

COMPASSION ACTS

Our Magazine for supporters
2023 edition

IMPACT REPORT

**PERSONAL
STORIES**

**OUR SUPERSTAR
DONORS**

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR
PROGRESS**



**UKRAINE
УКРАЇНА**

A grassroots local charity with a big ambition : poverty reduction.
Registered Charity Number 1172948

Together in 2022 what we have done has been **Life-Changing**



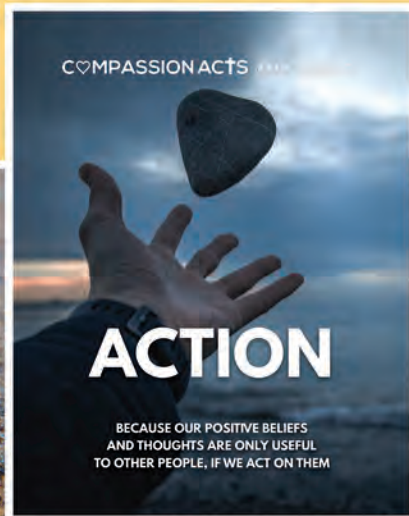
Dr Dympna Edwards,
chair of trustees

Our dedicated staff team, volunteers and supporters together have changed lives. One of the privileges of being a volunteer trustee is to be able to stand back and reflect on the changing needs and how we have responded.

Many people have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis and 2022 has been a year of growth and achievement. It is good to hear the impact on people's lives in their own words.

Lastly we try to be a listening organisation and always welcome ideas and feedback from our supporters and stakeholders.

Our Values



Did you know we run activities and sessions, open to all, which aim to improve social wellbeing and prevent poverty? Read more online



"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"

DESMOND TUTU

It is increasingly obvious that the causes of poverty are deep and complex, often rooted in low self worth and poor mental health. We are also prioritising more local organising work and in 2022 we began our Local Voices programme which will bring us together to advocate for policy change locally and nationally."

Together we can tackle the causes of poverty and **PREVENT** the need for emergency food support via Foodbank, because widespread use of Foodbanks is not a sustainable or ethical way of being a society.

Writes our CEO Richard Owens.

"Compassion Acts is part way through its ambitious strategy to reduce poverty.

£1.6 MILLION

Reclaimed in Welfare Benefits payments and a further £300,000 of debt now under control and being managed with clients.

1400

interactions by phone or face to face with clients by our excellent Advice & Support Team.

What is a food pantry?

This is a Food Club with a strong element of social interaction too, Richard continues. "One of the most notable features of our Food Pantry model is that it is about much more than food. Through the chatting and the regular reviews with our team, Pantry members are encouraged to look honestly at some of the on-going issues that are making life difficult. This continues into our 'Next Steps' programme that begins seamlessly at the end of the Food Pantry 12 month membership and is available for clients for as long as they need it."

In 2022 we provided 3525 subsidised weekly food shops in our Food Pantries at 5 locations (double the number of shopping trips in 2021) saving people on average at least £20 each time.



WHERE ARE WE?



- 1: Food Pantry (in Development)
- 2: Food Pantry (Tues & Thurs)
- 3: Southport Foodbank (Fridays)
- 4: Community Hub inc. School Uniforms
- 5: Food Pantry (Tuesdays)
- 6: Southport Foodbank (Thursdays)
- 7: Food Pantry (Thursdays)
- 8: Southport Foodbank (Tuesdays)
- 9: Food Pantry (Wednesdays)
- 10: Southport Foodbank (Thursdays)
- 11: Food Pantry (Thursdays)
- 12: Southport Foodbank (Saturdays) and various social wellbeing activities

CONTACT US:

COMPASSION ACTS, VICTORIA CENTRE, 197A SUSSEX ROAD
SOUTHPORT, PR8 6DG

01704 264505

HELLO@COMPASSIONACTS.UK

USUAL OFFICE HOURS 10AM-3PM MON-FRI

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1172948

Leave a legacy of hope

AS WE JOIN TOGETHER TO REDUCE POVERTY

COULD YOU SUPPORT US

IN YOUR WILL?

