

Sharing Our Story...



Farnworth Baptist Church, Bolton

Farnworth is situated three miles south west of Bolton. The church building is situated just outside the town centre and was extended and refurbished in 2012. Since then, it has become a hub of the local community and numbers attending on a Sunday morning have grown steadily to an average of around 75 people each Sunday. The local area is one of the top 5% of most deprived areas of the UK and the church has developed its ministry to those in need, as minister John Bradbury explains...

Our coffee shop provides valuable work experience for those who are unemployed and our Work Club has supported a considerable number of people to find and secure employment. We have partnered with the Trussell Trust to operate a local foodbank, which feeds over 4000 people each year.

Having seen the needs of those coming to the Foodbank, one of our volunteers had the idea to establish a welfare and benefits advice service. This service was launched in 2014 and now employs two part-time members of staff with funding from Bolton Council and the Nat West Skills and Opportunities Fund. Since January 2017, the Jeremiah Advice and Guidance Service has worked with over 500 people to provide assistance with debt management, budgeting and help to apply for benefits. This has resulted in claimants receiving over £851,000 per year which helps to lift their families out of poverty and brings wider benefits to the local economy.

Kevin, one of our service users, said, "I cannot thank you enough for the support. I never knew what it was like to have any savings to fall back on, but thanks to your help with my ESA and PIP claims, I now have my life back on track."

The team are not resting on their laurels. They are aware that other areas of the country do not have such support and so are looking to develop a Community Franchise Model of operation so that other churches can help their own communities too.



For your consideration, reflection and prayers:

In what ways could your church be a blessing to its local community? What does 'making a difference' look like in your context?

How is your church viewed by those in the local community, outside of the church congregation? How could you enhance the reputation of the church locally?