



Wirral Foodbank Annual Report 2020 – 2021

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Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in England charity number 1167967

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Wirral Foodbank Annual Report September 2020 – August 2021



Covid-19 Pandemic

As in the previous operating year, the most significant factor affecting Wirral Foodbank during 2020-21 was the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Distribution Centres**

In September 2020, a limited number of Distribution Centres was operating. Link Church and the Salvation Army co-operated to provide a centre every day from Monday to Saturday in central Birkenhead, while the Grosvenor Centre in Wallasey was open on three mornings a week. Some outlying centres also gradually re-opened during the Autumn. During the third national lockdown, between January and March 2021, the Wirral Council Foodhub re-opened and our Distribution Centres were suspended. Since the end of March 2021, Distribution Centres have gradually re-opened. In order to reduce the amount of time clients spend on the premises, boxes of food for different sizes of household have been packed at the warehouse and delivered to distribution centres. This arrangement has subsequently been modified, so that clients are given some choice over the contents of their food parcel; this reduces waste and gives clients more dignity as their preferences are taken into consideration. Since re-opening, volunteers and clients at Distribution Centres have been asked to wear masks, observe social distancing and sanitise hands and surfaces.

- **Finance**

Residents of Wirral have always given generously to Wirral Foodbank, but they have surpassed themselves during the pandemic. It was necessary for our Treasurer (Mike Donnan), the Finance Committee and the Trustees to devote more time than usual to financial planning, in order to ensure that the unexpectedly generous giving would be used most effectively. A substantial sum was set aside as a “covid recovery fund,” some of which has been transferred to Wirral Foodbank Plus.

- **Referrals**

A serious limitation to the work of Wirral Foodbank during the pandemic has been the difficulty experienced by many potential clients in obtaining vouchers. Staff of referral agencies have been working from home and the council one-stop shops have been replaced by a telephone number. So people who need face-to-face consultations with an adviser or who lack access to a telephone or who are incapable of sustaining a potentially lengthy and complex telephone conversation may have been unable to obtain a voucher. Wirral Foodbank has continually encouraged agencies, including Wirral Council, to reinstate face-to-face accessibility.

- **Alternative providers**

During the pandemic, there has been a great public awareness of food poverty, especially amongst families. Various providers, including schools and “pop-up” neighbourhood groups, have collected and distributed food to households perceived as being in need. After thinking long and hard about how and to what extent Wirral Foodbank could support such alternative providers without compromising its own guiding principles, the Trustees eventually adopted a policy for making grants to such bodies. Wirral Foodbank has also explored possible ways of collaborating with schools and social supermarkets.



St Vincent’s Centre

The attempts by the local branches of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SV) to set up a multi-agency support centre in Birkenhead or Wallasey continued during 2020-21 and culminated in the opening of the St Vincent Centre on Grange Road West, Birkenhead in September 2021.

Wirral Foodbank is currently open at the St Vincent Centre every afternoon from Monday to Friday. This is by far the busiest of our Distribution Centres.



Wirral Foodbank Plus

As agreed the previous year, the new charity, Wirral Foodbank Plus, began operations on 1 September 2020. Its sole function is to provide financial support for the employment of advisers to Foodbank clients.

Several supporters of Wirral Foodbank give regularly to FB+ and we have also received some one-off donations. Because of the generosity of Wirral residents during the pandemic, it has unexpectedly not been necessary to seek grants in support of this service from outside Wirral Foodbank itself. FB+ currently employs one full-time adviser, two part-time advisers and some administrative support.



Pathfinder Project

As mentioned in last year’s report, the aim of Trussell Trust’s Pathfinder Project is to

remove (or, more realistically, reduce) the need for food banks. Our Foodbank Plus programme is an example of the kind of development which the Pathfinder Project wishes to encourage other foodbanks to introduce. The Trustees discussed the Pathfinder Project on several

occasions during 2020-21. After initially assuming that our commitment to the ideals of the project implied we should fully participate in it, the Trustees subsequently recognised that some elements of the project might not be appropriate in our circumstances. Eventually, they decided to commit Wirral Foodbank to the principles and goals of the Pathfinder Project, but not at present to participate in the project itself.



