



### Growth needs to meet demand

With the plight of the poorest – and those on average incomes – set to considerably worsen over the

next year, the need for our food bank, and the services it provides, will become greater. Many are facing the worst cost-of-living crisis in memory.

Energy prices are set to double; food inflation is rising to the highest levels in almost a generation; higher national insurance contributions will hit the working poor hardest. All this is against the backdrop of people, and organisations, still struggling with the economic and social impact of Covid 19.

Those challenges come at a time when the Newcastle West End Food Bank has become a city-wide charity, part of its essential social fabric, offering help to customers not only with food but also through a welfare project called Pathways – and now with ambitions to become a provider of low-priced food for those with the ability to make modest payments for essential items.

During the two years of the Covid pandemic, the food bank has grown with seven distribution hubs across Newcastle providing food parcels, specially-prepared 'takeaway' frozen and fresh meals from our own kitchen – supplemented with veg and fruit from our own garden - and, of course, welfare assistance to those struggling to get by.

Far from standing still, the food bank has been developing, widening its social net, as the Pathways project underlines. This offers help to clients with, for instance, money, health and housing problems. Trained advisers offer expert advice and can access a referral network to provide expert support.

In other areas, too, the food bank is casting its net wider - by moving towards low-cost food provision, possibly through a mobile 'pantry', for hard-pressed families and people prepared, or able, to make a modest contribution for items. This will be determined through careful research followed by a trial, as food inflation bites.



### Our Garden is Growing

The daffodils are a welcome reminder that our garden is emerging from winter, ready to grow more fresh fruit and veg for the kitchen.

Leeks and onions are maturing, while carrots, radishes and spring onions have been sown in raised beds.

Tomatoes, beans, potatoes and courgettes will follow later in the year, and some of the fruit trees have been moved to form an orchard. Gardeners are also planning for 2023, planting rhubarb for harvest next year.

Volunteers are welcome to rest in the garden's benches, which are in memory of Foodbank volunteers

### Demand exceeds food donations

In the year to April, 2022, 43,000 people have benefited from our food parcels – including 16,500 children. It's taken 206 tonnes of food – much of it gratefully received in donations, although we spent £66,000 on additional food to meet a shortfall.

Farmfoods often arrange household leaflet drops which contain vouchers. The foodbank can use these vouchers to help keep costs down so we would be very grateful if you could bring the vouchers to the foodbank - providing you are not using them yourself!

### Pathways progress

In the past 11 months, staff and volunteers in our Pathways project have handled 1827 cases – often concerning Universal Credit, housing and health related issues and financial insecurity – and almost three-quarters of cases have been successfully resolved. The Pathways team have secured £264,683 in financial 'gains' for clients, in areas such as underpayment in welfare provision from Universal Credit to disability payments

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