

AMBLE FOOD BANK
ANNUAL REPORT
for the
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
November 2024



Introduction

This is our third annual report. Amble Food Bank (AFB) became a registered charity in October 2021 (Registered Charity Number 1196268). It is also now registered with HMRC and donors are able to Gift Aid their donations. It continues to have its base at Trinity Methodist Church on Percy Street, Amble.

AFB is run by a group of 25 volunteers, five of whom are trustees. This number has increased over the last year to help cope with the rising demand for food parcels and increasing duties of the team. We are a voluntary organisation serving the Amble and its surrounding communities. Three of the trustees have specific executive roles:

Terry Long - Chair

Lynne Morelli - Secretary

Colin Scammell - Treasurer

All volunteers coming into contact with clients have gone through Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, and volunteers also regularly refresh their safeguarding awareness training, along with any other relevant training (see 'Safeguarding' section). In addition there are two named Designated Safeguarding Leads who have also undertaken specific Designated Person for Safeguarding Adults and Children training. We make it our duty to care about the welfare of our clients, and there have been some occasions when we have had concerns about individual clients that we see on a regular basis and we have referred them to the One Call team to be assessed by them (see 'Safeguarding' section).

Our clients live in the Amble, Warkworth, Hadston, Broomhill and Red Row areas and receive a food parcel on a fortnightly basis. Very occasionally, clients who are in real need and, upon referral, have no food at all, receive a food parcel on a weekly basis for a short, limited amount of time. Deliveries go out every Tuesday and Thursday morning, 51 weeks a year. The total number of clients fluctuates, depending on clients' individual circumstances, but it can vary between 50 and 100 (see 'Data' section).

AFB has robust referral and review policies. Clients can be referred through a number of channels. These may include Northumberland Communities Together, a GP, social worker, Health Visitor, school or church. Clients sometimes self-refer. No individual or family is refused a food parcel, but after receipt of their first one, clients are requested to acquire a referral from an official agency – usually via Northumberland Communities Together, unless they have a key worker. All clients are reviewed on an approximately 3-4 monthly basis and require a fresh assessment and referral in order to continue receiving a food parcel. Records of all clients and referrals are kept in accordance with GDPR.

Food parcels are designed to supplement an individual's, couple's or a family's general food shopping. They contain staple ambient goods such as pasta, rice, cereals, pasta sauce, and a variety of tinned items, such as soup, meat, fish, vegetables etc. They will also receive toiletry items if these are available. Upon referral, we always find out if new clients have any specific dietary requirements or allergies. Occasionally we will receive a referral informing us that they have scarcely any food in. Up until recently they would receive an enhanced parcel containing fresh goods (such as bread, meat, cheese and fruit). Recently it was agreed that we would give such clients a £15 Morrison's gift card. This gives clients autonomy so

that they are then able to choose their own food. It also alleviates the pressure on volunteers who otherwise would have to shop specifically for these items. A record is kept of all gift cards handed out.

All food is stored at our base. As well as ambient goods, we also store frozen and refrigerated items in a chest freezer and a fridge/freezer. We were inspected by Environmental Health at the start of 2022 and received a five star Food Hygiene rating and were deemed to be “a well run food bank.”

We rely on the local communities for donations of food to AFB. Members of the public can donate food items at Amble Co-op, Hadston Co-op, Amble Tesco Express or they can purchase a pick-up bag from Amble Morrison’s. AFB works very closely with all supermarkets, and volunteers collect this food several times a week.

AFB has also signed up to the Neighbourly scheme and we have linked up closely with Aldi in Alnwick and also shop weekly from them. Being part of this scheme has enabled us to sign up as a ‘primary collector’ and we are able to collect fresh surplus items on a weekly basis, as well as collect ambient items from their community bin. Fresh items from here, the weekly Co-op Food Share scheme every Sunday (where the Co-op donates any fresh surplus items to AFB and we deliver to clients in need that day) and from HMP Northumberland Farm Shop every Friday all help to enhance the food parcels that our clients receive.

We also have collection tins at the Co-op, the Farm Bakery, The Boat Shed Gallery pod at Amble Harbour Village and the HMP Northumberland Farm Shop. Local schools and churches regularly collect food items that they donate to AFB, especially around Harvest Festival. Heatherdale Care home in Broomhill continue to collect food donations for us in conjunction with Iceland Morpeth. There are also some small local businesses and organisations who donate food to AFB, including Amble Women’s Institute and the Coastal Crafts Club who donate on a regular basis. The local communities are always especially generous around Christmas time when we always receive an increase in monetary donations. We were also fortunate Christmas 2023 to receive, in addition to our regular donations, food items from James Calvert Spence College, Drywater Arts and Styles by Helena (it is impossible to mention all in this report).

We have also received generous donations from a number of north east businesses through their community funds. (Pacifica regularly donates 200 food items to AFB). In the past, financial donations from business community funds have been spent on lunch items to help our families feed their children over various school holidays. But this year we made the decision to stop handing out lunch items during the school holidays. This was partly due to the added pressure of having to do additional large shops for items that then also needed to be delivered, but also as parents/carers are now in receipt of vouchers to support them during the school holidays and are less in need.

In addition, we are fortunate to receive some one off monetary donations to our bank account and a number of individuals have set up standing orders (see ‘Finances’ section). Where possible, we encourage donors to Gift Aid their donations. As mentioned above, we are now registered with HMRC for this purpose.

In December 2023 a Bingo fundraising event was organised in aid of AFB. This was well attended and raised £318.30. A further event was organised shortly before Easter 2024 and 48 Easter eggs were donated that went out to children whom we support.

Rigg and Furrow based in Acklington regularly organise quiz nights and collections for AFB and have raised over £600 across the last year alone.

We continue to work in partnership with the Farm Shop at HMP Northumberland run by The Oswin Project charity. This is a great cause that creates chances for individuals with criminal records through training and employment and helps to give them a sense of achievement from learning and working. Every Friday afternoon we receive any unsold fresh produce from the farm shop. This may include baked goods such as bread, cakes and pastries and also fruit and vegetables (grown in the prison market gardens by prisoners), plus sandwiches. These then go out to our clients. Such items enhance the food parcels that clients receive and feedback continues to be extremely positive. In January 2024 we appeared on ITV Tyne Tees news for a second time as part of a feature on our collaboration with The Oswin Project. Such publicity helped to raise the profile of both charities.

In addition to the above, AFB continues to develop strong community links. We work closely with a number of professionals who know our communities well. We regularly liaise with Social Prescribers at the local health centre (NPC Amble and Broomhill – formerly Coquet Medical Group), Citizen's Advice, Hadston House and local schools and churches.

We also support families who have pets in their household. We continue to work closely with the charity Alexa's Canine Trust (ACT) who regularly donate pet food to us (thanks to donations from their customers). Along with ACT we firmly believe that it is in the pets' best interests to remain with their owner(s). Providing pet food for them makes this all the more likely and helps to reduce pet poverty.

We continue to have a strong social media presence and regularly post useful information for the local communities, as well as thank various individuals and organisations for their support and donations. We have built up AFB's social media audience over the last 2 years (we now have just under 1000 followers) - again this page is run solely by volunteers. We do receive a number of self-referrals and enquiries via our AFB Facebook page. We also write an article in each edition of The Ambler, Amble's community newspaper. This outlines recent events and achievements, any requests that we may have and we also take the opportunity to thank local communities, businesses, schools, churches and other organisations for their continued generous support. Since January 2024 we now also submit articles to The Pelican, the community and church magazine for Acklington, Guyzance and Warkworth. Appearing in both of these publications again helps to raise the profile of AFB.

Finally, we have also been able to support another teenager with work experience. A year 10 individual helped collect and unpack pick-up bags from Amble Morrison's every Saturday morning for an extended period of time as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award. He found it incredibly rewarding and was a credit to his school and family. One other young person (aged 16) who regularly helped pack bags was successful in securing full-time employment and training locally. We were able to provide a reference for her, outlining how much she had grown in confidence and her ability to take the initiative whilst volunteering with AFB.

All families involved have been highly appreciative of the experience we have been able to offer their children.

Lynne Morelli
(Secretary and Trustee)

Trustees and Roles

Trustees

Terry Long – 3 years (from October 2021)
Lynne Morelli – 3 years (from October 2021)
Colin Scammell – 2 years (from October 2021)
Marion Long – 3 years (from November 2022)
Eric Davidson – 3 years (from November 2022)

Roles

Chair – Terry Long
Secretary – Lynne Morelli
Treasurer – Colin Scammell

Amble Food Bank's Constitution states that there should be a maximum of five trustees. It was agreed when the charity was set up that the following terms would be adhered to. Thereafter trustee roles come under review and it is possible for other trustee nominations to take place. Any trustee positions coming to the end of their term will need to be reviewed and discussed at the Annual General Meeting. The Chair and Secretary positions are up for review this year.

Policies

Since the first AGM AFB has written a number of policies to guide our working practices. These were all ratified by trustees and the Chair, Terry Long. They will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis by the team. All newly recruited volunteers are given copies of each policy – namely Safeguarding, Data Protection (covering GDPR and personal data guidance and regulations), Health and Safety (including Safe Manual Handling) and Lone Working.

In line with health and safety guidance we also have accident/incident forms available to all volunteers for completion, along with a log book for accidents/incidents. Any accidents occurring on the premises of Trinity Methodist Church are logged and duplicated in the church's own accident reporting book.

Data Analysis

During the period between 1st November 2023 and 31st October 2024 a total number of 1915 food parcels were delivered (852 parcels were family parcels and 1063 were single parcels). A single parcel is delivered to an individual living alone or a couple (the latter was agreed at a meeting in September 2023 with pressure being put onto our financial resources due to rising numbers of referrals). A family food parcel constitutes either a single person or couple with children in the household, or more than 2 adults in a household. Households with a large number of children (5 plus) receive extra items on top of a standard family bag.

The number of food parcels delivered between the above time span rose by 72 between the end of October 2023 and October 2024. This is an increase of just 4% (previously it had risen by 13.5%).

We always witness a fluctuation in caseload numbers following reviews. Clients are requested to get a fresh referral approximately every 3 months and some do not return to us following this. It may be because their circumstances have changed and they no longer require a food parcel, or it may be that their lives have simply become so chaotic that they do not get round to requesting a fresh referral to us.

We are still seeing an increase in working people being referred to AFB. August always sees an increase in family referrals as they struggle with the extra financial burdens during the school holidays. We did also see an increase again in single referrals in August as some clients had access to their children during the school holidays and had the additional costs of feeding them for longer periods than normal. We also always notice an increase during the winter months due to the necessity for heating as the temperatures drop and the associated rise in energy bills. Referrals are already increasing at the start of November 2024, and this factor is often cited in the referral notes that we get from referring bodies.

The Future

As we envisaged, the numbers of clients on our caseload generally continues to rise due to the continuing cost of living crisis (with energy and food costs still being high). More and more clients are self-referring as well as being referred by agencies such as Health Visitors, Children's Services workers and Social Prescribers (Northumberland Communities Together being the largest). Volunteers and trustees will continue to network with agencies who know their clients' needs well. This means that we try to capture as many individuals as possible who are struggling financially and are in need of support via a food parcel. Once again there have been months that our outgoings have exceeded money coming in to us. Currently we are financially stable compared to some food banks. But our Treasurer continues to monitor this situation closely.

We are starting to outgrow our current food bank base and sometimes struggle for storage (especially with increased stocks around Christmas and Easter times). Should we have to move premises, AFB is very aware that this could well mean future incurred rental costs which we would have to factor in long term. The possibility of a Community Hub based in the heart of Amble is currently being explored by Amble Town Council. AFB has expressed a strong interest in being part of this and having a base there.

Finally, our number of volunteers has significantly increased since we set up as a charity. Over the last few months alone we have recruited 4 more volunteers to AFB. We may still need to recruit further volunteers if the number of clients on our caseload continues to rise at the current rate. This year (particularly the summer and autumn months) saw an increased amount of pressure on the AFB team due to a number of fellow volunteers being out of action because of personal commitments, illness/injury. Recruiting further volunteers would certainly help to ease this pressure.

Lynne Morelli (Secretary and Trustee)

Figures supplied by Terry Long (Team member with responsibility for caseload management /Chair)

Safeguarding Report

The Designated Safeguarding Leads continue to be Lynne Morelli and Mary Davidson, to whom any safeguarding concerns should be addressed.

We are aware in the roles we all undertake, that there is the potential for a safeguarding situation to become apparent. Any concerns should be discussed with either Lynne or Mary. In the case of need for immediate action, either Lynne or Mary should be informed of any referral made, within 24 hours.

All referrals /causes for concern should be documented and signed by Lynne or Mary. Safeguarding Concerns forms are stored in a document wallet, next to the Safeguarding Policy on the noticeboard in the AFB room. The Chair, Terry Long, also needs to be informed of any safeguarding referrals/ causes for concern.

Safeguarding training is updated every three years. In the past year, seven team members have undertaken refresher or initial Basic Safeguarding Training (SG). This includes Mary who updated her Designated Person SG training. There are five team members who are required to update their Safeguarding Training next year. This includes Lynne, who is due to update her Designated Person SG Training. There are five team members who require Initial Safeguarding Training early next year. We are awaiting confirmation of Basic Awareness Safeguarding and Designated Person Training dates from Caroline Friend, our trusted Safeguarding Training Provider.

All volunteers are DBS checked. As Secretary, Lynne maintains an electronic record of each person's completion date of safeguarding training, along with dates of DBS checks.

In the past year, two referrals have been made to One Call, the contact hub through to Adult and Children's Social Care for all safeguarding concerns. These included one referral to Adult Social Care, and one referral to Children's Social Care. Two 'causes for concern' were recorded. Neither required a referral. Copies of all referrals and any "causes for concern" are kept in a secure locked box, in our locked filing cabinet. Lynne and Mary hold the keys to this secure box.

The AFB Safeguarding Policy is ratified, along with our other policies, annually in March by the Trustees and signed off by Terry Long, Chairperson.

All new volunteers are given a copy of the Safeguarding Policy to read as part of their induction to AFB. A hard copy is available in a document wallet on the noticeboard, should anyone wish to refresh their memory, or an electronic version is readily available upon request. Information regarding details of Safeguarding Key Contacts, Lynne and Mary, also One Call, the number for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Safeguarding are clearly displayed on the poster on the Food Bank noticeboard in the room.

Amble Food Bank continues to be committed to Safeguarding, and to endorsing the ethos that Safeguarding is everyone's business.

3/11/2024

Mary Davidson & Lynne Morelli (Designated Safeguarding Leads)

Amble Food Bank Financial Position
(1.1.24 – 31.10.24)

Bank Balance **£27156.35**

Gift Cards **£315.00**

Investments

1. Matures 25.11.24 **£10,330 (£537*)**

2. Matures 25.06.25 **£10,428 (£531*)**

Unclaimed Gift Aid **£1002.87**

Regular monthly standing orders **£740.00**

*** Interest due**

Food Spend 1.1.24 - 31.10.24 **£25,783.15 (£2578**)**

Food Spend 1.1.23 – 31.10.23 **£26,063.25 (£2606**)**

**** Average Monthly Spend**

Colin Scammell (Treasurer and Trustee)