

The Matthew Tree Project[®]

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“

The UK is one of the richest countries on the planet. We have more wealth; more resources; more knowledge; more understanding; than at any time in history. Yet still too many children grow up familiar with hunger, a cold home and exclusion from the norm of their peers. We are giving children a troubled start to life and wonder why we end up with troubled communities that cost us a fortune in social and health care public services. This is false economy on a massive scale. We have the means and the wherewithal to eradicate poverty in the UK once and for all. Therefore, we have a moral obligation to do so.”

MARK GOODWAY - FOUNDER
THE MATTHEW TREE PROJECT

2020 IMPACT REPORT

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Introduction

It is a great privilege to be able to help people in the way we do. We believe everyone is remarkable and capable of achieving great things. 'Rebuilding Lives' - our innovative social change model is built on the fundamental belief that people are our nation's greatest asset and every individual has something to offer and a life's purpose. Sometimes, challenging circumstance - life events, ill health, lack of opportunity and a wide range of other individual and/or societal issues - intervene and leave people in desolate and desperate situations.

The objective of the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' is to stabilise the crisis *and* address the underlying causes of the crisis - empowering people to rebuild a happier, healthier, better future.

2020 has been a brutal year for so many people because of the worldwide pandemic which has claimed the lives of 122,849 people in the UK (people who died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19) as of 28 February 2021.

Covid-19 has sharply increased demand: (+108% since March 2020); and has significantly increased operational costs. It has also placed un-imaginable pressure on the resources and processes of the charity – at entry point by way of food supplies and further down the line in addressing the underlying causes of the crisis. Due to Covid-19, the way services are delivered has been completely repurposed:

Support Centres / Community Hubs Temporarily Closed

All five 'Rebuilding Lives Support Centres / Community Hubs' closed for the safety of the clients, many of whom are vulnerable; and our volunteers and staff.

City-wide Home Delivery Foodservice Launched

Weekly home delivery foodservice introduced. By the end of December, The Matthew Tree Project were distributing the food equivalent of circa. 9000 meals per week – up from 6000 (Feb, 2020).

New Crisis Support Phone Line Launched

A (lifeline) weekly crisis support phone service has been introduced which has enabled the programme to continue to help people address their crisis situation and rebuild a better future.

Whilst it has been the most challenging of years, it has also been one of great achievements for The Matthew Tree Project.

On 23 July the charity celebrated its 10th birthday

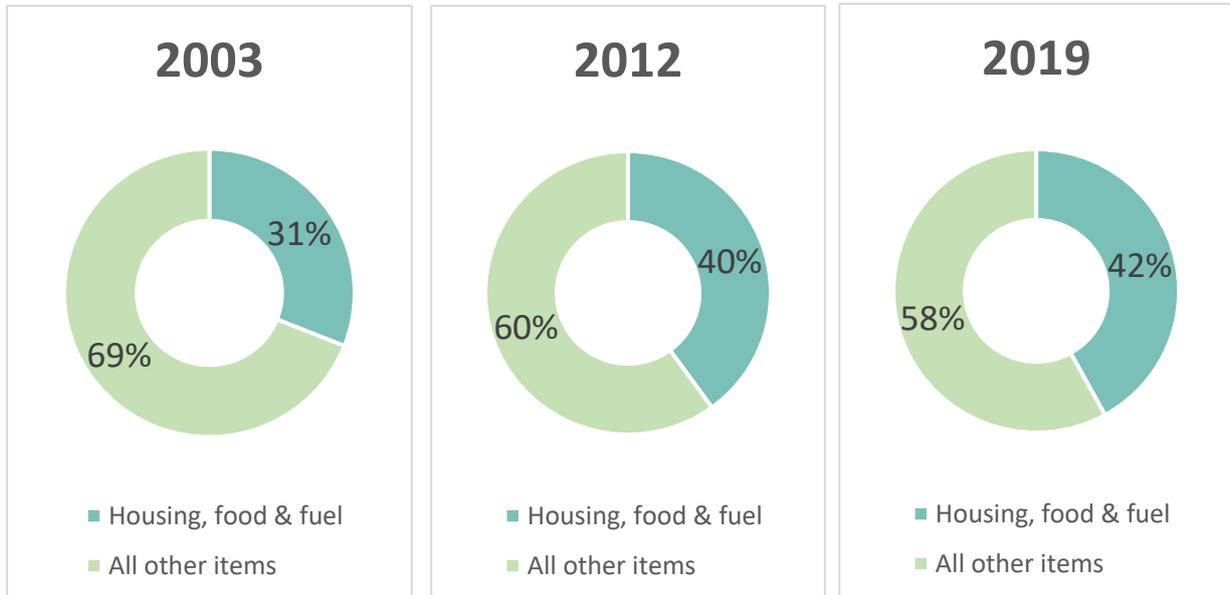


and won the Bristol Prestige Award for best in charitable community services 2020.



Summary

Higher Living Costs: combined proportion of household income devoted to housing, food and fuel costs by households in the bottom income decile:



NB: Spending on food, housing and fuel make up 42% of total expenditure for households at the bottom decile of income distribution, compared with 26% for those in the richest 10%. ONS statistical bulletin, January 2021.

Falling Incomes

Whilst housing, food and fuel costs have increased significantly for the poorest households, growth in income of the poorest fifth of people did not keep pace with inflation, which led to the median income of the poorest fifth falling by an average of 3.8% per year between FYE 2017 and FYE 2019. Meanwhile, median income of the richest fifth continued to grow steadily



over the same period, meaning that some measures of income inequality have increased.

Widening Inequality Gap

During the 10-year period leading up to FYE 2020 (April 2019 – March 2020), income inequality increased by an average of 0.2% per year to 36.3%, as measured by the Gini coefficient.

Covid-19

Throughout 2020, households' finances have been affected because of

restrictions and subsequent financial support measures put in place because of Covid-19. The labour market shocks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic have been felt more by young people and the lowest paid; people aged under 30 years and those with household incomes under £10,000 were around 35% and 60%, respectively, more likely to be furloughed than the general population. Of those who have not been able to work, over half (52%) of people in the top income quintile continued to be paid in full, while this was

the case for only 28% of those in the lowest income quintile.

Impacts to household spending have been felt differently across groups, with parents less able to afford either a holiday or an unexpected but necessary expense than non-parents; they were also roughly 50% more likely to have difficulty meeting their usual expenses. Throughout the pandemic, employed parents were almost twice as likely to report a reduction in income than the general population.

Growing Debt

By December 2020, nearly 9 million people had to borrow more money because of the Covid-19 pandemic; the proportion borrowing £1,000 or more also increased from 35% to 45% since June 2020.

Fewer Jobs

By January 2021 the UK economy had shrunk by 12% since the pandemic started and is forecast to contract still further throughout the remainder of 2021. Since February 2020; 828,000 fewer people were in payrolled employment and the loss of a job is disproportionately higher amongst the lowest paid.

