

Colchester Foodbank

Facing the Future



**The King's Award
for Voluntary Service**

**Annual Report
2023- 2024**

Contents

Our Achievements

Our Partners
Support for Clients
The Outreach Program
What our Clients Say

Our Volunteers/DoE
Volunteer Voices
Our Recognition and Awards

Our Sponsors

The Chair
Our Patrons
Our Trustees


Our Co-Directors
Community Organizing Team
Anne Barney
Welfare Officer
Warehouse Report

Our Treasurer
Governance


Our Satellites
The Trussell Trust
Special Thanks

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS


2023-24:



This year we delivered 24,514 food parcels, to 14,923 adults and 9,591 children, an overall increase of 11% compared to last year.



We have continued our collaboration with Citizen's Advice and the City Council's Welfare, Employment, and Financial Support team to provide services, including housing and debt advice, and general welfare and employment guidance. As a result, many clients received the additional financial assistance they were entitled to, alongside support to improve their overall situation. This service helped approximately 610 people from January to June this year alone.



We have increased our advocacy activity, aiming to address the underlying causes of food poverty. In particular, we actively support the campaign to make Colchester a Real Living Wage City.

As we reflect on the past 12 months, we are proud to share some of the remarkable achievements that have made a lasting impact on our community. Thanks to your support and the strength of our partnerships, we've been able to reach new heights in our mission to uplift and empower those in need.

This year, our collaboration with Blue Cross has been a tremendous success. Together, we established a Pet Foodbank that has provided much-needed pet food to families facing financial challenges. Over the past year, we've distributed hundreds of meals, ensuring that pets remain well-nourished and healthy. This initiative has brought relief and peace of mind to many pet owners in our community.

Our partnership with Penguin Books gave rise to the Children's Book Corner, a book haven that has sparked a love of reading in countless young minds. Over the past 12 months, children have been encouraged to explore our collection and take books home to keep. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with many families expressing gratitude for the opportunity to build on their children's reading. We've seen a surge in literacy and imagination among our youngest community members, and we look forward to continuing this tradition.

This winter, we took significant strides in our efforts to keep our community warm. Our Winter Warm Coat Rail and distribution of winter warm bags have provided essential cold-weather packs to those in need. Thanks to the generous donations from community members, we've helped hundreds of individuals stay warm and safe during the harsh winter months. This initiative has been a true testament to the power of community solidarity.

In partnership with The Works Colchester, we launched a back-to-school initiative over the summer, providing essential stationery and pencil cases to children preparing to return to school. This collaboration ensured that students started the new school year equipped with the tools they need.

Nikki Ranson Co-Director

People Fed	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Adults 2023 Includes all satellites	1207	1200	1334	1072	1064	1212	1192	1178	1259	1135	1240	1669	14762
2022	827	756	879	884	928	921	730	878	1065	1018	960	1454	11346
2021	748	628	845	770	616	737	757	621	671	631	719	1051	8794
2020	608	493	802	883	736	540	549	594	442	741	542	961	7952
Children 2023 Includes all satellites	934	820	947	744	727	715	763	702	807	811	806	1217	9993
2022	571	532	630	586	709	715	567	664	777	714	761	1194	8443
2021	593	437	683	590	476	530	570	484	489	403	524	844	6623
2020	408	386	691	504	513	264	352	653	285	673	432	786	6014
Total Adults and Children Fed: 2021: 15417 2022: 19816 2023: 24755													
Parcels given out	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Standard 2023 Includes all satellites	458	571	574	444	493	560	580	636	532	563	684	803	6898
2022	387	359	431	444	539	469	333	451	879	485	457	625	5859
2021	371	312	408	336	276	338	334	281	326	312	359	468	4121
2020	334	262	369	496	415	360	309			420	243		
Family 2023 Includes all satellites	217	237	262	203	224	203	221	265	198	226	229	363	2848
2022	188	142	187	203	248	213	168	204	264	205	222	328	2367
2021	145	109	193	200	157	179	161	139	131	136	139	247	1936
2020	101	107	177	149	127	65	161	176		108	112		



**Debbie from the
Financial Equality
& Wellbeing Team,
Colchester City
Council**

"We are extremely proud of the strong partnership built with the Foodbank. Mutual trust and a clear vision to support the immediate and ongoing needs of the residents of Colchester being our shared objective.

Each Monday and Friday, Deborah from the Financial Equality & Wellbeing team, holds a drop in service at the main depot, working closely with the Foodbank team to provide expert benefit advice, access to discretionary funds and partnership referrals. The aim is to ensure that each visitor is offered a package of support to move them forward from their initial crisis to a more sustainable position."

**Roz Clough
Financial Equality & Wellbeing Team Leader - Health Partnerships
and Wellbeing
Colchester City Council**

Proud to Partner...

Financial Inclusion

We are fortunate to have two caseworkers from Citizens Advice Colchester who help clients address the underlying issues that cause them to use the Foodbank in the first place. These advisers attend Tollgate twice per week with regular visits to other satellite locations.

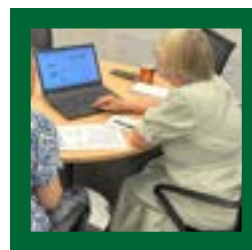
The advisers use their specialist money, debt and benefits knowledge to ensure people can claim all the benefits they are due, allowing them to maximise their income and deal with any existing debt. People using the Foodbank are often struggling with a raft of issues, in particular energy and housing problems made worse by the current cost of living crisis. Collaborative working across teams within Citizens Advice allows a holistic approach to help local residents take control over all the issues they face whether dealing with bills, finances, budgeting or making future decisions.

This collaboration means that clients have the opportunity to speak an adviser face to face, offering immediate, practical support to those who may otherwise face barriers in getting the assistance they need. Clients are also able to contact Citizens Advice via phone, email or using self-help information on their website.

Working together means that people get help addressing underlying issues without worrying how they will survive the next day. Together we are really making a difference to people's lives.

Client quote: 'Wow, wow, wow thank you and Citizens Advice so much. I can't tell what this has meant to me. It is wonderful to know that we have such a great bureau.'

Laima



Sylvie



Alistair with the
NHS Support

...Proud to Partner

At Next Chapter, we are committed to ensuring that every individual and family arriving into our refuge accommodation feels supported and cared for from the very start.

One of the ways we achieve this is by providing a Foodbank parcel upon their arrival. In partnership with our local Foodbank, we ensure that each client receives essential groceries and supplies tailored to their immediate needs. By sending across the basic details, we enable the Foodbank to prepare a parcel that caters specifically to their requirements, ensuring they have one less thing to worry about during such a challenging transition.

This initiative not only provides essential nourishment, but also offers a sense of welcome and relief to those escaping domestic abuse. It represents the beginning of a supportive journey with Next Chapter, where our clients know they are not alone. By addressing their basic needs immediately, we empower them to focus on their safety, healing, and rebuilding their lives. This collaboration with the Foodbank is a testament to our holistic approach to care, reinforcing our commitment to creating a safe, nurturing environment for all who seek our help.



Tots2Teens



"Wow - What a year it has been for us at Tots2Teens. We celebrated our 5th Birthday and this year has been our busiest by far, supporting families in need with children aged 0-16 years and working very closely with various professional agencies, as well as self-referrals.

We are incredibly lucky to be supported by Tollgate Foodbank where we have a section within to work, store and organise items that have been requested. Nichola Ranson has been a constant support to us over the years whilst being there and we are really grateful.

On Monday mornings, we are again incredibly lucky to be supported by Nicola Davey from the Greenstead Community Centre, where we are able to help families this side of Colchester, and we had the privilege of working with Michelle from ECFWS and Les Nichols from Nest with their Winter Warmer appeal, helping families to keep warm in winter with clothing, bedding etc. It's such a pleasure to be involved with this event each year.

We launched our Christmas Pyjama Appeal again and were so very grateful for the support we received from John Sisk Builders and Team. Also, members of Colchester Community who donated pyjamas and helped us provide each child with a brand new pair of pyjamas to go to bed on Christmas Eve ready for Santa to arrive.

Huge thanks our wonderful supporters including Lyn Barton and The Colchester Rotary Club, Doucecroft School students, Julie Young and Alice Simpson, and the Shoebox Celebration team, for donating a wonderful, huge selection of toiletries, chocolates, games and toys.

Go Bananas donated some much-needed hats, gloves and bed socks to help keep children warm, and we also had the pleasure of working with Tracey and her team from Sainsburys in Priory Street, where they again provided families with a complete Christmas dinner and all the trimmings and goodies but also some amazing toy donations.

The Original Factory Shop and Simon Collis also donated a fantastic assortment of brand new toys, and he and his family donated some brand new shoes from Clark's which we have been so grateful for as these have been so helpful.

