



**REPORT
2021**

HELP



Encouraging cohesion through education, social action, money advice and families work.

Restoring

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HOPE



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MORE ORGANISATIONS, TRUSTS AND FAITH GROUPS



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INTERIM CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Dear Friends

I use that term with a great sense of gratitude to so many who have made grants, donations practical and financial, commissioned funds, individuals, places of faith, schools and so many more. Please don't be offended if I've missed you, it's not intentional but these past 12 months have been somewhat of a whirlwind.

Just over 2 years ago I became a Narthex Trustee and a little over a year ago I was asked to be Interim Chair of Trustees due to John Self - Narthex Chair of Trustees for 24 years, being diagnosed with a terminal illness and sadly dying in May 2021. There has needed to be so much change. Nigel our CEO often quotes something he heard many years ago, "that change is here to stay", in Narthex that is truly the case.

As with so many of our contemporary charities we have faced 2 of the most dramatic years in our history. With Covid, Covid mutations along with so many things that we have faced as a

team of staff, volunteers and Trustees has hit us hard. Sadly we have lost friends, loved ones and colleagues. We have seen growth in need and for many sheer desperation, people have lost their jobs, been furloughed and have come to us out of utter destitution, including food and utility poverty. I have witnessed personally a level of poverty that is shocking as I've volunteered in our Tyseley centre, broken people coming for food, clothes, personal hygiene items and just someone to listen to them.

As interim chair I can only be amazed at the level of commitment of our staff and volunteers who have turned up daily over the past year to support people attending our foodbanks, from our advice and debt support staff, others who have supported refugees and asylum seekers all choosing to potentially put themselves in harm's way to ensure those in need were and are supported. Many of our staff and volunteers have contracted Covid and as soon as recovered were back in work looking after the very people who could make them



already turning off their heating), but to return to Charlie Mackesy -

"We have a long way to go", sighed the boy -

"Yes but look how far we have come" said the horse.



Mary Carroll
Volunteer Nurse



PARISH NURSE

Anyone familiar with the Charlie Mackesy book 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse' may have read the lines -

***"We are out of our depth",
said the boy,***

***"Just breathe", said the horse
"and hold on".***

As we have gone further into the pandemic it has felt at times as though we are indeed 'out of our depth', but we have continued to offer quiet support often on a One to One basis as little opportunity for groups again over the last year.

The range of issues I have been called on to support have included diagnoses of cancer, bereavement, postnatal depression, poor mental health, severe anxiety, debt, parenting, heart failure, entering residential care, loneliness, school issues arising from cerebral palsy and support to an ex drug user. A very mixed bag, some of it arising as a result of large gaps in services during the pandemic.

I have continued to send out regular newsletters to our elderly group as although a monthly gathering has been reinstated (and then stopped in its tracks by Omicron), funding is currently not available to provide the weekly meeting they enjoyed before the pandemic. Ring and Ride has also not been able to resume its services, meaning we have had to provide transport on several occasions.

Doorstep deliveries have also taken place of both Fish and Chips and other goodies all supported by volunteers. This has often been a good way of keeping in touch and becoming aware of other issues in the life of our elderly clients.

Lateral flow tests also featured in our armoury to keep folk safe and allowed us to make a limited number of (masked!) home visits.

There still feels to be storm clouds on the horizon with energy crisis looming (and some elderly

sick again. It has been humbling to see such dedication and compassion, to see extraordinary levels of support that is outside our normal pattern of support. Thank you to you all.

Writing a Chairs Report is a new role for me, I have spent over 40 years in the Energy Supply sector working on million £ projects, but I have not previously witnessed work that is impossible to put a value on because it is priceless.

I'm not planning to go into too much detail of what we do, I want you to read the reports from our staff who are on the coal face of what we do daily, they have earned the right to be heard and to add their voice to the growing number who are calling for change. I do however want to say thank you to them all and to our volunteers who turn up daily making a change to so many. I want to say a huge thank you to my fellow Trustees and to Nigel Brookhouse who has been our CEO for over 10 years and has been the driving force of so much change.

I want to thank all of our financial donors who have made it possible for Narthex to do the amazing work we have done this past year

through your partnership. You have partnered us so amazingly in 2021 and I want to ask that you continue that partnership with us in 2022 so that together we can achieve so much. THANK YOU.

Nigel our CEO will put a lot more detail in his report so that you can capture the incredible work you have helped us do this past year.

In closing I wish to express my gratitude for making it such a joy to stand in as Interim Chair of Narthex and hopefully we will see so much more happen in the coming year.

I also want to acknowledge that Narthex has fulfilled its mandate as a charity in regards to our CIO and has achieved over and above what is expected of us as a charity. We have also managed the charities finance in a responsible manner that has the charity using all of our funds in accordance with our trust document and any express wish or designation of our donors.

Sincerely



Jamie Walsh
Interim Chair of Trustees

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Each year I set my task to look back with a view to reporting to you good folks on our work, challenges, success and the need you all help us meet. This is year 17 for me and the saddest year yet as I look back on the broken lives, desperate single mums and dads and the total lack of hope for the future. Two weeks before Christmas we made a very sad achievement, we gave away 440 food parcels over 5 periods of 150 minutes. When my foodbank manager told me I quietly cried, so much need, so much heart ache and so much pain. The joyful bit apart from giving the food was to see parents faces light up when we gave them presents for their kids, all wrapped up and new. We also gave tins of chocolate, Christmas selection bits, and a gift for Mum and Dad. We also gave a little glimmer of hope in a world that had trapped them in poverty, destitution and foodbanks.

Alongside this we provided debt

and money advice, housing support, PIP claims and appeals, benefits appeals with considerable success, but even with a team of 7 advisors we had a 3 to 4 week waiting list. (We now have a team of 8 but still have a 2-week minimum waiting list). We're so grateful to Trussell Trust, Asda, The Weston Foundation and many others who are funding our team of 8 advisors, they are busy every day and I'm proud of them dealing with such sadness and hurt as people share their stories of need, they are amazing. My advice staff are continually up skilling their qualifications and this is mainly due to our 10-year partnership with Community Money Advice (CMA) who help us equip staff to deal with the growing need.

Much of our advice work has had to adapt during Covid with our centre open less days to protect our staff and volunteers, but they still work a full week including days at home.

The group ran twice a week on a Tuesday and Friday with craft and holistic workshops for people who have been bereaved and/or face mental health issues. This was followed by a healthy lunch and a pay as you go compassion café.

The group will finish in March 2022. It is going well, although they are finding that people in the area have been slow to re-engage with their community. They have 8 regular members.