COMPASSION ACTS



COVER STORY

For this special 2022 Impact Report we sat down for a cuppa and a chat with Sheila from Southport.

Almost before we could ask her questions, she was straight in with her message:

"This place, was like someone had a hug for me, to put their arm around my shoulder and say it's okay, we've got you."

Sheila suddenly, without warning, had £700 removed from her Universal Credit and this was obviously devastating for Sheila and her daughter and two sons.

"The sudden change meant bills were left hanging and I was about to go under. I was so depressed and was numb to it all. This crisis had come 18 months after a relationship breakdown. I'm not bad at financial planning, no-one could withstand this change without warning."

Sheila made her way to our Foodbank at Southport Salvation Army and describes the welcome as kind and non-judgemental:

"That decision to attend Foodbank doesn't need to be one of shame and sadness. For me it opened up a whole network and gave me direction out of a difficult situation. I still have to do the work of writing emails and checking my DWP records- the team don't do everything for you it still needs your initiative. The help that they can give to sort out issues with Benefits or if you have debts is amazing"

Since then Sheila has made use of other services

*"At a time that I couldn't afford to do anything sociable with my friends I came to the Relaxing Art workshop that they put on. It's free with no subs to pay and it has helped my mental health. I don't think people know enough about what Compassion Acts does for the whole person, not just food. I'm well on the way to a recovery and some stability because of their kindness. **Don't let fear keep you from reaching out.**"*

We are a PATHFINDER Foodbank and thanks to a funding programme from Trussell Trust we can experiment with innovative projects, learning from them and sharing best practice with other Foodbanks in the network.

One such project is our Community Hub at 17A Cambridge Walks.

It has met a need for an accessible space in the town centre, which we heard loud and clear from our service users was an issue.

It opened in July 2022 and by the end of the year had already welcomed; 231 people dropping in and 31 of those ended up being referred into our other services.

Its opening hours are Tuesday to Thursday 10-2 and Fridays 10-12.



WE ASKED PAUL, A RETIRED SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGER WHAT'S IT LIKE TO VOLUNTEER FOR US ?

Q: What do you get out of volunteering personally?

A sense of responsibility being able to support people in need, while I have the capacity to be able to do this.

Q: How do you feel you are contributing to a fairer & better society by volunteering?

Life is not equal and many people need help. There's no reason why I should not be able to provide my time and capabilities to provide the support required, and make some things easier for others where possible.

Q: What does a typical day look like?

Every week I work one half day driving a van for the charity, and I collect food donations from different supermarkets, and other donors, to bring back to the centre. Every other week I work in the warehouse sorting these food donations and packing the food bags which are delivered to different locations. There are also opportunities to do other tasks, one of my favourites being children's holiday clubs last summer. All of these days are fun, supported by other volunteers and the team at Compassion Acts, and I quite often leave for home with a buzz feeling that I have completed what I set out to achieve.

Q: Why did you choose Compassion Acts?

I started working with Compassion Acts during Covid. I saw an advert for support in the local Southport paper, and realized that my career experiences would help me be effective in these roles. I was looking for an activity that would use up some of my spare time, and the work itself, and the volunteering ethic combined to confirm this.



74 TONNES OF FOOD DONATIONS

EQUIVALENT TO THE WEIGHT OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE



OR 11 ELEPHANTS!

Julie, 46, from Formby shares her story

“I’m a lone parent of five including a child with additional needs. Back in 2022 I was struggling to make ends meet. I saw that there was a Food Pantry local to me in Formby. This village is not what people think, there is poverty behind closed doors. You can be in work, with some reasonable money coming in and still not be happy, still be struggling in some way. That’s when you need to reach out and ask for help.”

“I would skip meals so that the children didn’t go without. I was embarrassed and nervous but I shouldn’t have been. The benefits team have also helped me to be certain that I’m getting what I’m entitled to and have given me peace of mind. So the whole team and the full range of Compassion Acts services have helped me. I would just say to anyone who is nervous that it’s only by asking for help that things can get better. Because I’ve been helped so much by Compassion Acts, I’ve now been able to get my life together and now I’m giving back, yes I have been given enough confidence and stability to be able to volunteer for them and help other people. They have put me through my food hygiene and other training. It’s like a family here, I had a household flood and they rallied round, they are the best!”