We were lucky to be chosen to be an organisation to receive free funding for 10 children to take part in a Cook Stars session run by Emma, whereby the children each made Christmas themed cheesecakes to take home. It was such a fun evening and a joy to watch the children cook.

During this year we have seen the demand for help with formula milk and baby food go through the roof, with us not being able to keep up with demand - that was until we were very lucky to receive help from Simon who has campaigned nationally for prices to come down on formula milk and to lighten the stress and worries families are having as they try to afford to feed their babies. With this amazing help we were able to purchase some much-needed formula milk in all brands and stages, which helped so many families for a short period of time.

We were thrilled to be chosen by Palmer and Partners 500 Club to receive £500 which was used to purchase some much-needed new bigger storage boxes as well as some needed nappies and toiletries. They also donated a selection of Easter Eggs for us to hand to families we had been helping.

Johnny Mac's Fish and Chip Shop asked for nominations of volunteers that helped within the Greenstead Community for a chance to win £100 as a treat for doing so much. We were absolutely delighted and gobsmacked that people took time out to nominate us at Tots2Teens to be the winners of this prize! It was just so lovely to even be nominated let alone win and we would just like to thank everyone that voted as it meant so much to us.

St Luke's Ladies Tiptree Group donated £500 to help purchase some much-needed stairgates, nappies and baby food. They provided such a wonderful evening of entertainment.

Just recently we have been supported, on a monthly basis, by Butterfly Farms Day Nursery of Colchester whose families had donated nappies, clothes etc. We were thrilled to meet the team and some of their little people who handed their donations to us

Little City North Essex run classes in Colchester and have asked their families to support us by donating much needed clothing, nappies, toiletries etc which we have had the pleasure of donations being dropped to us at Tollgate Foodbank.

Millie and Mabel are a new venture in Colchester selling pre-loved children's wear who have donated some much-needed clothing to us when we have been out of stock and their clothes are greatly received. During the year we have had some gorgeous baby blankets and cardigans knitted which we are very grateful for.

This has been one very busy year and we can't thank you all enough for the amazing support that has been given to us. We really couldn't do what we do without you."

Eunice and Barbara

Essex Uniform Exchange

		No. of Families	Items Given Out
Jan-24		9	116
Feb-24		6	33
Mar-24		7	88
Apr-24		11	106
May-24		25	317
Jun-24		22	185



**Izabella Suchy,
Project Lead**

The project provides new & used uniforms and other school items throughout the entire school year. (Items are typically donated by school parents, PTAs and businesses).

Our Mission:

**Meet the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable.
Provide a free school uniform, helping young people integrate into their local community.
Reduce the threat of bullying.**

Re:Focus



"Re:Focus continues to work to provide free craft and activity packs to the residents of Colchester, and the surrounding areas.

Our aim is, and continues to be, to bring relief to mental health and wellbeing through creativity. The act of making and creating focuses our mind, aids regulation, ups our cognitive processes, gives fresh breath to our brain and nervous system. All in all, whether you doodle or whether your project is something more ambitious, the effect is the same: creating a balance between turmoil and life, having that one foot in, one foot out approach.

As we look to the future, our quality of mental health must continue to be our both greatest concern, and our greatest goal. What has been evidently clear, through the giving out of every pack, is the love gained, the joy in expression and the hope grown in the simple act of a free gift, with no strings attached.

We could not do what we do without the generosity of time given by our army of volunteers, who lovingly help in the preparation of every single element. Without these amazing people, of all ages and abilities, we would not be where we are today. Our goal is to reach as many lives as possible through the distribution of these multi-faceted packs to schools, families, individuals, community groups, to anyone and everyone in need."

Paula Stubbs: Re:Focus founder



The Outreach Program

We are proud to announce that our Outreach Project has entered its fourth year of operation, continuing to make a significant impact in our community. Through partnerships with various agencies, including MCTC and Next Chapter, to name a couple, we have been able to extend our reach and provide vital support to those in need.

In the past year alone, we have welcomed over fourteen Outreach volunteers who have collectively contributed an impressive 992 hours of service. These dedicated individuals play a crucial role in helping people regain confidence, overcome anxieties, and gain valuable experience.

The Outreach Project is essential in providing support to people struggling in various areas of life. Whether it's through practical assistance or emotional encouragement, our efforts are aimed at fostering a sense of community and empowerment. We are committed to continuing this work, ensuring that everyone who requires assistance has access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Nikki Ranson



What our clients say about us

"Foodbanks help our communities have access to essential items. You have been instrumental in feeding our children!"

"The Foodbank has been a life line to our mums, most of whom are unable to work or function due to their traumatic experiences."

"I am currently off work due to stress. I have received food and the volunteers have been fantastic and helpful. God bless them all."

"THANK YOU TO ALL the wonderful staff who has helped us through a tough time in life. You are all angels THANK YOU!"

"I am currently using Universal Credit as a single income household and still use Foodbank because the money I receive is not enough."

"I have used the Foodbank once before, when I was at rock bottom and had nowhere to turn apart from suicide. The support and food parcel I was given gave me the strength to start again. I am so grateful."

Volunteers at the Foodbank

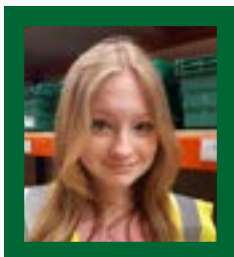
Over 140 volunteers work at Colchester Foodbank over the 10 satellites and the warehouse hub at Tollgate.

The combined efforts and dedication of these very varied individuals won the King's Award for Charities, the highest award available to volunteers and the equivalent of an MBE.

I said at the celebration gathering that our volunteers are actually very ordinary individuals from all walks of life, all social and economic backgrounds, of all political persuasions and faiths. This is true, but when they get together to devote their own time and energies to the Foodbank, the sum of their interest, care and love of people produces something quite amazing!

The Foodbank's achievements are due entirely to the love and commitment the volunteers offer to the helping those in need in the local community. It is a tremendous privilege to work with these people, who truly are the life blood of Colchester Foodbank.

Julie Rusiecki, Trustee with responsibility for Volunteers



The Duke of Edinburgh Award Project

The last students of our 23/24 cohort complete their twelve hours of volunteering for the Bronze Award. In total, twelve students were welcomed to the Saturday Team over 2023-2024. Special thanks go to the Saturday team and Lucy, who supports the students on a weekly basis.

With their parents, who are responsible for their underage child, students worked packing parcels for clients, sorting donations and experiencing what it is like to work in an adult environment; following procedures for health and safety and developing social skills at the same time.

Duke of Edinburgh students contribute so much to the Foodbank, and we thank them for their positive attitude and commitment, wishing them all the best for their future.

"The one day bus passes have proved very useful in Brightlingsea. We have had many clients who are required to make regular visits to Colchester for interviews or the job centre and buses are often their only transport option. Even with the current fare cap of £2 each way this still costs £4 for the return journey, which can be a weekly event and therefore really eats in to their monthly benefits. I know at least one of these clients has now found themselves a good job and I like to think we may have played a small part in his achievement."

"Remain frustrated by the inconsistency of voucher issuance in terms of by whom, from where etc alone with the challenges face with the likes of DWP who seem to use the Foodbank referral process as a way to simply gets people out of their offices. The lack of wrap around welfare support we seem to have locally and I am guessing nationally."

"It's a positive experience when I see a family go past my house who we helped to secure work in the early days of Brightlingsea Foodbank and who now are able to look after themselves without any help from us. Always a 'food bank tonic' that makes me smile".

"I find it fdifficult to understand on the occasion when someone asking for bags of food for a number of people in a large family when they then state they have just returned from a holiday abroad. However these are far and few between."

Volunteer Voices

"The Foodbank is my happy place".

"Coming here once a week is a happy experience but it also makes me aware of the terrible situations that people find themselves in. I'm happy that in some small way I can help."

"Being part of the team and being able to give back to the community has been such an honour and I feel extremely lucky to play a role in the mechanism of this operation."

"The Foodbank is a safe and welcoming enviroment and I feel incredibly blessed to be given the opportunity to become a volunteer."

Our Recognition and Awards



**Receiving the King's Award from
Mrs Jennifer Tollhurst, Lord Lieutenant
of Essex, 12 April 2024**

We were deeply honoured to have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This prestigious recognition highlights the dedication of over 230 remarkable volunteers who tirelessly support Colchester Foodbank with kindness, love, supportiveness and unwavering hard work.

The award is a tribute to each volunteer's commitment, making a profound impact on our community. To celebrate this achievement, we held a wonderful celebration at the foodbank, where our volunteers were joined by Partners, VIPs and dignitaries. The day was filled with joy and pride as we honoured the collective efforts that make our mission possible.

This award belongs to every volunteer whose generosity and spirit continue to inspire us all. Thank you for being the heart of Colchester Foodbank.

