

# A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CRISIS

YEAR 11 IMPACT REPORT | OCT 2023 - SEP 2024

## MORE DEMAND

This year, we've seen the highest levels of need yet. More families, children, pensioners and working people — many asking for help for the first time — have turned to us as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite. For too many, food banks have become the last resort.

## MORE SUPPORT

In response, we've scaled up — offering not just food and household essentials, but increased hardship support and stronger partnerships. We've worked to meet urgent needs while advocating for long-term solutions to lift people out of crisis.

## MORE CHALLENGES

At the IFAN conference, we heard the same message from food banks across the UK: rising demand is straining resources, and the emotional toll on staff and volunteers is growing. One thing everyone agreed on — food banks should never be the answer to poverty.



Click the play icon to hear Martin's story.

## LIVING WITH LESS

No one should have to rely on emergency food support just to get by. But the reality is, we're filling the gap left by inadequate incomes, rising costs and a welfare system that isn't keeping up.

Every day, we hear from people making impossible choices — between heating their home or buying food, paying rent or keeping the lights on. For some, the fridge is empty because an

unexpected bill wiped out their budget. For others, the financial strain is constant, leaving them trapped in a cycle of insecurity.

That's why, alongside delivering food and household essentials, we've strengthened our partnerships, expanded our hardship support and continued to push for long-term change. People need immediate help, but they also need a way forward.

“ I'VE BEEN CRYING FOR TWO DAYS ABOUT MONEY. THIS WILL REALLY HELP! ”

## BEYOND FOOD: THE REALITY OF HARDSHIP

We provide more than just food. Our Hardship Fund exists to offer practical, immediate relief when people have nowhere else to turn. This year, we provided £56,000 in hardship support, helping people cover energy top-ups, household essentials and emergency costs that food parcels alone can't solve.

For one single parent, it meant being able to turn the heating back on after running out of credit on a prepayment meter. For an older couple, it meant a small grant to replace a broken cooker, so they could eat a hot meal again.

**£56,000**

OF HARDSHIP FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

# HELPING PEOPLE TAKE THE NEXT STEP



Food insecurity rarely stands alone. Many people we support also face challenges with debt, housing, health or isolation. That's why we work beyond food — connecting individuals to vital services like energy advice, mental health support, and local community projects. People come to us in crisis, but with the right support, they can begin to rebuild. That's the impact of working together. Thanks to the support of our community and partners, this year we've been able to help over 1,700 people — including 700 children. As demand continues to grow, we're strengthening our response to ensure no one faces crisis alone.

## 37%

OF THE PEOPLE WHO CONTACTED US FOR SUPPORT HAD NEVER USED A FOOD BANK BEFORE

“ Until I lost my job, I'd never needed help like this before. I'd always worked, always managed. Then, suddenly, it was all gone. Just two days before I first came to the food bank, I remember the panic setting in. Rent, bills, food — I had no idea how I was going to cope. ”

## RESILIENT LEADERSHIP FOR CHALLENGING TIMES

With demand rising, we focused on strengthening leadership in Year 11 by recruiting new Trustees with business and management expertise, from the private, public and voluntary sectors. This has helped improve decision-making, financial oversight, and support for our team, ensuring we remain resilient and able to meet growing needs.



Click the play icon to hear a message from CEO, Sam Gilchrist.

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Every action helps. Here's how you can support our work:

- Follow us on social media to stay updated
- Donate food to keep our shelves stocked
- Give funds to help us respond quickly and flexibly
- Volunteer your time and skills to make a direct impact

SCAN TO READ MORE ABOUT OUR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY



## CONTACT

☎ 01434 700068

☎ 07958 000719

✉ [getintouch@westnorthumberlandfoodbank.org.uk](mailto:getintouch@westnorthumberlandfoodbank.org.uk)