New Working Patterns Disadvantage Low Paid

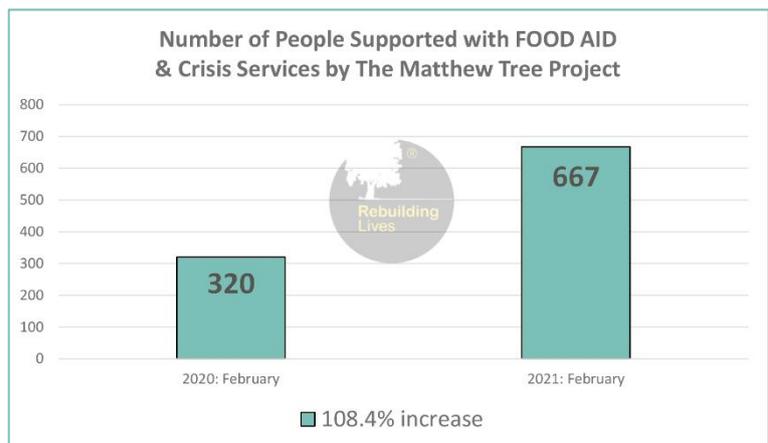
Those in higher-income groups reported that they were more likely to be able to work from home. 55.1% of people with income over £20,000 are able to work from home compared with 19.1% of people with income less than £20,000.

Rapid Rise in NEED

Since February 2020 The Matthew Tree Project's 'Rebuilding Lives Crisis Support Programme' which always starts with a city-

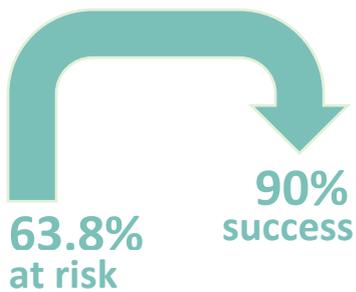
wide home delivery foodservice, has seen an unprecedented 108% increase in demand. By the end of 2020 the project was distributing the food equivalent of over **9,000** meals each week – making the charity one of the largest, if not the largest, provider of food aid across the Bristol region that works directly with those in need.

The programme delivered **4584** individual one-2-one crisis support sessions. An increase of 60.8%.



Risk of Homelessness

The Rebuilding Lives Support programme is primarily designed to intervene early and prevent people at risk of losing their homes from becoming homeless.



At the point of referral, 63.8% of people are at risk of becoming homeless. The programme is highly effective at preventing this, with a 90% success rate (prior to the ban on evictions due to Covid-19). Feeling safe and secure is one of the Rebuilding Lives Support Programmes higher level outcomes.

Support Needs

The most pressing support needs, as identified by the clients themselves are:

- Debt/budgeting **57%**
- Mental health **39%**
- Physical health **28%**
- Benefit issues **26%**
- Other **21%**
- No employment **20%**
- Addiction **17%**
- Legal issues **5%**

Pathways to Poverty

Over the course of 2020 we have seen a big shift in the causes as to why households are referred to the crisis support programme:



Health & Wellbeing

City-wide Foodservice



Eating better



Good Fresh Food



Healthier Weight

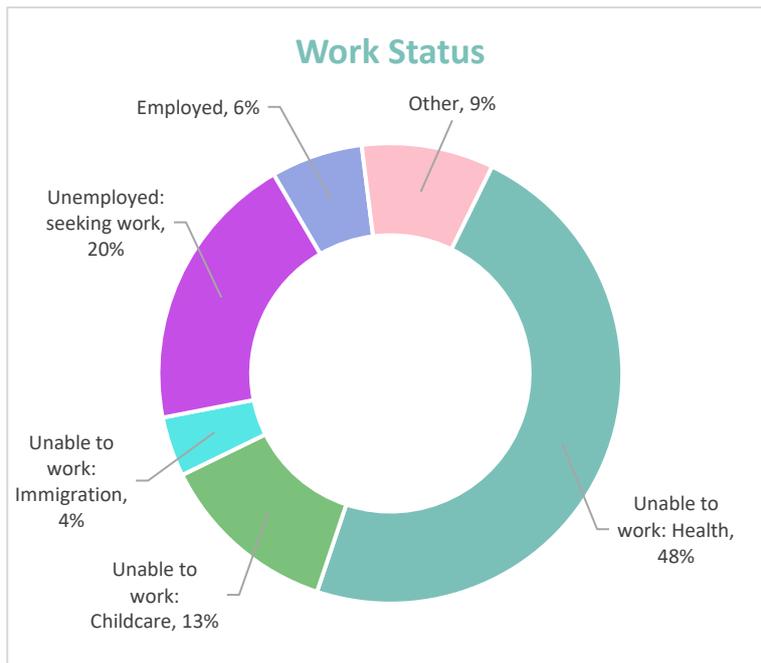


Overall wellbeing



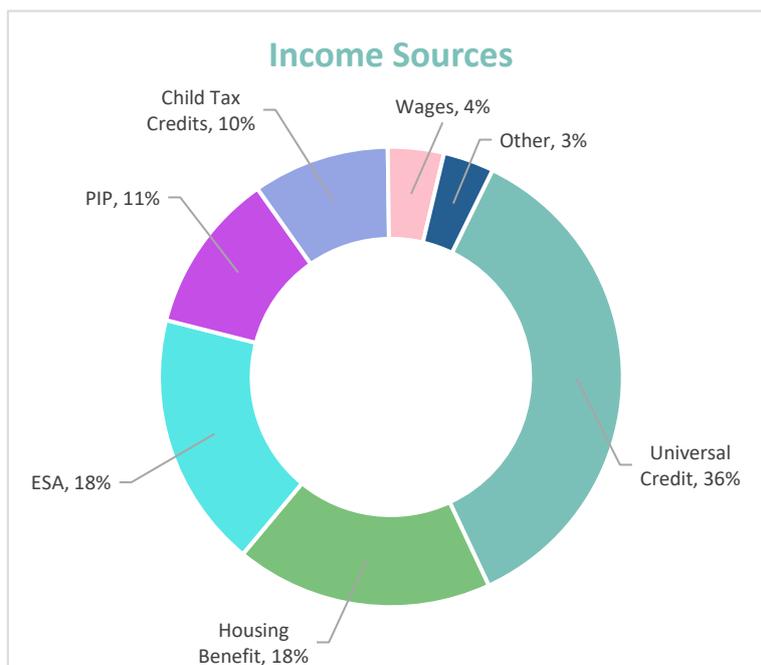
Work Status

A staggering 64.7% of those referred to the programme are unable to work due to poor health (47.9%); childcare (12.6%); or immigration status (4.2%). These households are completely reliant upon the welfare benefit system for their income. The sad reality is that for far too many, it is woefully inadequate and impacts negatively on health; overall wellbeing; and future life chances where children are involved.



Long-term Unemployed

As of December 2020, all unemployed clients are those furthest away from the job market (unemployed for 6 months or more). Statistically, long-term unemployment is the biggest barrier to securing a job and with competition for employment now so fierce, the future for these people is extremely challenging.



Employed

Of those clients who are classified as employed 1.2% are on zero-hour contracts, often going weeks without any work; 0.7% have full-time work; 3.3% are part-time, many of whom have lost shifts or hours during the pandemic; and 1.2% are self-employed.

There are also 3.1% of clients who are retired; 0.4% are students; and 5.7% who prefer not to say.

Typical goals include:

Client Set Goals

57.4% of the personal goals set by clients were achieved of significant progress was made towards them.

- Learn English
- Get healthy
- Clear debts
- Start training course
- Get a job
- To be in my own home
- Feel better about myself
- Move to a safer home

Recommendations

1 Ethical Taxation Reform

It is widely accepted that in societies where there is less inequality there are fewer social and health problems, and the demand on publicly funded services, and therefore government spending, is greatly reduced.