A BIG 'THANK YOU' TO OUR DONORS



1st Kelvedon Brownies
 20th Colchester Guides
 25th Colchester Guides
 30th Colchester Beavers
 Abbeyfield
 Community Church
 Agro Chemex
 Aldham Church
 All Saints Church, Fordham
 All Saints Church, Great Horksley
 All Saints Church, Shrub End
 Anti-loo Roll Brigade
 Ashworth Financial Planning
 Atlantis Gym
 Beauty Bank
 Birch Primary School
 Birkett Long
 Bishop William Ward Primary School
 Black Cactus Choir
 Bluebird Care
 Blue Cross Pet Food
 Bocking Primary School
 Bower Planning
 Bower Group
 Braiswick Primary School
 Brights Solicitors, Tiptree
 Brightlingsea Primary School
 Boxted Fruit Farm
 Boxted Silver Band
 Brooklands Primary
 Bungalow Bakery
 Cahill Design
 Consultant
 Chappel URC

Childs Play Nursery
 Christ Church
 Church of Latter Day Saints
 CKDC
 Colchestria Lodge
 Colchester and District Model Railway
 Colchester Arts Centre
 Colchester Castle
 Colchester City Councillors
 Colchester Royal Grammar School
 Colchester Children's Charity Appeal
 Colchester High School
 Colchester Institute
 Colchester Police Station
 Colchester Rock Choir
 Colchester Rotary
 Colchester Sixth Form College
 Colchester Spiritualist Centre
 Colchester Synagogue
 Colchester Wigs
 Colne Community College
 Copford Primary School
 Cornerstone Church
 Costa Coffee
 Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
 Cranmere Court
 Daniel Connell Partnerships
 Devonhires Solicitors
 East Mersea Church
 Earth Breeze
 ECL Care
 Elim Church, Greenstead
 Ellisions Solicitors

Elmstead Primary School
 Equippers Church
 Essex Industrial Doors
 Essex Professional Coaching
 Essex and Suffolk Quilters
 Essex Community Unit
 Fenwicks
 Fingeringhoe Primary School
 Fisher-Jones-Greenwood
 Fowler Smith mortgages
 Friends of Prettygate School
 Gainsborough Clinics
 Gosbecks Primary School
 Gray Daws Travel
 Great Tey Primary School
 Green Building renewable
 Greenstead BRC DT
 Haynes Watts
 Happy Ducklings child minders
 Highwoods Primary School
 Holmes and Hills
 Holy Trinity Primary School
 Home Farm Primary School
 Hope Church
 Horizon
 Construction
 Hospitality
 Colchester Institute

Howden Insurance
 Hiscox
 Icení Academy
 Icení club
 Ireton Road
 Community
 Institute Support
 Service
 Kendall Primary
 School
 Lakelands Primary
 School
 Langenhoe Lion
 Corner Community
 Shop
 Layer Primary School
 LB Group
 Lexden Lodge
 Kindergarden
 Lexden Methodist
 Church
 Lexden Primary
 School
 Life House Church
 Lilly Pud Puddings
 Linden Lady
 Lion Walk Church
 Linklaters
 Litterbugs
 Live and Let Live
 Marfleet Contractors
 McGahan Dance
 Group
 Mercedes Benz
 Mercers Farm
 Mercury Theatre
 Mersea Road Baptist
 Church
 Mersea School
 Milton Lodge Care
 Home
 Montgomery Primary
 School
 Mortgages First
 Mosaic Publicity
 Myland Parish
 North East Essex
 Co-op Academy

New Town Brownies
 Niblicks Running
 Group
 NRG Riverside
 Old School House
 Nursery
 Orchard Barns
 Nursery
 Oxford House
 School
 Palmer and
 Partners
 Park Run
 Paxman Academy
 Penguin Random
 House
 Perrywoods
 PFE Shipping
 Plan B
 Plug Trading
 Property Risk
 Quire
 Redeemer Church
 Re:Focus
 Roach Vale Primary
 School
 Rowhedge Surgery
 Rotary
 SBM Services
 Scarlett's Road
 Community
 SISK and Son
 Sodexo
 Squirrels Field
 Close Community
 St Andrews Church
 Alresford
 St Andrews Church
 Greenstead
 St Andrews Church
 Marks Tey
 St Andrews Church
 Wormingford
 St Barnabas Church
 St Benedicts
 College
 St Fillian Care
 Home

St Helena School
 St James Primary
 School
 St John the Baptist
 Layer
 St Marys Church,
 Great Bentley
 St Marys Church,
 Kelvedon
 St Peters Church,
 Boxted
 Stagecoach
 Stanway Primary
 School
 Stanway Secondary
 School
 Stanwell Hub
 Step 2 Colchester
 Institute
 Stratford St Marys
 Primary School
 Studio 5
 Team JA Fitness
 The Trinity School
 The Gilbert School
 The Hoolies
 The Rezidents
 thinkbdw
 Titan
 Townswomen's Guild
 Urban Support
 Victoria Inn
 Stanway
 Wavell Avenue
 Community
 Weston Homes
 Willow Brook Primary
 School
 Wivenhoe Cruisers
 Association
 WRS Insurance
 Brokers
 Year 8 Stanway
 School

We are so grateful to these Supermarkets for their support

ALDI

ASDA

B&M, Tollgate

Brightlingsea Spar

Co-op, Chesterwell

Co-op, Dedham

Co-op, Harwich Road

Co-op, Fiveways

Co-op, Icení Way

Co-op, Mile End

Co-op, Mersea Road

Co-op, Old Heath

Co-op, Prettygate

**Co-op, Samson Road,
Brightlingsea**

**Co-op, Station Road,
Brightlingsea**

Co-op, West Bergholt

Co-op, Wimpole Road

Co-op, Wivenhoe

Lidl, Abbots Road

Lidl, Gosbecks Road

**Marks and Spencer,
Stane Park**

**Morrisons, Little
Clacton**

**One Stop, North
Station Road**

**One Stop, Plume
Avenue**

**Sainsbury's, Priory
Walk**

**Sainsbury's, Layer
Road**

Sainsbury's, Stanway

Tesco, Crouch Street

Tesco, Highwoods

Tesco, High Street

Tesco, Hythe

**Tesco, Magdalen
Street**

Waitrose



**From Rt Revd Roger
Morris,
Area Bishop of
Colchester and Patron
of Colchester Foodbank**



"Did you know that the UK's net wealth has quadrupled over the last 20 years. According to the Office of National Statistics, the average UK household net worth (including property) stood at £437,685 in 2021. We are not a poor country. We are just an unequal country. Despite the 2008 financial crisis, the negative economic effects of Brexit and the war in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza, those who are rich (relatively speaking) have, on the whole, got richer. Meanwhile, more and more households (including hundreds of thousands of children) have been plunged into desperate poverty. Teachers in our schools are dressing children in spare uniform while they wash the soiled clothing that the children have worn to school. They are taking food into school to give to the children. We are not a poor country, but we are increasingly polarised into those who have plenty and those who have nothing at all.

The first thing that we need to do is to debunk the myth of 'levelling up'. Economics is not a zero sum game exactly (as countries can experience economic growth that can benefit all people) but, as a rule, some people cannot level up without other people levelling down. The solution to inequality is learning to share. When the people of God had fled from Egypt and were wandering in the desert, God provided food for them in the form of bread (manna). The people had to collect this God-given food each day. It says in the Bible that 'those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed'. This was the divine plan. Nobody had too much, and nobody had too little.

I believe that is God's plan for us too. We need foodbanks while it still remains the case that some people have too much and – tragically – too many people have too little. We need foodbanks as a short-term emergency service, but we must draw the line at them becoming a permanent feature. Charity in the short-term is no substitute for lasting justice. We need to do whatever is necessary so that those who have much do not have too much, and those who have little do not have too little. We need to level – both up and down. We need to share."



Sir Bob Russell, High Steward of Colchester and Patron of Colchester Foodbank

"Food banks should not exist - but thank goodness they do!

The United Kingdom is one of the wealthiest countries in the World, yet as we approach the end of the first quarter of the 21st century the need for food banks is greater now than when they started in the first decade of this century.

Back then, the pioneers of Colchester Foodbank never thought that not only would it still be operating in 2024 but that it would have grown from humble beginnings and that progressively over the years it would move four times into ever-larger premises to the current warehouse-sized operation at Stanway, with Colchester the busiest food bank in Essex.

None of this would have happened without the immense contribution by hundreds of volunteers over the years, and donations of food, (and lots of supportive supermarkets), by thousands of people who appreciated that there were those less fortunate in Society who they could help via the good work of the Foodbank.

Leadership of Colchester Foodbank has been crucial. It would not be the size and success it is without stewardship by those with responsibility of management, with the army of volunteers then making it possible for so many of our fellow citizens – on hard times – to be helped with food parcels. The dire situation is made all the worse because of the number of children short of the food they need.