Taxis

Some of our clients live near enough to a Distribution Centre to be able to walk home carrying the supplies we give them; some of those bring a friend or family member to help. Others arrive by car (their own or that of a friend or relative). However, there have always been some clients who could not easily transport themselves and their food.

In 2021, the Trustees were delighted to accept a generous offer from Argyle Satellite taxis to provide free taxi rides for Foodbank clients. This has become a very valuable and much-appreciated part of the service we can offer.



Policies and Procedures

One of the main tasks undertaken by the Trustees in recent years has been to navigate the transition from a small organization with informal structures to a larger, more complex organization with policies following best practice in every aspect of its work.

The main aspect of this task undertaken during 2020-21 related to the employment of staff. A small working party of Trustees reviewed staff job descriptions, drafted a staff handbook (based on a template from Trussell Trust) and proposed the introduction of a system of annual appraisals. These proposals were discussed with the current staff and in due course adopted by the Trustees. Job descriptions for Trustees and Chair of Trustees and a volunteer handbook were also agreed.

Policies which were introduced or reviewed during 2020-21 were: Financial Controls, Expenses, Consulting Stakeholders, Whistleblowing, Distribution Centre Guidelines during Covid, Distribution Centre Guidelines post Covid, Complaints Procedure, Lone Working – Employees, Lone Working – Volunteers, Health & Safety, Driving, IT & Communications, Safeguarding, Mission and Values, Declarations of Interest, Abusive Behaviour.



Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Towards the end of 2020, the Trustees were told in confidence that Wirral Foodbank had been nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Three Deputy Lords Lieutenant were responsible for assessing this nomination and making a recommendation.

Because of covid restrictions, the assessment was conducted remotely, and consisted of a group interview with key Trustees, staff and significant friends of Wirral Foodbank. The award was announced on 2 June 2021 and presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside at a ceremony on 4 August attended by representatives from the office, warehouse and distribution centres. It was a very joyful occasion.

Membership of Trustee Board

On 31 August 2021, three Trustees came to the end of their current period of office. Mike Cleave was re-appointed for a further three years. Diane Casewell did not seek re-appointment, while Colin Hart was not eligible to be re-appointed, because he had served as Chair for the maximum period. The other Trustees expressed their appreciation of the work of Colin and Diane during the previous six and five years respectively. Phil Davies was elected as Chair of Wirral Foodbank for three years from 1 September 2021 and Sarah Caines and Laura Cross were appointed as Trustees for the same period.

One of the few ways the Trustees could find of lightening the workload of Richard Roberts, our General Manager, was to appoint a Minutes Secretary to the Trustees. Katie Brown, from Wirral Council support staff, kindly volunteered to undertake this role, and has been doing so since March 2021.

Revd. Colin Hart, Chair of Wirral Foodbank

A message from our new Chair, Phillip Davies



I was delighted to succeed Colin Hart as Chair of Wirral Foodbank Trustees in September 2021. My background is in local government. I was an elected member of Wirral Council, representing Birkenhead and Tranmere ward, for twenty-eight years and retired from the Council in 2019. I was Leader of the Council from 2012-19. I have been involved as a Trustee of Wirral Foodbank since its inception and, while it is extremely sad that Foodbanks are necessary in one of the richest countries in the world, I have been grateful that Wirral Foodbank has been able to help individuals and families in need for over ten years. The work of our wonderful volunteers has made this possible and I am extremely grateful to them. I would like to thank Colin Hart, our previous Chair, for his excellent contribution to Wirral Foodbank. He has worked tirelessly both as Chair of Trustees and a volunteer and he thoroughly deserves our sincere appreciation.'

