



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

EMPOWERING PEOPLE,
BUILDING COMMUNITY



CHAIR'S REPORT

Welcome to Heart of Tamworth's Annual Report. It's my great pleasure to share some of the charity's many achievements and highlights of the past year.

I think most of us will acknowledge that 2022 was a year which presented many challenges, particularly the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine. We were proud to be part of March for Ukraine, the town's response at the outbreak of the conflict. Day after day, the reception area at Sacred Heart filled up with huge donations of clothing and hygiene products to help those fleeing the fighting. The generosity shown by local people was truly amazing.

Over the past year Heart of Tamworth (often referred to as HoT) focused on a number of key objectives. These included:

- **Undertaking a community consultation exercise to ensure that our work meets the needs of local people;**
- **Using the findings of this consultation work to develop a new three-year strategy (focused around emotional, physical and environmental wellbeing) which will shape our work going forward;**
- **Increasing use of our community facilities, particularly those at Sacred Heart, by partner organisations who then deliver additional services and support where they are often most needed;**
- **Developing plans for a new HoT Shop which will include an expanded community pantry, second-hand clothing store and a children's literacy project.**

We have created a new website, updated our branding and introduced new activities and services, many of which focus on addressing social isolation and loneliness – a growing issue and one which was frequently raised in the consultation exercise. I'm particularly proud of our older persons' Lunch Club which launched in September and supports some very isolated people. Our Friendship Friday group and Games Club are also making a big difference.

The HoT Café is nearly two years old and continues to flourish. If you haven't visited yet, I would urge to come and see what you're missing, not least the best breakfast in Tamworth by all accounts!

One event I think we will all remember for some time was the afternoon in July when we hosted the Commonwealth Games Baton. It was a great honour to be chosen, and the organisers were hugely impressed with the event we arranged which was attended by over 500 local people.

HoT has a small team of staff and we could not deliver our activities and services without our wonderful volunteers, around 140 at the current time. They really are the "Heart of Tamworth" and on behalf of the trustees I would like to thank them for their hard work and commitment. At a time when volunteer numbers are at their lowest level since the Second World War, we are extremely fortunate to have the support of so many hard-working people.

There is something special about this charity which draws you in...when I became involved I thought it was just for a few weeks. Three years later I'm still here and I know that the same is true for many others.

Thank you to our volunteers, the partners we work with, the businesses and charitable trusts who help to fund our work, the parish which provides huge support and our members of staff. By working together, you provide practical support to people across our community. I know that times will continue to be challenging for many, but the HoT team will remain committed to delivering a wide range of services which will help those in need.

Catherine Smith
Chair

COST OF LIVING

The past year has been a testing time for many. Soaring energy costs along with rising food prices (with staple products being particularly affected) have meant that many people have found it difficult to manage their household budgets.

The HoT Shop (a community pantry, not a foodbank) located at Sacred Heart has been a lifeline for an ever-increasing number of people. Thanks to donations from retailers which are collected both during the day and at night by a dedicated team of volunteers, as well food which is bought in, the HoT Shop allows customers to fill a bag with food from a wide selection of fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and packet items. In addition, they help themselves to fruit, vegetable and bakery products. Currently, a bag of food costs £5 which represents a huge saving when compared to supermarket prices. What sets the HoT Shop apart from a foodbank is that customers can choose the products they want, rather than being given a bag of pre-packed items.

The HoT Shop is open five days a week and staffed entirely by volunteers who brave the elements to ensure that customers receive a warm welcome. The current shop (set up by HoT trustee Simon People two years ago) was only ever intended to be a temporary, post-pandemic initiative, but it is clear that this support will be needed for some time to come. During 2022 the trustees agreed to build a new shop which will provide much better conditions for volunteers and customers and extend the range of products available by stocking good-quality used clothing and children's books. Building work is in progress with an expected opening date of Autumn 2023.

HoT also provided practical support over the winter months by offering free lunches (soup and other refreshments) during some of its own activities throughout the week and also from St John's on Saturdays and Sundays (particularly valuable as there is far less support available across the town at weekends). Providing a place of warmth, something hot to eat and people to talk to meant a great deal to many over recent months. Thanks to all the volunteers who supported this work.

Throughout the year HoT provided food parcels to primary schools at the start of school holidays. These parcels helped families who find it difficult to manage when children are not able to attend breakfast clubs and do not receive a school lunch. The parcels contain a range of staple food items chosen to help families prepare healthy meals. Overseen by team member Kelly, 450 parcels were delivered to schools across the town before each school holiday. We were fortunate to have huge support from local businesses who help to collect the food, pack and distribute the parcels to nearly 30 schools.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT, DIGNITY AND RESPECT



HoT COMMUNITY CAFÉ

In May it will be two years since the HoT Café opened when the country was coming out of the final Covid lockdown. It maybe wasn't the best time to be launching a new hospitality business. However, from the start the café proved to be a success and has developed a reputation for high-quality, fairly-priced food, a warm and friendly atmosphere and wonderful service from our team of volunteers. The online reviews are full of praise for Jen, our Café Manager, and her team.

