



providing crisis packs for those in need

# Appendix 1

## Feedback from user agencies

2016

The donations to the Lucas Project which is based in Farnworth are so important to the young people who live here. They are all on very limited budgets and it really sometimes is a choice between heating or eating.

Everything we receive is so appreciated and makes such a difference to the lives of the young people. While they live here they are gaining independence and life skills which will get them ready to move on into the community and the generosity from yourselves helps towards this huge transition to total independence. They can also experience that there are people out there who care and learn about putting something back when they are hopefully in a position to do so.

**Rebecca Evans      Manager      Bolton Young Persons Housing Scheme**

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I have used porch boxes several times for food and items for a new baby , all of which are so gratefully received by families and make a huge difference in anxious times.

Most recently, I rang on the off chance requesting a Christmas Tree for 2 Children who had recently lost their mother suddenly and desperately wished for a Christmas Tree. Dad had been forced to give up his job as a long distance lorry driver and move back to Bury in order to take over the full time care of the children and keep their home life as stable as possible. Benefits were not yet in place and the family were living on limited income. With the help of porch boxes these children had some joy in their home on the run up to Christmas and loved decorating and lighting the tree all of which were donated by Porch Boxes.

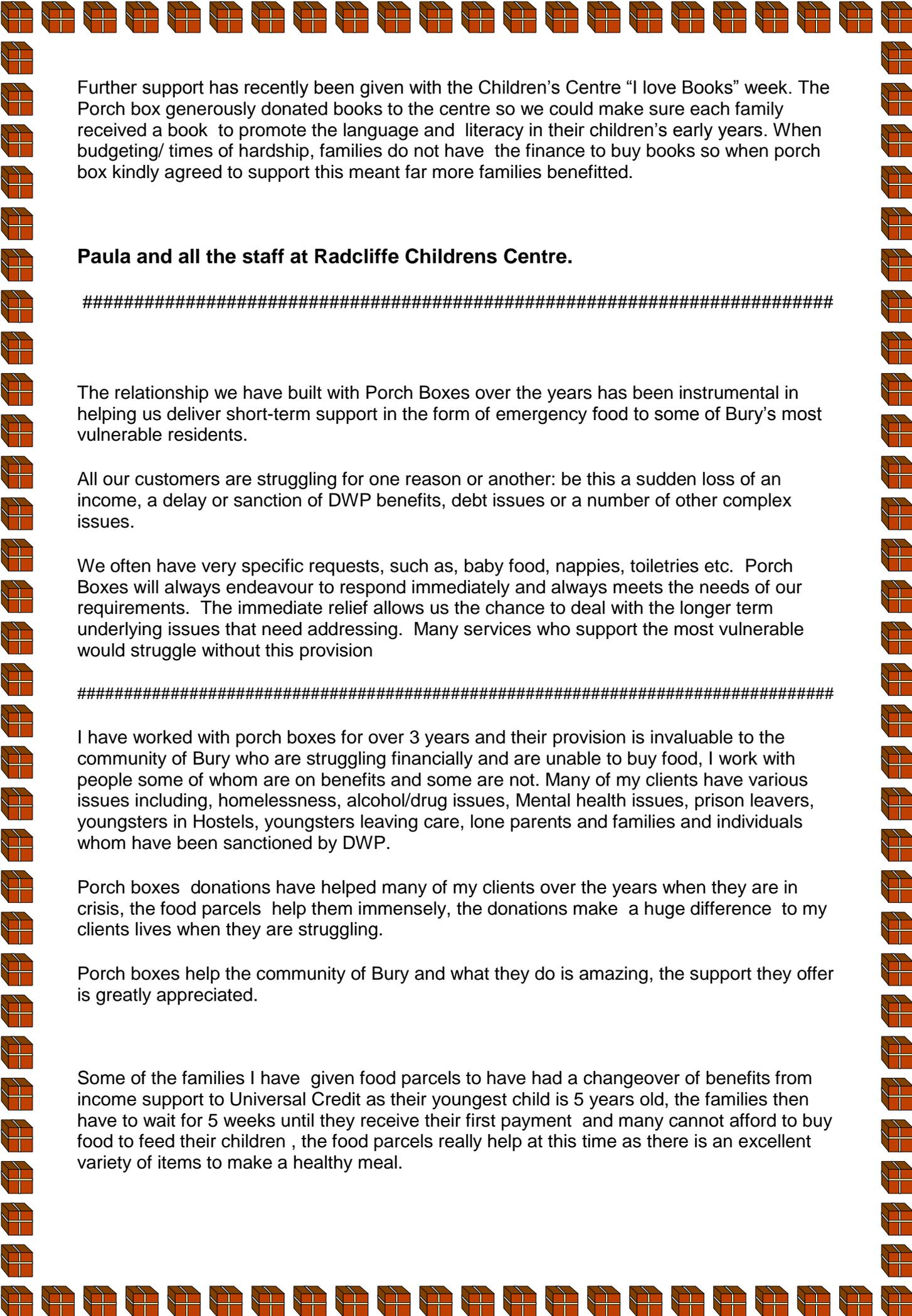
**Joanne Rowley      Outreach Worker      Prestwich Hub Children's Centres**

