

The West Lothian foodbank hosts various strands of work in the battle to alleviate and eliminate poverty. But before describing these we really should take some time to fully understand the meaning of poverty, in the context of West Lothian.

When asked to think of poverty , many will automatically think of those unfortunate souls, around the world ,who may be homeless , stateless, starving or all of these.

Yet in Britain we have “relative poverty” the inability of income to cover the local basic costs of living (food , rent , utilities , clothing) .

According to the Rowntree foundation , in the UK...

- 14.2 million people are in poverty, including 4.5 million children, 8.4 million working-age adults; and 1.4 million pensioners. The new measure has demonstrated that more children and working-age adults are in poverty, and somewhat fewer pensioners than we'd thought previously.
- Nearly half of people locked in poverty (6.9 million) are disabled themselves or live in a family with someone who is.
- One in eight people in the UK is in persistent poverty: they are in poverty now and have been in poverty in at least two of the previous three years. Persistent poverty is highest for those in workless families and disabled families.
- Around 8.2 million people are more than 25% below the poverty line, and 2.5 million people are less than 10% above it.

Before the Covid epidemic the Daily Record reported that over 8,000 children in West Lothian live in households affected by poverty.

Please take a moment to reflect on this data.

West Lothian Food bank (WLFB)

The WLFB does not want to exist !

We do not want Poverty and Social Injustice to exist and we actively work to

- Alleviate and eliminate poverty
- Alleviate and eliminate the symptoms of poverty

Our strands of work are as follows : -

- **Foodbank** -This activity is what most people would associate WLFB with . West Lothian Social Services , Citizens Advice and other organisations refer clients to us

who are in absolute financial crisis and who may also be homeless or in danger . The referring organisations ensure the clients obtain all their rightful benefits and provide them with foodbank vouchers .Then we will deliver appropriate food to cover their immediate needs , which may include Vegan , Vegetarian , Halal or “kettle” (for persons temporarily rehomed without kitchen facilities). This all runs on pure charitable donation of funds and food to operate. We satisfy > 6.6 K Vouchers every year

- **Charity Shop** – Located at **Whitburn Cross** it is a hub of this community, operating in an area close to social deprivation. Our shop takes charitable donations of clothes , books , CD’s and household items and then sells. Often items are simply given to deserving cases . During the pandemic we have also operated “on line” allowing safe purchase and pick up. Please think of donating items to be sold in this shop. Items can be picked up by the SVDP and brought to Whitburn.
- **Christians Against Poverty aka CAP** – WLFB recently became the first non church to host a branch of this organisation . This branch is housed in the WLFB offices. Clients are provided counselling and professional help to lift them out of debt and are befriended by volunteers and are encouraged to make a fresh start. 2 parishioners are befrienders
- **KickStart** – At any time there are people , working in WLFB , who are on this programme and carrying out work funded by this programme’s funds. These are 6 month placements , aimed at those aged 16 -24 on universal credit and who are in danger of long term unemployment.
- **The Food network** – WLFB operates the network as a partner with West Lothian Council for their anti poverty strategy. Food is distributed to outlets and other charities to provide inexpensive food to those who are classified as in “relative poverty”. A very high percentage are “working poor”. We take in donated food or food that would otherwise be wasted and distribute it.
- **New Projects** – We have 2 new projects in the pipeline. Firstly ,we have received grants and donations of money , materials and expertise in order to create a community garden that will organically provide fresh fruit and vegetables to the community . Soon we will open a new community hub close to an area of social deprivation , in Armadale. This will contain another charity shop , furniture re use store and community facilities.

“x” suddenly and unfortunately became a single mother to her children. She is a University lecturer but has to work part time in order to be able to take care of her children. Her total income of salary and benefits still don’t cover her ongoing living expenses of mortgage , transport , utilitiesfood. If she has a sudden , unexpected bill then she struggles even more. If her children want to go to a friend’s party then it is difficult to pay for a gift . If they need new sports gear then it is difficult . There is constant stress and life is a struggle

Asking for help is not easy

This is what “ relative poverty “ means . It may be temporary , for “x” , but it is very real.

Thankyou for your time. If you want to know more please find us online

<https://westlothian.foodbank.org.uk/>

On this website you can also find ways that you can help by donating money and goods or volunteering . You can also donate food at the rear of the church and if you want to donate goods to the charity shop you can ring them directly or seek help from any SVDP member in order to transport your donations.

BelowJerry O’Dwyer , Foodbank Trustee , receives a donation to WLFB from the Bathgate Catenians .

