticket for all three of us to travel to two different schools. The bus only comes once an hour. I seem to spend most of the day waiting for a bus.*

***The chemo really had a big affect on my wellbeing – it has changed my personality and I find myself really short tempered. The government should be more realistic and stop cracking the whip. I want to be active and enjoy life but I feel that we are pointed towards things that will eventually lead us to feel bad. I'd like to do more to help people, because I think in life, that's all we can do.***

***"At 56, I've gone from working, having a home, having a wife, everything, to being here at the foodbank. It feels very shameful."***

*Now I'm here at the foodbank I feel like a zero. When we were moved into our place in one of the permitted developments in Harlow we didn't have anything – no furniture or kitchen utensils. I had to buy all new school uniform and a TV. I have no one to turn to. All my money is gone.*

***"When your circumstances change, like mine have, it greatly impacts all of your life, and leaves you with a bleak future. You lose friends because you lose the ability to socialise. Friends and family fall away."***

*I have been a carer for 30+ years – I looked after my family members from the age of 13. I worked all through covid but last May it all became too much and I had to stop. I'd been working for seven days a week, juggling family commitments and it was all too much. I just couldn't do it anymore. The doctor signed me off for a while and then I just had to leave. I've gone from £600-700 a week to £258/month on Universal Credit.*

Next year these stories will be used to create a greater understanding of the predicaments of people who use our Foodbanks, through creating materials for Schools, Churches and Businesses. We believe that many of the public have little insight into the reality of life for those who come to us, and commonly believe false myths that lead to blame or an absolution of our collective responsibility to care for each other.

## Would you prefer to be in a country that had no need of Foodbanks?



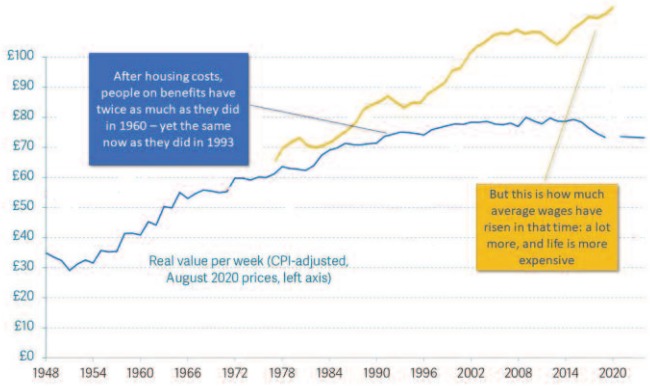





# RESPONDING TO POVERTY IN HARLOW

## Costs going up, benefits losing pace, things don't look good...

Last year we printed this graph of the relationship between levels of benefits and the cost of living.




It shows how the levels of benefit support have continued to drop in real terms, year on year, leaving dependents in an increasingly fragile position. As our Changing Minds stories show, they are vulnerable to destitution should life deal them any unexpected knocks.

As a charity we don't take a party-political stance, but recognise that numbers like these represent collective decisions made at government level, well beyond our control.

We are members of the Harlow Poverty Alliance, a broad network of voluntary and statutory agencies working in Harlow. We meet monthly to discuss how we can help reduce local poverty and support those affected by it.

It is currently chaired by our CEO, and the Alliance felt a strong concern for those in the town as the financial year drew to a close. Why?

Predictions of inflation rising by 10% started to be broadcast. We were aware that our neighbours on benefits were already floundering after the £20 a week uplift during COVID was removed. If people were struggling then, what would happen if inflation added 10% to the living costs of those dependant on benefits? They would clearly need a 10% uplift just to standstill.

But this uplift didn't happen. In March the increase for April was set at worrying 3.1%. We contacted our MP Robert Halfon who kindly wrote to the Secretary of State responsible for benefits to express our concern and forwarded us back his reply: the benefit level rise is customarily benchmarked at the level of inflation in the previous September, which was 3.1%. Yet that was when the inflation level had been kept artificially low by state intervention in the economy during Covid.

Other factors compounded the situation in the town such as the removal of price caps on house rentals causing rent levels to rise for many. The war in Ukraine has compounded this, leaving us in financially perilous territory. We hardly need to mention 'the cost of living crisis' on this page as it is everywhere on our TV screens right now.




## Looking at the coming year

The current trend for the Foodbank in 2022/23 indicates that 9-10,000 visitors will come in this year. This is 20% more than last year's 7,000. But alongside this we expect to distribute a further 15,000 low cost food bags to around 2,000 families at the Bounty Club, stopping them from slipping into crisis.