Phil Davies, Chair of Trustees, Wirral Foodbank

THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Trustees and of the many people who received help from Wirral Foodbank during the year we express our thanks to the following:

- those who have given food *via* churches or supermarkets or directly as companies or individuals.
- those who have given money to Wirral Foodbank and Wirral Foodbank Plus, especially those who do so *via* standing order and Gift Aid.
- the churches which host distribution centres on their premises.
- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council for their ongoing support
- Argyle Satellite Taxi Service
- Michael Donnan & Co, who have continued to undertake our book-keeping on a *pro bono* basis
- our paid staff
- and all our volunteers

Wirral Foodbank is grateful for the support of:



Trustees
(31st August 2021)



Revd. Colin Hart
Chair
(retired 31 August 21)



Phillip Davies
(Chair of Wirral Foodbank from
1st September 2022)



Mike Donnan
Hon. Treasurer



Paula Walker



Diane Casewell
(retired 31 August 21)



Sue Chadwick

**No photograph
available**

**Father Philp
McGovern**



Laura Cross
(appointed 1 September 21)



Paul Franklin



Mike Cleave

**No photograph
available**

Rose Mullarkey



Sarah Caines
(appointed 1 September 21)

Foodbank Team



In July 2021, Joseph Grealis retired from Wirral Foodbank. Joseph was appointed to the post of Warehouse Assistant in September 2018, prior to that he had volunteered for many years at Link with Emmanuel Foodbank Centre. We would like to express our thanks for his service to the foodbank.

Finance Report

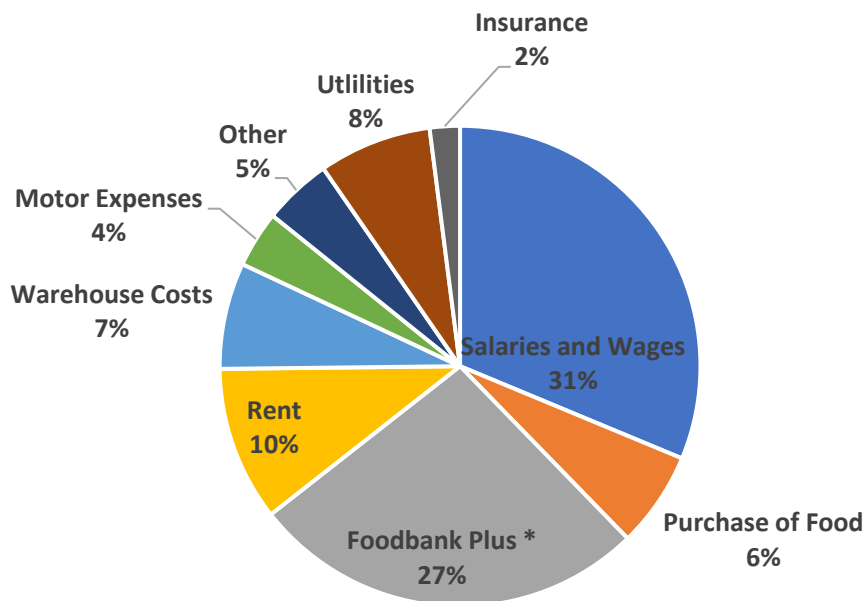
Mike Donnan, Trustee and Hon. Treasurer

During the reporting period, and beyond, we have experienced the generosity of donors, both in food and financially. Financial donations contribute to the running costs of the foodbank, and most importantly in supporting our objective, along with Trussell Trust, to end the need of foodbanks across the UK, but particularly in Wirral.

As reported last year, the Trustees agreed to establish a Post-Covid legacy fund, to support specific projects of Wirral Foodbank with the aim of addressing the underlying issues of food poverty. Our key project thus far has been Foodbank Plus, whereby we commission Citizens Advice Wirral to deliver advice service to individuals who attend the foodbank. Further information regarding Foodbank Plus is included in the Operational Report.

In 2021/22, we will be working with [Wirral Mind](#), to deliver mental health support across our foodbank centres. Conscious of the energy crisis that many in our community are facing we will also be launching a pilot with [Energy Projects Plus](#) to provide advice and support.

Breakdown of Expenditure



* Represents actual expenditure in 2020/21, a further £57,126 was transferred to Foodbank Plus to meet the costs of the project in 2021/22.

