



REPORT TO ASHINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL
March
2025

Registered Charity Number 1177303

Company Registration Number CIO13360

Principal Office Northgate Park
Morpeth
NE61 3BP



CHAIR: Richard Charles Anderson

TREASURER: John Rowley

SECRETARY: Mark Facey

TRUSTEES: Richard Charles Anderson
John Rowley
Mark Facey
David Lea
David Binns (resigned 14 Feb 2024)
Peter Robertson (resigned 17 Feb 2024)
Richard Scholfield (resigned 24 Sept 2024)

ASSOCIATES: Karen Bower
Dawn Hallett
Sheila Rowley

FOOD BANK

CO-ORDINATOR (Salaried): Claire Slater
Helen Griffiths (resigned June 2024)

ADMIN SUPPORT Karina Henery (appointed Sept 2024)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER: Wellway Accountants Limited
Borough Hall
Wellway
Morpeth
NE61 1BN

TRUSTEES' REPORT

OBJECTS AND AIMS

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank is a registered charity, set up to prevent or relieve poverty or financial hardship in Northumberland. The charity achieves its aims and objectives, in particular but not exclusively by:

- The provision of emergency food parcels, items, services and facilities to individuals in financial need.
- Contributing to and co-operating with charities and other organisations working to prevent or relieve poverty within Northumberland.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Good news and a sense of normality have been in short supply since the beginning of this decade.

Thankfully 2024 introduced the possibility that the lingering repercussions of COVID were on the wane and the soaring food costs combined with food supply chain restrictions were at long last returning to some semblance of ordinariness. That's not to say WVFB would be going to go out of business soon but surely all we had been waiting and wanting, for almost three whole years, was within our grasp.

And for WVFB, this was our opportunity to step back a little and take stock of our activities and perhaps explore some fresh opportunities and new direction for our operation.

There was though, one minor detail in need of our immediate attention and that involved what was to happen now that our six-year residence at Northgate had run its course. In the final weeks of 2023, we were technically homeless.

It must be said that ever since Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Hospital NHS Foundation Trust [CNTW] first welcomed us to Northgate they have given unstinting support to our endeavours. And rather than see us abandoned on the streets, they have tried their utmost to somehow find us alternative accommodation as part of their Northgate Park redevelopment.

It has taken a long time to get to this stage, but eventually formal proposals for a new building were submitted by CNTW mid-2024, and these ultimately received the blessing of those that matter in the NHS and the local planning authority. We can report with a degree of relief that construction of the new building was well under way towards the end of 2024. Discussions regarding tenancy agreements have yet to be concluded and we take nothing for granted. However, if all goes according to plan we should be relocated circa March 2025.



Meanwhile, as a stopgap, the Trust have made available office space for our administration - a small but secure warehouse in which to accommodate goods-in / bulk storage – and use of car parking space in which we use portable accommodation to pack and dispatch food parcels.

Working in this new split-site environment has not been without its challenges. However, our service to clients has continued without disruption. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of many of our volunteers and again the continuing support of CNTW for which the trustees are immensely thankful.

By chance this disruption to our established regular operational and administration routines has presented us with the ideal opportunity to reassess our longer-term operation.

One area of notable change is in the way in which we intend to source food stocks following the move. The main reasoning behind this is to achieve a minimum of 15% savings on the purchase of food, ensure we carry sufficient stock to alleviate the somewhat panic approach to stock replenishment, and to make most efficient use of warehouse space.

We successfully implemented this in part during 2024 in readiness for our relocation in 2025.

Improved methods for lifting and handling are also one of our aims.

We also intend to explore alternative ways of doing the Food Bank. There is much to learn and gain from establishing partnerships with other organisations. Our work with the Full Circle Community Food Project initiative, based in Ashington, is an excellent example of this approach which is of mutual benefit to both organisations and not least our clients. We are open to discussions with community agencies to explore ways in which we might diversify client support. These initiatives are ongoing.

The Trustees have become increasingly concerned about the number of clients who are using the Food Bank on a regular basis. The Food Bank exists to provide emergency food parcels and while it is appreciated that some emergencies will require more than one parcel, these parcels should not be seen as a solution to the issues the clients are facing.

We have therefore decided that a client can receive a maximum of one parcel per month, with a maximum of six parcels within a twelve-month period. This should not be seen as an entitlement, expectation, or guarantee.

We continue to monitor and liaise with our partner agencies on how best to assist our clients' needs in such circumstances.

