

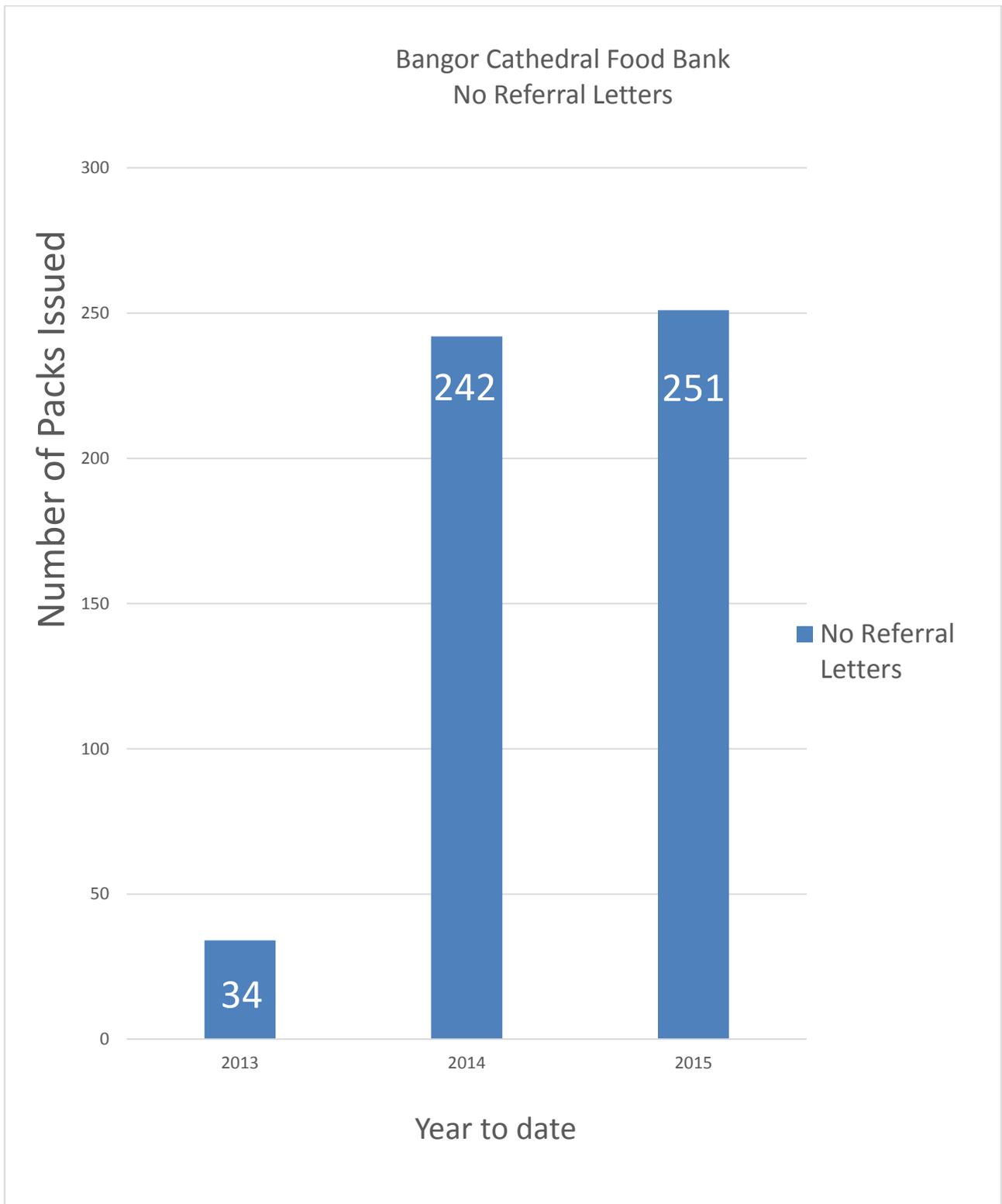
All- Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty: Follow up evidence from the Cathedral Food Bank, Bangor, Gwynedd.

General

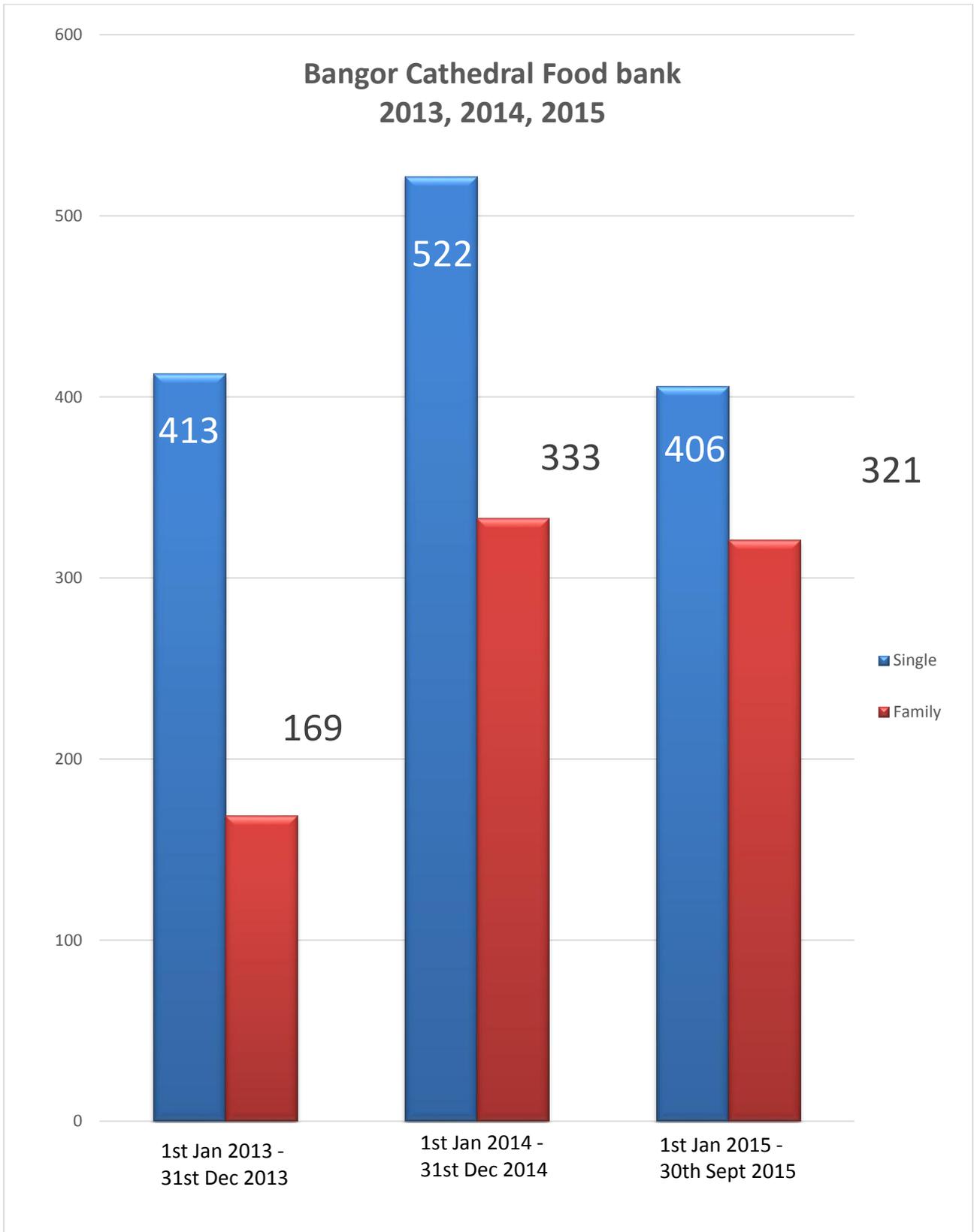
a. How has your work progressed and developed since you gave evidence to the inquiry?

- The Food Bank continues in the same premises, totally staffed by volunteers for all functions and supported by donations of food and money from the local community. Although the storage facilities are better they are still limited. We are unable to store fresh fruit and vegetables.
- We continue to advise people who come without referral letters to approach one of the helpful organisations on our list and give guidance in choosing the agency where appropriate.
- The referral system did not cope with the increased demands of all clients in emergency situations. In an attempt to encourage more of the emergency clients to seek help, a return voucher is issued after explanation of its function, to cover any delay in gaining an appointment with a referring agency. It is anticipated that the agency will take any further steps required. The emergency pack issued by volunteers provides the recipient with food for two days, scaled for a single person or a family (according to size).
- The session procedure was restructured so that there is greater opportunity for longer discussion. These latter two points were also an attempt to control the management of increasing numbers of clients without referral letters. Further restructuring will occur shortly to give still greater opportunity for individual conversations with clients.
- The need of some clients for more than three packs in a year has persisted, and although the crisis nature of the service is explained, packs are given in excess of that number if needed.
- CAIS(drugs and alcohol abuse, support) staff attended sessions for several months, assisting those who approached them. However they were not always used and the service was discontinued by them.
- The number of referrers has increased from 23 to 32 and all General Practitioners within our area have been informed and provided with referral letters. The new referrers include two family agencies (Integrated Family Support Services –IFSS and Flying Start), two mental health agencies (Community Mental Health Team –CMHT and Hergest – a psychiatric unit), two generalist agencies (Avalon Advice and Communities First, Maesgeirchen), two rural medical practices and the Employment Service of CAIS, now listed separately, who are contracted to deliver part of the Government’s work programme. Of these Flying Start and one medical practice were added this year. Abbey Road (mental health, counselling, voluntary services) and Gwynedd Council (homelessness) have resumed referring clients.

- Chart to show the number of people who have come without referral letters since January, 2013 to September 30th, 2015.



- Chart to show the number of single and family clients from January 2013 to September 2015. The increasing demand for food packs is particularly marked for families.



b. What barriers are there to your work?

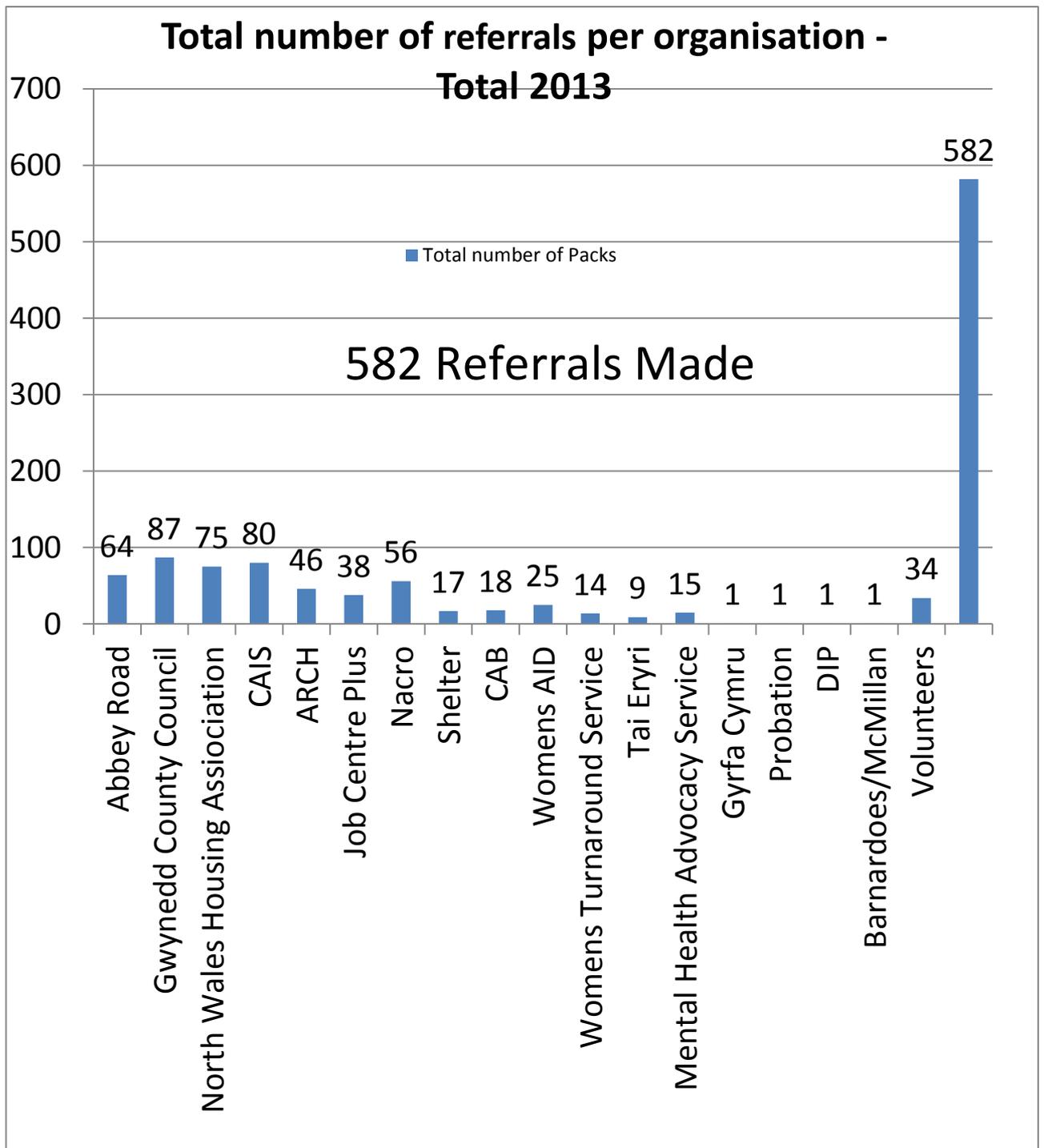
- Communication with our referring organisations can be complex. Effective one to one communication with them, especially for the more 'chaotic' recipients is not possible for a purely voluntary organisation where everyone generously gives of their time, but which is necessarily limited.
- Our local referring organisations are very busy so they cannot usually spare staff for food bank sessions. Some do escort their clients to the session where this is needed.
- As an independent food bank we have very poor access to large scale sources of food. Crest Co-operative(FareShare North Wales) foods no longer exists. The nearest FareShare is in Liverpool, which is impractical. The Trussell Trust is dominant in the supermarkets (Tesco and Asda) where their 'food drop' baskets state that the local food bank is being supported, but in this case is the nearest Trussell Trust food bank at Caernarfon, not the food bank at Bangor Cathedral. However Morrisons has allowed a profitable one day food and cash collection and Waitrose has included the Cathedral Food Bank in their green token scheme.
- We are unable to use the Food Cloud App operated by Tesco, the Trussell Trust and FareShare as we are too distant from the nearest FareShare centre.
- We are dependent upon donations from individuals, churches, chapels, the staff of some local businesses, school festivals etc, and the financial donations of individuals. Our monthly expenditure on basic foods is large and growing. Shopping is done by volunteers.
- We wish to continue as an independent, volunteer run food bank as we do not believe that food banks should be institutionalised or permanent. However volunteers are currently operating at their full capacity. This is both a strength and weakness as we concentrate our efforts on what can be effectively achieved.

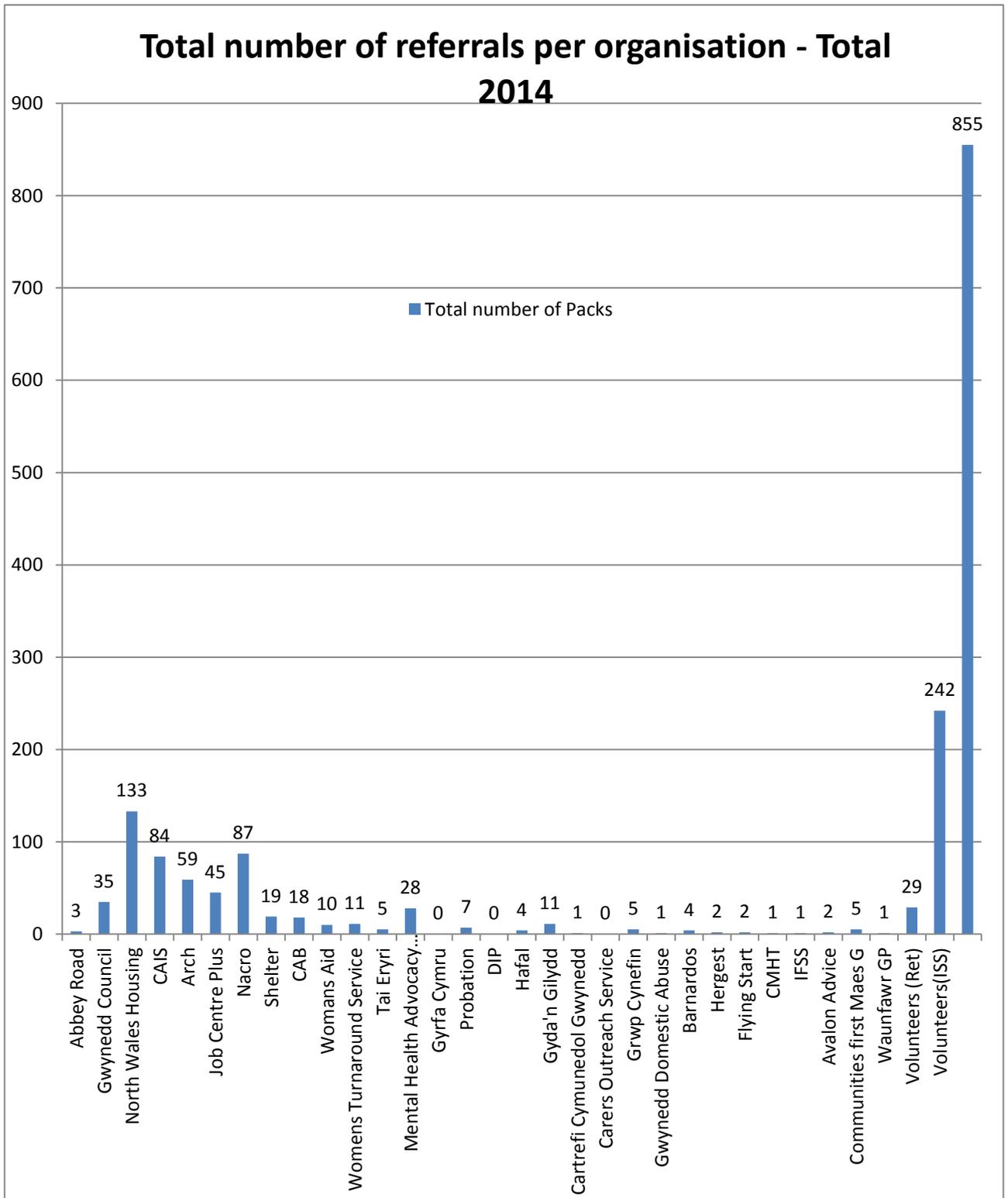
c. What are the trends in demand for your services and how have they changed since you gave evidence to the inquiry?

Number of Emergency packs given by volunteers in each quarter, 2014 and 2015.

<u>2014</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Single Returns</u>		<u>Family</u>	<u>Family Returns</u>	
Jan-Mar	18	N/A		5	N/A	
Apr-Jun	40	N/A		8	N/A	
Jul-Sep	63	N/A		30	N/A	
Oct-Dec	58	N/A		20	N/A	
<u>2015</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Single Returns</u>	<u>All single</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Family Returns</u>	<u>All Family</u>
Jan-Mar	28	12	40	29	14	43
Apr-Jun	37	7	44	20	7	27
Jul-Sep	42	14	56	27	11	38

- The demand for emergency packs for both single and family recipients increased sharply in the second half of 2014. The new system resulted in an initial reduction followed by an increase to former levels in the last three months for single recipients. The total number of emergency packs for families has increased.
- The JobCentrePlus stopped referring clients directly and only occasionally signpost them to the Food Bank. This appears to result in other organisations referral figures increasing and an increase in emergency applications for food. Only clients referred by CAIS Employment Services have a written statement that they have been sanctioned. The lack of written evidence from the JobCentrePlus causes difficulties for volunteers when clients present as emergencies.
- Volunteers were the most frequent referrers of all recipients, with NACRO almost as frequent for families and NWAH referring about half the volunteer numbers of single recipients. All these referrers are relatively easy to access for people in need.
- The following pages show the trends in referring by all organisations from January 2013 to the end of September 2015.

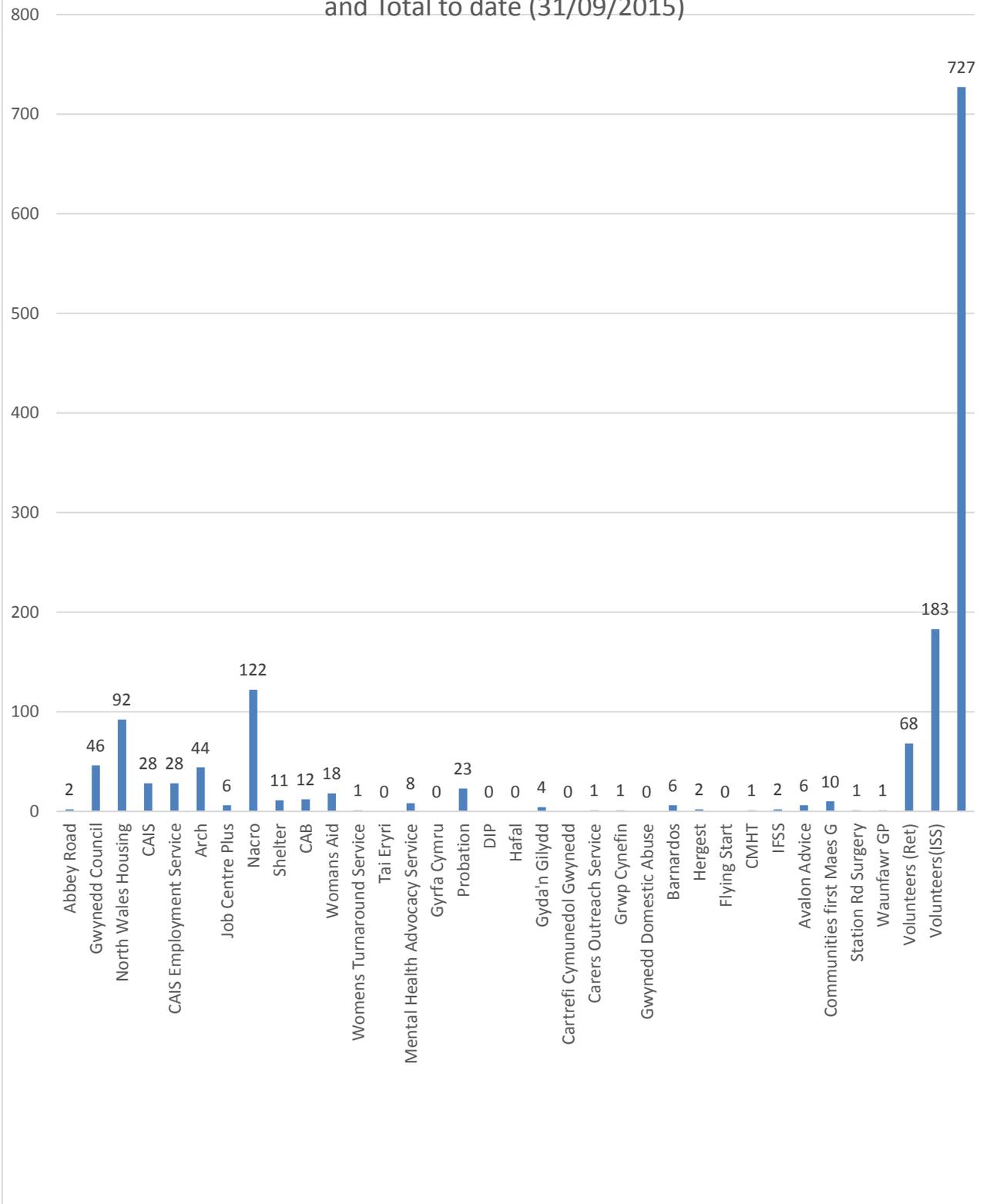




Total Referrals Made 855

Key: Volunteers (Ret) – second authorised emergency pack: Volunteers (ISS)- 1st issue emergency pack.

Bangor Cathedral Food Bank Use 2015
 Issues made per referral organisation,
 and Total to date (31/09/2015)



727 Referrals made to end September 2015

Numbers of people referred to the Cathedral Food Bank, Bangor, April – September, 2015.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Families</u>	<u>Total</u>
Apr	37	40	77
May	32	25	57
Jun	38	32	70
Jul	41	35	76
Aug	42	27	69
<u>Sep</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>98</u>
Total	247	200	447

Relieving and preventing hunger

d. What are the key problems facing people who are hungry, in respect to their living costs such as rent, food, water, communications, transport, gas and electricity?

- The food bank does not collect this data.
- Occasionally clients tell us that they have no fuel to cook food. Some of these have access to hot water, so are given a pack suitable for those circumstances. Fewer have no access to any form of heating food, so are given self heating packs.
- Anecdotally we know that insufficient cash from whichever source is a major problem for our recipients. We are pleased with the progress made in obtaining fairer payment systems for poorer people but want to avoid any potential possibilities leading to official 'ring fencing' of resources, e.g. benefits into different predetermined categories, possibly food cards etc. This would remove the possibility of flexible spending according to individual need and would be stigmatising. We consider that most people use their resources wisely according to their financial demands, well illustrated by those who return at a later stage to thank us for help in recovering from a difficult time. Ring fencing benefits will institutionalise food banks and any other expenditure control devices, so hindering recovery.

e. If a food assistance provider, are you collecting and publishing data on the reasons people are coming to you for food assistance?

- We do not collect data relating to this but accept the confidentiality which lies between client and referring agency.
- Referred clients sometimes volunteer information. Conversations with non-referred clients elicit anecdotal evidence, with the occurrence of benefit sanctions and delays frequently and increasingly mentioned.

- People citing delay in initial benefit claims include some who are just out of prison who have inadequate finances to cover the waiting period.
- For some, difficulties arise when there is a switch between benefits, e.g. ESA to JSA.
- Other difficulties mentioned include the effects of the bedroom tax, the impact of large bills following a sudden loss of income, redundancy, bereavement, illness in the family, long term mental illness, domestic abuse.
- Some clients live chaotic life styles.
- Some clients appear to lurch from crisis to crisis.

k. Have you been able to provide advice and advocacy alongside an emergency food parcel or meal along the lines of a 'Food Bank Plus' model outlined by the inquiry, and what impact has this had on the numbers of people who are hungry?

- We continue to discuss sign posting to an appropriate helping agency with emergency clients and attempt to nudge them in the direction of seeking help through our return voucher scheme. We cannot assess the effect that this has had on the numbers but note that only just over one third of emergency referrals are made using a return voucher. Overall the number of people seeking help continues to rise.

m. Is there any sign of 'giving fatigue' when it comes to food donations, and how might this be resolved? Are charitable food supplies able to keep up with demand?

- The number of food donations from the staff of nearby businesses has increased slightly perhaps because of greater awareness of our presence, but we are aware that donor fatigue might occur. We feed all those suffering from food poverty who are referred to us as well as 'chaotic' people. We are aware that some people disapprove of this latter group and that this could potentially have an adverse effect on some donations.
- We have never received sufficient food donations to meet demand. We have peaks at major festival times with smaller donations in between.
- We have always relied on donations of money which are spent only on food. These are of varying amounts, some occasional and some regular. We are fortunate to have a small number of donors who are very generous.
- We currently spend approximately £800 a month on additional food. This sum increased after the Crest Co-operative(FareShareWales) ceased.

n. Do you forecast that the numbers of hungry people will increase or decrease in the year ahead?

- We think that the numbers will increase as benefit changes occur, particularly in relation to Tax Credit changes, already mentioned in casual conversation with dread by people on low wages.

- School meals currently cost £2.20 per day in Gwynedd and are expected to rise to £2.30 in 2016. This will impose a greater strain on families.

Measuring hunger.

o. Are we any closer to knowing how many people in this country are hungry?

- Within Wales there are 157 food banks which are split into three forms, i.e. Independent, Trussell Trust and Trussell Trust Satellite Distribution Centres (Dave Beck, 2016, Bangor University).

Rescuing good quality surplus food.

q. How might we ensure more good quality food that becomes surplus in the food retail and manufacturing sectors can be rescued for human consumption?

- Encourage retailers and manufacturers to order efficiently and to accept a variety of shapes and sizes in fruit and vegetables, perhaps priced accordingly.
- We have ethical objections to giving left-over food to the poor. However we do want to reduce food waste. This could be helped by abolishing 'best before' dates and 'sell by' dates, and only stamping 'use by' dates on high risk foods.
- Removing barriers to retailers for selling surplus foods which are not past their 'use by' date cheaply within their shops, so making it possible for people to choose cheaper foods in those sections. This is already done in local supermarkets for foods on the last day of their 'sell by' date.

s. Should we follow France's lead by legislating to ban food waste in the retail sector?

- Food bank volunteers have slightly varying opinions about this, ranging from
 - a) we should follow France, with no qualification,
 - b) legislation supported in principle, but with a concern that food prices might rise as supermarkets claw back their costs. Some prestigious recommendation for supermarkets making arrangements to avoid waste, to suit local circumstances, might be preferable,
 - c) a change of culture and mindset, so that waste becomes unacceptable resulting in a more responsible management of the whole supply and demand chain.

t. Do you believe the UK would benefit from a law similar to the 'Good Samaritan' law in the United States, which protects charitable food assistance providers and donors from legal action?

- We do not believe that such a law, or any version of it, should be enacted in the UK. It negates the right of everyone to receive food which is fit for consumption and the often hard won laws which ensure it. We carefully check that all the foods that we give are in date to ensure this.

Child Hunger

u. How big an issue has this become - both during term time and the school holidays - and how should this be ameliorated?

- It seems likely from existing referral figures that, by the end of 2015, the number of emergency referrals for families will have increased about ten times since 2013.
- We have already noted an increase in the number of family packs we provide. These are sized in accordance with the number of children and adults in the family. The largest family packs given in recent months have been for families including 7 children. Clearly children are in families suffering from hunger.
- Detailed records show that almost all referrers have issued family vouchers as well as single ones.
- Gwynedd Council is required to make financial savings and has asked the residents to assist them in choosing which services to cut. The implications for each service are clearly explained (<https://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/en/Council/Have-your-say/Gwynedd-Challenge.aspx>). Among the options considered are free breakfasts and the school meal service.
- The Council currently provides free breakfasts for about 2,000 primary school children, of whom 300 are eligible for free school meals, from 8am onwards. The proposals include: 1) protecting the whole scheme, 2) cancelling the scheme or 3) reducing the hours of employment for the staff and/or charging a fee for an element of the time. This would mean that the scheme would be reduced from one hour to half an hour each day, or that the parents would pay a fee for the supervisory element.
- The Council currently provides hot meals for 5,500 primary school children, including free meals for 1,000 of them. The proposals include: 1) protecting the whole scheme, 2) Continuing to provide a hot meal and increase the price of primary school meals from the proposed September 2016 price of £2.30 a day to £3.00 a day, 3) ending the provision of hot meals in primary schools, providing only a packed lunch for those entitled to free school meals.
- Clearly if either of these schemes receive any cuts children's nutrition will suffer. Those who are not eligible for free school meals at present, but who currently just manage with the aid of the schemes would also be badly affected. It would also be easier to stigmatise the children receiving packed lunches if hot meals were withdrawn.
- Many families find it difficult or impossible to manage the existing school meal price, particularly if there is more than one child. A possible increase to £3.00 per day would place more in that position.
- We consider that some provision, perhaps through holiday play schemes or increased benefits for holiday periods, should be made for children who are eligible for free school meals.

- There is a case to be made for subsidising the school meals service from central government funds so that no child is denied the benefit of hot food.

Recommendations

v. What new commitments should we seek from the Government, and from which departments, to relieve and prevent hunger in this country?

- Improve incomes so that the minimum wage is the 'Living Wage' recommended by the Living Wage Foundation (£7.85 for 2015) rather than the Low Pay Unit (£7.20 for 2016). The Living Wage Foundation states that this amount will probably need raising to take account of tax credit and other changes announced in the Budget.
- Amend the proposed changes to Tax Credits so that the burden of national financial control does not fall on the lower paid workers. Rather use effective progressive taxation for higher income levels and effective taxation of company transactions within this country for this purpose.
- Impose restrictions on the use of zero hours contracts so that they cannot be used long term, except for specific purposes.
- Abolish the bedroom tax.
- Take further action to process benefit claims and changes more quickly.
- Stop the use of benefit sanctions for minor or unavoidable infringements of the job seekers agreement.
- Restore financial assistance for people in need so that they can deal with emergency needs.

Submitted on behalf of the Cathedral Food Bank, Bangor.