



**The
Welcome Centre**
food bank and more...



The Welcome Centre Annual Report 2022

For the period 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022

Chief Executive's welcome



2021 - 2022 has been another incredibly busy year for The Welcome Centre, our busiest ever. We have yet again seen more and more families and individuals in our local community experiencing crises and needing our support, set against a backdrop of change and growth behind the scenes at our charity.

This year has seen our staff team grow and change, with new roles created, new team members joining to replace those moving on to new challenges, and my own return from maternity leave. We've also seen our volunteer team grow and develop; we've recruited new volunteers to support our growing Advice, Guidance and Support (AGS) service, and to meet the ever growing need for food bank support.

In autumn 2021, as we transitioned away from the Covid-19 pandemic, we reopened our doors, welcoming people back into our building to access face to face support. Alongside this, we also continued to offer the home delivery service we introduced in the pandemic, for people who aren't able to visit us in person. The uncertain environment we've been operating in, both in terms of Covid-19 and then the cost of living crisis, has undoubtedly had an impact on the number of people needing our support. More people than ever before have needed The Welcome Centre, and we have worked especially hard over the last year to make sure that we can continue to offer a high standard of support to the growing number of people who need it.

We have given out 19,735 crisis packs, 17.2% more than we gave out in the previous year. We have supported 5,787 people in our local community, including 2,210 children. And we have provided enough food in our food packs for 361,262 meals.

As well as growing our food bank, we have expanded and developed our Advice, Guidance and Support service. We offer a listening ear, signposting, and triage support from our AGS volunteers. Staff offer weekly money management drop in sessions, over the phone and face to face budgeting and benefits appointments, and a grant programme to help clients with emergency funding for essentials. We have also developed a range of partnerships with other local organisations to allow our clients to access wider opportunities, including school holiday activities for children and local theatre trips.

We are incredibly proud of The Welcome Centre's achievements in what has proved to be another very challenging year. As you can probably tell, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make the Centre a success. We hope that this report will give you an insight into the work we do, the challenges we face, and the contribution we make to helping people in our community in their time of need.

These achievements do not belong to The Welcome Centre alone; we would not have been able to achieve what we did in 2021 - 2022 without our external supporters. Individuals, community groups, businesses, and funders were incredibly generous during difficult times, and without their generosity The Welcome Centre would not have been able to achieve what it did. So all that's left for me to say is thank you to our dedicated team of volunteers, staff and trustees for their continued hard work to develop and improve the work of The Welcome Centre. And thank you to all of the individuals, community groups, and businesses in Huddersfield and further afield that support our work throughout the year, we could not do it without you.



Ellie Coteau

Chief Executive

Our year at a glance



Our advice service has provided
2,145 support sessions



Last year, we received
12,090 referrals



...from 133 referral agencies



Our advice service has
provided support to
1,255 households

WE HAVE
SUPPORTED
5,787
PEOPLE

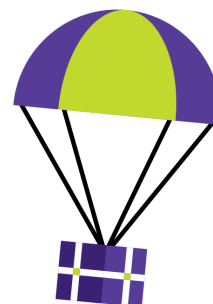


2,210
OF WHOM
WERE CHILDREN



Last year, we gave out enough food
to provide **361,262** meals

Last year, we
gave out
19,735
crisis packs



...of which
11,729
were food packs

Behind the scenes at the food bank

We're here to support families and individuals in crisis in our community by providing essential items, and advice, guidance, and support. A great deal of work goes on behind the scenes at The Welcome Centre to make that happen.

We have a small staff team, supported by more than 100 volunteers. Our volunteers are at the heart of our charity, collecting and sorting donations, taking referrals, making food packs and greeting the people we support. Volunteers come from all walks of life to help at the Centre for a few hours each week, and together with our team of dedicated and experienced staff, they drive the Centre forward.

How do people access the food bank?

People access our support through a referral system. More than 100 local agencies including other charities, statutory agencies, schools, and GP surgeries refer people to us for support. We use the information we receive from referrers to make bespoke packs, taking into account each person's family size, access to cooking facilities, dietary requirements, and cultural preferences. Clients can collect their packs from us anytime between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. For people who can't collect their packs, we offer a home delivery service.

Who uses the food bank?

Every food pack that we give out is gratefully received by an individual or family in crisis. There is no 'typical' person who visits a food bank. People find themselves in crisis for all sorts of reasons: job loss, debt and eviction, benefit issues, refugees and asylum seekers issues, homelessness, domestic violence, substance misuse, bereavement, and physical and mental health issues.

What is in a food pack?