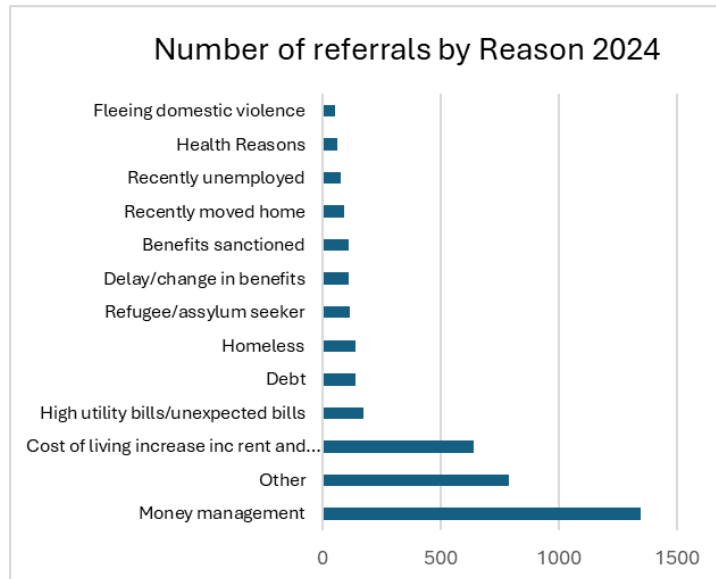
We also offer local client distribution points in partnership with the Ashington branch of the YMCA. In 2024 an additional distribution point was established in conjunction with our Hirst Welfare partners.

Our client delivery service and food collections from suppliers and local collection points are with the use of three dedicated vehicles. A National Lottery Grant enabled us to purchase an additional vehicle in 2024 and this is used mainly to collect food from suppliers.



Our operation is entirely dependent on the continuing and incredible generosity of the community in terms of food and financial donations. We are totally indebted to our faithful team of volunteers whose efforts in sorting, stacking collecting and delivering food are essential to our operation.

Notwithstanding all the increasing challenges, we continued to provide emergency food parcels to those identified as being in need. All appropriate requests were fulfilled.



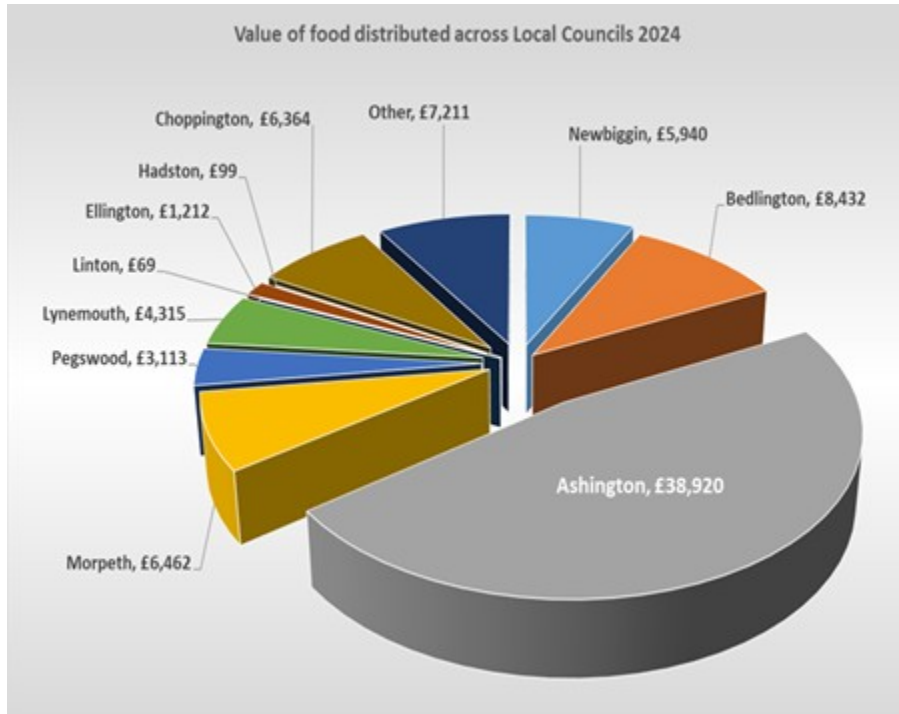
Other- includes; Working but on sick leave, Starting New Job, Hospital to Home, Low Income / delay in Wages, Financial Exploitation, Recently Left Prison, School Holidays, Lost/Stolen Money, Alcohol & Drug Addiction, Temporary Accommodation- No Funds, Evicted, Not Eligible for Benefits, Universal Credit, Bereavement Costs, Christmas or multiple reasons*

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charities Commission for England and Wales.