This pattern of inflation racing ahead of incomes will affect us all. At times like this we often say 'we are all in this together' but those nearest the breadline are 'in it' more than others and we will continue to work for them. However, there are only a few options that can be considered at this point:

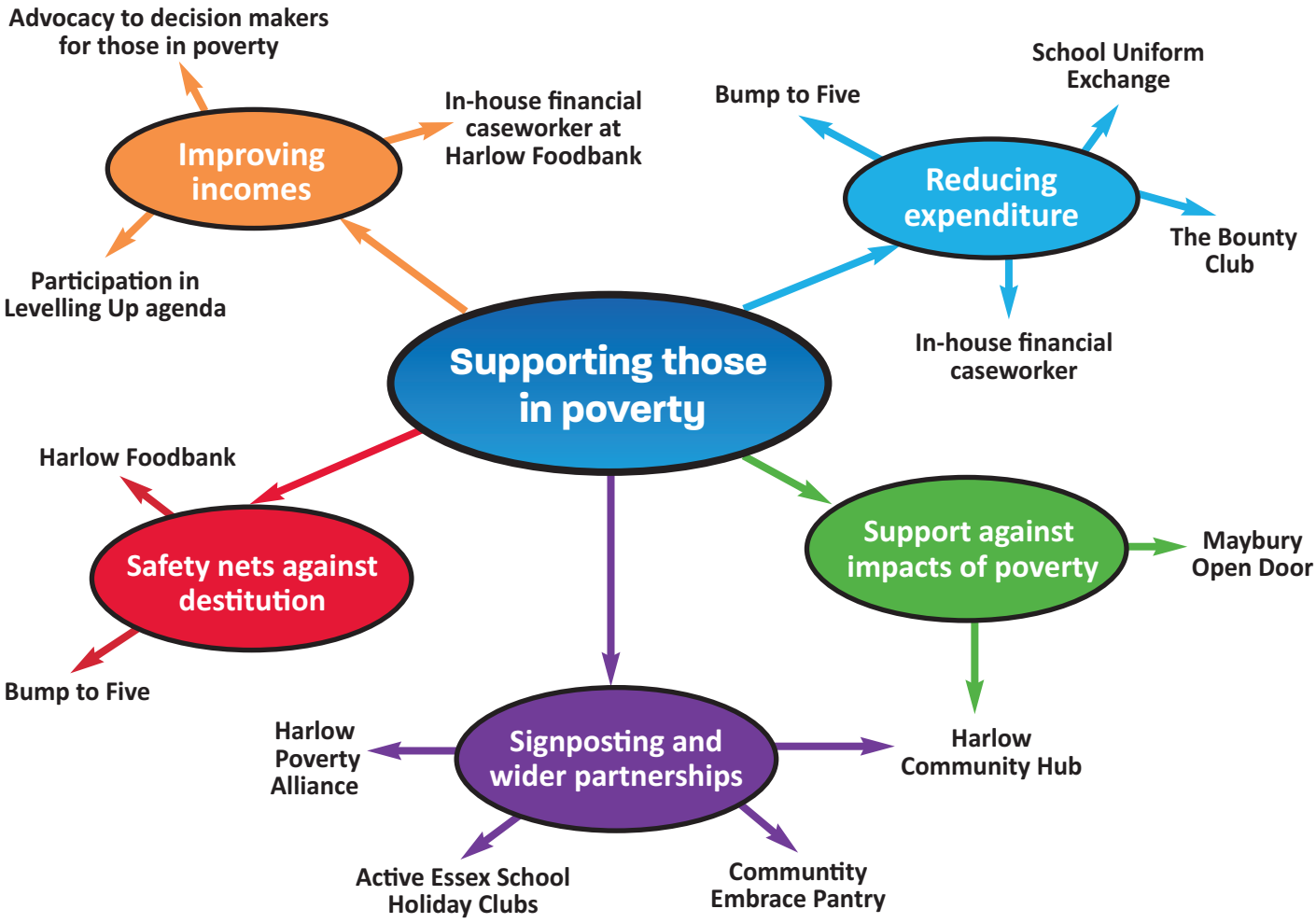
- Improving incomes
- Reducing expenditure
- Providing a safety net for those made destitute
- Collaborating with others to ensure that support is there for people trying to withstand the many secondary impacts of poverty such as metal health issues.






# RESPONDING TO POVERTY IN HARLOW

## What are we doing in response to this?







- Come and join the conversations led by the Harlow Poverty Alliance—seeking grass roots ideas along with wider collaborations across the region.

- Consider how you / your institution, business, organisation might play your part to support those most affected at this time

- Pray for / cheer on the Harlow Poverty Alliance - helping all agencies to share their information, work together, innovate and destigmatise poverty. The sooner people access help and address any mounting problem, the better.








