
IMPACT
REPORT

2023

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OUR YEAR

Black Country Foodbank (BCFB) first opened its doors in June 2006 from Chawn Hill Church in Stourbridge as a Christian-based charitable organisation. By the end of 2023, BCFB had a network of 26 foodbanks and over 300 volunteers across the Dudley, Sandwell, and Walsall boroughs, supported by a further 30+ volunteers who help to run the central warehouse in Brierley Hill.

The BCFB mission remains the same as it was in 2006: to help vulnerable individuals and families in crisis through the provision of three days of emergency food supplies while a longer-term solution is developed.



Our Vision

To relieve financial hardship, sickness and need for persons in the Black Country in particular (but not exclusively) by the provision of food



Our Mission

To feed local people in crisis



Our Values

Love people - Connect communities - Invest in everyone

Our model works by issuing food vouchers to local organisations and agencies who encounter people in hardship. They act as referral partners and give the vouchers to people who they consider to need food and toiletries. The people, our clients, then visit a BCFB foodbank where they exchange their voucher for a food parcel.

These statistics show the 2023 demand on our foodbanks and highlight the continuing increase in demand in comparison to 2022.



43,670

people supported



549,394

meals provided

↑ 20%

↑ 14%

NB. These figures do not include the additional work that BCFB delivered through Partner Projects - more information about our Partner Projects can be found on page 11.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Thank you for taking the time to read about the incredible work the teams at BCFB are providing to their local communities. Throughout 2023, the cost of living crisis continued to hold a firm grip over those living in the Black Country, during which we provided a record number of over half a million meals. Many people are forced to live with a negative budget, where there is simply not enough money to pay for the essentials - this highlights how important our services are.

We know that cash payments through the Household Support Fund and the Cost Of Living payments to the most vulnerable have been successful in helping to cover the cost of essential food and toiletries because we saw demand on our services reduce in this time, however this relief was only temporary. This support is due to come to an end in 2024. We look to the next twelve months with trepidation for those most in need, and hope that in this pivotal political year, those who can make a real change will seek to do just that.

Sadly in 2023, the number of children BCFB provided for was alarming, particularly over the summer holidays when support with free school meals was unavailable. In response, we are so pleased that the Recipe Bag Project has had a positive impact in bringing families together to cook a budget friendly, nutritious meal. Due to funding, we can expand the reach of the Recipe Bags into supported living, community homework clubs, social enterprises, and young carers support groups. You can read more about our Recipe Bags on page 10.

Our foodbanks have evolved over the last few years to become so much more than just a food parcel provider. They offer a welcoming sanctuary and space with, for example, qualified debt advisors, welfare rights, energy advice, and assistance with clothing and furniture. Through partnerships with local community groups and organisations, we aim to address the issues from the root, actively working together to build trust and find solutions to the challenges.

It would be remiss if volunteers were not acknowledged in this introduction. They are the backbone to all we do. They open their doors week in week out to a variety of complex cases and help their community with grace and understanding. We thank them wholeheartedly for all that they do.

The accomplishments the charity has achieved in 2023 have been incredible, providing food support for everyone that has accessed our services. However, we strive for a time when no one needs to access a food charity. Please read this report knowing that we aim to meet a deep need, while fighting for a time where everyone has equal opportunities.

Thank you for the support, we could not do it without you.

Jen Coleman, CEO



MEALS PROVIDED

The number of meals provided is our strongest indicator of the demand on our foodbanks. We record a meal based on the weight of the food that is provided i.e. 1 meal = 500g of food.



275

tonnes of food distributed

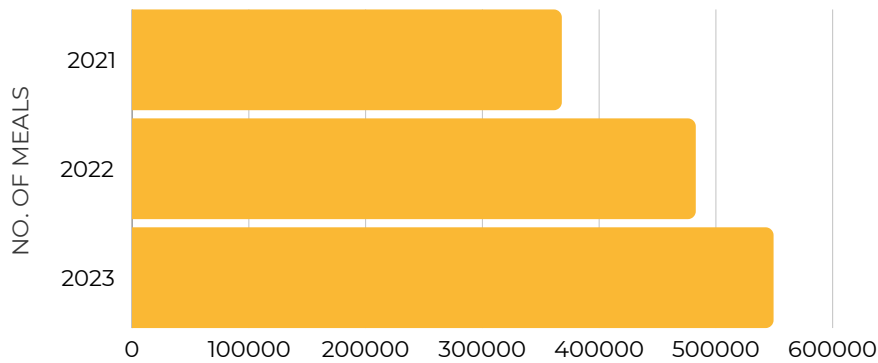


549,394

meals provided

↑ 14%

In 2023 we recorded a staggering 549,394 meals provided; that is nearly 275 tonnes of food distributed - a 14% increase from 2022. Or, put it slightly differently, it equates to 63 meals every hour in 2023 (55 meals every hour in 2022).



“ I am very grateful to the foodbank for all help given ”

63 MEALS



PROVIDED EVERY HOUR IN 2023

PEOPLE SUPPORTED



43,670

people supported



26,843

adults supported



16,827

children supported

↑ **20%**

↑ **17%**

↑ **24%**

To put these figures into context, according to the Office for National Statistics 2021 census, there were a total of 949,500 people living in the Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall boroughs - we supported 43,670 people in 2023 which is equivalent to 4.6% of our local communities, or approximately **1 in every 20 people interacted with our foodbanks**. NB. this doesn't account for repeat clients at a foodbank, but gives an idea of the volume of people we supported.

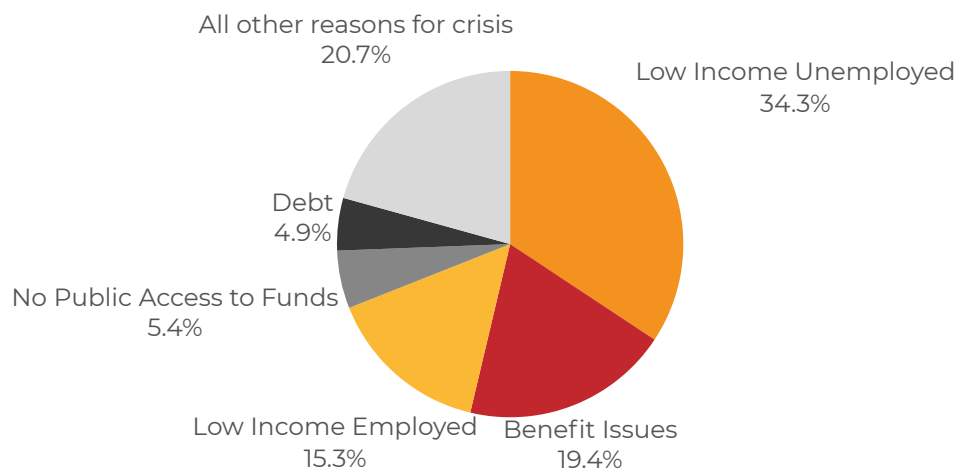
CHILDREN

The number of children we supported in 2023 was the most shocking statistic. We experienced a 24% increase in children accessing our foodbanks compared to 2022 – the 2022 total of 13,556 children was surpassed in early October 2023. The demand from families with children was greatest during the months of July and August, with the number of children accessing a foodbank increasing by 49% in the summer holidays compared to 2022.

REASONS FOR CRISIS

The top reasons for crisis (why people access foodbanks) for 2023 are illustrated below. Other reasons for crisis included universal credit applications and deductions, sickness, utility bills, homelessness, domestic abuse, and entering accommodation.

The most unexpected reason for crisis (accounting for 15% of the food parcels handed out), was **Low Income Employed**, because people's essential costs have risen faster than their income.



49%



**INCREASE IN CHILDREN
ACCESSING A FOODBANK IN
THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS**

DONATIONS RECEIVED

The volume of food donations received at our foodbanks fluctuated across the year; however, it was not sufficient to meet the increased demand. Fortunately, due to the generosity of our donors and supporters, we were able to purchase additional stock for items in short supply by using financial donations we received specifically to purchase food.

As the dynamics of our donations change to include physical and financial support, we are thankful to everyone that donated in 2023, enabling us to fulfil the demand of everybody who visited our foodbanks with a food parcel.



267

tonnes of food donated



35.5

tonnes of food purchased

HARVEST

During the months of September and October, we reached out to the local primary schools to support their Harvest Festival activities. Harvest donations were recorded as the busiest time in 2023 with a staggering 72 tonnes (food and non food) received: a **16% increase** on 2022.

CHRISTMAS

In addition to the donations received in the run up to Christmas, during November and December, we ran a Reverse Advent Calendar campaign asking people to donate items instead of receiving a small gift/treat from a traditional advent calendar. Christmas 2023 saw a **7% decrease** in donations (food and non food) compared to 2022.

DON'T FORGET US AT THE SUPERMARKET

Launched in May 2023, we developed a weekly email shopping list of our stock shortages that can be sent on the day of the subscribers choice, encouraging donators to add one or two items on their next visit to the shops.

If you would like to support us with a donation and are unsure on what to get or would like to know what our shortages are, then subscribe to our 'Don't Forget' reminder using the QR code.



**SCAN THIS QR CODE TO SIGN UP TO OUR
DON'T FORGET WEEKLY REMINDER**

DUDLEY BOROUGH



11

foodbanks



13,870

adults supported



8,038

children supported



140

tonnes of food distributed

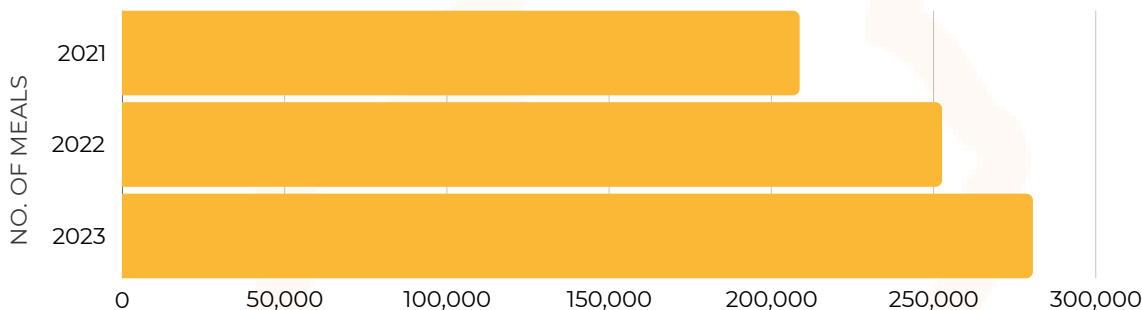


280,626

meals provided

Dudley, home to five of the original foodbanks opened in 2008-2010, is the busiest of the three BCFB boroughs, and has maintained the highest number of foodbanks in the network.

2023 saw an **11% increase in the number of meals provided** compared to 2022, and a **15% increase in the total number of people supported** (21,908 people) in the borough.



The total number of meals provided as shown in this chart, illustrates the continual increase in demand in the Dudley borough, attributed to the cost of living crisis impacting people's ability to cover the cost of essentials.

"During 2023, the warehouse saw a huge increase in the volume of donations being shipped out to our foodbanks, especially those in deprived areas heavily impacted by the cost of living crisis. This left the shelves bare at times, forcing us to purchase stock to support the demand of the foodbanks who have (on a number of occasions), experienced people queuing up outside before they even opened. After 6 years at BCFB, I don't see the demand reducing any time soon."

Ronnie - BCFB Warehouse Manager

Approx. 323,500 population based on Office for National Statistics 2021 census

WALSALL BOROUGH



7
foodbanks



7,220
adults supported



4,807
children supported



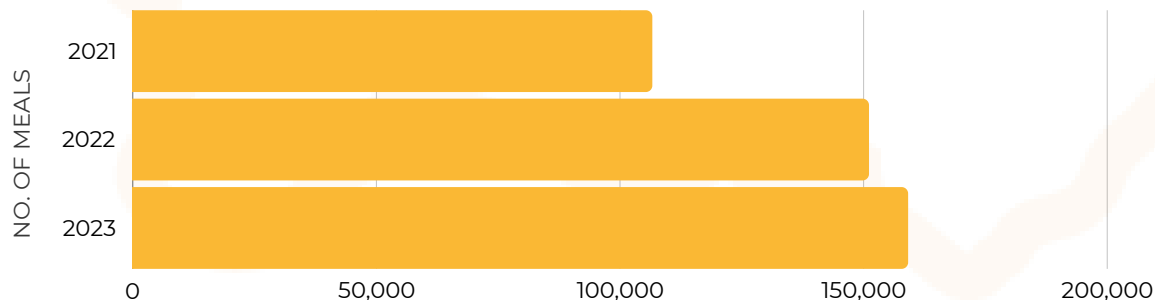
80
tonnes of food distributed



159,136
meals provided

Walsall, the smallest borough in our network, is fortunate to have two of its seven foodbanks offer support services that include benefit advice and debt counselling.

2023 saw a **5% increase in the number of meals provided** compared to 2022, and a **10% increase in the number of people supported** (12,027 people) in the borough.