Food banks should not exist - But thank goodness they do!

And thank you to all involved with Colchester Food Bank, in whatever capacity, and to all those whose donations assist those in need. It is appreciated."

From Peter Tibber, Chair of Colchester Foodbank

A Farewell to Andrew



2023-4 was a busy, turbulent, transitional year for Colchester Foodbank. 10 years after helping to set up the Foodbank and steering it as Chair of Trustees through a long period of change and massive growth, Andrew Fordyce decided to step down.

He will be hugely missed. His leadership, compassion, imagination, foresight (and colourful metaphors!) made the Foodbank what it is, responding robustly and flexibly to the huge challenges of a massive increase in food poverty and the need for ever greater number of food parcels, not least through the challenging and turbulent period of covid. Andrew has chosen to step back from the Foodbank, entirely justifiably after all he has done for it, but his guiding vision and spirit remain.

I am hugely honoured to have been asked by my fellow Trustees to take over from Andrew as chair; not an easy act to follow! My focus in my first year has been on building resilience and putting in place strong governance structures to ensure the Foodbank is equipped and ready to face the challenges of the future. We have completed the transition to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, giving the Foodbank the appropriate and more solid legal basis as we move forward.

New Teams

We have recruited four new Trustees to work alongside our brilliant existing and longstanding Trustees (Julie, Mark and Win), giving us a wider range of expertise and experience and deeper resilience to draw on. A huge welcome to Derek Sutherland, Sabina Hinchliffe, Shane Aldons and Lorna Preece.

In an open and transparent recruitment process we appointed Nikki Ranson and Armin Lange as co-directors (a more Foodbank-friendly title, we felt, than CEO) to replace Mike Beckett who after 7 years of dedicated service to the Foodbank also decided to step down. As existing employees of the Foodbank who know the place inside out, Nikki and Armin have got off to a fantastic start bringing an energy and commitment to finding efficiencies, transforming our communications, bringing in donations, making connections across the community and above all focusing on delivering the best possible service to our clients.

I'd also like to express warm thanks and appreciation to Jenny Turnbull who has taken over in the vital role of voluntary treasurer, replacing Shahidul Islam who kept the show on the road under great pressure; to Phoebe Jakovlevas who just seems to be everywhere, sorting out whatever needs doing, and to Aditya Medasani who is now building on the important outreach work started so well by Kim Moore.

Thanks to our Wonderful Volunteers

But none of this would matter if we didn't have our fabulous volunteers, without whom nothing would get done. Their commitment, expertise, good humour and willingness to go the extra mile make all the difference. In recognition of all this our volunteers received the King's Award for Volunteering, a great honour and more than amply deserved for all the hard work and dedication they show; and the occasion for a great party!



Challenges for 2024-5

So, what are the challenges this great team needs to face as we move forward? Well, most obviously, demand is increasing while donations, financial and in kind, have stalled, understandably in the current economic climate. How sustainable is that, for how long?

And we don't just want to deal with the symptoms of food poverty, although that is the priority, we want to address the causes. Working ever more closely with partners who can offer specialist advice to our clients and upping our campaigning, led by Adi, together with others, to make Colchester a Real Living Wage city will help address the root causes.

We need to step up our search for a new building for when we have to move out of Tollgate, as we know we will (and a huge thanks to the Tollgate partnership for their generosity and support). What sort of building do we want, what can we afford, where? And is the present food parcel model still fit for purpose? What difference will a new government make, and how will we need to respond?

Not only do we need to answer these questions, we need to act on our answers; and you can be sure that there will be more questions coming at us down the line. Yet I have every confidence that we now have the Trustees, staff, volunteers and resources to meet these challenges. Many thanks for everything for your amazing contributions...and good luck!

Our Trustees



Whilst recognising the generosity of our current landlords at Tollgate, our current main home is only temporary. In the next year or so we will have to find and secure a new permanent home for our main HQ and warehouse. Changes in the way we operate and interact with other agencies could influence the size and scope of the building needed for this move but staying put long-term is not an option.

This won't be easy as previous experience has illustrated how difficult such a search for a suitable building in and around Colchester that meets our specific needs and the needs of our clients, staff and volunteers can be. Compromise might therefore be necessary and this in turn may impact on the way the foodbank operates in the future. We will work with staff, volunteers and stakeholders to ensure that we reach the best possible solution for the organisation as a whole.

**Mark Norrington,
Wivenhoe Lead and Trustee**

Having been a Trustee for several years now, I reflect on the many changes and challenges facing Colchester Foodbank. I find myself both encouraged by the breadth of services offered to our clients in order to escape poverty in its many forms, and disturbed by the way we have inadvertently become a way of life for many.

At a time of falling donations and rising cost of food, this is a problem for foodbanks all over the country and I doubt there is a simple solution for anyone.

It will take time, courage and clear thinking to resolve this dilemma and I trust we are not left to deal with this without Government support.

**Julie Rusiecki,
Trustee with responsibility for Volunteers**

'It was a sad day when the first foodbank was formed' (I can imagine the sharp intake of breath and the indignation that this statement will bring !)

I have been a Trustee of Colchester Foodbank for a good few years now and also coordinate Brightlingsea Foodbank. Sometimes these two roles can clash, causing me to rethink my stance on a lot of the issues we are faced with. The Foodbank is my passion and I want to help those in Brightlingsea's community who are most in need. However, in my role as a Trustee, I am now faced with the corporate organisation that most charities have become and all that it involves.

Of course, we have to move forward and make our charity the best it can be, but not at the expense of the clients. If you had said the above to me on Day 1, I would have thought you had no concept of what a foodbank would mean to those unable to afford to buy food. Sadly, over time I think we have become a victim of our own success and instead of lessening the need, we have inadvertently increased it.

Yes, we can Signpost our clients to other agencies or organisations, who, hopefully, can guide them in resolving the crises that they are faced with, but it is so easy to try to give them more and more, lulling them into a complacency where they don't have to think for themselves, because we do it for them. Foodbanks were set up to supply food to those who could not afford it for a short period, and over time we have moved away from that – concessionary travel tickets, refurbished mobile phones, SIM cards, etc.

The other problem is that charities themselves are now big business; they have become corporate with CEOs, who in some cases (NOT in our co-directors case!!) are on high salaries, together with a good few more employed staff, moving away in many cases from volunteers carrying out the work.

**Win Pomroy,
Brightlingsea Lead and Trustee**

Meet our new Trustees

Hello, I'm Lorna Preece, I am honoured to join the board of Trustees at Colchester Foodbank. I bring 17 years experience of working with Next Chapter, previously Colchester & Tendring Women's Refuge, where I have and continue to be dedicated to supporting our community. For the past 9 years, I have had the privilege of serving as a refuge services manager, leading initiatives and guiding the refuge practitioners with a focus on compassion.

Whilst holding my position at Next Chapter, I served on the board of Colchester Borough Homes. During my time there, I gained valuable insights into governance, strategic planning and community advocacy, working on complex housing issues and implementing policies that made a real difference in the lives of residents.

As I step into this new role as a trustee, I am excited to bring my experience and passion for community service to the forefront. I am committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, empowering individuals and families, and ensuring that everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive and succeed.

I look forward to working closely with my fellow trustees, the dedicated staff, and all of our stakeholders to continue making a positive impact. Thank you for welcoming me into this new role, and I am eager to contribute to the ongoing success of Colchester Foodbank.

Left to right:
Shane Aldons, Lorna Preece,
Sabina Hinchliffe and Derek Sutherland



Hi, my name is Sabina and I'm delighted to be a new Trustee for the Colchester Foodbank. Hopefully my experience as a small business owner, mum and lifelong resident of Colchester can help me to make a difference and add value to the Foodbank.

The Foodbank faces many challenges in the future, from the increase in numbers in vulnerable people, to the changing and more complex needs of these people to hygiene poverty, all of which I'm very passionate about addressing.

Working collaboratively with like-minded individuals who care about this necessary cause is something I'm very excited and honoured to be involved with.

I am delighted to be joining the Trustees of the Colchester Foodbank, and I hope that I can provide support and governance to allow the foodbank to continue performing the vital role it does for our community.

Born in Edinburgh, I grew up and went to university in the west of Scotland before moving south for employment. While I initially resided in Bracknell and then Stafford, my wife Mari and I moved to Colchester in 1995 and have lived in the area ever since. My working career has been across a range of Enterprise Data Management, governance, programme and project management roles for several global banks and a worldwide news and media organisation. I chose to retire in late 2023, and I am now keen to bring some of my experience to the Foodbank.

My hobbies include cooking, music (listening mainly to classical and world music – and certainly not playing, I'm afraid!), dog walking and travelling. I'm excited to be joining Colchester Foodbank and hope that I'll be able to give more to the community now that I am fortunate enough to forgo the joys of daily working and the associated commuting. If I can help the Food Bank continue on its successful path, then I will be proud to do so.

Derek Sutherland

My name is Shane Aldons and I am extremely honoured to be one of the recent intake of Trustees of the Colchester Foodbank. My journey with the Foodbank began in January 2020 as a volunteer and has developed into a Trustee role this Spring whilst continuing to volunteer at Tollgate. Although I lead a busy life both professionally and personally, I felt a desire to give back to my community. What I hadn't anticipated was making valued friendships and seeing first-hand the benefits that the Foodbank provides to those in need.

I believe my role as Trustee is to continue the good work of Colchester Foodbank, provide stability for our clients and volunteers, promote fundraising (where you come in ... yes you!!!) and maintain oversight and governance.

Lastly, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved, directly and indirectly in the smooth running of the Colchester Foodbank, there are too many unsung heroes to mention but as a collective your commitment and loyalty has always been unwavering.

Words from our Co-Directors

As Co-Directors of Colchester Foodbank, we, Armin and Nikki, are excited about the new phases we are implementing to enhance our support and wraparound services for our clients. This year, we have initiated several new programs aimed at expanding our efforts to address issues such as debt, welfare, benefits, mental health, and overall health. These initiatives are designed to provide holistic support to individuals and families in need, ensuring they receive comprehensive assistance that goes beyond the immediate provision of food.

Despite these positive developments, we are extremely concerned about the rising number of people relying on the Foodbank. Over the past year, we have witnessed a significant increase in demand for our services, a troubling indicator of the growing prevalence of poverty in our community. Poverty extends beyond food insecurity; it encompasses challenges related to fuel, financial stability, and housing. The situation is further exacerbated by the increasing cost of living and current government policies, which have made it difficult for many individuals to make ends meet.

One of the most alarming trends we have observed is the rise in homelessness, driven by the inability of people to afford their rents and mortgages. This has led to a distressing increase in the number of families and individuals who find themselves without a stable place to live. The impact of this housing crisis is profound, affecting every aspect of their lives, from physical and mental health to the ability to maintain employment and educational opportunities.

Our concerns are that these issues will not improve anytime soon. The economic pressures facing our community are significant, and without substantial policy changes and increased support, the challenges are likely to persist. As we look to the future, our aspiration is to continue providing continuous support and services to our community. We are committed to tackling the core root problems of poverty, working tirelessly to help alleviate the suffering of our neighbours.



Our Co-Directors,
Nikki Ranson and Armin
Lange

**Looking ahead, we have aspirations to enhance and expand our impact.
We aim to:**

- 1. **Expand Our Outreach Programmes**:** We plan to reach more individuals and families by extending our services to underserved areas and increasing our mobile food bank operations.
- 2. **Develop More Holistic Support Services**:** Our goal is to integrate more comprehensive services, such as financial counselling, job training programs, and mental health support, to help clients achieve long-term stability.
- 3. **Strengthen Community Partnerships**:** We aspire to build stronger collaborations with local organisations, businesses, and government agencies to create a more robust support network for those in need.
- 4. **Advocate for Policy Changes**:** We will continue to advocate for policies that address the root causes of poverty and work towards systemic change that benefits the most vulnerable in our society.
- 5. **Enhance Volunteer and Donor Engagement**:** Recognising the vital role our volunteers and donors play, we aim to create more opportunities for engagement, training, and appreciation to strengthen our community support base.

Our vision is to create a community where everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive. We believe that by addressing the underlying causes of poverty, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. This includes advocating for policy changes, collaborating with other organisations, and continuously evolving our programs to meet the changing needs of our clients.

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received from our volunteers, donors, and partners. Your contributions are essential to our work, and together, we can make a significant impact. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to our mission of providing hope and assistance to those in need, and we invite you to join us in this important endeavour. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to making Colchester a stronger, more resilient community for all.

**Armin and Nikki accepting
the King's Award at the
request of the Volunteers**



Anne Barney

When asked what I did at the Foodbank' I answered, "Many things", so I felt I needed to explain more. I have now been volunteering at the Foodbank for over 10 years, and have seen many changes as the need for food parcels has increased.

I have organised and set up the satellites around Colchester (Highwoods, Monkwick, Eld Lane, Myland, New Town, Greenstead, Rowhedge as well as in Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe and Tiptree). The aim of the satellites was to make it easier for clients to be able to visit a Foodbank closer to where they live.

Once organisational and agreement paper work was completed, volunteers in place, and arrangements for food deliveries, training sessions were arranged. After a few sessions of training each new satellite became 'live' and the work of the volunteers has continued with new members joining the different teams.

I enjoy my role as link volunteer for the satellites. I keep in contact with each centre, each week when I send them the updated Voucher Count Report, (which highlights how many parcels each client receives). The Lead Volunteer and teams can check how many parcels a client has had. This also gives me an opportunity to inform or update them of any new information. The Lead Volunteer will also send me a stock order to get ready for delivery.

I have also facilitated two sessions with all satellite leads to come together to discuss relevant matters, such as signposting and finance with Colchester City Council.

I work closely with Mariners Chapel and St Lawrence Primary School in Rowhedge, where every school holiday, we provide a food parcels for those parents who will be in need during the holiday period. These are delivered and set up for parents.

Schools, various Church groups, Rotary, and Women's Institutes have invited me to talk about the work we do, usually at Harvest Festival time. Currently, I am working with West Bergholt Women's Institute who have been awarded a grant to prepare simple recipe card for our clients using the food parcel.

Some years ago, I set up the Reverse Advent Calendar which is used by many organisations who donate boxes of much needed items for the Christmas period.



The visit of the High Sheriff
of Essex
to award a certificate of
outstanding service to
Anne Barney,
10 June 2024

As a way of collecting more donations, I initially became responsible for setting up supermarket collections in stores where a collection crate was placed in a designated area by the store manager. This resulted in regular donations collected by our drivers. Most supermarkets now have these crates, as well as some businesses.

The large stores also now have BIG store collection food drives days, where I co-ordinate volunteers to cover one or two days at the store. This gives an opportunity to meet with shoppers, giving out lists and informing them of the work we do. These days are very successful and I am always very grateful for all the support from the volunteers as well as business groups who come along.

Another important part of my role is the daily logging in and out of all the donation information. This is used to provide daily, weekly and monthly data showing, donations of food, numbers of clients fed and the number of parcels given out. This is used to help our co – directors, trustees and Trussell Trust and understand the usage of Colchester Foodbank and Satellites. I also send out Certificates of Thanks to all donors who have supported the Foodbank; at Christmas, this can reach into the hundreds!

I am often contacted by different Agencies within the area who request to be a Foodbank Agency. A handbook of procedures is sent and an agreement form signed so the organisation has the ability to support their clients.

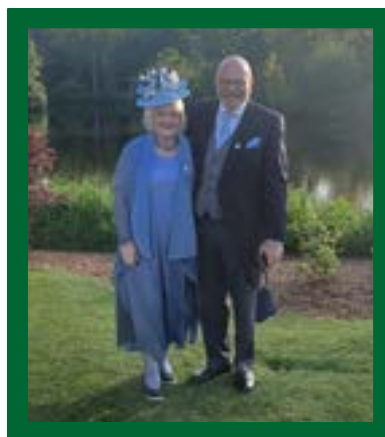
At Christmas I enjoy becoming Deputy Elf, and organising teams of elves to work with Chief Elf, my husband, who is responsible for sorting the food for the Christmas parcels.

Two days a week, I enjoy working with Monday and Wednesday teams at Tollgate answering the phone to clients as well as supporting the teams with any queries.

My husband and I were overwhelmed and very proud when asked to go to Buckingham Palace to represent the Foodbank Volunteers at a Garden Party in response to us gaining the Kings Award. A day we will never forget.

I was then recently awarded a certificate by the High Sheriff of Essex in recognition of the work I do for the local community...which took me very much by surprise.

**At Buckingham Palace to
receive
the King's Award on behalf of
Colchester Foodbank
Volunteers**



Community Organising Team

Earlier, most of our clients were unemployed individuals or those between jobs who needed our support temporarily until they found their footing. This is what foodbanks should be—support during a temporary crisis.

However, since 2020, the growing majority of the people we are providing food parcels to are those that are employed full-time. This is not temporary poverty; it has become much more of a permanent crisis.

This situation will not improve unless systemic changes are made. We are the 5th richest country in the world and only the 21st most populous, yet wages are not keeping pace with the rising cost of living, and benefits are failing to cover even life's basic essentials.

There's a river of poverty flowing through our community, and our clients are in that river. We're all doing our best to keep them from drowning by providing them with a life jacket—our food parcels. However, we know these life jackets only last for a limited amount of time. What happens then?

We have a few options: we either pull them out of the river, we teach them how to swim, or we go further upstream to understand where and why they are falling into the river in the first place.

This is the goal of the work we do as the Community Organising team. We aim to address the root causes of poverty and create sustainable solutions.

Linda Dumbrell



Aditya Medasani

Our work involves:

Advocacy and Policy Change: We work with local and national governments to advocate for policies that address systemic issues contributing to poverty. This includes campaigning for fair wages, housing, and access to affordable transportation.

Community-building: We foster a sense of community and support networks among those affected by poverty. By connecting individuals and families with local resources and support groups, we help build a stronger, more resilient community.

Preventative Measures: We listen to our clients to identify the factors that are pushing them into poverty and keeping them there. We address these issues, working to prevent individuals from falling into the river in the first place. This involves collaborating with various organisations and stakeholders to create a comprehensive support system.

Through these efforts, we strive to create lasting change and provide our community members with the tools they need to thrive. Our ultimate goal as a Foodbank, is not just to provide temporary relief but to transform lives and build a future where no one needs a life jacket to stay afloat.

Meet our Welfare Officer



Hi

I'm Phoebe and I am the Welfare Officer for Colchester Foodbank. I started my job in January after volunteering at Tollgate for just over 2 years. I got off to a busy start as I gained access to the Cadent Foundation's Winter Support Fund for Trussell Trust clients. I am pleased to say I managed to give out over £20,000 in supermarket and energy vouchers to our clients within a 3 month period. Since March I have been applying for grants for clients to help them get household items such as beds and flooring for their homes. I have also been applying for generalized grants for the Foodbank so that we can keep the warehouse stocked.

I do general support for all the Foodbank team, whether it be whipping up a spreadsheet or sorting the tip box, I am always happy to help. I am happily helping Julie to put this report together, hopefully it will reflect our work. I have especially enjoyed decluttering and organizing the office area in Tollgate! Part of my decluttering mission involved organizing a toy raffle; £275 raised later and I feel my mission is complete.

During my time I have been visiting all our satellites, it's very interesting to meet all the different teams and see how each satellite is set up. We can learn lots of things from each team and it is lovely to see the close relationship between the satellites and their local communities. I also work closely with Citizen's Advice and Colchester Borough Homes as we can work together to get good outcomes for our clients.

I have also taken over the social media channels for the Foodbank. Please like and share our posts so we can get our message out to as many people as possible! I am hoping to get more younger people involved in our cause so that we have a more sustainable future.

My two boys keep me very busy at home, they love being active and also love their food! I can't imagine not being able to feed my boys and that is why I am passionate about the work we do at the Foodbank.

Meet our Treasurer

The Foodbank has a new Treasurer! Jenny Turnbull has very kindly agreed to take on this absolutely key position for us.

She is already up and running, bringing her energy, enthusiasm and professional qualifications and experience, (Jenny is a retired accountant), to the role. We are extremely grateful to her.

Jenny takes over from Shahidul Islam, who is stepping down after two years as Treasurer. On behalf of all the Trustees, we thank him for all he has done for the Foodbank over a particularly challenging time.

Jenny said, "It's an honour to join the Foodbank volunteers. I'm looking forward to working with everyone. It's awful that we need the Foodbank, but it is a great team of committed folk."



Governance

Firstly, I'd like to say thank you to Taylor Rushby, Chartered Accountants, for their continued support in carrying out the Independent Examination. In particular, we are grateful to Nick Taylor for his guidance and support in presenting the accounts in the format required by the Charities Commission.

Following the AGM the accounts for the year to 31st December 2023 will be submitted to the Charity Commission and so will then be available to all interested parties.

The Trustees have regularly been kept abreast of the financial position during the year and forecast for future years, for transparency and to inform their operational and strategic decisions. In particular, expenditure on food items is tightly controlled by the Trustees by setting budgets for operational purposes.

INCOMING RESOURCES

Despite economic challenges, funding has remained close to the previous year, with many individuals, business organisations, philanthropic groups and faith groups choosing to support the Foodbank, as in previous years. We thank them for their support. In overall terms, incoming resources totalled £373k, compared to £382k in 2022, a fall of 2%, with regular donations down by 4%.

RESOURCES EXPENDED

Costs for the year on operational activities and organisational governance totalled £267k, a £26k or 13% increase over 2022. Within this there has been a significant increase in expenditure required for food purchases, at £54k in 2023 versus £21k in 2022, an increase of 142%. As covered elsewhere in the annual report, this results from a combination of additional numbers requiring Foodbank support combined with a fall-off of donations of food received.

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

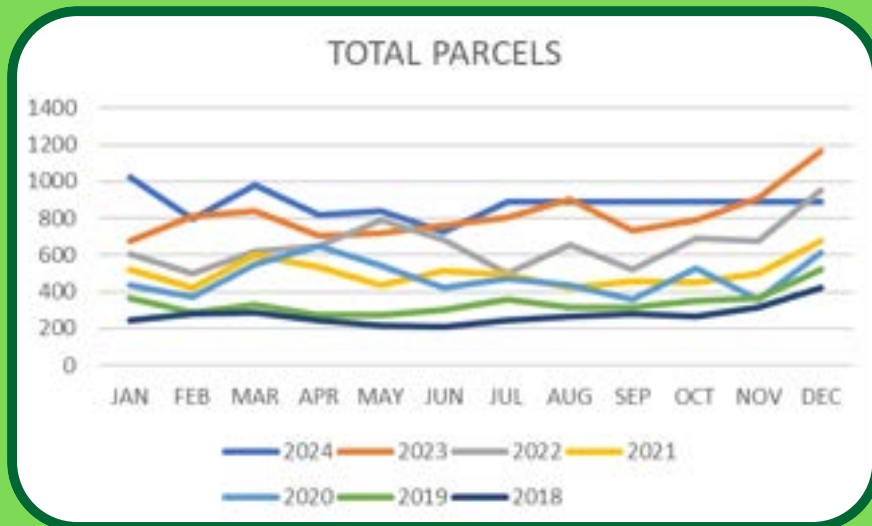
The net funds of the Charity increased by £133k in the year, to £756k.

Warehouse report 2024

We are still serving the community in 2024 and we will do so in the next few years!

Every day headlines in the newspapers tell us about a foodbank closing, foodbanks struggling to find food for clients or being unable to offer essential services.

Colchester Foodbank is facing the same economical climate as other foodbanks and we witness the same hostile environment. More and more people need our help (43 percent of our clients are children) and with tighter budgets people are less willing to spend extra money for foodbanks in the supermarket.



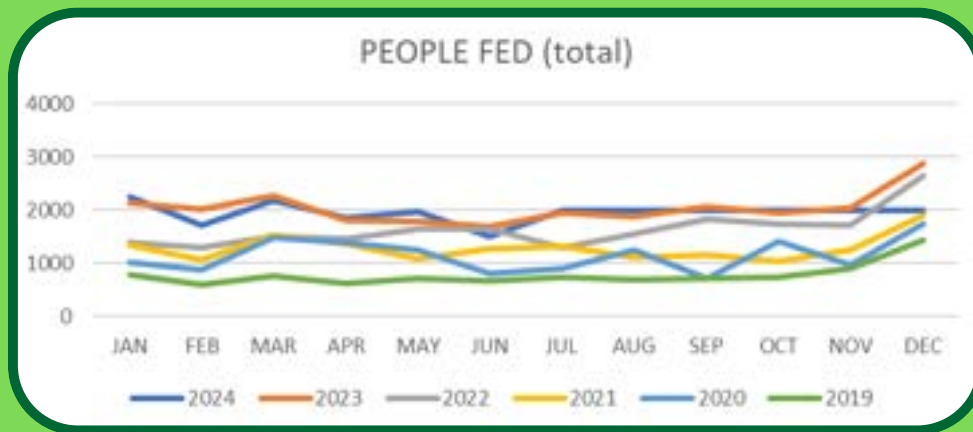
Parcel Weights:

To mitigate the situation, we have reduced the parcel weight over the last years. Currently standard parcels are 10 – 12 kg; family parcels around 15 – 17kg. This is a significant reduction to our peak parcels, but still above the required Trussell Trust guideline. More importantly we were not forced to reduce the range of products.

Demand Is Going Up:

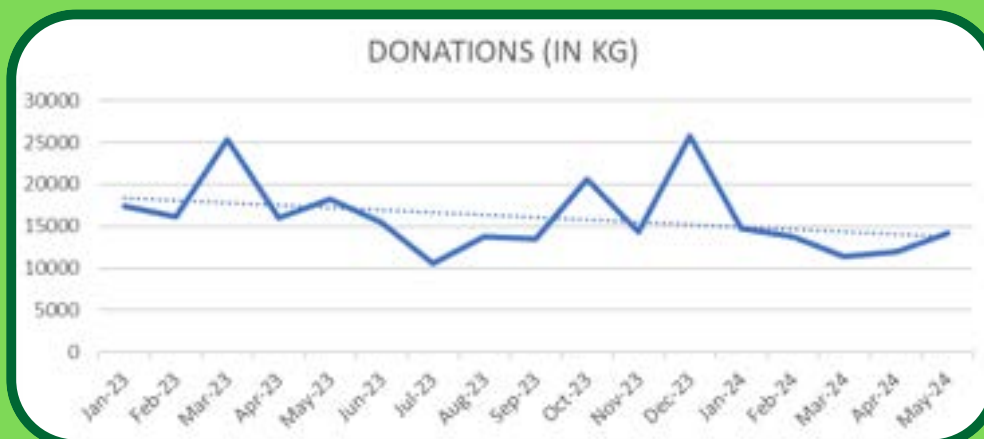
With the cost-of-living crisis came an increase in people in need resulting in soaring demand for the food parcels we hand to clients. At the same time our food donations dropped.

The reasons are obvious, but for all working in the warehouse week in week out, the empty shelves and the unused floor space are a sad reminder of foodbanks in the UK. We see an increase of 20% (JAN – JUN 24) over last year.



Food Donations Are Going Down:

At one point in 2021 we had 70 tonnes of food on the floor. We all remember full containers of pasta and rows of pallets of baked beans. Today only 11 tonnes of food are left in Tollgate and there is no indicator that things will improve.



New Refrigerator for Fruit & Vegetables:

You will have all seen the new chiller cabinet in Front of House. Since Covid 2019 we have massively increased our range of frozen food, fruit and vegetables. Frozen food & bread were always in multiple freezers in the front, but fruit & vegetables were a bit forgotten in FOH shelves. Not being properly chilled led to shorter shelf life for these products and specifically in the summer we had problems with fruit flies.

With the new cooling unit, we will be able to keep fruit & veg fresh for longer using this controlled environment.



Buying Food:

Since April 2023 we have been buying food in. This is the first time since the start of the Foodbank that we have been forced to do so. What started with a small amount has developed into a massive purchase operation to secure food.

Currently all supermarkets have problems with their own supply chain and in order to cover our monthly orders we have had to split these between various supermarkets. Luckily, we are in a financial position to continue buying our food.



New Warehouse:

We all knew that the warehouse in Tollgate was a temporary solution. Once planning permission for Tollgate Partnership is granted and final deals are fixed, we are on a 3 month notice period to vacate the building. Over the last months we have spoken to all relevant stakeholders about a potential new building for Colchester Foodbank.

Different solutions are available and currently we are exploring various models such as peppercorn rent, subsidized premises and rent to buy.

Armin Lange, Co-Director

Our Satellites

Highwoods

This year has been full of exciting things for us; we have managed to move to a new location, The Ark Methodist Church, which is only a stone's throw from our last place. This has a great space for our clients to enjoy refreshments and have a chat. We also have a great room for our stock which I have to say for me is even more exciting; the reason for this is we get regular donations from our church congregations at St Luke's & St Mark's. Earlier this year our local primary school came for a visit to see what is involved in the Foodbank, bringing donations with them. Last month the secondary school did a charity run with over 100 of its pupils running from the school to our foodbank, carrying items they had brought to donate - many of these pupils buying the items with their own money. All in all we are very, very blessed with the support we have from our local community. None of what we do would happen without the amazing team we have, the local community backing us and the support from Mother Hub. We are truly blessed.



Myland

We are glad to report that we are starting to see a rise in client numbers at our little Myland satellite. The satisfaction of helping people is tempered, of course, with sadness that so many do need the Foodbank. We have no "standard clients", some just need a short period of help due to temporary financial issues which will be resolved, some will need longer term help and we direct them as best as we can. It is interesting to note that the majority of clients visit us early, the 08:30 to 10:00 period. We, as a team, met one Saturday morning and decided to try this as an experiment (previously only 10 to midday), happily this works very well for anyone dropping off at school or nursery.

St Stephen's New Town

In line with the local trend we are seeing the demand for help rising and some of our sessions are really very busy now. We continue to be blessed to be supported by volunteers from both St Stephen's Church and Wimpole Road also with others from the local community.

The regular attendance of Citizens Advice really helps us and those who we are serving, but I think it is reasonable to say we are frustrated when we see needs, often welfare related, which we struggle to support people to address.



Monkwick

It continues to be a privilege to support local people who are in need where we can, but also sad that times remain hard for so many and also for some, without little prospect of improvement in the future.

Our community cafe numbers have picked up, and additional support groups who attend are well-received: we are particularly grateful to have the specialist support of CAB two weeks each month. Our recent slow cooker club went really well, and with a reserve list another is now planned for September/October. Many thanks to Dave Harris for securing locality funding for this, and to Louise and Andrew for co-ordinating.



Wivenhoe

It has been our busiest year since we first opened in 2018, with more than 200 clients using our services in 2023, as the challenges of the cost of living crisis were felt in the wider community. This number included a number of students studying at the nearby University, though by engaging with the University the number of students coming to us recently has declined.

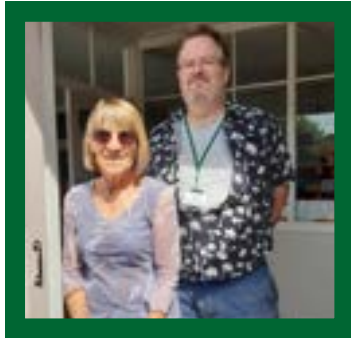
Our engagement with the local community continued this year with us attending a variety of events, not least the Community Day in September where we ran a Tombola which raised £162 for the Foodbank.

Local sponsors this year included Wivenhoe Allotment and Garden Association (for providing fresh fruit and vegetables in the season), the Norwegian Bakers for bread and pastries, DeVos for running a sale and raising funds, Winewell convenience store for running a raffle at Christmas and raising over £1000 and local supporters Francis and Ted who sell mistletoe every Christmas and raised over £200, as well as regular collections from our local Co-op and One Stop stores.

Probably our biggest organisational change was the move into new more spacious accommodation in the Autumn. Still in the Congregational church in Wivenhoe but we now use the church hall on a Tuesday (11.00-1.00 pm) and have our own storage room which enables us to store extra food parcels and a wider range of non-food items for clients. (see photo)

To cope with the increased demand we now have 11 volunteers in the team at Wivenhoe and without them it would not be possible to run the foodbank - so a big thank you to all of them!





Deni, Lead Volunteer with Mark

Central Eld Lane

Anyone who has visited or volunteered at Central Eld Lane will recognise that in many ways this is a unique satellite not only in terms of limited space and facilities but a very diverse client group.

Our client group is large and growing. Single men form the majority of this group, many of whom present with difficult complex needs including substance and alcohol abuse and mental health issues which occasionally, and it is very occasionally, lead to challenging behaviour.

In addition we have recently seen a large increase in the number of RAMA clients. Apart from some language problems, we have found some RAMA clients to be totally unaware about details of the service provided by Foodbank, indeed some seem unaware that Foodbank is a separate organisation and not part of RAMA. They can be very demanding about what they 'want' as opposed to what we can provide and expect to receive a voucher every two weeks.

We operate three sessions a week staffed by three teams of two volunteers. Usually we are able to cover internally for holidays, illness or appointments. But the last few months have presented us with a staffing problem. At one stage it looked as if this session would have to close, at least in the short term, but an appeal to Tollgate for help bought a brilliant result. We have been able to keep this session going thanks to the generous support provided by our colleagues from the bigger Foodbank team!

We've all heard the one about waiting for a bus when two come along? Well it seems to be true with recruits. I'm delighted to say that over the past two weeks we have found not one, not two but five new recruits who have attended training sessions and remain keen to get started! Eld Lane may have its problems but it can't be all bad!

Greenstead

We have had another busy year at Greenstead. Our volunteers have increased to 14 and we are working hard to serve our community.

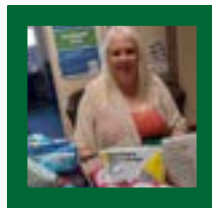
We were represented at the King's Award ceremony, the Lord Lieutenant's Award and the previous CEO's leaving party. We hosted the University of Essex survey on mental wellbeing and many of our clients participated.

Our volunteers have also worked with the supermarket collections.

At Greenstead, we have seen the opening of the Community Supermarket, but we have not noticed a significant decline in client numbers yet.

We are grateful for the help given by other agencies, in particular Citizens Advice and the Green Doctor.

In September we shall have been here for five years and we will continue for as long as we are needed.



**Mandy,
Greenstead Lead
Volunteer**

Tiptree

Tiptree Food Bank has continued to be well supported by the local community. At Harvest we had more schools and churches collecting for us than ever before.

We are now working in partnership with Tiptree Community Hub, who are able to supply us with fresh goods – bread, eggs and fruit – each week, while we pass on to them any donations we are unable to use (we did have an absolute mountain of chickpeas at one point).

