

Figures in this report were gathered from Food Bank statistics collated during the period running from 1st April until 31st May, representing the first weeks of the Coronavirus lockdown in the UK, which came into force on 24th March. By comparing figures from 2019 to 2020, it is evident that there has been a significant increase in Food Bank use and it is also clear to see that the pandemic has forced households who were previously managing to find themselves unable to 'make ends meet'. As the pandemic and lockdown continues, further monitoring of Food Bank use will help build a picture of how the town's population is coping with current conditions.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Food Bank, run by Berwick Community Trust, is based in The William Elder Building on Castlegate. It relies on public donations of food or money, with some grant support, to provide an essential service to residents who find themselves in a position where they cannot feed themselves or their family. In addition to food support, customers often receive budgeting advice and a benefits check. The Food Bank is a crisis service, designed to provide support during extraordinary circumstances, usually relating to some kind of income shock.

A typical food parcel is valued at approximately £35 (at rrp) and provides a balanced diet for a small family. Contents vary depending on the stock available and parcels are tailored to individual needs when possible. During the coronavirus crisis, the Food Bank has received additional, temporary support such as a weekly £500 food donation from Morrisons and fresh produce from local businesses. These donations, in addition to generous public support, have enabled the foodbank to continue operating throughout the pandemic to date.

But, the impact of The Community Trust goes much further than simply providing food during a hiatus. Trained staff are available to advise on the benefits system, especially useful for claimants being forced onto benefits for the first time, acting as an information or signposting service has ensured many people have accessed the help they need, working in the background to help other organisations has extended the Trust's reach and provided support to the network of town organisations, and how to value being able to pick up the phone and just talk to a friendly voice?

The following pages give a snapshot of the Food Bank and Community Trust's impact as the town's population has adjusted to life during the Coronavirus pandemic and resultant lockdown.



129% Increase in Food Bank Demand April & May 2019 vs 2020

Reached Out

Helped Prevent Food Waste

A Friendly Voice

238 Food Parcels Supplied April & May 2020

"Words can't express our thanks. This is going to help us so very, very much...you are amazing"

Aided Rural Communities

"Just to say thanks again for your generosity. It's much appreciated and for helping the system realise I am who I am"

Distributed VE Day Treat Boxes

133% Increase in the Number of Children Nourished.

Spread a Smile

Furloughed and Shielding Residents Supported

"A massive thank you all so much, they really needed a boost."

Local Business Support

Provided a Safety Net

26 Families Visited the Food Bank for the First Time

"You have helped me so much I just want to give some back to help you guys"

129% Increase in
Food Bank Demand

238 food parcels were distributed during April & May 2020, a 129% increase from the same period in 2019 when 104 food parcels were distributed.



**Local Business
Support**

From using a local taxi firm for food parcel deliveries to supplying Northern Soul Kitchen with takeaway containers for their hot food delivery service and surplus food donations, Berwick Community Trust has supported local businesses helping them to remain operational, while also facilitating much needed community service.

At the start of lockdown the Food Bank was delighted to receive large donations of food from various businesses which had been forced to close down, including the Haven holiday parks and The Granary youth hostel. A significant quantity of the donations had short use by dates and by acting as a redistribution hub, the Food Bank not only prevented food waste but also supported essential care organisations in town including the Grove School and care homes for the elderly. This support has continued throughout the crisis period.



**Helped Prevent
Food Waste**

133% increase in the
number of children
nourished.

During April & May 2020, 126 children received essential nourishment from food parcels supplied to their parents or carers. This is an increase of 133% from the same period in 2019. Through the help received from the Food Bank, child health and development has been supported.

During times of crisis people often don't know where to turn for help and advice. As well as providing food support and benefits advice, The Community Trust has been there to offer help and support. Acting as an information hub, the Trust has helped people confused about what help is available and where to find it. If not able to help directly, the Trust was there to signpost, or just to have a friendly chat and reduce loneliness.



A Friendly Voice

*Just to say thanks again
for your generosity. It's
much appreciated and for
helping the system realise I
am who I am."*

Elderly couple shielding and
in need of food and advice.

Most people believe that they would never need to use a food bank, but the coronavirus crisis has shown how precarious people's lives are. With vast numbers of the population experiencing serious income shocks or unable to shop as they are shielding, the Community Trust's support has never been more important to the town.

Furloughed and
shielding residents
supported



*Distributed VE Day
Treat Boxes*

Working in collaboration with Age UK to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, The Community Trust collated the recipient list and then delivered treat boxes to 40 local pensioners in recognition of their war experience, helping them feel valued and remembered, during these challenging times.

Lots of Easter eggs were donated from excess supermarket stock; too many to distribute directly to Food Bank customers. This meant that the Community Trust could share some joy and show appreciation to the frontline, key workers keeping our town going including postal and refuse staff. Further fun resulted from our donation of surplus eggs to The Grove School where they were creatively repurposed during a cookery class to make chocolate crisps.



Spread a Smile

26 families visited the Food Bank for the First Time between 1st April and 18th May.

As expected the Food Bank has been accessed by more first time customers than usual. With many people on furlough, made redundant, forced onto benefits or struggling to feed children who would normally receive free school meals, in the period between 1st April-18th May 2020, the Food Bank saw 26 families, including 40 children, visiting for the first time.

Recognising that the crisis would result in people who would not usually access Food Bank services needing support, but not necessarily knowing where to turn to find it, The Community Trust initiated a marketing push targeted to reach those groups most likely to find themselves struggling to manage. Local pharmacies agreed to include a Food Bank leaflet in prescription bags and local schools sent out details of The Community Trust's services via their parent mail channels. As a result the Trust has supported new customers.



Reached Out

"A massive thank you all so much, they really needed a boost."

Couple experiencing an income shock and referred to the Foodbank by Citizens' Advice

Many Food Bank customers have complex lives requiring additional support to help them through difficult times. As part of a multi-disciplinary panel that identifies potential needs and safeguarding concerns, including mental health services, Harvest Fields and social services, the Food Bank can refer more vulnerable customers to appropriate organisations, ensuring that additional support is accessed and potential harm minimised.



Provided a Safety Net



*Aided Rural
Communities*

The Community Trust's reach is not limited to the town itself. During the coronavirus crisis its influence extended to rural communities through food parcel deliveries to isolated or vulnerable households in the Borders and rural Northumberland, advising Wooler food bank on best practice during extraordinary times and donations of surplus supplies to Bellview community support in Belford.

"You have helped me so much I just want to give some back to help you guys"

Family of 7, previously supported and wanting to give back.

