



The Welcome Centre

food bank and more...



The Welcome Centre Annual Report 2023

For the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023

Chief Executive's welcome



2022 - 2023 has been another incredibly busy year for The Welcome Centre, our busiest ever. The cost of living crisis has meant that yet again we have seen more and more families and individuals in our local community experiencing crises and needing our support.

We have had to make a lot of changes behind the scenes to enable us to meet this growing need, including restructuring and growing our team, and moving our food bank from our town centre premises to our warehouse. Luckily our fantastic team of staff and volunteers has been engaged and supportive throughout, and the end result is that we have been able to support more people through both our food bank and advice service than ever before.

Throughout these challenging times, our food bank has operated uninterrupted, including continuing to offer a home delivery service for food packs, alongside clients being able to visit us to collect their packs in person. In fact, we haven't just continued to deliver our service, we've improved it as well! We introduced route planning software to make our home deliveries more efficient, reviewed and improved our packs for people with special dietary requirements, and trialled the introduction of retail vouchers to complement our core food bank offering.



This last change is especially significant, as it allows us to give the people we support more dignity and choice, which is one of our strategic aims.

Another of our strategic aims is to expand our Advice, Guidance and Support service, so that we can help more clients transition beyond needing the food bank. Over the



We have given out 23,398 crisis packs, 18.6% more than we gave out in the previous year. We have supported 6,499 people in our local community, including 2,636 children. And we have given 1,898 households additional support through our Advice, Guidance and Support service.

summer we expanded our team, and we now have a full time manager supported by four caseworkers and a team of volunteers. This expansion means we are now able to offer a greater range of interventions to a greater number of our clients, and the team has been busy completing triages and welfare checks, signposting and referring to partner agencies, and providing emotional and listening ear support. We also continued to offer our budgeting and benefits appointments, digital inclusion scheme, in-house fuel bank, and a grant programme providing emergency funding for essential items.

Our final strategic aim is, through partnership working, to actively engage in awareness raising to bring about change in social provision in the UK. Locally we've been an active member of the Kirklees Tackling Poverty Partnership and Feeding West Yorkshire, and nationally we are part of the

Independent Food Aid Network. Through these groups we're able to share the experiences of our clients, learn from partner organisations, and ultimately work towards achieving bigger picture change to improve clients' circumstances.



3,571 households accessed our foodbank

We are incredibly proud of The Welcome Centre's achievements in what has proved to be another very challenging year. As you can probably tell, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make the Centre a success, and we hope that this report will give you an insight into the work we do, the challenges we face, and the contribution we make to helping people in our community in their time of need.



Of course, these achievements do not belong to The Welcome Centre alone. Without our supporters and partners we would not have been able to achieve what we have. Even against the backdrop of the cost of living crisis, individuals, community groups, businesses, and funders have been incredibly generous, and without their generosity and trust we would not have been able to achieve what we have. So all that's left for me to say is thank you to everyone who supports our work throughout the year, and also of course to our dedicated team of volunteers, staff and trustees for their continued hard work to develop and improve the work of The Welcome Centre.

Thank you all, we could not do it without you.

Ellie Coteau

Chief Executive

Behind the scenes at the food bank

We're here to support families and individuals in crisis in our community by providing essential items, including food, toiletries, baby and pet supplies, and household items (bedding, towels, crockery, pots and pans). We continue to run a hybrid service, with food bank clients able to access home deliveries or in-person pack collections at our Lord St building.



Last year, we gave out enough food to provide **394,466** meals



Last year, we gave out **23,398** crisis packs

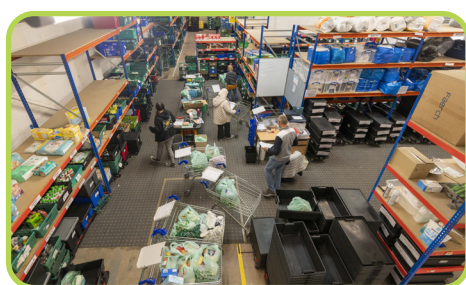
...of which **14,254** were food packs

An update from our food bank team



The last 12 months has been a period of significant change and growth for our food bank.

Back in October, we relocated our food bank packing operation from our Lord St building to our warehouse in Lockwood, where our existing warehouse team welcomed their colleagues with open arms! Moving to the warehouse required a lot of work behind the scenes, and a lot of changes to how we work, not just where we work!