We have recruited a few new volunteers to add to our team. We are still delivering most of our parcels to clients who are not able to get to the food bank because of mobility issues or lack of transport.



Brightlingsea

Brightlingsea Foodbank first opened its doors in December 2015, for what we thought would be a pretty straightforward process, if we followed all the input we were given by Colchester Foodbank. Our community had proved to be right behind us after an initial "town meeting"! Surely it couldn't be that hard to fulfil the pink Foodbank voucher with a Standard or Family food pack and 'Signpost' the client to an appropriate organisation or agency, who in turn would help the client with any problems they might have and before you know it, the client would be back to 'normal' – problem solved! **WRONG!!**

Life has a way of always throwing a spanner in the works and our nice, rosy view on everything was slowly shattered! Our first problem was that we did not have enough agencies in Brightlingsea to supply the Trussell Trust pink food pack vouchers. The second was that the two signatories of the Town Council found that they did not have the time to give to the clients alongside their normal work commitments. Gradually, our volunteers took over this task and became signatories, then being able to issue the pink forms! So, uniquely, Brightlingsea Foodbank became both agency and Foodbank – roles we are quite happy to fulfil (even though new volunteers can find it difficult to process at first).

Then came the Covid Pandemic, followed by the 'Cost-of-Living' crisis and we found clients, in some cases – no, in, a lot of cases! - were finding they couldn't manage week to week without a visit to our Foodbank. In a knock-on effect, those in our community who had been regular donators of food and money, were finding that they too were having to 'tighten their belts' and this caused a drop in the foodstuffs being dropped into the supermarket foodbank baskets and also in the amount of money donated.

I think the hardest thing I have had to do in the past year, is to get across to clients that we can't sustain them visiting us every week for a food pack and a voucher for the butcher/ or greengrocer. They already feel ashamed (for want of a better word) that they have to come to us and now they also feel we are judging them for coming every week! Can you see a pattern emerging here?

Meanwhile, Brightlingsea Foodbank's dedicated group of amazing volunteers, many of whom have remained with us from Day One, have found roles within the Foodbank that suit their talents:

Bob W – Keeps us all up to date with newsletters issued by Colchester FB or Trussell Trust and any Government information relating to help with the cost of living, helping with the bus concession plan with First buses, which enabled clients to have concession bus tickets to get to job interviews, or attend the DWP etc;

Hilary F – Our 'expert' on "benefits";

John & Jackie M – our dedicated husband & wife team, who faithfully collect the supermarket donations every week and do so much more, helping to transport equipment etc. to support our Foodbank;

Katy F-P – Press and Publicity Agent supreme!

All of you, though, even if I have not named you, contribute a special something to make Brightlingsea Foodbank the success it is and for this I truly thank you.

One person I must not forget, is my long-suffering husband, who retired as a volunteer on his 80th birthday in February this year. The other volunteers asked for a list of the jobs that he did at our Foodbank and most of these have been ably taken over by Scott T, with Ali M-W taking up settling the butcher's and greengrocer's voucher bills (these vouchers were another of Bob W's ideas!). A big 'Thank you' too, for his Surprise 80th Party and the lovely tea at Wivenhoe House!

I hope we have now turned a corner and will move forward to a much more successful 2025.

Win Pomroy, Coordinator, Brightlingsea Foodbank and Trustee of Colchester Foodbank.



Some of the Brightlingsea team at the King's Award ceremony

Client Satisfaction Survey

"Have you ever wondered what our clients really think of us?" Obviously, they are grateful to get a free food parcel, but what was their experience of their foodbank visit, and could it be improved? This is the question we asked ourselves earlier this year and decided to conduct our own survey to find out.

Some felt we could advertise our presence better by having more leaflets and posters around the town and although we do already have some posters and a weekly message on the Spotted Brightlingsea Facebook page, we will look at having more posters around town and seeing if local shops, doctors/dentist surgeries, and playgroups/schools will carry our leaflets.

Everyone said they felt very welcome and that the Foodbank volunteers quickly helped them overcome any anxieties they had when they first came in.

The process of completing the pink forms was generally acceptable although a few felt it was unreasonable for us to ask the same questions every time they come in.

The content of the food parcels received the most praise. Many said it was more than they had expected, and also that they were particularly grateful for the vouchers we provide for the local butcher and greengrocer which enables them to purchase fresh produce of their choice to supplement the food parcel.

Also, that they are allowed to change items in their food packs which aren't suitable for something else from our 'swaps table'.

There was also praise for the additional ways we help. Not just the signposting to other organisations, but also the mobile phone SIM cards, the concessionary bus tickets, and even an energy card top-up.

Overall, the feedback from the survey was very positive and there were a few good suggestions for improvement which we are now considering:-

promoting ways of better utilizing the contents of the food packs, providing recipes, meal planners and nutrition guides.

We will see if local supermarkets could help more by donating their "yellow sticker" items.

We feel this has proved to be a really useful exercise and has made us aware of some things we had not previously thought of and is definitely worth doing again - maybe in a year's time.

Bob Walsh, Brightlingsea satellite

Rowhedge

We have been able to provide food for 472 adults and 606 children, sadly an increase from 326 adults and 464 children the previous year. We continue to receive generous financial donations from the Parish Council and the generous people of Rowhedge to the value of £5,500, which includes the collection totalling £600 from the Carols on the Quay during Christmas 2023. Also, donations from a resident and his company, the Village Lunch Club, the Walking Men's Football Club and Pick Ball enabled us to provide for families over the year.

We are fortunate to receive food donations from residents in Rowhedge and Fingringhoe, the Co-op and Tesco Hythe. We have been able to provide fresh fruit and vegetables on a weekly basis plus ham and cheese in the school holidays in addition to our food parcels.



We continue to work with other organisations: Christians against Poverty (CAP); North Essex Support Team (NEST); Colchester City Council with a budget locality donation of £200 from Faye Smalls; Citizens Advice attending our hub monthly, which has been gratefully received and helped our community with this personal service. More recently, Greenstead Signpost has begun to visit on a Monday, which led to a client starting a part-time job. They aim to support people to overcome employment barriers, to empower individuals and build their confidence so they are better equipped to get and keep a job.

We continue to run the Slow Cooker Project which has been a great success, reaching out to twelve families over the winter months. The families really embraced taking part and their efforts and results were posted on our Rowhedge Facebook page.

At Christmas we trialled a new project provide by NEST, whereby five families within our community were given a Christmas Day free of worry, by providing Christmas lunch with gas and electricity paid for plus presents for the children. An amazing gift to give.

Our team at Rowhedge have gone from strength to strength, growing in knowledge and understanding of the complex needs that arise in the people we seek to support.

We thank the Tollgate Foodbank team for empowering and equipping us to run our hub so successfully.

Some of our dedicated volunteers from Tollgate

**Monday
Team**



**Tuesday
Team**



**Wednesday
Team**



**Thursday
Team**



**Friday
Team**



**Saturday
Team**



Rebekah Hill, Area Manager for Essex, The Trussell Trust



At a time when people on the lowest incomes continue to struggle to pay for the essentials and with food bank use at an all-time high, Colchester Foodbank is working hard to respond to the level of hardship and distress that people are experiencing across the district. The food bank works tirelessly to maintain its vital services, but it's stretched and struggling to cope, having to purchase huge amounts of food for its parcels in order to meet the growing demand.

So whilst the food bank is meeting a historic level of need, we cannot let it become the new normal. Which is why Colchester Foodbank goes above and beyond the provision of food, partnering with Citizens Advice to help people get all the benefits they're entitled to, and undertaking local campaigning work to address the systemic issues at a local level. These projects are helping provide extra levels of support to prevent people from needing to use the food bank.

At the Trussell Trust, we know what needs to happen to make sure people have enough money for the essentials - and it starts with making our social security system fit for purpose. Which is why we're calling for a UK social security system to include an Essentials Guarantee, so that everyone has enough money to cover the bills for everyday items, such as energy and food.

But we know that change takes time. In the meantime, if Colchester Foodbank is to continue to serve the local community with compassion and determination, then it will continue to need the support of the local community. It is only thanks to the generous support of so many local partners that the food bank has been able to help so many individuals across the District this year. But only together can the food bank face the challenges ahead.

**Special thanks to the
talented team who assisted
with this report:**

**Marcus Rusiecki
Phoebe Jakovlevas
Aditya Medasani**

**It would not have
happened without your
help**

Julie Rusiecki

Colchester Foodbank

Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of Colchester Foodbank

I report on the accounts of the organisation for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act"). The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Act and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioner under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioner. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and the seeking of explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements:

- (a) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act;
- (b) to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records; and
- (c) to comply with the applicable requirements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008; or

to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Nick Taylor
Chartered Accountant
The Coach House
Headgate
Colchester
CO3 3BT

The date upon which my opinion is expressed is:
30th October 2024