# OUR COLLABORATIONS

**MRCT is committed to working in partnerships. From the Foodbank which works alongside hundreds of voucher writers from agencies around the town, to one-off projects, we want to create the best outcomes for people in and around the town by working with all those with similar concern and hope.**

**Here is a snapshot of four that have made a difference in this past year.**

## Heart 4 Harlow

This is the joint churches' movement in the town. There are around 45 churches in Harlow and neighbouring villages, and many affiliate to this community who come together to pray and collaborate on projects that help different groups in the area.

Heart 4 Harlow members have been wonderfully supportive of MRCT over the years, we really treasure this.

This past year we supported the Heart 4 Harlow Awards: held in the Playhouse in April. These celebrated the great contribution of individuals and organisations to the social fabric of the town: from sports clubs to Chaplains, recognising the unique gifts that got us through the time of Covid.

For more information on Heart 4 Harlow please see **www.heart4harlow.org.uk**




## The Harlow Community Hub

This was the name for the Council-run emergency support service set up at the start of Covid. When the pandemic began to decline we were aware of its great benefit. Many were affected when the Job Centre were told they could no longer write Foodbank vouchers. Where could people turn?

Thankfully Rainbow Services gathered a coalition of agencies and received support from Harlow Council to continue to promote a wide range of support, advice and signposting services to our constituents: from Foodbank vouchers to Mental Health to fuel vouchers and beyond. Core partners are:
**Rainbow Services |Citizens Advice Harlow | Harlow Volunteer Centre | MIND in West Essex | ISS | MRCT**




## Harlow Poverty Alliance

Our CEO is Chair of this group which commenced during Covid and has since grown to incorporate most groups across the town who address issues related to poverty: currently 25 in total. The Alliance launched an inaugural conference in June '22 bringing more people together in support of those affected by poverty. Although not in the year we report on here – this event attracted a large audience and amassed widespread support, consolidating much that we had done over the previous year. A report from it is available in the news section of our web site.




## The Trussell Trust

We are affiliates of the Trussell Trust whose work and impact has increased exponentially over the past few years. This has brought enormous benefits to our work, informing us of wider trends as well as directly funding projects to extend our impact, such as the Changing Minds Project and more recently in 2022 giving us the funding to host a Finance Caseworker in the Foodbank. Everyone attending the Foodbank will now be given the option to have direct support in assessing their financial situation: from correct levels of income and benefits to debt and budgeting advice. This is a fantastic boost to our work!

the trussell trust
Stop UK Hunger






# MRCT STAFF & VOLUNTEERS


Andy


David


Margaret


Patrick


Adrian


Marc


Trevor


Clair


Suzie


Karolina


Michael


Liz


Moira


Fernanda


Emma

## Head Office

Andy Thornton– Chief Executive Officer, Company Secretary
David Evans – Director of Community Services
Margaret O'Donovan – Director of Operations

## Harlow Foodbank

Patrick Coppeard – General Manager, Harlow Foodbank
Adrian Smith – Assistant Manager (Bank), St Paul's Satellite
Marc Edmans – MRCT Logistics & Operational Assistant

## Bounty Club

Trevor Stanesby – Bounty Club Coordinator

## Maybury Open Door

Clair Forway – Community Worker
Suzie Raraty – Community Worker
Karolina Sadowska – Community Worker
Michael Raven – Assistant Community Worker
Liz Bellworthy – Community Worker - Bank Worker
Moira Luff – Community Worker - Bank Worker

## Bump-to-Five

Fernanda Champness —Bump to Five Project Manager

## Changing Minds

Emma Batrick — Research and Campaigns – Changing Minds

## MRCT Trustees

Jeanette Ehlers (Chair)
Pat Balkwill
Gary Pattimore
David Norkett
Teresa Knott (Co-Founder and Trustee)
Matt Parsons

## Honorary

Robert Carrington – Honorary Treasurer




MRCT has ten times more volunteers than staff. It is impossible to stress how much our achievements depend on their hard work and good will—thanks so much to every one!

Our volunteers help with all the projects that you have read about, and we are always looking for more.

From sorting food or baby's items to picking up, working at Maybury, helping with a Supermarket day for a few hours every 6 months to being involved in a project or campaign group, there are so many ways to help us help others! Check out the volunteers page on our web site for full details of how, where and when you might get involved!