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On behalf of the staff at Radcliffe Children's Centre I would like to share how invaluable the Porch Box service has been and continues to be.

As well as support with food, toys and equipment we have also had porch boxes for Christmas and Christmas presents. This has taken pressure off families and given them opportunity to celebrate and enjoy the festivities.

The requests are always dealt with promptly and the food and supplies are always generous and of a high quality. The support has always benefitted our families and in many cases ensured that both children and families have had food and basic needs met during specific times of hardship /crisis.



Further support has recently been given with the Children's Centre "I love Books" week. The Porch box generously donated books to the centre so we could make sure each family received a book to promote the language and literacy in their children's early years. When budgeting/ times of hardship, families do not have the finance to buy books so when porch box kindly agreed to support this meant far more families benefitted.

**Paula and all the staff at Radcliffe Childrens Centre.**

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The relationship we have built with Porch Boxes over the years has been instrumental in helping us deliver short-term support in the form of emergency food to some of Bury's most vulnerable residents.

All our customers are struggling for one reason or another: be this a sudden loss of an income, a delay or sanction of DWP benefits, debt issues or a number of other complex issues.

We often have very specific requests, such as, baby food, nappies, toiletries etc. Porch Boxes will always endeavour to respond immediately and always meets the needs of our requirements. The immediate relief allows us the chance to deal with the longer term underlying issues that need addressing. Many services who support the most vulnerable would struggle without this provision

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I have worked with porch boxes for over 3 years and their provision is invaluable to the community of Bury who are struggling financially and are unable to buy food, I work with people some of whom are on benefits and some are not. Many of my clients have various issues including, homelessness, alcohol/drug issues, Mental health issues, prison leavers, youngsters in Hostels, youngsters leaving care, lone parents and families and individuals whom have been sanctioned by DWP.

Porch boxes donations have helped many of my clients over the years when they are in crisis, the food parcels help them immensely, the donations make a huge difference to my clients lives when they are struggling.

Porch boxes help the community of Bury and what they do is amazing, the support they offer is greatly appreciated.

Some of the families I have given food parcels to have had a changeover of benefits from income support to Universal Credit as their youngest child is 5 years old, the families then have to wait for 5 weeks until they receive their first payment and many cannot afford to buy food to feed their children , the food parcels really help at this time as there is an excellent variety of items to make a healthy meal.

I have clients that are living in hostels due to family relationships breaking down and the food parcels help these youngsters whilst they are learning to live independently for the first time and budget their benefit monies to cover a small fee for rent, gas, electric etc, I then work with the client to complete a budgeting plan to cover all expenses.

**Paula Dermime The Work Company**

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Porch Boxes has been invaluable in their support to the project by providing food for people who are rough sleeping, those who are homeless and sofa surfing at friends and relatives and those who have recently moved into accommodation and are unable to buy their own food due to other expenses associated with a new home. Being homeless often means that they have no access to benefits and therefore have to rely on others to provide them with food. The Porch Box provides food that does not need cooking such as pot noodles, biscuits, dried fruit, water, fruit juices. They also provide, toiletries which are much appreciated by the homeless.

The system to refer to Porch Boxes is easy and simple, which is an enormous help in these days of technology. I can either make a phone call, send an email or text and they will get back to me quickly and provide the food within days. They have even been known to deliver to someone's house if the person has not money for bus fares to collect.

I cannot over emphasise how important this project is to the vulnerable people of Bury and surrounding areas. It can literally mean the difference between life and death and the service means so much to those who receive it – it shows someone does care for them and restores their faith in human nature.

The volunteers are always friendly and helpful. I'm not aware what goes on behind the scenes but I fully appreciate the time they give up to help the vulnerable. My job would be much harder without their support. Thank you.

