

Hope in 2021- Living with covid

Annual report on activity and social impact

Last year we reported on the devastating impact that covid-19 had made on our town and our work.

We all hoped and almost expected that the impact would subside throughout the year and we could begin to return to something like normal. It is now apparent that the virus continues to have a significant impact, not least of all in its impact on people's physical and mental health. Life is different, perhaps permanently so.



Once again the targets and activity against our strategic planning for the year were substantially affected by the virus, so that almost everything we hoped to do was significantly affected.

The table on the next page highlights the most significant achievements this year and these have been considerable. As we reported last year, Hope as a whole has continued to change, adapt and focus what we do to offer a valid local response to the problems we serve, and which have been intensified by the pandemic. We continue to adapt and be flexible, every day, in offering improved services to people who still desperately need them.

Hope continues to work very much as an integrated staff team, and whilst there have been changes, there has also been continuity, and the core senior management team has worked strongly to manage change and development over the year, in often trying circumstances, as covid in waves has taken staff out of action. The whole staff team has pulled together magnificently in the face of challenge and continues to offer a superb service every day to the people who need it most.

Let's look at some key things that happened this year

- ❖ Poverty has increased, not least with the cut to universal credit made in September 2021. We are very pleased when the new local authority voted unanimously to write to central government stating their view that this cut was wrong. This, from a council where the ruling party is conservative. It reflects the degree of



cross party commitment to tackling poverty.

- ❖ Homelessness has not gone away. During the year whilst numbers went right down they have crept up again to the point where at the end of the year there are around 15 people sleeping rough. We offer these people food and complete wrap around services six days a week, with close partners supporting people on the seventh.



- ❖ The context in which we operate has significantly changed with the coming into being of the new local council, West Northamptonshire, with whom relationships improve every day and with whom we work very closely. It is one of the key things to report that we very much welcome and enjoy working with the new council staff who have come into post and we are working together on key issue, like the co-writing of a local anti-poverty strategy.

- ❖ Deaths amongst the homeless and those 'post'homeless' increased again. We lost some much loved service users and former volunteers. Some through covid, some from its consequences to people already weakened by other health issues.
- ❖ We have been funded to offer support services for both addictions and mental health, with three new staff members. This reflects our crucial role in being the front door to services. Whilst specialist services remained closed to face to face services, we carried on, with practical support on offer that has made a real difference to people's lives.
- ❖ Trading in our social enterprises remains massively reduced, but it is now coming back. Catering, tools and charity shop operations were all affected and this hit our income. We are pleased that now at the end of the year, we are seeing a return to trading at a higher level in all of these, though our local economy is massively reduced.
- ❖ 2020 was a very successful year for funding through to April this year. Ordinary people, and trusts, were incredibly generous. Fundraising this financial year is much tougher. People are poorer with fuel price rises looming, though they remain generous and trusts gave away so much money last year, they have little left this year. Central government funding all ended at the start of April, though services and need carried on, and there have been no new grant streams emerge.
- ❖ We undertook a major mapping project of local needs relating to poverty, consulting with many individuals, workers and community leaders, on a community by community basis, taking into account the views of Eastern European, homeless, food club users, the Somali and Sub-Saharan African communities

Key achievements in 2021

- We kept going or expanded ALL our services and continued to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in our society
- We were accredited by the Improving Quality benchmark for charity excellence
- We continued to deliver our food aid services at a significant level, and maintain our leadership role co-ordinating the sector and sourcing funding and food to distribute to them
- We secured funding for specialist support staff for mental health and addiction, which have made a transformative impact on the lives of rough sleepers
- We have restarted our tool repair workshop and it actively supports service users again
- We re-started and dramatically expanded our lifeskills programme offering arts, drama, poetry, meditation, reiki, pottery and many more activities

- We continued to set up bank accounts for many rough sleepers with HSBC under a unique partnership scheme
- We undertook a major mapping project, identifying needs in the community in relation to poverty, working in partnership with groups to reach community members in migrant and financially insecure settings
- We were awarded a silver medal as food heroes in the Weetabix awards
- We extended horticultural therapy services to reach older people with Masonic charity funding
- We led the West Northants Sustainable Food Places project to recognised membership of the national SFP programme
- We chaired the West Northants Social Enterprise Town company and secured £500k in resources for social enterprise
- Our social enterprises were re-accredited by the Social Mark

Case study: My Story

Growing up in London, MA moved to Northampton to buy a property as house prices were so much cheaper, working in Tesco for 2 years he then moved in to the building trade. Life was great until his relationship broke down and he had to leave his property.

