



HOPE
works

Impact Report 2024/25

HOPEworks is the social action arm of
Hope Church Ipswich

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Hope Church is a registered
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Welcome

Welcome to the new look version of our latest annual report covering the year 2024/25.

Based in the heart of Ipswich, Hope Church believes that an essential part of our Christian expression is to provide a warm welcome and helpful services, particularly for those facing challenges in our community. Not only do we support people practically but, where possible, we encourage growth in the skills and confidence that help people towards greater resilience and social inclusion.

The report provides an outline of each service, some information on activity and impact, and some feedback from people who have taken part.

In the ‘Looking Ahead’ section at the end of the report we set out some of the key values that inform our approach to the further development of what we provide. Where practicable we seek to develop our services in conjunction with those involved in them.

Thank you for taking the time to look at the report. We welcome feedback and suggestions, particularly from those who have experienced being with us at first hand.

Mark Crawley
Lead for HOPEworks



BUILDING A COMMUNITY HUB: GOOD FOOD, GOOD CONVERSATION, PRACTICAL HELP

Community Lounge

Open to everyone, our Community Lounge provides a warm welcome, great company, an excellent hot meal and a range of support opportunities. We also run craft sessions, quizzes, puzzles etc, for guests to take part in, if they wish.

Our guests represent the diversity of our local community and include people from our Conversational English and other groups, as well as some struggling with homelessness and other challenges.

We have a dedicated and friendly group of volunteers who serve the meals and build friendships, creating a warm, community feel.

“Since opening up our drop-in service we have seen an increase in the number of street drinkers coming into the Community Lounge. In the warm weather over the summer we have been able to give them a meal, rehydrate them and connect them to addiction support services like Turning Point, GP practices and Housing.”



Key improvements and impact

This year we have seen our numbers grow from an average of around 66 meals to over 80 in the latter quarter of the year.

Our drop-in regularly welcomes professionals from local services who can help with housing, addictions and health needs making it a ‘one-stop shop’ for people with needs that cross over organisational boundaries.

One third of our meals are free or subsidised meaning we can give a hot meal to the most needy in our community.

Average of 86 guests served per week



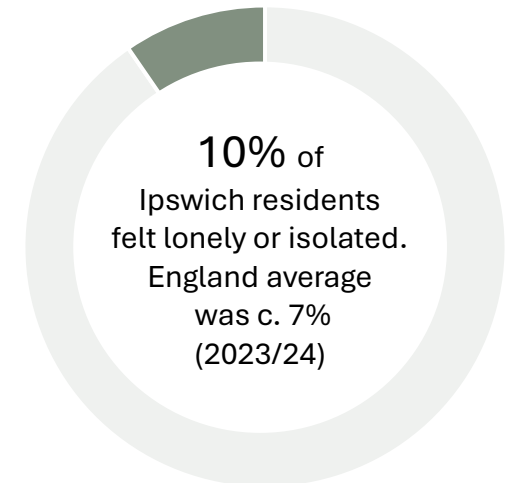
33% of meals provided for free or at a reduced rate



25 volunteers, 18 serving per week



10% of Ipswich residents felt lonely or isolated. England average was c. 7% (2023/24)



NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE'S PROBLEMS

Advice@Hope

We provide advice and support to people who need additional support to navigate through complex areas such as:

- Benefits: We advise on, and support people to complete forms to access benefits that they are entitled to. Where appropriate, we support clients to challenge decisions through the mandatory reconsideration/appeal process
- Application forms: We support people to navigate complex on-line or paper forms such as DVLA, passports

Part of our identity is to spend time to listen, build relationships and trust with clients who may otherwise not be able to access support. We encourage and equip people to own and tackle their challenges.



“X, a client with complex needs came to us seeking support with their utility bills. We were able to secure a hardship grant, which made a significant, material difference to X’s well-being.”



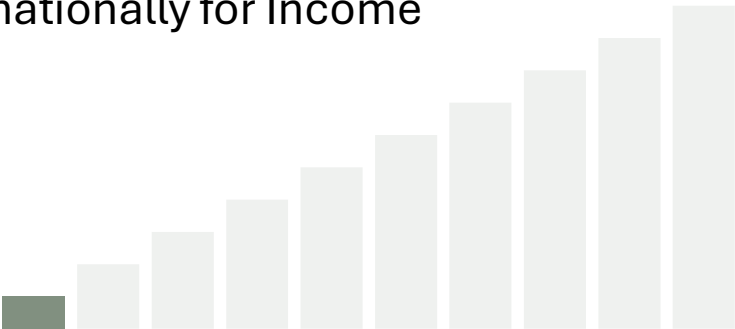
Key improvements and impact

In February 2025 we established Advice@Hope as a Hopeworks ministry. We are supported by the AdviceUK network.

We have built up our networks with Ipswich’s Top-Up Shops and made new relationships with a mental health provider and another advice giving organisation. As a result of these, and an increasingly challenging welfare system environment, we have seen demand for our advice service grow.

In 2025/26 we will be seeking to enhance our skills through additional training in the benefits’ appeals process.

This area is in the lowest 10% nationally for Income



Average of 5 new clients per month with casework ongoing for a further 4 clients



2 volunteers serving two days per week



In 2025/26 we will be further developing our outcome measurement tools



ESCAPING THE DEBT TRAP

2 new clients per month



11 clients became debt free



91% of clients becoming debt free had a Debt Relief Order, 9% paid their debt off



Key improvements and impact

We have continued to build strong relationships with our statutory sector referrers (mainly the Job Centre and NHS Social Prescribers) and community organisations such as Top-Up Shops and Family First.

Sadly, and for a number of reasons, more than half of our clients drop out before becoming debt free. However, since April 2024, we have seen 11 become debt free.

Ipswich CAP Debt Centre

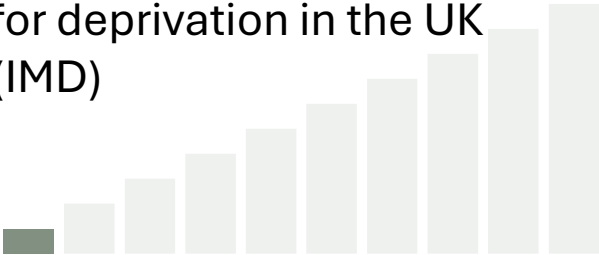
The Ipswich Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre is a partnership between 6 Ipswich churches working together to provide hope and debt relief to anyone with unmanageable debts.

The debt centre manager sees 2 new clients per month. After an initial meeting, clients, supported by the debt centre manager and where available a befriender from a local church, pull together all the information about a client’s financial position. This information is shared with CAP’s debt team who create a sustainable debt solution and working budget for debt free living. The client can then choose if they wish to follow this advice.

Where clients are working through their debt by paying it off gradually, the befriender is there to support and encourage them until they become debt free. They can also support them to attend other services like CAP Life Skills.



This area is in the highest 10% for deprivation in the UK (IMD)



“X had significant mental health issues and was unable to leave his house.

Gradually, through consistent support and reassurance, the team were able to meet with him and enable him to leave the house to attend meetings with the council and benefits agency. X is now debt free, able to leave the house and enjoys his time leading craft groups for others.”

Key Statistics

Community Lounge:



3,069 great value hot meals served,
991 were given free or at a reduced rate

Advice:



25 new clients taken on since February
2025

Debt:



24 new clients with unmanageable
debts taken on

Life Skills:



12 people attending more than 5
sessions

Money Coaching:



8 people learning to budget and take
control of their finances

Conversational English:



Over 100 lessons with an
average of 10 learners per lesson

Community Chaplaincy:



24 prison chapel services supported
with an average of over 20 attendees
per service

Tots:



40 sessions with an average of 11
families per session

EQUIPPING PEOPLE WITH MONEY SKILLS

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Money Coaching and Life Skills

CAP Money Coaching is a four session course equipping attendees with the skills to understand their money, set a budget, and to manage this. It enables people to plan proactively and reduces the chance of missing important bills or getting into unmanageable debt. This year we have completed 3 money courses.

CAP Life Skills is an eight session course teaching people the skills to manage on a limited income - skills that they might never have picked up in their life. This year we have partnered with a primary school, another church and a housing charity to run 3 courses.

“X came to us through a referral from the Job Centre. He had a history of addiction and anxiety, a number of debts and he needed support to know how to manage his money. While on the Money Coaching course he learnt how to manage his money and, with the help of his sister, put in place a workable budget. Whilst he was with us, we introduced him to our Community Lounge community and he received advice on Personal Independence Payments from our Advice Service.”



Key improvements and impact

This year we have formed three new partnerships, two in the IP2 part of town (Sprites Primary School and St Peter's Church) and one with the housing charity, Selig Trust.