"I feel this group has really supported me during some dark days. Everyone is always so friendly and warm." JH, Member

We love Ping Pong

This is a group set up by 5 Pakistani men in Small Heath aged between 52 and 75. They set up an activity group for men to play table tennis and darts, followed by some food and socialising. The pandemic meant that most men who would normally have socialised at the mosque, became bored and isolated.

They wanted to do something outdoors to get fit and active after spending so much time indoors.

They applied to the fund and were successful and their activities started in September 2021. They held their sessions at a community centre, which has a little garden outside. They were able to set up the table outside over the warmer months. During the winter they moved indoors to play cards and the photo shows the group having lunch.

The lead reported the sessions went well and were popular with between 15 - 20 men attending.



Nita Upadhyay

Network Coordinator
Ageing Better Sparkbrook

stated that most people were not sufficiently digitally skilled to keep in touch during the lockdowns and did not speak English. Some managed to keep in touch by phone.

When groups were safe to meet again, they found the tutor was no longer available. They also found that the groups needs had changed, with the lack of exercise affecting older people's mobility.

Due to this they chose to use their remaining funding to have swimming sessions, with the permission of the Ageing Better Fund.

They found that many people were still reluctant to come out due to anxiety and lower confidence. As a result of this they decided to apply to the transition fund and were successful and went for a day trip to the Peak District in September 2021. The lead said the people really enjoyed it and the feedback was excellent. In the photo below, we can see one of the Yemeni ladies on a trail, and it is encouraging to see that a walking stick did not deter her from getting involved. They booked a 72 seat coach and it was full of men and women from the local communities of Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath.



Peace Sanctuary

This is a group of men and women in Balsall Heath in their 50s and 60s, and from mixed cultural backgrounds. They got to know each other before the lockdown

in February 2020 and kept in touch. They were successful in their application to the fund in 2021, to run wellbeing workshops, as well as maintain an on-site peace garden.

Our clients' needs are met via phone, WhatsApp, email, text, internet etc. and this has been warmly welcomed as clients see their needs still being professionally met and outcomes positively changing their lives. We are looking at present to what extent we re-open the centre as clients and agencies are appreciating the way their needs are met. But the forefront of any change is the need of those who look to us for help.

The foodbank and the 5 satellite foodbanks have faced their most dramatic year, giving away over 130 tonnes of food to destitute people in food poverty. David our foodbank manager has worked hard with his team to make sure we have enough food to ensure everyone is fed. As need grows this is getting harder each week with bigger families and greater need, so many not having enough money to meet their living costs. A scenario this winter has been where families who have adults working cannot eat and heat their homes, some also face a trinity of need: eat, heat or wash clothes,

this is a challenge most days, parents go hungry so kids eat. We've stories of mums and dads crying as they are so hungry and lay in bed wondering where to get the next meal. This is a situation you may not have faced or may never face, but this past year those of us who are part of the network of Trussell Trust foodbanks gave away 2.1 million food parcels. **"IT'S WRONG"**.

This is WRONG in today's world. **"IT'S WRONG"** in every way that parents cry themselves to sleep due to hunger. **"IT'S WRONG"** that families sit on the sofa huddled up with blankets and coats to keep warm because they can't afford to have the heating on.

"IT'S WRONG" that our benefit system is not fit for purpose and individuals and families don't have the dignity of choosing where to shop and choosing their own food. While it's awesome that so many of you donate food and money so that we can give the food away in your name to so many. **"IT'S WRONG"**.

"IT'S WRONG" that wages don't allow families and single people to live with dignity and are able to

pay their way. Some sneak food into their home from the foodbank and open tins and packets of food whilst the rest of the family are out or occupied because they don't want them to see the brand or the date written on the packets and tins. In the foodbank we write dates on everything to make sure everything is used in order so as not to waste anything. Each person is grateful to have the food but, **"ITS WRONG"**.

"IT'S WRONG" that kids grow up being bullied at school because parents need to get clothes from our clothesbank, or the kids feel embarrassed when they're with friends who are wearing more modern clothes and they have donated clothes. **"I'TS WRONG"**.

I think you can guess I'm making a point. Can I ask you a couple of favours please? Will you continue to support us as we daily stand at the forefront of need and try to make a difference? Secondly can you keep asking your councillors and MP's to do something about the poverty that is prevalent in our country, food poverty, utility poverty, hygiene poverty, and old

age poverty? Many of these dear folk are so down or suffering mental health problems, they no longer have the hope or confidence to tell local politicians the problems they face. Will you be their voice and speak up against poverty? Thank you.

In closing I want to thank all who have donated money or food and clothes, those trusts who have given us grants, the contracts we have been able to be part of to meet needs, the schools, children's centres, places of faith, businesses, office workers and so many of you who have given online or through bank credits we thank you all.

Thank you to the vicar of St John's Church, Sparkhill PCC and congregation for letting us use the community facilities of the church building to meet the needs of so many. Thank you to our Trustees who have helped us to maintain and follow the laws and regulations required by the charity commission. Thank you also to over 200 volunteers including our Parish Nurse who all make it possible for Narthex to do so

803 older people have reported improved wellbeing, reduced isolation and a greater ability to cope.

The project initially faced many challenges as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. From May 2021 onwards, things gradually changed to become more positive, with face-to-face meetings resuming, albeit slowly. Many groups continued to social distance and wear face masks to protect their members. People seemed to feel more confident to venture out after receiving their vaccinations, although some anxiety still remains, particularly amongst those who are much older and vulnerable.

Details of some of the groups follow:

Women's Happy Heart

This is a Bangladeshi women's group who used their Ageing Better funding to run a series of craft workshops, using wax to make decorative pieces and items to aid stress relief. This included homemade fragrance candles, wax flowers, organic sleep balm, and lip balm. At the end of their sessions they enjoyed snacks and refreshments together. Their activities ran for 16-weeks, and to



finish off they had a celebratory community event in December 2021.

At this event, they were able to sell some of the crafts they made. They also learnt how to self-massage since many women felt isolated, anxious, and low in mood, as a result of the pandemic. They had a total of 27 women signed up to the project and they really enjoyed themselves. The group will showcase their craft work at the AB Spring Event in February 2022.

"I enjoy coming here and making things and seeing friends. I felt so bored at home." SH, Member

Yemeni Elderly Project

This is an Arabic speaking group that met for calligraphy workshops before the pandemic. The lead had

AGEING BETTER SPARKBROOK HUB

NartheX Sparkhill has led on the delivery of the Ageing Better Sparkbrook Hub in partnership with the East Birmingham Collective, which aims to reduce isolation and loneliness and improve wellbeing for people over 50. The project was originally commissioned by BVSC with Big Lottery funding over 6 years. It was then extended until March 2022, with this being our final year.