Achievements and performance 2024

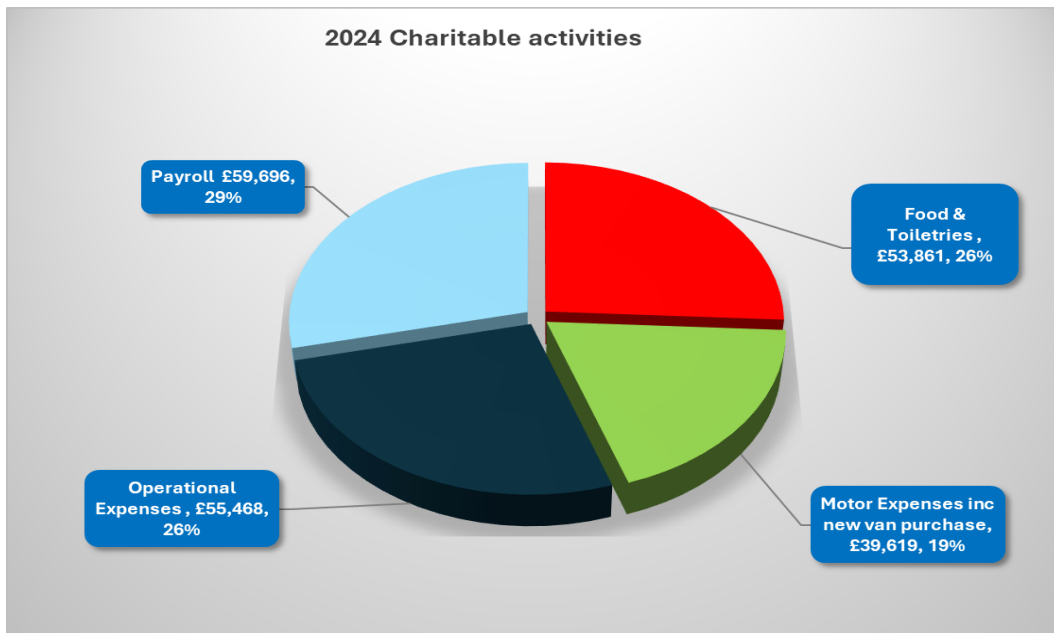
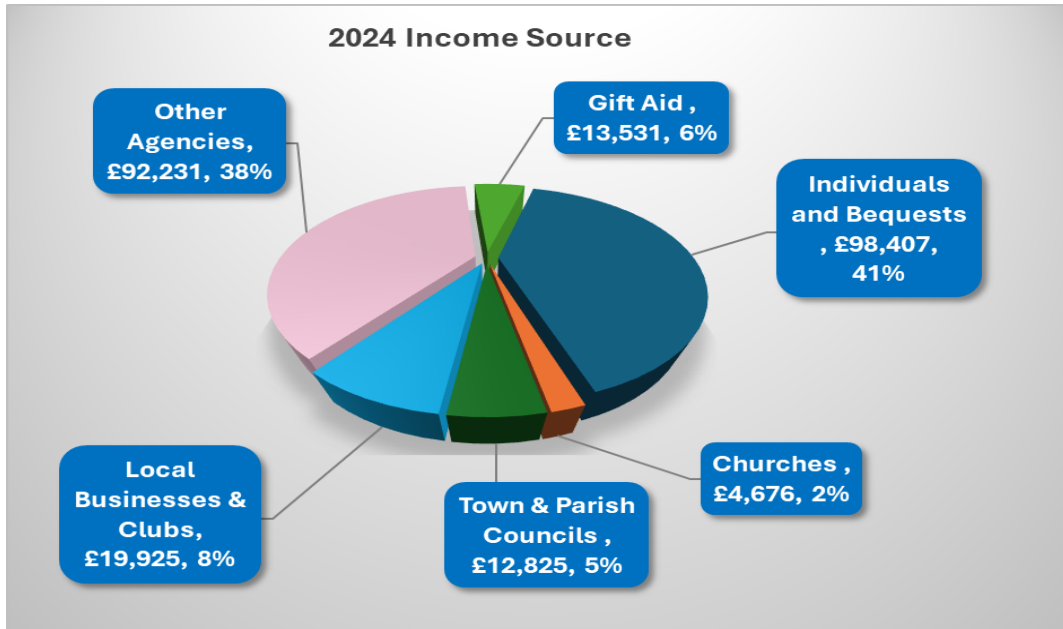
In the year 2024 we received 3837 Referrals and supplied 49,329 meals to 5947 Adults and 2391 children. Of those clients needing support, 74% are returning clients.