121 Families Helped with essential baby and toddler supplies via our Little Miracles project with Southport Salvation Army in 2022



The impact we have made is not only practical or financial, but emotional also.

In his own words, Client Brandon says "It's such a relief. This was the only place that didn't simply signpost me somewhere else or fob me off. Although you were busy you made me feel like I was important and you care."



2022 was the year when we really moved 'beyond just food'.

We were seeing more people come to our Foodbank because of the massive costs of school uniforms.

Joining forces with Nicola and the Free Uniforms for Southport Schools, we were able to launch the Uniform Hub which is for anyone (no referral) who needs it. Even if you simply want to minimise waste and swap your pre-loved uniforms for some bigger ones, or make a small donation to cover costs.



In summer 2022 we again organised a **Holiday Activity Club for local kids** (thanks to Sefton Council HAF funding). Over 90 children participated across 2 weeks which included a free lunch each day. Great fun was had by all and parents reported a real benefit in terms of cost of living in the long school holidays.





No-one could have predicted that Compassion Acts would need to spring into action in 2022 to support refugees from Ukraine

We distributed 60 welcome packages and had drop in support sessions. In the autumn we launched the weekly Speak Easy classes and also a mutual support group for host families.

"I didn't speak English, only a few words. I didn't know any English people to talk to. It was better for me to come to Speakeasy to speak English with English people. I suggested to Ukraine Welcome Centre about a conversation group. I have learned English and also culture. My English is much better, just a few words I don't know. I understand well enough to translate for others in the group. I can ask what a word means and write it on my phone to learn. It is a very friendly group, very supportive as we have got to know each other. And, there is good cooking and cake!"



Partnerships Matter to us

Conal Devitt, Social Prescriber,
Sefton CVS/Brighter Living Partnership

"The most important thing is the quality of the welcome. For people with anxiety or other needs places like the Food Pantry and Warm Space are safe zones for people to mingle and move around. They are well managed and designed. I have no hesitation in bringing clients along"



7.3 equivalent to full time staff members managing 200 volunteers, 2 premises of our own and projects at 10 other sites.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Caroline Wilson
Social Wellbeing Officer

Q: What do you get out of working here personally?

For me, it is great to be part of a team who work so hard to support people who are going through a really tough time. I am naturally a person who likes to help people and it is so nice to see how each of our projects can make a positive difference to those who access them.

Q: How do you feel you are contributing to a fairer & better society by doing your job?

As a team, we all have a part to play in striving to achieve a fairer and better society. Each project is a piece of the puzzle to achieve our strategy 'going upstream'. As part of increasing social wellbeing, I have been developing a calendar of activities for the community to access. These activities are free to access as it is important that those accessing them can do so without the worry of cost. I have been a familiar face in our food pantry projects to enable the transition to our Next Steps project to be a smooth one. This has led me to better understand the kind of support that is needed to further develop Next Steps.

Q: Why did you choose to work for Compassion Acts?

I was working in retail for 25 years and decided to take redundancy, at the time I was three quarters of my way through 3 years at university completing an honours degree. One thing that was always highlighted throughout my research was those who were living in poverty do not get a fair chance. Living in poverty can have a negative impact on people's mental health which in turn can lead into many other issues. It became apparent throughout my research that it was actually charities throughout the country that were doing more work to reduce poverty, provide support for mental health and being proactive to prevent crisis, rather than our government. I want to be part of helping to make a positive change, give people hope and empower them to take action.

Q: What does a typical day look like?

I am not sure if there is a typical day! If it is a day in the office, it can be anything from dealing with telephone calls which can be anything from a simple question needing answering to a more complex issue. We take in donations throughout the day which we are always very grateful for. Greeting clients or visitors when they arrive. Planning activities, processing food pantry referral forms, making welfare calls, planning reviews.

GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS



In the last financial year, foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network have seen the highest ever level of need, distributing close to 3 million (2,986,203) emergency food parcels including more than a million to children. This is the most parcels the network has ever distributed in a single year.

Our social security system should support anyone in need of help, but right now it's not providing enough income to cover the cost of life's essentials

Message your Member of Parliament today, and let them know your views.

