



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK (Affiliated to the Trussell Trust)

Newsletter Number Two: January 2019



From the Editor. Welcome to our second Newsletter and thanks to all of you who gave me really encouraging and helpful feedback following our first newsletter in November. Once again I'm including a range of information about our Foodbank's activities together with some more personal stuff about teams, volunteers and supporters – this seemed to be particularly appreciated last time.



It's been quite a three months, hasn't it!

When some volunteers first noticed tins sliding off the shelves in the picking area I thought it was my fault for overloading them. Then others noticed the forward tilt in the shelving and when we moved the shelves the gap between floorboards and skirting was quite extraordinary! Finally we learned that the whole floor in the middle section had to be replaced and since then volunteers have been working in – well let's just say somewhat cramped conditions!

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO OUR PICKING AREA?

As Iain Wight has repeatedly said, it's thanks to amazing efforts by everyone that the Foodbank has remained open throughout the repairs. During the same period the donations we received have been astonishing in quantity, via our Tesco collection, collections by Rotary, and huge donations through churches, schools and other organisations during the Harvest and pre-Christmas periods. Thanks to everyone who has helped with the collecting, dating, sorting and storing of all this food – a huge task which is still ongoing (only 240 more boxes to sort as I write!).

We also continue to experience rising demand for our services from clients, as you will see from the figures in this Newsletter. I found it interesting if depressing back in November to read an interim report on the United Kingdom by Philip Alston, the United Nations Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. He found that, despite our being the fifth largest economy in the world, the levels of child poverty are "not just a disgrace but a social calamity and an economic disaster." After six years of Rochdale Foodbank I think few of us would disagree with that statement. Sadly, with the exception of the Guardian and ITV News, the media largely ignored his report. Will we see a change in the situation or is our Foodbank here to stay? Leaving you with that question, I'll wish you all a Happy New Year!

NEWS FROM THE STORES

In October 2018 we received 8862 kilos of donations and gave out 7096 kilos, helping 393 clients (an increase of 192 over the same month in 2017), including 488 adults and 207 children. In November donations totalled 3692 kilos with 5055 being given out to 336 clients, including 427 adults and 175 children. In December donations rocketed to 9026 kilos with 5134 given out to 377 clients, including 471 adults and 252 children. This means that over the three month period we helped 1386 adults and 634 children, over two thousand clients in total!

At present our storage spaces, both at Fleece Street and at the Wheatsheaf, are pretty much full to bursting, but we expect that by midsummer most of this food will have gone out to hungry clients.

OTHER NEWS

As you may have read in the local press, our sister Foodbank opened in Smallbridge back in November. The centre, at Number 1 Wesley Street, is open from 10.30am until 12.00 Noon every Saturday, which makes it a great addition to our service. Thanks to Ruth Pringle and her team of enthusiastic volunteers for this brilliant project.



LIZ (LEFT): THE COOPERATIVE HERITAGE TRUST MANAGER AND HER COLLEAGUE CAT, OUTSIDE THE COOP MUSEUM ON TOAD LANE

During 2018 a joint venture between our Foodbank and the Cooperative Heritage Trust on Toad Lane enabled ten vulnerable men from the Falinge area to embark on an “Eat Well Spend Less” programme, designed to promote their skills in cooking and finance management. Led by the Heritage Trust’s Community Engagement Officer Cat Jessop, the project enabled a number of the men to gain a Food Handling and Hygiene qualification.

Following this success some of the group became involved in several community activities, such as helping to cook and serve meals to 40 Littleborough residents at the Hare Hill House Over-60s

Meet-Up Club and contributing to the monthly Family Meals venture at the Co-op Museum, helping to provide nourishing meals for parents and children in dire need during school holidays.

As a result of this project one of the men, originally homeless through no fault of his own, has now been appointed as a Museum Assistant at Rochdale Cooperative Museum, which has itself been nominated for the prestigious “Museums Change Lives” award, the work being described as “a shining example of community engagement”.

IN FOCUS 1.....OUR TUESDAY TEAM



KATE BURNS (LEFT) AND HER SISTER SANDRA GETTING READY FOR A BUSY DAY AHEAD

Sandra Wright went to the inaugural meeting of the Rochdale Foodbank and ever since has been leading the Tuesday team, ably assisted by Marjorie Davies and Glenys Crossley. The team comprises 4 men and 13 women, and all are flexible in where they work. The team generally alternate working in the picking area and working with clients at the front.

Sandra says they are a lovely, happy team who all get on well together, including the two recent recruits who have settled in nicely. They all work hard, are very caring in their approach to clients, but also enjoy a laugh while

they're working. Three of the team work in the office area, including Sandra's sister Kate Burns who, having (she says) been press-ganged in by her older sister, has become the team's computer whizz. Certainly when I dropped in the atmosphere was extremely positive and cheerful. Thanks Tuesdays!

IN FOCUS 2.....OUR VOLUNTEERS

In this edition we're paying tribute to one of our Foodbank's original Volunteers, Pam Paterson.

Pam used to be a volunteer helper in the Chaplaincy at Rochdale Infirmary where she really enjoyed meeting people. When this ended she says she felt at a bit of a loss; then the Vicar at her Church, St Andrew's C.E. Dearnley, mentioned volunteers were needed at the new Foodbank in town and she joined immediately.



PAM HAVING A WELL DESERVED BREAK FROM MAKING BREWS AND ENJOYING ONE HERSELF

Originally Pam was a member of the Monday and Friday teams, but when she began to have trouble with her back she moved to the Thursday team where, as well as meeting and talking with clients, she makes the drinks with which they are welcomed. Pam says she loves the opportunity to meet with a mixture of people who, for one reason or another, are having real difficulties.

She has found hearing their stories an eye-opener and often quite an emotional experience.

She also enjoys the social part of volunteering, relishing the happy atmosphere in the team. Above all she says it is wonderful to see clients who "come through the door with a sad face but leave with a happy face". Well done Pam – and let's hope you can continue to help for a long time yet!

IN FOCUS 3.....OUR DEBT ADVICE SERVICE



STEVE FIELD – ROCHDALE FOODBANK'S DEBT ADVICE SERVICE LEADER

Steve Field leads our Debt Advice Service which grew from conversations he had with Foodbank leader Iain Wight. Both thought we might be more pro-active with our clients, and if possible help them not to need to return to the Foodbank.

They were aware that many of our clients had problems with debt and that face-to-face advice for these difficulties was reducing with cuts to services and volunteer organisations.

A Trussell Trust initiative provided some funding, as did support from the Coop Local Community Fund. So in Autumn 2016 Steve and Iain began their training through CMA, starting taking clients in December that year. Now Foodbank Agencies and volunteer organisations often refer clients to them.

Steve says debt issues are multi-faceted, ranging from a single debt issue to chronic problems associated with years of rising debts to an increasing number of creditors. All of this occurs against a background of widespread availability of credit to those who may feel they desperately need it but who cannot afford it, and often people have little idea of the rate of interest they will eventually end up paying.

Starting by allowing clients to share their problems in a calm, confidential and non-judgemental setting, Steve and Iain can then advise them on possible strategies, identifying creditors, contacting and negotiating with them, offering budgeting advice and helping clients to reduce some aspects of their spending. It's often a long process!

Currently Steve and Iain have 10 active clients between them and overall have supported 25, but there is always a waiting list and another volunteer is waiting to train. Nevertheless, Steve feels that within their limited resources he and Iain have achieved some successes with those clients who are willing to stick with them and see it through. Enormous thanks to Steve and Iain for leading this hugely beneficial initiative – and let's hope Steve's beloved Huddersfield Town can find some similar success soon (with a new manager)!

AND FINALLY...

I hope you've enjoyed reading this latest Newsletter and found it of interest. We provide printed copies for all our Volunteers and members of our Board of Trustees, and send electronic copies to our Agencies, Churches and other supporters.

The next Newsletter will hopefully be in April – and who knows what's going to happen in the world between now and then!! Best wishes from John Rowe (Editor) and Dave Drake (IT Support).