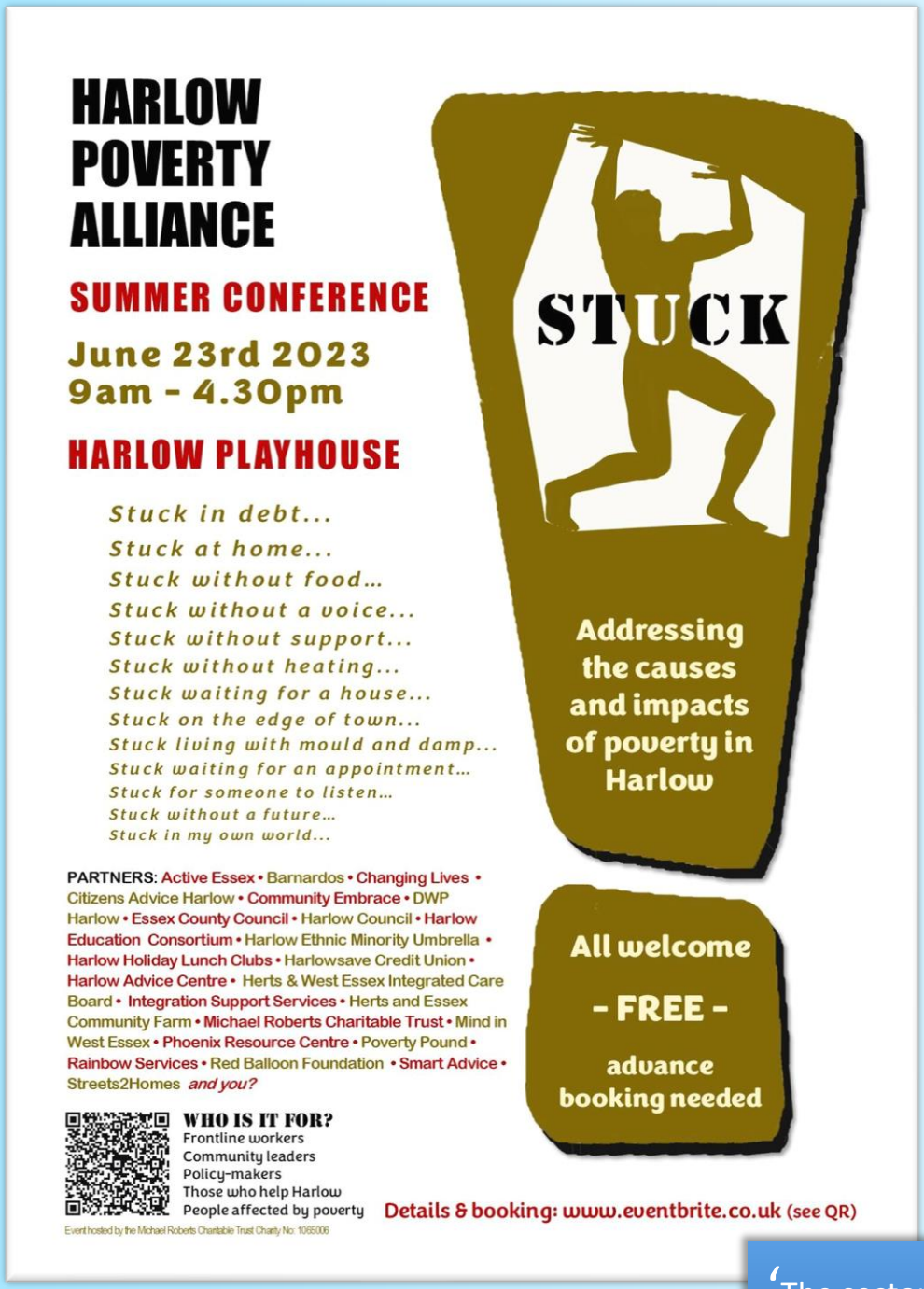


CONFERENCE REPORT

'The sector has been broken-up into so many pieces, with so many disparate providers… These conferences help us to know more about the support networks so we can share that knowledge/ information with others.'

Attendee Feedback

ABOUT HARLOW POVERTY ALLIANCE

The Harlow Poverty Alliance is a multi-agency forum created to consolidate the ways we address the causes and impacts of poverty in the town.

The Alliance was conceived at the end of 2020 after representatives of many agencies and local government had been collaborating closely during the pandemic. We felt that we had proven the many benefits of working together more closely. This had involved ensuring that those affected by Covid had the basics to live off, especially food.

The pandemic revealed the ways in which many people were more susceptible to its impact as they were already living in relative poverty: regularly going into the kind of crises that needed social and material support.

Since that time several new initiatives have sprung up, and the Alliance has helped to ensure that as far as possible those who respond to poverty and other social issues work in a joined-up way across the town.

The Alliance identified three objectives:

1. Improving our shared understanding of the needs in the town: getting greater value from our collaborations; ensuring that decision-makers are aware of the causes and impacts of poverty.
2. Recognising where there is need for new or earlier interventions to stop the effects of poverty escalating
3. Looking at how the public perception of poverty affects those impacted by it eg destigmatising poverty so that people seek help sooner.

The Alliance is open to all organisations who work with people in poverty, and others who might support them such as local businesses with social concern for the town.

Current partners in the Alliance

Active Essex • Barnardo's • Changing Lives • Citizens Advice Harlow • Community Embrace • DWP Harlow • Essex County Council • Harlow Council • Harlow Education Consortium • Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella • Harlow Holiday Lunch Clubs • Harlowsave Credit Union • Harlow Advice Centre • Herts & West Essex Integrated Care Board • Integration Support Services • Herts and Essex Community Farm • Michael Roberts Charitable Trust • Mind in West Essex • Phoenix Resource Centre • Poverty Pound • Rainbow Services • Red Balloon Foundation • Smart Advice • Streets2Homes

The Alliance is currently chaired by Andy Thornton, CEO of Michael Roberts Charitable Trust – contact 01279 724515

ABOUT HARLOW



With transport links into London and surrounding counties, Harlow is an area of great opportunity, yet has long experienced high levels of deprivation. Some areas of the town compare poorly nationally, and Harlow has the second highest level of deprivation and highest level of child poverty in Essex.

Harlow has also experienced changes in population levels and types of accommodation, with an increase in people living in the area in temporary accommodation and permitted developments, both of which can have detrimental impact on quality of life. At the same time there is a rapid growth of higher income families into newer areas of the town.

Poverty and deprivation affect people in multiple ways, putting a strain on both mental and physical health, education, work opportunities and life expectancy. Employment opportunities, overcrowding, accommodation and ease of access to services and benefits are all contributory factors to the level of need in Harlow.

Section 1 Executive Summary

Following two thought provoking half-day sessions in 2022, the Alliance marked June 2023 with its first full day event. Many things have changed in the two years since Harlow Poverty Alliance was established, but the dedication and resolve of agencies and local people to support those in poverty has not lessened. The focus of this year's conference was to explore how people – and the agencies that work with them – may feel stuck, and what could happen to change this.

The event was once again generously supported by a grant from Mulberry Trust, and hosted at no cost by Harlow Playhouse, allowing it to be offered as free to attendees. Publicised through voluntary sector networks and on the local online newspaper, YourHarlow. 101 people enrolled through Eventbrite and around 55 people attended.

Attendees were from a mix of statutory and voluntary agencies, local councillors, educational establishments, individual activists and service users.

The programme for the day (see Appendix) involved an opening and closing plenary and two choices of topical sessions. Attendees were invited to break into discussion groups after each presentation, with a question focused on driving action informed by the presentations and their own insights and experiences. Presentation summaries and discussion outcomes are detailed in this report.

The day was opened and closed with thoughts from a representative of Berecroft Residents' Association and a poverty-related service user.

The introduction outlined one of the priorities of the day: engaging those affected by poverty in the solutions to its effects. We were inspired by an example of this from Epping Forest District Council who shared the story behind their community-engagement project - tackling poverty on the Ninefields Estate.

