



The RAFT Foundation Annual Report 2023

Registered Charity Number 1191272





Annual Report 01-1-2023 to 31-12-2023

Charity name: The RAFT Foundation (TRF)

Charity registration number: 1191272

1. Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document

1.1 THE RELIEF OF FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AMONGST PEOPLE IN ROSSENDALE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA BY:

A) PROVIDING EMERGENCY FOOD, ESSENTIAL TOILETRIES, AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED

B) SUCH OTHER MEANS, INCLUDING (BUT NOT LIMITED TO) THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT OR SIGNPOSTING TO RELEVANT INFORMATION AND OTHER ADVISORY SERVICES

2. Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes

2.1 The Raft Foundation is a crisis support foodbank and signposting service. We operate from our single distribution centre in Rawtenstall, Lancashire and provide support to individuals and families within the community of Rossendale.

2.2 We **deliver** our food parcels **3 days per week**, 51 weeks of the year, but wherever severe crisis and emergency need for support exists, our volunteers do their best to deliver outside of these 3 core days. Volunteers **support** us across the full **7-day** period with the other days of the week spent sourcing, buying, collecting, sorting, and packing donated food for distribution.



2.3 We also work closely with over 35 local, regional, and national statutory, and third sector organisations that refer their clients to us for support. This referral system helps us to ensure the people we work with are actively engaged with professionals, who can assist them in recovery from their position of crisis. By offering a delivery service we also help ensure our food parcels can reach some of the most vulnerable members of our community who struggle to access food due to disability/mobility or mental health issues.



2.4 Each individual/family referred is directly contacted by RAFT the day before a delivery to ensure the request from the referral agency is appropriate and their details are correct. We ask the relevant questions to ensure we have sufficient information to meet the needs of everyone in the household, including pets. Parcels are adapted to support lifestyle choices such as vegetarianism and veganism, religious or cultural preferences such as Halal or Kosher, and they are also adapted to consider food allergies/intolerances, and in support of those without a permanent address who may be sofa surfing, or have no or limited access to refrigeration and cooking facilities.

2.5 Enough food for 3 meals per day, for 7 days is provided to each member of the household. We do not differentiate parcel content for families with children. Parcel food content remains the same, whether it is term time, school holidays or if the child/children are in receipt of free school meals and we also adapt parcels accordingly to consider the needs of parents, grandparents, and other care givers whose children, grandchildren or otherwise may only be visiting for a short period of time.

2.6 The food element is a combination of ambient and non-ambient food products, but we aim to provide as healthy and nutritionally balanced food parcel as possible. In addition to food, we also provide personal hygiene products, sanitary products, nappies, and household cleaning products. Furthermore, we add donated flowers and seasonal gifts for Mother's/Father's Day, Easter/Passover, Christmas, and Eid as well as birthday gifts, advent calendars, and new baby welcome packs etc.



2.7 We also make great use of redistributed food, toiletries, flowers etc. that would otherwise go to waste via our ongoing relationships with M&S, ALDI and LIDL via Neighbourly, Warburtons, Other local supermarkets, and stores.

2.8 Our volunteers continue to provide our service to our community. We have continually adapted and refreshed our handling, processing, delivery and hygiene policies and protocols to reflect current government advice and guidance whilst continuing to ensure the personal safety of each of our volunteers and the safe handling of food.

3. Statement on public benefit

3.1 All TRF trustees are aware of the need to ensure that activities are focused on ensuring that we provide a public benefit to the people of Rossendale.

4. Volunteer Contributions

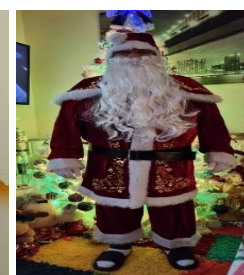
4.1 TRF is run solely by volunteers, so all the achievements listed in the Achievements and the section below are through volunteers giving their time, skills, and resources (such as use of their vehicles). The RAFT Foundation volunteers & staff all hail from the local community and believe in supporting their neighbours during times of hardship and difficulty. Along with kind donations of food from the public, their hard work, dedication, and caring natures are what help add a sprinkle of hope to the crisis food parcels

they deliver. Without our fantastic volunteers there would be no RAFT Foundation, and we are grateful for their kindness, generosity, and support in delivering this charitable service



