

COMPASSION ACTS

FREE
Magazine
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BREAKING THE CYCLE: TOGETHER WE CAN PREVENT POVERTY AND INCREASE SOCIAL WELLBEING



Our 2024 supporters

Read more about our donors on page 14



Campaign for change

Learn about our Local Voices group on page 12



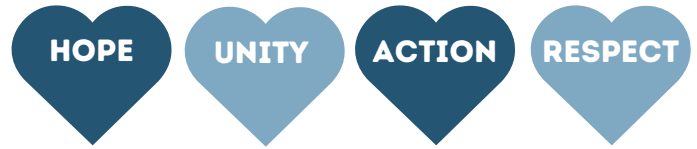
IMPACT REPORT

Compassion Acts is a registered charity in England & Wales (1172948)

WELCOME

From our roots as Southport Foodbank and growth through the years as Southport & Formby Churches Debt Centre - Compassion Acts has now developed to be a respected Christian social action agency which seeks to catch people early and reduce the causes of poverty.

We work with people of all faiths, and none, and do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender or sexuality. The cost of living crisis has shown that all of us, from whatever background, may need a helping hand from time to time and there is no shame in seeking assistance.



In this magazine we will lay out some of the stories which inspire us to keep going. We do not believe that anyone needs to face life's challenges alone.

None of it would be possible, of course, without our loyal donors, volunteers and friends. We rely totally on the generosity of local people.

Thank you!

Richard Owens
CEO



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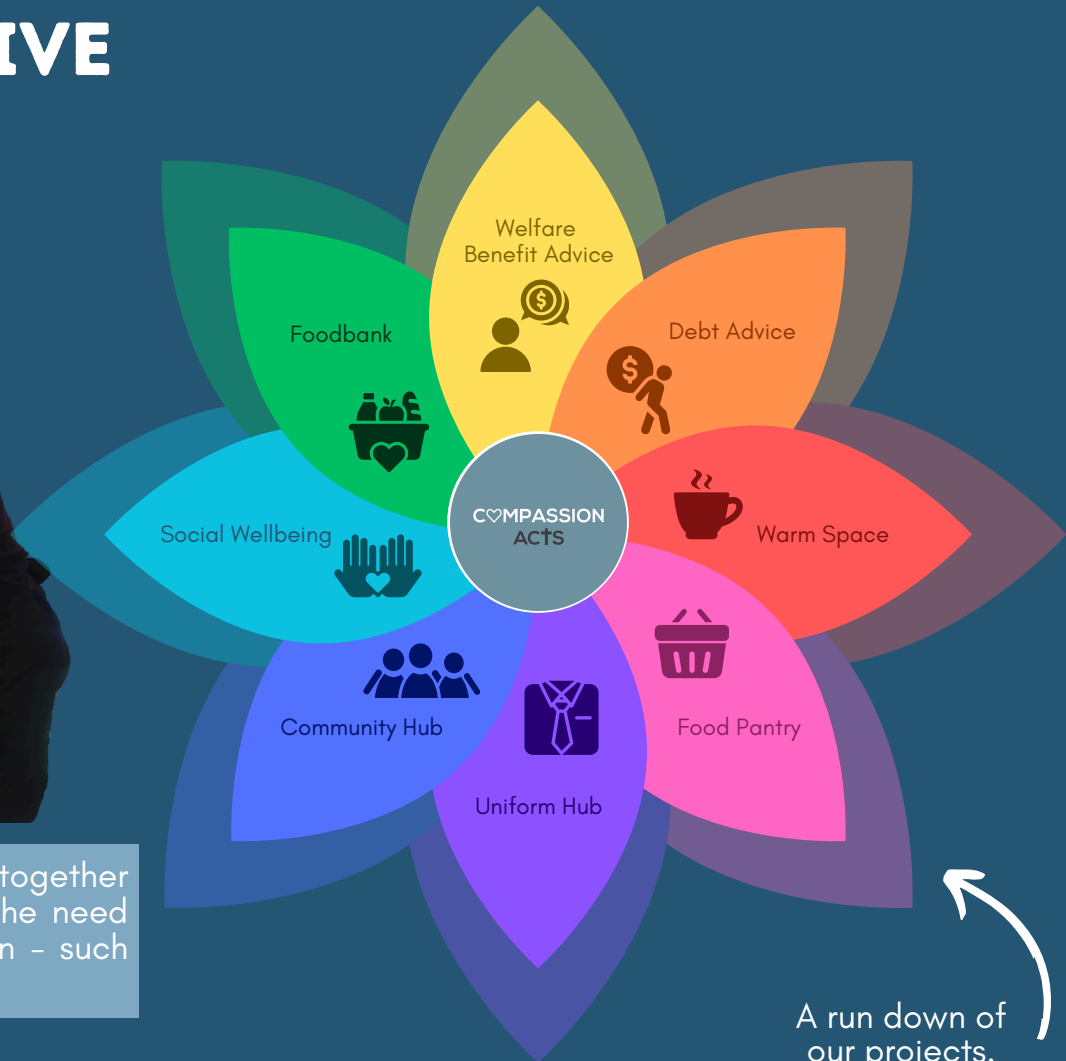
www.compassionacts.uk