“I didn’t know what to do and needed help and support”

“I first came to Hope in July 2020. I had been homeless since December 2019. I didn’t know Hope existed until I started to speak to other people and they told me about the service.”

When asked: HOW DID HOPE HELP YOU? Here was the answer...

Hand Up – helped me to survive. I was living on nothing and I did not know what to do. Hope provided me with food, clothes and someone to talk to. I didn’t know what I needed to do and Hope helped me to do what I need. I never used to trust anyone but Hope has

“Hand Up helped me to survive”

changed this. I am now in Hope Supported Living and this has provided me with a secure and stable environment.

Hope Housing – Provided me with stability and security. Being in Hope Housing has built up my self-esteem. I am now looking forward to my future. Learning 4 Living – helped me with my C.V writing. I’m going to start a course on assertiveness this is an area of weakness for me. I’m looking to doing more courses. I have recently started a work placement with Hope catering. I really enjoy cooking and I’m learning new things. This has helped to build my confidence/self-esteem and has filled my time. I suffer with anxiety and get very anxious around people. Hope catering has really given me a purpose and helped reduce my anxiety.

Foodclub – is amazing. Foodclub has given me an affordable way to eat healthy and helped me to budget my weekly food.

Hope Catering – I am currently on a placement with Hope at Hope Catering



Since coming to Hope MA says that he has his life back

“I never had a life or anything before Hope.”

“I would 100% recommend [HOPE]. Everyone else offered me help but never kept to it, Hope kept to everything they said. The people that work at Hope understand what is happening to people. They give people a chance to trust with no pressure. “

When asked what Hope should do in the future

“Carry on doing what they [HOPE] are doing. I am happy and grateful for everything I have received from Hope”

Our governance

Hope is very proud of our organisational excellence and good practice, externally validated as it is by multiple accreditation by external bodies.

Our trustee group ensures our activities are monitored by an experienced outside group, who bring varied and senior expertise and who ensure staff accountability and monitor good practice.

Our accreditations include:



NCVO Trusted Charity Mark – in process of being transferred to a new provider

Investing in Quality



Social Mark



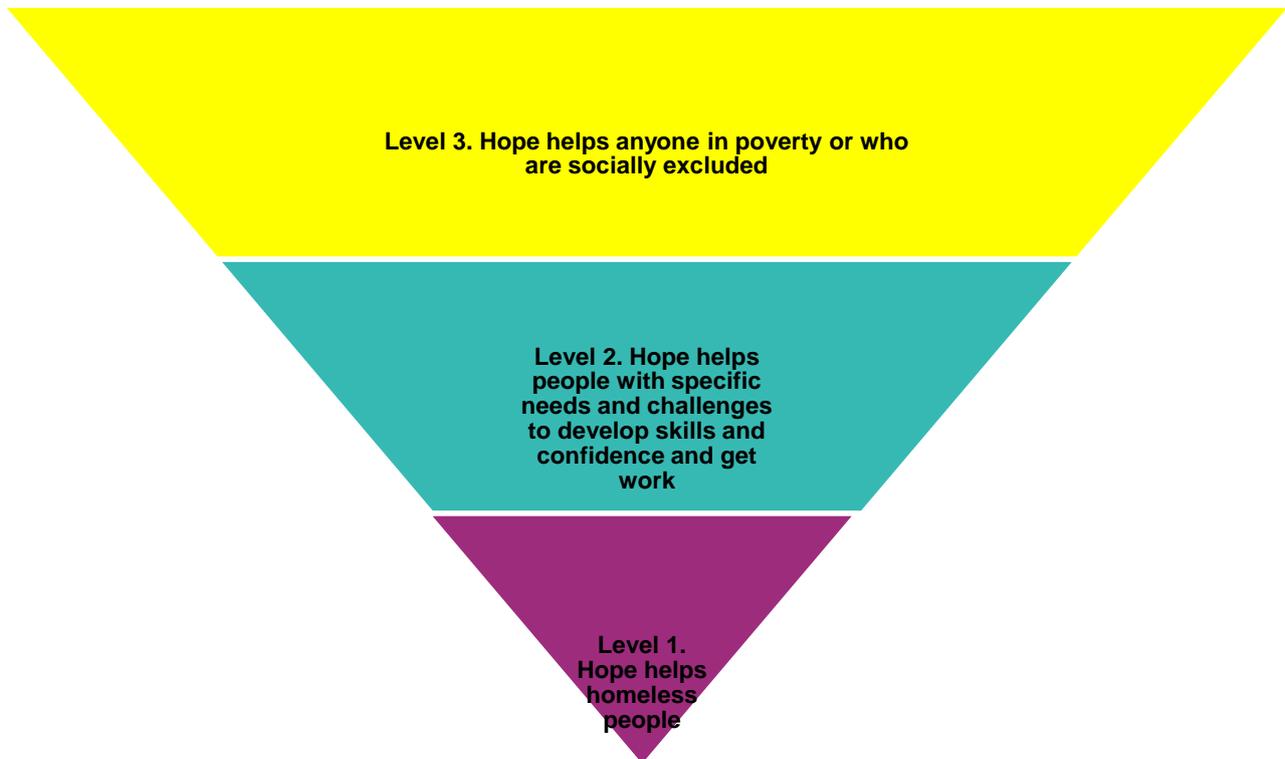
Investing in Volunteering



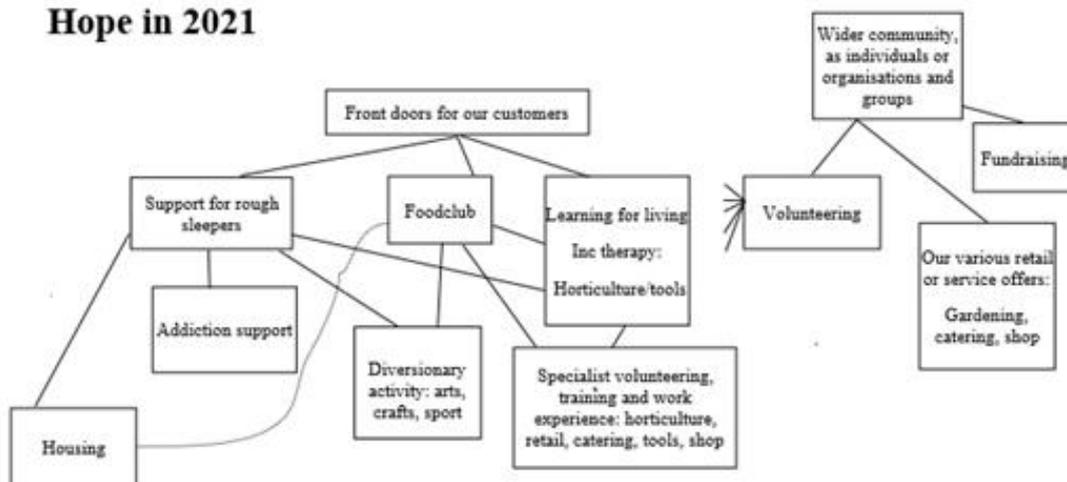
Living Wage Foundation

A model of Hope Services

Hope works with increasing diversity and volume of service users in its three main areas of service delivery, shown here:



Hope in 2021



Work with people with multiple support needs - including those who are homeless

Level 1



The Hand-up service which replaced our former day centre has worked very effectively throughout 2021.

In this service we see both rough sleepers and sofa surfers – very often these categories are elastic. Between 15 and 35 people come in on any day, but it changes as people are found accommodation quite quickly. As we say above, the numbers of rough sleepers were down at one point to around half a dozen, but have crept up with people going through a cycle of failure in supported accommodation before

entering the street again, alongside people there for the first time.

It's a shame that not all 'supported' housing really deserves that title, as some is little more than a room, the 'support' part, despite the huge amounts of funding that go with it, being fairly invisible. This is why accommodation breaks down.

Whilst food is central to this service, at Hope we have always seen food as an access point or gateway to structured services of real support. On its own, food is of course very important; but on its own, it is limited. It needs to be in the context of other services which enable and encourage change. Food offered on the street rarely leads to change and may enable people to stay there. This is why we have never even considered offering it. It also causes mess, nuisance and leads to anti-social behaviour and is often taken up by people who are not homeless and not really in need of free food.

The service is fully covid safe, and much more structured and it offers, all free:

- Hot food – which can now be eaten inside, and takeaways for later. We also open for tea and toast on some mornings, and services extend into the evening on some days for mental health crisis cafes and social activities on Mondays



- Clothes
- Showers
- Haircuts
- Support for Settled Status for EU migrants
- Help to open bank accounts
- Postal addresses
- Registration with GPs
- Access to sanitary products for women
- Referral to housing – the council staff come into the building
- Advocacy to get access to these and other services
- Benefits advice
- Access to drugs, alcohol and mental health support, including heavily used and welcomed mental health Crisis Cafes
- Free glasses
- Access to Mental health services and addiction support
- Access to other healthcare, including sexual health and covid related support such as vaccinations and testing
- Access to employability and other support through Hope – our Learning 4 Living service below



We support cold weather provision – SWEP – and support for those who cannot access council schemes due to their NRPF status.