**Diane Sumpton Homeless Support Worker for the Bury Rough Sleepers project.**

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Just a quick line to advise that the service you offer is 'second to none!'

It is greatly appreciated by ourselves and our service users for the kindness of the people who donate the food and also the people who give their time to put the parcels together to ensure that the less fortunate are able to have something to eat in their hour of need. Without these people, it's sad to say that our users would be without any nourishment, sometimes, for weeks, due their circumstances.

Once again a BIG thank you to all involved in making the service you offer a godsend. It restores my faith in humankind.

**Fran Clegg Bury Probation Office**

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The supply of porch boxes given to The Bolton Guild of Help has been extremely beneficial and has helped many of our clients in times of great need. It has been the difference between a family or individual being able to have something to eat or to go without.

At the Bolton Guild of Help we have a lot of clients who need assistance with food. Our policy is to register and refer people who need assistance with food to the storehouse run by Urban Outreach.

As the storehouse is only open once a week we often get clients who need help and cannot until the storehouse is due to re-open. The supplies of food we have from Porch Boxes have proved invaluable for our clients to tide them over until we can set them up with the food bank the following week. The service and food supplies are wonderful

We are a small charity and the fact that the porch boxes can be delivered to us is also very beneficial. This makes a huge difference for us to be able to keep on top of the supplies we have stored in our offices, and in turn being able to offer this assistance to people in need. Whenever we request more porch boxes they are always delivered promptly and professionally.

Thank you once again for all your help you are providing a valuable service

**Sherelle & Tracey Bolton Guild Of Help**

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We have been working with Porch boxes for over 6 months now and we would like to take this opportunity to communicate how important your service is to the lives of those on the fringes of society.

Working well is a project designed to help people with the greatest barriers move forward in society and into sustained employment. For this to be able to happen we rely heavily on our local partners to support the work we do and to help us to improve the lives of the disenfranchised of our local community.

In the most recent months a high percentage of our caseload have been through major changes to their benefits which has caused extreme hardship. Without the support of the volunteers and all who donate to Porch Boxes, a high percentage of families would have experienced food poverty. We also support people with multiple health conditions and it is essential for them to eat regularly to be able to take their medications. We have also utilised the hygiene packs provided to help clients prepare for work as it is essential that they are clean and tidy, unfortunately those in extreme poverty quite often feel a massive sense of shame that they cannot afford to stay clean.

We find it very humbling that our local community take time out of their own busy lives to support strangers in their time of need. As a service we value every step that is taken to providing us with the porch boxes.

We felt it very important that we gave our clients an opportunity to express their feelings of thanks to your service and they have provided a couple of comments below:

'L' was heavily affected by the benefits cap and was distraught when she could not pay her rent and feed her children.

*"I have spent many years as a single parent providing for my family and when my benefits change with very little notice I didn't know what I was going to do. I have no family to support*

*me and the food parcels that I received through Working well were a life saver. I have now started a new job and will make sure that I won't forget the support by giving back when I go shopping. Thank you"*

A & G and moved from ESA onto Universal credit, with this there is a 5 week gap in benefits and as they have 3 children they had no idea how they were going to cope.

*"When this happened to us just before Christmas it broke our hearts as we didn't know how we were going to feed our family let alone make a nice Christmas for them. We had kind of accepted that we were not going to be able to buy them Christmas presents and were so touched when we attended Working well and discovered that not only did we have food parcels but there were also toys for the children which the Keyworkers told us had come from you. We can't thank you enough"*

The work that you do has had a beneficial effect at a basic level and the good feeling that you generate has a ripple effect that improves the lives of those who need it the most.

**Ingeus / Working Well Bury**

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We are lucky enough to have had the opportunity to be in receipt of your porch boxes for some years now.

Stepping Stone Project is a charity that support the homeless. One of our projects is for complex needs, and as such, we support those that are considered the most vulnerable in society.

A porch box is given when a person first moves into one of our properties. It is left for them in their kitchen. It is not only seen as a surprise act of kindness and generosity, but it is often crucial as people often come to us street homeless with very few possessions, never mind shopping; it is not uncommon for new residents not to have benefits in place so no access to money and therefore shopping.

We also use the food when people's benefits get sanctioned, or, in the case of the most vulnerable, when they have their money taken from them. Financial exploitation is sadly common. In addition to this, we use the food donations in our cooking sessions where we educate clients how to cook on a tight budget.

We carefully monitor who we are giving to, and are careful not to enable misspending.

