

# FEEDING BIRKENHEAD: ON A MISSION TO ELIMINATE HUNGER



A FEEDING BRITAIN PILOT PROJECT

ESTABLISHED IN 2014



## ABOUT US

Feeding Birkenhead is a coalition of churches, food banks, community groups, and other organisations working together to eliminate hunger in Birkenhead. It was established by Frank Field MP in 2014.

Here we explain the sheer range of activities that Feeding Birkenhead has undertaken and is developing. This loosely organised but highly effective coalition of local voluntary bodies operates so that:

- Families on low incomes who struggle to afford food are immediately helped.
- These families can permanently prevent themselves from being engulfed again in hunger
- At the same time Feeding Birkenhead campaigns for its local successes to be spread across the nation as quickly as possible so that all families similarly placed are helped
- The results of its campaigns are developed in the national work that Feeding Britain undertakes in eliminating hunger as we know it today in our country

Feeding Birkenhead's programme centres on three main projects— schools holiday meals & activities, school breakfast clubs, and Food Bank Plus, each of which is now being extended across the country by Feeding Britain, the national charity to which we belong.

## WHAT WE DO

### School holiday meals & activities

Feeding Birkenhead has established a project to provide free meals and activities for children during school holidays. Over the past three years, community groups in Beechwood, Central and North Birkenhead, Prenton, Rock Ferry, and Tranmere have provided this service for a total of 2,000 children. Most of those children receive free school meals during term time and would have been hungry in the absence of the project. Much of the food supplied by the project is sourced from local supermarkets' surplus stocks which, while they are still of good quality, would otherwise be wasted. Fun activities offered by the project include arts, crafts, cooking, games, and sports.

Feeding Britain has successfully campaigned for the Government to begin funding a national programme of free meals and activities for children during school holidays, based in part on Feeding Birkenhead's project.

## School breakfast clubs

Having found that up to a quarter of children in some parts of the town arrive to school hungry each morning, Feeding Birkenhead is helping local schools to set up and maintain breakfast clubs. The breakfast products are supplied by a charity called His Church. Feeding Birkenhead distributed the equivalent of 156,000 breakfasts to schools in March 2017 alone. In November 2017, Feeding Birkenhead supplied 20 schools and community projects with enough breakfasts to feed 1,400 children every weekday. Most recently, in April 2018, 32,000 servings of cereal and 85 breakfast packs were distributed. Donations from the public enable Feeding Birkenhead to fund the distribution to schools of fruit juice, fruit snacks, cereal, porridge, muesli, jams and spreads.



## Food Bank Plus

Feeding Birkenhead has commissioned a joint project, 'Food Bank Plus', between Wirral Foodbank and Involve Northwest, to prevent people from experiencing prolonged periods of hunger. The project is delivered by a trained benefits advisor who is on hand to resolve people's crises during their first visit to the food bank. Over the past 3 years almost 1,000 people have received help from Food Bank Plus. Half of those have had their crises resolved there and then, meaning they no longer had to visit the food bank.



Feeding Birkenhead has also brokered an agreement between Wirral Foodbank and npower for the delivery of one of the country's first Fuel Banks. The Fuel Bank offers two-week credit vouchers for gas and electricity to people on prepayment meters who would otherwise be unable to afford the energy they require to cook the contents of their food parcel. Over the past three years, more than 20,000 people have been helped by this project.



# WHAT'S NEXT

## Hot Food for the Homeless

Feeding Birkenhead is working with Wirral Council, Wirral Ways to Recovery and YMCA Wirral, to feed and support people who are homeless. Vouchers will shortly be available to be distributed to the homeless, entitling them to hot meals at Nightingale's Café; and 52 Thermos flasks donated by Tesco have been distributed to the homeless, enabling them to receive sachets of pasta, or soup, from Feeding Birkenhead projects to consume when they are hungry.



Accompanying the hot meals at Nightingale's will be intensive, one-to-one support from Wirral Ways to Recovery, which aims to help incredibly vulnerable people in complex situations. The initiative is expected to be fully rolled out soon. This two-pronged attack aims to fend off destitution in Birkenhead, whilst helping people in dire circumstances access hot food as well as the close support they need to rebuild their lives. Alongside this, Feeding Birkenhead has successfully campaigned to get the Ministry of Defence to divert its army surplus ration packs to the homeless.

## Citizens' Supermarket

Feeding Birkenhead is setting up a Citizens' Supermarket in Birkenhead Town Centre to enable local families on low incomes to buy their weekly shopping at a heavily discounted price. Alongside this, the Citizens' Supermarket will provide advice and advocacy on benefits, looking for work, debt, budgeting, and cooking, that will build those families' resilience against hunger. All of the food will be sourced from food manufacturers' surplus stocks, thereby preventing it from going to waste.

# HOW WE HAVE CHANGED LOCAL POLICY

## Free School Meal Registration

Feeding Birkenhead has successfully campaigned for the local authority to use its Housing Benefit data automatically to register all eligible children for free school meals. This policy led to 600 more children being signed up for those meals, which



triggered an additional £725,000 of previously unclaimed Pupil Premium funding towards their schooling. All Feeding Birkenhead projects and campaigns are linked into Feeding Britain so that, in this instance, other local authorities can follow in the automatic registration of children eligible for free school meals and thereby Pupil Premium funding.



## Cooking Facilities

Feeding Birkenhead has successfully encouraged the local authority to include the provision of basic cooking facilities within the licensing criteria for private landlords seeking accreditation.

## Early Opportunity on Council Tax

Feeding Birkenhead has successfully campaigned for the local authority to take a more proactive approach in offering vulnerable residents an early opportunity to settle their Council Tax debts before they spiral out of control.

# HOW WE HAVE CHANGED NATIONAL POLICY

## Energy Prices

Feeding Birkenhead demonstrated how families on low incomes who use prepayment meters are asked to pay disproportionately large energy costs, as well as a series of one-off charges, which restrict their ability to afford food. Following our campaign, Ofgem implemented a price cap on prepayment meters – saving the average household up to £90 per year for the next three years – and abolished almost all one-off charges, to help level the playing field across the energy market.

## Tax Credits and Child Benefit

Evidence from Feeding Birkenhead revealed how the transition between different types of tax credit claim was triggering a period of months without money for some families, during which they were at risk of being hungry. On the back of this evidence, HMRC began piloting a new programme to enable the conversion of single tax credit claims to joint claims over the telephone. In 2017, 55,000 claims across the country were successfully converted in this way, with the new payment processed in eight days, rather than the eight weeks it would have taken under the previous system.

Further evidence from Feeding Birkenhead demonstrated how delays in the processing of Child Benefit could also cause financial hardship among families on low incomes. A second trial programme has been set up by HMRC to counter this problem, by digitally processing new claims where the parents do not include a birth certificate. Many thousands of claims so far have been processed in this way, when they would otherwise have been rejected and required a further submission. The loss of birth certificates under the previous system, and the delays this caused, had resulted in some families having to use food banks.

## Benefit Sanctions

Feeding Birkenhead produced evidence showing how, in some cases, sanctions are used against particularly vulnerable people whose behaviour should not have warranted a loss of benefit – their bus may have turned up late, or they had to take care of a close relative who had fallen ill, for example, which meant they could not make it to a Jobcentre Plus appointment.

The Government accepted the recommendation made by Feeding Britain, on the back of this evidence, for a Yellow Card warning system to protect this group of people from being wrongly sanctioned. During an initial trial period in parts of Scotland, over 500 people received such protection. Feeding Britain is now encouraging the Government to extend the system across the rest of the United Kingdom, beginning in Birkenhead.

## Reformed Welfare Contract

Feeding Birkenhead has partnered with Birkenhead Jobcentre Plus to help people on low incomes make their limited resources stretch further. Once they have signed up to the duties they need to fulfil while claiming benefit, people making a new claim are informed of the support they can receive towards their utility costs, as well as helpful Freephone numbers to call if they are struggling to pay their bills. Over the past two years, more than 1,000 people have received this information. The Government has confirmed that it will extend Feeding Birkenhead's Reformed Welfare Contract to every Jobcentre Plus across the United Kingdom.



# WHO WE WORK WITH

Feeding Birkenhead consists of dozens of organisations and individuals working hard to eliminate hunger in the town. Among them are schools, GPs, supermarkets, the Beechwood Community Trust, Charing Cross and Tranmere Methodist Churches, Citizens Advice Wirral, FareShare, Magenta Living, St Vincent de Paul, Wirral's Homeless Angels, and:

## The St. James Centre

North Birkenhead Development Trust is a charity which runs a multi-purpose community centre, The St James Centre in North Birkenhead.



The Centre runs a year-round community programme, including after school clubs

for children, adult exercise classes, a youth club, courses for young people around mental health and well being, cooking courses for families, crisis support, food bank, debt and benefits advice, support for homeless people, a weekly social supermarket called People's Pantry, and lots more.

344 Laird Street, Birkenhead

0151 670 9974

Eve Barrett – [eve.barrett@corganisers.org.uk](mailto:eve.barrett@corganisers.org.uk)

## Hope for the Hungry

Hope for the Hungry aim to feed the homeless and hungry of the Wirral using surplus food, alongside reducing the amount of foods being sent to landfill.

Bidston Rise Community House, 29-31 Clover Drive, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 7DZ

Stefanie Parson - [hopeforthehungry@outlook.com](mailto:hopeforthehungry@outlook.com)

## Gautby Road Play & Community Centre

Gautby Road Play & Community Centre offer open access play schemes for children and are part of the Feeding Birkenhead Holiday Hunger programming.



69 Gautby Rd, Birkenhead CH41 7DS

0151 652 5645

## Wirral Foodbank

Wirral Foodbank provides three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them in crisis situations. They act as part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.



Unit 14 Wirral Business Centre, Dock Road, Birkenhead, CH41 1JW

0151 638 7090

Richard Roberts – [manager@wirralfoodbank.org.uk](mailto:manager@wirralfoodbank.org.uk)

## Wirral Play Council

Wirral Play Council is a charitable organisation that provides a year-round service to groups working with children. Every summer, Wirral Play Council organises free open-access playschemes for children aged 6-13. It also runs an Additional Needs Group, consisting of evening sessions and a Saturday morning session, each week, as well as daily throughout most school holidays, for children with varying additional needs.



1 Berner St, Birkenhead, CH41 4JY

0151 650 0030

Peter Johnstone – [wpc@wirralplaycouncil.org.uk](mailto:wpc@wirralplaycouncil.org.uk)

## Involve Northwest

Involve Northwest is a non-profit organisation, based in Birkenhead, offering a wide range of services to help improve the quality of life for local individuals and families. The organisation provides services such as employment support, welfare and benefits advice and domestic abuse support, with a key objective of empowering and enabling local people through access to clear, concise information and guidance through a high-quality service.



334 New Chester Road, Rock Ferry, Wirral, CH42 1LE

0151 644 1100

Eddie Gowns – [eddie@involvenorthwest.org.uk](mailto:eddie@involvenorthwest.org.uk)



## The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone

Wirral Youth Zone, named by young people as 'The Hive', is a purpose-built facility for young people aged 8-19, and up to 25 for those with disabilities. Young people from across Wirral have access to fantastic facilities at a cost of £5 for an annual membership and 50p per visit. The Youth Zone provides a safe environment where young people can come and enjoy themselves and enables young people to raise their aspirations and confidence to create a happier and healthier generation.



Bright Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4EA

0151 705 8000

Adam Mellor – [adam.mellor@thehiveyouthzone.org](mailto:adam.mellor@thehiveyouthzone.org)

## Neo Community

Neo Community is a charity set up to fight against food waste and food poverty in the community. Through growing links with other community groups and Lidl, Neo began to offer surplus food to community members, through the first of Neo's community food markets. Neo prides itself on being unique with its approach by going out and listening to what it is the community desires, which enables the creation of services that can be moulded around local needs and challenges.



Beaconsfield Community House, Rock Ferry, Wirral, CH42 3YN

07447 913888

Ema Wilkes – [ema@neocommunity.org.uk](mailto:ema@neocommunity.org.uk)

**Feeding Birkenhead's activities are co-ordinated by Andrew Forsey in Frank Field MP's House of Commons office, on 0207 219 6636 or [andrew.forsey@parliament.uk](mailto:andrew.forsey@parliament.uk)**

# HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

## Feeding Birkenhead Volunteer sign up form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Employed: Y / N

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to help (please circle all that apply):

Volunteer with an organisation

Help set up a Project

Give Specialist Support

Volunteer at the Citizens Supermarket

Volunteer as a Business or Company

Please specify below which area of Birkenhead, or which organisation you would like to volunteer with. If you are volunteering as a Business or Company, or if you have a project or special skill you would like to provide to Feeding Birkenhead:

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Send form by post to: Rosie Oglesby, Feeding Britain, 55 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3QL

Or fill it in and submit online at: <https://www.feedingbritain.org/forms/volunteer-birkenhead>

# Programme of Giving

Your generous donations make our work possible

We believe that everyone should have access to good quality nutritious food- and with your help we can make this a reality. Feeding Birkenhead is a local pilot of Feeding Britain, with all funds collected by Feeding Britain and distributed directly to Feeding Birkenhead to support their crucial work.

You can make a donation to Feeding Birkenhead in the following ways:

## Donate online

When you donate online you can make a one time secure payment using your credit or debit card. You can also choose to set up a regular monthly payment.

To make a donation online please go to:

[www.feedingbritain.org/appeal/donate-to-feeding-birkenhead](http://www.feedingbritain.org/appeal/donate-to-feeding-birkenhead)

## Send a cheque

If you would prefer to donate by cheque please make it out to "Feeding Britain" and specify in your letter that you would like it to go to Feeding Birkenhead. If there is a particular project that you would like your gift to support please do let us know. Your cheque can be mailed to:

55 Tufton street  
SW1P 3QL  
London

## Give us a call

If you require any assistance in making your donation you can also contact Feeding Britain at: 0 207 340 6073

Feeding Britain is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in England & Wales, 1163986, and is a Scottish charity, SC048470, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT!**



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