We work very closely with council staff as one of their key partners, but also with faith community and other voluntary sector providers like NAASH and HAARP.

We help up to **30 people a day** in the day centre, six days a week. We see perhaps **120 or more different individuals during a year.**



Level 2



In this area of service we work with people with complex needs who may have been homeless, but also not, but who share the same needs and challenges:

- Homelessness
- Addictions, including gambling
- Offending
- Long term unemployment
- Trauma
- Mental health issues

We have received new four year funding for our Learning 4 Living project from the National Lottery. This enables this vital provision to continue and to make a real difference to people in need of structured support to leave the street or manage their problems, and get help to become more employable. We are also supported by other funding, including BBO – Building Better Opportunities.

People are referred to this service from lots of places: probation, other offending services, supported housing providers, social prescribers and mental health teams. It is aimed at people ready to move on in their lives, most typically when they are now in accommodation.



Where people in 'supported' accommodation access these services it provides a vital degree of real support for life changes that control behaviours and fill people's time. It is the support people need when the support some housing providers offer may be minimal. By doing so, we maintain people's housing. This includes those people living in our own supported housing, who receive a great deal of support of this type from us.

We offer Hope Foodclub membership (see below) to anyone accessing this service.

This said, many people in this service have never been homeless. It's an illustration of how we are simply not just a homelessness provider! Most people who access this service have not been previously homeless.

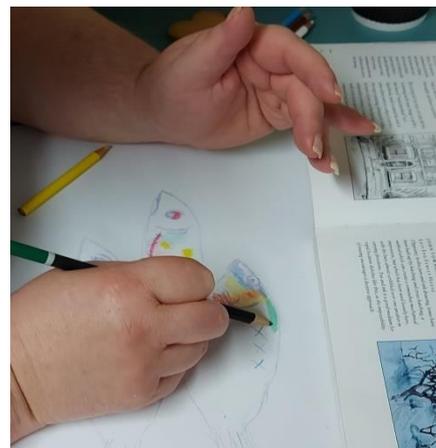
This area of service links very closely with our social enterprise programmes given below, which can offer vocational training and work experience in specific areas.

Highlights this year:

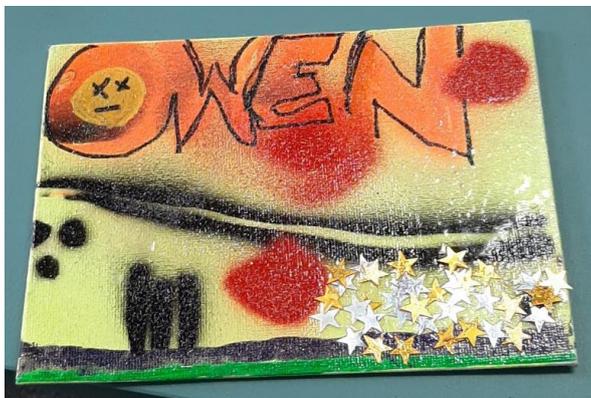
The re-introduction of the lifeskills programme.

Activities have always been a big part of Hope. There was always art and creative writing, with occasional other ad hoc groups. Now, post covid, this programme is huge and encompasses all of the following, at some points during the year:

- ❖ Creative writing
- ❖ Poetry
- ❖ Pottery
- ❖ Art
- ❖ Street art
- ❖ Reiki
- ❖ Meditation
- ❖ Drama
- ❖ Cookery
- ❖ Computer skills
- ❖ Football and other fitness



Our various social enterprises play a role here: gardening and tool recycling are further options as part of a programme of support.



All these activities bring these benefits and outcomes:

- ❖ Filling of people's time, leading to lack of engagement with street life and anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Social opportunities and meeting people
- ❖ Building skills and confidence
- ❖ Building a sense of achievement and purpose
- ❖ Support living skills for accommodation
- ❖ Improves employability
- ❖ Gives opportunity for 'whole person' development by doing things they otherwise could or would not do (perhaps through lack of money)

We are even performing a service user panto this year! (Oh yes we are!)

We act as the local wholesaler for the Big Issue and this is open to people in this category of service users.

We help around **120 people** a year in this level of service

Level 3

Help for people in poverty – Hope foodclub



Tackling food poverty has been a focus for Hope since 2017, when Foodclub was born. It has become, in four years, one of the three key things we do.