Since the Hub started in 2016, it has successfully helped to reduce social isolation in Sparkbrook and has built strong partnerships, with a positive reputation in the community. The project seeks to set up new activities, with the help of volunteers of any age, to help older people feel more connected. The Hub has assisted local organisations and community members in

accessing the Ageing Better fund, which is a fund that offers up to 2k to set up new activities.

Since the start of the project **78 community led activities have been set up across Sparkbrook to engage isolated older people.** These include arts and crafts, meditation and wellbeing, exercise, reminiscence workshops, English classes, games groups, cycling, walking, gentle dance and much more.

2,187 Birmingham citizens have reported increased social and community connections and have been able to access community-led support through Ageing Better Networks.



Relax and Get Fit at Spark Green Park. The group met for weekly Tai Chi and Qi Gong classes.

much. We value you all. Thank you also to our partners whom we work with so well to help bring change to our communities.

Thank you to my staff team who have worked so hard this year, often putting themselves in danger of Covid and the nasty effects it has on people, to Sandra and David my managers who have led with professional and competent ways that ensures our staff are supported.

July 2022 will be the end of my privilege of serving our communities of Sparkhill, Sparkbrook, Springfield, Tyseley and so many parts of Birmingham South. I have been here for 17 years and it's time to hand on the baton to Patricia our new Chief Operating Officer who is learning the ropes here at NartheX. I think she will be fine.

I am very sad to leave; I have grown to love the communities NartheX works in and you will all have a special place in my heart.

Thank you for the privilege.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nigel J Brookhouse'.



Nigel J Brookhouse
Chief Executive Officer

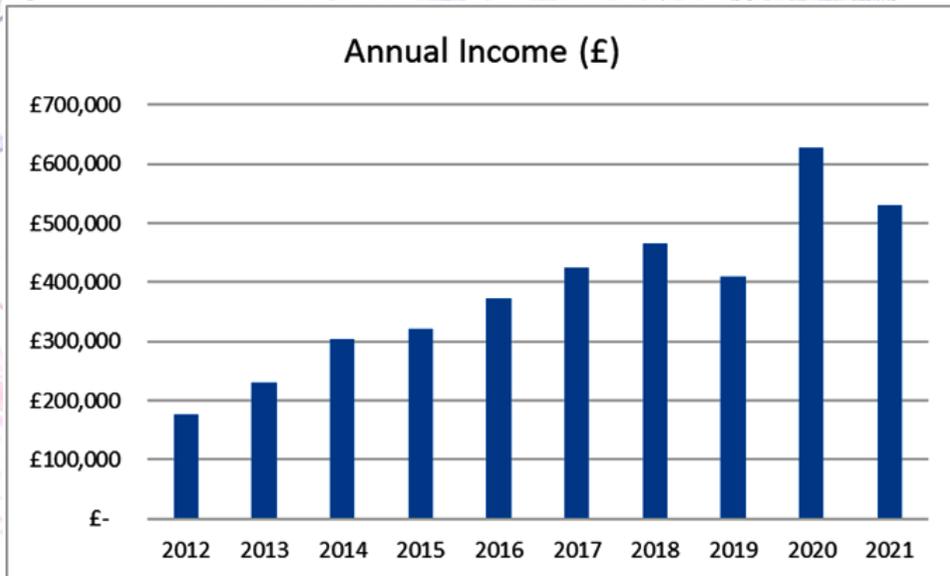
FINANCE

During 2021 Narthex has continued to fulfil its vision and charitable objectives of supporting individuals and families in crisis, as we see more and more people in need coming to us.

We have been much encouraged to see donors who have continued to be generous in their support and who have seen the importance of what we are doing. We are deeply grateful to you all. Although our income has fallen

from a peak in 2020 (due to Covid response), we have continued to receive significant grant and statutory funding, acknowledging that our activities have been at the front line of response to growing need. Over the year we were supported by over 60 different grant making trusts and organisations.

The chart below shows how, overall, our income has steadily increased over the past 10 years:



SOME ORGANISATIONS, TRUSTS AND FAITH GROUPS



RESOURCE TEAM

The impact of the pandemic has meant that the Resource Centre has remained busy. During 2021 we have helped 76 adults and 126 children. Referrals have come from some regular sources which include British Red Cross, Barnardos, Adavu, The Springfield Project, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid as well as many self-referral, with a large number of them being families that we helped in 2020 who are still struggling to improve their lives and adequately clothe themselves.

We have supported families from 15 countries or regions; with the majority of referrals coming from Romania, Albania, Afghanistan and Africa. Most of the families we have supported are Refugees in need of the very basic items; clothing, bedding, shoes and toiletries.

During the pandemic we have also had many UK families seek support with some of their clothing needs, this has been mainly due to household incomes reducing, due

to loss or reduction in employment and/or sickness affecting the household income.

We have maintained good levels of stock throughout 2021 and in the main we have been able to meet the need of most families that have been referred to us. We have some very dedicated volunteers who have worked with us over many years to sort the donations prior to going into stock, ensuring that the items that are to be distributed are in the best possible condition.

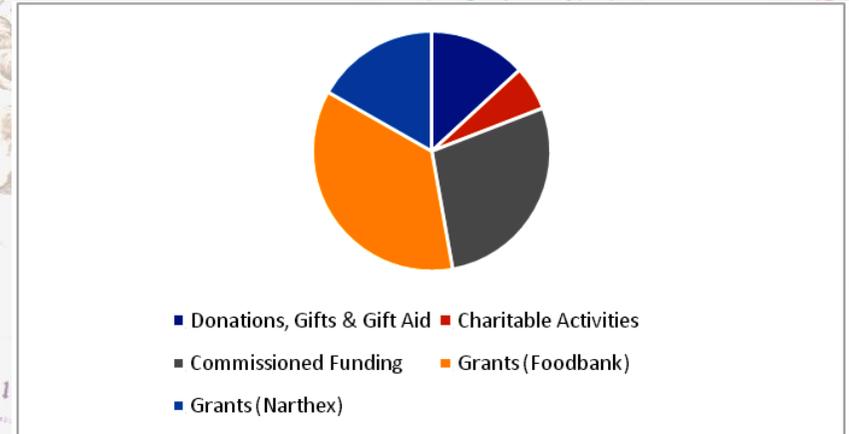
During 2021 the Resource Centre is still running on an appointment basis; preparing parcels in advance of collection, which allows for a more speedy interaction and less time for close contact between staff and clients in the hope of keeping everyone safe.