Put simply, many of our clients would be hungry without your input and we, and our clients, appreciate your donations enormously.

**Debbie McClelland Senior Resettlement Worker Stepping Stones**

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I would like to say a huge thank you to the team at Porch Boxes. We would be lost without your assistance.

This is an excellent and much needed service. It is of great assistance to ourselves and the families we support, especially in these hard times, with high cost of living, budget and job cuts that affect everyone. It provides the essentials when things are tough and gives the families faith and hope.

**Carol Green Bury Safeguarding Team**

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Thank you so much for all the help you have given to Eagles Wing over the past 12 months. Since May last year we have been a part of the Red Cross Destitution project. This means that we are able to give refugees and asylum seekers who are destitute or in emergency poverty £10 per week for 12 weeks, to enable them to seek long term solutions to their poverty.

Some of our destitute asylum seekers have been in this terrible crisis for years and have very little prospect of a speedy successful outcome with the Home Office. In such cases, Eagles Wing and solidarity raise funds to continue to support them after the Red Cross project ends.

In the last 12 months we have been able to support 103 individuals at our 'Drop ins'. All of these recipients are refugees or asylum seekers living or staying with friends in Bury.

On most weeks we are helping 15 or more regular members in dire straits. Some of the individuals, most upsettingly, are children, whose parents are for one reason or another unable to claim benefits for them or whose claim for Child Tax credit or Child benefit takes 3 months to process!

It has therefore been a wonderful help to have our food cupboard regularly stocked by PORCH! And not only randomly stocked, but to have food particularly requested by our members and in particular for one of our friends who is diabetic. You are SUCH a caring service. Thank you.

In addition to the regular Porch boxes, you were kind enough again to make up 40 special boxes of Christmas food and little luxuries for our asylum seeker families for Christmas. Our volunteers enjoy delivering the hampers to wish our friends well for the Christmas period. This can often be a difficult time for families, as the schools are closed and services close down for the holidays, so we always try to visit with your hampers to check they are ok and that they have something a little special for the Christmas period,

Thank you so much, Porch Boxes for being there for our friends and for enabling refugees and those seeking asylum to feel at home and welcome in our town. You are a life-saving service, truly.

**Sue Arnall, Hon. Treasurer for Eagles Wing and Solidarity**

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I am an outreach worker and pastoral support worker in schools supporting families in the borough. These families are constantly facing struggles in their daily lives. However, due to the enormous generosity provided by the Porch Boxes charity the families have been given a life line and this has helped put a smile on faces and help ease some of the stress the families are under.

**Family 1**

Recently had their benefits capped and their income reduced; the parents had 4 children and were really struggling to make ends meet. The porch boxes provided were extremely valuable in helping this family through a very difficult time.

**Family 2**

Single parent asylum seeker, moved to Bury with no friends and expecting a baby. The baby was born via a c section so the parent could not leave the top floor flat. This parent did not have any money for 3 weeks and relied on friends visiting once a week from Liverpool who brought a large pot of cooked food to last a week. Through porch box this parent was provided with some fresh produce including fruit, vegetables and pulses as well as tinned goods. They also provided essential baby basics for the new born including nappies, blankets and clothing.

**Family 3**

Fled serious domestic abuse; benefits were slow in being sorted due to a house move. Porch box helped with food parcels. As it was December they were also provided with toys for the two young children. Bedding for the baby and a sofa bed which had been donated. This parent was overwhelmed with the generosity. The donations ensured this family could have some happiness during the traumatic experience.

**Family 4**

This parent has four children and has moved due to a relationship breakdown; as both parents were now claiming separately the benefits were stopped. The family were supported for two weeks until benefits were paid. Having the food boxes ensured the parent could then spend money on gas and electric. Staff at the children's centre appreciate the hard work, compassion and dedication shown by this wonderful charity who never fail to offer support.

**Bernadette Thomson Woodbank with Elton Childrens Centre**

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At the resettlement Service/Bury Council we support, advise and house vulnerable people, in temporary accommodation whilst trying to source more permanent housing.

People experience homelessness for various reasons and often present as homeless to the council with a wide range of problems, these include lack of income due to frozen benefits, addiction to drugs or alcohol, waiting for benefit application to be processed and mental health problems. These problems leave families and individuals with no income or a very little income to buy food and essential toiletries.