We had building work done to make the warehouse more suitable for the larger team now working there, putting in extra office space for staff, an additional toilet, and most importantly a bigger kitchen area for our volunteers to enjoy a well-earned cuppa on their break!

Our staff and volunteers worked together to improve our systems; along the way we changed our warehouse layout, pack contents, and workflow. As a result of the

changes that we made, we are now in a much better place to support our clients. We have the room we need to work safely, and the space to store the stock that we need. We also have more space at Lord Street to allow us to offer more than a food pack, but more on that later.

£479,200:
the total value of the food we've given out in the last year.

Behind the scenes, staff have also been busy improving our stock procurement, to make sure we get the best possible value for money when purchasing food and other items to give out to clients. Staff have also implemented technological solutions to improve our efficiency and client experience, including route planning software for our delivery driver, that automatically texts clients a delivery slot so they know when to expect us.



Another significant food bank change we've made this year is to start trialling the use of retail vouchers, to supplement



our crisis packs. Over summer, we gave out retail vouchers to families with school-aged children. This was in addition to their food packs, to help families manage the additional costs of having children at home in the school holidays. Additionally, clients in need of household items were given the option of receiving the items, or a retail voucher to choose and purchase their own items. A lot of the household items we give out are purchased by ourselves so there isn't a significant cost to us in offering clients shopping vouchers instead, and it gives them a lot more choice about the items they receive. We have found that some clients really appreciate the dignity and flexibility of a retail voucher, and some clients really appreciate the convenience of receiving items, so it's great that we can offer both. Retail vouchers won't replace our crisis packs, but they're a great way to supplement our packs, for the benefit of clients.

We'll be continuing to work hard to improve our food bank offering for clients over the year to come, with a focus on giving clients more choice about the food they receive in their packs.



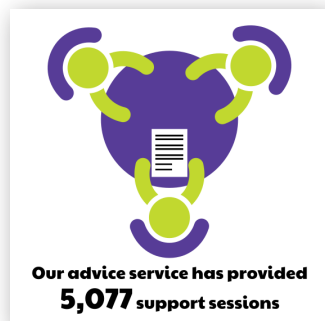
More than a food bank

Providing people in crisis with food and other essential items is just part of what we do. We also offer people visiting the food bank Advice, Guidance and Support (AGS), to help them get back on track. Our AGS services include a fuel bank, client grant programme, and digital inclusion scheme, alongside providing emotional support and a listening ear when people need it most.



An update from our Advice, Guidance and Support team

Our Advice, Guidance and Support team has grown over the past 12 months, and we now have a manager supported by four caseworkers.



As a staff team, our focus is on helping clients address the underlying issues that are causing them to need food bank support – it's a really varied role and no two days are the same! One day might be spent processing client grants for essential items like furniture and white goods, the next working with partner agencies to broaden our offering to clients, and the next doing one to one client appointments. We are building our in-house expertise on a broad range of issues, and have staff leads on immigration support, health and wellbeing, budgeting and benefits, children and families, and fuel poverty.

Our staff team is supported by a fantastic team of volunteers, who go above and beyond to make clients feel welcome and supported in their every interaction with The Welcome Centre. Volunteers provide all of our clients with a warm welcome, and an initial triage chat to better understand their needs. Volunteers help clients with a range of interventions, including accessing our fuel bank and digital inclusion scheme, and they provide a much needed listening ear and emotional support.

We have been doing a lot more work supporting families with children over the last 12 months, and some of our fantastic external partners have made donations to help us give those children something special:

- Street Bikes donated children's bikes for us to pass on to families as Christmas presents
- The Zone gave free spaces for children we're supporting to attend their summer and Christmas activity camps
- Fizzy Lizards, Eureka, and Kirklees Active Leisure all gave free tickets for children we're supporting to visit their attractions over summer
- Lawrence Batley Theatre gave us free tickets to their Christmas pantomime for the families we're supporting

These donations from partners make such a huge difference to families, and elevate our offering to families beyond crisis support.

We have also continued to build on our already strong partnerships with both the Money Advice Unit and Kirklees Citizens Advice, supporting clients with budgeting and income maximisation.

We also launched a new partnership with The Howarth Foundation, who provide specialist support for our most vulnerable clients, struggling with homelessness and unemployment. The Howarth Foundation offers long term, intensive support providing people with upskilling, confidence building and ultimately securing long term, sustainable employment.