Hope's foodclub is a social supermarket by which people become members of our club and for a flat fee or £7-10 a month in respect of their household size, they can get up to £35 worth of food, 52 weeks a year, including fresh fruit and veg. We currently feed around 500 people a week and we also supply many other

items including toiletries and even toys and Easter eggs or Advent calendars. It always includes items like sanitary products and toothpaste, given our strong commitment to dignity and public health.

We talked last year about how, in response to the impact of covid, we took on a major new role, additional to running the foodclub itself, of co-ordinating the work of now around 40 separate providers of food aid in West Northants.

We source funding, source food, and supply it on to these groups, who work collectively as FAWN – the food aid alliance for West Northants, which we convene and host meetings for (see <https://goodfoodwnorthants.org/foodaidalliance.html>).

Through to the end of April 2021 we managed the remainder of the grant from DEFRA via Northamptonshire County Council. This supplied around £400k in food and other essentials to those who needed it most. We added to this with huge amounts of food that DEFRA supplied, alongside many other sources. We work closely with Booket Cash and Carry on food ordering.

Sadly funding ran out and only now, at the end of the year, is new funding forthcoming from West Northamptonshire Council. But it is here, and Hope will administer this through until April 2023. It is really significant and we welcome their continuing support.

This enables us to supply high quality, purchased food. Many foodbanks rely on what is known as 'surplus' or 'waste' food. Neither is good as a term. Should poor people be fed 'waste'? To whom is that food 'surplus'?

Whilst we do take food from supermarkets and other supply chain sources, we are very careful, and we are choosy. The poorest need respect, and access to proper food, and that's what we give. Where possible, we mostly supply food that is purchased and well in date, which we augment with in date food which is close to the end of that period. We never supply out of date food.

We do not presume that anyone who comes to foodclub has specific or complex needs – we assess need by recording income status: we do not require 'referral'. Yet if people

need help, we offer it. We always have staff on site who can offer support, signposting and referral, and help with emotional issues. These include regular social work students on placement at Hope.

We continue to work explicitly in an anti-racist way and develop food services and partnerships and support to diaspora communities, maintaining our engagement with and support black led organisations.

We continue to take services to people rather than require people to come to us: we work out of community centres and similar services on estates where the poorest live, and we bear the cost of travel, not the customers, if it can be avoided, although we can't cover the whole town. We work closely at all times with our fellow members of the FAAWN groups above to identify gaps and limits in local provision.

Volunteering in foodclub was huge whilst people were in furlough. Many have returned to work now and we thank them all for their fantastic support. But we still count on a great pool of wonderful volunteers, such as a Michael pictured above, who's day job is at one of our major supporters, Sainsburys.

We are shortly hoping to open a fifth shop, in Daventry, a major expansion to the rural west of our county.

Feedback from service users, as the quality of food, its availability, the service, and how we administer this continues to be overwhelming positive.

Other work on food



Hope had been involved in work to develop a sustainable food strategy for this area since 2018. The extensive food poverty unleashed above by covid, plus the demonstration of the need for alternatives to big food and unsustainable food supply lines, and the new interest in lockdown gardening, has meant that this work has been vital since then.

We have worked to achieve recognition and funding of West Northants, the new Unitary area, as a Sustainable Food Place by the accreditation bodies Sustain and the Soil Association. Working together with active partners in Public Health and local council and voluntary sector as well as other local

organisations, this work continues, with real potential to improve the quality of local food – not least of all in terms of access to good food for those who are the poorest amongst us.

Hope hosts the development worker for the partnership.

Hope was awarded a Weetabix Food heroes silver award



Hope's leadership role as a long established leading social enterprise in this area has been recognised this year. Our CEO has been the chair of the local development company for social enterprise, WNSET or West Northamptonshire Social Enterprise Town, though he steps down at Christmas 2021. We are keen advocates of social enterprise for its value as a means of helping people through economic means alongside therapeutic and practical support. It is however increasingly financially challenging to maintain these enterprises.



Our Social Mark, in recognition for our social impact was renewed in 2021 as a recognised indicator of the quality of what we do.

Covid has continued to be challenging for all our social enterprises, as we have not yet been able to trade as we did in areas like catering and tools, as much as in the past, which has affected our income.

Catering

Our catering service has been essential in continuing in cooking healthy meals to those experiencing homelessness or sofa surfing.