At the Resettlement service we receive deliveries of food and toiletries on a regular basis. These donations are then distributed to those in need to enable them to feed their families for the short term whilst the resettlement worker will support them in claiming entitled benefits, chasing up benefit claims and working out budgeting plans. As a resettlement service, being able to help out with a bag of food when most needed is absolutely vital to our service and society.

Some of the food that gets delivered to the Resettlement Service will be taken to Bradley Fold, the Councils "out of hours response unit" and given to those who become homeless at night-time or over the weekend when our office is closed. This is people fleeing from Domestic violence, house fires, flooding and such likecatastrophes. Often these people have had to leave their house and all their belongings behind and the donation from the Porch Boxes helps them through the first difficult, and often very expensive days in temporary accommodation.

We also give food out to street homeless who will stop by the Housing Reception on a regular basis looking for support and advise.

Another fantastic service from Porch Project that the Resettlement service benefit from is Easter eggs and Christmas chocolates and gifts for the children and young people in temporary accommodation.

One single mother experiencing financial hardship due to problems with benefit processing had very little for herself and her son to live on over Christmas whilst they were awaiting a move into permanent accommodation. She expressed how crucial the gifts from Porch Boxes had been by text message saying

*"Thanks for (child's name) gifts they were a saviour"*

I can't fully express how important the porch Project service is for the resettlement team and the people that we work with but the difference that it enables us to make is for some people simply - lifesaving.

And finally I would also like to thank all the volunteers, the packers and drivers for the outstanding service they provide, tailored to our needs.

**Signe Johansen Resettlement Team**

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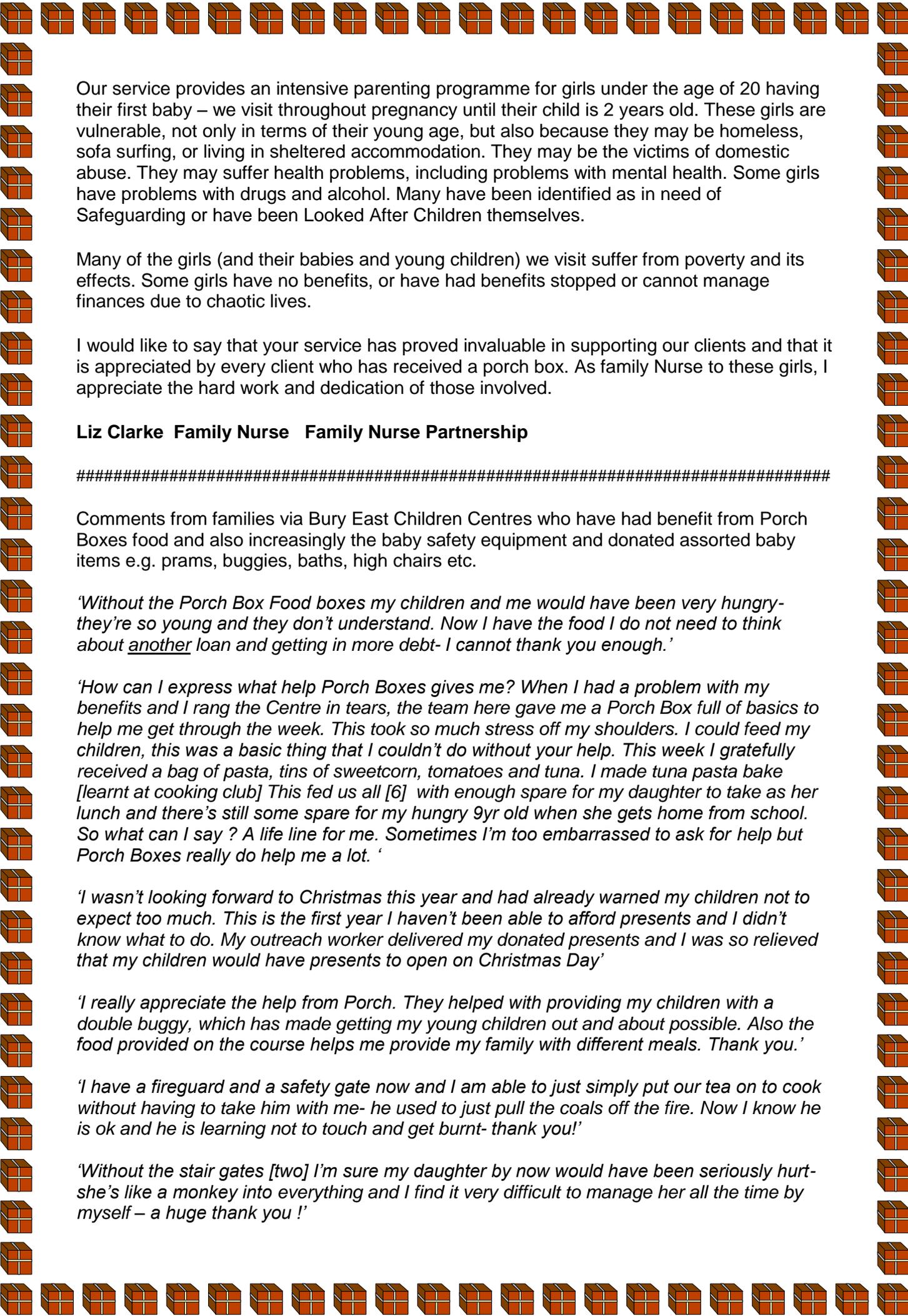
I would just like to say that we are so grateful for the food, bedding, toys and toiletries that you are able to provide for us for our client group of under 19 years old first time parents.

