

Example of a grant awarded from Funds set up with Essex Community Foundation (ECF) and that received matched funding from the Proceeds of Crime (POCA) Scheme also managed by ECF:

For 13 years, **Sanctus** has been a place of refuge for those seeking a warm space and a hot meal. Based in Chelmsford, the group believes that everyone should have a secure home and food on the table, which they provide from their café.

There are no criteria to access this support, because Sanctus use a person-centred approach. They build trust with the people who come to their premises and provide various services to alleviate the complex issues of homelessness and rough sleeping.

In 2023, Sanctus were receiving more than 50 visits to their café and Hub each day, with an average of two new faces among them.

There is a clear need for services like Sanctus, as proven by the growing number of individuals seeking their help. Sanctus is open seven days a week, 365 days a year, which results in them providing a great number of support sessions and meals. However, this also demonstrates that homelessness is an issue with a solution more complex than many expect.

By supporting the work of Sanctus through its funds established with matched funding from the POCA Scheme, this café has continued to offer crucial front-line services to those experiencing poverty, making the communities better for them and for others. Programmes like the Hub and café provide a safe and welcoming place for homeless and vulnerable individuals to reach out and receive guidance on helpful services. By welcoming everyone and not discriminating against those with disability, mental health conditions, and other complex needs sometimes considered barriers to entry by other institutions, Sanctus is a lifeline for those most desperately in need. Their gratitude is clear, hearing the visitors to the café call the manager 'Mum'.

Case Study:

Due to a rise in the cost of living, Jim (name changed) was struggling to make ends meet. Jim works on a self-employed basis and due to some serious health problems, he was forced to cut down on his workload. His utility bills had risen and he had a small amount of rent arrears. He struggles with PTSD as he is a veteran and tries very hard to stay occupied at all times. Working limited hours is impacting both his mental health and his financial situation.

Consequently, Jim has been using our café service more regularly, taking away items from our food bank and accessing our Hub for regular support. We have worked with him to look at other sources of income, make an application for Personal Independence Payments (resulting in two appeals so far) and making regular contact with his DWP work coach via his Universal Credit journal to ensure that any income is submitted, alongside his work expenditure.

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The inconsistency in Jim's income has impacted his benefit entitlement and left him with little to live on. We will continue to support him with his PIP appeal and any other types of financial support that we can access on his behalf. Just having us here as a support mechanism both on the phone and in person, enables him to remain as positive as possible.

Volunteers making lunch and a visitor at the Sanctus café:

