

## 2021 Business Plan

Charity number 1177303

**Wansbeck Valley Food Bank is a registered charity (CIO) set up to "prevent or relieve poverty or financial hardship in particular, but not exclusively by the provision of emergency food parcels to individuals in need"**

### 1. Introduction

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank was established in November 2012 with the aim of providing food aid to people in need in the local area. There are many reasons for the need for emergency help, ranging from the long-term unemployed, people whose benefits have changed and there is a gap in payments, to an increasing number of people who are employed but are struggling to feed their families due to a combination of rising inflation and a reduction in wages/hours. Previous research indicated that 7 per cent of the UK's adult population – or 3.7 million people – have used a food bank to receive a meal<sup>i</sup>. Food poverty is defined as the inability to afford, or not to have access to food to make up a healthy diet. We feel unable to stand by when mothers admit to regularly going without food in order to feed their children and when families are forced to choose between paying the bills or buying food.

Until the onset of Covid-19 brought about the need to change the way WVFB operated, almost all requests for assistance came through professional organisations or trusted partners. Personal referral was very much the exception.

During 2020 Wansbeck Valley Food Bank provided 28382 days of food for those using our service i.e. c85,000 meals, almost a 100% growth over the provision two years before. Whilst this growing trend was undoubtedly exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, it shows no sign of abating. Nationally some charitable organisations expect 2021 & 2022 to see a worsening of poverty, and therefore an increase in demand for food bank provision.

### 2. Our Operating Model

We traditionally generated stocks of dried/tinned supplies of basic food types via donations from various community organisations (schools, churches etc.) and via supermarket collections, supplemented by the purchase of staple and fresh perishable foods. Our standard food parcels are considered sufficient for individuals or families to feed them for up to 3 days and these packs were issued at the request of care professionals in our community. They were normally collected by clients at one of our distribution sessions, while we arranged delivery in particular circumstances. In addition, we also provided emergency packs to referring professionals, so that they could issue them immediately when this was required.

As a result of the pandemic and in order to protect our volunteers, the trustees took the decision to close both the Ashington and Newbiggin distribution points and deliver direct to all our clients from the Morpeth warehouse. In order to cope with this increase, a decision was made to purchase a second delivery van and employ an additional part time Administration Assistant.

The increased workload, resulting from this growth, meant that we had to extend the hours worked by our Administrative Assistants. We have also increased our van collections/deliveries and doubled up the drivers to deal with the increasing demands, as well as hiring a third van for the extra deliveries during the latter part of 2020.

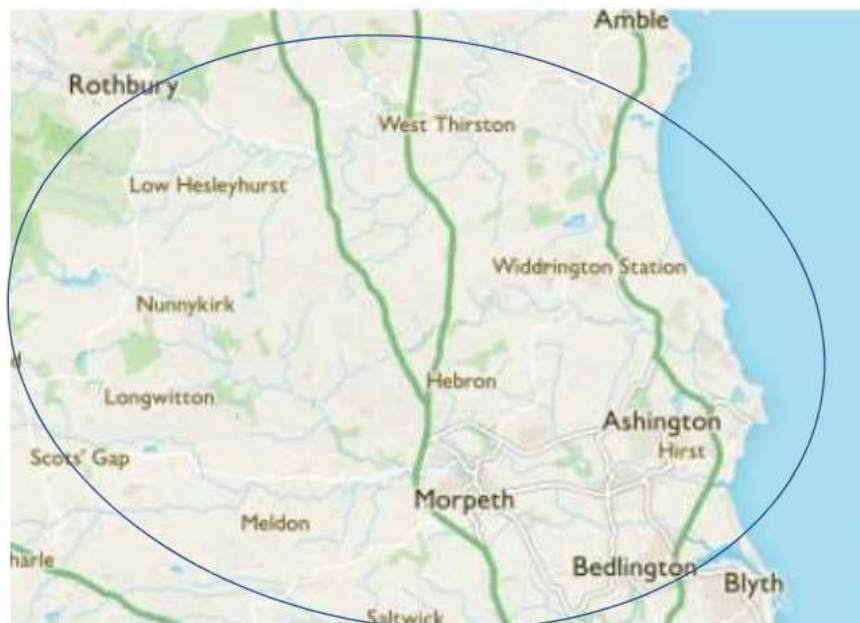
However the biggest operational change made by the trustees was to accept that in certain circumstances self-referral would be acceptable. The outcome of that decision, together with the problems referring agencies have had in personal contact with their clients, means that self-referrals are a growing percentage of total referrals.

It has now been decided not to re-open the Ashington Centre and to concentrate on the more efficient home deliveries. The other aspects of the temporary delivery model e.g. volunteers working in 'bubbles' will be reviewed as soon as the limitations of safety requirements related to the pandemic allow.

Clearly Wansbeck Valley Food Bank can never be more than a vital stop gap service, providing food while other enduring support arrangements are made for clients, but we aim to do this in the most efficient and caring way possible.

Our service remains free to clients and referrers. We now employ two part time members of staff (1 FTE) for coordination and administrative activities with all other duties being delivered by our dedicated volunteers.

### 3. Our operating area and its challenges



Our project covers some 80,000 people living in towns and villages close to the River Wansbeck and the surrounding rural communities. The operating area is shown on the map to the left.

Agencies often request help beyond this core operating area, subject to resource availability so we do not adhere rigorously to these physical boundaries.

However as there are other Food Bank projects covering further districts of the county, the vast majority of our operation occurs between Longhorsley / Hadston in the north; Newbiggin-by-the Sea in the East, and Stannington/ Bedlington in the south.

Economic circumstances continue to impact our clients adversely.

According to government statistics in 2019 Northumberland was ranked as more deprived than three fifths of all local authorities across England. There is no evidence to suggest that this will have changed since then, other than probably worsened.

In 2015 of England's 32,844 Lower layer Super Output Areas [LSOAs], Northumberland contained 14 of those within the 10% most deprived nationally. By 2019 this had risen to 23 areas meaning Northumberland was in the top ten local authorities in England for the largest percentage point increase in the proportion of LSOAs.

In 2019 11 of the 23 were served by our project, the others were all adjacent and are areas where we are regularly asked to extend our service to. Trustees will have updated information when the first results of the 2021 National Census are released by the Office for National Statistics.

The table below shows these 11 needy communities are served by our project.

LSOA	County Ward(s) LSOA falls into	Overall IMD Rank 2019
E01027533	College	693
E01027545	Ashington Central / College / Hirst	1248
E01027540	Hirst	1056
E01027542	Newbiggin Central and East	1124
E01027527	Ashington Central	2543
E01027539	Hirst	1243

E01027518	Bedlington Central	2921
E01027451	Lynemouth	1474
E01027546	Ashington Central / College / Hirst	2543
E01027543	Newbiggin Central and East	2563
E01027519	Bedlington East	3267

Furthermore from 2015 statistics in terms of income, our project caters to 10 LSOAs within the most deprived 10% in the country, while in terms of employment Hirst Ward falls within the bottom 1% . Such a combination of persistently high unemployment and comparatively low wages has other knock on effects. For example 80% of houses (2,500 of 3,300 properties) in Newbiggin by the Sea fall within band A, making it difficult for the local council to fund poverty alleviation measures.

In such a climate it is families with young children who often suffer the most. In assessments where children live in income deprived households, 6 pockets of our project area were ranked amongst the worst<sup>ii</sup>. Such parameters demonstrate the importance of our work at both County and National level.

Even towns like Morpeth cannot sit easy – With 60% of its local workforce employed by the state, Morpeth has the highest proportion of public sector workers of anywhere in the country<sup>iii</sup>. Many could face difficulty as work is transferred from the public to the private sector.

Recent changes in the benefits system is a further factor that impacts on many of our clients: studies suggest that significant numbers of persons will need the support of Food Banks as they continue to transition into the Universal Credit arrangements and the impact of the pandemic on those currently furloughed is as yet unknown.

The Wansbeck Valley Food Bank exists for all of the above reasons and any others that result in people finding themselves unable to afford food.