We have started taking students again and helping people obtain accredited qualifications and experience to work in catering



Horticulture

Being outside based, horticulture has flourished despite covid controls. Gardening, especially the therapeutic elements, closely links to all our other work on training, therapy, diversionary activity, training and food.

We continue to provide training opportunities, both to those from Learning 4 Living and elsewhere.

We continue to grow a lot of healthy fruit and veg for the foodclub and Hand up services.

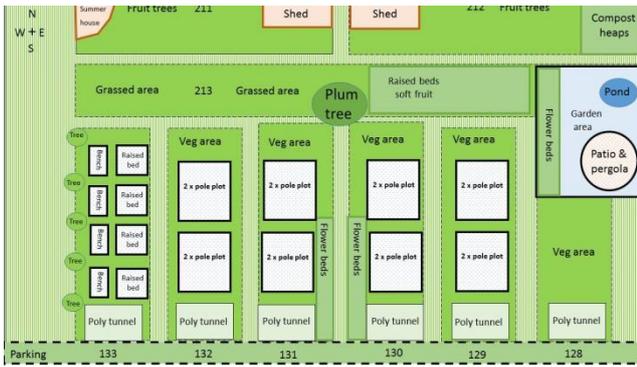


Typical ecotherapy service users:

A is 68, White British, divorced and retired. He attends the group to reduce feelings of depression and isolation.

B is 61, White British, single, has a previous brain injury and is unable to work due to brain injury symptoms (cognitive issues) He attends the group to reduce feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety and to prevent further cognitive decline.

F is 70 White British, a widower, has some back problems and is retired. He attends the group as he was very recently bereaved. The group assists in to reducing feelings of depression and panic



Our continuing Masonic Funding has enabled us to recruit an experienced Occupational Therapist, now also qualified as an eco-therapist via Thrive, to conduct horticultural therapy with disadvantaged people, including the isolated elderly.

We have taken on an additional area, for which our intention is to create a bespoke eco-therapy healing garden – see the plan above – subject though to funding. This is quite a large project with capital costs for which we are fundraising actively.

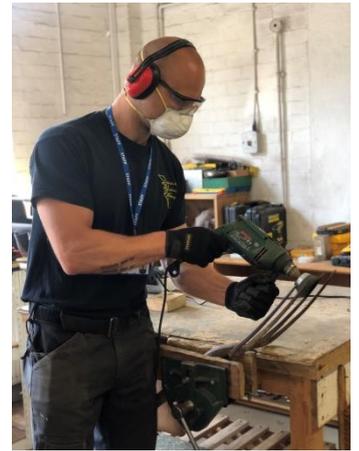
We will supply small, mini-allotments for people who want to garden but can't take on a large plot, and who will receive support, teaching, encouragement and tools.



Case study: gardens and toolshop We have a regular service user who joined the tools workshop in October and who has consistently attended his weekly sessions in the workshop ever since. He is a retired gentleman that unfortunately lost his wife of some 50 years due to Covid and has understandably been struggling with the grief, depression, and severe isolation; he has also spoken regularly about his loneliness and suicidal thoughts. Unfortunately, the pandemic not only took the life of his childhood sweetheart, but it also did not allow him access to other people and the services that might have helped him in his hour of need, further exacerbating his mental health issues and depression. Unfortunately, his children are now grown up and have moved away and have families of their own, so his only personal interactions and refuge from his depression have been with a concerned neighbour who occasionally invites him round for a cup of tea or gives him a portion of their family meal to take home, however unfortunately due to his pride and low self-esteem, he feels like a burden and rarely takes them up on their offer. He was referred and is attending the workshop and our allotment each once a week. He works in a small group with other isolated service users, who we thought he would get on well with. Upon his arrival he is usually visibly distressed and shows outward signs of intense emotion and grief, however a few minutes into the session he is laughing and joking with staff and the other service users, talking about music, films, and other general chit chat. He struggles physically, however he always does as much as he can, and he'll frequently rather sit on a stool and continue working than call it a day. He has had some small practical experience in the past, however his skills were very basic upon his initial few sessions. He is now producing great quality work (he is by far one of my most conscientious service users) and is improving his practical competency and personal confidence with every session. He has also started our drama class, to help him come out of his shell and to help to reduce the loneliness and isolation he feels on the days he's not at the allotment or in the workshop (when he is in his house all alone). He has also been engaging with our mental health specialist. He said last week that he loves the sessions, especially having others in the group just to talk to (whom he now gets on really well with), and that the only time he smiles is when he comes into the workshop. He is still working through the long process of grieving his wife, however he has come a long way since his first appointment in October and it fills me with great satisfaction that we are playing a part in helping him out of his darkest times.