2022 At A Glance

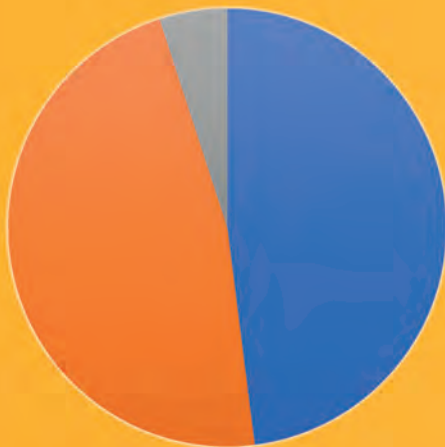
Amazing support from the local community in 2022 which funded supporting almost 200 volunteers (£250,000 value to the local economy) and provided food to, on average, 160 households every week...

Over 2000 pieces of school uniform provided, over 50 Ukrainian refugee families supported.

2157 Emergency Foodbank parcels were distributed. That's 4689 people, including 1772 children!

Warm spaces were launched, in partnership with Sefton CVS and around 150 people welcomed.

Income
£642,000



- Donations Cash & Food 48%
- Grants 47%
- Memberships & Other Income 5%

Expenditure
£590,175



- Advice Services 9%
- Core Services 27%
- Foodbank 34%
- Food Pantry 16%
- Social Wellbeing 14%

These figures are rounded for the purposes of this magazine, and at time of printing yet to be Independently Examined. Full accounts will be presented to Charity Commission and accessible on their website in due course.

Search Compassion Acts on their website.



Giving Regularly How it helps & how it works



Anne-Marie,
from Southport says:
"Giving monthly makes
me feel involved,
included and part of
the solution to poverty
locally here in
Southport & Formby"



Simply set up via your online or telephone banking, using these bank details.

Compassion Acts, HSBC Bank,
Southport
Sort code: 40-42-30
Account Number: 52071665

We also have some printed forms available if that is easier.

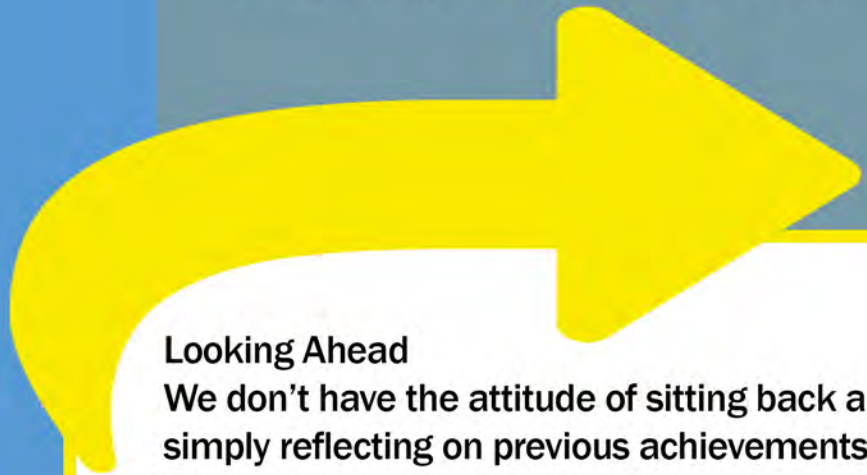
Ring the office 01704 264505 for assistance.

Don't forget to ask us for 'Gift Aid' form. This is where the HMRC, at no extra cost to you, will add to your donation by 25%.

Fundraisers are heroes!

In 2022 we had some amazing corporate partners- businesses large and small who came up with innovative ways to work with us to achieve our aims. Too many to name here, but always thanked personally and on our social media. Whether it's being a chosen charity for the year or having a collection box on your premises. There are lots of ways to get involved.

Call us on 01704 264505
email hello@compassionacts.uk



Looking Ahead

We don't have the attitude of sitting back and simply reflecting on previous achievements. There is so much more to do!

In 2023 and 2024 expect more work on:

- Mental Wellbeing
- Families
- Next Steps offer for people after Food Pantry membership ends
- Collaborating with other agencies to reach certain groups eg single males