Not all organisations and services/products are ethically equal. Some contribute more to health and social problems (fast food outlets, bookmakers); some are neutral (accountants, opticians); and some actually contribute positively towards better health and a better social fabric in society (health food shops, social enterprises, gyms, fruit & veg growers).

The 'polluter pays' concept should be central to a radically progressive and ethical tax system (corporation tax and VAT) that rewards organisations who contribute positively and penalises organisations who contribute negatively. The sugar tax recognises this concept but on its own does not go far enough.

2 Start-up grants: Social Enterprise

Social Enterprise organisations make a significant contribution towards the social fabric of our local communities. They do not benefit individual shareholders but rather the wider community. We need to do all we can to encourage more social entrepreneurs to launch Social Enterprise's that tackle deep seated social and health problems.

Measures to stimulate and support **Social Enterprise organisations** to start-up are desperately needed. There has been a growth in the availability of 'social investment' funding but this is expensive and takes the form of a loan that needs to be paid back – with interest. This could be helpful for a social enterprise that is established and needs funding to up-scale but does not help where capital is needed for the start-up phase. Grant funding for the start-up capital needed by a Social Enterprise would enable more great social change ideas to become reality.

3 Enable Charities to reclaim VAT

Analysis in June 2020 by independent charity Pro Bono Economics predicted a **£6.4bn loss of income** over the six months to December 2020 for the UK's 170,000 charities, leaving one in 10 potentially facing bankruptcy. Smaller, local charities are especially exposed to the crisis.

Office supplies cost The Matthew Tree Project 20% more than office supplies bought by a commercial company. This is because charities who do not trade are unable to reclaim VAT.

Charities – who make such a positive contribution to society – should not have to pay 20% more for goods and services than commercial organisations

At a time when funding for charities has been hit significantly by the pandemic this is just wrong and needs to be addressed urgently.

4 Public Assets & Planning

New Developments

For all new developments over a certain scale, planning permissions to be granted subject to a % of buildings & land being made available for affordable housing; food growing; community amenities; by way of long-term peppercorn lease, i.e. 35 years or more; for local community based social and health service providers.

Publicly Owned Land

Central and local government to work with third sector representatives to establish a long-term strategic plan for publically owned land that accommodates the needs equally for housing, food growing, transport and public amenities.

Non-Use of Capital Assets

Prohibit local councils from 'sitting on' capital assets for an 'open-ended' time. If the asset is not utilised by the local council within a reasonable time, it should be made available for asset transfer to a local not-for-profit organisation, and not sold to the highest bidder.

5 Discounts for those on Low Incomes

Being able to fully engage with all areas of 'normal life' is something most of us take for granted. Sadly, for those on low incomes this is not a reality. It is absurd that people on very low incomes should pay the same as those on high incomes for essential services and we are calling upon the Government to engage with the providers of the following 'essential' services to find ways to offer partial or full discounts for those on means tested benefits:

- Fuel/energy
- Food
- Internet/phone
- School uniforms
- Public transport
- Adult re-training
- Rent
- Council tax

The concept already exists for pensioners and students who receive various discounts including bus and rail cards and we strongly believe this should be extended to those in the lowest income decile.

6 Benefit System Reforms

Many of the reforms to the benefit system that we are calling for do not require additional funding. A small change in administrative procedure will make a big difference in the experience of many.

Prisoner Pre-Release Protocols

Currently, someone being released cannot begin the benefit claim or housing bidding process until after they have left prison. This creates a period where they have no income and are homeless which is completely unnecessary. The dates when people are being released is known and it should be possible to change the system so that benefit claims and housing provisions can be applied for and granted before the release date.

Universal Credit (UC)

Currently, when someone moves from legacy benefits onto UC there is a mandatory 'waiting period' of at least 5 weeks before UC benefit payments begin. However, the legacy benefit stops immediately meaning that for at least 5 weeks the claimant receives no

income. This is inhumane and totally unnecessary. We are calling on the government to change the process so that legacy benefits are maintained until UC benefits begin. If, during this time, there has been an overpayment then this is reclaimed over time at an affordable rate for the claimant.

This one measure alone would remove up to 30% of The Matthew Tree Project clients overnight. It is fair to assume the same would apply to other crisis support providers right across the UK.

We believe that it is essential the £20 UC top-up that was introduced at the beginning of the pandemic is made permanent. The poorest in society have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, even with the top-up, and there is no case whatsoever that it is fair or reasonable to remove it.

Abolish Benefit Cap

The benefit cap applies to larger families and as such unfairly penalises the children as it is impossible for them to be properly provided for. It is cruel and there is no rational argument for the benefit cap to remain in place as it

has failed on every measure that was set for it.

Furthermore, the DWP report that the benefit cap saves only 0.1% of the total welfare bill and this is just the money it takes from households' benefit income, and not any of the costs of administering the cap.

CASE STUDY:

N

Age: 32.

Referred to the Rebuilding Lives Support Programme by the Centre for Sustainable Energy

N's marriage broke down 5 years ago and he took custody of their 5 children; 3 of whom are now primary age and 2 secondary but were then all primary age. As his ex was the tenant of their home and wanted her new partner to move in with her, N and the children had to leave and went to live with his mother – sleeping on her living room floor. For a long time, his ex-wife was claiming the benefits for the children and not passing them on and he acquired significant debts. (His ex has since been denied access to the children by Social Services). He had been working as a scaffolder since he left school but had to stop to look after the children. After 9 months, Social Services found him a four-bedroom private rented house. By this time the “grace period” – when those who had previously been working can claim full benefits – had expired and the benefit cap kicked in immediately. He had to apply for discretionary housing payments but these are limited and eventually ran out. Now he has, after paying the rent, which was increased last March by the landlord, approximately £550pcm to feed, clothe, entertain and educate his children, and keep the home running.

He cannot see himself returning to work as a scaffolder due to his childcare commitments. He doubts whether he could manage without support of The Matthew Tree Project.

N enrolled in a training course in Spring 2020 but that had to be cancelled because of COVID. He cannot, at this point, see how his situation can ever improve.

7 Establish FAIRNESS ALLIANCE

In 2014 Bristol City Council published the final report and recommendations from the work of the Fairness Commission. The panel was chaired by **Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group** and consisted of local and national experts including the CEO of The Matthew Tree Project. The commission took evidence from a wide range of local service providers together with evidence from many who had/have lived experience of deprivation. Sadly, the next stage in this process never happened due to a lack of funding. It was to establish a Fairness Alliance Panel to oversee the implementation and progress of the recommendations. The issues the commission addressed; inequality; deprivation and fairness are even more pressing today than they were in 2014.

The Matthew Tree Project highly recommend that a Fairness Alliance Panel is created to review and update the findings from 2014 and then oversee the implementation of its recommendations.

8 Stimulate a Local Food Economy

For every £1 spent on food in a supermarket chain 80p leaves Bristol. For every £1 spent at a local independent trader, £1 stays within the Bristol economy. When the item purchased was produced within Bristol from natural resources, i.e. food, the wealth of the city itself increases.

Bristol has an abundance of natural resource and it is incumbent upon us to do all we can to stimulate local communities, local people, local economy, local council and create a framework which is conducive to the creation of a 'new and thriving' local food economy causing the proliferation of 'new' skilled and semi-skilled jobs, engaging communities to work together to solve their problems and build a better future, whilst at the same time protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for all citizens of Bristol.