4.2 Trustee board members want to thank everyone for all their many contributions, always going above and beyond. There are so many tasks that keep RAFT able to respond to our neighbours experiencing hard times. There are so many parts to the jigsaw, some very visible and some hidden away behind the scenes and we want to recognise the many volunteer roles and tasks that are carried out by all:

- Collection of donations and supplies at all hours of the day, on weekends, school, and bank holidays
- Sorting and stock rotation of donations and purchases, both ambient and fresh
- Making up parcels, both in advance and on delivery days
- Taking those parcels to people across Rossendale
- Sharing excess donations with a range of partners throughout the valley
- Ongoing organising, tidying, and cleaning of the unit, contributing to our 5* hygiene rating and creating a more pleasant, less stressful, and safer working environment
- Receiving and dealing with referrals both within normal operating times and as emergencies
- Daily Unit Leaders seeing it all runs smoothly
- Continuing administration tasks ensuring we are responsive to need, respond to referrals in a timely manner and forward referrals to other support organisations as needed. This is alongside signposting, which enables people to retain some control and autonomy over often extremely difficult situations. This also ensures we stay in timely contact with Partner organisations and donors
- Regular posts to social media sites, sharing of posts and timely responses to queries and messages received
- Maintaining many different relationships – with referrers, Rossendale Borough Council, churches, schools, corporate donors, supermarkets, other charities and food groups, and private fundraisers
- Sourcing, sorting, and arranging delivery of non-food items and household goods
- All the tasks involved in the many little extras for Easter, Christmas, Mother's and Father's days, and Eid



- Organising and running the improved, auditable, CashFirst/Supermarket voucher schemes
- Maintenance and further development of our financial systems



- Creating and developing the referral data collection system to ensure timely reporting of numbers to trustees and relevant external organisations (such as funding providers and national bodies), provide oversight for potential overuse/misuse of TRF services, allow analysis of patterns to enable better decision making
- Working together to change ways of operating to improve efficiency and, in particular, to make the organisation more resilient with actions such as ensuring every role can be covered by several people, and working in sub-teams to ensure coverage, for example the drivers' WhatsApp group
- Applying for, managing, and reporting on grant funding bids
- Managing the many Secretarial duties required of a charity
- Meeting our obligations as a registered charity and governance team



We would also like to thank the family, friends and neighbours of our volunteers who support them to do what they do.

4.3



4.4 Thanks to all the operational volunteers on roll during 2023.

We estimate the average number of operational volunteering hours per year at 24,000. This would equate to £250,080 at a Living Wage of £ 10.42 an hour



There were six trustee volunteers during 2023, giving an average of 500 governance volunteer hours, equating to £5,210, £10.42 at a Living Wage.

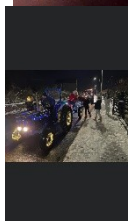
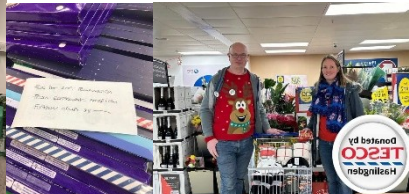
Most trustees perform roles within both the governance and operational teams.

4.5 There were Four new volunteers in 2023.



4.6 Four volunteers ended their volunteering with us, and we wish them all the best and extend our thanks for all their contributions.

4.7 The Raft Foundation is a wide and inclusive group and every year we are grateful for people in the various Rossendale communities who go above and beyond to help, whether that is folk donating regularly, when they can, or in response to our urgent needs call outs, Supermarket Community Champions and Pioneers donating food stock or supporting community token schemes and funding applications, school, church and friendship group collections, local business stock donations, Christmas tractor drives, reverse advent calendars and sports clubs running donation appeals and community group shares. Not to mention the fundraisers who have done Round-the-Hills walks, held children's table-top sales, church car boot sales, local business donations, and signed up to Easy Fundraising.