2023 AT A GLANCE



- 4500** Warm Space Visits
- £518,732** Debt Managed
- £1,987,953** Benefits Reclaimed
- 2219** Foodbank Parcels
- 72** Social Wellbeing Workshops
- 2270** Items of Uniform Distributed
- 3913** Food Pantry Shops
- 251** Community Market Shops

PREVENTATIVE HOLISTIC SUPPORT

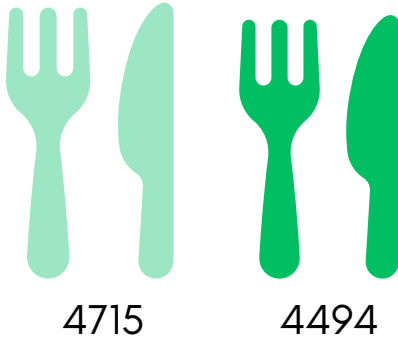


Compassion Acts projects work together to tackle poverty and prevent the need for emergency crisis intervention - such as turning to a Foodbank

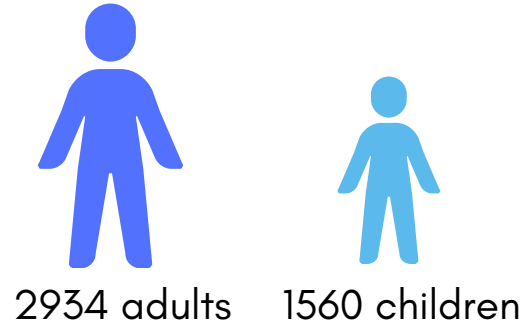
A run down of our projects.

Behind every statistic is a real individual or family – sharing the benefit across the community. Seemingly small changes all combine to bring about transformation.

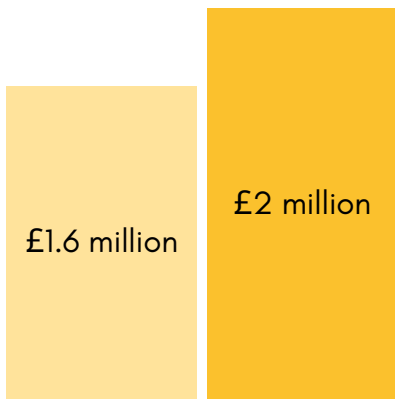
People Fed via Foodbank
2022 vs 2023



This equates to:

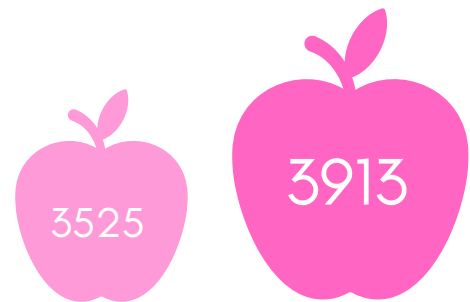


Benefits Reclaimed 2022 vs 2023



A further £112,416 reclaimed via our Skelmersdale Foodbank Partnership.

