



18<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### **Report on work of Mustard Seed October 2019 to September 2020**

This year has been one of the unexpected. While as we anticipated, Christmas 2019 was our busiest year to date at Mustard Seed, seeing more local families than ever being fed both through our foodbank project and our Christmas hampers specifically for families that would not otherwise be able to have a Christmas meal; we also opened our new Helping Hub.

As already reported last year we were blessed with the finances to both purchase and refit out a building behind our main premises and after around eight months, we finally opened the doors in February 2020 with much excitement and dreams of how this additional space could be used to support and bless our community.

We have been able to rent out one of the rooms to a charity that we work closely alongside (The Lizard C.H.I.L.D. trust) and began talks with the Citizens advice local team to look at opening a drop in clinic here in Helston, since the previous one closed many years ago and yet the need is high in this area for such a service.

Then all of a sudden the pandemic hit, many of our dreams and aspirations have had to be put on temporary hold, the community café closed for now, our life skills training was forced to close for a while and our foodbank project became our main point of focus.

As we navigated our way through the first few months taking advantage of the Government furlough scheme for all staff not linked to the foodbank project and looked at new ways to engage with those in our community who are vulnerable, we have had to be resourceful, think outside of the box yet fully comply with all things relating to being COVID-19 safe.

We have been holding online interactions and 'training meetings' with the 17 students with learning disabilities, held an outside event in a field, car park and a very large Church hall to engage when we have been able to do so and keep the momentum of the life skills training programme going.

As well as these COVID safe group meetings, we have also been holding (when allowed) one to one walks, cycle rides and even experimenting having one of our students cooking breakfast.

And we have been surprised, by who has embraced the use of these different ways of engaging. The parents and carers have been so appreciative and also commented how surprised they have been themselves that it has worked and enabled them to have some respite from the continual frustration and feeling 'imprisoned' by the need to keep isolated to protect those most vulnerable.

Meanwhile our foodbank has remained open, operating slightly differently with less volunteers due to many themselves being vulnerable.



14-16 Wendron Street, Helston, Cornwall TR13 8PS – 01326 564194.

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Charity Number 1127110 Company Number 6528767

The numbers have fluctuated due to the provision of Government food parcels also being delivered, but remains so much in need.

We as a charity struggled during March, April and June in particular as many statutory agencies who would normally refer individuals to us were closed or working with limited resources. We helped where we could, working with CAP, our local JCP, other charities and the local Town Council to fill gaps in support and making sure no one has gone without food or essential items.

We have seen local businesses fail, new people accessing the foodbank unsure of how the system works, whether they would be entitled to assistance. But quickly realise they could trust us and many tears have flowed.

With the community café being closed we may not be able to sit down and have a conversation over a cup of coffee, but we engage in other ways. The telephone is ringing continuously most days and we do what is needed to keep meeting the need.

Due to being in a rural community we have taken the decision to deliver to those who are unable to collect their food which has really made a huge difference as many are afraid to use public transport at this time. And our community has continued to support us, with food donations never running low, in fact we have been able to help nearby foodbanks who are seeing an ever increasing need especially due to unemployment increasing as it is.

In February right before the pandemic hit, our existing foodbank project lead who had only been in post since last year, felt it was right to move on. A lot of Prayer in a short time frame resulted in a fantastic answer when a very capable young man called Ian (of whom we know well) took early retirement and was looking for a part time job where he could help and make a difference.

Ian actually started three weeks before the first lockdown and has shown great strength of character, an ability to work under pressure and has picked up the ropes very quickly indeed.

We have not achieved all that we planned to do over the past three years and as I type this now Proverbs 16:9 comes to mind: *'A man's mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps and establishes them'*

We do not know what is ahead, but we continue to trust Jesus, practically showing His love to those who we are here to serve and hold fast to His promise that He is Faithful and Just.

I wanted to let you know a little of what has happened over the past year since our last report, but also wanted to thank the Trustees of The Joseph Rank Trust for believing in Mustard Seed and what we stand for and for investing in this charity, which continues to in turn realise that investment into the lives of those who are so in need.

Faithfully yours

David Williams  
Development Manager  
Mustard Seed (SW)



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