Every food pack is different. We tailor the content of our packs to meet individual needs, whether that's providing high energy convenience food for people who are homeless, or providing extra fresh fruit and vegetable supplies for people we know love to cook. As well as tinned and dried goods, we're able to provide people with fresh food including fruit and vegetables, eggs, milk and cheese, bread, and baked goods. Our food packs contain food for seven days. And we don't just provide food, we also provide other essentials, including toiletries, bedding, cleaning supplies, and basic kitchen equipment.

Where does all the food come from?

A lot of the food we give out is donated to us. Our collection points situated in local supermarkets are filled with tinned and dried goods donated by individuals, and we receive regular food donations from community groups and businesses throughout the year. At Harvest we benefit from the generosity of schools and churches collecting on our behalf, and from mosques and Muslim groups that collect for us during Ramadan.

In addition to the generous donations we receive from the community, we also purchase a lot of food and other essentials to give out. More and more of our supporters now donate money rather than food, which gives us the freedom to buy the food items we're really short of when we need to.



An update from our Centre Manager

The past 12 months have very much been about getting back to "normal" at the centre. We've learned a lot of valuable lessons following COVID, which has meant that we are able to adapt our service to better meet the needs of our clients. Reopening the centre for the first time back in November felt like a landmark moment after such a tumultuous time and it was nice being able to welcome our clients back to the centre, and put that personal touch back on the support that we offer.

Along with opening the centre, we've also been able to continue our delivery service for those clients that struggle to access the centre. In November we hired a full time delivery driver. Paul has settled into our team incredibly well and has worked hard to ensure we have an efficient delivery service across the far reaching areas of South Kirklees. A big part of Paul's role is ensuring some of our most vulnerable and isolated clients don't miss out on the additional support we can offer. Paul does a fantastic job building relationships with our clients who would really struggle without us being able to offer a delivery service.

The unfortunate truth of the past year is that we've seen a continual increase in the number of clients using our service. Managing the centre is too big a job for just one person and I've relied heavily on our General Assistant Katie to help me with the day to day operations. Katie has really hit the ground running since joining us in September and has been a brilliant support to not only myself, but also to the Advice, Guidance and Support & Warehouse teams. Katie has really taken ownership of our volunteer recruitment & administration processes and has ensured that we have the right volunteers in the right places to be able to cope with the ever growing demand.

The overwhelming support we have received from the people and businesses of Kirklees has meant that we have been able to make further improvements to the overall quality of our packs, increasing the amount of food that we provide with a focus on high quality meals. We've also introduced new packs for those living in temporary accommodation, taking into account storage and cooking facilities available. We are always listening to feedback from our clients to ensure we are providing the goods that they need and we will continue to adapt our packs to ensure they meet the needs of our clients.



An update from our Warehouse Manager

My first 8 months at the warehouse have been a whirlwind! When I joined in January, I spent my first week at Lord Street getting to grips with what the core of our operation entailed, and trying to understand the intricacies and anomalies that we embrace and deal with on a daily basis. This really helped me get a better idea of how better to organise the warehouse operation, in order to support the work of Lord St and encourage a smooth operational process.

I then set about getting to know our lovely warehouse team (such a hardworking, fun bunch) as well as making some changes to the warehouse layout, operation and communication between the two sites. We took on the making of non-food packs and in time decanting, to better control the flow of these through the charity as well as alleviate the pressures on Lord street, as the space grew increasingly busy.

Shortly after my stationing at the warehouse, we had a flood, due to an unfortunate combination of uncharacteristically high levels of rain and a blockage in the water system. The team's reaction to this was fantastic! A group of volunteers gathered on the Monday morning, donning welly boots and gloves - the saying 'many hands make light work' definitely applied that day! Thanks again folks!

Despite the little set back we kept on powering through. With stock donations decreasing and the demand only set to increase, we have become more reliant on our bulk purchasing. We are already moving nearly double the amount of stock than we were in January. I have been working with our trustees to develop better ways to manage and procure our stock, so that we are as efficient as we can possibly be, as we get busier.

I am looking forward to the next phase of The Welcome Centre's development, and the challenges that will bring.

An update from one of our volunteers



My name is Kimberley and I'm a volunteer at The Welcome Centre on the AGS team. Soon it will be a year since I started volunteering. I'd been thinking about it for a while, but it was seeing an ad from The Welcome Centre that made my mind up and prompted me to apply.

And it was the role of AGS worker that appealed to me specifically. You see, ten or so years ago, I was struggling, with two young kids as a single parent, an unreliable income, and studying at university too. I had absolutely no idea about what support I might be entitled to, or even where to find information. I'd been to Student Services once or twice, but their advice was limited to what they themselves could offer (not a lot, as it happened). I didn't know much at all about food banks, and likely wouldn't have thought we'd be eligible to use one anyway. There was - and still is - a preconception that they are there for people who have absolutely nothing. Not people like my little family, with a roof over our heads just trying to eke out the last few quid till the end of the month.