Presenters' slides were shared with attendees following the event, leaving a huge amount of up-to-date information at the disposal of those looking to progress the many issues raised. These can be found here: https://mrct.org.uk/links/harlow-poverty-alliance-june-2023-presentation-downloads/

In summary sessions throughout the day and at close, concerns were raised regarding:

- a lack of tangible community-building in the town: in recent years investment has dropped and we seem to have gone backwards in levels of support and cohesion. There is a need for community-buildings and services to be re-established and consistently funded again.
- a disconnect between services offered and the needs of the population
- the lack of options within the current housing system in Harlow – offering little hope that households in poverty can become 'un-stuck' at the moment
- we are feeling the impact of policies of previous governments, such as the right to buy scheme, which may not serve our best interests today now that Council housing stock is reduced and in need of repair. Can't this be changed?
- Developments set to take place around Harlow's borders are more likely to attract new arrivals rather than benefit longer-term/current residents
- the stigma that comes with being poor lands on young people as a heavy burden alongside the levels of deprivation they are actually experiencing – social attitudes could be challenged

- the significance and value of voluntary acts aren't always recognised by service providers – eg Berecroft Residents Association fills in where youth services are lacking but the community value and cost it saves is not calculated or appreciated
- there are opportunities to go into schools and speak to parents to let them know about available support before they reach crisis point
- existing services are not promoted well enough to reach people before crisis/people are not aware of what is available or whether they are eligible

Post-event feedback

18 attendees filled in feedback forms. 81% of attendees found the conference to be very/quite useful, with many stating they gained insight into the initiatives that were underway in Harlow and beyond and appreciated the opportunity to network.

> "It was good to hear both the problems and the positive things going on in Harlow".

Most noted issues in the post-event evaluation were:

- the interest in sharing resources to improve communication both between agencies and to the public, to make them aware of services available
- the need to reach people before they reach crisis point
- a focus on more action
- the need to involve and attract more people from the wider community, outside of agencies, to future events

> "I liked how approachable everyone was. Great that there were residents from the community there and not just professionals."

Many valued the chance to network with other organisations and share ideas, with the focus being on knowledge-sharing rather than anyone delivering a 'sales pitch'. We also have many more people interested in joining Harlow Poverty Alliance. There was a real interest in taking the insights from these events, turning them into action and reporting back.

Suggestions for follow up events included hearing from people living in permitted developments, as well as a focus on combining forces to take action.

Some were critical of the low numbers of people with a lived experience of poverty among attendees and presenters on the day.

We shared that feeling: some had pulled out on the day and we remain conscious that a conference for anyone and everyone is an intimidating forum.

> "Most who attended are employed, voluntary or paid, to ease the symptoms of poverty, not the cause. I would want to hear more from people who have combatted poverty in future."

Introductory session summaries

Andy Thornton – Chair of Harlow Poverty Alliance

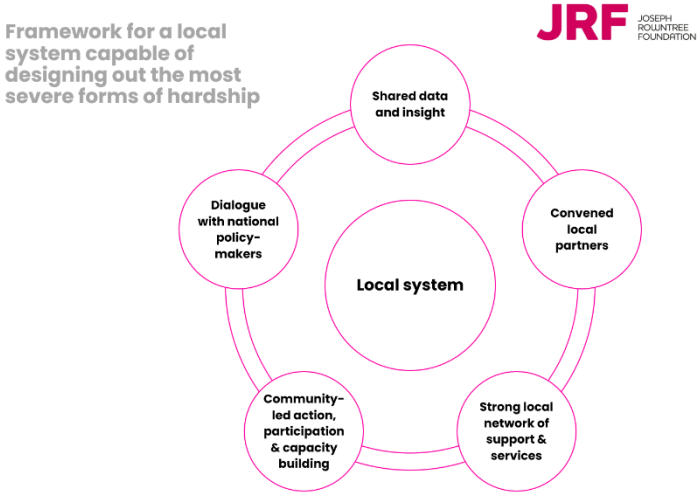
Everyone has a part to play in addressing the issues of the day. Those who come with a policy remit – such as the high-level post-holders at Harlow Council may often appear to be making decisions that determine the life chances of others. Many come as service providers with a daily experience of the conditions faced by those trying to manage on a weekly deficit budget. Others who are living in poverty, and will usually feel the most powerless. All are welcome and are equally important today.

This day is designed to recognise that no one in that mix is without some form of power. And for all we may think of Councillors and MPs as being all-powerful, they will tell us that they are especially constrained by the pressure on the nation's finances. Borrowing is at an all-time high due to COVID and the cost-of-living crisis. The whole nation seems to be maxed-out: households living off credit and loan schemes that have gone up with the interest-rate hike, matching the crisis in GDP.

The money problem has got increasingly complex. People now arrive at the Foodbank from families who have calculated their borrowing against a previous level of income who can no longer match it. They were 'just-about-managing' but can no longer manage as they can't save nor get credit. They stand alongside those who drop in and out of crisis due to record low levels of benefit payments. Many are now strangled by the rising cost of housing that absorbs the first part of their Universal Credit leaving next to nothing to buy food, heating, clothes or other household items.

All of us have some form of power. But only when we come together will the poorest find theirs. When they are supported by others who raise their voice on their behalf. One key task of the policy-makers, charities and service providers in the room is to do just that.

Recent research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation illustrates how the systems that create ingrained poverty will only be tackled when stakeholders come together cohesively – with the intention to share information and make a real difference on the ground.



Summarised in this graphic, it shows that the Poverty Alliance has made a good start, successfully sharing data and insight, convening local partners, creating a strong local network of support and services. We have dialogue with local policy makers, many of whom are in the room, but our main next task is now to support community-led participation and capacity building. To that end we look forward to hearing from the Epping Forest experience, and need to remind ourselves that although Harlow has a number of these elements in play right now, this Alliance can accelerate that development and coordination, and needs to do so quickly. The situation is acute, not long-term. People are in dreadful situations right now. Too many can't cope. The poorest cannot be a dispensable minority as we scramble for answers. So this day will focus action not just reflection. People living with poverty are our abiding priority.

Ninefields Robert Wood Johnson Project

Presentation sharing information around targeted tackling of poverty on the Ninefields Estate

Wendy Cockbill – Senior Community Engagement Officer, Epping Forest District Council
Fabrizio Ferrari – Public Health Officer, Epping Forest District Council

How can a targeted approach enable a community to improve its health outcomes? In 2020, the Epping Forest Health & Wellbeing Board* used this question to focus their activities in the Paternoster area, which had historically experienced lower long-term outcome scores for many social determinants compared to the rest of Epping Forest.



Indicators of Deprivation

Both males and females have a life expectancy which is seven years lower in Paternoster and the rate of deaths considered preventable is 45.7 higher, per 100,000 people. The rate of emergency hospital admissions for hip fractures for over 65s is double.

At 3% the level of working age people claiming out of work benefits is not that high, but it is 1.3% higher than the rest of Epping Forest. The long-term unemployment rate is 4.1per 1,000 in Paternoster compared to 2.8 per 1,000 in Epping Forest. Income deprivation affecting older people is almost double in Paternoster, and 5% higher when comparing deprivation for children to children in Epping Forest. Year 6 children in Paternoster have a 10% higher rate of obesity/being overweight.

Approach

Through 181 doorstep conversations a total of 2,195 data sets were collected, revealing the following key needs:



- Wider participation in positive activities, both physical and cultural
- Improved community cohesion and resilience
- Support for those struggling with poor mental health
- Enhanced local environment, including tackling anti-social behaviour

Through conversations and engagements, the project achieved:

- Half a million pound of investment
- 24 new projects and initiatives started
- 18 different partners engaged
- Over 1,054 residents directly engaged in projects
- 190 most vulnerable residents supported by Financial Wellbeing Hub
- Recruitment of Court and Road Champions to build on success



The local community was engaged further through enlisting them as court/road champions who helped with consultations, spreading the word about the project and walked around the estate with officers and attended meetings. Seven main areas of focus were established: CCTV, environmental, community safety, healthy relationships, diversionary activities, bin stores and area enhancements.

People were invited to attend the Waltham Abbey Financial Wellbeing Hub with Citizens Advice. 190 people attended the hub and benefited from income maximisation/benefit support which totalled £154,481.

Key learnings from the project

- Focus on what you can influence and use existing resources better.
- Internal partnership working is just as important as external partnerships, and the community needs to be supported and given skills to develop.
- There needs to be a commitment to a long-term approach, as building community trust and collaboration can take a long time.
- A focus point or facility is key.

