

## Wansbeck Valley Food Bank in Ashington:

### October 2023 - January 2024

Our last report to Ashington Town Council covered the period June – September 2023. At that time we had been without a paid Admin worker for three months (until August 2023) and were behind on producing statistics. The current report covers the remainder of the calendar year and the first month of 2024.

#### **Full Year:**

For context, the numbers of adults and children supported by our emergency food aid in Ashington since our establishment is as follows:

2014 = 866

2015 = 1141

2016 = 1599

2017 = 1984

2018 = 2154

2019 = 3762

2020 = 4836

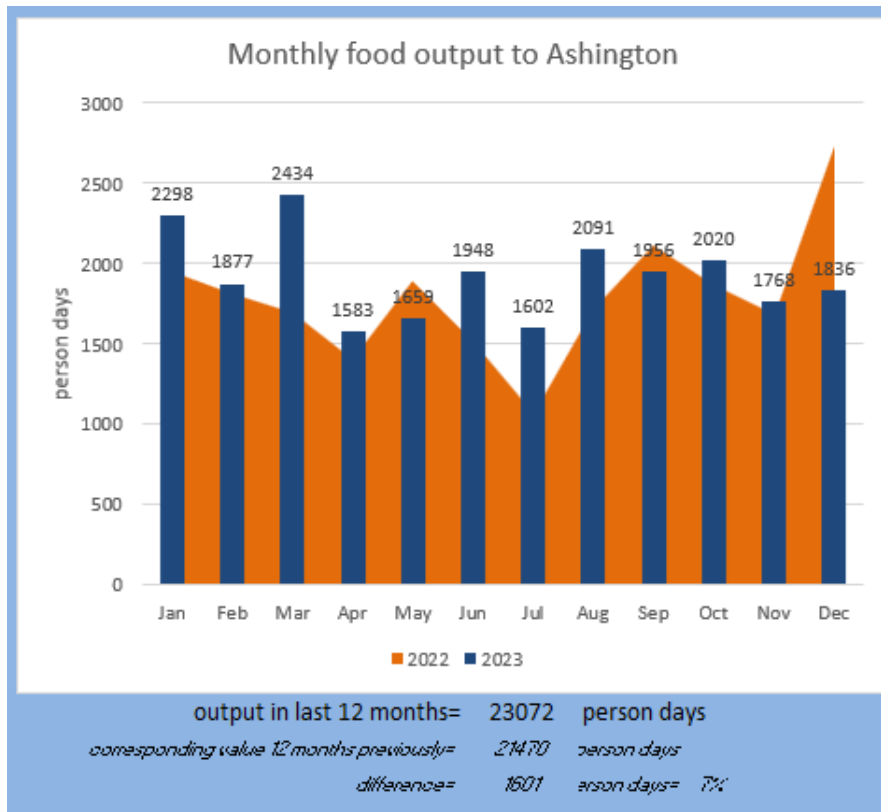
2021 = 5335

2022 = 5447 (3621 adults and 1826 children)

2023 = 6134 (4010 adults and 2124 children).

Therefore there was a growth of 687 in the numbers of people supported in 2023 as compared to 2022, i.e. +12.6%.

The graph below shows the picture of food days distributed in Ashington throughout 2023, and the text below it gives the position compared to 2022.



The graph shows that we had delivered 7% more than equivalent 12 month period in 2022. To summarise both sets of figures, the numbers of people supported grew 12.6% whereas the numbers of days' worth of food provided grew 7%, perhaps indicating that we supplied a lower percentage of our 7 day bags, as opposed to our 3 day ones, than in 2022. Overall though, need in Ashington continues to grow.

The lower figures for December 2023 as compared to December 2022 may be a result of our forced closure of the food bank premises for almost a week, when we moved into temporary accommodation. We had placed 'emergency' food bags with referring agencies but unfortunately some of those in need may have missed out on support.

For further context the figures below show the growth in demand met in Ashington since Wansbeck Valley Food Bank began operations in 2013 in terms of referrals, people, food days and value.

NB For ease of comparison each days' worth of food is costed at £6 in the table whilst in fact the cost of a days' worth of food has increased from £5/£6 in 2013 to over £8 in 2023.

| Year | Referrals | Adults | Children | Person days | Value for year |
|------|-----------|--------|----------|-------------|----------------|
| 2013 | 176       | 256    | 181      | 1311        | £ 7,866.00     |
| 2014 | 370       | 519    | 347      | 2598        | £ 15,588.00    |
| 2015 | 593       | 799    | 342      | 3941.375    | £ 23,648.25    |
| 2016 | 818       | 1082   | 517      | 5434.046    | £ 32,604.27    |
| 2017 | 931       | 1247   | 737      | 7057.904    | £ 42,347.42    |
| 2018 | 901       | 1260   | 698      | 6621.77     | £ 39,730.62    |
| 2019 | 1559      | 2193   | 1569     | 12455.61    | £ 74,733.67    |
| 2020 | 1992      | 2852   | 1984     | 16487.13    | £ 98,922.78    |
| 2021 | 2261      | 3305   | 2030     | 19178.59    | £ 115,071.51   |
| 2022 | 2662      | 3614   | 1828     | 21470.3     | £ 128,821.79   |
| 2023 | 2895      | 4010   | 2124     | 23071.65    | £ 138,429.87   |

## January 2024

The figures for January 2024 as compared to January 2023 shown a decline in the numbers of individuals fed in Ashington, from 611 to 439, and in numbers of days' worth of food provided from 1836 to 1377. It is not known whether this is a long-term trend or a one-off 'blip'. However it may be a result of our recent liaison with referrers to recapitulate our referral criteria and procedures. We will be monitoring this closely.

## General:

As reported previously overall donations of food have still not returned to pre-pandemic levels and, because the level of need is now so much higher, donations do not meet need and we have had to purchase food in ever increasing amounts.

As a result we anticipated that we would have a financial deficit for our financial year 2023 and this was borne out. It amounted to just over £33,000 (accounts currently being audited). Deficits of this magnitude are of course unsustainable so we have been looking very closely at the contents of our food parcels and suppliers' pricing. We believe that we have already made substantial progress in

reducing the cost of bought-in items without compromising the quantity of the food in the parcels or of their nutritional standard.

For information, as feared we needed to leave our premises at Northgate Hospital at relatively short notice, because of the redevelopment of the site. We are currently operating from 3 separate temporary locations on the site. Whilst this is not ideal, we are still hopeful of being able to move to a single more permanent building during the summer - but this is not finalised. We are therefore continuing to be on the look-out for alternative accommodation and have put aside funding for this purpose. The uncertainty is not ideal.

Peter Robertson

on behalf of Wansbeck Valley Food Bank

1 March 2024