Over the years there have been good times and bad times, and I've found myself becoming someone who knows a little bit about a lot of things. I've worked in education, for the NHS and in other health-related roles, so I've picked up quite a lot from that. I've also got a knack for finding things out!

My involvement with a local online news outlet over the last year or two has highlighted something to me: there are a lot of organisations and people out there doing incredible things and trying to help our community. There are so many that it seems impossible to know about them all! But that's what we're trying to do in AGS at The Welcome Centre. We want to know about as many as possible so that we can signpost people to them. So that when we get talking to someone and it turns out they are struggling to buy school uniform for their children, we can direct them to Uniform Exchange. So that when we find out that the retiree we're chatting to hasn't seen another soul for weeks, we can put them in touch with Aspire Creating Communities and get them involved with their local group. And we can tell the parent of the LGBTQ+ teen about HIVE Youth, where they can go to a weekly, free youth and support group.

It's all out there, sometimes people just need pointing in the right direction! And so, when I saw the role of AGS worker at The Welcome Centre, it seemed like it was perfect for someone like me, who knows a little bit about a lot of things. And it sounded like it would help someone like me, ten years ago, who didn't know where to turn.

More than a food bank

Providing people in crisis with food and other essential items is just part of what we do. We also offer people visiting the food bank one to one Advice, Guidance and Support, to help them get back on track.



An update from our Advice, Guidance and Support Manager

The last 12 months for our team have been challenging and exciting in equal measure! Our first priority was to get the right team in place, so we quickly set to growing our staff team to three, and recruiting a whole host of talented volunteers to support the Advice, Guidance and Support (AGS) service.

It's really important that our AGS volunteers are able to hit the ground running so we have quite an intensive training programme when new volunteers join, and then we give them lots of ongoing training, supervision and support along the way.

Once we'd built our team, we were ready to start expanding our service. Our volunteers meet and greet clients in reception, offering a listening ear, triage, and signposting support. Volunteers also provide information on digital inclusion, the Healthy Start scheme, homelessness, registering with a GP, mental health services and a whole host of other issues.

We've also introduced a weekly money management drop in service. Clients drop in for an introductory meeting with a member of the AGS team so that we can understand their situation. We then agree what additional support they need from us and set up follow-up appointments. Once we understand someone's situation, we can offer follow-up budgeting and benefits appointments providing more in-depth support. Lots of people need help with their Universal Credit claims, benefit deductions, benefit recovery fines and historic rent arrears.

We were really aware that not all of our clients would be comfortable or able to access face to face support, so we began to offer a telephone support service. Around half of the households we support access our food bank through our delivery service, and we wanted to make sure they could also access AGS support remotely if needed. We provide this service every Wednesday and aim to engage and support clients who are not coming into our building but who we identify through our database as potentially needing additional support.

We also offer a grant scheme for our clients, so they can access essential items such as furniture and white goods, or help with fuel bills. We have worked closely with our partner agencies to deliver this area of work, to ensure we were reaching people most in need.

We know that the coming 12 months are going to be really challenging, and we'll be continuing to grow our AGS service to try and help as many of our clients as possible navigate through the cost of living crisis.



Martina's story

When Martina got full custody of her grandson she wasn't quite prepared for how many new things she'd need for him. She was referred to The Welcome Centre for a food pack via her support worker. When Martina arrived to collect her pack, she was greeted by our Advice, Guidance and Support volunteer who chatted to her about what other services we might be able to offer to support her situation.

"I am so happy to have received full custody of my grandson recently and he's moved in but I have very little for him."

Martina was referred to our Deputy Advice Manager, who explained our grant service and together they completed an application to buy her grandson a new bed and mattress. With Christmas fast approaching and understanding the difficulties Martina was facing, we asked how they would be celebrating Christmas.

"I had recently moved and had left behind lots of items in my attic, including my old Christmas tree. I couldn't afford to spend what little I had on a new one."

The Welcome Centre sourced a tree and trimmings for Martina from generous donations within the community. Martina and her grandson were so happy and amazed at all the help they had received. The best was still to come though. We knew Martina was struggling to afford Christmas presents for her grandson; thanks to a large donation of new toys from local businesses we were able to give Martina a brand-new Lego set, books and chocolates for her grandson to open on Christmas day.

"The Welcome Centre's generosity and support really made our Christmas."