This would be an exciting project which 'liberates' our natural under-utilised resources (land; buildings; unemployed / under-employed people) to create a range of city-wide

strategically linked-up food activities which are positive for people; positive for our poorer communities, positive for the environment, and positive for the wealth of individuals and the wealth of the city.

When fully established, a project such as this and all the related stakeholder activities it would spurn will have a major impact on food security and food sovereignty for future generations and by producing a significantly higher proportion of the food we consume, money stays within the city and does not flow out to multi-national corporations elsewhere.

By creating a vertically integrated 'field-2-fork' working 'live-axis' of the four legs of the food chain (growing; processing; distribution; retail), barriers to entry are removed for others and it becomes viable for new enterprises to launch and existing ones to upscale.

Vertical integration also ensures a fair and equitable distribution of the margin earned across the whole food chain.

For further information, see page 33.



Fund New TMTP Services

The Rebuilding Lives Programme is extremely effective as it provides a holistic joined-up approach to the full wrap-around service support it offers. This makes it much easier for people to engage with the help they need. The new or increased needs, as identified by the clients themselves, make a strong case for new services to be provided. New services require new funding. The identified service needs are not accessible elsewhere in the sector either because they are over-subscribed or conditions of access exclude some of our clients.

Debt advice/budgeting

57% of clients say they need help with unmanageable personal debt and/or budgeting. Debt advice requires a qualified and skilled person and is very time consuming but is an absolutely essential, and growing, need. Money budgeting support does not require the same degree of expertise and by combining the two functions into one integrated service, the clients will receive the most effective overall solution. Debt advice services across

the sector are massively over-subscribed and conditions of access can be a barrier to some of our clients.

Counselling/mental health support

Here we are not referring to clinically diagnosed mental illness; but poor mental health caused by events such as: anxiety; abuse; fear; loneliness; exclusion; loss; bereavement; failure; depression; insomnia; illness; etc.

The Matthew Tree Project should employ a qualified full-time worker to provide effective first stage counselling support and develop closer working links with the wider mental health care providers.

Mental health services are massively over-subscribed with long waiting lists and are not so easy for clients to access due to the requirement for a health care professional, such as a GP, to make the referral.

A working group, overseen by Public Health England, should be established to develop a closer working partnership between frontline community based organisations, such as The Matthew Tree Project, and

the mental health care providers so that (a) the community organisation is better equipped to do more; and (b) where necessary people can be referred to more specialised support by the community based organisation, so they get the help they need, when they need it.

Language / interpretation support

The Matthew Tree Project have a number of clients who only speak their native language, which includes: Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese and Mandarin, Farsi, Kurdish, Punjabi, Somali, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese.

Providing weekly food supplies is all we can do for these households and as a result they tend to stay in the programme for a very long time. Bristol City Council provide an interpretation service but this is chargeable and extremely difficult to access.

The Matthew Tree Project needs to bring this expertise in-house so that these clients can get the help they need to move out of crisis.

Client Voice: Co-production

From 'Day One' 10 years ago, the foundation of The Matthew Tree Project has been built on a fundamental approach which is firmly rooted in co-production. This critical process is to harness the collective voice, experience and opinions of the people the charity seeks to help. Then, with key involvement from current and ex-clients, and those with 'lived experience'; working with the executive board, the service delivery team (staff and volunteers), and strategic partners; collectively we translate this 'intelligence' into effective services that meet the client needs most effectively.

No-one is excluded from the programme and every single client have equal voice in shaping how it develops. The insight gained by this approach is also used to affect systemic change where the system is unfair and people suffer unnecessarily. Our recommendations in this report has come by way of this process.

KEY ELEMENTS TO THE CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS

- Long-term client engagement; typically, 3-6 months
- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Nurture open and trusting relationships
- Empower the client to be in control of their process
- Every client contact, formal and informal, is recorded; feedback is captured and acted upon
- Support is tailored to the client's ability to engage
- Front line service delivery team are given the autonomy to do whatever is needed for each client case
- Constantly ask fundamental questions, such as:
 - What needs to happen for you not to need us?
 - What do you want us to help you with?
 - How can we do better?
 - What kind of future do you want for yourself?
 - What new skills would you like to learn?
 - What is your dream job?
 - How are we doing?
 - How would you like to get involved in shaping and delivery of the programme?
- Encourage clients and ex-clients to become part of the delivery of services by volunteering and applying for vacant jobs within the charity
- Empower clients to decide when their case should be closed

All clients are regularly asked "how do you rate the support you have received from The Matthew Tree Project?" For 2020 the client rating rose from 90.9% in 2019 to:

98.5%

Client Involvement

In 2020, on average, volunteers contributed **747** hours per month. The amount provided by current and ex-clients was:

45.0%

Rebuilding Lives Programme



'Rebuilding Lives' is a unique, innovative and pioneering early intervention crisis support programme, progressively developed by The Matthew Tree Project since 2010, which is available to anyone who is in crisis.

The programme is particularly effective at engaging with those who have slipped through the gaps of other support services across the sector.

62.5%

of clients are isolated and have no other form of support. They say that if it were not for The Matthew Tree Project they would have nowhere else to turn and wouldn't know what to do.

Fully Inclusive

No-one, no ethnic group, no crisis type, no postcode, no age is excluded from access to the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme'.

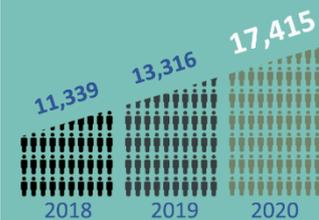
We have an extensive network of over 90 officially appointed referral agencies which includes statutory and voluntary organisations such as the council, advice agencies, schools, etc.

Referrals are made via a secure online portal on our web site. Each new referral receives a 'welcome' phone call within 24 hours of being referred where everything is explained and the client can tell their story.

Recognising how difficult and challenging it can be to come to somewhere new to ask for help, our online system enables us to make contact with those who are referred but do not come. A simple phone call to say "we were expecting you and are you ok" is highly effective in breaking down barriers that may be preventing someone from accessing the help they need.

Key facts:

Beneficiaries¹



Underlying Causes



59%

understanding & acknowledgement of root causes / issues

Isolation

62.5%

have no other support and nowhere to turn to for help



53%

of clients live alone

52.9%



feel less isolated since coming to The Matthew Tree Project

¹this is the weekly demand on the service, i.e. a family of 4 attending for 6 weeks would count as 24.

The Client Journey

Every client has complete control over how much they engage with the programme and the speed at which they progress. Once registered as a client the household is supported for as long as necessary and until they do not need us anymore.

We place great emphasis on treating all clients with the upmost dignity and respect. A compassionate, non-judgemental approach is absolutely **essential** if we want to help people achieve sustainable, transformational change.