Sandra Osbourne
Project Manager

The breakdown of our income for 2021 is shown in the following chart:

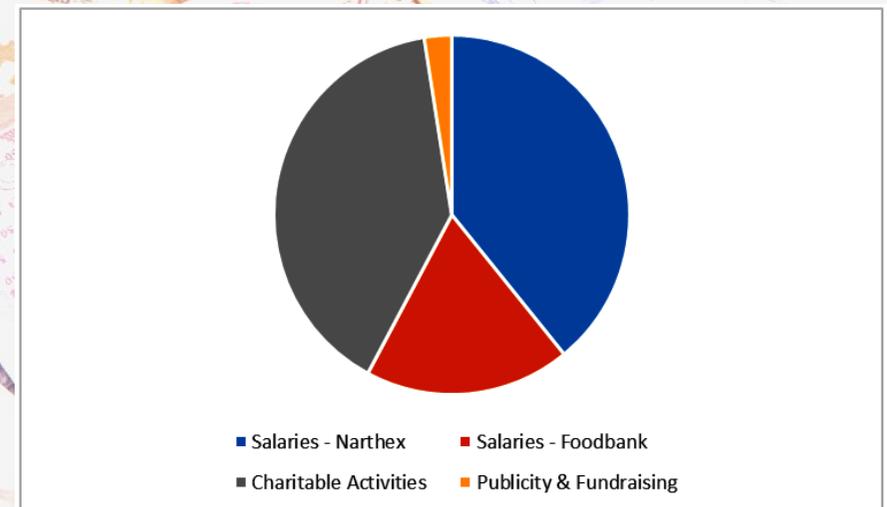
Breakdown of 2021 Income



As a Charity our priority is always to ensure the maximum possible proportion of the income we receive is actually spent on our clients and communities. Again during 2021 only 2% of our income was spent on publicity and fundraising (2020: 2%).

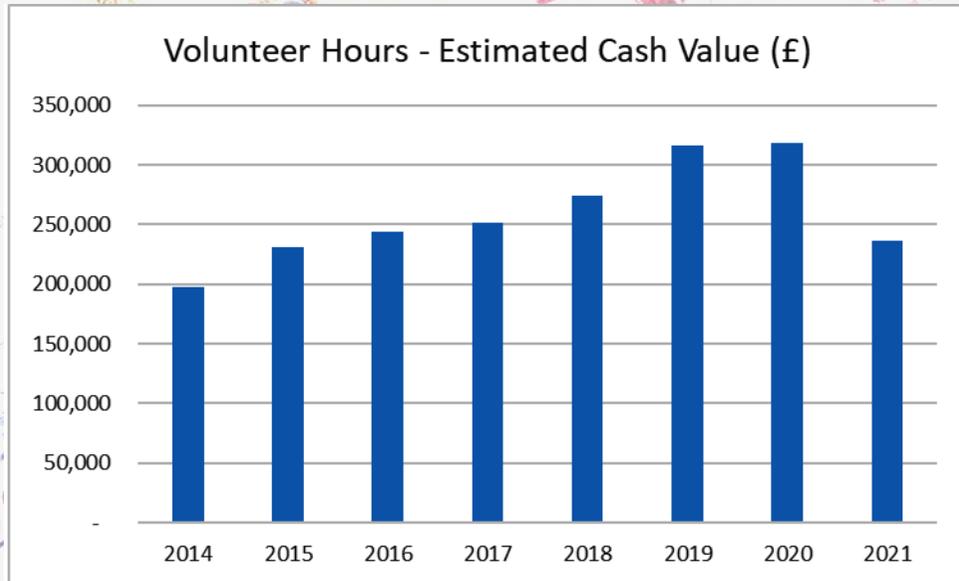
A breakdown of expenditure for 2021 is shown in the chart below:

Breakdown of 2021 Expenditure



Particular mention must again be made of the important contribution of our many volunteers, who faithfully and selflessly give generously of their time and efforts, see chart below. Although numbers are lower this year owing to the impact of Covid, we estimate this equates to a cash value of over £236,000.

Volunteer Hours



Sincere and warm thanks to you all.



Geoff Holt
Finance Director & HR Support

Conclusion

We would be nothing, literally, without the help and support of so many people; from our donors to our volunteers to our supporters – thank you, thank you and thank you again. We know that it seems like a never-ending pattern of growth, but we do see glimmers of hope and reminders every day that what we do matters, makes a difference and must continue to be salt and light.



David Wiseman
Foodbank Manager

COMMISSIONED FUNDING

ASHIANA COMMUNITY PROJECT

BIRMINGHAM VOLUNTARY SERVICE COUNCIL

THE MUATH TRUST

SMALL HEATH COMMUNITY FORUM

that those who are genuinely in need are able to use the Foodbank, we are still seeing its use go up instead of down. As part of Narthex, we are able to signpost foodbank users to our other services that will help them with financial advice and other support.

We are also part of the larger Trussell Trust network, and have regular interaction with the other foodbanks in the area; unfortunately, our experience is being replicated across Birmingham. The use of Foodbanks looks like it is going to simply increase over the next few years and we have to be ready for it, despite being in one of the world's leading economies.

Mandy's* Story

Mandy used to be an Administration Manager for a large local firm, until she was made redundant and then unfortunately experienced a separation, leaving her with sole responsibility for three teenage girls. Mandy had to start claiming Universal Credit, but

suffered with the five week wait for the benefit to start, leaving her with no income for over a month. The situation deeply affected her, as Mandy was used to providing for her and her family; coupled with the pandemic, it felt like a hopeless but continuing cycle of life that would be difficult to break.

Mandy started attending the Foodbank on a regular basis and enquired about volunteering. We were able to give her some volunteering hours and she has faithfully attended for a number of months. Volunteering has actually helped her feel productive and has given her social interaction; she is trying to find another job, though it does need to fit around school hours – a challenge for many of our Foodbank users.

In her own words, 'Volunteering has really helped bring me back to a level of confidence that I need to move on to the next stage of my life'.