Selig house and support a number of guests who are in, or are seeking work, who might otherwise be homeless. We saw an average two-point increase (on a 10 point scale) across five metrics with the biggest improvements being seen in 'no longer feeling alone and isolated' and 'not feeling they have the skills to solve their problems'. We anticipate this being a longer term partnership.

12 people completed the Life Skills course and 8 completed Money Coaching



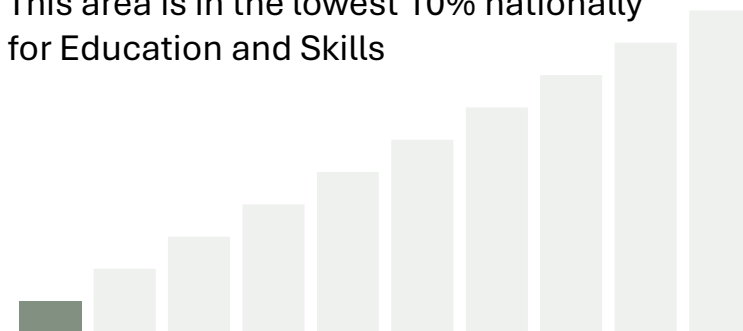
63% of Life Skills guests reported improved their skills and/or wellbeing



100% of guests agreed they were better able to keep on top of their finances



This area is in the lowest 10% nationally for Education and Skills



WELCOMING THE NATIONS

Conversational English

Each week in school term time we welcome a diverse group of people whose first language is not English. We hold lessons for people with different abilities from speaking no English, to beginners, to improvers.

We build a fun and friendly community where people can come and get to know people they would otherwise not meet.

We invite all our guests to our Community Lounge at the end of each session to help them feel welcome at the church, to build community and to enable them to try out their new skills.



“In the spring we were joined by around 20 Afghan ladies, who descended on Conversational English en-masse with less than 24hrs warning! Whilst it has presented logistical challenges, especially as some come with young children, it has been a wonderful chance to reach out to these beautiful women who were known to a member of our church. The most amazing thing is that Hannah and her co-worker, who lead a local charity for Afghan women, say that this is the first time that these ladies have attended anything not specifically for Afghan women. We are so happy to have them.”



Key improvements and impact

Over the course of our ministry, we have seen changes in the mix of people attending, as global situations change. For example, to begin with we had a large group of Ukrainians, then people from Hong Kong, then refugees and asylum seekers from Iran and Afghanistan as well as a broad range of others.

We are working well with a group of Afghan women and their children who came to us through our relationships with another community group in Ipswich.

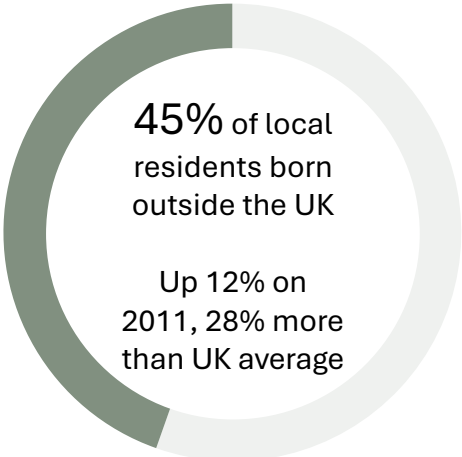
Average of 30 language learners each week



Over 10 nationalities represented



6 volunteers, teaching and helping entertain children or enabling practice.



SUPPORTING YOUNG FAMILIES

Tots

Every Tuesday in term time we welcome 0 to four year olds and their parents and/or carers to our Tots group. We provide a range of activities including play, singing and snack time.

We listen to the parents and carers and where possible provide coaching and encouragement to help them with family life and with supporting their children.

We have some families that come regularly and some that drop in from time to time – all are welcome.



Key improvements and impact

This year we have worked to build up and equip our volunteer team to ensure the Tots group continues when our team lead finishes her time serving this summer.

We are looking forward to the next term and will be looking at different opportunities for example offering a library of age-appropriate books.

“We support young families who are new to Ipswich or new to parenthood through listening, coaching and connecting them to other activities.”

