

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank in Ashington:

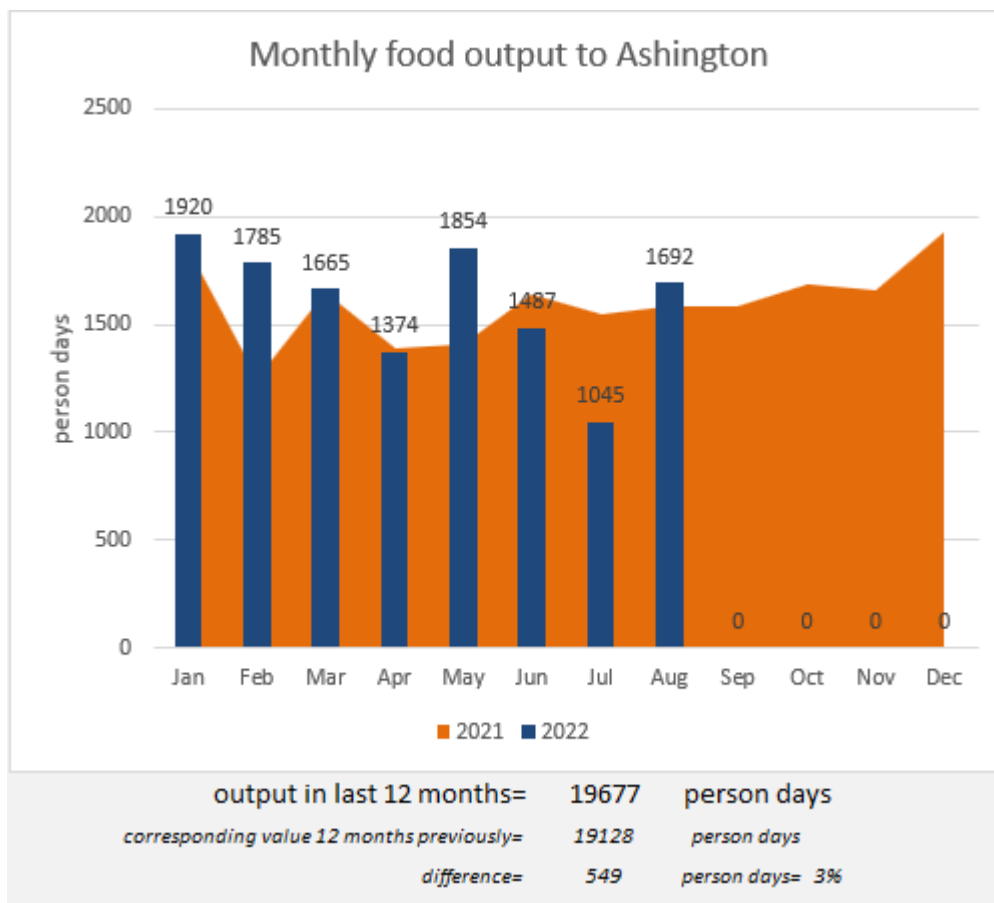
June – August 2022

As requested, this is the first quarterly report to Ashington Town Council; it covers the period June – August 2022.

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

The graph below shows that, for most months in 2022, need was above that of last year – itself the highest recorded until that time. It also shows that over the twelve months September 2021 to August 2022 the number of days’ worth of food and other essentials provided rose from 19,128 to 19,677 (valued at £118,062).



For the three months covered by this report we have supplied 1,091 adults and children in Ashington with food and other essentials.

There is a sustained growth in need in the town, albeit at a lower rate than during the pandemic. We believe that this growth is the beginning of a reflection of the rapid cost of living price increases.

Our work to support families in Ashington as a proportion of the overall work of WVFB continues to be well over 50% of our total provision.

Due to the dramatic increases in the cost of fuel, we are providing 'no cook' food packages where these are requested or where we discover on investigation that these are needed.

We have also begun to ask for donations of e.g. hot water bottles and blankets, and have received some of these items; we will begin the distribution of these soon, where need is expressed/determined. We expect to have to supplement the donations with purchased items.

As there has been an overall growth in referrals of people who are homeless, we have been purchasing tents and sleeping bags and have been distributing these for some time. It is both disappointing and distressing that we have been forced to do this because the overall support system has been unable to prevent a growth in the numbers of those without a roof over their heads (albeit normally temporarily.)

In response to the worrying suggestion that those in need might be reluctant to use our service by knowing that an identifiable van would be delivering to their door we have now arranged for food parcels to be collected from Ashington Children's Centre instead, if preferred. Ashington is the first place where we are trialling this approach.

These parcels will have been requested and agreed via referrals in advance and will be available from 3pm to allow for collection after school pick-ups. Staffing changes at the Centre have meant that this service will now commence in October. We will be monitoring the demand for this service, to ascertain whether this model is working effectively and also whether it should be rolled out elsewhere.

Our monthly food collections at Asda Ashington are now firmly re-established and the generosity of the local shoppers is truly amazing! Our thanks go both to them and to the store's staff as they do to the members of Ashington Town Council for agreeing to the invaluable food aid grant.

Peter Robertson

on behalf of Wansbeck Valley Food Bank

September 2022