

Going Upstream 2025

a **strategic framework** for poverty reduction in
Southport, Formby & surrounding communities

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river.

We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

Desmund Tutu



Our Vision:

To see poverty reduced and social wellbeing increased in Southport and surrounding communities.

Our Mission:

To bring people together from the local neighbourhoods, uniting them with the resources and passion of local churches and other organisations - for projects and interventions, which achieve real enhancements in the social wellbeing of families and individuals.

Our Values:

- **Respect** because in the end we are about 'Love', and people, (service users, staff and volunteers) deserve to be treated well and fairly.
- **Unity** because bringing people of all backgrounds together is what we do, community and churches delivering far more together than apart.
- **Hope** because it is our experience that people do grow, change and feel empowered for a brighter future - if there is real engagement.
- **Action** because our positive beliefs and thoughts are only useful to other people, if we act on them.

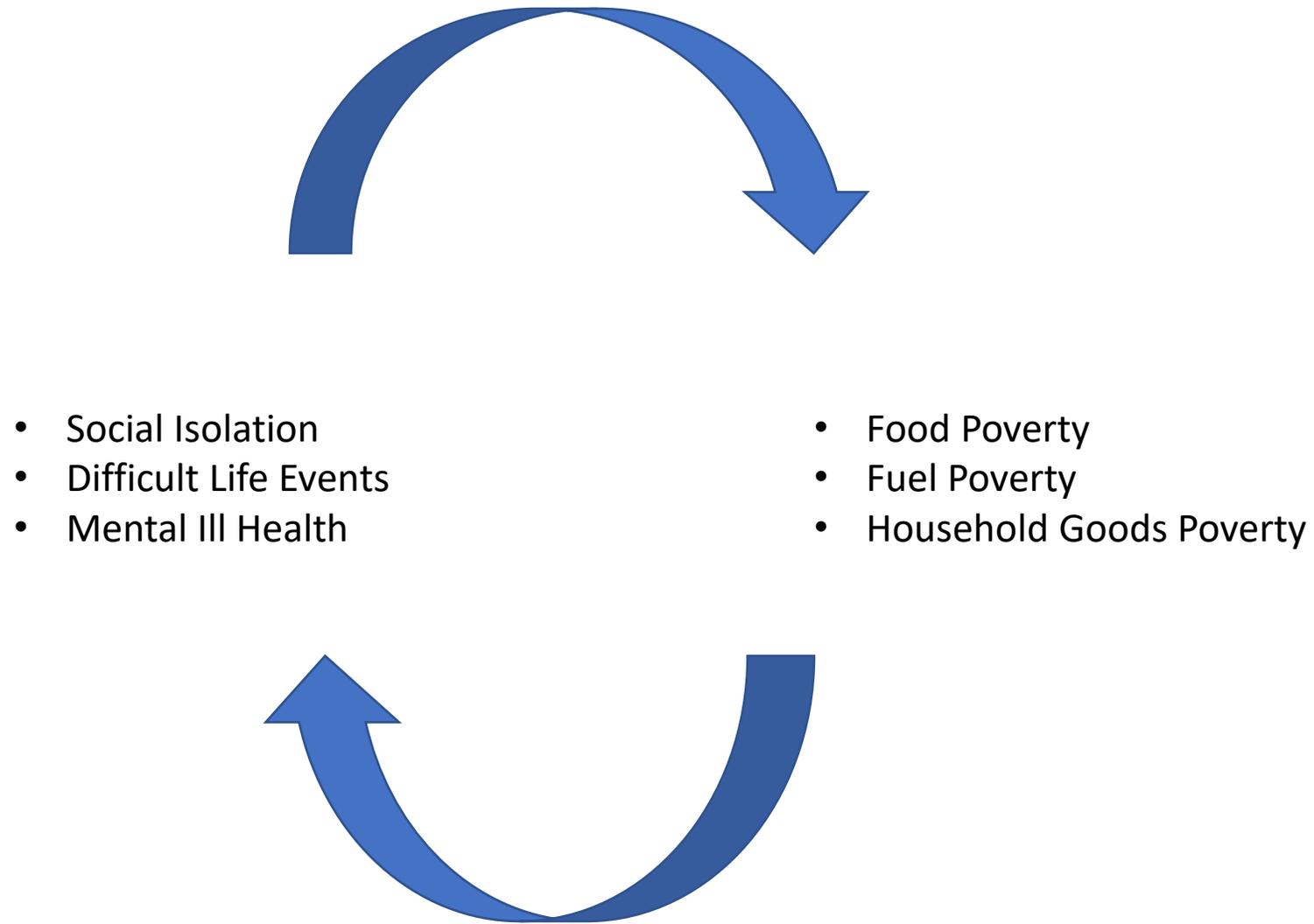
Our spiritual foundation:

As a Christian charity, we place ourselves at the service of all people*. As Jesus did, we recognise the dignity and worth of every individual.+ We also pray constantly that God's Kingdom will come on earth and all people will be healed, restored and given new life.

*Mt 25:40 +John 15:12 ^ Luke 11:12

The cycle of social exclusion, mental health and poverty

Source: World Health Organisation and others



Opportunities

- Providing a full spectrum of support wrapping around the Foodbank
- Support from retailers
- Generosity of donors in terms of food
- Access to church premises
- Financial donors
- Scope for activities to tackle loneliness and isolation which are gateways to poverty
- Partnerships with referral agencies and a positive reputation
- Skilled and trained welfare benefits advisers
- A unique perspective as one of the only organisations taking a wholistic approach to the issues e.g both prevention and treatment
- A strong track record at dealing with debt issues

Challenges

- Stigma of using a Foodbank
- Loneliness and isolation
- Reliance in local labour market on casual work in leisure and retail
- High rents and high rental deposits, low numbers of social housing units
- Multiple food projects in Southport
- Public support is often seasonal
- Universal credit delays
- Reliance on volunteers

Our partners say:

“It has been a real privilege to partner with Compassion Acts. I have found their commitment to the biblical values of love and service for the disadvantaged runs throughout all their activities. They have an impressive desire to make a difference across our town that reflects Jesus commands to be agents of change wherever we live”

Rev. Canon Steve McGanity, Area Dean North Meols Deanery, Church of England

“The voluntary, community and faith sector plays a critical role in supporting and underpinning the social and community fabric of our local communities. Compassion Acts is integral in not only delivering essential antipoverty interventions, but working with others, to ensure our most vulnerable residents can be provided with critical and ongoing support.”

Angela White OBE FRSA, Chief Executive of Sefton CVS

Our beneficiaries say:



"I found myself like many others at this time in a very difficult situation with no funds available for food and struggling financially with my bills. I attended the Foodbank and they were fantastic even though I was embarrassed and anxious they asked me about my finances and for the first time was honest with them and myself. Within 24hrs I received an email from the Adviser , I can honestly say she was fantastic with me and already organised a reduction for my council tax and I am waiting to hear in regards of my other bills. For the first time in a long time I am in a positive and honest position in regards to my finances."

“A” the former Sales Manager seeking our help during lockdown

Strategic Aims:

1: We want to build a consensus among community leaders, individuals and decision makers in Southport & Formby around poverty reduction.

2: We want to develop our services in such a way that people feel empowered to make decisions about their own lives, with the support of well resourced and trained Compassion Acts staff/volunteers.

*Timeframe of Strategy: **April 2021 to April 2025***

Preparations for the next strategic planning cycle will begin in spring 2024, for publication in March 2025

Strategic Themes

- PREVENTION

To invest in areas of work which seek to prevent poverty, through earlier interventions and acknowledgment of the realities of the mental wellbeing - poverty cycle. We are committed to giving local energy to the national Trussell Trust campaign “HungerFreeFuture”.