Toolshop

The tools workshop is fully back up and running under its new manager, James, and is recruiting new customers, volunteers, sources of donations, and sites to sell from. █



Charity Shop

This has continued to offer low cost clothes to people in need and remains a part of Hope service delivery, as well as a source of funds, because it also offers volunteering and training opportunities in retail. However, the various virus lockdowns have impaired both. If and when we are able, we will be launching a retail training experience as a skills offer for people needing such support to gain confidence at work.

We have moved location at the end of 2021.

The **foodclub warehouse** also offers opportunities for work experience for Hope service users.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a key part of Hope, now and forever

Volunteering continues to change. Furlough ended and took with it one group of volunteers, but Hope's fabulous volunteering team grows and changes all the time, bringing skills and experience and commitment, and linking us to the wider community in so many ways.

We have at least 80 volunteers. Volunteering brings benefits to us, to volunteers themselves, to the people we work with, in relation to our funding, and in helping raise awareness. It is worth, in terms of income (from as much as a year, as 7000 hours), £70,000 to the charity.

Volunteers include corporate groups helping their companies to show their commitment to local charities.

Annabelle from Ricoh, volunteering in November cooking a meal for the homeless (and in the picture right) said:

"Fabulous volunteering day. This was one of my all time favourite days - fun, rewarding and meaningful!"

We welcome volunteers across everything we do, both as individuals or as groups.

We are currently working on the renewal of our accreditation under NCVO's **Investing in Volunteering** Scheme.



Our donors and friends

Hope is very much a community organisation, owned by and accountable to the people of Northampton. These range from ordinary members of the public who do their bit by volunteering, giving food or financial donations – and these have held steady this year, including a successful Harvest Festival – and people supporting us through organisations they are connected with. The most common of these are businesses, faith groups and schools.

Our funders include many churches and community groups, schools and companies.

Income in 2021 has been much reduced from during the exceptional year of 2020 when many covid grants were available. This year they have not been available and neither has there been as many trust donations.

Significant donors and supporters include

Persula foundation	National Lottery	West Northants Council and predecessor councils	David Cock Foundation
OCM wealth management	Arnold Clark	Masonic Foundations and trusts	Headlands United Reform Church
School for Social Entrepreneurs	Turvey Abbey	Ricoh UK	OCEE
Sainsburys	Anonymous donors x 2	Barratt Homes	Kier
Goodwill Solutions		Scott Bader	The Crane Fund
Veterans Foundation	BDW training	Lendlease	Barclays
Glencar construction	Longhurst group	DC James Charitable Trust	Levis
Artemis UK	Barwood Capital	In'n'Out	

Learning and research

Hope is a major centre for learning: for students on placement here, for researchers, and for students asking us for help as part of the degree projects.

We continue to offer placements for social work students; for social care students, and in the future again, occupational therapy.

Over the year we have advised over 20 researchers and advised on the research programmes, covering research into food, homelessness and social enterprise.

We contribute to academic teaching at the University of Northampton, Anglia Ruskin and others.

We continue to maintain a significant library for study, cover some magazines and maintain reading lists online.



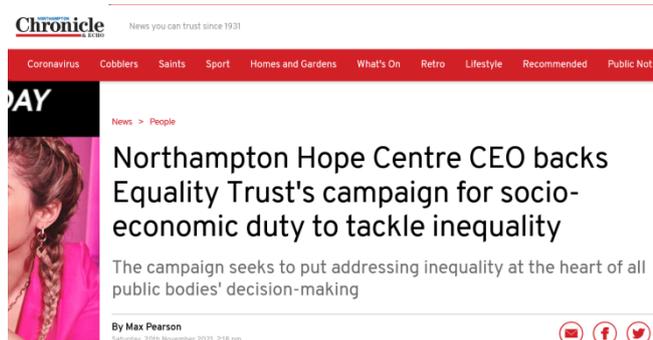
We will again be a research site for King's College London's work on smoking cessation resources for the homeless

Campaigning and contribution to the civil space

Hope has no affiliations to any political party, as no charity can. That does not stop us campaigning, within the rules laid out for charities, for action on the issues that matter most to us: poverty, homelessness, marginalisation, exclusion, addictions and mental health, above all others.

We engage actively in social media campaigns, both locally and nationally, for the key issues: things like the deaths of homeless people, the cut to universal credit, climate change decisions that affect us, laws that threaten to further marginalise or deny access to services.