The total number of meals provided in the Walsall borough, as shown in this chart, saw a 42% increase in demand from 2021 to 2022 associated to the increase in energy prices and its effect on people with prepayment meters. The increase continued in 2023 with the rise in food costs.

"Walsall, like everywhere, is still feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis as in reality, although inflation is easing, prices are not falling to bring relief to the families we support who are in crisis. Over the last 12 months, I have seen a greater cross networking of agencies working together to try and create pathways of support to people who are finding times difficult. But in all of this, a big thank you has to go out to all our volunteers, working behind the scenes, offering a friendly face to those who use our foodbanks."

Allan - BCFB Walsall Coordinator

Approx. 284,100 population based on Office for National Statistics 2021 census

SANDWELL BOROUGH



8

foodbanks



5,522

adults supported



3,804

children supported



52

tonnes of food distributed

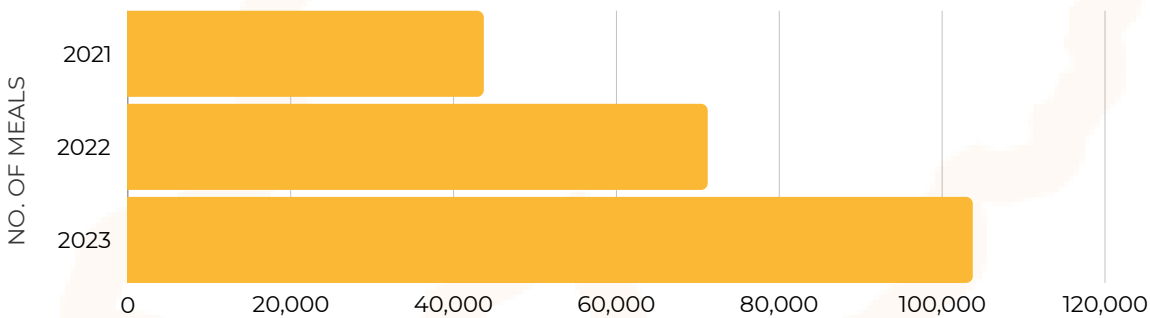


103,758

meals provided

The Sandwell borough welcomed the addition of another foodbank to its network in 2023: the Seventh Day Adventist Church in West Bromwich.

Sandwell had the smallest footfall out of the three boroughs but saw the largest spike with a **46% increase in the number of meals provided** in 2023 compared to 2022, and a **54% increase in the number of people supported** (9,326 people) in the borough.



The total number of meals provided in Sandwell, as shown in this chart, has seen a significant increase from 2021 to 2023 – this is believed to be partly due to the increase in the number of foodbanks from five in 2021 to eight in 2023, with each new foodbank opening increasing the reach within the Sandwell communities, but also the long term impact of the cost of living crisis.

"In the heart of Sandwell, where compassion meets crisis, the surge in demand for foodbanks echoes a narrative of resilience and community strength. With a significant increase in demand, 2023 has seen the volunteers going above and beyond to make a difference in the lives of those facing hardship. With unwavering dedication, they extend a helping hand, embodying compassion in action. These remarkable volunteers not only distribute essential provisions but also cultivate a sense of community and warmth."

Lynne - BCFB Sandwell Coordinator

Approx. 341,900 population based on Office for National Statistics 2021 census

RECIPE BAGS

Recipe bags were first introduced as a pilot project in December 2021, funded by Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), with the aim of breathing life into the standard food parcel that families receive when in crisis.



The ambition of the recipe bag was to use non-perishable food items from within a food parcel to create healthy and nutritious meals, whilst collaborating with schools and youth groups to develop key life skills.

The project has been a tremendous success so far, offering ten recipe cards, each accompanied by a how-to video accessed by scanning a QR code on the front of the recipe card.



Over **1000 recipe bags** were handed out during 2023, either as a supplement to a food parcel or delivered through a project including:

- YMCA, Wrens Nest, running summer cookery sessions.
- Holiday Activity Club with the CreArt Community Centre, Dudley
- Destined to Reign Church, Dudley
- Women's Discovery Group at Top Church Training, Dudley
- Christ Church Primary School, Oldbury

“ Even my dad
tried it and he's
fussy ”

“ I've loved cooking, my
favourite was the chilli! ”

Chawn Hill Church in Stourbridge and the New Life Church in Wall Heath were big supporters of the project and took the initiative to hand out empty recipe bags with a recipe card, asking the congregation to source all the ingredients for a recipe bag in place of gathering their Harvest food donations. This was an amazing success producing over 100 completed recipe bags.

