

Annual Report & Financial Statements for the Year Ended October 31st 2024.

www.exeterfoodbank.co.uk

Restoring dignity, reviving hope

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Throughout our report these green boxes are used to share the voices of clients of Exeter Foodbank who have shared their experience with us.

10,538
Food parcels given out

3,588
Food parcels given out to local children

98,800
kilograms of food donated

168
volunteers

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“Reading the messages in this book opens up a whole new understanding of the journeys people are on and the gratitude they share for the support offered by the foodbank.

I was recently diagnosed with cancer. A billion words have been written about cancer but despite that, nothing prepares you for how much it affects your life. I am unable to continue my business and benefits go only so far. Like many, I was initially apprehensive of coming here; the shame, the stigma, ridicule, the judgement of others.

I could not have been proved more wrong any more than I was. Such care and kindness and the empathy.

My cancer journey is so much easier with such kind people providing such an invaluable service. Thank you, x”

(Entry in our Visitor's Book - Oct 4th 2024)

The aim of Exeter Foodbank is
“to ensure that nobody in our city goes to bed hungry”

The motto of Exeter Foodbank is
“restoring dignity, reviving hope”

The dream of Exeter Foodbank is
“to see a United Kingdom without the need for foodbanks”



1) Exeter Foodbank - letter from our Trustees

The first Trussell Foodbank opened in UK in 2000. It was very simple project, opened at the home of a couple called Carol and Paddy Henderson. They received a call from a mother in their hometown of Salisbury and decided to do something to help this lady - and then for other people who were struggling to afford food.

It must have seemed unthinkable that by 2024 not only would there still be a need for any foodbanks, but that the Trussell network of foodbanks should have increased to almost 1700 venues across the country.

Like many foodbanks, Exeter Foodbank opened in response to the financial crisis of 2008. The charity has genuinely hoped to not be needed for as long as it has existed. It was established to serve people while it was essential but the hope was that this would be short term. Sadly, 16 years later we have moved from our home in a local church and have felt the need to rent a venue of our own as the work is busier and more complicated than ever.

To wish that there was no need for a foodbank does not fail to recognise all of the good about such an organisation. Foodbanks across the country bring together a vast group of people who believe in a different way and a better world. It brings together staff and volunteer teams who desire to do good in their local community, to share their time and resources and to make a positive impact. When we see all of these people working together it is humbling and inspiring. In Exeter, while we wish that people did not need to depend on donated food, we see the very best of human nature working together to support friends and neighbours in their most vulnerable moments. That is why we have worked so hard with Trussell to ensure that our new venue can be as accessible and can offer as much support to as many people as is possible. And we are delighted to see this support making a difference.

At this time Exeter Foodbank is part of a national project called 'Pathfinder' which is run by Trussell. A small number of foodbanks across the country are working with Trussell to see how they can best support households who are in need. This learning and experience will then be shared with the wider foodbank network so that each foodbank can be inspired and learn ways to combat local food poverty. Sadly, Pathfinder has come at a time of economic challenges for so many charities, councils and agencies. However, in the middle of all of this - we have still seen a positive difference as people across the city have worked together to support their clients in creative and collaborative ways. We have always known that foodbanks are not the only people trying to make a difference. The last couple of years have really underlined how agencies and charities can all do so much more if we work together.

Our Community Hub, staffing structure, partnership with Citizens Advice Exeter and our Financial Inclusion Project has been the first part of our Pathfinding journey. We have been very pleased to see how this has developed in our new venue, how the learnings have impacted the charity and how it has helped people to need foodbank support less often. We have already passed a lot of our experience on to other foodbanks in the region and have been able to offer support and knowledge to them.

Our story this year is not one of building a larger charity. It is one of building collaboration to ensure that we are working with other groups, charities, churches and organisations to make as much difference as we all can. Every person who no longer needs us is a 'win'. We know that there is more to do, but our Pathfinder journey so far has set us on a positive course and has seen a real impact made.

When a person comes in to Exeter Foodbank, if they choose to work with us and our partners, we will generally be working with an agency in the city that will be able to help them tackle some of the root causes of their time of crisis. For us, the collaborative path has been the better path.

As a trustee board, we have been very pleased to see the early impact made by Pathfinder. We have put in place all of the governance and structures to help our staff and volunteers to make as much positive difference in the city as they can. We are grateful to Trussell for their support and passion - and to the people of Exeter who continue to support us and affirm this work.

Thank you.

2) STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

2.1 Governing Document

Exeter Foodbank was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 8 June 2008. It registered as a charity with the Charities Commission on 25th March 2009 under charity number 1128795.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Trustees: Exeter Foodbank is directed by a board of trustees drawn from local churches, who also serve as directors for the purpose of company law. Trustees are appointed at the charity's Annual General Meeting. The board takes responsibility for all policy decisions and the charity's finances. The minutes of board meetings constitute the formal record of proceedings and decisions taken and approved by the trustees.

Financial Oversight: The treasurer of the charity is also a trustee and reports regularly to the trustees as to the charity's ongoing financial status. A trained volunteer carries out much of the day-to-day financial management of the food bank, under the close supervision of the treasurer and a second designated trustee.

Employees: The Foodbank employs six part-time staff; a Strategic Director, an Operations Manager, an Administrator, an Advice Worker, a Store Manager and a Logistics Worker who undertake the day-to-day running of the charity.

Staff Team: The trustees have delegated the day-to-day running of the charity and operational decisions to the Staff Team. Staff Team meetings take place monthly (generally with a trustee also present); minutes are kept as a formal record of proceedings.

Volunteers: The Foodbank benefits from the service of almost 170 volunteers, who are recruited from all sections of the local community. Voluntary team leaders oversee specific areas of operation.

Related Organisations: Exeter Foodbank is affiliated to Trussell, a charity based in Salisbury, which is registered in England and Wales under charity number 1110522.

2.3 Risk Management

Risk Register & Policies: The trustees give consideration to the major risks to which the charity is exposed via a risk register when updating its annual plan. These include internal and external risks that, if occurring, would be likely to affect finance and resources and other aspects of the work of the charity. The trustees are satisfied that procedures and systems are in place to monitor and control these risks and to mitigate any impact that they may have on the charity and in its future operations.

Exeter Foodbank has an appropriate manual for staff, volunteers and clients of the charity which is reviewed annually. This includes policies covering Data Protection, Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety, Safeguarding (Vulnerable Adult and Child Protection) and Complaints.

Financial Procedures: The trustees have ensured that comprehensive insurance cover is in place to cover risks. A Financial Procedures Policy has been implemented, and finances are kept under regular review. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out below and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, and in accordance with applicable accounting standards, and with the requirements of the Revised Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in 2005, and with the Companies Act.

GDPR: Exeter Foodbank takes Data Protection very seriously. We ensure that all of our online and office practice is in line with the General Data Protection Regulations which were implemented in May 2018. We review all of these policies annually and update them with guidance from Trussell.

Quality Assurance: Trussell carries out reviews of Exeter Food Bank, including in areas of statutory compliance, working practices, volunteer roles, public relations and communications, fundraising, safeguarding and sustainability

“I seriously do not know what I would have done without these guys. I’m so heart warmed at the gratitude these people hold, the lengths they go to make you feel welcome and the coffee is great too. Many thanks.”



Above: The Exeter Foodbank Store - based in Kennford.

Below: The Cranbrook Food Hub. This is based at Cranbrook Education Campus and opens on Thursday evenings. It is run by a team of wonderful, local volunteers.

“My partner and I both work yet still struggle to make ends meet most months. It’s incredibly disheartening when we work so hard, just about cover the bills but are left with nothing to fill the cupboards. The foodbank has meant that we can continue to eat when our cupboards are bare. Always welcomed with a kind smile and instantly made to feel at ease at an emotionally difficult time. We will always be so grateful for all of the staff at the foodbank and everything they do. Thank you so much.”



3) OBJECTIVES, AIMS & ACTIVITIES

3.1 Charitable Objectives

The objective of the charity, as set out in the charity's governing trust deed, is to relieve persons in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress in such ways as the trustees from time-to-time think fit.

3.2 Aims

Emergency Food Provision: Exeter Foodbank seeks to alleviate food poverty in and around Exeter by providing short term, emergency food for families or individuals in crisis via a voucher referral scheme. Beneficiaries come from a broad cross-section of the local community; they include families, young people, and both the unemployed and those in work. Anyone can be referred to Exeter Foodbank, regardless of background, belief, race or creed.

Contextual Support: Through Advice Work, close partnership working and effective sign-posting, the Foodbank aims to relieve the immediate physical and psychological pressures caused by food poverty, whilst ensuring that more long-term support is put in place.

Raising Awareness of Food Poverty: Additionally, Exeter Foodbank aims to raise awareness of the complex issues that surround food poverty and to contribute to research into its causes. In doing so, we aim to improve public understanding of the causes of food poverty, engender greater community cohesion and contribute constructively to public debate.

Collectively, these measures aim both to meet immediate local need and to address the wider causes of food poverty, in order to promote long term change.

3.3 Public Benefit

Each year, our trustees review our activities and strategies to ensure that we are effective in reaching those most in need of assistance in the local area, and in meeting our longer term aims. In carrying out this review, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and in particular its supplementary public guidance on the Prevention of Relief of Poverty for the Public Benefit.

3.4 How the Foodbank Works

- Non-perishable food is donated by members of the public from a prescribed list
- Food is transported to our warehouse, where it is sorted by date and by type.
- Clients in crisis are assessed by one of our authorised referral agencies and are issued with a foodbank voucher.
- Clients bring their voucher to one of our food distribution sessions where it is exchanged for nutritionally-balanced food
- Clients are encouraged to access further sign-posting and support services, as required.

3.5 Objectives for the Year

Our objectives for this year are a continuation of work that we have already begun. They are based upon the objectives that we have agreed with Trussell as part of The Pathfinder Project. This project is aimed at helping to reduce the need for clients to come to foodbanks by offering alternative resources. These objectives will continue until the end of the Pathfinder Project in 2025:

- a) Develop Participation
- b) Develop Referral Pathways
- c) Develop our Financial Inclusion Project
- d) Develop volunteer skills and experience
- e) Develop our Operations

3.6 Strategies for Achieving the Objectives

a) Participation

We have increased the input of clients with a lived-experience of food poverty. We are doing this with a variety of methods including surveys, interviews and dialogue with referrers. Ultimately, we hope to bring together a group of people with lived experience so that they can share their stories and utilise their experience to help the foodbank adapt to the needs of its users. We hope that this will enhance both the experience of visiting a foodbank and also the support that is available.

b) Referral Pathways

We are working most closely with our largest referral partners across the city to not only understand who is coming to us and why, but also to see how we can create collaborative systems across the city to offer the very best support to clients who are in need – and offer this help at the earliest opportunity

c) Financial Inclusion

We have developed collaborative, multi-agency work within our Community Hub. We are now able to offer clients far greater support in areas like Benefits advice, debt advice and employment skills. We will continue to work with agencies who can offer support with general cost of living and cost of utilities.

We have entered into a partnership with Citizens Advice, Exeter and currently pay for an advisor to be present at sessions three days each week. This advisor is a specialist in benefits advice and debt. However, at this time most of their work is done on benefit claims and appeals.

d) Volunteer skills and experience

Throughout the Pathfinder Project, we aim to continue to develop our volunteers by offering training (in areas like valuable conversations, de-escalation, conversations with vulnerable clients and in areas of signposting). We hope that by being part of Exeter Foodbank that our volunteers are learning new skills, are able to participate in their community more deeply and build friendships. Our aim is that volunteering for us is a fulfilling experience whilst also bringing positive change to our community.

Our *Exeter Foodbank Volunteer Forum* is comprised of a volunteer Representative from each team at foodbank and enables all volunteers to be able to feed back ideas, comments etc so that their voices can be heard as we continue to develop the charity.

e) Operations

The significant change that we have seen this year has been opening our new venue in Cowick Street. It had become necessary if we were to work collaboratively, have an accessible service and offer the wraparound support to help clients out of poverty. After much work, we opened our new venue on May 1st 2024 and we did not miss a single session in doing so.

During the previous year we had expanded our staff team so we have the capacity to run our store, our venue, our office and our financial inclusion & advice work. During this reporting period we have seen all of this work beginning to bear fruit. While we have the capacity to collect food from almost 20 local supermarkets and distribute over 100 tonnes of food in a year, we can also offer advice work and build collaborative working relationships with agencies, charities, schools, churches and community groups across the city.

The battle against poverty is multi-faceted and far from simple. However, our experience this year of developing our operations across three venues with over 150 active referrers has seen people released from poverty and freed from needing to access donated food. There is much work still to do. However, the strategies and direction that we have taken is beginning to see an impact.



“Thank you everybody for your help, support and kindness. You made me feel like a human being again.”

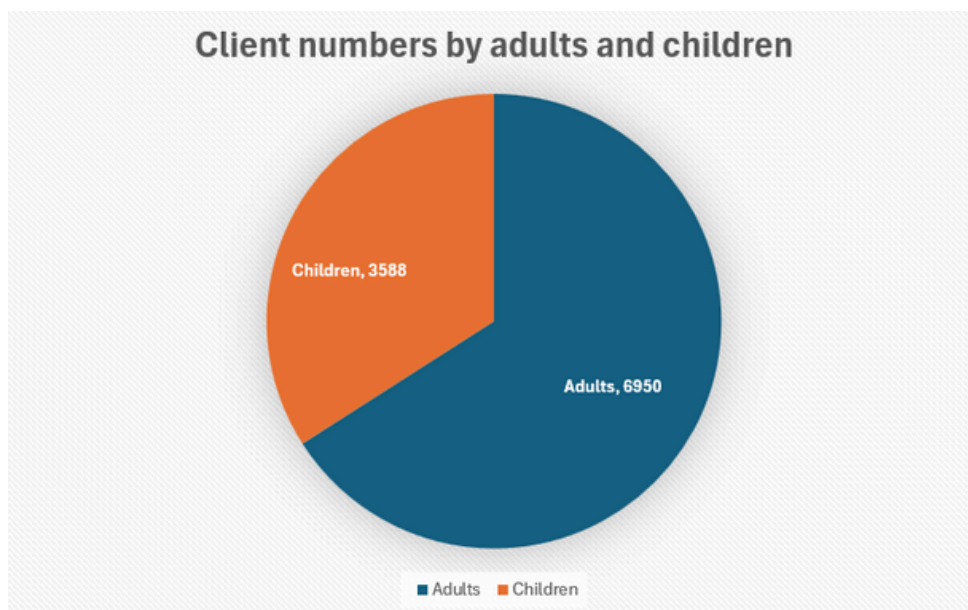
Left: Emma at the Beacon Distribution Centre. Emma spent a week on Work Experience at Exeter Foodbank. During this time she participated in many aspects of the life of foodbank including collections, sorting, distribution - and she even wrote an article for our website to explain what she had learned about the charity: <https://exeterfoodbank.co.uk/2024/07/22/my-work-experience-at-exeter-foodbank/>

“I have fallen on hard times – loss of job, marriage and house. Former addict but luckily not using anymore. Ex forces and being supported by various charities and organisations. Looking forward to the future while building myself back up. Just wanted to say a big thank you to all the staff here at the foodbank. I wish you all well.”

“Thank you to the very beautiful good people here. A long story short, I have been working in healthcare for 4+ years and it has been a rollercoaster of being absolutely fine or on the other hand having terrible seizures. This is by far the worst my health has become. Inflation hits harder and if not for the help received here I would be in a very bad position.”

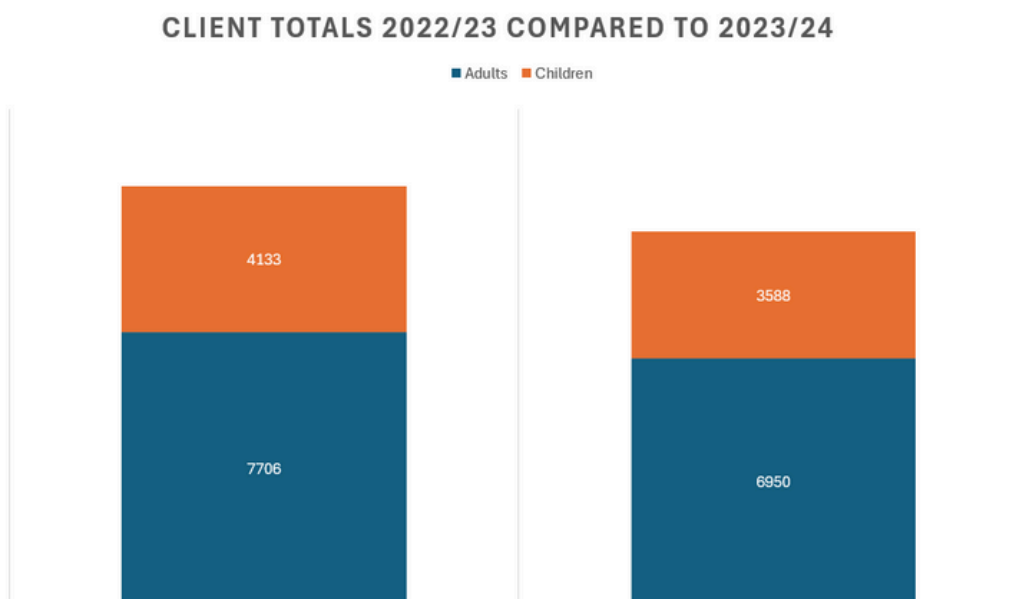
4) Statistics

All of our data is recorded on the Trussell Data System. We can see how many referrals are made, how many people live in those households, the reason for referral, the number of first time or frequent foodbank users there are etc. All of this data gives us real insight into the situation in the city.



Our records show that food was given to 10,538 clients during the year. Of this number, 3,588 were given to local children. While this is a large number of food parcels, there were encouraging signs too. The total number had reduced from 11,778 the previous year. This is a reduction of approximately 10%.

While we are still in a cost-of-living crisis we may have expected client numbers to increase. However, much emphasis has been placed on Financial Inclusion work at Exeter Foodbank. By helping households with Benefit issues, Debt, Utility Tariffs and Budgeting etc, we have seen clients needing to access donated food less regularly. This affirms the approach that we have taken and underlines the importance of solid advice work.



Additional Data

The number of referrals to Exeter Foodbank this year was also reduced as fewer clients needed less donated food. Whereas we received **5697** referrals in 2022/23, this number reduced to **5,201** in the latest period. Our hope has always been that if we could offer appropriate levels of Financial Inclusion support, that clients who engage with us would need less food support. All of our data seems to indicate that this is happening.

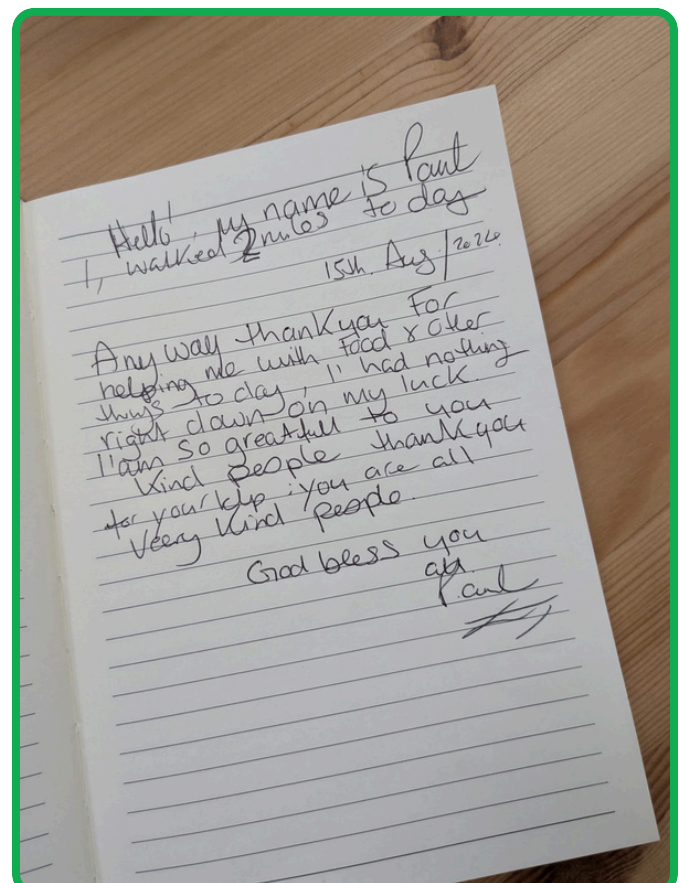
The frequency of visits per household to Exeter Foodbank also decreased. On average we saw each client **2.47** times this year and this had reduced from **2.68** the previous reporting period. These are small steps for a project that is still developing - but we are very encouraged to see it moving in a positive direction.

One troubling statistic that we have seen this year is that clients of 'no fixed address' have increased from **275** to **360** 'households'. This is a significant increase of over 30%. While it may seem like a small number, this means that 360 individuals or families who have come to Exeter Foodbank are either homeless, sofa-surfing, in temporary accommodation or in short-term emergency housing. It underlines the housing crisis that we are currently facing; affordable and secure housing remains one of the key drivers in situations of poverty. The increase in this number is of great concern.

In a meeting of our major referrers in February 2023 we asked the question: 'What would it take to reduce the need for foodbanks in the city?'. The first answer that we heard from every referrer was 'affordable housing'.

The final piece of data in this report is that in this period we saw **953** households who needed to access support from Exeter Foodbank for the very first time. Basically, this means that for every single week of the year we saw 18 families who needed to rely on donated food and had to call a foodbank for help having never needed to do that before. That is a shocking state of affairs for a city like Exeter.

"An incredibly stressful and unsafe job broke me and I left. I was very worried about having no income but my situation was certainly helped by the Foodbank and the community support info packet they gave me. Just feeling supported has helped a lot! Thank you!"



Right: a page from our Guestbook in our Distribution Centre in Cowick Street

5. Main Activities & Achievements in 2023/24

The focus of much of our effort during this year was moving to our new venue in Cowick Street while trying to ensure that the service to the clients was uninterrupted. The Mint Methodist Church had been our 'home' for approximately 15 years. Exeter Foodbank had a very good relationship with the church and felt very supported by their team. Moving to a new venue did bring many challenges and required changing all of our existing systems. However, the benefits to the clients outweighed the complications and costs of the move.

The new venue has allowed us to offer a more holistic service for our clients. We now have all of this in an accessible space which does not involve them needing to find their way around a very large building.

We were fortunate to receive two substantial grants to carry out the necessary renovations to the building. This meant that the donations that the public had given towards the general running of the charity were not impacted. Having been handed the keys early in 2024, we opened at Cowick Street on May 1st thanks to the efforts of many people, especially the team at UK Property Service.

Our partnership with Citizens Advice Exeter had been one of our main drivers for the move. The new venue allowed not only a space for hospitality and welcome for clients, but also private meeting rooms for advisors to work with clients to discuss issues like Benefit problems or debt. In the first six months in our new home, our own Advice Worker and our CA Advisor worked at length with approximately 100 households. Many of these families will not need to access foodbank again as they have received the correct support to help them to move on from situations of crisis.

For other clients, the opportunity of having a cup of coffee and a chat cannot be overlooked. Many people are in situations of serious social isolation and this becomes one of the drivers leading to poverty. Our amazing volunteers offer such a welcome that this becomes a very important part of our work and offers hope and support to very vulnerable people. While raw data and statistics show that our move has been worthwhile, it is often some of this 'soft' data that makes the biggest difference to people.



Left: Some of our staff, volunteers and team from Citizens Advice Exeter get ready for our first morning at Cowick Street, Exeter.

3) Other news

- We received amazing support from the local community as a total of 98.8 tonnes of food was donated. This has seen a significant decrease of over 20% from the previous year as the cost of living impacts both our clients and our donors. Fortunately, there has been enough to go around and our shelves have always had food to offer.
- Our [#efbchristmasinabag](#) project saw over 250 donations arrive. We had enough for every client to receive seasonal treats.
- At Christmas we were able to give each household vouchers so that they could buy meat for their Christmas Dinners.
- We were able to contribute more than 380 Christmas Hampers to Care-experienced young people. We worked in tandem with Devon County Council (DCC) on this project and this relationship continues to develop our relationship with some of the staff involved to ensure that we can offer help to young people in situations of need.
- Related to the hampers project, we were able to resource and fund Christmas Dinners across the county in partnership with the Participation Team at DCC. Approximately 125 young people were able to attend.
- We were able to offer Work Experience and Duke of Edinburgh placements to young people who wanted to find out about our charity and support their local community.
- We held two CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Money Courses. These are designed to help households deal with issue like debt and budgeting.
- We began trialling an evening session in Cowick Street as many foodbank clients are from working households and we are currently assessing whether it is more accessible for them to come out of traditional working hours.
- Following on from some art, craft and basic woodwork sessions at our old venue, we held a 'Sewing Bank' with a local group called 'Our Exeter CIC'. While we primarily work on food poverty we have become increasingly concerned at how many of our clients are also in 'social poverty' and we are looking at ways of helping them to make friends or find social connections.
- Upon moving to our new venue we hosted a 'Meet the Neighbours' event so that people from the local community could come in to meet the team and ask any questions that they may have. We followed up this successful event with a coffee morning for local city councillors. This was also a very positive meeting.
- Finally, we have been asked by Trussell to be involved in their winter fundraising appeal this coming year. This is very affirming as it recognises the holistic nature of the work taking place at Exeter Foodbank. Trussell wish to use this nationally as an example of how a foodbank can support people to work through their times of emergency and crisis if they have the correct help and support.

7) Financial

Review (See separate report)

Financial statements

Principal Funding Sources

Reserves Policy

Trustees' Responsibilities in Respect of the Accounts

The Trustees are required to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Trust and of its financial activities for that period. In preparing those accounts, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Trust will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Trust and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Charities Act 1993 and the Charities Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Trust and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Chair of Trustees

Date: October 31st 2024



Left: our Strategic Director, Mark, leading a Harvest Assembly at a local Primary School.