



## Students fighting poverty

### Partner responsible: Furness Academy Trust

When we were first introduced to the ICAP project, there were many different ideas on what the focus of the project should be. We were all divided into groups of our choice and from here we found and highlighted the issues that we thought were significant and stood out to us in our town. Different groups decided to focus on different subjects such as healthy eating and obesity, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, and homelessness and poverty. Each group conducted their own research and looked at data and statistics online from the news and previous surveys. The time for this research was initially taken from some of our lessons where we worked on the project as a class, however some groups such as my own stayed at lunchtimes to do extra research, complete presentations, plan our next steps, etc.

The first task to be completed was to set goals. We came up with three main goals that we wanted to achieve and we began to work towards them. Our goals were:

- To help with the problem of poverty in local area, and play a part in decreasing the percentages of homelessness and poverty in Barrow-in-Furness – through fundraising to support charities
- To raise money and collect food donations for those in need
- To make an overall difference to the families who face poverty daily and struggle to provide for themselves and their children

Our team consisted of four people- Lydia Hope-Hill, Ella Drury, Kirah Newton and Kieran Bushel. To reach our goals, our group picked a team leader (which was me, Ella Drury). After deciding upon a team leader, roles were then assigned to different people to match their strengths, however in the end these roles were not completely consistent. Here are the different roles that were assigned:

-Research, Creating documentation (PowerPoints, graphs, etc), planning

-Research, creating documentation, sending and receiving emails, planning possible events and next steps, editing

-Research, creating recipe cards, sending and receiving emails, planning possible events and next steps

-Research, editing, sending and receiving emails, creating documentation

What were our next steps? Next, once we had all of the research that we needed to begin working on the project, we planned possible events that we could host and participate in for the future such as sponsored walks/runs, selling items to raise money such as school artwork, a charity car wash, disco nights, etc. Some of our ideas were very adventurous so we had to rule them out, however we did have one idea that stood out the most to us- holding a whole school food collection. We knew that this would be possible to do and we also knew that the students and staff at our school are very generous and love to help when it comes to food donations and raising money



for charity. There were a few steps that we had to take before we could begin to collect food. One of these steps was emailing the food bank to ask questions about how many families they see yearly, how often they have empty shelves, what kinds of foods that they need, which companies provide for the food bank and the circumstances in which families may need to use the foodbank. We received a reply from a manager at the foodbank, on the 22d November 2018, and the answers to our questions were eye opening. Below, there are some of the questions asked by different groups and their answers:

‘How many families (on average) use the foodbank each year?’

“We have seen an increase each year, last year was the biggest increase so far and was 31%. The number of people we saw was 9,586”

‘Do you see poverty as a big issue in Barrow?’

“Poverty is a big issue in Barrow. We have 3 of the highest wards in the country with child food poverty with central, Hindpool and Ormsgill having every 1 in 2 children being in child food poverty”

‘Under what circumstances is the foodbank necessary for families?’

“Benefit delays and changes, delayed wages, Debt, Homelessness, low income and unexpected bills” “This year at the beginning of October, we had a lot of empty shelves and only 6 ton in the warehouse, of which 3 ton was baked beans and 500g was non-food items. We put out an appeal and the community responded generously and the harvest festivals started coming in. We are always in need of extra food before the school holidays as this is one of our busy times.”

After asking many more questions and becoming more informed, we now had a deeper understanding of the foodbank and could create a PowerPoint to further inform the school upon the collection that we would be holding. In the PowerPoint, we gave background information on the foodbank and asked for the foods that was said were needed in the email; what was brought in did not disappoint our requests.

Thanks to all of the donations brought in by our students, we managed to collect enough food to provide over 550 meals for the families in need in our area

Contacting other retail brands-

While we were doing our bit for the community, we decided that it would be interesting to see what the other companies and retail brands in our area do to help those in need, we contacted several stores/companies such as Tesco, B&M, Asda, Primark, the foodbank, and Aldi. Here was the email sent out on the 14th November 2018:



*Hello!*

*I am a local student at Furness Academy in the area of Barrow-in-Furness and I have enquiries about what your company does to support the less fortunate people and those who live in poverty in our community, and if you don't do anything to help, would you be prepared to?*

*We would like this information for an ICAP Innovation Project. We have to present this to a council in Greece and Slovenia built up of people with a higher authority and we would love to have a statement from you and some information about what you do to help the poverty problem in our community. Please respond ASAP.*

*Yours sincerely, a student from Furness Academy.*

We received replies from three of the companies that we reached out to; these were from Tesco, The Foodbank and Aldi. We found that both Tesco and Aldi (and obviously the foodbank) donated food and/ or money to the community.

We found that Tesco:

- has a collection point in each of their supermarkets for people to drop off food
- multiply each kilogram of food left in the collection point by £1.75 and give the foodbank 20% cash of the total value to use in the foodbank

(these are also the same in ASDA stores)

- have 'Community Champions' who organise charity events and fundraisers

We found that Aldi:

- donate meals to charity partners around the country (over 1,000,000 meals have been donated since their partnership began with 'FoodCloud', equating to a saving of almost €1.5 million for the charity partners involved)

- have donated over 510 tones of food to 260 local charities

- has increased its surplus food donations by 60%, helping to support an even greater number of charity groups in Ireland

We found that the Foodbank:

- provide emergency food and support to people living in poverty
- run holiday clubs that provide food (breakfast & lunch), as well as a variety of fun activities and learning opportunities for families. These include dance, arts and crafts, football and circus workshops
- work with money advice specialists to enable people who go to the foodbank to access specialist help (this includes help managing or avoiding debt, help setting a



budget and making sure that people are accessing any finance available through grants or benefits

-runs courses to help benefit families, for example, cooking courses on a budget

It was great to find out what other people were doing to help those in need, and after one of our teachers made us aware that volunteering at the foodbank was an option, we contacted the foodbank. Unfortunately, we were too young to volunteer, however next year this will be an option as we will be old enough.

#### Data collection and input

On January 24th, a survey was created on homelessness and poverty and handed out to all staff and some students at the school. The survey contained questions that explored stigmas and stereotypes, how others perceive those who are homeless, how stereotypes effect those who are less fortunate, what others do to help those who live in poverty (donate clothes, take part in charity events, volunteer at shelters, give money, etc.), etc. We have not yet had chance to input the results, however that is one of our next steps. To input our data from the Foodbank collection, a spreadsheet was used. We found that this was the best possible application to store this data as it was easy to use and keep track of numbers, and it was also easy to convert the information into a pie chart

What are our next steps? We feel that we have come very far with this project, however to continue, we need some goals for the future. Here are our next steps:

- Create recipe cards for the foodbank to integrate with the food that we collected- this is to get the most out of the food and to help create meals that everyone will enjoy
- Visit the foodbank for volunteering work
- Collect more food to donate
- Input the data from our questionnaires and turn it into visuals (graphs, pie charts, etc.)
- Look at other issues in our area