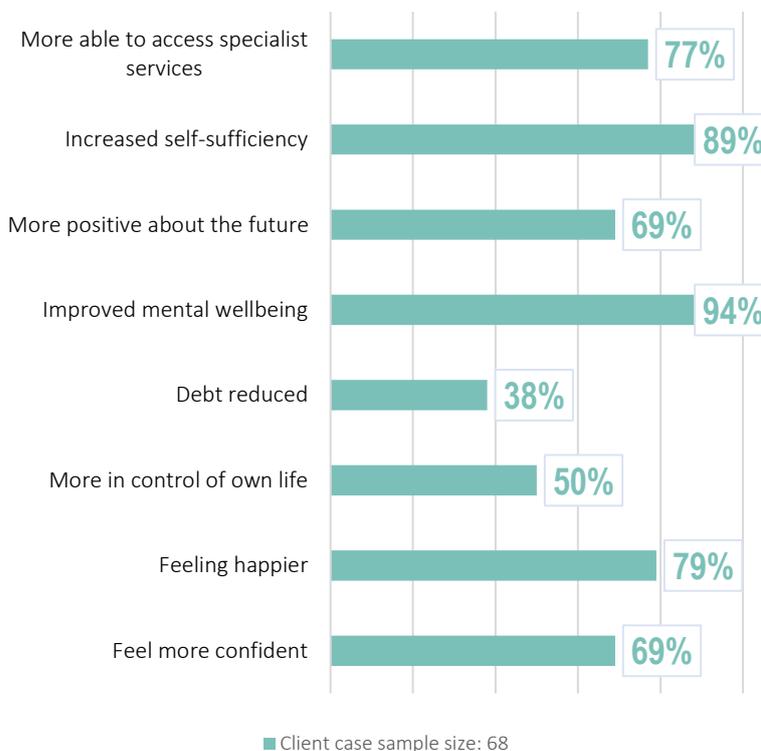
People only fully engage in an open and honest way when they feel they are in a safe, secure, supportive, non-judgemental place.

This level of engagement is **the key** factor in the effectiveness of the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' and enables us to get to the heart of the matter and help people rebuild a better, healthier and happier future.

'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' enables people to:

- Address the underlying causes of their crisis
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Set, and work towards, personal goals
- Learn new skills
- Make decisions about the support received
- Help shape the 'Rebuilding Lives Programme' that is supporting them

Some of the Outcomes Reported by Clients



The Matthew Tree Project were proud to be selected as a 'Best Practice Representative' in the Parliamentary Review for community based health and social care services.



Full 'wrap-around' Joined-up & Individually Tailored Support Programme

6 Higher Level Outcomes of the 'Rebuilding Lives' Social Change Model:

- People feel safe and secure
- People have improved health & wellbeing
- People have support networks & feel connected
- People have improved resilience
- People have new or improved skills
- People have hope and a purpose

Since being established in 2010, The Matthew Tree Project has grown from operating one 'Rebuilding Lives Support Centre', to running five by 2020 - all of which are located in the most deprived areas of Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

The 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' enables people who are experiencing, or are at risk of hardship, to overcome the difficulties they are facing and to plan for a better future.

By working collaboratively with others, the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' offer people advice, advocacy and support which matches their personal circumstances.

The aim is to look at the issues people face, **and** the underlying causes, from their basic needs, to their physical and mental health, to skills and employment.

People are supported to draw on their personal experiences to build on their skills and strengths so they are ready to seize the opportunities, and overcome the challenges, ahead.

'Rebuilding Lives' is a holistic, person centred approach which is a crucial part of developing the kind of relationship which builds trust and allows **support to be tailored to an individual** and their circumstances.

Key facts:

Volunteering

747 average volunteer hours per month



Children's schooling

improved school performance of children **47%**



Home Cooking Skills

47%

Improved their cooking skills



Money Management

59%

gained ability to budget



Client Involvement



45%

volunteer hours provided by current and ex-clients

Client Goal Setting & Progression

57%

set, and progressed towards - or achieved - personal goals in 2020

When we first meet people who have been referred there is a tangible sense of hopelessness. The experience of falling into poverty for the vast majority is soul destroying, degrading and painful.

Our first task is to re-set the situation: stabilise the crisis and give people 'hope' of a better future – belief that the problems and issues can be overcome and a renewed sense of focus and motivation to work towards a better, happier life.

We are patient with clients who upon arrival are often in a state of distress and confusion.

Falling into the poverty trap does not happen overnight. It is a long, painful and disempowering experience that can scar someone very deeply. This is why we do all we can to give 'control' back

Examples of the personal goals clients set themselves:

- Learn English
- Get healthy
- Stabilise mental health
- Clear debts
- Get a job
- To be in my own home
- Find support in recovery
- Start training course
- Move to a better home
- Bring gambling under control
- Feel better about myself
- Retraining

What is the Client Journey?

We refer to the time a client spends with us as their journey because we encourage clients to plot a pathway out of their initial situation. The client manages their own journey, including the decision that they no longer need our support. The journey metaphor is a useful way to frame their experience as a process they themselves are making, rather than something they are obliged to do by others.

to the clients in every interaction we have.

The 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' is built around the people it seeks to help and is guided in what it does and how it does it by the clients themselves through formal and informal feedback, discussion and involvement.

Co-production is central

to the development of the service: creating priorities,

language and approaches among all those involved.

People with lived experience (clients and ex-clients; some staff; and some volunteers) work alongside everyone else to shape every aspect of the programme: bringing an empathy and experience to our planning, practical development and external communications.

Improving Health and Wellbeing

[Good] food is vital to sustain life and improve / maintain good health.

Food insecurity is a massive issue for the households referred to the programme. People are often in poor health, physically and mentally when they first arrive - missing meals, losing weight, weak and disorientated, low in confidence, confused and scared are all common traits displayed.

Our **Foodservice** improves physical and mental health and wellbeing so that people are better equipped to overcome the considerable challenges ahead and engage in life more fully.

When first launched in 2010, the charity was only able to offer people a selection of tinned and packaged foods, a listening ear and basic signposting. Whilst this was beneficial it was very limited in what it was able to achieve for people in crisis.

The charity is now able to provide a **professional city-wide home delivery Foodservice** - which promotes good health and wellbeing - alongside an expert full-time client navigation support service

that ensures people get the help they need – in a way that works best for them.

The **professional Foodservice** provides weekly nutritionally balanced grocery supplies which includes fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy and meats for the whole family.

By the end of 2020 the charity was distributing food the equivalent of 9,000 meals a week and only differs from that of any other food retailer inasmuch as the food is provided free of charge at the point of delivery.

Clients are referred to the programme because they are penniless and this approach removes affordability as a barrier to a good food diet which we believe **everyone** should have access to.

79%



said they are **happier**

Health & Wellbeing

City-wide Foodservice

9,000 meals
distributed each week

hungry of which
3,986
go to children

Eating better

90%
Developed
better eating
habits & diet



Good Fresh Food



44%
of the produce
provided is fresh
5-a-day foods

Healthier Weight



41%
lost or gained
weight to
improve health

Overall wellbeing

71%
feeling healthier



66%
managing stress better

Client Case Study

Systemic failure can take many forms. In this case poor and conflicting advice from Job Centre Plus (JCP) staff and officials from two local councils created a completely unnecessary crisis that spiralled out of control causing significant human suffering to the parents and the children. It also incurred great expense to the tax payer by way of publicly funded services that were subsequently involved. A more joined-up and consistent approach from local councils is desperately needed and much better training for JCP staff.

CASE STUDY:

R

R is a 29-year-old female diagnosed with bi-polar disorder.

R self-referred by turning up at our Filwood Support Centre in January 2020. R told us her story and we accepted her as a client. R was 7 months pregnant.

She and her partner, along with their four children, had recently arrived in Bristol after having been evicted from their council home in Cornwall. This was due to rent arrears brought about by confusion concerning her partner's irregular zero-hour employment and its effect on their eligibility for Housing Benefit, which they should have claimed but didn't know.