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

NARTHEX FUNDERS

- ACCORD HOUSING
- ARNOLD CLARK COMMUNITY FUND
- AWARDS FOR ALL
- BARNARD KENNETH HUFTON CHARITY
- BAYFIELD CHARITY TRUST
- BENEVIT CHARITABLE GIVING
- B K KUFTON
- CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION
- CHARLES BROTHERTON TRUST
- CHARITIES TRUST
- THE EH SMITH CHARITABLE TRUST
- THE ERIC F SPARKES CHARITABLE TRUST
- THE EDITH MURPHY FOUNDATION
- THE EVESON CHARITBLE TRUST
- THE FITTON TRUST
- FRIENDS HALL FARM STREET TRUST
- G E GEE TRUST
- G J W TURNER TRUST
- THE GOODENOUGH CHARITABLE TRUST
- GOWLING WLG (UK) CHARITABLE TRUST
- THE GRANTHAM YORKE TRUST
- GRIMLEY CHARITY
- GRIMMITT TRUST
- HARAMEAD TRUST
- H E AND E L BOTTELEY
- MISS J B ALBRIGHT'S GRIMLEY CHARITY
- JOSEPH HOPKINS CHARITY

More Narthex Funders on pages 22 and 26

NARTHEX CENTRE

We are back with a presence in the community!

After an initial period of working totally from home at the start of the pandemic, we made considered decisions to safely enable the team to return to do some of its work in the community.

Post Covid The Narthex Centre is now open 2 days a week accepting donations for our Resource Centre and distributing clothing, pushchairs, small household items books, toys and toiletries to those in need. During these days we are also available for emergency money advice appointments that cannot be resolved over the phone and dealing with a whole range of queries and issues that clients need assistance with.

Although we continue to work from home part of the week, the 2 days in the centre gives some balance and allows some face to face work to happen when needed. It also means the clients get to see the team that are supporting them.

From a staff perspective the time spent in the centre brings the team together to share information, good ideas, best practice and resolve any difficult issues. Our time together is also spent doing training and having regular staff meetings and of course if gives us some informal time together which enhances team cohesion.

As we emerged from Covid some of Narthex's previous projects have now moved under the umbrella of St John's Church, namely the Seniors Lunch Club and the Place of Welcome which are now church led.

During the pandemic the Narthex Money Advice Team has grown just as the need for support has. By the end of 2021 the team increased in size taking us to 7 Advisors. We brought on some very experienced staff who have added terrific skills and experience to the team. It also increased the range of languages that we have within the team and so enabled us to more easily connect directly

staying warm and sometimes not even being enough to stop them having to still make that choice.

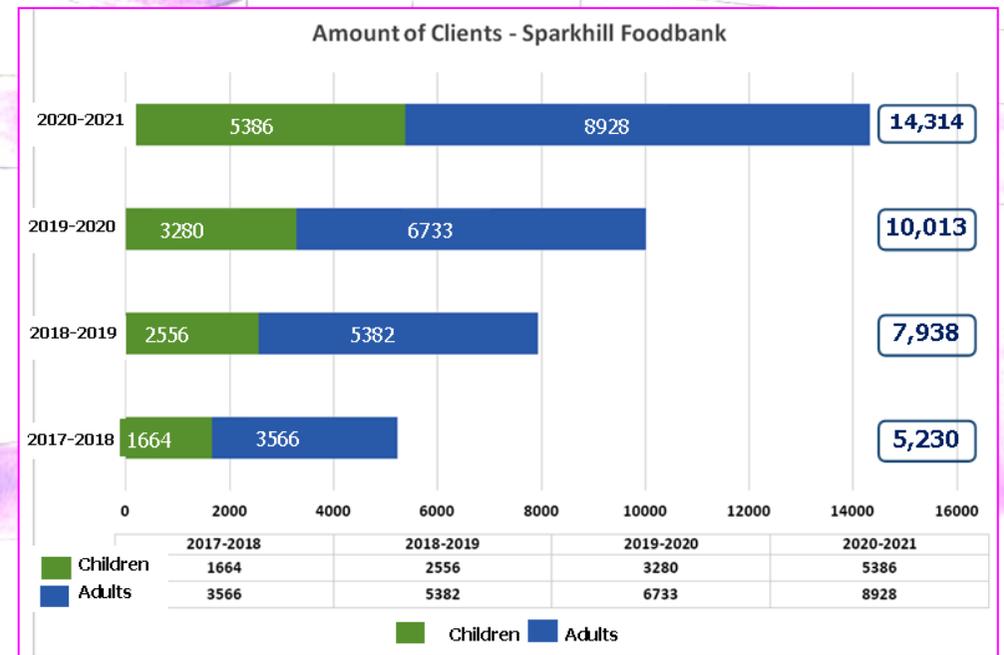
We also have seen moments of joy and signs that we are making a difference; 'regulars' who no longer need to come to the Foodbank because they have a new job; having a toy to give so a single parent can provide a birthday present for their child; those moments make us realise that we are doing what the Bible instructs us to do – be salt and light to the world.

Salt is useful and purposeful, and

light shines in the darkness; we want to help those who need us, and also be the voice for those who can't shout loud enough. It is hard to not be political, yet equally, it is hard to not say that having just a single foodbank in the UK is a national shame.

Growth in the Wrong Direction

We have seen a shameful 43% increase in the use of Sparkhill Foodbank and its satellites over the past year; while we have put in every possible measure to ensure



FOODBANK/SATELLITES AND CLOTHESBANK

Heating or Eating?

Most of us have heard that phrase, yet mercifully, few of us know the grim reality of having to make that choice. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of those who visit Sparkhill Foodbank know only too well about having to make that decision.

The effect of the lockdown continued to have far more impact than simply 'staying at home'. For many, the isolation meant that they lost the opportunity for connection, which has had a clear and lasting effect on mental health. The pandemic also led to many having to heat their home when they would normally not need to and provide extra meals for themselves and/or their families; an additional burden on parents whose children would get a free school meal every day.

As part of the Trussell Trust network of Foodbanks, we can attest to the figures shown in their

report, 'The State of Hunger' – "... *that almost one in five (18%) households referred to foodbanks during the pandemic being single parents - that's more than twice the rate in the general population (8%) ...*" or "...95% of people referred to foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network were living in 'destitution' – *this means people cannot afford to eat and stay warm and dry...*"

Salt and Light

It was hard to have enough of anything during the pandemic; stock, volunteers, donations... even hope seemed to be in short supply, and yet we were able to cope with our biggest ever year in terms of demand and to help and support those in need. There are times when as a team, we look back on the last year and wonder how we made it. It can be depressing to think that we are all that stands between people going hungry or

with the local community. Across the team we can now offer support to speakers of Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati and Hindi.

You will see from the detailed account later on in this report the huge impact that the team have had in supporting the community. The range of support is wide and varied and includes resolving debt issues, helping those who are in need of housing, working with families who are dealing with disability and the impact it has on their lives, assisting with grant applications and helping people to claim their full benefit entitlement.