5. Achievements and Performance

5.1 TRF, through its volunteers: -

- **During 2023 we delivered**
 - o **85050 meals to 1483 Households, 4054 people,**
 - o **350 lots of nappies and pull ups,**
 - o **supplies for 1047 pets during 2023.**
- Please note that the figures in the previous Annual Report cover sixteen months of activity and so direct comparisons cannot be made. The numbers for 2022 are 66,066 meals to 1,146 people, 211 lots of nappies and pull ups, and supplies for 855 pets. This represents a 29% increase in general activity, a 66% increase in provision of nappies a 22.5% increase in provision of pet foods.
- Continued our active relationships with a wide range of local community, health and well-being groups and other community organisations in the Rossendale Connected Partnership, working for the good of Rossendale folk. Larger local statutory partners included Rossendale Borough Council Communities Team, GPs and Practice Managers, mental health workers, social prescribers, probation services, addiction support organisations, Citizens Advice and Rossendale Leisure Trust. Also included were more regional statutory partners based within Lancashire County Council



- Shared resources with the valley-wide Rossendale Food Box Scheme, Positive Start Food Group, and community food share groups at Haslingden Community Link, to aid access to food provision and support neighbours with different levels of need
- Produced our second Charity Commission required Annual Report for January 2022 to December 2022.
- Maintained our 5-star food hygiene rating.



- Continued working with IFAN to raise awareness of food poverty, and by providing ongoing data, supporting their campaigns and calls to the government to address this issue.
- Worked with Rossendale Borough Council (RBC) to deliver food parcels to those in financial crises as well as general hardship due to cost-of-living increases
- Delivered voucher Comfort Schemes, supporting neighbours receiving parcels during more challenging and expensive times e.g. at Christmas, Easter, and school holidays, totalling £10,600
- Produced specific packs either to use surpluses such as lots of donated sour cream dips (loaded nachos packs), and orchard apples (apple crumble bundle) and or for seasonal events such as warming soup packs, and Back-to-School kits



- During an unprecedented increase in demand due to fuel and food price increases, our Christmas focus was on helping as many individuals and families as possible across Rossendale with food and warmth, providing hot water bottles, Blankets, Slow cookers, advent calendars and Christmas treats.

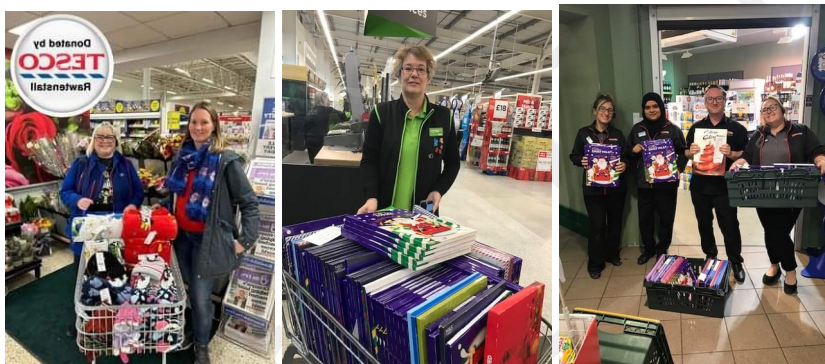


- Supported the Christmas Rossendale Shine on Project, and CAP both based at Kay Street Baptist Church, who delivered three course meals plus gifts. Raft provided donations of socks, hats, gloves, and advent calendars for inclusion in their gift bags
- We continued to support the Rossendale Shine On project helping individuals experiencing isolation and loneliness, by promoting befriending and emotional well-being and sharing our supermarket surplus collections on a weekly basis throughout the rest of the year.
- Made regular weekly donations of surplus fresh food to SafeSpace, the Rossendale Food Boxes scheme, Positive Action in the Community (PAC), Young Homeless Service, and Shine On, The Unity Fridge, Bacup Trinity Baptist and Haslingden Community Link.
- Delivered masses of donated fresh flowers, potted plants, and spring bulbs with our parcels as well as to Nursing and Care Homes and local community groups across Rossendale to brighten staff and residents' days, and we shared with other community projects too such as Rossendale Food Box Scheme, Haslingden Community Link, SafeSpace, Friends of Haslingden Cemetery and Civic Pride to name a few.





