



HARTLEPOOL BABY BANK – CHAIR'S REPORT FOR THE AGM

Here at Hartlepool Baby Bank we like to do things a little differently and indeed a little more informally than at other charities, so I don't want to make a big deal of my role as Chair, other than to tell you. I have am one of the founding members of the Baby Bank and that being Chair is a source of great pride for me.

We started in February 2019, 3 mums with an idea that we wanted to help local families and what came next was a great adventure. We set some aims and I am proud that almost 6 years later they have not changed.

The aims of **Hartlepool Baby Bank** still remain

- To provide resources for families across Hartlepool with under 2's or who are pregnant. (With support to parents with older children as appropriate)
- To provide parent to parent, advice and support on feeding
- To provide a lending library of equipment
- To signpost families to help with housing, benefits or other community agencies as appropriate.
- To provide a safe space for parents to meet other parents and access community based support.

We have continued to welcome families to Crown Buildings to collect their items, choose their own clothes and to chatter to other parents.

We have run three sessions a week Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays across the year, and we have been able to continue to deliver maternity packs and big items and provide an emergency out of hours service to those in need.

We have continued to attract grants and large donations amongst others

TrustHouse £5400 a year for 3 years – second year of this funding received

National Lottery, £19,000 a year for 3 years – second year of this funding received

John Armitage Charitable Trust --£15,000 for 3 years – first year funding received.

Save the Children £1200 as part of our membership with the Baby Bank Alliance.

We had received £24,061.75 cost of Living Grant from the National Lottery in November 2023 so this money was spent across Nov 23- End of March 2024. A further £2196.25 was received retrospectively in January which covered July-October's period.

£500 from TK Maxx

£500 from M I Dickson a local pie company

£500 from Sainsburys

£500 from Stagecoach for safety gates which had been outstanding for almost a year was received.

£2729.89 from Ward Hadley Solicitors

One regular donor continued to support us each month a total of £1200 for the year.

As a team we have seen significant changes this year, we have had to say goodbye to some long term volunteers and these have been difficult to replace. We are actively recruiting now to try to address the shortfall. We have been very lucky to have two strong volunteers start but it's not enough week on week.

We have recruited 2 members of staff who work 18 hours and 12 hours which gives some cover for illness/holidays but not as much as we hoped due to the volunteer shortfall.

"Staffing" has definitely been our biggest issue this year.

We have continued to work hard to achieve our dream of becoming a village where families can support and help each other, as we knew that social isolation is rife amongst families with young children and so we have encouraged our users to become volunteers where possible.

Supporting a variety of ethnicities and cultures has always been part of our service but this has been made harder due to local immigration tensions and riots throughout Hartlepool and the North East, with people fearing to leave their house to visit the Baby Bank. We have continued to offer support, even placing calls to the police on the behalf of families and arranging for more support from other agencies.

Our highlight of the year was receiving our Kings Award for Voluntary Service, presented to us by the Lord Lieutenant and two of her deputies at the Baby Bank. A mix of staff, trustees, volunteers and families were present and hear a speech about how hard we have all worked to provide locally.

We have continued our media presence this year, featuring in a piece for the Royal Foundation for the Prince and Princess of Wales, marketing campaigns for both Save the Children and the Baby Bank Alliance, campaigning live on Sky News for

lower formula prices and other pieces advocating for baby banks. We continue to campaign for a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves, we continue to challenge the government to give more to those that need it.

And we have continued to grow our relationship within the Voluntary and Community Sector and we are now entrenched in numerous projects and committees within Hartlepool including working with the borough council to shape their Family Hubs project delivery.

We have seen the benefit of partnership working with other local Baby Banks such as Stockton Baby Bank and Love, Amelia, which has allowed us to share stock and better support our families. We also work with other local charities to help them support families and continue to accept referrals from numerous professional bodies.

As we look towards the start of the next year which will soon be upon us, I am pleased with our financial position. We have given more support than ever, to a larger number of families and responded well to their growing needs. We have provided free sanitary items and toiletry packs to 1000s of families which although stretching us at times has provided a large amount of well being to families. We continue to attract grants to sure up our position and enable us to look to the future.

I remain grateful to the families of Hartlepool who have come forward to support us with their time, their items and their generosity. Without them we couldn't do what we do.

We know at Hartlepool Baby Bank that it takes a village to raise a child and as chair I'd like to say a personal thank you to everyone who has joined our village.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. de Bruijn'.

Emilie de Bruijn

Chair