



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK (Affiliated to the Trussell Trust)

Newsletter Number One: October 2018

Hello to everyone and welcome to our first Newsletter! I'm hoping this will reach all our Volunteers, all those Agencies who play a vital part in our work, and all the Churches who do likewise, plus other great supporters of our organisation. We're hugely grateful for your time and support and I hope you'll find this Newsletter a useful innovation - when Iain Wight asked me recently to take over as Publicity Coordinator this was the first thing I thought of.

Lots of you reading this will have no idea who I am so I'll start with a brief introduction. I'm John Rowe and I joined the Wednesday team as a Volunteer soon after the Food Bank opened in 2012 and I've been trying to help Stuart Watson with the sorting and storage of donations ever since, as well as helping out with the many other functions of a morning team. I spent a year also working with the Monday team (before my back was giving out under the strain!) and some of you will also know me from my rather loud support on Saturdays in the Main Stand at Rochdale FC!

Looking back six years to when I first joined the Food Bank (can it really be that long?) I wasn't actually around for the opening so I can only imagine the heroic efforts Iain, Margaret and their supporters must have made to get the place up and running.

At the time I guess most of us thought and certainly hoped that the need for the Bank would be only temporary – unfortunately that has proved to be anything but the case.

Six years on we remain saddened at the terrible poverty afflicting so many people in our town, but also amazed at the extraordinary generosity of townspeople with their time, their donations and often their money too.

I'm intending to produce a Newsletter every two to three months, and while the statistical information we can provide is always interesting and important, I want (as I hope you will see) to leaven this with as many "personal" and news stories as I can. So thanks to all of you reading this, and please let me know of any suggestions or requests you have for future editions. Back in January and till then a Happy Christmas!



ME SORTING OUT SOME BREAKFAST CEREAL

NEWS FROM THE STORES

During September our Food Bank received donations of food totalling 5148 kilograms while we gave out 4938.2 kilograms to clients. Thus the amount of food we received was slightly greater than the amount we parted with. However Stuart's latest stock check showed that overall our food supplies had dropped by 1.42 tons, so the Harvest Festival season which is now upon us (and largely over by the time you read this) will have come at a perfect time. 342 vouchers were dealt with during September, which meant that 429 adults and 170 children in desperate need were helped. As always we have considerable stock of dried pasta, and tinned soup, vegetables and meat, but a continuing need for the other items on our picking lists.

DONATIONS KEEP COMING!

As you may have read on our website, three girls from Beech House School, Ellie, Amy and Becky, as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award, planned to raise £1000 for their chosen charity, our Food Bank.

In the event they have raised nearly £2000 which they have spent on much-needed supplies at Aldi's store.

Well done girls!



ELLIE, AMY AND BECKY HELPING AT THE STORES



IAIN AND MARGARET RECEIVE THEIR SCROLL FROM PETER RHODES

At the end of September Iain and Margaret were invited to a Freemasons Charity Giving Evening, at which 10 charities supported by the Masons were given a scroll honouring the partnership.

In addition, they received a generous donation of £250 from the Tudor Royal Arch Chapter of the Freemasons.

Mauser UK also raised and donated £500 to the Food Bank and Castleton Bowling Club raised £100 for us at a Ladies Pairs Day. Thanks to donations like these, and to those who donate on a monthly basis via the BT My Donate website, Mo Evenson assures me our finances are currently in very good order, which obviously enables us to buy in any stocks which run seriously low and to keep the fabric of the Food Bank in sound condition.

IN FOCUS 1.....OUR MONDAY TEAM

Volunteer Wally Rutter helpfully suggested that we should include in each edition a piece about one of our Teams. Many of us tend to know those we work with really well but know relatively little about other Volunteers and it seemed logical to start with the Monday Team. They number 19 Volunteers and have been led since the opening of the Food Bank by Cynthia Giles and her Deputy, Ann Hope. Cynthia told me they are a brilliantly cooperative group who mostly work in their own specialist areas but are always willing to be flexible when needed.



MEMBERS OF THE MONDAY TEAM HARD AT WORK

Two relatively new members have fitted in easily and quickly and one Volunteer, Denise, summed up the group by saying “There’s never a Monday when I don’t want to come in!”.

Although, as Cynthia put it, nearly all the team are “well into our retirement”, they honestly feel it is a privilege to help, and though clients may sometimes arrive clearly anguished or ashamed at their situation, a cup of tea and a friendly welcome quickly reassures them.

The team feel that “There but for the Grace of God might go any of us” – it only takes one thing to go disastrously wrong. They find that almost all of their clients are polite, hugely grateful and easy to deal with; when, very occasionally, a “difficult” client appears, I can say from personal observation that Cynthia, Ann and their team deal with them exceptionally calmly, bravely and firmly.

IN FOCUS 2.....OUR VOLUNTEERS

In each edition I’m hoping to pay tribute to one of our many dedicated Volunteers and who better to start with than Andrew Jackson! Andrew has been an enormously popular member of the Wednesday and Friday Teams since the Food Bank opened. It helps to have someone as tall and strong as Andrew to help at the back, but that’s certainly not the only reason for Andrew being so well liked.

He’s always cheerful, and always willing to turn his hand to any jobs that need doing, from taking bags out to clients to sorting the tins upstairs. Away from the Food Bank, Andrew spends a lot of his time caring for his 93-year-old mother and attends Kirkholt Christian Centre. He often leads the prayer at the Wednesday morning meetings. He also enjoys going on walking holidays and playing bowls – not to mention being a regular in the back row of the Main Stand at Spotland supporting Rochdale FC. It’s people like Andrew who make the Food Bank such a success and such a good place to volunteer!



MR ANDREW JACKSON

IN FOCUS 3.....OUR SUPPORTERS

Again in each edition I intend to pay tribute to one of the many individuals and organisations who play a huge part in the work of the Rochdale Food Bank. This time I want to highlight the enormous generosity of Rachel and Patrick Jarrett, owners of the Laughing Loaf Bakers and Café situated on The Walk, close by the Food Bank.



RACHEL OUTSIDE THE LAUGHING LOAF WITH PART OF A RECENT DONATION

For some time now they have been donating enormous amounts of bread, rolls, pies, tarts and even delicious cakes for us to pass on to our clients.

Rachel said a major reason for their support for our Food Bank is their concern over the amount of food that is wasted these days – certainly a topical issue! Many, many thanks Rachel and Patrick from our grateful clients.

STOP PRESS: HARVEST NEWS

As we go to press huge quantities of food are being delivered to the Food Bank as Harvest collections from schools and churches are passed on to us. We are so grateful to all the organisations who contribute in this way at this time of year – the Harvest collections really form the backbone of our food stores and keep us going throughout the year – when we've dated and sorted them that is!

Thanks are also due to Wendy Fell who heads up our liaison with schools, and to our team of Drivers, led by Dave Hill assisted on this occasion by Peter Crompton, who go to a lot of trouble to make sure all the donations are picked up on time.

Given the way numbers of clients seem to be rapidly increasing at present, all that food will be needed!



MONDAY VOLUNTEERS SORT A HUGE INFLUX OF DONATIONS

AND FINALLY, A WORD FROM OUR LEADER – IAIN WIGHT

I'd just like to echo John's thanks to absolutely all of you who support our Food Bank in whatever capacity. Margaret and I have been constantly amazed and grateful at the willingness of so many people to help, to volunteer, to donate. We are one of the busiest Food Banks in the country – a sad fact in many ways but nonetheless I think what goes on here is a huge credit to the people of Rochdale. I hope you'll find this Newsletter a valuable innovation; our thanks go to John and to our IT whizz David Drake for putting it all together, and to Daleprint for producing the hard copies for Volunteers.