#### **4. How a client can access our service**

Previously all persons requiring our service came by referral from other parties providing care in our community. Using this referral route has the following advantages:

- The referring party establishes that the client is in genuine need of emergency food and that alternative sources have been explored and discounted. Donors can therefore be assured that food gifted is being used to best effect.
- The client has established communication with a referrer who can help them to address the underlying causes of their food crisis.

Our 30+ referrers include both local Citizens Advice Bureaux, the 5 largest NHS General Practitioner partnerships, Health Visitors, Community Mental Health and Social Services teams, local Job Centres, South East Northumberland Credit Union, Northumberland Emergency Transition Support (NETs), ISOS and Bernicia Social Housing, Barnabas Safe and Sound, Contact Mental Health, Stobhill Community Hub and a number of other third sector and council operated community services. .

Upon referral clients attended one of our distribution centres where a completed referral form was exchanged for a food parcel appropriate to the needs of the individual or their family. Every food parcel contains sufficient food for three balanced meals per day. Most of the produce is tinned or dried to preserve its shelf life, but we also make a point of providing a loaf of fresh bread and other items as available, a feature greatly appreciated by our clients.

N.B. Due to the Covid pandemic we:

- were forced to close these distribution centres in March 2020 and our service to clients is now 100% by van delivery;

- we decided to accept self-referral from those in emergency need who were unable to access the normal referral services, this is to be reviewed as circumstances allow.
  - Whilst we are working with Northumberland Communities Together to determine client need the trustees accept this increases the risk of not having a complete & accurate picture of the client's circumstances.

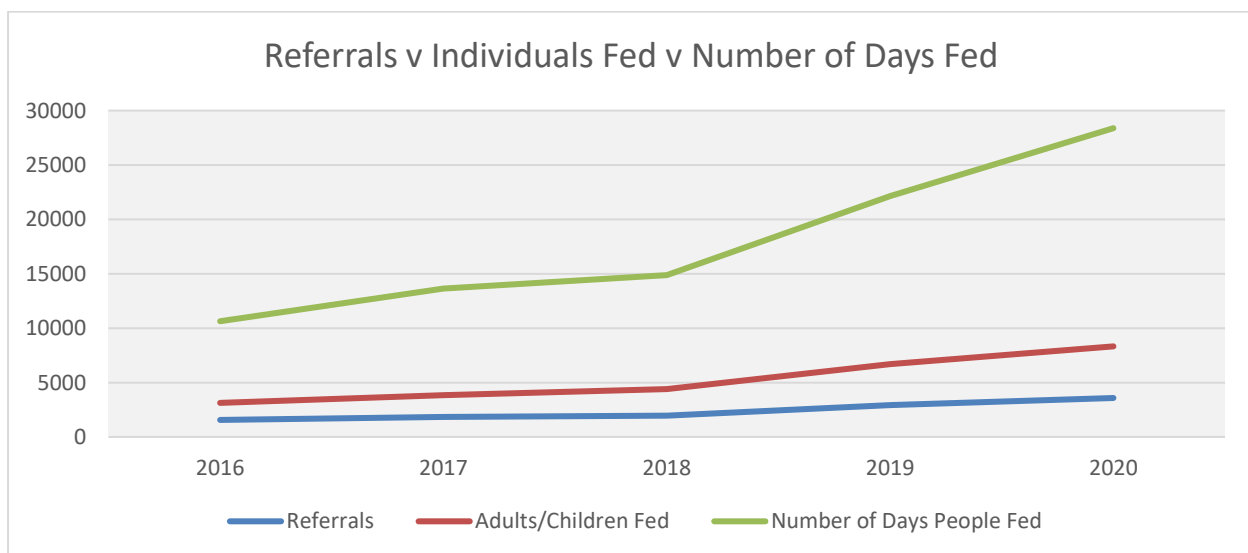
## 5. Project growth

Since the outset, we have maintained sustainable and effective growth. This features:

- production of an operating manual of procedures, so that all volunteers and referrers can function in a consistent manner and that the requirements of environmental health, health and safety, client confidentiality etc. are maintained.
- increasing our food supply chain, warehousing and distribution capacity so that we can meet rising client needs.
- making our service known to those in greatest need through media releases, production of information notices and via our contacts with referrers, councillors and other local interest groups.
- Our model continually evolves as we learn more regarding our clients' needs. For example, we now provide meat vouchers in certain circumstances so that clients can exercise some choice regarding the food they are obtaining.

