

2022 - 2023

1st March - 28th February

Annual Report



An outreach project of



About us

Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (formerly Bangor NI Foodbank) is an outreach project of Bangor Elim Church is a charity based in Bangor, Northern Ireland. The aim of the charity is to serve the local community through Projects which help people physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, spiritually and relationally especially in areas of need and short term crisis.

Recognising the significant deprivation in the local area and with a desire to encourage and empower vulnerable people to overcome poverty and crisis, BFCS was established. The charity launched a range of community-based projects that offer a holistic approach to tackling poverty and its underlying root causes. BFCS takes a multi-faceted approach in addressing these complex issues to maximise the potential for lasting community transformation.

These multi- faceted projects are making a real difference to the lives of thousands of people in the North Down area. BFCS has been privileged to see dignity and hope for the future restored to thousands of people who are trapped in poverty cycles, with many going on to reach their full potential in life.

Motivated by compassion for the most vulnerable in society and recognising the dignity and worth of every individual - the charity welcomes all people regardless of background, beliefs, nationality or disability. The charity is privileged to work alongside many statutory agencies and community/voluntary organisations towards the shared goal of tackling local poverty. It not only receives referrals from these organisations but also signposts and refers clients to them for specialist support. The charity seeks to avoid duplication in service provision. Where gaps exist or current provision is unable to cope with demand, it looks for ways to launch projects that meet genuine needs in a sustainable and effective way.

A word from our Chairperson

This year's annual report celebrates the FoodBank's 10th anniversary serving North Down! As I reflect on the foodbank's many accomplishments, I am awed by the amount that has been achieved and the legacy of our organisation. For the past 10 years, the Foodbank has help led the area's charitable food network through our shared mission to feed those facing food insecurity in our community. The challenges of the last few years have demonstrated the strength and resilience of our organisation. This was illustrated by our ability to pivot to meet the exponential increase in demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent inflationary environment currently impacting our service users. The food and monetary donations provided through food drives, events and individual giving is humbling to say the least. Thanks to our donors, volunteers, staff and the community, we continue to feed people facing food insecurity every month in communities throughout North Down. Our service population includes working-poor families, fixed-income seniors, low-income families, the unhoused and children living in poverty. We continue to innovate by creating new programs and initiatives that meet the evolving needs of our community that complement the work of our food security programs to help end the cycle of poverty. Every day, I am honored and humbled to lead a critical and vital nonprofit organisation that has such deep roots in our community.

We are excited and ready for another busy year as we help those in need, engage more with the community and build new relationships.



Gary Faulkner
Chairperson
Bangor Foodbank and Community Support





Achievements and performance

BFCS continues to provide emergency food to those in financial crisis within the Ards and North Down Council area.

BFCS have been in operation for ten years and has one full time member of staff, assisted by three part time staff members along with a team of 32 volunteers. It remains part of the national foodbank network seeded by the Trussell Trust. BFCS is one of more than 22 Independently run foodbanks/satellite distribution centres in Northern Ireland.

In the period from 1st March 2022 to 28th February 2023 BFCS collected 46,971 kg of food in donations and distributed 60,141 kg. This represented an increase in donations of 18% and a staggering increase of 132% in food distributed. This provided around 143,192 individual meals. Once again we have seen an increase in the number of local organisations/agencies partnering with us in the distribution of food vouchers.

We have also supplied household items such as cleaning materials, toiletries, nappies, and washing powder. We have seen a marked increase in the number of young families we are able to assist through the introduction of our new babybank, Ten Tiny toes. Through this new service we are able to provide a wide range of items such as; prams, cots, moses baskets, highchairs, walkers, bouncers, walkers and a range of toiletries.

In addition to the above food we delivered directly to those in need we supplied food items to The Simon Community, North Down YMCA and The Warehouse Newtownards, who all received support to assist them with projects they are delivering in the local community.

Working closely with The Warehouse Newtownards they collectively distributed over 1,100 Christmas Hampers. Families receiving hampers were nominated by our referral agencies and local church organisations connected to BFCS and The Warehouse. This was the ninth year we have been able to provide hampers thanks to the generosity of our supporters who donate food throughout the year. Also during the Christmas period BFCS was able to provide meat vouchers and toy vouchers to a number of families in need within the community.

Tesco Springhill, Sainsburys and ASDA Bangor continue to have a "Permanent Collection Point" (PCP) allowing their customers to donate food on a regular basis. Once again Tesco Springhill facilitated our annual three-day collection in November which provided great support to us in the run up to the Christmas season.

In December we saw a major increase in donations from customers to the "Permanent Collection Points" situated within Tesco, Sainsburys and Asda stores. This would not have been possible without the effort and co-operation of the store managers, staff and generosity of the general public.



Achievements and performance

We have identified that those in financial crisis are not only people who are currently unemployed but also working families. The increased trend of part time contracts, or zero-hour contracts, can mean that family incomes are much reduced or can cease without warning. Access to Universal Credit continues to cause hardship to families and individuals requiring help. In many cases people who are already finding it difficult to cope financially, are under more pressure in providing the very basic necessities for their families. A delay in benefit payments which could take weeks following a change of circumstances continued to cause stress to many families in need. This is more devastating to families with no savings, and remains a major factor in those needing to call on our foodbank in helping to feed their families. This year seen the completion of Phase 1 of our building work which comprises of a multi-function meeting space and refreshment area. This new facility has enabled us to provide valuable meeting space for several service providers such as; Women's Aid, uHub, MenCap, Sure Start and Home Start.

To spread some much need Christmas cheer and with the help of the Catering and Hospitality department from the Bangor Campus of the South Eastern Regional College, we provided over 350 members of our local community with a 4 course festive feast complete with live entertainment. For a lot of the guests this was the only Christmas meal they would be enjoying.

Volunteers

BFCS operates with the support of in excess of 32 volunteers from the local community including a number of individuals that we have supported in the past. The volunteers offer support in the foodbank three sessions per week, and in the collection and transferring donations from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and other local donors that provide food to BFCS.

BFCS would not been able to operate efficiently and effectively without the help and support from our incredible and dedicated team of volunteers who in the past year have contributed 2,796 hours of their time processing donations and packing and distributing food parcels. In addition the support afforded by donors, trustees and supporters is invaluable and has supported BFCS in achieving their aims and objectives. Their enthusiasm, generosity and commitment to tackling and eradicating hunger in our city drives our mission forward and we are inspired by their unwavering dedication, passion and kindness.



GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS

Our social security system should support anyone in need of help, but more and more people are finding it impossible to make ends meet because Universal Credit is falling short, and it's pushing people to food banks.

We need an Essentials Guarantee

The basic rate of Universal Credit should at least cover the cost of essentials like food, household bills and travel costs, but it is not currently set according to any objective assessment of what people need.

Right now, this is only £85 a week for a single adult. That means there's a significant shortfall between people's living costs and their income, which is forcing many to skip meals, switch off essential appliances such as fridges, and unable to pay essential bills. That's why we're working with the Trussell Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to call for an Essentials Guarantee within Universal Credit, which means the basic rate at least covers life's essentials and that support can never be pulled below that level.

Our Aim

Our aim in the coming year will be to continue to serve our local community and support people experiencing food poverty and financial crisis and we will endeavor to further embed financial inclusion and income maximisation support into our everyday operations to ensure that people who visit our foodbank are receiving all of the financial support they are entitled to. We will also be continuing our campaigning efforts and allocating additional time and resources to aid our mission to end poverty and hunger in our city through the engagement of local communities and policy makers. Thank you to everyone who has made what we've done this year possible, and we hope we'll earn their continued support through another busy and exciting year!



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