



# The Well, Wolverhampton



**Location**  
Wolverhampton

**Founded**  
2006

**Legal structure**  
Charity

**Description of activity**  
Foodbank, delivering food parcels across Wolverhampton

**Key assets**  
Two vans, rented warehouse space

**Staff and volunteers**  
One staff member and 60 to 75 volunteers

## Overview

The Well is a small Christian charity in Wolverhampton which operates as a foodbank. It is located to the north of the city centre but serves communities across the city. Since it was created in 2006, the foodbank has delivered food parcels directly to recipients. It has grown over time and currently provides food parcels to 25 households each day, four days per week. The charity is largely operated by volunteers, although there is one paid member of staff. Governance is provided by five directors and its activities are supported by between 60 and 70 volunteers able to give varying amounts of their time.

Owing to the model the foodbank operates on, whereby food parcels are delivered directly to recipients, the key assets that the charity owns are the vans used to make deliveries. At present there are two vans owned outright, although this has varied over time as vans have depreciated or been damaged, and ultimately replaced. These vans are integral to the operation of the foodbank; they are used to collect donations from across the city and then to deliver food parcels to recipients.

## What difference community ownership makes

The use of foodbanks across the country has risen considerably over the past decade and The Well, which was set up in 2006, has seen demand for their services grow exponentially during this time. Food parcel recipients are referred to The Well from a range of organisations across the city. These include statutory and voluntary organisations that support people in a variety of situations. When it began it had 12 organisations referring recipients but this now



stands at 130-150. This demonstrates the expansion of The Well since its creation and it currently supports over 9,500 individuals per year. Some referral agencies will regularly refer recipients, for example Wolverhampton Homes refers five families each day, whereas other referral agencies might refer only one recipient per year. Recipients receive a parcel that supports them for three days. Parcels are provided to recipients up to five times in a six month period, although there are exceptions to this when the household is experiencing particularly difficult circumstances.

A unique aspect of The Well is that it delivers parcels directly to those in need rather than asking recipients to travel to the foodbank to collect food parcels. It sees this as integral to being able to support hard to reach individuals, for example those who are isolated, have mobility issues, or cannot afford to travel to a food bank. This does however place significant reliance on The Well having appropriate vehicles to help the foodbank operate effectively.

## Financial health

The health of the specific assets owned by the charity – the two vans – are considered good. However, owing to expected depreciation in the value of the vans over the next three years this is expected to worsen. The assets help to support the revenue of the charity and the maintenance of them is largely predictable and manageable for the organisation.

For the wider organisation, its health is also considered to be good. It has been consistently able to attract donations to help support its activities and, where necessary, draw on grant funding. It does have very limited reserves but considers itself adaptive in the face of financial challenges and has a track record in overcoming problems as they arise. For example, when the vans have been unavailable it has relied on private vehicles to collect donations and help deliver food parcels.

## Three key factors that have affected its development and financial health:

### 1. Ability to draw on key skilled individuals and organisations

The Well was set up by Caroline and Gary Price in 2006, with the support of the Pastor of their local church. From the outset Caroline and Gary have driven forward the organisation and been instrumental in expanding it to its current size. Over the years they have been able to draw on support from certain individuals with expertise to help deliver discrete tasks. For example, one of their original trustees was a lawyer and was able to undertake the various legal tasks involved in creating a new charity. Other trustees have extensive experience in working with vulnerable people within the city, which has proved invaluable in creating links with various referral organisations.

The founders were also able to draw on the experiences of other food projects at the time, in particular the Renewal Church in Solihull, which operated the Helping Hands project. Being able to draw on their experience was instrumental in determining the model that The Well adopted (specifically delivering food parcels as opposed to operating a drop-in centre). It joined the Trussell Trust at the start of the project for three years which gave them the support needed to establish effective back office systems (it was the 30th organisation to do so). This provided a strong basis from which to start – many of the systems it uses to operate the foodbank were derived from these two sources.

### 2. Donations

The primary source of income for the charity is from donations, be it regular donors or one-off donations from individuals and organisations. In its latest accounts (2017/18), the charity received £43,887 in donations over a 12 month period, with its total income that financial year being £56,657. This indicates the substantial value that donations have to their ability to operate. These contributions can be small amounts (e.g. under £50) but have also ranged to more sizable donations in the £1000's. Supporters have also engaged in a wide variety of sponsored events in order to help raise funds for the charity.

The Well has also recently introduced its '500 Club', which is a campaign to secure regular, small donations from 500 supporters. The campaign is very simple, the requirement to join the club is agreeing to commit to donating £10 each month. By creating a target of members the charity is able to build towards a regular income for the charity that is vital as it moves forward. The charity describes its value



succinctly on its webpage: “it is a simple way of providing us with a regular amount of income which helps to underpin our vital service and allows us to plan for expansion.”

3. Volunteer base

The charity has been successful in establishing a strong volunteer base that allows it to regularly provide food parcels to those in need in Wolverhampton. Originally established by only two individuals in 2006, the charity has expanded substantially since then and now draws on between 60-75 volunteers who give their time to support the charity’s aims. The volunteers bring a range of skills and deliver a range of roles that support the charity. This includes collecting donations (including from supermarkets), office administration, managing the finances, undertaking speaking engagements to raise the charity’s profile, packing food parcels, delivering these to recipients, assisting with social media and the charity’s website. The breadth of these tasks demonstrates the extensive time and resource needed to run such an operation, and the significant value volunteers therefore contribute.

Future direction

The charity anticipates that it will likely expand its operations in the coming years. This is dependent on the on-going demand for foodbanks to continue. If this is the case, it anticipates needing to secure a permanent building (it leases its current warehouse) that will give it more stability, lower its costs, and enable it to store larger amounts of stock.

A key future direction is to expand the number of vans it owns in order to increase the numbers of deliveries it can make and the amount of food donations it can collect. It also anticipates that it is likely to expand the types of products it gives to recipients. It is in the process of starting to provide some frozen food to recipients but also expects that there may become a time when it is also distributing larger, non-food items, such as furniture. However, all of these future directions hang on the charity’s ability to raise sufficient funds. It anticipates continuing to rely on donations but will also seek appropriate grant funding where necessary.

Financial information

The following table provides an overview of The Well’s income, expenditure and assets for the year ending 31st March 2018.

Table with 2 columns: Category and Amount. Rows include Income (£56,797), Expenditure (£71,107), Difference between income and expenditure (-£14,310), Surplus/deficit on ordinary activities before taxation (-£11,438), Annual income from grant or subsidy (£8,116), Fixed assets (£3,300), Current assets (Debtors; cash at bank and in hand) (£0), Creditors: amounts falling due within one year (-£16,943), Total (£3,300), and Net assets (£2,125).