**www.mrct.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer-3/**








# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**MRCT's work is a tremendous feat of collaboration from so many people who bring their goodwill to help people across the town. We are thankful to all those listed here (and we hope we haven't forgotten any!) for playing their part in supporting Harlow and the surrounding areas with us in the past year.**

**The Bounty Club operates a refrigerated van picking up three days a week from food wholesalers in order to get fresh food to individuals and organisations who support communities in need. This also enables us to give fresh food to recipients at our Foodbank. Picking up this food also avoids thousands of Kgs of fresh food going to landfills every year, redirecting it to those who otherwise could not afford it.**

Bidfood provide a wide variety of surplus, short dated, soft drinks and fresh food for us to redistribute across the town. Through doing this they help schools, disadvantaged people and local agencies.

Brakes provide a wide range of surplus, short dated fresh food and meat, allowing us to access their stock and choose what we can distribute to partners, schools, individuals and the food bank.

**Harlow Foodbank stops people going hungry by acting as a resource for frontline professionals who are supporting those in crisis across the town. Over 200 professionals and organisations can write vouchers which authorise their clients to pick up enough food for at least four days. Individuals can also ask the food bank for help, and they will always be helped and at the same time referred to a supportive agency to address the causes of their lack of money for food.**

St. Paul's Church in the town centre hosts our food bank for four days a week. We could not operate without their fantastic support for us and for the people of Harlow. They are true allies and show constant flexibility and cooperation in our mission. Thanks so much!

The Salvation Army in Harlow are our second wonderful delivery partner. They operate the Foodbank on Wednesdays (until Christmas 2021 a day when Saint Paul's church was not open) deploying their team member Lorraine Evans and resources as true partners in our mission to support those in need. We are so grateful to them!

UK Salads have provided an assortment of fresh salad items each week which we can then distribute to clients at the food bank. their consistent support has helped thousands this year.

High Trees Packers' consistent generosity has enabled us to provide a supply of fresh potatoes through the food bank year on year. This is a hugely valuable resource to people in need.

Greenways Eggs continue to provide our food bank in Harlow town centre with a supply of fresh eggs each week which helps to complement the range of non-perishable food we give to all our food bank referrals. Thanks again to Jenny Fish for her great support.

Special thanks again to Tesco who have not only allowed us to pick up a huge amount of food from all the supermarkets around the town but they also top up the amount given by donors in the store with a further 20% of financial contribution to help with our running costs. They, and their customers have been phenomenal this year.

Thanks too to Sainsbury's for faithfully providing a place for their customers to contribute donations of food to our food bank, day in and day out. Thanks for keeping them safe when they overflowed many times this year!

Many thanks to Asda and their fab Community Champion Gemma in the Water Gardens for such warm cooperation in providing a basket for donations from their customers. Again, this year these overflowed and fresh ones were provided when full.

Lok'n'Store have supported our work since we opened in 2009 come up currently providing a drop off point for food donations throughout the year. This has been a consistent and fantastic resource, thanks so much!

Poundland have been an invaluable community partner since 2017. Providing a wide range of non-perishable foods, toiletries, household items, sweets and drinks, these add important extras to local people in crisis.

SES Group provided a hugely generous party for Harlow children who might not have had a present last Christmas. We acted as a go-between with local agencies who knew who they might be, and the staff team at SAS group went chose, bought, wrapped and gave out presents (and more) at a special event which also supported recently arrived Afghan refugees.






# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Land Sherriff's bought beautiful Body Shop cosmetic gifts for mum's (often the most overlooked) who came to the Foodbank – a very thoughtful treat... they also lend us their big vans for special occasions and come to volunteer in our Store House! Thanks Tyler, Vanda and team.

Thanks to iRead books for donating thousands of childrens, puzzle and colouring in books as bonus items for the FoodBank and also to other agencies we partner with across the town.

**Maybury Open Door operates their drop in in two centres across the town. We thank our hosts St Paul's and Harefield Churches who so warmly and committedly work with us to provide this enduring safe space for attendees.**

**Based on the edge of town, the store house hosts our offices as well as a copious two-storey storage space for food and other items that are donated to us.**

We cannot thank our partners, Lawsons builders, enough for sponsoring our vans, for renovating our store house by installing office spaces for the whole organisation, and this year by donating 72 steel girders that now underpin the 1st floor making it strong enough for the kind of quantities of food we are now storing and redistributing. Lawson's have given us a free van and forklift and service the forklift for us. This family-run business exemplify generosity and social responsibility and have inconspicuously changed so many lives in our town.

We are deeply grateful to Harlow Council and also to the Mulberry Trust for underpinning the costs of running the Store House.

We would like to thank Bristol Street Motors who diligently support us by offering free services and cost price repairs to our fleet of 3 vans. They keep us on the road!

