

CHAIRPERSONS FOREWARD

Denis McGowan, Chairperson

“The spread of foodbanks maps the growing problems of poverty across the entire UK, but also the growing drive among many thousands of people across the country to try and do something about those problems”. (Prof. Jon May - London University))

The Northwest area has always been noted for its very generous, active and caring people. Therefore, because of that inbuilt characteristic, it was not unusual that at some stage, a foodbank or foodbanks would appear in this area. Unfortunately, this is fertile ground in which a foodbank can grow due to high embedded unemployment levels and the consequent poverty and food insecurity associated with government austerity programmes along with a welfare support system that is not fit for purpose. The Foyle Foodbank came into being as a response by the community to the needs of people around them.

The Foyle Foodbank is a place where people can come, when suddenly confronted, for whatever reason, with the fact that they have no money for food. The foodbank is the visible conduit between the generosity of local people and those who for whatever reason cannot at times afford the essentials of life.

Foodbanks can only ever be a temporary sticking plaster solution. A former deceased mayor of the city and much cherished local family doctor, Dr Raymond Mc Clean, often said *“give a person a fish and they have food for the day, teach them to fish and they have food for life”*. Although people need immediate help in a crisis, it’s not handouts that are needed, but rather a “hand up”, support and help in lifestyle situations where the least “wobble” and the wheels come off the wagon!

The Board of the Foyle Foodbank has always recognized and been very aware that food poverty and insecurity is a crisis problem the result of many underlying complex and difficult causes that demand expert supportive help that we could not deliver. We have always known that *“we need to become more than a foodbank”*. However, it needs to be said that we have no wish to grow into the biggest foodbank around that simply means the problem is also growing but until a solution is found we will always need to be into a place where that immediate crisis can be dealt with. The Foyle Foodbank is a trusted

welcoming space where people are supported in a dignified, and confidential way.

In the past year and with financial and strategic help from the Trussell Trust Pathfinder Project under the guidance of a Strategic Development Manager, the Foyle is slowly developing a model hub of “*wrap around services*”, a “one stop shop” or pathway for tackling and dealing with the poverty problem. Along with several other foodbanks throughout the UK we are moving from a reactive response to a more proactive and integrated approach foodbank model that will help move people away from foodbank dependency to a place where, at least they have some measure of resilience if the wheels do come off the wagon. We are all too aware in today’s world that all it takes is the car or washing machine breaking down, a job lost or a cut-back in hours, sickness or indeed a cold winter then people are faced with the awful “heat or eat” choice. Remember there is no “typical” person or family who is forced to use a foodbank, but there are far too many people in the NW area who are very much at risk and extremely vulnerable to having to make that choice.

Foodbanks have become normalized and that is morally wrong and a very visible symptom of government failure to care for its people. Therefore, let it be a priority here that none of us will ever need to use a food bank, because none of us will allow it.

SECRETARIES REPORT

Karen Mullan, Strategic Development Manager

I was delighted to take up the role of Strategic Development Manager with Foyle Foodbank in April 2022. It was an exciting time for Foyle Foodbank as they embarked on Trussell Trusts Pathfinder Programme.

Foyle Foodbank is one of four foodbanks across Trussell Trust Northern Ireland network to become part of the Pathfinder programme.

Pathfinder programme looks at the reason why the person is attending the foodbank and helps to address that crisis with wrap around support both inhouse and in partnership with others. We support people to get back on their feet so that they never have to use a foodbank in the future.

In 2022 we looked at how we were operating, how we could improve our facilities, what support services we needed to put in place and who we need to work with to provide further support.

Over the coming months we improved our facilities, in café area we included soft seating, tv, children's toys and a book library. The shop area was moved to front of the facility and improved to include fresh fruit, veg, bread and dairy on a daily basis.

In October 2022 we employed a Project Support Worker, Louise Kane, through our Pathfinder funding.

Louise's role is to co-ordinate all referrals to our foodbank, work closely with referral agents, meet clients on a one to one basis, provide support and make referrals to other organisations. It was important for us that when people are making contact or being referred that they have one main point of contact and that they do not have to repeat their story.

We introduced a booking system for those attending the foodbank to provide privacy and allow time for a conversation.

We encourage clients to come and do their own shop, choice is very much a part of the dignified support we want people to have.

In the latter part of 2022, it was apparent that with rising costs more people were struggling to cover the household and living essentials. We seen more people using our foodbank for the first time and more people in work needing our support.

Winter was really difficulty for people and unfortunately with the lack of intervention and support from Governments we have continued to see more people continue to struggle.