PARTNER PROJECTS

In addition to the work we deliver direct in the community through our foodbanks, we also support a variety of Partner Projects across the Black Country area: community-focused organisations who offer support, guidance and provide regular events such as soup kitchens. We supply these partners with any items that we have in abundance and/or are close to their use-by date; this ensures our waste is reduced, whilst enabling us to support people we may not have otherwise been able to reach directly.

We were fortunate this year to work with many organisations and community groups including We love Carers, Revival Fires, YMCA, Russells Hall Hospital Discharge Team, Raven Rescue, CHADD, Brushstrokes, local Family Hubs, Friendly Faces Disability Support, and Welcome Group, to name a few.

The following three groups give an idea of some of the projects that we supported in 2023 and how they work to help provide for those that are homeless, vulnerable and in need.



Brierley Hill Babybank

Brierley Hill Babybank's mission and core focus is the prevention or relief of poverty in Brierley Hill and the surrounding areas by providing essential items, resources and support to families with young children and/or to charities or other organisations who also work to prevent or relieve poverty amongst families.

CreArt Community Centre was established to address the lack of available safe spaces for activities among black and migrant children in addition to combat the issue of loneliness faced by Black communities. They strive to be at the forefront of providing supportive creative activities for families in the Black and migrant community located in the Dudley borough.

CreArt Community Centre Dudley



The Connect Project Brierley Hill

The Connect Project was born to do just that - to help people connect with others and with themselves. They offer clubs for men, women, allotment groups, coffee mornings, and craft clubs which are open to all. They also offer 1-2-1 support focusing on building individuals' confidence and self-esteem along with an array of volunteering opportunities within their community venue called Harrys. For whether you want to just sit and chat with others or if you would like to have a chance at getting creative.

17.5 TONNES OF FOOD PROVIDED TO PARTNER PROJECTS

FROM THE FRONTLINE

Everyone who visits a foodbank has a story, and it is these real-life stories that show the day-to-day struggles of putting food on the table, highlighting a reality that many face but which is not always visible. It also emphasizes the importance of addressing the systemic issues contributing to food poverty, and the need for policies and initiatives that address the root causes of food insecurity.

From the many good news stories that we hear every day, these are some of the comments that our clients have made when visiting our foodbanks.

“ I was made to feel unburdened and welcome, and that support is just a short walk away ”

“ The foodbank is my favourite place because the people there care about me ”



“ Thank you for all the kindness and support, it is amazing to have some caring people still on this earth. I was made to feel at ease, not judged, and welcomed. ”

“ An absolute life saver ”

“ I was made to feel comfortable, welcomed, not to be shy or feel embarrassed ”

OUR VOLUNTEERS

We would not be able to continue our mission without our volunteers. We are so fortunate to have such amazing and dedicated volunteers who support us not only at our foodbanks, but also within the central warehouse.

All the volunteers play a pivotal role in the operation and success of our foodbanks, by selflessly contributing their time and effort to collect, sort, and distribute food items to those in need. Together, they create a powerful force of community spirit, making a real difference in the battle against food poverty.



CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

Every year we welcome corporate volunteers into the central warehouse to support us with the influx of donations received, particularly during our Harvest and Christmas campaigns. Volunteers are welcomed from local companies to support the existing volunteers in sorting, dating and storing the donations.

During 2023, we had over 150 corporate volunteers support us in the central warehouse.

Inviting corporate volunteers into our warehouse not only provides crucial assistance in distributing food to those in need, but also fosters a sense of community engagement and social responsibility within the company. If this is something that your company would like to get involved with, visit our website for more information or get in touch via

corporates@blackcountryfoodbank.org.uk

SUPPORT

This report focuses on the incredible impact the charity has had across the Black Country in 2023 through all our foodbanks and partner projects.

However, there is so much more to our story that we cannot include here.

If you would like to find out more about the work that we do, then please contact us.

HOW CAN YOU HELP

If this report has inspired you and you would like to support the work of the Black Country Foodbank, there are several ways you can help.



VOLUNTEER

at your local foodbank



CONNECT

corporate volunteers are invited into the central warehouse during Harvest and Christmas in exchange for a donation to the charity



DONATE

visit the support section on our website to find out where you can donate items and sign up to our Don't Forget emails to find out what items we need the most

alternatively, scan the QR code to donate financially



THANK YOU

From all the team at Black Country Foodbank, we would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has supported us.

GET IN TOUCH

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