This vulnerable group have benefitted from your service at times of crisis. Issues such as moving in to their own property, late or cancelled benefit payments, no benefits as they are still classed as dependants themselves or when their children have been ill and they have used their money for transport to hospital are some of the reasons we have made requests to your service.

**Karina King Family Nurse Family Nurse Partnership**

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Many thanks for the excellent work your service provides for some of the most vulnerable young people in Bury (and their babies and young children).



Our service provides an intensive parenting programme for girls under the age of 20 having their first baby – we visit throughout pregnancy until their child is 2 years old. These girls are vulnerable, not only in terms of their young age, but also because they may be homeless, sofa surfing, or living in sheltered accommodation. They may be the victims of domestic abuse. They may suffer health problems, including problems with mental health. Some girls have problems with drugs and alcohol. Many have been identified as in need of Safeguarding or have been Looked After Children themselves.

Many of the girls (and their babies and young children) we visit suffer from poverty and its effects. Some girls have no benefits, or have had benefits stopped or cannot manage finances due to chaotic lives.

I would like to say that your service has proved invaluable in supporting our clients and that it is appreciated by every client who has received a porch box. As family Nurse to these girls, I appreciate the hard work and dedication of those involved.

**Liz Clarke Family Nurse Family Nurse Partnership**

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Comments from families via Bury East Children Centres who have had benefit from Porch Boxes food and also increasingly the baby safety equipment and donated assorted baby items e.g. prams, buggies, baths, high chairs etc.

*'Without the Porch Box Food boxes my children and me would have been very hungry-they're so young and they don't understand. Now I have the food I do not need to think about another loan and getting in more debt- I cannot thank you enough.'*

*'How can I express what help Porch Boxes gives me? When I had a problem with my benefits and I rang the Centre in tears, the team here gave me a Porch Box full of basics to help me get through the week. This took so much stress off my shoulders. I could feed my children, this was a basic thing that I couldn't do without your help. This week I gratefully received a bag of pasta, tins of sweetcorn, tomatoes and tuna. I made tuna pasta bake [learnt at cooking club] This fed us all [6] with enough spare for my daughter to take as her lunch and there's still some spare for my hungry 9yr old when she gets home from school. So what can I say ? A life line for me. Sometimes I'm too embarrassed to ask for help but Porch Boxes really do help me a lot. '*

*'I wasn't looking forward to Christmas this year and had already warned my children not to expect too much. This is the first year I haven't been able to afford presents and I didn't know what to do. My outreach worker delivered my donated presents and I was so relieved that my children would have presents to open on Christmas Day'*

*'I really appreciate the help from Porch. They helped with providing my children with a double buggy, which has made getting my young children out and about possible. Also the food provided on the course helps me provide my family with different meals. Thank you.'*

*'I have a fireguard and a safety gate now and I am able to just simply put our tea on to cook without having to take him with me- he used to just pull the coals off the fire. Now I know he is ok and he is learning not to touch and get burnt- thank you!'*

*'Without the stair gates [two] I'm sure my daughter by now would have been seriously hurt-she's like a monkey into everything and I find it very difficult to manage her all the time by myself – a huge thank you !'*

I often visit families that have no safety equipment in their homes and no money to be able to afford such equipment. The Children's Centre cannot afford to buy these items for families and I am grateful for the support from Porch Boxes to ensure children are kept safe within their homes.