What people may not know is that the café plays a hugely valuable role in providing work experience opportunities, not just for students from Tamworth College, but also for people with learning or physical difficulties. It is a "safe space" for groups to meet who might feel less comfortable in a more commercial environment, and has also given people who live in the local area a new place to socialise.

Under Jen's leadership, and with the support of our wonderful volunteers, the café continues to go from strength to strength. Future plans include opening on Saturdays for brunch with a range of special, weekend-only options. During the summer months outdoor seating will be available along with our pre-school play area and ice-cream machine.

Finally, if you haven't tried a slice of cake made by our very own 'Star Baker', Terry McElroy, you don't know what you're missing. Why not pay the café a visit to find out?

A REPUTATION FOR HIGH-QUALITY, FAIRLY-PRICED FOOD

Great coffee



Great company



Star Baker 'Terry'





Lunch club friendship group

ISOLATION & LONELINESS

Our community consultation exercise conducted during spring 2022 told us that social isolation/loneliness was one of two issues which most people were most worried about.

The Covid pandemic highlighted how damaging loneliness is for both physical and mental health. To try and address this, HoT launched some new projects during 2022.

Thanks to funding secured from Captain Tom's charitable foundation, we established a weekly lunch-club for older people. Guests enjoy a home-cooked, two course lunch (thanks to Neil our chef) as well as activities and entertainment. Our fantastic volunteers look after the guests and even provide transport to ensure that those who cannot make their own way to Sacred Heart do not miss out.

It has been heartening to see how our guests have made friendships, look after each other and benefit from spending time with others. For some, this is their only regular activity and many describe it as the highlight of their week. Our guests were even featured on BBC Midlands Today in April this year as part of a feature about HoT's work across the community.

Similarly, during 2022 we also set up two new social groups: Thursday Games Club and Friendship Fridays. Run by HoT team member Kelly, these are open to all and provide an opportunity to meet others, enjoy some refreshments, take part in activities and have fun. We will continue to develop new services and support, some delivered by HoT and others by partners, which help to tackle loneliness.



FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT



Commonwealth Games baton relay

Volunteering at its best - Community Fun Days

HOMELESSNESS

People find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons. It can be caused by the breakdown of a relationship, loss of employment, eviction (there is an increase in 'no-fault' evictions), dependency or more.

For the past three years, HoT has been working in partnership with Tamworth Borough Council to support people who are homeless or need help to remain in their existing property. This work, led by Terry O'Brien, is time-consuming, often frustrating but hugely rewarding when successful. It involves supporting individuals in a number of ways from liaising with statutory bodies such as the council or DWP, to helping people settle into accommodation once secured, accessing benefits, registering with a bank or a GP, helping with day-to-day issues such as budgeting and always being a source of advice and encouragement.

Terry will work with other partners to tailor support to an individual's needs (particularly in respect of dependency or health issues) and ensure they have the best chance of moving forward in a more positive way.



TAILORED SUPPORT TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S NEEDS

CREATING A COMMUNITY HUB

Thanks to funding secured from The National Lottery, the Sacred Heart community centre benefitted from a refurbishment in 2021. The new premises are a huge asset and ensuring the community benefits from this investment has been a priority.

Thanks to a great deal of hard work, we have a busy, vibrant centre with a range of activities, advice and support available throughout the week. Some of this is delivered by HoT, with much more provided by partner organisations. Crucially, this brings much-needed services into the communities where they are needed.

Examples include:

- **Citizens' Advice Bureau**
- **Samaritans**
- **Organisations delivering mental health support**
- **Programmes for people seeking employment**
- **Specialist support for people who have experienced abuse**
- **Opportunities to engage with services such as the school nurse or local PCSOs**

We will continue to expand the range of support available at Sacred Heart and also want to increase the use of the community space at St John's. We are in discussions with several partners about how this might be achieved.

CONTINUING TO EXPAND, MEETING THE NEED



Artists impression
of the Community shop
opening Autumn 2023

EMPOWERING PEOPLE, BUILDING COMMUNITY

Trustees:

Catherine Smith (Chair)

Bob Charles (Vice-Chair)

Lee Bates

Richard Berry

Helen Bolger

Tim Empson (appointed June 2023)

Sheree Peaple

Simon Peaple

Wendy Quinn

Frances Tansey (stepped down in May 2023)

Fr Michael White

Verrona Woodley

**Heart of Tamworth,
Sacred Heart Community Centre,
Silver Link Road,
Tamworth,
B77 2EA**

Tel: 01827 259955

Web: heartoftamworth.org

Email: enquiries@heartoftamworth.org

 HoTCP

 Heart of Tamworth
HoT Community Cafe
HOT Community Shop

Registered charity number 1157449