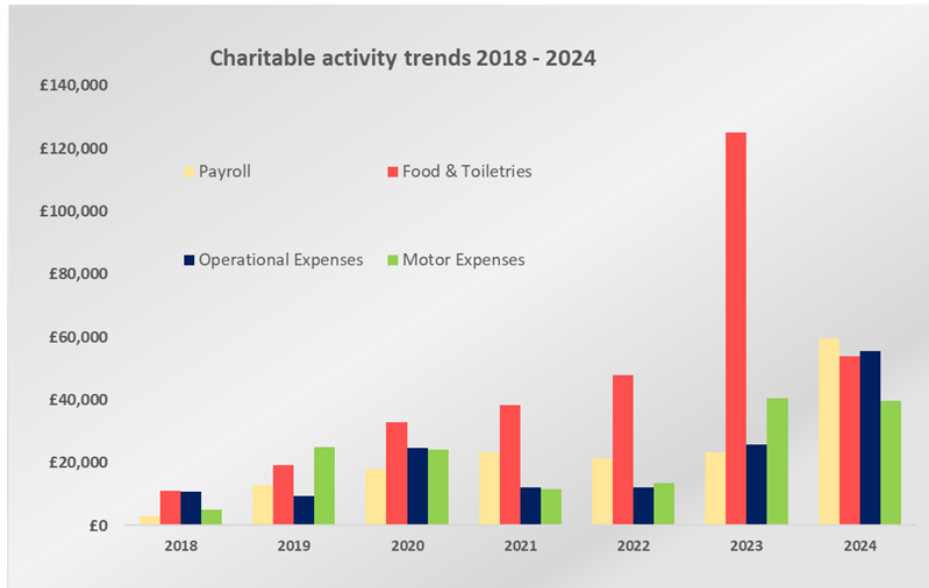


Expenditure on Food	£53,861
Value of Donated Food	£28,274
Value of Issued Food	£82,136

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity's current account will be maintained at approx. £10,000. This can be increased with trustee approval for exceptional items. The deposit account will be maintained for the remaining balances.





Policy on reserves

Our aim is to hold in reserves no less than 3 months of the total operating budget for the current year *[or an amount no less than £100,000, whichever is greater]*. This will ensure that all expenditure, including core salary costs, will be covered in the event of a shortfall in funding. This amount is to be reviewed quarterly in the light of operational costs.

Fundamental to the food bank operation is having an adequate warehouse distribution facility and associated office accommodation. We are assured that CNTW is making provision for us to remain on site at Northgate Park. None the less, the Trustees have decided it prudent to retain the sum of £100,000 in reserve to cover the cost of relocation to alternative accommodation should this be necessary.

We currently have use of four vehicles, one of which is 9 years old. A sum of £25,000 has also been reserved should the Trustees consider it economic to replace this vehicle.

The total value of reserved/designated funds is £215,000 *[31st December 2024]*.



And here at a glance is what it takes and what we do

The Organisation:

- 92 Volunteers [including Trustees]
- 2: - Salaried staff members
- 4 Vans [1 up on previous year]
- 25724 Annual milage
- 3472 Telephone calls
- Busiest Hour 12:00 to 12.59
- Busiest Day Wednesday
- Busiest Month January

Public Benefit

- 3837 Total Referrals
- 15 Daily Referrals Average
- 5947 Adults fed
- 2,391 Children fed
- 25,014 Days People fed
- 74% of Clients returning on a regular basis
- 3351 Referrals Delivered
- 486 Referrals collected from distribution point
- 49,329 Meals issued
- £82,136 Value of meals issued
- £53,861 Value of food purchased
- £28,274 Value of food donated

The Future

Our Priorities for 2025

- Establish new practice and procedures following the move to the new premises, including Health and Safety.
- Secure continued supply of grants/ funding /donations to support our work.
- Develop our storage systems and access in the new premises.
- Publicise the need and attract new trustees and volunteers.
- Review the nature and usage of our transport (vans).
- Aim to develop a stronger relationship with our partners agencies.
- Identify strategies to facilitate the sharing of skills and expertise between ourselves and our partners.
- Focus on networking with our current and potential partners.
- Develop Website and App to be used by administrators and referrers.
- Develop a portal for referrers to use when identifying clients in need of emergency food parcels.



THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING:

Academy Northumberland CofE
AECOM LIMITED
AKZO Nobel
Ashington Camera Club
Ashington Hurst Rugby Club
Ashington Town Council
Ashington United
Bedlington FC
Bernicia Foundation
British Rail
CAF Bank
Carr & Co Solicitors
Charities Trust
Choppington Parish Council
County Durham Community Foundation
Dukes Secondary
Elsie Davis Trust
Food Standard Agency
Handels Banken
Henriksen Trust
Jewsons
Karbon Homes
ICS
Lions Club of Morpeth
Local Churches
Local Schools
Local Scout, Brownies & Rainbow Groups
Northumberland Mark Benevolent Fund
Menzies Distribution Ltd
Morpeth All Saints [Friends of]
Morpeth and District Gardening Club
National Lottery
Newbiggin Maritime Centre
Newcastle Building Society
Nissan Sunderland
North East Organic
Rotary Cramlington
Rotary Morpeth
Roundabout Club
Thirston Parish Council
Timley
Tranemo Workwear Ltd
WI Lancaster Park
WI Morpeth Town
Woodhorn Museum