Cornish council staff advised them to leave their home before the bailiffs came and as they had family in Bristol they decided to make a fresh start where there were people to support them. Things did not work that

way, however, because Bristol City Council decided they were intentionally homeless and therefore not entitled to go onto HomeChoice. Nevertheless, because of children, Social Services got involved and placed the family in emergency accommodation.

During this time, we were supporting R and her family, practically, with food, and also emotionally. We enlisted the debt advice services of one of our strategic partners, SPAC.

R gave birth to her fifth child who was poorly and initially was not released from hospital, causing anxiety.

Then the first lockdown came. R found it helpful to be able to speak to someone regularly amidst the isolation via our telephone support service. This was particularly important to her as the family were getting harassed by a neighbour. They also felt cramped in

the small flat they were allotted. After two further moves, they settled into a home. Social Services had no criticism of their parenting abilities. They redecorated their new home and we helped with a grant for flooring. Her partner found a job and they closed their case.

Then came the second lockdown and her partner lost his job so they returned for support. He volunteered to help us in the warehouse and was very reliable.

Her partner then found another job and R said that they would not need food aid but would like to stay as clients so that they could get continuing emotional and practical support as and when they needed it. This happened immediately; we provided a laptop - donated by strategic partner Digi Local - so that R's children could do their schoolwork.

Client Case Study

CASE STUDY:

S

S, 58, referred herself to TMTP in June 2019. S had been living 'off grid' for the best part of 40 years, in caravans and live-in vehicles as part of the 'new age' travelling community. S supported herself with casual jobs on the land or at festivals and prided herself on being self-sufficient and resourceful. S had been ordered to leave the static caravan she was living in by the council. S moved into a tent on a friendly farmer's field and was anxious the planning department would find her again.

It became clear that S had deep-seated anxiety and was fearful of the authorities. S had once tried to claim benefits but found the process so hostile and humiliating she vowed never to try again. S had long-standing medical problems arising from a road traffic accident when she was 20 but had encountered an unsympathetic GP and so stopped seeking treatment. S was in constant pain with an arthritic spine and other, undiagnosed, problems. It was clear that S needed to change her entire way of life and this frightened her. It was therefore necessary to proceed in three stages: finances; health; and then housing.

After much discussion, we supported S to make a claim for Universal Credit, accompanying S to the first two interviews at the Job Centre. S was relieved to find that her job coach was friendly and fully accepted that she was not well enough to work. S then suffered a ruptured appendix and was admitted to hospital. After discharge, she developed post-operative problems and had to be re-admitted.

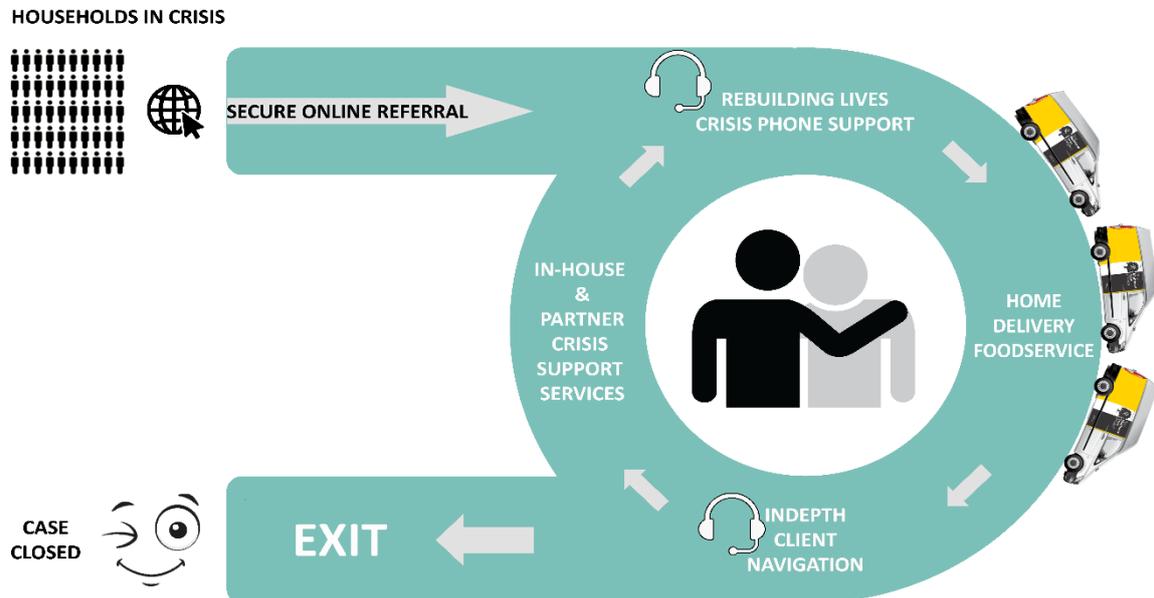
After her second discharge, we supported S to visit a GP and, to her surprise, she found the doctor to be empathetic and clearly concerned for her well-being. She obtained the necessary fit note for the JCP coach and the doctor discussed setting up a holistic treatment plan, including mental health support. The scans performed at the hospital also showed the extent of the internal damage from her earlier accident.

Housing was now the next hurdle and S was very resistant to asking the council for help - fearing that she would be placed in emergency housing that she would not be able to tolerate. We supported S in visits to the Housing Dept. who accepted their homeless duty to her but also agreed that they would waive the rule that she must accept any offer they make.

S feared being in a house – away from the direct contact with the elements that she was familiar with. She feared the responsibility of paying bills and being tied down. It took her a long time – during which she had regular emotional support from TMTP – before finally, in January 2021, S accepted a bungalow in a supported housing estate in a small village.

In partnership with her new Housing Support Worker, we made applications to various charities to get essential furniture and also a small temporary cash grant in order to help her settle in her new home.

Collaborative Partnerships



By working collaboratively with a wide range of strategic partners, the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' is able to offer people advice, advocacy and support which matches their personal circumstances.

Partnership networks sit on either side of The Matthew Tree Project. On the one side are the 90+ officially appointed referral agencies who refer people in need to the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme'. On the other side are the key strategic partners who provide different support services in a joined-up way.

The support provided is personally tailored to each

individual case and most importantly, the abilities of each person to engage with the help they need.

The client determines the plan for their future and is in complete control of the process throughout, including the closing of their own case when they do not need our support anymore.

"our clients are at the centre of everything that happens in relation to their situation. We maintain a close relationship which ensures nothing slips through the gaps."

MICHELLE GOODWAY
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
THE MATTHEW TREE PROJECT

Some of the KEY strategic partnerships:

- St Paul's Advice Centre
- Centre for Sustainable Energy
- St Monica Trust Community Fund
- Bristol Drugs Project (ROADS)
- Assertive Contact & Engagement Team (ACE)
- Future Bright
- ACFA

Systemic Change

The Matthew Tree Project is a nationally recognised pioneer in systemic approaches for the alleviation of poverty in the UK.

Using the unique insight provided to us by our client group (client voice) we aim to Influence policy makers and create a systemic environment that is more fair and conducive to enabling citizens living in deprived communities to improve their income, health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The close relationship we develop with our client group enables us to capture the whole client experience and then by using this 'intelligence' give the client a voice to influence policy makers and seek to create a systemic environment that addresses social injustice and inequality.