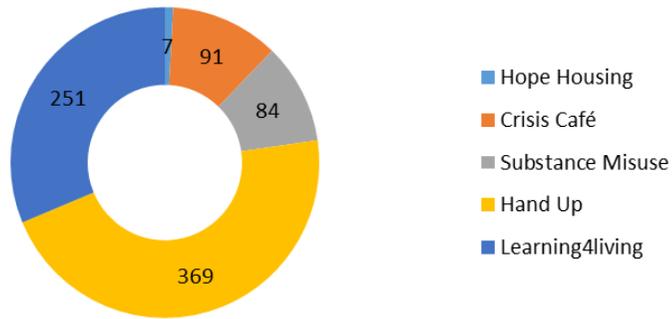
Our role is to support constructive solutions and bring people to work together. We are very proud of our poverty hustings event leading up to the council elections, where during the meeting, political leaders of the three main parties collectively pledged to develop an anti-poverty strategy for the new council. This is now being written.



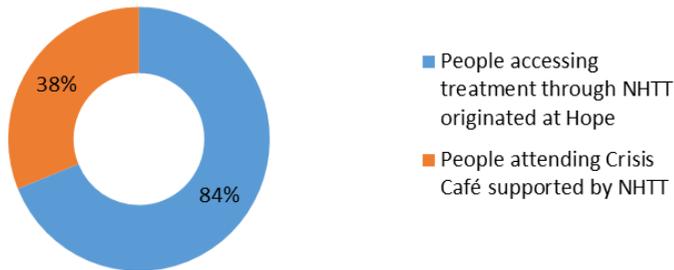
Alongside others, we played a role in encouraging the new council to vote through a unanimous commitment to writing to government to oppose the cut to universal credit – we believe this is unique amongst majority conservative held councils. We also kept pressure on for extended funding for resources to support the most vulnerable, now being rolled out, under Hope's administration on behalf of WNC, as the Star Fund.

Annex 1: Service user data for complex needs services (inc. homelessness)

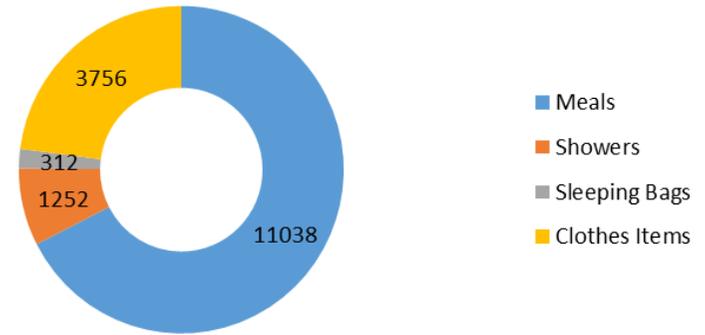
1. Service users by service 2021



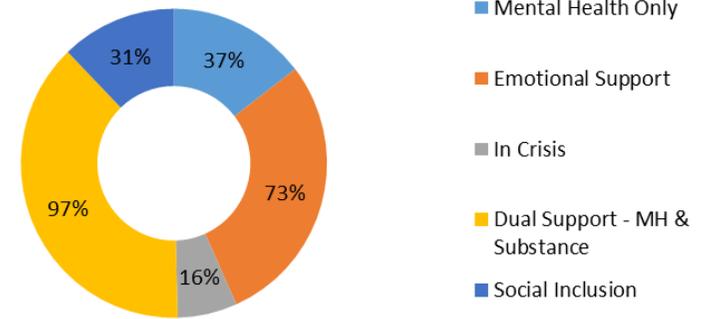
2. Substance Misuse - Access & Engagement



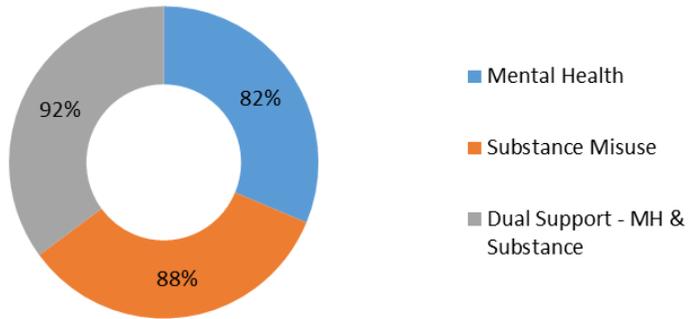
3. Basic Essentials



4. Reasons for accessing Crisis Café



5. Complex Support Needs



6. Service Outcomes