Over the coming 12 months we have plans to launch some exciting new partnerships, to further improve our offering for clients.

The last 12 months at a glance

- **We gave out more than £12,000 of fuel grants, and more than £33,000 of grants for furniture, white goods, and other essentials.** These grants are the difference between people going home to a cold, unfurnished property, and being able to heat their food pack, take a warm shower and sleep in a bed.
- **We provided 49 clients with employment support, in partnership with Groundwork.** For clients trying to find work, our partnership with Groundwork provides handheld support back into the workplace, helping them with everything from CV and interview skills, to grants for travel costs and uniforms.
- **We gave out 34 mobile phones, and 368 SIM cards with 6 months of free data.** In today's world having digital access is an essential part of life. Giving phones and SIMs to clients provides a lifeline, enabling them to do all the things so many of us take for granted – phone a friend, book a GP appointment, and so much more.
- **We provided more than 400 clients with emotional support.** For many people, coming to the food bank is a really difficult step to take, especially if they're already struggling with their mental health. Being able to provide a non-judgmental, listening ear is one of the most important things we do, and clients tell us how much they value feeling safe, respected, and heard.
- **We provided funding for 12 successful Debt Relief Orders, writing off a combined debt of £194,762.02.** This intervention resulted in these 12 households no longer requiring assistance from our food bank.

Danielle's story

Danielle was referred to The Welcome Centre by the Local Welfare Provision, who she had contacted when things had become too much. Danielle was visibly nervous when she arrived to collect her food pack as many people often are. Our Advice, Guidance and Support service sat with Danielle and her daughter while they waited. Danielle explained her situation:



I WAS WORKING AS A FULL-TIME SALES ASSISTANT BUT MY PRIVATE LANDLORD INCREASED MY RENT, THEN I NEEDED TO BUY ITEMS FOR SCHOOL, AND FINALLY, TO TOP IT ALL, I HAD TO REPLACE A PART ON MY CAR.

This left Danielle with no money for food. She explained that if this had been last year, she would have just about gotten by, but with her wages not increasing and her expenses increasing she found herself in a position where if she had any unexpected expenditure, she had no choice but to use her grocery budget for this. Danielle broke down as she explained that she didn't know what she would do over the winter months when her fuel bills increased.

Our Advice, Guidance and Support team updated Danielle on all of the cost of living support available to her. They also introduced her to The Uniform Exchange for any future school uniform costs and advised her that The Welcome Centre would support her in the future with a small grant if she experienced any other unexpected expenses in the future.

What our clients say about us:



Your service has been so wonderful, thoughtful and perfect, thank you.



Thanks for all your help in hard times.



Thanks for years of support.



Your help and support has saved my life - without exaggeration!



I always walk out feeling at least a little bit better. Thank you from my heart.



My food cupboard looks healthy and so do myself and my lads

Our volunteers



We have a small staff team, supported by more than 120 volunteers. Our volunteers are what make us 'us', and they're at the heart of everything we do. Volunteers do everything from collecting and sorting donations and making food packs, to taking referrals and welcoming the people we support.

Volunteers come from all walks of life to help at the Centre for a few hours each week, and together with our team of staff, they make sure that everyone who comes to us for support receives the best possible service we can offer.

We rely on our volunteer team giving more than 420 hours of time each week, to deliver our service.

How our volunteers feel about The Welcome Centre



I feel very happy about volunteering at The Welcome Centre. I feel glad that I can help people who are in great need and wish that I could do more.



It is extremely well run and one of the best organisations I have ever been a part of.



There's a great feeling of 'togetherness' about the team. It's good to be involved.



I have found The Welcome Centre to be a very warm and friendly organisation and I think the name is very well chosen as everyone is indeed very welcoming.



Staff work very hard and give excellent support to volunteers. Managing volunteers well is a very valuable skill and they are very good at it. There is a very good balance between direction and allowing people to work at their own pace and in their own way.

How our staff feel about our volunteers



Volunteers are the heartbeat of The Welcome Centre. Without them, we wouldn't be able to meet the needs of our clients. We have such a broad mix of volunteers from different walks of life. Each one brings with them so much wisdom and knowledge. There's never a quiet moment with our volunteers. That's the upside of having so many! There's always a conversation to be had or a debate to be discussed. We have a truly wonderful group of volunteers at The Welcome Centre, each with their own personalities that boost team morale no matter the challenges we face.