- Continued to provide seasonal treats such as Easter eggs, Mother's Day Gifts (including gifts for single Fathers), Father's Day Gifts, Birthday gifts
- Provided activity packs and books for kids during school holidays
- Provided back to school stationery packs for those children and adults returning to school, college and university
- Provided slow cookers, microwaves, kettles, toasters, and cook-books to people with reduced means of preparing food economically
- Provided blankets, socks, scarves, and hot water bottles to help people stay warm despite increasing fuel costs, following the principal of 'heat the person, not the room'
- Provided new baby welcome packs to Knitting Smiles for East Lancashire who run this project and put the boxes together
- Using our social media visibility to promote other local organisations' activities and appeals, and share information on support available
- Promoted Challenge Poverty Week England 2023.
- Expanded public donation points
- Contributed to reduced food waste by working with Fare Share and Neighbourly to redistribute excess food.
- Worked with the Community Champions at our local ASDA, TESCO and Co-Op stores and held in-store stalls to raise awareness of our charity and food poverty, promote support and donations.



- Completed our work with RBC on Worrying About Money leaflet and launched this in conjunction with IFAN (Independent Food Aid Network)

6. Financial Review

6.1 See attached Income and Expenditure Statement for the period ending 31st December 2023

6.2 Due to continuing support from Rossendale Borough Council in 2023, using government funds allocated to assist in ensuring access to food for people in financial crisis, and the overwhelming generosity of the Rossendale community, the reserves are now in a much healthier position, in addition to having met the needs of 4050 people over this period of time. Without all their help we would not have been able to continue to meet our fixed costs or have been in a position to continue to provide Rossendale with a much-needed food bank service.



6.3 The trustees have a responsibility (as expected by the Charity Commission) to maintain the viability of the TRF whilst ensuring we deliver current services and the changing needs of our community. The TRF's model is now sustainable and continuous, with the help of ongoing personal and company donations from our local community supporters.

Principal sources of funds

6.4 The principal sources of funds include: -

- Public donations of actual goods
- Public donations of money via collecting tins, online donations, and bank transfers
- Public fundraising activities such as gym-athons and Christmas tractor collections
- Local churches, schools, groups & businesses donations
- Local supermarket donations and surplus food sharing
- Grant bids applied for successfully
- Cost-of-Living specific funding from a variety of foundations, supermarket schemes, and local government support.

Trustees maintain due diligence regarding financial donations, we are members of the Fundraising Regulator and always check sources of financial donations to make sure they are above board and to offer thanks accordingly.

Investment policy and objectives

6.5 Our policy is to hold two years' operating costs in the current account for immediate access, to maintain the viability of the organisation. This currently is £50,000

A description of the principal risks facing the charity

6.6 The principal risks facing the charity, as common with most small charities are: -

- Reduction in or loss of donation streams
- Increased costs of running TRF, the main costs relate to, the lease of premises, the purchase of essential insurance, utilities costs, and equipment (e.g. commercial fridges & freezers, transportation cool boxes, cleaning equipment, carrier bags), and to provide volunteers with a safe base to operate from and in which to store and manage food supplies
- Notice could be given by our landlord at any point.
- The charity's volunteer-only basis, whilst meaning we operate very frugally, could, due to the nature of volunteering, leave us vulnerable to a few risks, including:
 - o loss of people in key roles
 - o loss of those who give many hours each week
 - o potential for volunteers not being available on any given day
 - o difficult-to-allocate tasks (either due to skills needed or time demands) leading to overload on the same few people
 - o burnout of volunteers
 - o ageing profile of volunteers generally
 - o difficulty in delivering any potentially bigger vision for the charity
- The charity also relies heavily on the use of volunteers' own vehicles and fuel, some of them to a substantial degree. It would severely impact deliveries if this generosity were not available.

6.7 **Reviewing the year against these risks, notable points were:**

- Donation streams remained steady, and the trustees are grateful for the substantial support of Rossendale Borough Council in the costs of delivering our service
- Costs increased substantially due to an increase in demand, inflationary pressures on food purchases, and an increase in premises & other fixed costs.
- Several changes in working practices were implemented to improve resilience in volunteer roles. This is ongoing.
- We implemented a volunteer expenses policy to support drivers' fuel costs, particularly for drivers who incur substantial mileage on the foodbank's behalf. The massive rise in fuel costs experienced

during 2022 resulted in an increase in volunteer expenses claimed because of the combined effect of rising fuel costs, requirement for volunteers to collect surplus food and deliver to people and general rise in demand for TRF service.



