

## **Reports for the CTH AGM 2022 - 2023**

### **The Homelessness/ Asking for Help Group**

The group has continued to meet regularly during the year when discussion has often centred around the most effective ways to respond to requests from those in need locally, including requests for food parcels, which have been largely managed through the Jubilee Foodbank. Other occasional requests for items such as clothing have also been met.

The local council continues to house individuals and families, (sometimes from outside the local area), in the Travelodge as a temporary measure, where there is nothing more than a kettle with which to 'cook' food in the rooms. The group has continued with the help of the Foodbank to distribute meal vouchers where appropriate. The closure of Cod's Scallops fish and chip shop has not impacted the group's ability to provide vouchers as two new hot food outlets have recently come on board to provide a small hot meal in a voucher exchange scheme. We continue to purchase Greggs vouchers for distribution too.

Some of the town's churches continue to respond to requests, particularly St. Di's in its central location, where the team has recently reported a 'significant increase,' in those presenting themselves as homeless and requesting help.

We continue to work out the best way to enable individual churches to respond to ad hoc requests for food. At our last meeting it was decided that one way forward would be to prepare emergency food bags that the churches, who would like could hold, and for those churches to have a named person who would have access to the bags with appropriate instructions on how to distribute and replenish.

We were reminded at a recent meeting that the group was set up in conjunction with the council yet contact with the council has been minimal of late due to various factors, including changes in personnel and the closure of some of the services that had operated during the pandemic. We are therefore seeking to re- establish contact and closer links with the council in the future.

Overall, the group continues to help the homeless locally in ways that are appropriate in a town that does not have many visible rough sleepers. The generosity of people through CTH continues to enable this, so thank you.

**The Homelessness/Asking for Help Group**

### **Harborough Action for Justice and Peace**

This year we have continued to discuss how best to move forward with the group, while continuing to highlight issues of justice and peace. At the March Forum it was decided after discussion that we rest/disband Harborough Action for Justice & Peace for the time being, with a thought that we may (in God's time) start up something new in the future. It was also decided that CTH adopts the Peace Vigil as a permanent fixture and keeps justice and peace issues on the Forum agenda as a standing item, to give people the opportunity to bring issues for discussion, response, and action. This would also give us an opportunity to hold ad hoc events where appropriate.

Individuals have continued to campaign on a range of peace and justice issues by writing to Neil O'Brien and others in local and national government and by supporting other local groups that have issues of justice and peace at their heart. The Peace Vigil held in January was well attended by a range of people, including some of the Ukrainian community. The first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was marked by holding an event on 24th February at the Methodist Church. The event which was coordinated by Andy Murphy and led by the Ukrainian community was a moving and fitting occasion of remembrance.

Janet Smith

## **The Cube**

This year has seen the Cube continuing to provide a range of valuable services for the town's young people, enabling them to thrive. The youth workers continue to go into Welland Park and Robert Smyth Academies, running lunchtime drop - ins and after school sessions, which provide valuable, safe spaces for often some of the most vulnerable students to discuss things which affect their lives, from relationships to wellbeing and mental health.

Other regular groups continue to run at The Cube, including the open access 'Oasis' group which is well attended by young people in years 7 - 10, who enjoy a full programme of exciting weekly activities. With recent new staff appointments there are plans to run a group for older young people in Years 10 and above.

The counselling service continues to grow. In its first year it has supported fifty young people, with counselling taking place at both The Cube and local schools throughout the working week. The Cube has recently run grief support sessions in Brooke House College and are now opening discussion on other ways to work together to support their students. The caravan continues in its refurbishment, which once completed will provide a much needed additional counselling space. Youth workers attended the Careers' Fair at Welland Park Academy this last academic year to promote youth work and are taking on Year 10 work experience students at The Cube for the second year in a row.

The Cube continues to seek to engage in ever closer ways with the town's churches. It is good to be reminded that the Cube is available as a great space for churches to use and there are a range of volunteering opportunities for people to get involved with, from sharing skills with young people to gardening, becoming a Friend of the Cube to offering prayer support. The Cube would be delighted to hear from you if you would like to get involved. <https://thecubeyouth.uk/>

Janet Smith, Trustee

## Communications report 2023

Local media (Harborough FM and *Harborough Mail*) continue to be very willing to mention major events or activities as they have time/space, for which we are grateful. The *Mail* "Church talk" weekly column, which began in the first lockdown, continues to be published using contributions from a variety of church and charity leaders across the area (not all members of CTH) and which I co-ordinate as an extension of the CTH Communications Officer role. This is a rare feature in commercial newspapers, seems to be well received, and deserves on-going support. We are grateful for this opportunity to keep Christian thoughts and values before the wider public.

This year we started issuing a CTH newsletter roughly once a month to combine all notices of interest to churches into one email instead of forwarding every notice that we are sent. This requires some discipline and planning for churches and charities to ensure they give us plenty of notice of forthcoming activities - ideally several weeks. We cannot usually reproduce posters in the newsletter, not forward them to churches, and ask that all notices are sent to the CTH Secretary as simple Word documents.

We continue to be grateful to our web master Dave Kennard who keeps the site up to date and we encourage everyone to check it regularly for updates and news. It continues to draw a steady stream of views. We had hoped to explore a re-design of the website during the past few months but that has not proved possible yet. You can find it at <https://www.harboroughchurches.org.uk/>

Finally, I would like to hand over this role to someone else in the coming year and would be grateful if everyone could consider if there might be someone in their church (ideally but not necessarily with some kind of communications skills or background) who could take it on. It does not take very much time! I can be contacted at [communications@harboroughchurches.org.uk](mailto:communications@harboroughchurches.org.uk) .

*Derek Williams*

*Churches Together in Harborough Communications Officer*

### **CTH Financial Report 2023**

At the moment the accounts are with Katherine Bentley (of E T Peirson and Sons Accountants) to be examined. These will be available to view once I get them back. Please find a summary below:

CTH own funds	£4212.44
Holiday at Home	£606.67
Homeless and asking for help	£546.53

#### Breakdown of Profit and Loss

CTH Income	£2374.33	
Less Expenditure	£1070.59	£1303.74
Holiday at Home Income	£1095.49	
Less Expenditure	£850.00	£245.49
Homeless and Asking for Help	£606.53	
Less Expenditure	£47.50	£559.03

The accounts are in good shape and no adjustment to Churches subscriptions is felt necessary for the coming year and the relevant invoices will be sent May/June.

## **REPORT ON HOLIDAY AT HOME FOR THE HARBOROUGH & BOWDEN CHARITIES 2022**

Holiday at Home is run by a group of volunteers under the auspices of Churches Together Harborough at the Methodist Church on Northampton Road. It is aimed at any senior citizens living in Market Harborough and the Bowdens, of any religion or none, who would otherwise not be able to go on holiday because of finance, loneliness or infirmity. It costs participants £5 per day to help cover the cost of the lunch and refreshments. Free transport is provided for those who need it.

This year Holiday at Home took place from the 1 August to 5 August inclusive. There were 32 different participants during the week, some attending each day and others only once or twice. Altogether there were 31 volunteers on a rota basis with some coming each day and 24 volunteer speakers, musicians and activity leaders.

### **The programme for the week ran as follows:-**

- Coffee/tea/biscuits on arrival
- One hour of a choice of three activities per day. This year it included art, carpet bowls, beetle drive, quiz, creative writing, ballroom line dancing, cooking demonstration, flower arranging, craft making, arm chair yoga.
- One hour talk or music session (Ukulele band, talk on the witch trials of Leicestershire, Musical Memory Box, The Ospreys of Rutland Water, The Old Friends musical group.
- A two course lunch.

The feedback was very positive. One participant told us that she had recently had a stroke and had been feeling isolated. The week had made a huge difference to her and had made her feel happy and part of the community again.

It is wonderful to look around the room when the participants are having coffee or their lunch to see them chatting, smiling and laughing together. It makes us, as volunteers, feel it is very worthwhile.

A couple of examples: The art class was greatly enjoyed both by those who paint at home, who chatted about different media and artists, therefore sharing their interest, and also by those who hadn't picked up a paint brush since they were at school, who surprised themselves by producing a picture to take home.

New for this year was the ballroom line dancing and those who joined in had lots of fun doing the cha cha cha, waltz and tango. Doing the traditional dances without a partner was a revelation to everyone.

We consider Holiday at Home to be an important community initiative which enables senior citizens to come together to make new friends and undertake new experiences which lifts their spirits and confidence.

The main cost is the hire of the Methodist centre, as well as meals, fees for two speakers, transport provided to just a few, publicity and miscellaneous expenses incurred by group activities. We are grateful for grants received, principally from the Bowden Charity and Rotary. Thank you to the Churches Together treasurer, who looks after the money.

If Churches Together would like to do more to support us, it would be good to know that Holiday at Home is well publicised in every congregation, so that older people who need company and something to look forward to are aware that these are available to them this August. We would also like to see volunteers from every church contributing to our work.

We ask your blessing on Holiday at Home 2023, which will run from August 7 to 11.

## **Jubilee Foodbank Report**

### **The Good News**

The good news is that Jubilee has now been granted Charity Status which means that we have access to more support, grants, concessions and eventually gift aided donations. The Trustees and volunteers all want to say a huge congratulations to our Chair Liz Mills who worked tirelessly to put the application together, which was an extremely complicated and longwinded process.

There is a downward trend of referrals from this time last year by approximately 30%. However, the daily referral rate is stable with approximately 4 a day. The majority of referrals come from CAB followed by Harborough Churches, HDC and then Homestart.

This year from January – April 2023 we have helped 152 households; with 24 of these receiving

4 or more parcels.

In all, we have given parcels to 797 people comprising 468 adults and 329 children. That equals

a total of meals provided 7173.

We are still receiving referrals from HDC for Ukrainian refugees.

Single adult referrals add up to approx. 39%, with multiple adults no children at 18% and

Families with children being 44%.

There are a few households using the foodbank more regularly which we continue to monitor in case further support can be offered from other agencies.

36 homeless people have been helped so far this year.

We have had support from the Lions who are providing some essential toiletries.

Stock levels at the Store are very good, low levels of specific essentials are being managed well by using foodbank apps, social media and the shoppers.

A procedure document for the store team has been improved and made even more accessible for those volunteers who work at the store. We have had some new volunteers join the team who have been trained and are settling in well.

Collections of donations from stores etc are averaging around 20 trays per week, which is slightly higher than the average of 18 for this time of year. Charitable status means that Jubilee can approach many more local supermarkets to collect our donations.

Jubilee is currently waiting on the purchase of a local building which, if successful, will mean that we can move to a more accommodating property with access for clients, and therefore the potential for better engagement and provision of services.



Social Media and Publicity is proving very effective, a recent development of the website created a fresh look, better accessibility and more information. Instagram and Facebook reach is very good with a higher number of followers, with numerous people emailing showing their interest.

One of our Trustees visited Market Harborough Ladies Luncheon group this week and gave a 10minute talk. They were really interested, asked lots of questions and some people made offers of regular monetary donations.

Jubilee continues to reach out to local groups and has been involved with United for Warm Homes, the Community Fridge and this year's Big Green Week; as well as trying to find more parcel collection points, and connect with foodbanks further afield.

Since the loss of The Cod's Scallops for our hot food outlet, we have managed to link with Master Fry and Blue Wave Fish Bar who now take our vouchers to supply hot meals mainly to the homeless and people housed in the Travelodge. Everest Indian restaurant also continues to support us with free hot meal vouchers and fresh food vouchers are still supported by market stalls.

Please continue to pray for those who are living in food poverty; as well as all the volunteers who ensure the smooth running of the Jubilee Food bank.

## **Churches Together Bower House Report May 2023**

We send our apologies for not being able to join you in person.

We have just come through a busy period for the Bower House and our team. On April 15th, we officially 'Re-Opened' the house after the completion of building works to improve access to the house. Two of our volunteers worked tirelessly to bring 'Jenny's garden', now positioned at the front of the house, back to a state of colourful beauty. The exterior painting has been finished, a new notice board erected and a new back door has been fitted, providing amusement for the team - we are all trying to get used to the soft close rather than the very forceful bang needed to close the old back door. It used to shake the whole house!

On April 29th we held our team 'Away Day' (which was actually a morning!) at Harborough Methodist Church. It was well attended by 30 of our volunteers; both counsellors and support workers. We focused on the theme of 'Compassion' including self-compassion, compassion for others and the risk of compassion fatigue. This was a very special meeting as it gave an opportunity for volunteers to connect, meet new members of the team, have fellowship and catch-up with those that we may not encounter on a regular basis during the working week.

On May 13th we are having our 'Coronation Coffee Morning' at Harborough Theatre. We hope to have stalls selling cakes, bric-a-brac, a tombola, cards and crafts, tea, coffee and bacon rolls! We are looking forward to being able to celebrate this very special occasion within the community.

Coming up in June, we are delighted to be able to offer a professional development opportunity for counsellors, both within our team and other organisations.

Forging links with the local community is important to us and as part of this commitment, we were excited to be able to enter a team into the Market Harborough Rotary Club's Swimathon under the name 'Sinkers and Swimmers'. We are happy to report no one sank! We managed to complete 92 lengths in 50 minutes. It was a fun experience and we were able to raise funds for the Rotary Club who have generously supported the Bower House over the years.

Our most recent bereavement group was well attended and we are hoping to be able to offer future groups. One piece of feedback we have received is that it would be helpful to have the groups in the evening. Now that summer is on its way, we are looking into fulfilling this request.

It has been a busy but exciting year so far and we are full of anticipation to see what God is calling us to do next. We humbly ask for continued prayer in matters of the house, especially for our current trainees, qualified counsellors and support workers. We offer thanks to God as we induct new recruits to the

service, particularly for our new associate support workers who will focus on house maintenance, our social media presence and strengthening connections and communication with those that support us.

However, the search for new support workers remains our greatest current need. If anyone is able to volunteer as a support worker for 3 hours one day a week (9am-12pm, 12pm-3pm or 3pm to 6pm) please do get in contact. Full training is given. We also ask if you can continue to pray for our clients (the very reason we are here) and funding. We give thanks to God for His continued provision and for always meeting our needs.

We are so grateful for the support that you all afford us and thank you for the way you continue to undergird the work, both financially and in prayer. We look forward to being with you again in person soon.

Every Blessing,  
Cara and Lorraine