

SUPPORT THAT MEETS PRESSURE HELPING PEOPLE COPE AS WINTER PRESSURES RISE

DELIVERING THE ESSENTIALS

For the people we support, winter marks the start of a long period of pressure. Colder weather, rising energy use, reduced daylight hours and the approach of Christmas mean heating stays on longer, food budgets are stretched further, and the financial and emotional weight of the season begins to build.

As a result, the opening months of our year coincide with one of the busiest and most demanding periods of our work. Demand increases not because circumstances suddenly change, but because people who are already stretched have fewer ways to absorb additional costs.

PREPARING FOR WINTER EARLY

Funding from Northern Gas Networks and the Northumberland County Council Household Support Fund allowed us to plan and put support in place from October, rather than responding reactively once pressures had already escalated.

80%

OF PEOPLE SURVEYED

Going into winter, 8 in 10 people we spoke to were worried about paying their gas and electricity bills.

65

NEW HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED WITH EMERGENCY FOOD AID

Funding from Northumberland County Council's Household Support Fund, meant we were able to provide emergency food support to 65 new households, including 153 adults and children.

237

HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED WITH PERSONALISED ENERGY ADVICE

Funding from the Centre for Sustainable Energy and training from Northern Gas Networks enabled early intervention, including personalised energy advice for 237 households

CHRISTMAS SUPPORT

The weeks before Christmas are one of the most intense periods of the year for our helpline and delivery services. A significant proportion of our annual food support is delivered in a very short window, as pressure on households rises quickly and options for coping run out. Rising costs, cold weather, school holidays and the pressure to "make it special" all collide.

For households already living with ongoing financial strain, Christmas often acts as a tipping point rather than a temporary challenge. With little flexibility left, strain builds rapidly and the margin for coping disappears. Our Christmas support focuses on easing that pressure, offering reassurance as well as essentials, and helping people feel supported through a period that can otherwise feel overwhelming.

“ I WAS JUST TRYING TO KEEP EVERYTHING GOING FOR THE CHILDREN, EVEN IF THAT MEANT GOING WITHOUT MYSELF. I TRIED ONLY HAVING THE HEATING ON WHEN THEY WERE AT HOME, SKIPPING MEALS, BUT I JUST COULDN'T COPE ANYMORE. ”

CHRISTMAS SUPPORT



326

CALLS FOR SUPPORT



510

STANDARD FOOD PARCELS



120

FRESH FOOD PARCELS



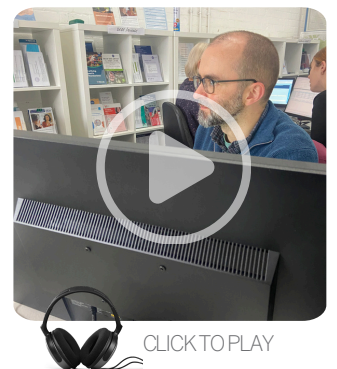
335

CHRISTMAS FOOD PARCELS



227

FESTIVE GIFTS DELIVERED



CLICK TO PLAY

In this short video, our Helpline Team Leader Owain reflects on the pressures people are facing this winter and how early, practical support is helping people navigate rising costs and ongoing pressure.

PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

WORKING TOGETHER TO MEET RISING NEED

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

This work was only possible through long-standing partnerships rooted in the local community, built on shared values, trust and a commitment to supporting people when pressure rises.

Major local retailers including Waitrose, Tesco and Co-op and Lidl provided ongoing food donations and community support, with Waitrose in Hexham hosting the launch of our Christmas Food and Gift Drive through an in-store collection day.



Waitrose Hexham help launch our Christmas Food and Gift Appeal

Independent businesses also played a vital role. Grace and Purpose, working with other traders, donated profits from "Shop Small, Shop Hexham" tote bags, while Grateful Bread donated and matched proceeds from its Christmas loaf sales. Behind the scenes, businesses such as Robson Print supported our communications and outreach, alongside many other partners featured in our Hexham Courant partnerships article.



Local business support: Grateful Bread (left) and Grace and Purpose (right)

CHALLENGES AHEAD

While Christmas represents a visible peak in demand, it doesn't mark the end of when pressures ease. It sits in the middle of a much longer period of pressure, with financial strain continuing into January and February. Demand often peaks again in March, typically our busiest and most challenging month of the year.

This reality shapes how we plan and deliver support, ensuring people across more than 50 towns and villages in West Northumberland can continue to access help well beyond the festive period. Our focus remains on planning early and responding proactively so support continues through winter and beyond.

SUPPORT IN PRACTICE



*YTD DATA: OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025



WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR WORK

Your continued support is crucial to sustaining our work. Here's how you can get involved:

- Follow us on social media to stay updated
- Donate food to keep our shelves stocked
- Give funds to help us respond quickly and flexibly

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

