



BANGOR
FOODBANK &
COMMUNITY
SUPPORT

ANNUAL REPORT

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About us

Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS) is an outreach project of Bangor Elim Church and is an independent charity based in Bangor, Northern Ireland. It is dedicated to alleviating poverty and promoting well-being in the community through a range of vital services that go beyond just food provision.

The foodbank is at the heart of its operations, providing emergency food parcels to individuals and families in crisis. These parcels, filled with nutritious staples, are a lifeline for many who struggle to make ends meet.

At BFCS we know that food assistance alone is not enough to break the cycle of poverty, which is why we've developed several additional programs to address the root causes of financial hardship.

One of these initiatives is the Financial Inclusion service. Understanding that managing finances can be overwhelming, especially for those dealing with debt or on low incomes, BFCS offers personalised support to help people take control of their financial situations. Through one-on-one sessions and workshops, individuals learn essential skills such as budgeting, debt management, saving strategies and benefits advice. This service not only helps to alleviate immediate financial stress but also empowers people with the knowledge and confidence to build a more secure future.

BFCS also recognises the unique challenges faced by families with young children, which is why the Ten Tiny Toes baby bank was established. This service continues to provide crucial support to parents and caregivers by offering essential items such as nappies, baby clothing, and equipment. For families struggling financially, these items can be a significant expense, and Ten Tiny Toes ensures that every baby has access to the necessities for a healthy start in life.

Addressing the issue of addiction in the community, BFCS has recently introduced an addiction drop-in service. This new initiative offers a safe, non-judgmental space for individuals struggling with substance abuse to seek help and connect with resources that can support their recovery. With trained staff and volunteers on hand, the drop-in provides not only practical assistance but also emotional support, helping people navigate the challenges of addiction and move towards a healthier, more stable life.

Through these diverse services, BFCS is creating a comprehensive support network that tackles multiple aspects of poverty and hardship. Whether providing food, financial guidance, baby essentials, or addiction support, the organisation is committed to offering hope and practical help to those in need.

By addressing both immediate and long-term challenges, BFCS empowers individuals and families to overcome adversity and build a brighter, more secure future.

A word from our Chairperson

It is my great pleasure to present the Chairperson's Annual Report for the 2023-2024 period. This year has been both challenging and rewarding for Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS), as we have continued to serve our community with dedication, compassion, and resilience.

2023-2024 has seen a significant increase in demand for our services, with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and rising energy prices having a profound impact on local households. Many families are facing unprecedented financial pressures, leading to a heightened reliance on foodbanks and community support initiatives. Despite these challenges, our organisation has remained steadfast in its mission to alleviate hunger and provide essential resources for those in need.

In addition to food distribution, we expanded our community support services, offering financial advice, benefits advice, mental health support, and signposting to other essential services. This holistic approach has been vital in addressing not just the immediate need for food, but also the underlying causes of poverty and hardship.

A key element of our success this year has been the strength of our partnerships. We have continued to work closely with local supermarkets, businesses, schools, and churches to secure regular food donations.

Additionally, our collaboration with Community Advice, local councils, service providers and health services has allowed us to provide more comprehensive support to those facing hardship.

We are particularly grateful to our corporate sponsors and local organisations who have contributed through grants and donations, ensuring that we have the necessary resources to sustain and grow our operations. This funding, enables us to invest in infrastructure, expand our services, and support more people.

Our volunteers remain the heart and soul of Bangor Foodbank and Community Support. Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to pack, distribute, and deliver food parcels, as well as offer a listening ear to those who need it most. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to every volunteer for their unwavering commitment and compassion.

I also want to acknowledge the hard work of our staff team, whose professionalism and dedication have ensured that our services continue to run smoothly in the face of growing demand.

This year, we invested in additional training for our team, particularly in areas such as safeguarding, mental health awareness, and financial advice, which have proven invaluable in supporting our clients.

Despite the increased expenditure on food supplies and operational costs, we are pleased to report a balanced budget for the year. Our prudent financial management has ensured that we remain in a strong position to continue delivering our services in the coming year.

While the rising demand for our services presents ongoing challenges, it also underscores the importance of our work. The cost-of-living crisis is unlikely to abate in the near future, and we anticipate that more families will turn to us for support. However, with challenge comes opportunity. In the coming year, we plan to expand our services by opening two new distribution centres and increasing our outreach to rural areas. This will allow us to reach even more people who are struggling.

We are also exploring new partnerships with local employers and training providers to offer employment and skills development opportunities to our clients, empowering them to break the cycle of poverty.

As we move into 2024-2025, our focus will remain on supporting our community through these difficult times. We will continue to advocate for those facing food insecurity and work with policymakers to address the root causes of poverty. We also aim to diversify our funding streams to ensure the long-term sustainability of our services.

Our strategic plan for the next year includes the following key objectives:

- Expanding our foodbank operations to meet increasing demand.