**Outreach Worker Redvales children Centre - Bury East**

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On behalf of the service users at Gabriel Court I would like to thank you for your kind donations of food etc. They really do make a difference. I know how challenging it is – when there are so many needs at a time when budgets are tight. Your support throughout 2016 has been amazing – and the kindness and genuine caring of those delivering the food is something I want to acknowledge.

**Lesley Foster Children's Service Manager Gabriel Court [Barnardo's]**

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Thank you so much for the lovely donations which you brought to the unit on Christmas Eve. As my colleague explained, we rely on the kindness of people like yourselves, in order to support our young ladies and their babies.

**Judith Dudgeon Unit Manager [Caritas at Radcliffe Road ]**

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I'd like to take this opportunity as we approach the end of 2016 to say a big 'THANK YOU !' for your continued support this year. The food parcels that you have provided made a huge difference to the lives of the children and families that we work with. I thought you might appreciate the testimonial below which is an extract from one of our parents.

*'I never thought I'd need to ask for help. To be honest I felt a bit embarrassed. However Holding Families were able to help us when we needed it most. They brought us a food parcel when our benefits were stopped, I don't know what we would have done without it.'*

**Amy Calderwood Holding Families Co-ordinator Early Break**

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I wish to thank you on behalf of our service for the support we have received from Porch boxes over the past year.

The Family Nurse Partnership team works with very vulnerable teenagers from early pregnancy to the child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Our young Mum's often find themselves homeless in pregnancy after being asked to leave the family home. Our clients typically struggle to make ends meet even if they are in receipt of benefits and would go without food in some instances if it were not for the food donations. This means they are denying their developing baby of vital nutrients. This trend often continues after the baby is born, when they struggle

to manage finances due to the additional demands of parenthood and again nutritious food is often their lowest priority due to their economic situation.

Our family nurses have always found that their requests for help are dealt with promptly and that Porch Boxes go out of their way to provide items for client's specific dietary requirements. The fact that your volunteers deliver the boxes to our office base is a big help and much appreciated. Our clients whether they are single Mums or living with a partner, have benefitted greatly from these boxes which in addition to adult, baby and child food products, also include very useful items such as baby toiletries and nappies. Thank you once again for your invaluable support.

**Kathryn Wolstencroft Interim Family Nurse Supervisor**

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### **Healthy Eating Initiatives - Bury East**

This year we have been supporting a Family healthy eating cooking course based in Bury East Children Centre. This is run in partnership with Bury Council. The aim of the course is to support families in changing their attitude to buying and eating fresh fruit and vegetables and thus improving the diet for the whole family.

We have provided tins and packets for the course and with the support of the Co-op some fresh fruit and vegetables

### **Feedback from food provided via Co-op and Porch for the healthy eating cooking course 2016 onwards**

*'I really find the goody bag very helpful at home. It helps me out a lot and also helps encourage my children to try new foods. I found it very useful getting extra fruit and vegetables when I am sometimes unable to get to the shop to buy it.'*