Working in partnership to support clients

Kate lived with her partner in Leeds, but when the relationship turned violent she did the only thing she could. She left. She arrived in Huddersfield with no family or friends to turn to. This meant she found herself sleeping rough, sheltering under a canal bridge.

"One of the outreach workers from Simon on the Streets found me. She told me about the Mission, where I could get a hot meal and some help."

Once at the Mission, Kate was referred to The Welcome Centre for food. She then received advice from our Advice and Guidance Manager at The Welcome Centre, on how to get a homelessness assessment. She met with another support agency, Housing Solutions and was given temporary accommodation.

The Welcome Centre supported Kate with food and toiletries whilst her benefits claim was processed. As Kate had fled without her possessions, she had nothing to set up her new home. We provided a home starter pack of pots, pans, plates and cutlery as well as cleaning products, bedding and towels to try and make her temporary accommodation homelier.

Twelve months on Kate is now in a permanent flat. The Welcome Centre helped her to apply for a small grant, which she was able to buy some essential furniture. And the best news – recently she was offered a part-time job!

"I can't believe how far I've come, I'm really proud of myself and thankful to you lot too."

Donations of time, money and food

The Welcome Centre depends on the support of our community – without the donations of money and food that we receive from community groups, businesses, churches, schools and mosques, we couldn't do what we do.

£417,666: the total value of the food we've given out in the last year.



An update from our Fundraising Manager

The last twelve months have flown by, there have been highs, and lows as you would expect. The economic challenges are always going to make my role a little harder as people start to look at their own budgets and tighten their spending. But, as ever, our amazing Huddersfield community has shown me how important the work we do is to them.

A great example of this was my first foray into match funding taking part in the national Christmas campaign The Big Give. This match funding campaign allowed me to fundraise for a week in December 2021, giving people the opportunity to have their donations matched until our funding pot ran out. Well, it's fair to say I underestimated your generosity and support. We ran out of match funding in 3 hours! I was genuinely blown away that in just one week, we raised a staggering £26,000 towards our food costs which provided a lot of meals. It definitely gave me the confidence to know we could be a little bolder with our campaign goals next time!

A low point this year was definitely having to cancel our Marshfest event, but with the after-effects of Covid still looming it was too risky to put in all the effort and planning for it not to go ahead, especially as Marshfest has always been one of my favourite community events of the year. However, it has been great to see so many individuals and businesses setting up their own creative fundraising events to support us. We've had sponsored swims, Come Dine With Me, office fruit baskets, and 3 peaks walks, all raising vital funds for The Welcome Centre.

A big focus for the last 12 months has also been on regular giving. Since our new website was introduced back in November 2018, more and more donations have been driven through the donate page of our website and there has been a steady growth in regular donors. Although donations of food are important to us, the fact that we purchase at wholesale prices means that we can buy more with your donation so financial support is more cost-effective. This means I've spent a lot of time focusing on our messages on social media and when I am out and about, to ensure that our community understands how vital their financial support is to us, to make sure we can keep our doors open each day, supporting hundreds of people each week.



Local businesses play a big part in my role too. We now have 13 partners who make an annual donation to The Welcome Centre or provide us with large quantities of food. The continued support of One 17 Design, Ewing IT, Stafflex, Cummins, Darkwoods Coffee and Syngenta to name a few not only helps us financially but enables us to promote the work that we do to a much wider audience. It has also been great to receive donations from new business supporters such as Longwood Engineering, Suez and GPS Ltd.

The next 12 months are no doubt going to be a lot more challenging as we fall further into the cost of living crisis, but I feel a sense of pride and confidence in The Welcome Centre and its supporters that we'll get through it together, ensuring no one goes hungry in our community.

“Well, it's fair to say I underestimated your generosity and support. We ran out of match funding in 3 hours! I was genuinely blown away that in just one week, we raised a staggering £26,000 towards our food costs which, provided a lot of meals”

Thank you to all of our supporters

A huge thank you to all of the local businesses, schools, churches, mosques, community groups, and individuals who have supported us throughout the past year. Without your financial support, donations of food and other items, and fundraising efforts, we would not have been able to achieve what we've achieved this year. In particular, we'd like to thank the following:

Grant Funders



F.V. & E Brook Charitable Trust

Business Partners



Business Supporters

Arnold Clark Motors
DBW
Fareshare
Greggs

Handmade Bakery
Longwood Engineering
Company Ltd
M&S

Nando's
Proper Nutty
Suma
Yorkshire Housing

Community Supporters

Bradley Park Golf Club
Huddersfield Town Supporters
Association

Holmfirth High School
Rotary Club of Huddersfield
Lindley Methodist Church

and a very special 'Thank You' to all of our volunteers, trustees, and committee members, for giving up their time.