- Enhancing our community support services, particularly in mental health and financial counselling.
- Strengthening our partnerships with local businesses and service providers.
- Increasing our volunteer recruitment and training programs.

I am incredibly proud of what Bangor Foodbank and Community Support has achieved this year, and I am confident that, with the continued support of our community, volunteers, and partners, we will rise to meet the challenges ahead. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported us throughout the year. Whether through donating food, time, or money, your contributions have made a real impact. As we look forward to the year ahead, let us continue to stand together in the fight against hunger and hardship.

Yours sincerely,



Gary Faulkner
Chairperson

Achievements and performance

Over the past year, Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS) has made a remarkable impact in the community, addressing the growing need for emergency support and tackling the root causes of poverty and hardship. One of the most significant achievements has been the expansion of the foodbank's services. Over the past year, Bangor Foodbank and Community Support has provided crucial assistance to over 3,240 individuals, a 15% increase compared to the previous year. Our core service, the foodbank, distributed over 65 tonnes of food, equating to more than 154,760 meals. We are proud to have been able to meet this rising demand while maintaining the quality and dignity of the services we offer. This increase in distribution reflects the rising demand, driven by factors such as the cost-of-living crisis and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to meeting basic needs, BFCS has significantly advanced its Financial Inclusion service. This program offers personalised financial guidance and support to help people manage their money more effectively. Over the past year, BFCS has supported over 3,240 individuals through one-on-one financial coaching sessions and workshops, helping them to create budgets, manage debt, and set savings goals. Many participants have reported an improved sense of financial security and reduced stress, showing the tangible impact of this service. The Ten Tiny Toes baby bank has also seen significant growth, supporting over 106 families with essential baby supplies, including nappies, clothing, and equipment.

This service is crucial for parents and caregivers facing financial hardship, ensuring that every child has access to the necessities for a healthy and happy start in life. Feedback from recipients has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the support during challenging times. This year also marked the launch of a new Addiction Drop-In service, addressing a critical gap in support for individuals struggling with substance abuse. The drop-in provides a safe, welcoming space where people can seek help, access resources, and connect with trained volunteers and staff who offer guidance and emotional support. The response to this service has been encouraging, with many attendees taking steps towards recovery and rebuilding their lives. BFCS's achievements are not only measured in numbers but also in the stories of transformation and hope. The organisation has forged strong partnerships with local agencies, businesses, and volunteers, enhancing its ability to respond effectively to the community's needs. By taking a holistic approach that addresses both immediate and long-term challenges, BFCS has empowered countless individuals and families to overcome adversity and build brighter futures. Looking ahead, BFCS remains committed to expanding its reach and impact, continuing to serve as a beacon of hope and resilience for those in need. The past year has been a testament to the dedication and compassion of its team, volunteers, and supporters, who have made these achievements possible.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS), playing an essential role in the delivery and success of all our services. Their dedication, compassion, and commitment make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve. From sorting and packing food parcels to offering a friendly and supportive ear, our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do.

At the foodbank, volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that families in crisis receive nutritious food parcels. They handle the collection, sorting, and distribution of donations, often going above and beyond to create a welcoming and dignified experience for those seeking help. Their friendly, non-judgmental presence makes a significant impact, offering not just food but also a sense of community and support. In our Financial Inclusion program, volunteers provide one-on-one advice sessions, helping individuals navigate complex financial challenges. Their expertise and patience empower clients to take control of their finances and build more secure futures.

The Ten Tiny Toes baby bank relies on volunteers to collect, organise, and distribute essential baby items to families in need. Their hard work ensures that parents have access to the supplies they need to care for their children, alleviating some of the stress and anxiety that financial hardship can bring. Our new Addiction Drop-In service also benefits immensely from the dedication of volunteers, who offer a compassionate, listening ear and support to those struggling with addiction.

The passion and generosity of our volunteers inspire us every day. Their work is crucial in providing not just practical assistance but also hope, dignity, and a sense of community for those who are struggling. We couldn't do it without them!

Our Aim

The aim of BFCS is to provide compassionate and practical assistance to individuals and families facing financial hardship. Working with such organisations as Home Start, Women's Aid, uHub, Orchardville and the Simon Community and by offering a range of services and programmes, including emergency food parcels, financial guidance, and essential baby items, BFCS strives to alleviate the immediate pressures of poverty while addressing its underlying causes. Our goal is not only to provide relief but to empower people to achieve lasting stability and well-being. BFCS believes in treating everyone with dignity and respect, creating a safe, welcoming environment for those who seek help. The organisation recognises that each person's journey is unique, and we offer personalised support to help individuals regain control of their lives. From helping families put food on the table to guiding people through financial challenges or supporting new parents, BFCS is dedicated to making a meaningful impact in the community. Through our compassionate efforts, BFCS aims to create a more caring and connected community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.