Copy of accounts 2020/21 available at [charity-search \(charitycommission.gov.uk\)](https://charity-search.charitycommission.gov.uk)

Operational Report 2020/2021

Richard Roberts, General Manager, Wirral Foodbank

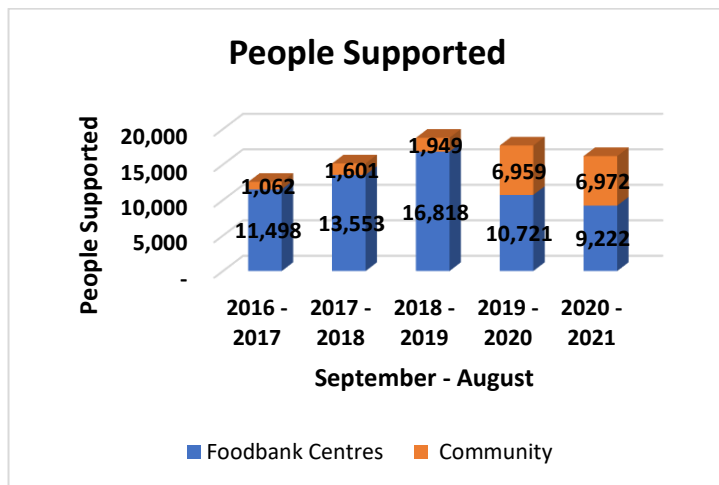
The need to operate a Covid safe environment continued to be our priority. It was necessary to change our operational procedures; pre-Covid, we would deliver bulk supplies of food to our Distribution Centres, who would then make-up emergency food parcels for those visiting our Distribution Centres. This changed, with the Warehouse making up and delivering pre-packed emergency food parcels, to be given to individuals in need of emergency food support. This avoided unnecessary delays and crowding at our Centres.

Many who volunteered at our Distribution Centres missed the opportunity to have a chat over tea/coffee with individuals who visit the Foodbank. This was a valuable time to listen, to allow the time and space for individuals to open-up and explain why they had come to the foodbank. We hope to re-introduce refreshments in the coming year. In the meantime, the Foodbank Office volunteers telephoned individuals who had attended a Distribution Centre, to offer further help and support through Wirral Foodbank Plus.

In 2020, we moved from paper based to electronic foodbank vouchers. This involved training all voucher holders and volunteers in a new way of working. The benefit of electronic vouchers enabled voucher holders, many who were working from home, to issue foodbank vouchers remotely. Clients received their foodbank voucher over the telephone and then visited one of our Foodbank Centres.

We are grateful for the support of our volunteers and staff in adapting to new ways of working.

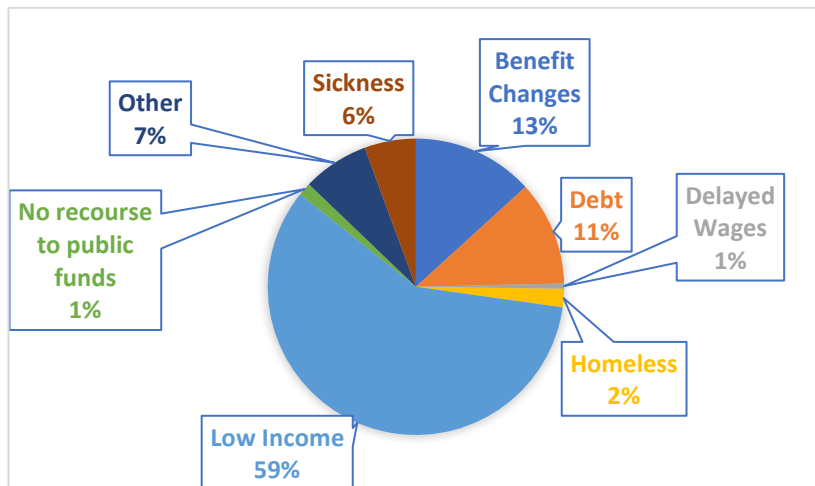
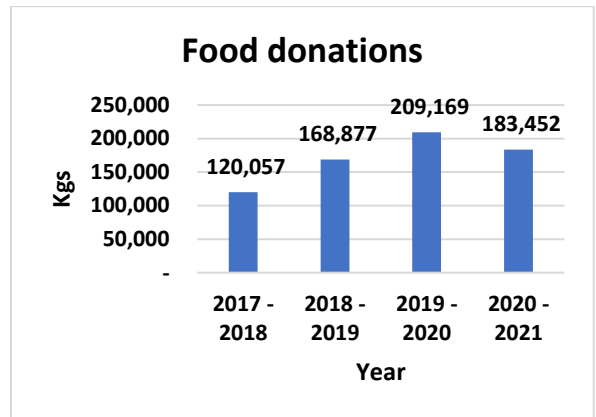
Facts and Figures