**Bump to Five takes in essential items for children, new-born to five years old, and sorts them into bundles of requested items, dispatching them to families who need them. These are mostly referred to us by caring agencies and professionals around the time, and some ae self-referred from the Foodbank.**

HTS continue to support us by lending us storage space for the Bump to Five project. This is a perfect space nearer the town centre so that stored items stay warm and dry, as do the volunteers who work so hard there.

**The Michael Roberts Charitable Trust is the parent organisation that runs the projects operated above. Founded in 1997 by Teresa and Gary Knott, the Trust has flexibility to respond to a wide range of needs in Harlow and the surrounding areas.**

We would like to thank the Trussell Trust, our associates in running the food bank. The Trussell trust runs a national network of food banks offering guidance through regional staff, materials, partnerships, data management, additional grants, networking, statistical analysis, national campaigning advice and solidarity.

We want to thank our colleagues at the Bishop Stortford food bank for our ongoing close working partnership. This allows us both to get the best out of working in neighbouring towns, sharing ideas and resources to the full.

We would like to thank all organisations in Harlow who partner with us by referring those in need to the food bank. These partnerships go much deeper than writing vouchers: we are in constant touch with frontline staff who advise us on the best way to respond and collaborate in addressing the needs of those facing poverty in Harlow.

In particular we would like to thank Rainbow Services, Harlow's central support charity for the other charities and agencies in the town. We thank them for their leadership in the voluntary sector, in the Community Hub and the consistently warm-hearted support they give when we need a friend!






# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Churches Hope Beyond Fund (funding support)
ASDA (food collection point)
Bidfood, Harlow (surplus fresh food supplies)
Bishop's Stortford Foodbank (foodbank partner)
Brakes, Harlow (surplus fresh food supplies)
Bristol Street Motors (van servicing and repair)
Burnt Mill Academy (student supermarket collections)
CAF Resilience Fund (funding support)
Church and School partners (general and harvest food donations)
Church Langley Church (funding partner))
Church of Holy innocents, High Beach (funding partner)
Create Identitee (MRCT clothing)
Customers at Mecca Bingo Harlow (Christmas Foodbank Donations)
Essex Alliance of Local Councils (funding support)
Essex Community Foundation (funding support)
Free Cakes for Kids (celebration cakes for foodbank client's children)
Freshwaters Church (funding partner)
Front-Line Professional Agencies (community partners)
Gateway Freedom Church (funding partner)
Greenways Eggs (egg donations)
Halifax (foodbank delivery point and cash collection boxes)
Harefield Church, Harlow (free use of building)
Harlow Autos Ltd (Foodbank van revamp)
Harlow Council (Store House funding support)
Harlow Health Centres Trust (funding support)
Heart4Harlow (community partner)
High Beach Church, Epping Forest (regular funding partner)
High Trees Packers (potato donations)
HTS Group, Harlow (storage space and waste disposal)
Laing Family Trust (Maybury Open Funder)
Land Sherriff's (Christmas gifts for mums)
Lawsons (Whetstone) Ltd (vehicle and equipment donations, office rebuild)
LoknStore (foodbank delivery point)
Masonic Charitable Foundation (Foodbank donation)
Mayfield Farm Bakery (bread and rolls donations)
Mulberry Trust, Harlow (significant funding support)
Phoenix Resources Harlow (free use of town centre premises)
Poundland Distribution Centre Harlow (food, toiletry and household donations)
Rainbow Services (community partner)
Robert Halfon MP
Rodect Pest Control (pest control partner)
Rotary Club of Harlow Tye (funding support)
Sainsbury's, Harlow and Bishop's Stortford (foodbank collection point)
Sainsbury's at Neighbourly (Foodbank Fridge)
Salvation Army, Harlow (foodbank satellite centre on Wednesdays)
Santander (foodbank delivery point)
SES Group (Christmas gifts for children)
St Paul's Church, Harlow (discounted use of building)
Stansted Airport (London) (food, toiletry and gift donations)
Stuart & Kathryn Tinney, Housham Hall Farm (landlords)
Tesco, Harlow and Bishop's Stortford (foodbank collection point and cash top-up)
The Rent Guarantee Company (Christmas Donations)
Trussell Trust Foodbank Network (foodbank partner)
UK Salads (salad donations)
Waitrose, Bishop's Stortford (foodbank collection point)


**Michael Roberts Charitable Trust**

Store House, Unit 8, Housham Hall Farm, Harlow Road,
Matching Tye, Harlow CM17 0PB
Tel: 01279 724515 Email: enquiries@mrct.org.uk

**www.mrct.org.uk**
Registered Charity No: 1065006
Registered Company No: 3439299

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