The data collected by the programme is made available to local councils and national government in a very constructive way and is always supported by real-life case studies.

16% of clients are referred to the programme due to

The Matthew Tree Project is recognised nationally by

- Key contributor in the 2014 national inquiry into food poverty in the UK
- Best Practice Representative in the 2020 Parliamentary Review
- One of only 69 projects in the £33m 'Help Through Crisis' nationwide programme
- Winner of the 2020 Bristol Prestige Award for 'Best Charitable Community Services'

The unique insight captured by the programme is due to:

- No-one is excluded which means we don't only support one group or crisis 'type' but we see the effects of policy decisions across the board, on everyone and anyone who falls into a crisis situation
- The close and open relationship we develop with each client affords us a deep understanding of the realities of life; the causes of different crisis situations and the barriers to progress out of crisis
- 'Rebuilding Lives' is an 'early intervention' and 'long-term engagement' programme so we don't just see a snap-shot moment, which can be very misleading, but the whole client experience over time

welfare benefit delays. In November 2018 we wrote to the Secretary of State at the DWP arguing; instead of all benefit payments being stopped when someone's situation changes, until a decision is made - which can take months – the current award should continue whilst the decision is being made. There has been some movement in this direction but there is still some way to go for the system to be not so inhumane.

22%

of referrals



caused by
BENEFIT
issues

Theory of Change

Case Management & Reporting

As we work with clients we record any positive or negative change they tell us about and place it within the context of our **'Theory of Change & Social Impact Measurement Framework'** which underpins the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme'.

If a client tells us, for example, that their benefits are now in payment we would record a positive outcome for the payments and also another for the fact their financial situation has improved. By classifying these two positive changes and mapping them to the Theory of Change outcome groups we arrive at a count of positive change outcomes which measures the impact of our work with each client.

So the client's benefit payment success will count towards 'Reduced Material Deprivation' and also 'Increased feeling of being in control of money/budget' as well as some Theory of Change measures.

Some of the outcomes in the Theory of Change Framework can occur frequently, such as the client having a more positive

The Matthew Tree Project long term goal is two-fold:

- Working holistically, to empower disadvantaged people to take control and live dignified, fulfilling and self-sufficient lives
- Engage with policy makers, locally and nationally, to effect systemic change and create a fairer and more equal society for the benefit of all

6 higher level outcomes of the 'Rebuilding Lives

- People feel safe and more secure
- People have support networks and feel connected
- People have new or improved skills
- People have improved health and wellbeing
- People have improved resilience
- People have hope and a purpose

outlook or feeling happier, others will mostly be one time changes such as moving to better accommodation.

Over the course of the last 3 years the 'Rebuilding Lives Support Programme' have designed a bespoke online case management software system based on the Apricot platform. Impact data is being collected at every interaction the client has with the programme.

The case management system enables us to understand and improve the level of support provided and also report on the

impact of the programme to stakeholders and policy makers.

"We believe we are pioneering the creation of a 'blue-print' that can be replicated in urban environments across the UK and Europe thus addressing poverty, at its root, on a significant scale."

MARK GOODWAY
FOUNDER
THE MATTHEW TREE PROJECT



The main food distribution centre in Lawrence Hill, Bristol; Mobile FoodStore & temperature controlled vans

City-wide Food Collection & Distribution

A key element of the Foodservice provided by The Matthew Tree Project is the full range of nutrition represented in the food distributed consisting of the full range of foodstuffs: chilled; fresh; frozen; and ambient.

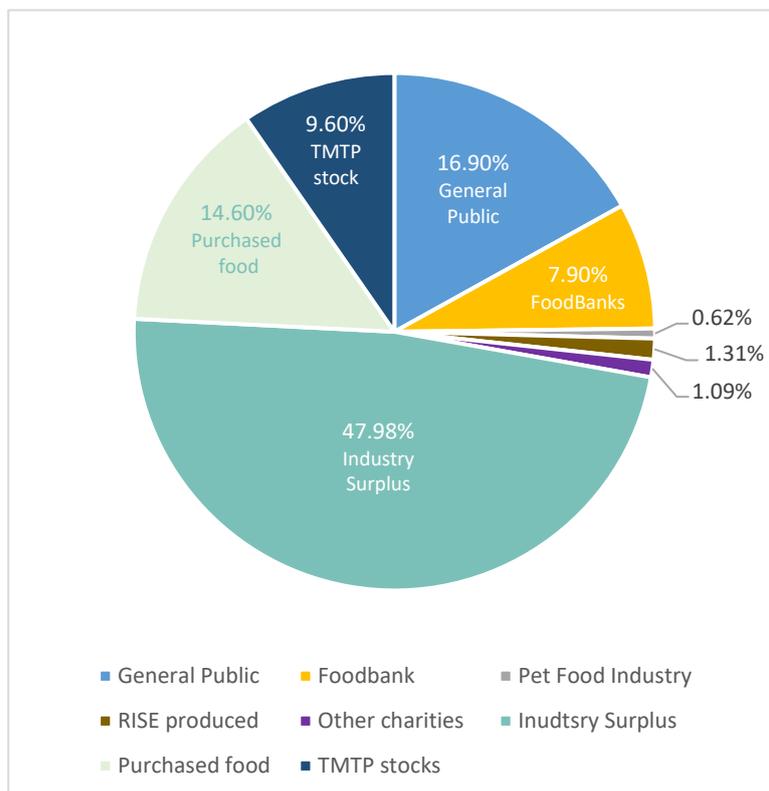
Each household is given a weekly allowance of each food group based on what makes a healthy meal according to the 'Eatwell' plate. Within their allowance clients can then choose the foods they like.

Due to the Covid restrictions upon the hospitality sector donations of surplus foods from the food industry fell for the first time. In 2020 we collected 83.3 tonnes from a peak of 115.4 tonnes in 2019. This was especially challenging as Covid-19 also caused a steep rise in client

numbers. Thankfully, the loss of industry surplus food donations was partly made up for by way of donations from other charitable organisations, and a government grant of £62,500 for the purchase of food. In addition to this, we

were able to draw down on 16.6 tonnes of food we had in stock at the end of 2019.

Below: **SOURCES** of food distributed in 2020:



The Matthew Tree Project work very hard to ensure all food received gets to the clients – the people who need it the most. However, as much of the food donated is perishable foods with very short shelf life, sometimes we ourselves have a surplus.

To ensure as little food of this surplus as possible actually gets wasted the charity has developed sophisticated processes that redistributes any surplus for beneficial use.

How TMTP food is distributed in order of priority:

- 89.4% - Clients
- 5.12% - Other charities
- 1.91% - Fareshare SW
- 1.75% - TMTP events
- 0.56% - Animal feed
- 0.14% - Composting
- 0.81% - Waste

44% of the food distributed is fresh 5-a-DAY foods

163,890 meals provided to children in 2020

Some of the charities who receive food from The Matthew Tree Project include:

- **Community Fridge**
- **Community Café – The Park**
- **Bristol Refugee Rights**
- **Super Supper Club**
- **Bristol City Mission**
- **Zenz**
- **Salvation Army**
- **Cat & Dogs Home**
- **Borderlands**
- **St Nicholas of Tolentine**



Key Facts:

159

tonnes collected

+

174

tonnes distributed

=

333

tonnes handled

Urban Food Growing

Food is our vehicle to educate, empower and help people move on from entrenched systematic deprivation.

We are tackling this by starting at the heart of the problem, Filwood and Hartcliffe are in the top 1% of most deprived wards in the UK.

This is where the largest Matthew Tree Project Rebuilding Lives Support Centre; our largest food growing site, the RISE food processing kitchen, and the RISE food shoppé/café are all located.

By seeding the local food economy within deprived communities we are providing the opportunity to permeate and advocate for positive social change. In 2021 we are committed to the expansion of our

community food growing activities and are seeking a larger plot of land in the region of 5-acres. A plot of this size will enable us to

demonstrate fully all the positive impacts that can be achieved and will significantly increase the volume of food produced.

The principles that underpin our food growing activities

- Soil management and improvement, i.e. crop rotation; balance between permaculture & agriculture, trees, wildlife, environment
- Sustainability, irrigation systems; alternative energy; food storage (undersoil cold food storage)
- Natural/organic, non-use of fertilisers, pesticides & chemicals
- Composting
- Training/teaching/skills, i.e. home-growing; small scale (allotment); larger-scale (commercial)
- Schools/next generation education/engagement, i.e. legacy
- Innovation – the difference compared to the standardised global industrialised food production model
- Use of new technology / circular systems
- Replicability
- Long-term financial viability

Client Comments

Here are just a few representative comments of the hundreds we receive from the people who go through the programme.

"All at The Matthew Tree Project, myself and family owe you so much for all the help and support you gave us in time of need. Thank you all so much for all the food which helped tremendously. Also for the help with CV which was very grateful as I have now managed to get a job after such a long time. Also the friendliness you all showed without being judgemental, the laughs and chats will be missed. There will be times when I will be able to pop in for a chat and keep you up with progress. You haven't quite got away from me yet (ha ha). Thank you again very much appreciated and truly grateful. Friends for Life."

Ex-client of The Matthew Tree Project

"My quality of life has improved with help emotionally and a better diet. I've actually put on weight. I'm very grateful to you all. Staff are amazing, make you feel most welcome. The environment is welcoming, everyone so kind, caring and loving make me feel important, and not alone. Someone's caring for me and has my best interest at heart. Forever grateful xxx"

Ex-client of The Matthew Tree Project

"Well I have changed my life by coming and getting the support I need. You guys are fantastic and I'm very grateful for all the help I receive. Thank you!"

Ex-client of The Matthew Tree Project

"When I was at rock bottom you pick me up, supported me, made sure I had healthy diet. You all have been so brilliant, listening, giving me smile when all I could do is cry. I've come back today not for food or support but to say THANK YOU."

Ex-client of The Matthew Tree Project

"Couldn't wish for better people, all the staff were there at my lowest and darkest place and they took the time to listen and talk to me when no-one else did. They are amazing. Couldn't get through it without them. They will always be in my heart and will always be forever grateful and thankful. To all the staff, my life would be nothing without them."

Ex-client of The Matthew Tree Project

Appendix 1: Rebuilding Lives 2020 Factsheet

Measure	2020	2019
Number of unique beneficiaries		
Adults	55.7%	58.6%
Children	44.3%	41.4%
Number of people being supported at any one time (case load)	667	320
Single person households	52.6%	45%
Families	47.4%	55%
Number of people supported	17415	13316
New case referrals during period	240	350
Number of different agencies referring	26	50
Average length of support provided (in weeks)		
All cases	28.6	18.2
One-2-One crisis support sessions provided	4584	2849
Length of time supported provided (in weeks)		
1	7.7%	17.3%
2-6	13.8%	30.9%
7-12	10.9%	15.0%
13 – 18	10.1%	7.8%
19 - 54	25.4%	19.7%
55 +	32.1%	9.3%
Clients without any other support	62.5%	69%
Client age groups		
16 - 25	7.1%	8%
26 - 40	40.1%	37%
41 - 60	43.7%	46%
61 +	9.2%	7%
Unknown	0%	2%
Average monthly volunteer hours	747	405

Measure	2020	2019
Client employment status		
Casual labour	0%	0.2%
Employed full-time	0.7%	2.1%
Employed part-time	3.3%	5.1%
Employed zero hour contract	1.2%	0.8%
Unpaid Maternity leave	0%	0.2%
Retired	3.1%	1.4%
Self-employed	1.2%	0.4%
Student	0.4%	0.4%
Unable to work – childcare/carer	12.6%	10.4%
Unable to work - health	47.9%	43.6%
Unable to work – Asylum/Immigration status	4.2%	6.4%
Unemployed	19.7%	14.6%
Unknown	5.7%	14.4%
Client original referral crisis type by group		
Asylum/Immigration	5.6%	8.0%
Unmanageable personal debt	25.0%	22.5%
Welfare System Issues	22.6%	31.1%
Other	46.8%	38.3%
Client risk of homelessness		
None	14.5%	36.4%
Low (but possible)	26.1%	25.2%
Medium/High	63.8%	38.4%
What clients tell us they need support with		
Mental Health	39%	31%
Physical Health	28%	17%
Addiction	17%	14%
Benefit Issues	26%	24%
Debt	57%	42%
Legal issues	5%	2%
Overall how would you rate the support you received from TMTP? (% - 7 out of 10 or higher)	98.5%	90.9%
Client Goals showing some progress or achieved	57.4%	63.0%

Measure	2020	2019
Reported changes (over a period of at least 6 weeks)		
Sample size (cases)	68	260
Feeling happier	79.4%	61.5%
Feeling calmer	70.5%	50.8%
Managing stress better	66.2%	46.2%
More positive about the future	69.1%	56.9%
More able to access specialist services	76.5%	75.0%
Increased self-sufficiency	89.2%	87.0%
Improved independence and resilience	92.0%	92.0%
Improved self-belief	80.0%	80.0%
Feel more confident	69.1%	92.0%
Increased aspirations	78.0%	78.0%
More in control of own life (choices etc.)	50.0%	92.0%
Developed new skills to be able to earn a living	50.0%	50.0%
Improved budgeting skills/making money go further	58.8%	44.0%
Debt has reduced	38.2%	38.5%
I have done skills training or other courses since coming to TMTP	7.2%	33.8%
Improved cooking skills	47.1%	36.9%
Eating better	89.7%	80.0%
Feeling healthier	70.6%	60.0%
Putting on/losing weight - whichever is healthier	41.2%	33.0%
Understanding and acknowledgement of root causes/issues	58.8%	59.0%
Less worried about being homeless	23.5%	44.0%
Improved mental wellbeing	93.8%	99.0%
Better able to cope with crisis	99.0%	99.0%
Improved school performance of children	47.0%	47.0%
Feel less isolated	52.9%	57.0%
FOODSERVICE statistics		
Food collected – total (kg)	157078.76	142180.4
of which, food collected directly from the food industry (kg)	83376.24	115400.6
of which, food collected from the general public (kg)	29424.18	26222.5
of which, food grown or processed into meals by RISE (kg)	2113.92	557.3
Of which, fresh 5-a-day foods - fruit and vegetables (kg)	68802.64	79059.2
Food distributed – total (kg)	173766.11	131232.50
of which, given to Rebuilding Lives Support Programme clients (kg)	155381.20	90435.80
of which, given to other charities - free of any charge (kg)	15057.71	30903.50
of which, food unfit to be used	3327.20	9893.10