



**REACH** Community Projects  
*Celebrating ten years!*

***"...an asset to Haverhill, a genuine  
community-based project"***  
**Community support worker**

**[www.reachhaverhill.org.uk](http://www.reachhaverhill.org.uk)**



**REACH Community Projects** is a Haverhill based charity which exists to tackle poverty, increase aspirations and ultimately lift people out of poverty. We are part of the charitable work of River of Life Community Church (ROLCC) Haverhill but our volunteers (now numbering more than 60) come from many backgrounds.

We started out in 2005 providing debt counselling. Debt can have a devastating effect on family life and we soon discovered its impact. Due to debt and other problems (often benefits related), people were missing meals and in some cases didn't have enough money to put food on the table. In response to this, 'Haverhill Foodbank' was launched in October 2008, just as Lehman Brothers bank crashed and the so called 'credit crunch' became hot news and we plunged into a global recession.



**First debt advisor  
Henry Wilson**



**Foodbank launch**



**Early Furniture  
Bank team**

Things moved fast. In September 2009, in response both to offers to donate furniture and an evident need for recycled items, we set up a Furniture Bank. Then in January 2010, to bring all the projects under one umbrella, 'REACH Community Projects' was officially launched by Richard Howitt MEP. The name REACH is an acronym for **Restore, Encourage, Action, Community and Hope**.

We noticed early on that we had regular clients with multiple problems. It was never our intention to act merely as a 'sticking plaster' and we wanted to do more. It was (and remains) our aim to get to the root cause of people's problems. Realistically, we needed a permanent home and we eventually managed to secure premises on Haverhill's Clements Estate meaning that, in May 2010, the 'REACH Resource Centre' opened its doors for the first time.



**REACH launch**



**Resource Centre opening**



# Celebrating 10 lives



*"It was so nice to be befriended over something that was my own fault, really... Things got out of control. Since then I am completely debt free. If I haven't got the money I don't buy it. I pay cash for everything. It wasn't 'good customer service', it was a 'life service'. My finances were sorted out; my health was sorted out; my faith was sorted out. I didn't know you but you saved my life"*

**Sarah – Our very first client in 2005**

*"Getting a job after being inside is really hard. This is the first 'legal' job I've had in 14 years. No-one's ever given me a chance before now. Working with REACH has really, really helped me out. Life has changed immensely. I have my own money to spend. I can get what I want; go where I want. It gives me a purpose to live life"*

**Gavin – former volunteer 'Breaking the Cycle' programme**



*"The bailiffs were coming to my house. I got to know REACH and they helped me out and made my life a lot better. They took my bills to insolvency. I feel like my life is back on track now... I now volunteer at the Foodbank and my husband does the Furniture Bank. It is good to give a little bit of help back for others"*

**Jackie – former debt client and volunteer**

*"I felt so embarrassed about going to the Foodbank and felt like a bad mum, but I received a really warm welcome and feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders"*

**Kerry – Foodbank client**



*"Before REACH I was financially in a bad place. I was at a very low ebb emotionally due to depression. Not only did REACH help me with my financial problem, they were also there to listen. I'm in a far better place than I was before I contacted REACH and that is all down to them"*

**Steve – debt client**

*"You took a massive risk to take a long term heroin addict... I was lost; I was praying, I didn't know I was praying... I was in big trouble I couldn't climb out, I was in hell, I knew I was as close to hell as you could possibly get on earth... This Christmas I will have been off drugs five years and off any replacement drugs for two months"*

**Phoebe – former Foodbank client, volunteer**



*"I was an emotional wreck. My partner was on sick, he needed an operation, I wasn't working and I'd just lost child benefit as my son had turned 19. We'd run out of money and it was really hard. I was near enough 'in bits' when I walked through the door. REACH helped me with food and debt and reduced my outgoings... things are definitely on the up, we're both working, I can't thank you enough"*

**Tracey – former debt client**

*"I couldn't do anything, I was in debt. I can't remember who advised me to come to REACH but I came and you put me on the debt relief system. It was brilliant. You've helped me out with the authorities; talking to people, form filling in... I've had lots of furniture. I had food when my finances were really bad... we even had a holiday, me and my children just before one Christmas. That was beautiful. I've been debt-free for over a year now, I've learnt my lesson!"*

**Gina – former debt client**



*"My mum passed away and we didn't have any money coming in. REACH helped with food, the forms for the funeral costs and benefits. They also helped me with my debts and that has helped with the whole of our lives. Our money situation is sorted out. I haven't got to worry about the debts. I don't know where I'd be without REACH's help"*

**David - former debt client**

*"Coming to REACH has made a big difference; I feel a big weight has been lifted from my shoulders, especially as me and my partner don't speak English very well. No one has helped us like you have. I don't know where we would have been without the Foodbank and the other help we have received, thank you"*

**Jacinto - current REACH client**





**REACH today** – Since 2010 we have grown organically from our Resource Centre hub and we now see around 180 people per month. We run 3 headline projects – Haverhill Foodbank, the Furniture Bank and REACH Money Advice, our own ‘in-house’ debt counselling service. We have access to support from the Acts 435 charity ([www.acts435.org.uk](http://www.acts435.org.uk)) an online client aid resource and now run a ‘Starter Pack’ project (basic bedding, kitchenware, etc) for those who literally have nothing.



**REACH Money Advice launch  
November 2014**



**A fantastic response to a recent  
Starter Pack appeal**

**What comes next?** We are developing a supported volunteer programme. Despite the improving economy, there are many needs within our community and we have ambitious plans for the future including a supported housing project with Hope into Action ([www.hopeintoaction.org.uk](http://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk)) and an expansion of REACH services from other locations in the town. We continue too, to look at ways in which we can tackle the root causes of poverty locally by addressing some of the systems that keep people trapped - not an easy task! Our ultimate aim is to lift people out of poverty and give them a hope and a future.

Would you consider helping us with our future plans? It costs us around £120,000 per year to support 400 families and individuals. These include some of the most vulnerable in our town. Just £10 will supply a bedding pack; £100 will feed a large family for a fortnight; £1000 will keep the Foodbank van on the road for a year and £10,000 will employ our debt administrator for a year enabling us to help more than 50 people with money management issues.

If you can help us in any way, whether it is by regular giving (any amount welcome), a one-off donation, a sponsored event or whatever you choose, please get in touch with us on 01440 268003. Alternatively, email via our website – [www.reachhaverhill.org.uk](http://www.reachhaverhill.org.uk)

You can keep up to date with all that is going on at REACH through our website or via our Facebook page - "[Facebook.com/Reach-Haverhill](https://www.facebook.com/Reach-Haverhill)".

Thank you for your interest and support for REACH Community Projects. Here's to the next 10 years!





## REACH Annual Review April 2014 to March 2015

Giving a family a box of food is all well and good – but if the underlying issues remain unresolved, it is just a temporary fix. This year REACH's debt work took on greater prominence, as we focused more explicitly on getting to the root of people's problems. Here are a few of the **REACH Highlights**:-

- **REACH Money Advice:** Our 'in-house' debt counselling project, launched in November 2014, in partnership with Community Money Advice. Our client base need 'hand-holding' to negotiate with creditors and we can provide this. Working painstakingly with the client to uncover all the issues, we have managed to release more than £100 per month back into the family budget in some cases.
- **Foodbank** - Since mid-2014 we have seen a 32% reduction in demand. This is really good news because it shows that we are helping people resolve issues before they become critical. We also credit an improving local economy. The picture is likely to remain fluid - not least with the roll-out of Universal Credit which could cause a future spike in demand.
- **ACTS 435** – REACH can access support from this online client aid resource ([www.acts435.org.uk](http://www.acts435.org.uk)) and we have met a number of diverse needs over the last 5 years including white goods, 'back to work' clothing and school uniforms. ACTS 435 awarded its 5000<sup>th</sup> grant during the Spring of 2015 and we were thrilled that it was to a REACH client – a lady who needed a new shed for her mobility scooter.
- **Starter Packs** – We are making up an increasing number of basic bedding and kitchenware packs (cutlery, crockery, pots and pans) for people who literally have nothing. This is part of a move away from an exclusively 'Foodbank' focus.
- **Volunteers** - We have expanded our volunteer programme, especially within the Foodbank and now have more than 60 volunteers.
- **Local support** remains excellent – We received extra funding through the Havebury charity golf event and Haverhill Chamber of Commerce 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and successful food collections at Haverhill Tesco.
- **Housing** - With low income jobs, zero hours contracts, the increasing cost of living and the incredibly high cost of rents, we see more and more people spending more and more each month on keeping a roof over their head! We want, over time, to make a difference in this area. In the short term we're looking at homelessness, working with Hope into Action ([www.hopeintoaction.org.uk](http://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk)) to open a house in Haverhill to support at least two vulnerable adults during 2015/16.
- REACH will celebrate 10 years working in the community during 2015 with an Anniversary Showcase event in September.

### REACH People

A key achievement this year has been the development of our volunteer programme which now provides an opportunity for vulnerable people in the local community, including supported volunteers, to 'have a job' with REACH. We are also grateful for our under 18s - Duke of Edinburgh Award students. We have been delighted to see how a former inmate of our local prison, who came

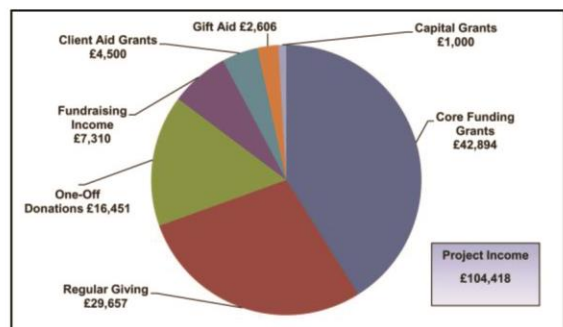
to REACH via the 'Breaking the Cycle' re-offending initiative, has managed to hold down a job with Royce, our warehouse landlord. He now really seems to be turning his life around.

## REACH Projects

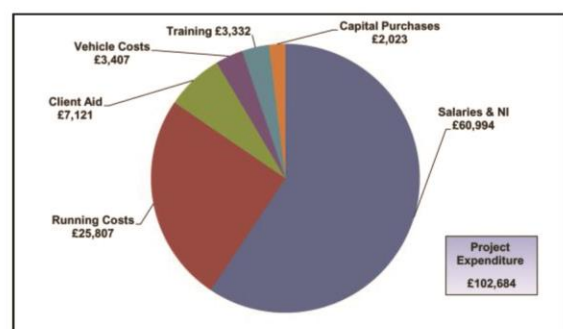
- **Resource Centre**; we opened 285 new cases with a footfall of 2410 (33% food, 16% furniture, 11% debt). Housing, benefits, IT (eg job search) and form completion also featured strongly.
- **REACH Money Advice**; 28 cases opened with 3 of these having their debts wiped out through a Debt Relief Order (DRO)
- **Foodbank**; we received 15.9 tonne of food and distributed 13.1 tonne in 667 boxes (with 1081 people fed). We were pleased that 59% of Foodbank clients in the six months to the end of March 2015 needed a food box only once.
- **Furniture Bank**; 558 items of furniture were collected and 468 items delivered. A total of 176 families or individuals were helped from 193 donors.
- **ACTS 435**; 68 gifts of client aid were given out totalling £5846.
- **Client Aid**; £5735 was distributed to 89 families/individuals. The help took various forms from bus fares to fuel payments (gas & electricity via the Warm Homes Healthy People initiative).
- **Starter Packs**; a total of 96 bedding and kitchenware kits were provided.

## REACH Finances

Income - We achieved a key objective for the 2014-15 financial year by boosting regular giving by £3000 (from £26 to £29k). Fundraising income has also gone up from approximately £1800 to more than £7000. Though our income, overall, decreased; it had been exceptionally high the previous year with one-off grants to deal with specific project investment and capital expenditure needs.



Expenditure – This has increased due to the salary costs of our Debt Administrator. We have also invested in REACH's future through training for REACH Money Advice. Running costs have remained the same. We did spend more on client aid than we received – this will need to be monitored.



Capital Investment - We completed changes to the Foodbank racking through the support of former Councillor Roger André and ONE Haverhill. We can now store large volumes very efficiently.

We continue to be hugely indebted to Royce Group who have hosted our warehouse and associated office space for free for nearly 10 years. The criticality of such generosity, over such a long period, cannot be overstated. 'Generosity' is a core REACH value and we are privileged to have partners who share our vision and have been with us since it all started.