

It has been a very challenging year for many REACH clients with the impact of the Government's welfare reforms particularly visible in the Foodbank. We are now seeing ten times as many new Resource Centre clients per year as when we started and recently saw our 1000th new client! It has been a year of incredible growth in our operations, profile and resources. Here are a few of the **REACH Highlights:-**

- In May 2014 we celebrated our projects, particularly the Foodbank, at a Dinner for a range of local stakeholders. This helped us make connections for the future and raised around £5,000
- In March 2014 we were honoured to be invited to Bury St Edmunds where we met the Archbishop of Canterbury and were able to explain REACH to him
- Our reputation as a flagship Foodbank led the Trussell Trust to recommend a visit by former Conservative Party Chairman Lord Tebbit in April 2014. He later wrote *'I was impressed with the quality and dedication of the people ... There was a systematic approach to uncovering the deeper problems ... There was no slap-happy handing over of food boxes'*
- We are punching above our weight for a community charity, increasingly acting as a trusted media resource when real-life stories of poverty in the UK are needed. The most notable example was when one of our teenage clients was featured in the Channel 4 'Dispatches' programme 'Breadline Kids' in June 2014. The programme's Director commented *'it's not just about the food and the advice they give, it's also an opportunity to see a friendly face, have a chat and a cup of tea. A real local hub that provides emotional support and great community spirit'*
- We are cementing our relationships with local business and were thrilled to be nominated by the Haverhill branch of Lloyds Bank for the Lloyds Community Fund 2013 awards. We gained 50% of the 16,000 votes cast for the St Edmundsbury area and received the top prize of £3,000 for the Foodbank and Furniture Bank

## REACH Team

It has been good to welcome new volunteers throughout the year as well as to say goodbye to others including David who left us to take up a full-time position. We currently have 45 volunteers and a further 10 occasional helpers for Christmas box packing and supermarket collections. We are particularly delighted at the growth in our supported volunteers, (ie those needing extra support to enable them to volunteer – eg because of physical or learning disabilities). We have had volunteers from Mencap, Avenues East and the Papworth Trust as well as from Highpoint Prison



## REACH Projects

**Foodbank** – Over the year we received 18.5 tonne of food and distributed 14.1 tonne in 869 boxes (with 1595 people fed). We also collected a record amount of food at the Tesco Christmas 2013 food collection – 2.4 tonne *“I am ever so grateful for all the help and support you’ve given me and my children when I was so desperate...”*

**Resource Centre** – we opened 367 new cases with a footfall of 2737. Housing, benefits, job searching, debt, furniture and Foodbank are just some of the issues we deal with on a daily basis

**Debt Counselling** – 10 of our clients went debt free last year! To respond to the changing nature of debt with many people needing on-the-spot support with single debt issues including negotiation with creditors, we are launching our ‘in-house’ REACH Money Advice project in September 2014

**Furniture Bank** – this year 202 donors helped 176 families and individuals with around 500 furniture items recycled. *“We had nothing apart from a cooker and a carpet, thank you for the furniture”*

**Starter Packs** – we made up 83 packs of essential kitchenware and bedding for people starting out after eviction, supported housing & homelessness

**ACTS 435** – more than £8,000 of client aid was distributed following more than 100 requests. Flooring, cookers, washing machines and removal fees were just some of the needs met

**Client Aid** – through the Warm Homes Healthy People initiative, we helped more than 85 families/individuals with more than £7,000 of emergency gas and electricity payments *“I can’t express my gratitude enough, I have had no heating or electric... Thank you so much”*

## REACH Finances

We continue to focus on building relationships with funders including grant making trusts, strategic planning and our financial sustainability. Our income increased to £146,000 boosted by an increase in regular giving and one-off gifts (including a significant sum of £20,000 for project investment)

We spent £13,000 on capital investment including additional ICT and warehouse racking for the Foodbank – this part-funded by Councillor Ann Gower. We also replaced our existing furniture van in November 2013 as a result of financial support from Councillor Tim and Margaret Marks, along with matched funding from a grant making body and the remainder from a private donor

We had a large increase in buildings costs due to us taking over the paying of business rates at the warehouse. However, this was met in full by a one-off donation by Royce Group who continue to provide our warehousing for free. We are hugely indebted to them