Next steps

These will be based on the findings from the annual community and stakeholder conference, which identified priorities to increase opportunities for training and skills development, along with support/services for older residents; increase in volunteering to support the delivery of existing services; engagement with private business, schools and colleges to support employment training and skills opportunities, and research to measure the impact of the project.



**Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board is made up of organisations from: Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council New City College, Citizens Advice Epping Forest District, HCRG Care Group, Community Safety Partnership, Active Essex, NHS Herts and West Essex, Essex Community Fire and Rescue Service, Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Essex Local Optical Committee, NHS Essex Partnership University, and NHS Foundation Trust.*

Section 2 – Session summaries

Housing in Harlow – a shocking year

Ayub Khan & Sara Cass – Citizens Advice Harlow

Housing issues are being presented at CA Harlow:

1. CA are seeing private tenants being evicted, particularly under s.21s (no fault evictions) who are then unable to secure alternative private rented properties due to soaring cost – they are forced to make homelessness applications – solutions? Perhaps rent deposit schemes/council bonds?
    a. ONS figures show private rental prices increased by 4.3% in 12 months to January 2023 – national figures and clearly prices have moved since then.
    b. On average private renters paying 43% more on rent than people in social housing
    c. Rents may be higher but housing conditions/standards generally lower.
    d. More middle-income families now unable to meet requirements for income levels/credit reports.
2. Permitted Developments in Harlow – not fit for purpose/mould damp because of poor insulation and ventilation; antisocial behaviour; clients often report that they are frightened – lack of support in housing pad for as 'supported'–paying very high rents but not receiving the services.
3. Use of hotels for emergency accommodation (homeless applications and refugees/asylum seekers) – unsustainable – creates antisocial issues.
4. London Boroughs continues to place tenants in unsuitable properties out of area – see point 2 above.
5. Housing conditions generally – Private rented and social housing

National context - 290,330 households faced homelessness in 2022 in England – a rise of 6% compared to the year before.

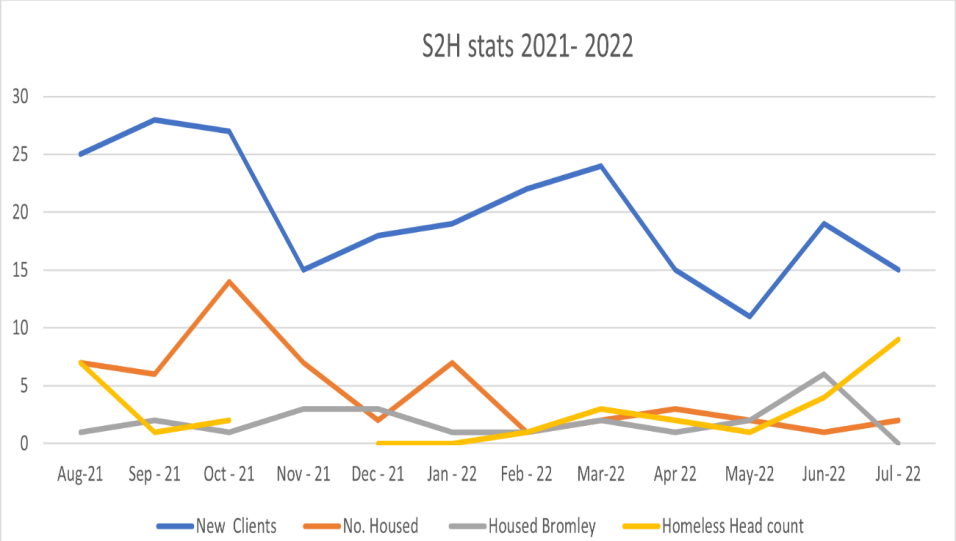
Kerrie Eastman - CEO, Streets2Homes

Closure of HMOs and rise of homelessness – what can be done?

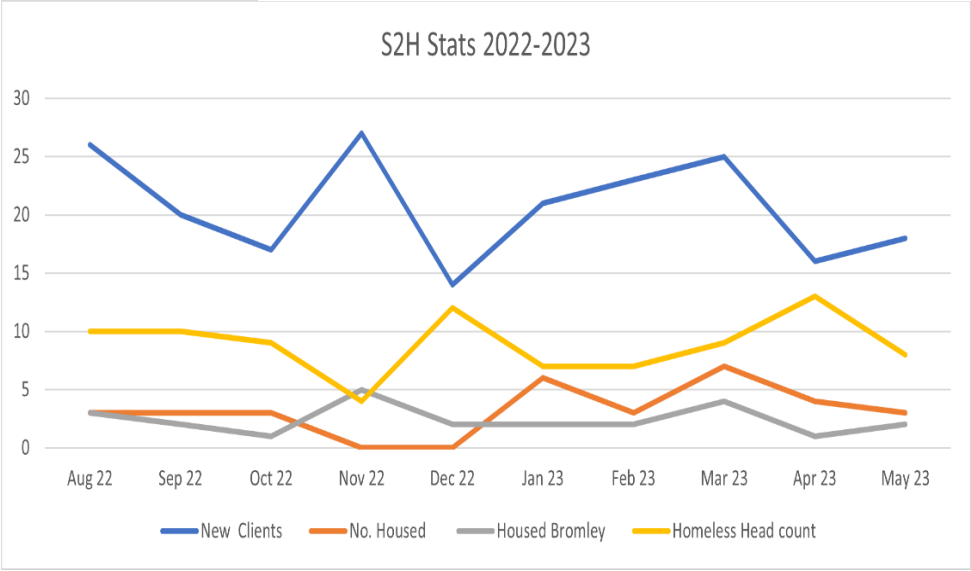
When we think about homelessness, the first thing that springs to mind may be rough sleepers, but homelessness extends much further than this: to those sleeping in vehicles or unoccupied properties, sofa surfing/vulnerably housed, at risk of eviction, in emergency accommodation and homeless shelters.

So what are the key issues in Harlow? 16 House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties have closed in the past 12 months, with no new applications, which means that the 3+ people in each home have had to find places to live – which is not easy to do at the moment. There has been a huge increase in demand for properties, which are not generally affordable, especially for those under 35. Rental cost is also higher than the housing element of benefits, once again, especially for those under 35. Single rooms in Permitted Development properties, often seen as poor-quality options, are now full.

As shown here, there has been an increase in homelessness in Harlow. This combines with a lack of options to help people. In 2022 Streets2Homes housed ten people in the private rental sector, in 2023, just three.



Note - measures to manage the spread of COVID created anomalously low figures in this year



Kylie Brown - Work Coach Team Leader, Harlow Job Centre

Is rent growing faster than benefits?

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate relates to the amount of money you are able to claim to support you to rent a home. If you are a private tenant, the maximum amount of Housing Benefit you are entitled to claim is based on the Local Housing Allowance rate appropriate to your circumstances.

LHA rates vary depending on where you live and the number of bedrooms you need. There are five different rates per area: shared accommodation, one bedroom, two bedrooms, three bedrooms, four bedrooms.

The basic LHA for over 34-year-olds is currently	£720
for under 34s, it's	£330
For 2 bedrooms, the LHA rate for over 34-year-olds is	£899.99
For 3 bedrooms, the LHA rate for over 34-year-olds is	£1,124.98

In most cases, this leaves a shortfall between housing benefits available and private rental sector charges. Any difference between rent costs and LHA has to be met with money set aside for everyday items (food, heating, clothes, travel etc) on Universal Credit.

How LHA compares to rental costs in Harlow

This is a snapshot of housing costs in Harlow, taken from Rightmove on Wednesday 21st June, 2023:

Single room

- £525 cheapest available
- Average is £950
- 23 single bed properties currently on Rightmove
- 1-bed properties in the new builds near Harlow Town train station start at £1,195 a month
- *LHA rate shortfall on average room = £230*

Two bed

- £1,075 for a two bed property in Harlow
- Average cost is £1,400
- 24 properties currently available on Rightmove
- *LHA rate shortfall on cheapest room = £175.*

Three bed

- Cheapest £1,500
- Average £1,600
- 10 properties on Rightmove
- *LHA rate shortfall on cheapest room = £375.*

With property prices as they are, combined with low availability, there are concerns that many Harlow people are not able to afford to live in their hometown, and are having to move away from their support network as a result. This is disruptive to them and their children (if they have them).

When people are able to get a private rental property, they are unlikely to have remaining income to save for a rainy day, or to purchase their own property in the future.

Overall, the situation is detrimental to mental health. People are living in more debt to ensure that rent is paid, having hardly anything for everyday needs such as food, clothes and heating. This debt also has a big impact on whether they are able to get a rental property again in the future, due to credit checks.

This all leads to an increased level of council housing applications, far outstripping availability.

Universal Credit can make people in work better off, which can help with housing costs, but what about those who can't work, for various reasons?

Jokey Poyntz – Coordinator, Harlow Holiday Lunch Clubs

Re-housed families are in deficit from day one. Who's helping and how?

Run by churches in Harlow to offer food, fun and support to vulnerable families predominantly during the school holidays, Harlow Holiday Lunch Clubs seek to provide support to families all year round.

One of the biggest issues for families is finding suitable housing. Those who find themselves in dire straits are thankful to be housed, but it is shocking to see traumatised victims of domestic violence and their children moving into houses with no furniture: not just missing beds but carpets, curtains and even curtain rails. There's no clear justification for this.

While schemes like the Essential Living Fund are available to help to buy white goods and beds/bedding etc, it can take a long time to come through, which adds to people's stress.

It wouldn't be so bad if the floors were safe and easy to clean; for example, if concrete floors were sealed or painted and wooden floors free from nails, but people are given properties with floors which are like you would find in a warehouse: impossible to clean and constantly kicking up dust. This exacerbates health problems like asthma. Having no carpets or curtains makes houses really difficult to heat. There are no charities readily available to pay for carpets. This is a major issue.

If you have no experience of living with a concrete floor, you are unlikely to know that it will cause so many issues, yet if people complain they are told they shouldn't have accepted the property. Often they accept what they are offered because they are frightened to refuse a property for fear of going back to the bottom of the housing list. All of these things accumulate and add to the feeling of being stuck.

Cllr David Carter - Deputy Leader, Harlow Council: newly appointed Portfolio Holder for Housing

Note- this summary was compiled from notes taken at the time and is not verbatim – please do not attribute this as being word-for-word quotes from the Councillor.

Harlow has a Council House waiting list of over 5,000 people, yet only around 400 council properties become available each year to re-let. This leads to frustration and high competition for relatively scarce resources. There are no simple /short term solutions for this. There are plans in place to build just over 100 additional council properties, in places like the old Lister House site, which should be ready by 2024. But this is far from the amount needed to match demand.

In terms of further development, Harlow Council has quite unique pressures to manage. Its geographical boundaries as a new town were devised to mark out an area with a sustained balance of green space and housing. But it is now built on to capacity – there simply isn't space to put new properties. Just like people feel stuck, so the Council is similarly 'stuck' as it would take a change in national policy to create new options. To add to this, it isn't economically viable to build new houses and let them out at the same cost of the existing housing. The average rental cost of council housing is around 40% less than a commercial property. The cost of building materials has risen sharply. Current council resources are being used to upgrade the existing stock which is now of a critical age and needing high levels of maintenance, having been built around the same time.

Housing session: discussion

Council house rents, private rents and mortgage increases are all outstripping income levels. What's happening on the ground, who is losing out the most and how can we stop the poorest coming out worse?

What is happening on the ground?

- Whether private or social housing, there are not enough properties available in the town, and what is available isn't always of the best quality/can come with issues such as mould, damp or no carpeting. This leaves an instant large outlay to make habitable or drives up heating costs and impacts health.
- It's felt that the cost to privately rent is particularly high here (indeed, it has been found to be cheaper to rent in parts of London than Harlow), with private landlords over-inflating prices for monetary gain and demand and competition is high. The private rental sector is also commanding much of the emergency temporary accommodation, leaving vulnerable people with little option but to go with them.
- Part of the issue is the sale of council homes. These are sold to tenants, some of whom sell will eventually them on to private landlords, who then continue to benefit from properties which were once social housing stock.
- There is concern at the level of empty properties in the town. This doesn't make sense when people need homes.
- There is the feeling that Harlow people are not getting local housing, and that if they are on the council list, they may be placed in a property at "the other end of the country".
- People from other areas are being placed in Harlow in temporary accommodation, including permitted developments. Once they have lived here for five years, they are then absorbed into Harlow's housing list, potentially taking the place of a longer-term Harlow resident.
- Permitted developments are in areas of the town with poor transport links, and what there are may not be affordable. These properties tend to be far away from schools, which can impact children's attendance and education, and place extra strain on families.



- Older people may wish to downsize to smaller accommodation but there are no suitable properties available. With an ageing population, more warden assisted housing, such as Sumners Farm, would be beneficial, but there is no land left to build more housing, and what council housing is being built is for family sized homes.
- At the same time, lots of housing is being built as part of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. There is concern that this housing won't be for, or benefit Harlow people, and new builds will not solve Harlow's housing problems, as they will be unaffordable. This development is another missed opportunity to help Harlow people and build more places like Sumners Farm.

Who is losing out the most?

- It's not always the poorest that are being impacted – it's felt that lots of people are in bad situations, with increasing numbers of people on varying income levels, facing bills they can't meet. More of the population is being affected.
- There's a feeling that people in need are often stereotyped and are unfairly written off. There is also a feeling that judgmental landlords are humiliating vulnerable families, exacerbating this vulnerability with the mentality that everyone is replaceable.

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town publicity 2022

- Historically London boroughs and other local councils are placing people in Harlow, which means that those places aren't available to Harlow people. It's felt that Harlow is left to rot, so that other places prosper.
- Older people are losing out, unseen at home, not always able to reach places to get help, or unwilling to ask for help. In other countries, older people are looked after by family members, rather than being sent to residential homes. Is this because of a lack of community/change of values here, or a lack of time and money to provide care ourselves?
- People are fed up, getting further into debt and becoming isolated due to their financial inability to take part in different things and the impact on mental health. It's also recognised that it's not just adults that are shouldering the stress – children are too. What will this do to people in the long term?



Organisations' response to housing issues

- There's a feeling that agencies are trying to offer support but being unable to provide the solution of a home, they can't really help. They are stuck in terms what they can do, with their capacity and resources stretched, so people are feeling let down.
- This is furthered by the sense that people-centred solutions have been lost, and that organisations are working in silos rather than partnership.

What can we do to stop the poorest coming out worse?

- Engage with people. Establish what is strong in the community. Can we empower people to do more through asset based community development?
- There's a need to create a basic, good connection to affordable public transport.
- Change the approach to how council houses are let – leave existing carpet in when there is still life left in it. Allow people to have a look at the property and say what they are happy with being left there, rather than gutting it and leaving people with a huge outlay when they first move in.
- Alongside this, there was appetite for some real policy changes including increasing LHA rates in line with rental rates and setting minimum standards of homes; as well as removing both lifetime tenancies and the right to buy option on council properties. If the right to buy option is kept, it was felt there should be an increase in the time you need to be in a council house before it can be bought, to extend money recouped by the council and keep it council stock.

Health inequalities and poverty

Ian Tompkins – Programme Director, Levelling Up and Partnerships, West Essex Health and Care Partnership together with Harlow Council

Tackling poverty improves health – does tackling health decrease poverty?

The NHS defines health inequalities as being 'the preventable, unfair and unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from the unequal distribution of social, environmental and economic conditions within societies, which determine the risk of people getting ill, their ability to prevent sickness, or opportunities to take action and access treatment when ill health occurs'.

The Wider Determinants of Health - Robert Wood Johnson Model

This is now a widely accepted representation of the likely impact of various factors on someone's long term health status. It illustrates how everyday social and environmental factors contribute to inequalities in health.



The largest category here contains the socio-economic factors. In short, the worse off you are, the worse your health is likely to be. How can we intervene to stop that being the case?

Area covered by the ICB

Supporting a population of around 1.5 million people, the ICB covers areas across Hertfordshire and west Essex, with a growing and increasingly diverse population.



The area is home to some of the healthiest people in the country, but there are communities with high levels of deprivation and much lower levels of life expectancy.

The ICB wants to make sure that people living here have the best opportunities to live happy and healthy lives, and get the support they need, when they need it. It also wants to reduce the inequalities in health between different communities.

A snapshot of the challenges for Harlow

The Built Environment and changing population needs

While Harlow has a younger population profile compared to the rest of England, there is a projected increase in the number of people over 65 from ~16k to ~20k between 2022-2024. Local authority forecasts show a continued increase in population size between 2023-2024. There are 13 permitted development accommodation sites.

Healthy behaviours

Generally, there is a low physical activity take up in the adult population and 41% of year 6 children are overweight (including obesity), compared to the England indicator of 35%.

Socio economic

An area of high socio-economic deprivation, 26% of adults have no formal qualifications and educational attainment scores are lower than average. The wards with the most deprivation (Toddbrook & Staple Tye) are in the most deprived 20% of the national population as identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Key clinical conditions with the highest prevalence

COPD, asthma, hypertension, heart disease and heart failure area all key conditions with the highest prevalence. The presence of Mental Health recorded is the highest within the HWE ICB.

Pressures on healthcare

The suicide rate is significantly higher in Harlow than elsewhere in West Essex, and the presence of mental health recorded is the highest within the HWE ICB. Alcohol related admissions are a cause for concern.

The average number of acute and chronic conditions is the highest in the HWE ICB area.

2022-2023 saw the highest rate of A&E attendance per 1,000 population which is above the West Essex rate.

Harlow has a high volume of chronic and advanced Ambulatory Care Sensitive conditions within the >65 age group of note, Heart Failure, AF & Flutter and COPD. Heart Failure is the condition which shows the highest volume and cost of those receiving, End of Life, Frailty and Dementia care.

Cancer screening take up in breast, cervical and bowel are lowest in comparison to the rest of West Essex.

Harlow North

Public Health intelligence shows that Harlow North is amongst the most deprived Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within the ICB.

Old Harlow Health Centre, Church Langley Medical Practice, Nuffield House, Addison House and Sydenham House Surgery are all practices which fall into the Harlow North PCN area. The data that follows is reflective of the patient population registered at the practice, which may not be the same as the area that they live in.

Estimated figures show:

- 17% of children live in poverty
- 15% of older people live in poverty
- 13% of households live in fuel poverty
- 10% of households are overcrowded
- 34% of people aged 65+ live alone
- 6% of working age people are claiming out of work benefits
- 22% of children aged 4-5 and 39% of children aged 10-11 are overweight

Long term conditions [LTCs] in Harlow North:

- 25% have at least one LTC
- 7% have more than 5 LTCs, compared to 6% for the ICB

- 32% of the population in the End of Life, Severe Frailty and Severe Dementia segment live within the bottom tenth of the population for four deprivation factors.

Harlow South

Wider determinants data shows Harlow South as the most deprived primary care network within the ICB for income, employment, overall deprivation, child poverty and education, skills and training.

Lister House Medical Centre, the Ross Practice and the Hamilton Practice are all practices which fall into the Harlow South PCN area. The data that follows is reflective of the patient population registered at the practice, which may not be the same as the area that they live in.

Estimated figures show:

- 20% of children live in poverty
- 15% of older people live in poverty
- 15% of households are overcrowded
- 34% of people aged 65+ live alone
- 1.2% of people cannot speak English well
- 6-7% of working age people are claiming out of work benefits
- 23% of children aged 4-5 and 40% of children aged 10-11 are overweight

Long term conditions in Harlow South:

- 27% have at least 1 LTC
- 7.5% have more than 5 LTCs compared to 5.6% for the ICB
- 52% of the population in the End of Life, Severe Frailty and Severe Dementia segment live within the bottom tenth of the population for four deprivation factors.

Harlow life expectancy compared to rest of West Essex

Uttlesford and Epping Forests' men and women have a life expectancy which is 2+ years longer than Harlow, which has a life expectancy rate for both sexes which is one year lower than the rest of England. (Source Essex County Council Public Health Nov 2021)

HARLOW PROJECTS in progress	
Tackling Neighbourhood Inequalities Project run by Primary Care (GP'S)	Harlow North - Early diagnosis screening for Breast, Cervical & Bowel cancer and AAA linking with the ERICA cancer pilot. Harlow South – Chronic Respiratory Disease targeted support to maximise uptake of reviews for respiratory and cardiovascular patients.
Population Health Management Project In Mobilisation	Health Inequalities Pilot targeting patients on multiple waiting lists at PAH who are of working age, and experiencing mental health conditions such as depression - through targeted telephone contact to identify a patient's holistic needs and enable sign posting to community services to help address the wider determinants of health.
Harlow Community Hub Development	Part funded arrangement with Harlow District Council to ensure Community Hub services continue and develop.
Harlow Levelling up Task Force	Group has been set up to Tackle Health Inequalities as part of the Health Equity work.
Core20Plus5 Connectors Project	Focus is to engage with harder to reach communities through community engagement and volunteer recruitment with those with lived experience of health inequalities. 2 Year project lead by West Essex delivery partner Rainbow Services working with a range of partners. Aim is to work alongside the community to achieve solutions and increase health equity.

HARLOW PROJECTS in progress	
The Harlow Just About Managing Project	Funded by ECC Financial Well Being and Levelling Up unit. The lead delivery partner is Harlow Citizens Advice. This project will aim to engage women over 60 and to test and learn communication and engagement methods. The project will focus on Financial Literacy specially whether women aged 60 and over know how to access the right information, advice and guidance at the right time from the right place and know how to maximise savings, increase income capacity and forward plan. The project will focus in on geographical hot spots areas where ECC data and insight demonstrates need for financial literacy support.
Targeted Lung Health Project	A pilot took place in Harlow South PCN targeting patients who met a criteria to look at lung health. 172 patients attended and 165 were referred for a low dose CT scan. 4 patients were referred for further investigation. Severe Emphysema was identified in other patients and they were referred to respiratory. Plans to roll out to wider ICB, with plans to target particular patient cohorts. Scoping is currently underway to inform decision making.

Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System

HARLOW PROJECTS Coming soon	
Trainee GP placement **August 2023**	A 2 day placement to support Health Inequalities
Patents with Severe Mental Health (SMI) Annual Checks	EPUT to support additional capacity. A comprehensive annual health check will be offered to each adult on the SMI Register. This will include measurement of blood glucose and cholesterol, BP, assessment of alcohol, smoking, and substance misuse, diet, physical activity and oral health and health enquiry into sexual health along with cancer screening advice.

Harlow Identified Health Inequalities Priority Areas for 23/24

- To take a targeted geographical focus in areas of greater need: Harlow, Waltham Abbey and Debden. Support community asset building through developing the Health and Well Being offer of Community Hubs.
- Resource the Harlow Health Inequalities Project, which is underpinned by Population Health Management.
- To support children's health equity to ensure the best start in life to focus upon healthy weight (obesity).
- To support improvements in health checks for patients living with severe mental health need and for patients diagnosed with a learning disability.
- To support the expansion of wider roles, eg social prescribers.

Session 3 – Food shortage is the tip of the iceberg

Kate Greer Project Lead – Harlow Community Hub

Impressions from the Community Hub – what's troubling Harlow?

The Community Hub is a partnership between MRCT and Citizens Advice Harlow, funded by the UKSPF via Harlow Council and west Essex ICS. It focusses on assisting Harlow residents in crisis situations.

People primarily contact the Community Hub due to food poverty, but through conversation the team find out the root cause of the challenges faced and work to connect the household to someone who can help. This connection can be to a Hub partner or an organisation outside of the partnership. The face-to-face work carried out around the town via outreach sessions allows the hub to reach many more people than may be achieved by a phone line alone. Clients are followed up with, so further assistance can be provided once the initial crisis has been resolved.

Current key themes/areas of concern:

- Temporary accommodation
- Families being placed into unsuitable hotels with no cooking facilities
- Isolation faced by those living in permitted developments
- Families/households struggling with the cost of living

Patrick Coppeard General Manager – Harlow Foodbank and Bounty Club (MRCT)

From Bounty to community



Due to expected pressures on foodbank through the cost-of-living crisis, the decision was made to open The Bounty Club, which collects surplus food from wholesalers and makes it available to households on low income – helping to make their weekly shop more affordable. For £2.50 a week, members can buy a bag of mainly fresh food which would cost around £30+ in the shops. This food would all be going to landfill, otherwise, so this is a project which both helps those would benefit from a bit more support with food costs and also helps the planet.

It was expected that there would be around 500 members, when the Bounty Club was set up, but over 4,000 people have signed up. Open 1-3 at St Paul's Church, people start queuing at 9:30 and a community has been developed in that queue.



While other Essex foodbanks are quoting an increase in usage of 30-60%, the opening of The Bounty Club has led to a 20% reduction in the numbers of people visiting Harlow foodbank – bucking a national trend.

Since a Bounty community has been created, the next question is what else can be offered to them to help them to move on and not be reliant on our services?

An Animal Foodbank has recently been added and a Community Supermarket will be opening in September, along with a community café. It's hoped that these initiatives will encourage engagement and add value to members' visits by developing a stronger sense of community: helping to develop personal, social and mutual support to those in similar positions to themselves.

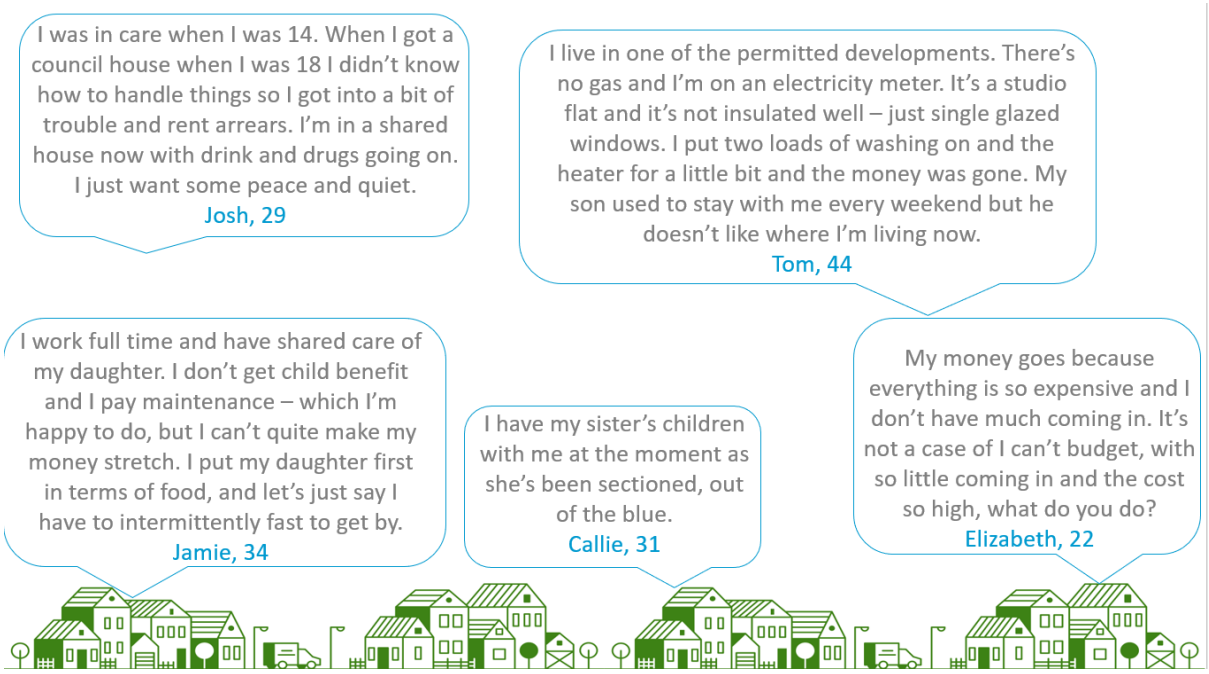
Bounty Club members have been surveyed on what else they might need or want, alongside discussions with other agencies in town to ascertain what else could be offered. While the project may have been created within MRCT, the aim is that it will be a community based/led facility, with MRCT just providing the infrastructure, and an open door.

Emma Batrick Changing Minds Campaign Manager – Harlow Foodbank (MRCT)

How can we mobilise and influence?

In 2021 a listening project asked Harlow Foodbank attendees to share their stories. It aimed to raise foodbank users' voices, challenging stereotypes and making them more than just a statistic. Many people will remember Janice, who joined us at last year's conference. She was one of the first people to share their story at Harlow Foodbank and she stated how important she felt the opportunity to do so was at the time.

People were asked what brought them to the foodbank and how they felt. The main issues included universal credit (delays, sanctions and the levels that they are set at); housing, one income not being enough and life changes such as illness, domestic violence, loss of work and bereavement.



No matter what the main driver was, a common theme through many people's stories was isolation.

People were also asked what could change. Unsurprisingly, the universal credit system and the need for better housing came up a lot. Many said they felt a real lack of community and that Harlow had lost something there. Many were concerned that there was nothing for young people to do in Harlow. There was also a strong feeling that people wanted to help others.

Seventy people shared their stories. Work has been done to share some of these through schools and churches and there is a need to progress things further.

Would knowing that other people felt the same reduce feelings of isolation? Would many people coming together to raise their voices over the same issues have more power? What could be done to bring them together?

The next step is to create an online and in-person community to come together and share experiences, find solutions and work towards improving our town through lobbying for change.

HARLOW HIVE
A DIFFERENT KIND OF BUZZ

MRCT now has its own premises in the Harvey Centre as well as the Bounty Club as places to develop this dialogue and community mobilisation.

Marina Dunajeva Chief Executive Officer/Operations Manager – Integration Support Services, Harlow

New arrivals, hidden communities and unseen barriers to engagement

ISS provide a holistic approach to advice and guidance to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from all over the world. ISS strives to empower people that they support, standing with them, helping people to be seen and heard.

Many people who now visit ISS didn't choose to move to Harlow. They have been moved by other councils, the Home Office and social Services. Often this is a case of people being moved and just dropped off, without any knowledge of where they are or what is available to them in the area that they now live. New arrivals are also coming from the Ukraine: refugees who have settled and managed to rent a place privately are becoming sponsors for extended family members, helping them to move to the UK.

Support and information sessions are sometimes targeted at different communities, such as the Ukranian community and Afghan community, but there are some hidden communities who do not know where to find help or that they are eligible for support.

Settled Eastern European communities who have been living in Harlow for 5+ years, working full time, experiencing financial independence, are now struggling financially but don't think that they are eligible for support, believing that it is only available for those who receive benefits.

Those who don't speak English are also unheard and unseen as language differences remain one of the biggest barriers in accessing services. Those who are working full time, long hours, without opportunity to access the services (as they are working when they are available) are also unheard and unseen.

Many don't reach out for help because they have lost trust. They have received too many promises from different organisations saying they will get back to you, but were not heard from again.

People are losing hope when temporary/emergency status becomes permanent. People feel lost and confused trying to navigate services. Digital illiteracy and poor writing and reading skills also make completing online forms quite impossible.

ISS believes that people need people. They need a physical, safe space to speak to someone. ISS work in partnership with statutory and non-statutory organisations to provide this space and be there for those who need support.

Food poverty: discussion

To feel hungry with no hope of food is traumatising. The shock causes people to crumble. What can we put in place to stop people getting to that point – and how can they find it in time?

- While there are services in place to help people, there doesn't seem to be enough joined up thinking in their delivery, as many people don't know how to access those services or whether they are eligible.
- At present, people feel that they don't have a voice and that they are not listened to. There's a feeling that plans are made without people's involvement, so initiatives are not really being created to address a need but an assumption. Health is fragmented and support services are strained. Capacity and sustainability of services are an issue too – some are oversubscribed and underfunded.

Create initiatives with people

- There is a need to audit evidence of previous work and not repeat consultations without action, otherwise people feel that their voice doesn't matter because they weren't listened to the first time, and are less likely to engage in future.
- Communication – both where and how it takes place – is a huge factor. There is a need to speak in a language that people understand, avoiding tech talk and acronyms or talking down to people. There should be a feeling of respect and trust. If some people have more to say than others, take the opportunity to conduct more in depth research.
- There is an opportunity to engage with people where they already meet, such as libraries, GP surgeries, Harlow station, pubs, salons, hairdressers, men's sheds and residents associations and shops – alongside social media. Community noticeboards, screens in GP services, bus stops and the top of large bins could also be used to advertise on, along with leaflet deliveries, door knocking and local radio. Local celebrities and sports teams could use their platforms to encourage people to go to get help if they need it and share information on where support can be found. Any outreach should be in multiple languages, where possible.
- Many people who work in the community, such as nurses and social services, would benefit from learning what is available when they are training, so that they can share information as they are out visiting people.
- Where language is a barrier, there may be service users who can help and will support other agencies too. There is an opportunity to bring people together through trusted members of their own communities.
- It's important to connect the voices of the people with policy makers and those who can create change.