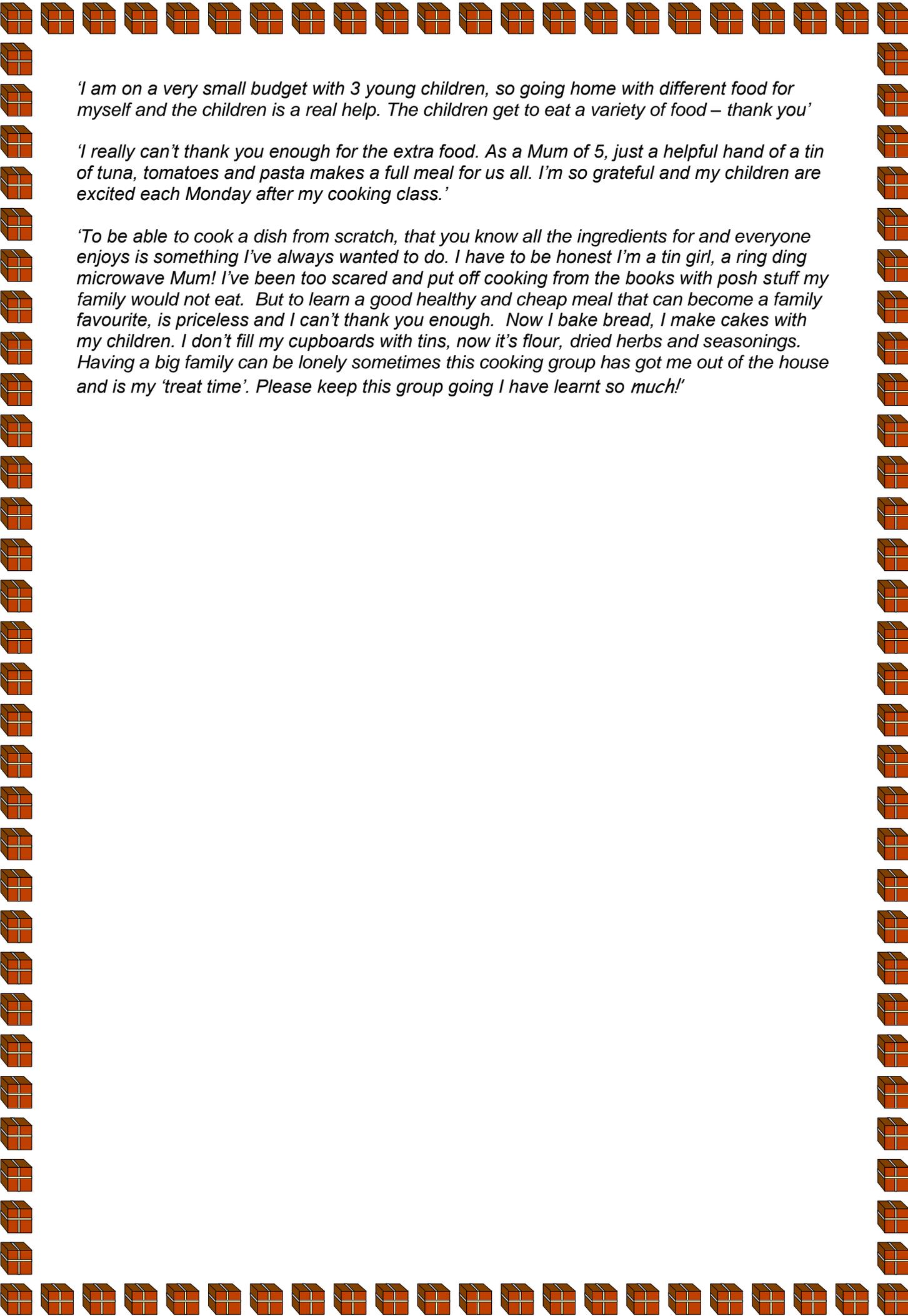
*'I love the surprise of what goodies we'll have in our bags to take home. We often get eggs which we use to make omelets, scrambled eggs etc There are some vegetables that I like but never buy as the kids don't eat them such as cabbage. It has been nice to get them in our bags. I also loved getting bags of pasta and other cupboard essentials.'*

*'I think it's very helpful to make nice food for our children. Having extra pasta and vegetables helps me with meals and with having a large family I soon run out of food.'*

*'I love coming to the cooking course and trying new fruits and vegetables that we have never tried before and recipes that I would never have done before. Great ideas to use at home.'*

*'I have loved the fruit and veg. vouchers I now tend to use fresh cooked carrots instead of tinned as they taste nicer. I have been experimenting with ways to incorporate F & V into meals [grating carrots and courgette into spag. Bol. And lasagne]. I have started eating some of my favourite F & V again. Things that I couldn't usually afford & considered a treat. [mango, lychee, physalis and asparagus] I have found out both my boys like mango and my eldest enjoys eating lychees with me!'*

*'I love coming to the cooking course as I get fruit and veg that I never thought I would use and also I get things I can't afford.'*



*'I am on a very small budget with 3 young children, so going home with different food for myself and the children is a real help. The children get to eat a variety of food – thank you'*

*'I really can't thank you enough for the extra food. As a Mum of 5, just a helpful hand of a tin of tuna, tomatoes and pasta makes a full meal for us all. I'm so grateful and my children are excited each Monday after my cooking class.'*

*'To be able to cook a dish from scratch, that you know all the ingredients for and everyone enjoys is something I've always wanted to do. I have to be honest I'm a tin girl, a ring ding microwave Mum! I've been too scared and put off cooking from the books with posh stuff my family would not eat. But to learn a good healthy and cheap meal that can become a family favourite, is priceless and I can't thank you enough. Now I bake bread, I make cakes with my children. I don't fill my cupboards with tins, now it's flour, dried herbs and seasonings. Having a big family can be lonely sometimes this cooking group has got me out of the house and is my 'treat time'. Please keep this group going I have learnt so much!'*