The team are skilled, knowledgeable and supportive and show great enthusiasm to ensure they do the very best they can for every individual or family they work with.

The Narthex Centre is a busy hub of activity, and we are incredibly thankful that increased funding during this period has allowed for the expansion of the team enabling us to work with even more people and support them through this extraordinary time.



Sandra Osbourne
Project Manager

MONEY ADVICE

“Supporting those in need and crisis”

Narthex Money Advice is one of the many services provided by the organisation to the general public in Sparkhill, Birmingham. While Narthex entered into the year, 2021 post Covid19, it was apparent that it would be a continuous challenge to meet the demands of the community in need of Money Advice Service. Despite the easing off of lockdown restrictions and the government’s plan for the public to return to what was once the norm slowly, the community in and around Sparkhill still had a long way before life would return to an orderly routine.

So how does Narthex rise above the challenges that post Covid19 brings and continue to deliberate and provide Money Advice which is in such high demand at such complex times?

In 2021 after employing three new Money Advice Workers, Narthex has been able to support an increased number of clients

compared to 2020. Having three new Money Advisors joining the team contributed to the organisations ability to make more of a difference to those in need of the service.

Once again in 2021, staff continued to commit themselves to work from home and continued to acknowledge consistently the client’s needs and demands, ensuring that the demand for appointments was maintained. All the while, pursuing and implementing compassion, empathy and professionalism in the work that they do to support those in need and crisis.

Having the three new Money Advice Workers join Narthex also permitted the organisation to prepare for the high demand for the service while welcoming numerous referrals made from external service providers, such as children's centres.

Money Advice continued to be delivered via telephone appointments which enabled the advisors to engage with the clients productively throughout 2021. The team also gathered together twice a

MORE NARTHEX FUNDERS

THE LEIGH TRUST

L G HARRIS TRUST

LIMOGES CHARITABLE TRUST

METAMORPH LAW LTD

THE MICHAEL MARSH CHARITABLE TRUST

NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND (PREVIOUSLY BIG LOTTERY)

THE PAMELA BARLOW CHARITABLE TRUST

THE PARK FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST

THE PAT NEWMAN MEMORIAL TRUST

REUBEN FOUNDATION

RICHARD CADBURY CHARITABLE TRUST

RICHARD KILCUPPE (OTHERWISE FIELD) CHARITY

ROGER & DOUGLAS TURNER CHARITABLE TRUST

SAYER H J CHARITY

SHAKESPEARE MARTIN BARLOW

SMITH - KNOWLE CHURCH

THE N SMITH CHARITABLE

SETTLEMENT

THE SOUTER CHAITABLE TRUST

SOUTH BIRMINGHAM FRIENDS

SPARKHILL TRUST

THE 29TH MAY 1961 CHARITABLE TRUST

TRUSSELL TRUST

VEALE WASBROUGH CHARITABLE TRUST

W E D CHARITABLE TRUST

brutally tortured and raped whilst younger brother who was only a year old at the time was thrown in the air resulting in a lifelong disability.

Ms W and her family were taken into a refugee camp where she met a man in his 40's who apparently tried to help her and the family with basic necessities. Soon this acquaintance formed into a friendship. To the client's surprise, this man was a hustler, providing young girls to influential men for money. Before she knew it, Ms W was working for this man which made her extremely depressed. This man started providing class A drugs and alcohol to Ms W which helped her to suppress her emotions and painful experience. She got pregnant many times but had miscarriages as a result of both alcohol and drug misuse.

Ms W was trafficked to UK under a forged ID and now she was working as a sex slave. Ms W became pregnant but this time her pregnancy lasted and she was about 7 months pregnant when she was taken to a private doctor, for which Ms W had no memory for what happened to her in that clinic. It wasn't until she went to her local GP who after examining her explained that she has had an hysterectomy; not only client's baby was aborted but she also underwent an hysterectomy to prevent future pregnancies.

*Client somehow fled her owner and now lives in supported accommodation. Client came to know about our charity and wanted advice on benefits/money. With Narthex intervention, client successfully claimed Personal Independent Payment (PIP) enhanced rate daily care £89.60 per week and standard rate mobility £23.70 for just over 3 years. Total weekly benefit was £113.30 on top of Universal Credit. Client was better off £5891.60 each year and the benefit period is over 3 years and 5 months. Client will receive extra amount of £19,940.8 from PIP as a result of Narthex intervention. Client suffers from extreme depression, PTSD, low energy levels and various physical issues. Ms W aims to bring some stability and happiness in her life. This money will help her in achieving not just good health but also help her in building strong mental health after her long painful ordeal - **Rosella***



Rajna Begum

Money, Debt and Advice Team Lead

week at Narthex Centre, which allowed the advisors to touch base weekly, share any challenges they may be facing and share client cases. Advisors could also share positive and effective methods of working with one another, ultimately resulting in quality advice being delivered to clients.

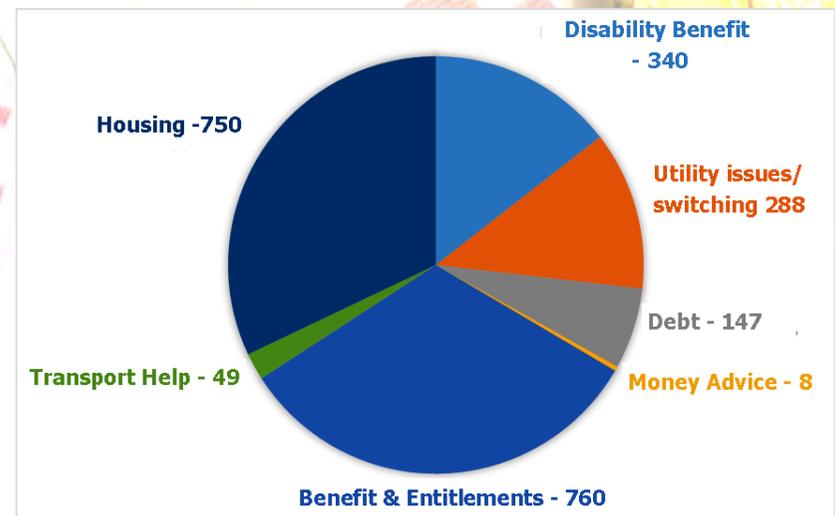
Clients Supported - 2021

Amidst the government restrictions easing off by the end of 2020 and seeing the community slowly return to normality; Narthex supported a total number of **2,345** clients with numerous cases during 2021. This has exceeded the number of clients supported through 2020 by 1442. **763** situations alone were clients that required support with welfare benefits. This was more than the

Weekly meetings also allowed clients to drop in on a Wednesday or Thursday to the centre and provide or sign paperwork required from them, allowing adequate support to progress effectively. It also helped maintain the trust between the clients and the Money Advice Workers.