Food Pantry Shops 2022 vs 2023



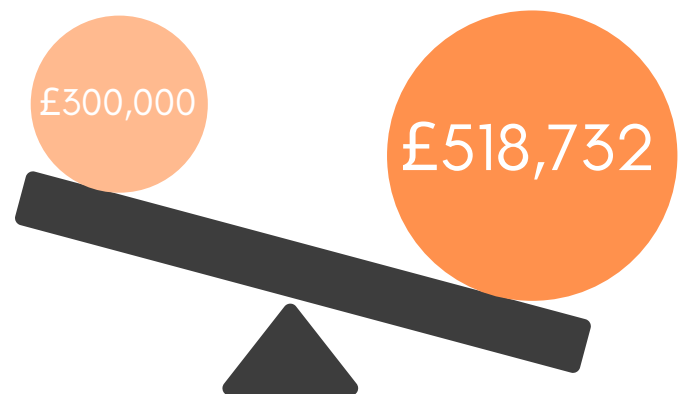
Our Pantries provide long-term food support for those who may have previously turned to Foodbanks.

Uniform Hub Items Given
2022 vs 2023



450 families supported through our Uniform Hub.

Total Debt Managed
2022 vs 2023



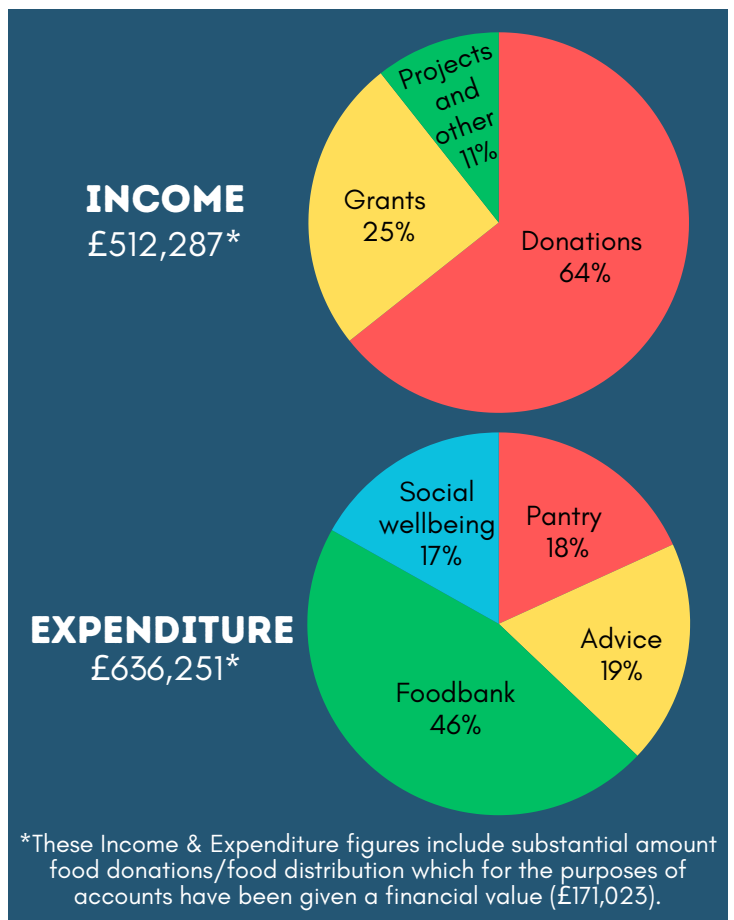
“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.” – Desmond Tutu

“2023 was a pivotal year”, writes Richard Owens our CEO, “coming off the back of the COVID crisis with many people adjusting their working patterns and still feeling the effects of that emergency, this year saw massive rises in fuel and energy prices and a sustained increase in the rate of inflation. There was not a family in our area that did not feel the effects. That has allowed us to reinforce our message that Compassion Acts is here for a much wider range of people than many perceive. It makes the conversation about the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ a lot less polarised.

Given this economic background, you might have expected a sharp rise in Foodbank referrals. In fact, our numbers slightly reduced from the previous year (2022: 4711 people fed). This stability, or modest fall in numbers, is a sign of the impact we have had and the model we have adopted. For several years now, we have prioritised preventative measures such as Welfare Benefits Advice, Food Pantries Social Wellbeing activities, and Warm Spaces and it appears to have paid off. Rising numbers of people seeking urgent food supplies at a Foodbank would be a sign of failure, not success.

We took steps to invest some of our reserves in adapting the Victoria Centre so it is even better equipped with small rooms to give privacy for the increased number of welfare advice appointments. In addition, we are seeing reduced food donations, largely, and understandably, due to

the cost of living crisis. As food prices have risen, the public have had to adapt their donations accordingly, bringing our overall levels down. It was a year where we as an organisation had to purchase more food than ever before to fill those gaps. Together, donors, partners, volunteers and service users have navigated 2023 and all its challenges. Thank you.”



ROY AND MAUREEN

Our Welfare Advice clients, Roy and Maureen, tell their story and talk about how their finances changed after using Compassion Acts services.

Roy and Maureen were in a challenging situation before they discovered Compassion Acts. Referred to us by Light for Life, they were struggling financially and dealing with a landlord who was increasing their rent. Despite working, they hoped they could get more support and were seeking help with claims such as Attendance Allowance, Housing Benefit, and Pension Credit.



Roy and Maureen used our welfare advice service and their experience with us was overwhelmingly positive. Financially, the help they received made a significant difference, providing peace of mind and helping them get back on their feet. "I don't have a pension," Roy mentioned, "so it helped us a lot."

Working with Alison was a highlight for them. They found her to be thorough, knowledgeable, and quietly efficient. "She knew what she was talking about and went about it in a nice manner."

Compassion Acts assisted the pair in securing the benefits they were entitled to, resulting in a life-changing increase to their weekly income. This support transformed their financial situation. "We are much, much better now than before," Roy shared. "We can think straight and buy the same food without constantly scraping by."

Roy and Maureen have no hesitation in recommending our services. "If [Compassion Acts] can't find out whether you're entitled to more, then nobody can." "It's been a pleasure to work with somebody who knows what they're talking about. If anything else happens, we would definitely be back in the future."

Their story shows how much getting support can change your life. If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out. Our team is here to help you find the right support.

"Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived."
Galatians 6:2-3

MYTHBUSTING

Myth: Compassions Acts debt advice is only available to those with thousands of debt.

Fact: Our advisors can help with all amounts of debt - if you are worried at all about your debt, the best thing you can do is get in touch with our advice team.

Myth: Food support is only for people who are unemployed.

Fact: Many of our Food Pantry members work full-time but are on a tight budget, due to rising costs. Our Foodbanks are for anyone who may find themselves in immediate crisis and need access to food.

Myth: Big retailers and national organisations fund our charity.

Fact: Nothing is guaranteed, food or financial. Most of our donations come directly from local donors.

Myth: Compassion Acts refuse to give clients more than 3 Foodbank parcels.

Fact: We operate on the Trussell Trust model and assess everyone on a case by case basis. We also offer more long-term support options.



TACKLING RISING COSTS FOR FAMILIES

School uniforms can be expensive, and often leave families short of enough money for other essentials - the Uniform Hub project is designed to tackle this. We have had great success, distributing 2270 items of Uniform last year.

2023 was the year our team went beyond just uniform and trialled our first Uniform Hub Christmas Party with festive treats and a visit from Father Christmas. Plus 55 Christmas Eve boxes were given out to families packed with a variety of toys, books, clothes and treats. This event was in partnership with MLEC and we are looking forward to further events in the future.