Without the generosity of our amazing AGS volunteers giving up countless hours to help us deliver our advice service, it would not be possible for us to operate. AGS volunteers each bring a unique quality to their shift. Some are hilarious and crack jokes with clients to make them feel at ease, some are practically minded and ensure that clients have all the provision they need, and some are fantastic at offering a listening ear in a client's time of crisis. I am so proud to work with each and every one of them and I thank them all for being so supportive and encouraging of our team's expansion and visions for the future.



Being surrounded by food bank volunteers who go out of their way to provide such a fantastic service for our clients is a huge reason that I enjoy working at The Welcome Centre. Volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge, diverse characters, and senses of humour to our team. It is great to have people around from a plethora of different backgrounds in one space, working together towards a shared goal. Each team has its own personality and with that different ways of working, providing insightful ideas, their unique take on what we do, fresh energy, and new smiles and enthusiasm, which enables us to do what we do.

Our supporters

The Welcome Centre depends on the support of our community – without the donations of money and food that we receive from individuals, community groups, businesses, churches, schools and mosques, we simply couldn't do what we do.



An update from our Fundraising Manager

Wow, I can't believe I've been the Fundraising Manager at The Welcome Centre for a decade!

I'm still discovering new things and finding fresh ways to bring in new donations and support. This year, grant funding was added to my role, and I'm thrilled to say we had more than 20 applications approved. These grants funded food, salaries, rent, and equipment for our food bank. Grant funding is really competitive, so it's fantastic that The Welcome Centre was able to secure all of these funds.

At the end of 2022, our Aviva Match Funding campaign, which we are doing again this year, was a massive hit. In just six weeks, we raised more than £68,000 from our community, and Aviva's matching funds. That money helped us expand our Advice, Guidance, and Support service, which meant we could support nearly 2,000 households with grants, budgeting, and signposting. We also used some of the funds to purchase stock for our packs and for fuel grants. Despite the tough financial situation in the UK, we're hoping our 2023 campaign will be just as successful, so we can help even more people in need our community.

Keeping up with the ever-changing world of social media and connecting with new people has been a bit of a challenge too, but it's a crucial part of keeping in touch with our wider community. We've even jumped on the TikTok bandwagon and are slowly but surely growing our followers. We're keeping all our other social platforms fresh and up to date too, especially when it comes to supporting national campaigns, like the Trussell Trust's 'Guarantee Our Essentials' campaign.

This year was also the first year we have ever received a significant legacy donation. Legacy giving isn't something many people want to talk about, but leaving a legacy gift is one of the best ways to help us keep supporting our clients, well into the future.



Last but not least, it's been a pleasure meeting some new businesses that want to help us out. Thanks to Blake Clough Consulting, Waste Experts, Accu, and Magic Rock for choosing us as their charity of choice. Our community continues to amaze

me, especially in these tough times. The Welcome Centre has had another successful year of fundraising because of the generosity and kindness of our community, so thank you to each of you that took the time to show your support and donate.

Thank you to all of our supporters

A huge thank you to all of the local businesses, schools, churches, mosques, community groups, and individuals who have supported us throughout the past year. Without your financial support, donations of food and other items, and fundraising efforts, we would not have been able to achieve what we've achieved this year.

In particular, we'd like to thank the following:

Grant Funders



The Charles & Elsie Sykes Trust



FV E Brook Charitable Trust

THE FINE & COUNTRY FOUNDATION
- FIGHTING HOMELESSNESS -

THE JULIA AND HANS RAUSING TRUST

Gay & Peter Hartley's HILLARDS Charitable Trust



THE INMAN CHARITY

Business Partners



Blake Clough CONSULTING



TOWNGATE PLC

STAFFLEX
Honest Trusted Recruitment



unite
the UNION

first4lawyers

syngenta
Bringing plant-potential to life

Business Supporters

AFD Software • Agro Smart • Allsops Ltd • Cummins Turbo Technology • DBW
Distinctive Chesterfield • Fareshare • GPS Ltd • Greggs • Handmade Bakery
Longwood Engineering Company Ltd • M&S • Morrisons • Nando's • Sainsbury's
Skipton Building Society • Suma • Towerbridge International • Yorkshire Housing

Community Supporters

Honley Samba Band • Huddersfield Parish Church • Kirkburton Parish Council
Locala • Lindley Methodist Church • Rotary Club of Huddersfield
St. Barnabus' Church • Slaithwaite Methodist Church

thewelcomecentre.org