651 clients that were supported for the same group of situations in 2020.

In 2021 **340** clients were supported with Disability Benefits, while **147** clients were supported with debt issues. **750** clients were supported with housing issues and **288** clients were supported with utility and fuel switching issues.



Income Generated - 2021

The total annual income generated for Narthex clients from Money Advice intervention is a significant amount of **£983,349.35** for welfare benefits. The total amount of debts managed and resolved was **£90,728.89** furthermore there was a generous amount of grants and funds awarded to Narthex clients. This was a total of **£34,249.64** by the end of 2021.

Comparison table of 2020 - 2021.

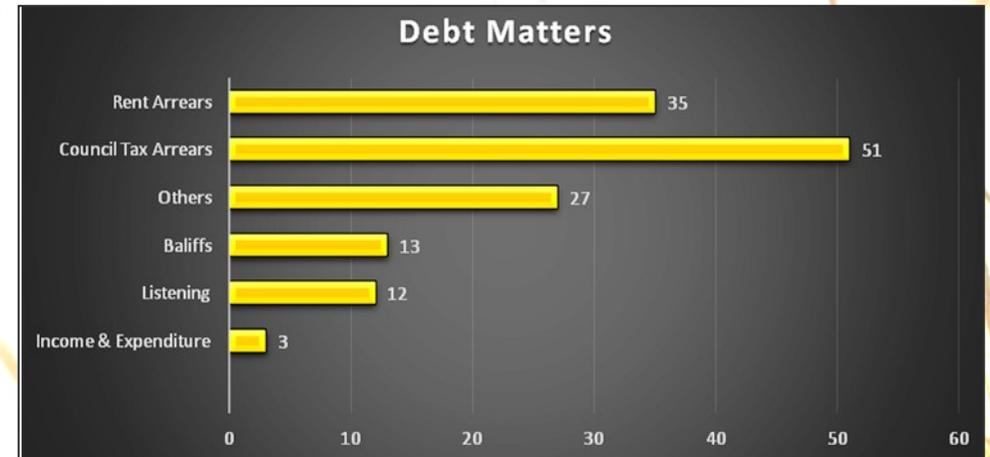
Issues	2020	2021	Increase %
Welfare Benefits	£439,906.39	£983,349.35	123.536% increase
Debts Resolved/Managed	£77,698.28	£90,728.89	16.7708% increase
Grants and Funds	£23,722.80	£34,249.64	44.3744% increase
Housing Matters	316	423	33.8608% increase

Towards the end of 2020, Narthex slowly started to see the external centres return to face to face intervention. Narthex was able to start delivering advice at the satellite food bank at the Church of Ascension and St John's Church. Narthex was also able to start talking to the children's centres about restarting the face to face work within the centres so that the clients can regain the reassurance of speaking to someone face to face again in 2021.



£28,681.22.

There were a total of **147** clients supported and assisted with Debts and the work completed for them resulted in debts being managed. This was achieved by setting up affordable payment plans or debts being resolved through grants and benefits being awarded. The overall debt resolved or managed during 2021 was a huge amount of **£34,249.64**.



CONCLUSION

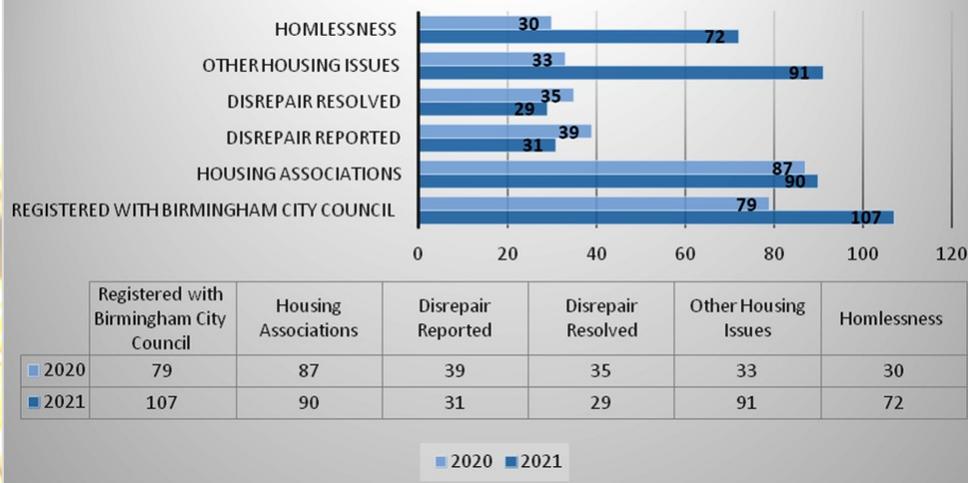
In conclusion, the community in and around Sparkhill are still experiencing the negative effects of the Covid19 pandemic and lockdown. Consequently, the demand for services provided by Narthex has increased. Narthex has endlessly supported and encouraged those in need and crisis, empowering them to help themselves and encouraging them to see a better future for themselves and their families. The Money Advice remains to be in high demand by the community and while the service has been continued to operate, the clients have been left to feel confident that Narthex will do its best to help them through this challenging time.

Case Study

My client Ms W is originally from a country in Africa. She belonged to a well to do and affluent family with mother being on a Government official post. They used to entertain foreign diplomats and Ambassadors at their family home. Things took a turn for the worse when the country got into a civil war.

When the client was 16 her house was attacked by rebels, her mother was

Housing Matters



Grants and Funds:

Much of the community were overwhelmed with the impact that the pandemic had on their household income and many clients had fallen into debt with their fuel suppliers. Clients had also accumulated rent arrears as they had to prioritise food over bills. This meant that many of Narthex's clients were unable to meet the cost of living and sought support from the Money Advice Workers with Grants and Funds.

Throughout 2021, Narthex submitted **57** white goods applications and **79** applications for other financial assistance. There was a substantial award totalling **£4,840.00** for white

goods and furniture. **47** clients were supported with Fuel Poverty matters and **77** clients were supported with utility bill matters. The consistent support provided via Money Advice helped ease the client's financial struggles and ultimately reduced stress levels, improving the standard and quality of living for those in crisis.