40 Tots sessions delivered



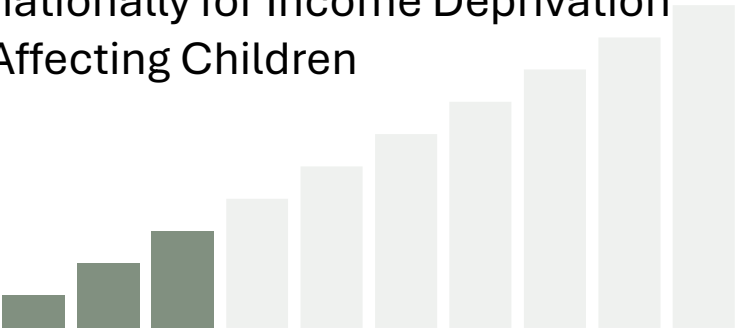
Average of 11 families per week enjoying the sessions together



4 volunteers giving their time to support children and their parents or carers



This area is in the lowest 30% nationally for Income Deprivation Affecting Children



NEW OPPORTUNITES

2 ex-offenders supported in the community, chats with around 45 prisoners at chapel once a month



Up to 9 volunteers to go into the prison once a month



6 trained mentors



Prison Ministry

There are two key aspects to our ministry:

- Attending chapel at HMP Warren Hill and HMP Hollesley Bay once a month providing musicians for the worship time and a team of people who are there to listen and chat with the prisoners
- Mentoring of ex-prisoners when they are released into Ipswich. Our aim is to provide stability, practical support and community to prison leavers through matching them with trained mentors.

We now have six trained mentors and are building up our profile by becoming established with the Community Chaplaincy Association and introducing ourselves to prison chaplains, probation officers and other ex-offender support groups.

Key improvements and impact

This year we have been working to formalise and streamline our governance and raise our profile with potential referrers, to our mentoring service for ex-offenders. We have appointed an administrator for half a day per week to support with building relationships and maintaining our systems.

We received very positive feedback from the men at HMP Warren Hill who enjoyed the new worship format we implemented.



Not employed at 6 months post release

61%

Not in settled accomodation at 3 months post release

32%

Not housed on release from custody

18%

UK statistics

“X, a prisoner at HMP Hollesley Bay came to faith and was baptised in the prison. He thanked us and said he’d never forget the support he received from Hope Church.”

A WARM WELCOME

10 to 2

In 2024/25 we opened the doors of the Hope Centre between 10am and 2pm on Mondays to Fridays. Each day we had a small team of volunteers available to make tea or coffee, chat, or play board games.

We had a broad mix of people coming in: some seeking company; some seeking an indoor place to sit and chat with friends; church members and people using the free Wi-fi to work or catch up on admin.

We have been able to connect some of these people to our Advice service, Community Lounge and to our church community.



“We had several guests who would come once and then regularly attend, enjoying the company offered in the 10 to 2 space. We were able to direct some to find help with housing, jobs and finance. We also gave out many food vouchers, sleeping bags and other practical things to help address needs they presented to us.”



Key improvements and impact

Having piloted this new initiative for a year, we are reviewing it and seeking to understand how we can make this ministry sustainable, and how we can support people who come, in the best way.

Our biggest challenge is recruiting sufficient volunteers to cover our rota.



People in Ipswich rated their happiness at 7.2 out of 10 compared to a national average of 7.4

15-20 visitors a day on average



4 volunteers a day



Over 1,000 biscuits given away!



Looking Ahead

2024/25 has been a year of consolidation in some areas and growth in others. The appointment of a Hopeworks Co-ordinator will enable us to further build our resilience and consider new opportunities.

Looking ahead to 2025/26 we are seeking to develop the following areas:

Volunteers

Volunteers are key to everything we do. We will:

- seek to enable, inspire and motivate more of our church members to get involved as well as exploring opportunities to involve others from our community and church networks.
- ensure we look after the volunteers we have well by listening, appreciating and supporting them as appropriate.

Communication

We will seek to improve our communication with our church members, key partners and other churches in Ipswich. We will be active members of the Together For Ipswich group of churches. We will share our stories with others and see how we might work together more effectively.

Demand and Capacity

We will

- continually be reviewing our services to ensure we are helping people and not creating unhealthy dependencies. This may lead to changes to how our services operate.
- review our capacity to meet the potential demand and manage our services accordingly to ensure we provide quality, safe services at all times.

Listening

We will do more listening in 2025/26 to our guests/clients, our volunteers and our partners and networks. We will ensure we are delivering services that people need rather than things we think that they need.

Prayer

We are a Christian church and we believe in the power of prayer. When appropriate, we offer to pray for anyone who attends our services but always respect the wishes of anyone who is uncomfortable with this. Our services are provided without prejudice to anyone regardless of belief or background.