Creating community

- It is felt that the town would benefit from community initiatives in each area, so that people can come together without having to overcome the barrier of trying to reach the town centre. These events could take place in churches and community centres, if available. Recommendation /knowledge sharing about services available may be received better from friends and neighbours rather than service providers. This may be easier to achieve through conversations arising naturally during different social events such as coffee mornings, sporting or dance activities, as a softer way in. This could also make it feel less like they would be accessing charity.

  If the initiatives are developed well, awards could be offered to encourage participants and groups.
- Through sharing more information on what will happen to food if it is not taken, you can emphasise that people will be helping the planet through reducing waste too, to alleviate the stigma of charity.
- The development of community initiatives could involve children from a young age, to educate them about different ways to help themselves and show them the value of being part of a community. This could also involve partnering with the Scouts and other young people groups.
- Once people have heard about the services that are available, there is a need to ensure that people feel able to access them. It's felt that there is a lot of bureaucracy when trying to navigate services, which could be solved through a hotline to help with form filling. The level of paperwork required for support or referrals is a huge barrier. It's also felt that services need to have a greater awareness of cultural differences.

- Whatever initiatives are created, they need to be in an easy to reach location, with information about other support that is available, so that further crisis can be averted. It's important that services are well promoted and also accessible to working people.

What could we learn from existing initiatives?

Potter Street seems to have a great community – how have they created this? What do they do?

This is all great in theory…

We may think we know the answers but the best thing that we can do is engage with people and listen. Make "What do you need?" our core question.

Session 4 – is money the only answer to poverty?

Rachel Lewis – Relationship Manager, West Essex Active Essex

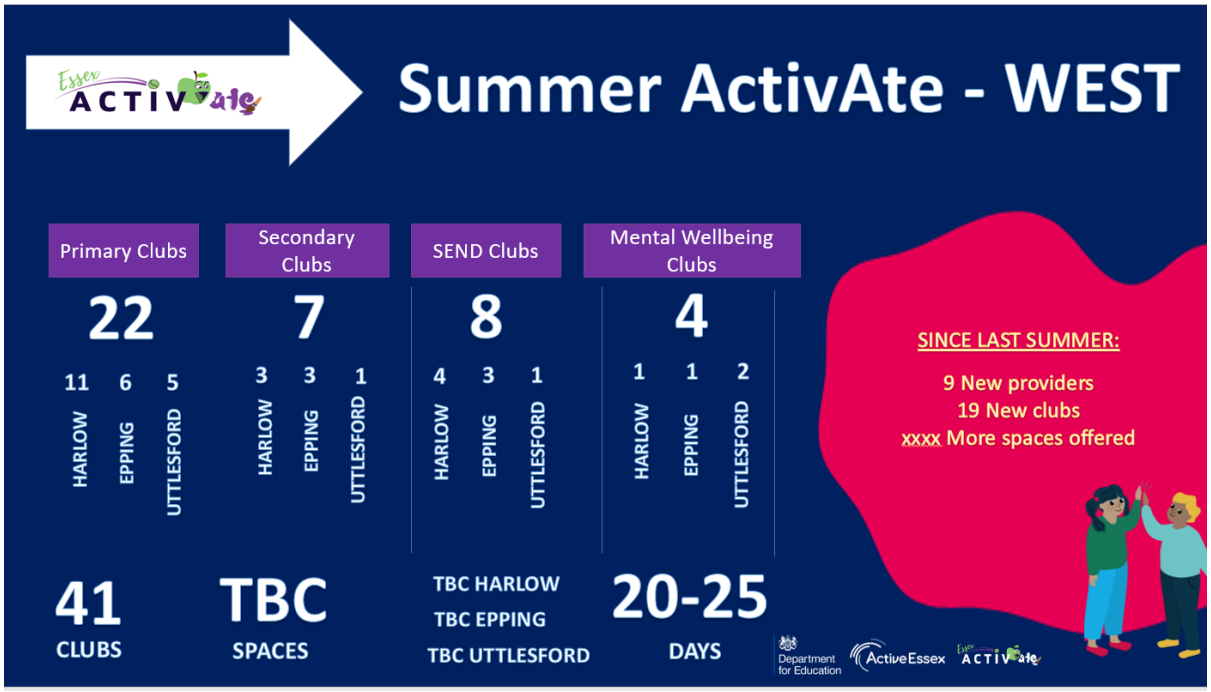
What is being provided for families and how far is it helping?

Essex ActivAte is the name for the Holiday Activity and Food (#HAF2023) programme across Essex, run by Active Essex, Essex County Council and Thurrock Council, on behalf of the Department for Education. The programme aims to support the physical and mental wellbeing of primary and secondary school children, through engagement in a wide variety of enrichment and physical activities, and provision of a nutritious, school standard meal.

Their aim is to engage at least 30% of young people who are eligible for benefit based free school meals daily. 85% of those who take part must be in receipt of free school meals, 26% must be vulnerable families identified by referral partners. To ensure coverage is hitting those areas of need, there is a targeted approach to recruitment through schools and Wonde e-vouchers, as well as child and family wellbeing services, community partners and foodbanks.



** BBFSM = Benefit Based Free School Meals*



Challenges

There are some accessibility concerns as to whether the scheme is able to reach and accommodate the families who need it most, such as those with caring responsibilities and/or English as a second language. There is also a dependency on schools to issue the e-codes to families, which creates a distance between the service and its potential users. secondary aged school children are also harder to reach.

Gary Taylor - Business Development Lead, Adult Education, Employability, Innovation & Skills Academy, Harlow College

What's stopping people moving into employment and what's being done to help with that?

Bright Futures is the Adult Training Academy of Harlow College. The training centre is in East Walk at Harlow Town Centre.

Barriers to training

Bright Futures believes that the main obstacles to people returning to work or entering the workplace for the first time can involve many emotional and practical barriers. These could relate to a lack of confidence or motivation, or a lack of understanding of what opportunities there are, as well as a fear of the unknown or of what support is available. Technology can be a barrier in terms of digital skills and lack of access to equipment. If people do have access, they may not know how to prepare a quality CV or know where to find roles and how to apply for them. There may also be a mismatch between the qualifications and skills that they have now and the opportunities that they are applying for – there needs to be an understanding that there may be a need to start at entry level, develop a career and work towards becoming better skilled and higher paid. Even if roles are available, they may not be practical due to travel and childcare. There are limitations on how easy some people are to reach.

What we currently do try to help people in this position

Bright Futures offers free courses for anyone who is 19+, unemployed and in receipt of at least one benefit, or employed and earning under £20,319 per annum (personal allowance). Vouchers worth up to £2,000 are available to people who meet these requirements for part time courses.

Free Level 2 NCFE e-learning courses are available to everyone – with no restrictions – via the college website. ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages) are also available.

Courses are also targeted, such as Supporting Older Workers into Work (50+).

CV support is available in partnership with the National Careers Service.

As part of the Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) courses are offered with employers attached, with work opportunities available on completion of the course. Partnership working takes place with a number of agencies e.g. Harlow JCP, Reed in Partnership, Caridon, Bounty Club, Windrush Housing, Employ-Ability, Shaw Trust, Harlow Council and Essex County Council.

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) course progression/further progression to learning is offered to improve work opportunities.

What do we see as some of the common challenges faced in Harlow?

Partners are working smarter together to provide a high quality of support and IAG. There are some challenges, including employer buy-in, lack of resources available and the need to work around people's existing commitments/provide flexible working so that individual needs are met.

Low skill set/qualifications can be a challenge, along with language barriers, cultural differences, health conditions and age.

Norma Gordon - Disability Employment Adviser, Harlow Job Centre

Are people really preferring not to work? Why are so many jobs are going unfilled? Is something better than money?



Working with in job centres and local community hubs across west Essex, the disability employment advisor team of two comes into contact with many residents of Harlow (benefit claimants or otherwise). In their experience, 90% of people they have contact want to partake in some kind of work. However, there are barriers which prevent them from working, including childcare, health conditions, housing issues, etc.

Harlow Job Centre strives to reduce those barriers by signposting people to other agencies which can provide support, alongside advising claimants of the support they can receive via JCP (Jobcentre Plus). This support is available in a variety of ways: personalised support with a DEA (Disability Employment Advisor) for those with health conditions; regular meeting and coaching from a claimant work coach, job fairs, and 85% of childcare costs for those on Universal Credit, among other things.