Debt Issues

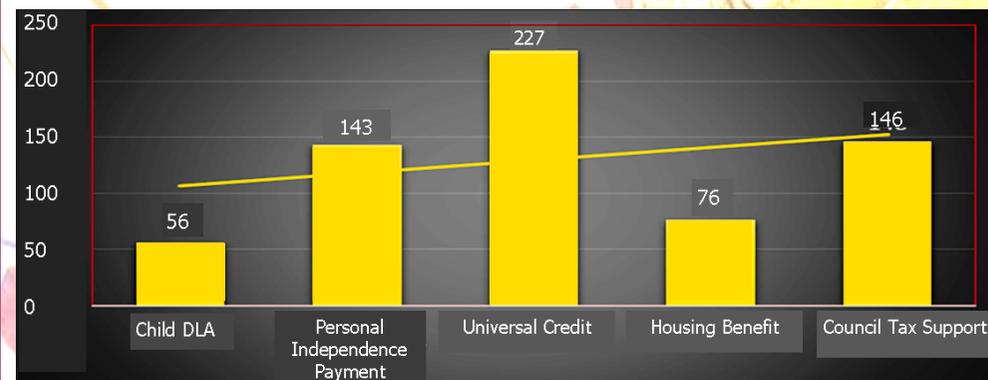
The positive outcomes of the grant applications and awards made to clients also meant that Narthex had a huge outcome of debt matters being resolved and wiped off. Throughout 2021, Narthex supported **51** clients with Council Tax Arrears and **35** clients with rent arrears. This helped resolve and wipe off a total of

The green chart at the bottom of the previous page shows the **Comparison Chart between 2020 and 2021 income generated**

Welfare Benefits Advice:

In 2021 Narthex assisted a large number of clients with various welfare benefit issues as many service users were still overcoming the difficult challenges that Covid19 surfaced for them. The Money Advice Workers supported **227** clients with Universal Credit, this ranged from application submissions, Universal Credit advance payment requests and general Universal Credit queries. **143** clients were supported with

Personal Independence Payment applications completions, **56** Child DLA applications, **146** Council Tax Support claims and **76** Housing Benefit claims. Covid19 impacted much of the community resulting in them applying for benefits that they have never had to claim in the past. Ultimately the number of claims submitted and clients assisted in 2021 with welfare issues exceeded the number of clients that were assisted with the same issues in 2020.



Through the struggles of the pandemic, Narthex continued to support a high number of clients with Universal Credit and Council Tax Support issues. Both of these were the highest case issues which clients were supported with. The top 3 Welfare issues that clients were supported with during 2021 were: Universal Credit, Council Tax Support and Personal Independence Payment.

The Work with Children Centres

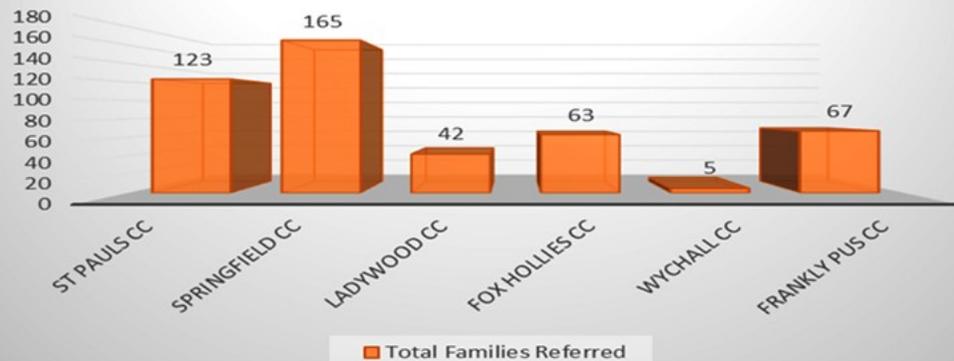
Throughout 2021, Narthex continued to deliver Money Advice to its client's base that was being referred from the various Children's Centres and other service providers as it did in 2020. It also extended its service to Fox Hollies Children's Centre, Frankly Plus Children's Centre, Wychall Children's Centre and Ladywood Children's Centre, as the demands for Money Advice remained to be heightened.

Narthex has been advising and assisting families that had been referred with their welfare benefits, housing, debt, Grants and Funds and fuel poverty.

They have also been supported verbally via phone inquiries and through the completion of forms and letter drafting.

During the year 2021, Narthex Sparkhill has had an astonishing number of referrals from the Children's Centres in and around Sparkhill. Many of the referred families were also supported with other various case situations and continued to have many follow up appointments to fully conclude the issues that they were experiencing.

Families Referred by Children Centres



Total Follow up Appointments

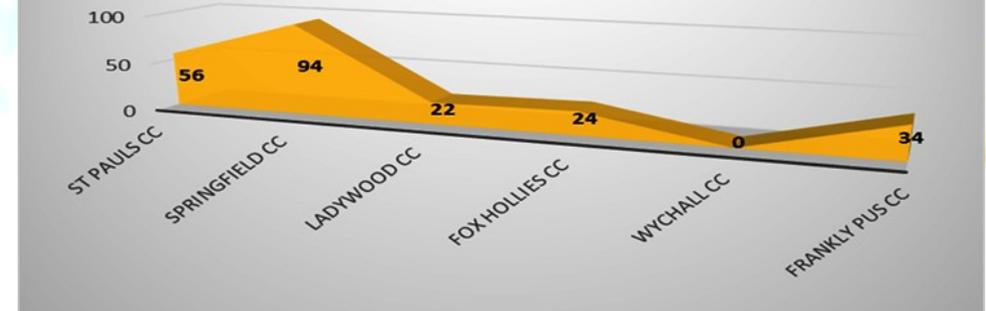


Chart of Children Centre Families Requiring Follow-up Appointments.

Housing:

In 2021, Narthex Money Advice Workers have had **423** positive outcomes for clients that were supported with various housing matters. This ranged from **107** clients registering with Birmingham Home Choice to a total of **60** clients reporting and resolving disrepair issues within local authority homes. Narthex has also seen a huge rise in the number of homelessness referrals made to Birmingham City Council in 2021 post Covid19.

Additionally, while the Courts started to re-open and operate as normal, many clients soon started to receive Court eviction notices.

This resulted in clients feeling helpless and vulnerable in the situation that they were being faced with. However, with Narthex continuing to support those in need and crisis, there were a total of **72** clients that were supported with homelessness and required assistance with requesting a housing needs assessment.

The support and assistance with housing that has been provided to Narthex clients throughout 2021, has provided clients with reassurance and security. They have felt well guided and confident that they have a safe place to go should they need further support with their housing issues.