- JUSTICE

To place justice at the heart of what the Charity does. In addition to one-to-one advisory work develop, we will deepen our work on advocacy and campaigns.

- PEOPLE

To enhance and support the overall effectiveness and productivity of the Charity’s volunteer/staff teams through the development of policies, training plans and corporate partnerships.

Continue to provide an accessible and recognised Foodbank service, at an early critical stage of crisis.	A minimum of 5 sessions each week Signposting to housing, employment advice (e.g. job clubs) to reduce chance of repeat of crisis
Distribute an early intervention pack focused on mental wellbeing e.g. bereavement, sudden illness in family, domestic abuse.	Set up a nomination form for partners by Dec 2021 Develop food and non-food content for the packs by Apr 2022 Continue to partner with Macmillan Centre Southport and Veterans in Sefton for Advice services. Create Memoranda of Understanding between us by Mar 2022
Expand the number of fresh and frozen lines available at the Food Pantry, enhancing value, healthy eating and choice at this <i>weekly</i> poverty reduction intervention. Relaunch and refocus on the loneliness agenda with the Pantry greeters and chatters.	By Dec 2021
Open a new Food Pantry in Birkdale.	By July 2021
Launch a <i>monthly</i> Community Market for Next Step Cardholders and the Just About Managing who for a variety of reasons are unable to access the weekly Pantry. A stronger focus on non-food lines which are a big impact on family budgets.	2021
Develop a 'slow cooker' starter pack project.	2022
Work with the churches and communities in the Northern parishes and also the community of Formby in order that food and community projects are nurtured, that fit the distinct needs of their areas.	2021
Continue to develop the 'Next Steps' project.	Target to have 50 members by end of 2021
Plan and manage a portfolio of groups, courses and events which act as early interventions against social exclusion/poverty. Examples include bereavement, self-defeating behaviours, loneliness, addictions, self confidence etc.	Seek funding partner and collaborate across churches and other charities by March 2022
Promote effectively the CMA service. Research and create a locally bespoke Money Advice Course and personal journal.	By 2022

Strategic Theme 2 JUSTICE

Periodically review and audit Foodbank locations and the operations at each of those distribution centres to ensure accessibility for people with differing needs.	2023
Invest in the capacity of the Welfare Benefits Team, including training, to ensure best practice is shared and more individuals can be helped up to and including tribunals and appeals.	2024
Launch the Southport Fuel Bank and bed it into the routine work of the Advice & Support team.	May 2021
Explore options for local 'self reliance groups' on the model pioneered by Church Action on Poverty and with local Credit Unions to expand that type of financial self improvement scheme.	Written proposals by February 2024
Commission a 'scale of poverty' report for Southport and surrounding villages - analysing areas for joint action.	2022
Develop a feasibility plan for a Zero Waste Café / pay as you feel / pay it forward project for Southport and how this could tie in with training places. Consider governance and whether a CIC would be needed.	By Jan 2024
Provide opportunities via groups, workshops and other materials for reflection, prayer and study of the issues surrounding structural inequalities and the causes of family financial insecurity in the UK.	Study day 2023 2022 Produce case studies, prayer cards, videos and seasonal resources
Work with partners to produce quality resources, lesson plans and assemblies for the 13-16 age group in local schools on the theme of financial resilience, personal dignity despite economic status, budgeting etc	2021
Work with churches and other partners, to provide food and loneliness solutions during the long school holidays for 'free school meal' children.	2021
Produce up to date information and data which informs all our work and campaigns. Improve the level of detail in the Annual Report.	Create a new database which gives 'real time' access to the client journey.
Capture better feedback and qualitative data from clients.	On going for use in publicity by I&P Manager
Prioritise social isolation as a driver towards poverty. Produce a plan for sections of population e.g. Over 55s and single males.	2022

