



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 3 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.

Although faces have changed along the way, and we’ve moved house a couple of times, we still do what we set out to do, which was deliver an in person session where families can come to collect resources, or be signposted to appropriate agencies.

During the opening hours of the baby bank, our team are on hand to give advice on feeding, signposting and matching the items to families in need.

This past year has been tricky and thanks to COVID-19 we’ve had to adapt and keep responding to restrictions. We started by becoming a registered CIO on the 24th September and I think the fact we achieved this in the middle of a global pandemic is proof of our determination and drive to move forward.

During lockdowns we ran our Pop up Baby Bank which was a huge success – seeing on average 30 families a week using this session, no matter the weather.

We delivered to 100s of isolating and vulnerable families during lockdowns. Averaging 200 a month.

We appeared on the BBC twice during COVID which allowed us to really promote the work we do and our Gofundme has so far raised more than 11,000.

We opened Crown Buildings in May 2021 where we are now welcoming and helping on average of 80-100 families a week.

Since Sept 20 to end of Oct 21 we have helped 305 new families, on top of existing case load and numerous social visitors.

Another dream of ours at the Baby Bank is to create a village where families can support and help each other, we know that social isolation is rife amongst families with young children and we encourage our users to become volunteers where possible.

We had to completely start again due to COVID-19 but it gives me great pleasure now to have a strong and reliable team of 9 and to have just taken our first work placement student from Catcote Academy. We could not do what we do without our volunteers and they are truly the beating heart of Hartlepool Baby Bank.

Another thing we have improved immensely this year is our relationship and standing inside the Voluntary and Community Sector and we are now entrenched in numerous projects and committees within Hartlepool. We have seen a great improvement in our relationship with our statutory colleagues too.

As we look towards the start of our third year which will soon be upon us, I am pleased with our strong financial position, our full stock cupboards and our good professional standing, but most of all I am grateful to the families of Hartlepool who have supported us with items.

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 'ED Bruijn', written in a cursive style.

Emilie de Bruijn

Chair