The majority of people are wiling to work when these barriers are broken down and they are given the support that they need. This support may include retraining, which is available through the JCP SWAPs (Sector based work programme) and in-house training programmes.

Andy Thornton – MCT / Harlow Trussell Trust Foodbank

Introducing the Trussell Trust Essentials Guarantee Campaign

In the last financial year, food banks in the Trussell Trust network have seen the highest ever level of need, distributing close to 3 million (2,986,203) emergency food parcels — including more than a million to children. This is the most parcels the network has ever distributed in a single year.

We know this is just the tip of the iceberg as their research finds that one in seven people face hunger across the UK due to a lack of money.



We believe our social security system should support anyone in need of help, but right now it's not providing enough income to cover the cost of life's essentials, with most people at food banks in receipt of Universal Credit.

We're calling on the UK government for an 'Essentials Guarantee' to make sure that the basic rate of Universal Credit is at least enough to afford the essentials we all need, such as food, household bills and travel costs.

Around 90% of low-income households receiving Universal Credit are going without at least one essential like food, a warm home or toiletries.

The Trussell Trust is calling for an Essentials Guarantee

The basic rate of Universal Credit should at least cover the cost of essentials like food, household bills and travel costs, but it is not currently set according to any objective assessment of what people need.

Right now, this is only £85 a week for a single adult. That means there's a significant shortfall between people's living costs and their income, which is forcing many to skip meals, switch off essential appliances such as fridges, and unable to pay essential bills.

Working towards the next general election the Trust is inviting partners to join them in calling for an Essentials Guarantee within Universal Credit as part of the manifesto of all parties seeking to govern the country. This means the basic rate at least covers life's essentials and that support can never be pulled below that level. **This means guaranteeing at £120 not £85.**



Andy showed the video explaining the campaign, available here https://player.vimeo.com/api/player.js and invited all present to help promote it to create a tangible change in the coming year.

Is money the only answer…? Discussion

Talent and potential may be distributed evenly across all of humanity but money isn't. Money helps us afford things. Without it talent and lives can be wasted… Can things be made available to those with little money so there isn't an ever-increasing disparity in society if you're not born into a family with money?

- In terms of the question heading up the session, "Is money the only answer to poverty?" the answer was a resounding yes. It was felt that money, or lack thereof, impacts mental health and is fundamental for living. It not only helps people to provide for themselves but reduces labels and stigma. Children are now being highlighted as a cost area and don't want to have to endure a label.
- It's felt that people are living in deficit, which can impact people's lives. Caps are unhelpful and benefits do not cover the cost of living. There is a sense of vulnerability which could be eased with maximising of income, pension credits and increased financial literacy.
- Where there are free services available, it doesn't always mean free as transport costs will be involved. It's felt that support services do cost money.
- How communal spaces are labelled can be a barrier to people accessing them. "Warm spaces" are all well and good, but it's felt that announcing them as such can put people off from attending and perhaps outing themselves as experiencing poverty.

Is Harlow losing out?

- Leisure facilities are expensive in Harlow, for example, it's cheaper to go swimming in Bishop's Stortford. It seems that it's a postcode lottery for affordable leisure activities. Paddling pools are also open for larger parts of the year in Bishop's Stortford and other areas – why are the paddling pools in Harlow only open in the summer holidays?
- There are places where people come together which offer free tea and coffee and become a safe warm space naturally, without feeling like charity, such as St Thomas Hospital.
- Spaces and opportunities to meet for free have become fewer and smaller.

There are free things, do people know about them?

Harlow Library is amazing, and the libraries in the area offer a Library of Things, but do people know that? More needs to be done to share information and promote what is available.

Barriers

Barriers need to be broken down, even for funding organisations. There needs to be a cultural level playing field, but with the inequality in school funding between private and state, a level playing field will never be achieved.

Opportunities

- There are opportunities to invite parents into schools to share information about what services are available and any benefits that people may be able to access but may not be aware of. Multi agency services could visit the school to connect, raise aspirations and share life skills. It's important that sessions are accessible to all parents and carers.
- Are relationships between partners being used to their full potential? Sharing information holds value. Parents involved with Find Your Active could be introduced to Brighter Futures. Services in GP surgeries could help.
- What are some of the differences between experiences at private schools compared to public and could they be provided for with targeted funding? For example access to chess clubs, reading groups and theatre trips.

Summary from the Chair of the Harlow Poverty Alliance

Congratulations if you have made your way through this rather extensive report!

Hopefully it has reminded you of the bits you missed, or given you some data you needed to find, or ideas of people to connect to, or initiatives you are glad to discover.

All that is our purpose.

It is hard though to summarise in one document the *spirit* of the day. Here are some attempts:

One recurrent theme in discussions was the need for 'less talk and more action'. It's a chastening message, but I feel it strongly too. At events like this we inevitably talk up what we are doing to try address issues, but the scale of our interventions in context of the level of hardship in the town and nation still seems small. The past year has been *dreadful* for those in long term poverty.

We were disappointed that some of our community representatives couldn't make it, and in general it is hard to attract people affected by poverty to an event that has that word in its title. We will do more to address this in the coming year, maybe even a different style event next year. It all remains to be discussed.

We shared a sense of powerlessness in the immediate term: not enough light on the horizon. There is no shortage of dedication from those who came from all walks of life to reckon with the problems. The best thing we did is compare notes, issues, and solutions available, re-affirming our determination to speak out for those who seem increasingly overlooked and 'stuck'.

We were left asking "where is the power to change all this?" We seem to be subject to circumstances beyond our control in this year of 'the cost-of-living crisis'. I feel that in my own affairs, and I have a relatively large amount of control in my life. Conscious of it in our own fears, we can't let our more vulnerable neighbours lose all sense of control, self-determination, hope. The answer must be in unity of purpose and vision for a better town. Where worth is measured not by wealth, but it is intrinsic to each neighbour, and we offer what we can in solidarity.

This is what keeps me, and I hope us all, going… looking and hoping for effective solutions to support those who are 'stuck'.



In some respects, this is the same spirit that founded Harlow – a new town born after a terrible national struggle.

In what seems to be a dark time we need to hang in. To make good the future for those who shaped the town – many who are ageing alongside us. They and many others who can't make ends meet feel abandoned right now… and we all fear for the next generation whose life chances seem to diminish as we borrow more and invest less in the future. We have much work to do. We can only do that together.

Come and join us.

Andy Thornton – Chair Harlow Poverty Alliance August 2023

Appendix - programme for the morning

Time	Choices	
8.30 – 9.30	**Coffee on arrival** **+ Agency Fair** (pop-up stalls in **Mezzanine**)	
9.30 – 10.30	**Plenary - Launch & welcome – Theatre 2** The shape of the day, outline of sessions. Summary of the past year's work, achievements, current situation relating to poverty in the UK / Harlow. Andy T Profile of work in Ninefields Epping – Fabrizio Ferrari – initiatives and principles that bring more community players into action to address poverty. "I can make a difference" activity. Introducing our respondents who will give their thoughts at the end of the day.	
10.30 – 11.00	**Coffee break Agency Fair Mezzanine**	
11.00 – 11.45 Practical progress sessions choose 1 out of 2	***Housing in Harlow*** **- Theatre 2** *What can be done to improve it for the poorest?*	***Health Inequalities and poverty –*** **Mezzanine** *HWE ICB update*
11.45 – 12:30	**Discussion 1**	**Discussion 2**
12.30-13.00	**Lunch (Platter from Dorringtons) – Studio 1** **Agency Fair Mezzanine**	
13.00 – 13.45 Practical progress sessions choose 1 out of 2	***Feeding & supporting Harlow*** **Theatre 2** *Various agencies (eg MRCT, Community Hub, CA) report on collaborative outcomes, share plans and welcome involvement in next step activities*	***Is money the only answer to poverty?*** **Mezzanine** *Supporting wellbeing for those can't spend (various agencies offering practical support in mitigating the impacts of poverty) & beating debt*
13.45-14:30	**Discussion 3**	**Discussion 4**
14:30-14:45	**Coffee break Agency Fair Mezzanine**	
14:45-16.00	**Feedback from 4 sessions Theatre 2** **Reflections from people with lived experience of poverty in Harlow** **Summary and close**	

This report was compiled by Emma Batrick and Andy Thornton working for the Michael Roberts Charitable Trust
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