Strategic Theme 3 PEOPLE

Recruit and support an Influencing & Partnerships Manager.	June 2021
Ensure that a full range of policy documents are produced which reflect our vision, and are effectively communicated with all volunteers, staff, trustees and partners via training and line management.	By Sept 2021
Produce an Influencing Plan which will set out activities around: Changing hearts and minds so that the understanding of what poverty is and how it can be eradicated is improved. Bring political representatives and community leaders on side for campaigns towards our overall goals.	By Feb 2022 2023
Devise and develop ways of including service users in the day to day management of the Charity.	Produce a Participation Plan by May 2022
Develop a robust system of corporate risk management at a board level. Deliver training.	By December 2021 By September 2022
Be considerate of the need for succession planning for staff, long serving volunteers and trustees.	By September 2022
Become a member of the Living Wage Foundation and Fundraising Regulator.	By October 2021
Ensure that staff and volunteers have access to training and other support that is suitable for their role.	Produce a training plan by Dec 2021
Develop and resource Community Money Advice service so it is on a sustainable long term footing.	Produce a budget/funding plan by Dec 2021
Instigate stronger administrative systems and protocols for meetings of the Trustee Board and its associated sub-groups Finance, Remuneration, Fundraising, Risk.	On going
Keep branding and communications channels under review, gathering responses from a focus group on any changes. Modernise the Food Pantry branding.	On going By Sept 2021
Continue to use all the talents in a Fundraising Working Group and plan effectively for funding bids/campaigns to fill funding gaps- priority in the 2023-2025 period.	On going

EARLY INTERVENTIONS

- School assemblies and materials on money for students and families
- Kindness and sample bags including a personal money journal
- Access to the Community Market by invitation
- Group therapeutic sessions to improve wellbeing.

CRISIS INTERVENTIONS

- Southport Foodbank
- Benefits reviews and re-evaluations with immediate impact.
- Fuel Bank
- Little Miracles (with Salvation Army)
- Debt advice triage, budgeting
- Counselling in partnership with Philippi

MEDIUM TERM INTERVENTIONS

- Food Pantry
- Village Food Hub
- Debt advice restructuring with creditors
- Starter packs
- Advocacy, appeals and tribunals for benefits clients
- Courses and groups e.g. bereavement, loneliness, confidence, cooking.

LONG TERM INTERVENTIONS

- Next Steps including ongoing access to advice services / groups/courses
- Community Market
- Participation by service users in the charity
- Allotment and horticulture skills.

SEASONAL and ADHOC

- Campaigns and influencing of policy
- Christmas Hampers
- Bags for summer/winter street homeless
- Advice sessions for Veterans
- Bags for Refugees in hotel accommodation

We say:

Public goodwill and food donations can be transformed from a series of random, seasonal peaks, into dynamic resources for year-round poverty reduction.

Together we can change minds and hearts about what poverty is and isn't.

We are inclusive and work with people of all faiths or none!

Being in debt or on the wrong benefits for your needs are common – but don't need to be a cause of shame. Help is at hand.

Poverty comes in many forms, affects people from all backgrounds.

We must include and listen to the stories of people with lived experience of bereavement, fuel poverty, addiction, anxiety, domestic abuse and other issues as we plan.

Love and kindness go a long way. As a Christian charity we'll not forget this.

Foodbank use should be as a crisis support and not a part of a permanent structure of social provision.

Poverty is preventable if tackled at an early point.

Justice is our priority and change is possible. Structures can keep people stuck in poverty.

Strategic messages

- # Hunger Free Future
- # volunteering is a tool for social inclusion
- # going upstream
- # lets talk about finances
- # falling through the net
- # justaboutmanaging
- # neighbourhood solutions are best
- # social exclusion is a form of poverty
- # debt is a silent mental health crisis



Our area stretches approximately 20 miles from North to South, a population over 110,000, covering 4 parliamentary constituencies, and two local authority areas. Our local neighbourhoods have their own strong identities.

The patch which Compassion Acts serves is a diverse seaside town centre with suburban and semi rural village settlements, scattered along a stunning coastline.