7. Structure, Governance, and Management

7.1 The Raft Foundation is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation – Foundation model.

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees

7.2 Trustees are recruited via a visit to the operational unit, initial discussions with the Chair, an interview with fellow trustees, and appointment, as minutes, at a general management committee meeting.

This process is to be augmented by asking any potential trustee who doesn't currently volunteer with TRF, to also work alongside other trustees (for example on a specific project) for a period, and to complete trustee responsibilities and duties training modules.

The intention is for both parties to ensure a good working match, and for potential trustees to be fully aware of the demands of the role.

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees

7.3 At this time, TRF meets the minimum required by the Charity Commission in sharing the initial guidance on the responsibilities of a trustee as given by the Charity Commission and via the expression of interest letters.

Whilst developing our induction and training package we have also been providing access to governance and trustee specific training via the organisations we have joined such as Charity Excellence, IFAN, ICO, NCVO, BPRCVS and Fundraising Regulator. We have also referred to specialist support available via Association of Chairs and ICSA, where necessary, too.

The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works

7.4 The development of both trustee and operational roles is an ongoing piece of work, Cascading through the organisation, to increase organisational resilience and sustainability, improve working practices and ensure the volunteer experience is rewarding and in balance

7.5 Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	The Raft Foundation
Other name the charity uses	N/A
Registered charity number	1191272
Charity's principal address	Room G1, Unit 5, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road, Rawtenstall, Lancashire, BB4 6HR

7.6 Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of body entitled to appoint trustee
Julie Erwin	Chair	From 14-9-2022	Trust Board
Janice Johnson	Vice Chair	From 14-9-2022	Trust Board
Helen Jeeves	Secretary		



Gerard Greenhalgh	Treasurer		
Michelle Jones	Trustee		
Mark Stapleton	Trustee		

7.7 Names and addresses of advisers

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Legal	PD Greenhalgh Solicitors	6-10 Edward St, Glossop SK13 7AF
Accountant	Donnelly Bentley Chartered Accountants	70 Chorley New Rd, Bolton BL1 4BY

Exemptions from disclosure

7.8 None

7.9 Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees.			
Name	Position	Signature	Date
Janice Johnson	Acting Chair		
Gerard Greenhalgh	Treasurer		
Helen Jeeves	Secretary		

THE RAFT FOUNDATION

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

APPENDIX 1

Financial Statement

THE RAFT FOUNDATION

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

For the year ended 31 December 2023



Unrestricted Funds
£

Income:

Voluntary Donations	35,122
Grants	<u>51,833</u>
Total Income	<u>86,755</u>

Expenditure

Expenditure on Charitable Activities	<u>70,042</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>70,042</u>

Net Income/Expenditure for period **16,713**

Balance brought forward 01/01/2023 135,461

Balance carried forward 31/12/2023 152,174

Of Balance carried Forward

Working Capital	102,174
Reserves	<u>50,000</u>
Total	<u>152,174</u>

APPENDIX 2
VOLUNTEERS







Financial Statement

THE RAFT FOUNDATION

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)**

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Unrestricted Funds
	£
Income:	
Voluntary Donations	35,122
Grants	<u>51,833</u>
Total Income	<u>86,755</u>
 <u>Expenditure</u>	
Expenditure on Charitable Activities	<u>70,042</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>70,042</u>
 Net Income/Expenditure for period	16,713
 Balance brought forward 01/01/2023	<u>135,461</u>
 Balance carried forward 31/12/2023	<u>152,174</u>
 Of Balance carried Forward	
Working Capital	102,174
Reserves	<u>50,000</u>
Total	<u>152,174</u>

THE RAFT FOUNDATION

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE RAFT FOUNDATION

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended (date) which are set out on pages 4 to 7.4.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2) the accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3) the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mr A Newton ACA
DonnellyBentley Limited
Chartered Accountants
Hazlemere
70 Chorley New Road
Bolton, BL1 4BY Date: