



Charities working together in Wirral to help people out of poverty

In the first week of April this year, Wirral Foodbank experienced over a 50% increase in demand for emergency food. It is no coincidence that this coincides with the increase in fuel costs, National Insurance and cost of living. Many people across Wirral are facing a crisis, choosing between heating and eating.

Providing emergency food should not be the solution to this crisis, regardless of how it is distributed. That is why in March 2018, Wirral Foodbank and Citizens Advice Wirral established Foodbank Plus. Foodbank Plus seeks to address the underlying reason as to why someone needs to be provided with food.

It is not right that anyone should have to use a foodbank, which is why Wirral Foodbank is working towards a future without foodbanks. They recognise that this is an ambitious objective, but believe it is the right one to have, and is at the centre of Wirral Foodbank's strategy.

'Foodbank Plus is a vital element in this objective. Wirral Foodbank volunteers can refer people who visit our foodbank centres direct into Foodbank Plus. Since September 2020, Foodbank Plus has helped over 6,000 people, with nearly 9,000 issues (debt, benefits etc.). Foodbank Plus has successfully claimed just under £135,000 on behalf of those who have used the service, this includes additional benefits, debt write-off, fuel support, white goods. Many people referred into Foodbank Plus no longer require the support of Wirral Foodbank; slowly we are moving towards our objective. Thank you to the incredible support of Wirral Foodbank Volunteers and Citizens Advice Wirral. Richard Roberts, General Manager, Wirral Foodbank.'

A family with three children, who have serious medical conditions, recently attended Wirral Foodbank to get an emergency food parcel. The family had significant gas, electricity and water debt. The Foodbank volunteers referred the family to Citizens Advice Wirral's Foodbank Plus adviser who successfully applied to Wirral Council's Household Fund for financial assistance towards writing off the debt.

Carol Johnson-Eyre, Chief Executive at Citizens Advice Wirral says, 'the partnership with Wirral Foodbank was established over 4 years ago, and our advisers are able to look at

ways families and individuals who need an emergency food parcel can move towards having enough money to pay for food in the future. We look at each individuals situation and see if we can help minimise their debts, maximise their income including assessing if there are benefits they are entitled to, help them with the housing issues, apply for charitable support for them, help people report loan shark activity - *providing support that leaves them with money in their pockets to buy food*. Our advisers work in partnership with all the fantastic Wirral Foodbank volunteers and our work often results in families and individuals no longer needing emergency food assistance'

If you are need of emergency food support or help as a result of fuel poverty or any other advice contact Citizens Advice Wirral www.citizensadvicewirral.org.uk 0808 2787848 (*lines open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4pm and are quieter in the afternoon*)

Wirral Foodbank is grateful for the tremendous support of the community. So far this year they have received 45 tonnes in food donations (equivalent to over 50 transit vans full of food.) Details of how to support Wirral Foodbank can be found at <https://wirral.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/>.

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For more information

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