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**REACH Makes a TRIPLE PLEA**

*Following the release of shameful national statistics regarding the continuing cost of living crisis, REACH Community Projects issues three urgent pleas - to those in need, to those in power and to those who continue to support.*

With suggestions arising from some circles that the Cost of Living Crisis is over, REACH Community Projects, based in Haverhill, Suffolk is to the fore in pointing out statistics which very strongly contradict this belief.

While the official inflation rate this month has fallen, REACH reminds us that prices are still rising, a fact which brings difficult choices to an increasing number of people and especially families with children.

REACH is not alone, however, in making this point which is supported by much respected bodies such as Citizens Advice, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Institute for Fiscal Studies, The New Economics Foundation, The Child Poverty Action Group and The Food Foundation.

Headlining in the media within the last few days has been the staggering and shameful “biggest rise in UK absolute poverty for 30 years” and “300,000 more UK children falling into absolute poverty”.

Such headlines are backed up with official data. As one example, in 2022-23 there was a 600,000 rise in the numbers of people in absolute poverty bringing the total to 12 million nationally a current rate of 18%. Others show that the rate of food insecurity rose from 8% to 11% of individuals while the proportion unable to afford home heating shot up from 4% to 11%.

Much of the impact of the increase in hardship has fallen upon children. Figures show that 69% of children in families experiencing poverty have one or more working parents, along with estimates of 2.9 million children in deep poverty.

Reacting to the released figures and headlines, REACH’s CEO, Henry Wilson MBE said “These figures across the whole UK reflect pretty well exactly what we are currently seeing locally. The numbers of people, families, children, pensioners we are helping, with debt advice, welfare assistance, benefits claims and emergency food, is up alarmingly and we are having to respond across a broad front and in innovative ways.”

An impassioned Henry continued “I make a Triple Plea today. Firstly to all those who are suffering financial hardship, at whatever level, to get in touch with REACH without delay and let us find ways through your crisis. My second plea is to those in power, of whichever political persuasion and as a matter of dire urgency, to bring about a well thought through approach to poverty, rather than just sticking plaster measures, because it’s a not over by any means and is a blot on what is supposed to be a civilised and leading nation.”

REACH not only supports those in immediate need but also has a longer term approach to poverty and details of its 2024 programme, featuring ‘Prevention, Policy and Pounds in Pockets’, will shortly be released.

“My third plea today” said Henry “is to our truly wonderful benefactors and donors who stick with us and enable us to deliver this much needed work in the community and I ask that you continue your kind and generous support at this crucial time – thank you so very much.”

**Ends**

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*REACH Community Projects (registered charity 1169108) was founded in 2010 by Henry Wilson MBE, a lifelong resident of Haverhill. The charity aims to relieve and prevent financial hardship whilst tackling the causes. As well as operating a foodbank (part of the Trussell Trust national network) and providing emergency aid (help with utilities, basic bedding, and kitchenware through partnerships with other organisations), REACH works longer term with clients to help them rise above and out of their crisis. This includes offering debt and budgeting advice (Reach is part of the Community Money Advice network), signposting clients to other appropriate support (help with mental health, homelessness, legal advice etc.) and supporting clients in other ways including helping them to complete forms, apply for jobs, accompanying them to court hearings and more.*

*For further information, contact Emma Wilkins, Communications Team Leader, REACH Community Projects.*