Our Uniform Hub is open Tuesday - Friday operating from the Community Hub and anyone can access uniform via a drop in service.



JANE'S STORY

We sat down with our client Jane, whose life took an unexpected turn during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"I was a successful businesswoman and my whole world flipped upside down after COVID. I lost everything, I had a breakdown, couldn't provide for my family anymore. I was devastated."

"I was told about Compassion Acts at the Job Centre. I called in one afternoon and was greeted by Lee. I explained my situation and got quite upset about it. I am a proud woman and found it so hard to ask for help."



"Lee was fantastic, he calmed me down, reassured me and discussed all the support that Compassion Acts could offer me. I accessed the Foodbank, which I was so nervous about, but everyone I came across treated me with respect and empathy. I didn't feel like I was being given a handout, I felt like they were holding my hand."

"I was told about the Food Pantry, so completed the form and started there."

What can I say, 5-star! I felt supported, loved, with people on my side."

"Being part of the support available from CA has helped me mentally, emotionally, nutritionally and has restored my faith. Myself and my family definitely haven't had any luck recently, just when we seem to take steps forwards we get knocked back again, however, we look forward to attending the pantry every week. The words of encouragement and genuine interest from the team there is heart-warming."

"I have been studying ready to start a new career to be a retrofit and domestic energy assessor in housing asset management. I am 6 weeks away from being qualified, things are still tight but there is light at the end of the tunnel. I can honestly say, I do not know where I would be without Compassion Acts. It's a one-stop shop of love!"



FOODBANKS SHOULD NOT HAVE TO EXIST

Our Local Voices campaign group have been speaking to individuals that have faced significant hardship amid the ongoing cost of living crisis – many of whom have never had to use a Foodbank before. Here are some of the perspectives shared by people who may now rely on our food projects.



“ Me and my children suffer greatly with the cost of living crisis. I am a nurse who works up to 20 hours a week. I cannot afford to pay my bills and I am looking for a second job now. If it wasn't for these Foodbanks my children would starve.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY

“ Food prices going up needs to change. It's getting to the point of food or bills.

“ [The cost of living crisis] has forced us into some loneliness. Our house is too scruffy to let anyone visit and we can't meet friends out due to the cost of cafes, petrol and parking meters, forcing you to stay in. Everything has a knock on effect.

“ Food is constantly going up. After shopping there is barely enough for bills. I am struggling to feed my children and it is destroying my mental health. Healthy food needs to be accessible and affordable.

“ I cannot always use the heating in the house, my son is the most sensitive and his lips turn blue before we can turn the heating on for a short while.

We know times are tough but Compassion Acts are here to help. Do you think you could benefit from our Food Pantry membership scheme? You can self refer! Get in touch or visit www.compassionacts.com/foodpantry for more information.

ADVICE SERVICE

Our welfare benefits advice service is designed to guide people through the often complex benefits system. We offer general advice, help with completing benefit forms, and support for clients appealing a decision at a tribunal to ensure they receive all they are entitled to.

Our debt service helps clients work toward financial stability and freedom from debt. Our advisors assist with repayment plans, budgeting, and financial analysis to help clients improve their financial well-being.

In 2023 our welfare benefit team successfully reclaimed £1,987,953 in benefits for our 2191 clients – with another £112,416 reclaimed via our Skelmersdale Foodbank partnership, through 168 consultations.

Our debt advice service took on 21 new clients and now manage a total of £518,732 worth of debt.

All services are free for anyone to use, although donations are welcome to enable us to continue to provide these services. Clients can contact us by phone, through our website, or via email to book an appointment. Many clients are referred to us by other agencies, such as: healthcare professionals, social workers, local and national charities, e.g. we collaborate with Macmillan to support cancer patients who are new to the

benefits system and need guidance. Here is a quote from one of our recent advice clients:

“Lee was so friendly and courteous with a great sense of humour. He made the process of finding out what support I was entitled to both easy and straightforward.”

We recently assisted a client whose application for PIP had been refused. Our team helped gather additional evidence for his case and represented him at tribunal. Thanks to our support, the tribunal reversed the DWP's decision, granting him the benefit along with nearly £10,000 in back payments. The client, who struggled with severe mental and physical health issues, couldn't have navigated this process alone. He later told us that we “genuinely saved his life” with our support.



SOCIAL WELLBEING

Every month, we host a variety of free events and workshops. These sessions are designed to support your wellbeing, whether you are looking to unwind, pick up a new skill, or meet new people.

Here are some of our popular courses:

- Let's Get Cooking
- Basic DIY
- Shop Smarter
- Financial Wellbeing
- Relaxing Art
- Mindful Movements
- Grow Your Own
- Let's Get Digital

Our Social Wellbeing Officer, Caroline, explains: "Our calendar is designed to reduce social isolation, build relationships, boost self-confidence, and give attendees a chance to learn or try something new. We aim to be holistic and focus on individuals and families, creating a safe environment where everyone feels like they belong."

All courses are free and change every month, so keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates. Contact our team to book your place on - hello@compassionacts.uk



4500 visits to one of our 4 Warm Spaces, thanks to Sefton CVS funding.



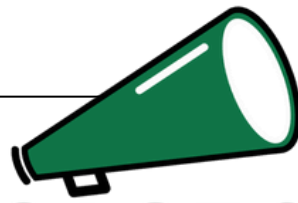
We hosted an average of 6 social wellbeing courses per month.



70 families benefitted from one of our free Family Spaces.



A total of 1123 people through the doors of our Community Hub.



LOCAL VOICES

Local Voices is a campaign group for the local community to have their say and to make our voices heard during this challenging time.

The cost of living crisis is forcing us to make difficult choices, for instance whether to pay into our pension pot or pay the rent, or, whether to put food on the table or put the heating on. We are hearing the most extreme examples across our community such as families not putting the heating on until their children's lips have turned blue!

We decided enough is enough! And so, Local Voices was born. A passionate group determined to be the voice of change for our community. We are **real people** with **real stories**.

LOOKING AHEAD

We don't have the attitude of sitting back and simply reflecting on previous achievements. There is always more to do. Our last Strategic Framework, 'Going Upstream,' focused on preventing poverty.

We're now developing a new Strategy for 2025 to adapt to post-COVID changes and the rising cost of living, affecting more people than ever. We welcome your ideas, suggestions, and complaints to help us better serve our communities.

Email us at feedback@compassionacts.uk

Ways you can get involved:

- Become a Community Champion Volunteer and bring your time and skills to the various campaigning activities.
- Become a Campaign Partner. Your organisation can help us to promote Local Voices and host Community Conversations.
- Share your story about how the cost of living is impacting you or join one of our Community Conversations.
- Donate to our efforts.



Gill Green

Learning, Impact & Evaluation Advisor

"As a Christian I start with learning from Jesus Christ that people matter equally, are equally loved by God, and that justice in society matters deeply – a theme that runs throughout the Bible."

Archbishop Justin Welby



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Local food drive.



30,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS

This is equivalent to the hours of 16 full-time members of staff working 37.5 hours per week and would cost us £360,000 in wages. For a charity this is unrealistic, but thanks to our dedicated volunteers we are able to run all 20 of our current projects and can help even more people.

Compassion Acts could not operate without each and every one of our volunteers, so thank you!

A CHAT WITH OUR WARM SPACE VOLUNTEER - MARGARET

I'm Margaret, and every Wednesday, I volunteer at Compassion Acts Warm Space. My role includes setting up, chatting with visitors, serving tea and coffee, and connecting them with other helpful services. My family and I moved to Southport from Bolton, and volunteering felt like the perfect way to get to know our new community.

I also volunteer every Thursday at Formby's Welcome Space at the Gild Hall, helping wherever I'm needed. My husband comes with me, though he's not volunteering; he just enjoys the welcoming atmosphere. It's a lovely routine for us. Compassion Acts has changed my life. It's a wonderful way to meet people and truly make a difference.



AWARD WINNERS FROM OUR RECENT VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION EVENT

Want to join our team?
We'd love to have you!
Find out more information on our website or scan the QR code to see our current volunteer opportunities.



OUR SUPPORTERS

In 2023 we received **68 tonnes** of food donations which is equivalent to the weight of the Statue of Liberty. Our donors and fundraisers also collectively raised **£150,000** for Compassion Acts. We rely solely on the generosity of our donors to fund our projects and ensure we can provide support to those in need.

What could your donation do?

- £5** could pay for a bag of laundry tablets for a family.
- £10** could subsidise a social wellbeing workshop.
- £15** could pay for one hour of welfare benefits advice.
- £20** could pay for one counselling session.
- £25** could pay for one Foodbank parcel for someone in crisis.



SOME OF OUR GENEROUS DONORS



WAYS TO SUPPORT US

Want to get involved? Here are some different ways you can support our charity.

GIVEASYOULIVE.COM

Give as you Live is an easy way to donate funds to Compassion Acts - make direct donations, create fundraising pages and share our message online.

FUNDRAISE FOR US

Run, walk, dance or bake in aid of Compassion Acts. Have fun whilst raising money for us. Get in touch with our fundraising team who can help you with ideas and resources.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Join our team of volunteers. Whether you can volunteer regularly or only have a few hours to spare, we'd love to have you. We always have opportunities open.

CAMPAIGN WITH US


Join our Local Voices campaign group and stand with us to make change in our local community. We want to hear your personal stories, opinions and ideas.

FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS

Keep up to date with charity news and upcoming events on our Facebook page. Plus, you can raise awareness and help us reach a wider audience by sharing our posts.

DONATE FOOD

We are always grateful for any and all food to help stock our food projects. You can always find an up to date shopping list on our Facebook page.



• Tinned fruit
• Tinned meat
• Crackers
• Confectionery
• Jam
• Custard/rice pudding
• Coffee
• Longlife juice/milk
• Toiletries e.g. shampoo, conditioner, toilet roll etc.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Do you work for, or own, a business that believes in our mission to end poverty in Southport, and want to work alongside a local charity to make a change? If so, then we'd love to hear from you!

Each week Compassion Acts is in contact with over 250 people from our local community. We work to help those who are most in need and act as a lifeline for people in crisis.

If you want to find out more about how we can work together get in touch and we can discuss mutually beneficial projects.

1. I'D LIKE TO MAKE A ONE TIME GIFT

My amount

I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to Compassion Acts

-OR- please debit my: Visa Mastercard

Card number:

Name on card: Expiry: /

-OR- scan to donate:



2. PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR DETAILS

Title: First name: Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Email: Mobile:

3. GIFT AID

giftaid it

Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below.

I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past four years to Compassion Acts.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Date:

We require address details to enable a claim to be made.

4. LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

We will continue to contact you by post with information about our work, fundraising activities and ways to get involved. If you are happy to receive this information by email or phone, please provide your details.

Email:

Phone:

To change your communication preferences at any time, please call us on 01704 264505 (between 10am and 3pm) or email hello@compassionacts.uk.

5. GIFT IN WILLS

I would like more information about leaving a gift in my will.

Data Protection Compassion Acts will use the personal information that you provide in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Your details will be kept safe and secure, only used by us, or those who work for us, and will not be shared, sold or rented to third parties for marketing purposes. We may use information and data you provide for analysis, research or screening purposes in order to help us understand our supporters so we can save resources and deliver the best possible service.

**PLEASE RETURN TO: COMPASSION ACTS
197A SUSSEX ROAD, PR8 6DG**

**VISIT COMPASSIONACTS.UK/DONATE
OR CALL 01704264505** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 3pm)

Thank you for your generosity. Your donation will be used to fund our essential projects.

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1172948)

COMPASSION ACTS