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank was formed to address what was thought to be a short-term problem. However as can be seen from the graph below, the demand for our service showed no sign of abating even before the pandemic accelerated the growth in that demand.

Previously we expanded our capacity in line with increasing need. Predicting the future is now much more problematic as we await the results of the vaccination programme and the ending of furloughing. A further Covid wave resulting from new variants can also not be ruled out. We will maintain a careful watch on all of these and respond with rapidity as issues arise. Recent increases in positive Covid-19 tests in Northumberland, mostly in our area of operation, show that the pandemic is far from over.



Outcomes we intend to achieve during the next 2 years are as follows:

### **Outcome 1: Continued provision of emergency food through our service to persons in need within our community.**

As the above graph shows we issued 28382 person days of food to clients during 2020, almost a 100% increase in two years; We do not expect this rate of growth to continue beyond 2020 unless the recovery from the pandemic is minimal and the end of furloughing is problematic however we aim to have sufficient food stocks

via donations and funds in hand to provide for increases of 33% in this year and next. However there is no indication that demand will drop significantly below the current level in the foreseeable future.

**Outcome 2: Raising sufficient community awareness and engagement that the project can be sustained and continue to develop.**

We will measure success against this outcome as follows:

- a. At all times, rates of food input maintain a minimum stock for 4 future weeks' demand, including the ability to provide fresh food, i.e. milk & bread;
- b. At all times, sufficient trained volunteers and reserves are available to deliver the service for the forthcoming 3 months.

**Outcome 3: Ensuring that our service is made accessible and convenient widely across our community to those in need**

Achievement of this outcome will feature:

- a. An adequate range of contacts in the local care and advice sectors, who can both refer clients to our service and also can help clients to address the underlying problems that cause them to seek emergency food. Whilst specific targets have not been set, we will conduct an annual review of the number, range and geographic locations of referrers to ensure that there is a sufficiency for effective client access;
- b. The maintenance of distribution sessions via deliveries to the client's home.

**Outcome 4: Ensuring that the Trustee Board is able to continue to plan and manage the delivery of an effective service**

- a. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities;
- b. Ensure each Trustee is able to contribute in the most appropriate manner;
- c. Ensure effective succession planning including the age etc profile of the Trustees.

**7. Our objectives and financial plans**

Our objectives and financial plans for the current and next year are set out in the appendices.

**8. Contributions to the project provided in kind (based upon current volumes of activity)**

**a. Volunteers' contributions in kind, valued at £70,667 per annum:**

Our volunteers provide their time free of charge and will not be claiming any travelling expenses until further notice. We value this as a contribution on the following rationale:

- 5566 volunteer hours per annum in delivering food, managing our warehouse, collecting food, taking calls and undertaking administration of the project. Assessing volunteer's time as worth £8.91 per hour, this represents a contribution of £49,593 per annum.
- At their own expense, volunteers drive an average of 3 miles return journey on 6831 occasions per annum to attend the Food Bank. Based upon a rate of £0.45p per mile, this represents a contribution of £3,074 per annum
- Trustees' activities are also all voluntary and no re-imbursements have been requested / made. Their annual in-kind contribution of c.253 working days per year are calculated at £18,000.

**b. Food contributions in kind, valued at a minimum of £78,347 per annum**

The value of food issued exceeds £6 per person day. Therefore the value of food issued during 2020 (28382 person days) = £6 x 14877= £170,292 minimum per annum. We made purchases of £32,515 during the year and so assess the value of food donated in kind as £170,292-£32,515= £137,777.

**9. Project risk management**

Version dated June 2021

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The Food Bank has adopted a quantified risk management approach for this project, whereby the potential impact of risks is quantified before and after mitigating controls are put in place. The current version of the risk register is shown in Appendix 3.

#### **10. Other information**

We are a registered charity with both the Charity Commission and with HM Revenue and Customs, so that gift aid can be claimed on donations for income tax payers.

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