September 2020 – August 2021, demand for emergency food support was comparable to the previous year. The figures include direct and indirect emergency food support. Clients referred to our foodbank, who presented with a foodbank voucher, received emergency food support “direct” from one of our foodbank centres. We also provided “indirect” emergency food to other agencies, in particular schools, children centres and other recognized charities, who provided emergency food to individuals.

It was no surprise that during the pandemic there was an increase in the number of people receiving indirect support. Wirral Foodbank came together with other local charities, to support those in need of emergency food support.

We were grateful for the support of all who gave so generously in food and monetary donations. Despite the economic situation and increase in food costs, we were able to meet the needs of those who sought emergency food support from Wirral Foodbank. In 2022/21 we received an equivalent of 185 transit vans full of food



The reasons for needing emergency food support have changed from previous years. In the past, changes to benefits were the main reason for needing support, this has now been replaced with “low income.” Many agencies and foodbanks are reporting that many who attend our foodbank centres have maximized all income opportunities, but despite this, individuals still do not have enough income to cover their basic living requirements. Read more in the latest [State of Hunger - The Trussell Trust](#).

Wirral Foodbank Plus

Provision of food should not be the solution to poverty, regardless of how it is distributed.

In 2020, we were successful in securing two-year funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and Asda Fight the Hunger Campaign. This, along with other donations received, enabled us to commit to the project until August 2022. At the time of writing, we have committed to fund the project for a further two years, until August 2024. This been made possible due to the generosity of donations received.

Foodbank Plus is a vital component in the support offered to individuals who come to our foodbank centres.

In 2020/21 Foodbank Plus supported 3,124 clients, dealing with 7,419 issues, including debt, benefit etc. As a direct result of Foodbank Plus intervention a financial gain of £73,000 was achieved for clients, this included debt write-off, additional benefits, provision of white goods and access to other charitable funding.

Wirral Foodbank Plus makes a real difference, as the following case studies show:

*Client A received a payment of **£1,104.53** into her bank account within a week of our support. She told us that she had not expected this payment and was overjoyed.... she would not have been able to contact the DWP without our service. Since receiving this amount the client has not required any support with food and feels that she is more in control of her situation.*

.....

*Client B was awarded **£40.87 per week/ £177.10** Discretionary Housing Payment, making her rent shortfall reduce from **£240 per month to £62**, so much more affordable. Also, the application for the grant was approved and the full debt of **£370** repaid in full.*

*Foodbank Plus identified that there was a deduction from her Employment and Support Allowance of **£33.00 per week, and** this was negotiated down to **£20.00 per week**, which the client felt was affordable. In total, the client was **£53.87 per week/ £2,801** per year better off following our advice.*

Volunteers



The Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Mr Mark Blundell, with representatives of Wirral Foodbank.

In June 2021, Wirral Foodbank volunteers were honoured with The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK, equivalent to the MBE for volunteer groups.

The award was given for “delivering outstanding service to residents of Wirral, providing emergency food, advice and advocacy.” There was also special designation to QAVS awardees that “provided impactful support to the community in response to the pandemic last year - either by managing a significant increase in their usual work or providing extra support in other ways.”

Furthermore, two volunteers from Wirral Foodbank will attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in 2022, along with other recipients of this year’s Award. More on this next year!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you to all our volunteers for their dedication and support, their tireless efforts enable us to deliver a vital service to our community.