Even in difficult times we were totally overwhelmed with the donations and support we received from the public and businesses. People knew how tough it was for others and wanted to support where they could, and we are extremely grateful to of those who donated.

As we head into another difficult year, I want to thank our team at the Foodbank, the staff, volunteers and board of directors for your commitment and hard work, I have no doubt by working together we will be to face the challenges and developments of the coming year.

I want to thank the team at the Trussell Trust in particular Jonny Currie, for the strategic direction and ongoing support.

VOLUNTEER TESTIMONY

Tony Murray

Sometimes people and families need a bit of support to get them through challenging times and its nice to be there for them. Foyle Foodbank plays an essential role in sustaining the clients who avail of our services. I get to bring some of my own life and work experiences to what we do here. I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of new friends and volunteering also gives me a sense of purpose.

CLIENT TESTIMONIES

- Took the pressure of the worry of my kids and family going hungry and helped with other bills such as heat and electric, so my family is kept warm, so grateful for this service.
- Support allowed me to feed my 6 children without worry.
- Coming to this foodbank has been life changing for me in many ways at such a difficult period in my life. It allowed me to continue with my degree and I even volunteer here now as well which has improved my mental health and also the mental health of others.
- I am able to buy a bag of coal with money I saved on food and stopped me sitting in cold.
- I have been meeting up with other women and I have come off my tablets and I walk a wee bit more.
- The support allowed me to be able to afford to pay for my daughter's school trip.
- I have no words that can express the thanks and support this has offer, it has taken so much pressure off this winter, I am so grateful.
- Amazing service and people, when I can, I will be returning the favour.
- Overall the foodbank has been great, everyone has been so supportive and respectful no matter what your situation or background, everyone is very respectful.
- I felt ashamed to have to use the foodbank but staff made me feel calm and staff are easy to talk to.
- At the beginning I found it very difficult but with help and support from staff it helped remove the stigma and embarrassment I initially felt. This is an absolutely amazing service that I could not have done the last few months without.

OUR VISION AND STRATEGY

Vision – to end hunger and food poverty in the Foyle area.

Strategy - is to respond to hunger and poverty in the Foyle area by acting as a conduit between those in need and the generous people of Foyle who donate non-perishable food, household and hygiene products. Almost all of the food/products we distribute have been donated by the general public and local businesses. We are indebted to their generosity.

SUPPORT PROVIDED



11,457 People supported



5159 Children supported



6325 Adults supported



Food collected 76,740.07 KG and Food distributed 77,656.10 KG

TOP THREE REASONS FOR HELP

1 low income 2 benefit changes 3 debt.

REFERRALS

In 2022 we had 118 referral agents registered. Individuals and families in need normally access our service through one of those referral agencies who issue an electronic voucher. People also self-refer by contacting us directly.

Referral agents include community and social housing organisations, care professionals, doctors, health visitors, social workers and other front-line agencies.

LOCATION

Foyle Foodbank operates from the Apex Living Centre at 15 Springtown Avenue.

OPENING TIMES

Office hours Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 3pm.

Foodbank service is available:

Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday: 11.00 am - 2.00 pm

FOOD COLLECTION/DONATION POINTS

- Sainsbury's, Strand Road
- Tesco, Quayside Shopping Centre, Strand Road
- Tesco Express, Crescent Link
- Rath Mór Shopping Centre, Creggan
- Maxol Service Station, Eglinton
- Pets at Home, Crescent Link

VOLUNTEERS

We rely almost entirely on the help of around 50 volunteers who come from a range of community and ethnic backgrounds. Many of them work regular shifts each week and during the year a total of **9,100** volunteer hours were recorded.

Foyle Foodbank could not operate without our fantastic volunteers. And we are indebted to them for their commitment, loyalty and dedication over the many years.

We are also greatly indebted to a number of local firms who, in seeking to foster corporate social responsibility, allow their staff to help out at the food bank from time to time during normal working hours. In 2022 Foods Connected, Seagate, H&A, APEX, Learning Pool and Lycra helped alongside many nursing and medical students from Ulster University.

FUNDING

In 2022 Foyle Foodbank received funding from The Trussell Trust and Derry City and Strabane District Council. Public donations allowed us to purchase fresh food and other items and support running costs.

TRUSSELL TRUST

Foyle Foodbank is affiliated to the Trussell Trust, a UK wide charity which supports an extensive network of food banks.

THANKS

We can only describe the support given to the Foodbank throughout the year as overwhelming and humbling. We received considerable quantities of food/hygiene and cleaning product donations and generous financial support, much of it anonymously provided by local businesses and members of the general public.