



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK (Affiliated to the Trussell Trust)

Newsletter Number 3: April 2019



From the Editor. Welcome to the third of our quarterly Newsletters. Thanks for the continuing and encouraging feedback and I hope our volunteers, associated agencies and churches and other supporters of the foodbank will enjoy reading this one.

I ended the January Newsletter by saying who knew what might have happened in the world by the time this one was printed. Well, at the time I was mostly thinking of the political situation but of course major change has come much nearer to home. Iain and Margaret's decision to "retire" from leading our foodbank was a real shock to most of us, though we can all absolutely understand their reasons.

There have been plenty of well-deserved eulogies about Iain and Margaret and their remarkable achievement in establishing and leading the Rochdale Foodbank over more than six and a half years. The unveiling of the plaque in our home, the many cards, letters and words of appreciation given directly to them, and the articles in the Rochdale Observer and on Rochdale Online have said what needed to be said so I won't repeat it all here – just huge thanks Iain and Margaret! I've personally always been grateful for their kind and encouraging feedback.

Their departure has obviously led to significant changes in the leadership and operations of our foodbank and I've tried to reflect some of these later in this Newsletter. The fact that our service has continued (so far!) without a hiccup is a real credit to many of our volunteers who have taken on significant extra responsibilities, especially at a time when the number of clients coming to our door continues to increase. These organisational changes of course came on top of a fairly fraught time either side of Christmas when we all had to work in extremely challenging conditions. Everyone pulled together and it was simply extraordinary that we managed to keep the foodbank open as normal throughout the building repairs.

Recent figures indicate that, though Britain is the fifth richest country in the world, more than four million children, almost one in three of the population, are now living below the relative poverty line. There was an interesting exchange of letters in the Guardian recently where several correspondents voiced a concern I and some others at our foodbank have long felt: that our voluntary efforts may be providing a safety-blanket which helps hide the need for national action in tackling the causes of food poverty. It's why I believe the Trussell Trust's over-arching aim, to end food poverty and effectively put ourselves out of a job, is so right and so important. Have a Happy Easter – you've all earned it!

NEWS FROM THE STORES

In the last three months we have received donations totalling 10,632 kilogrammes and given out food and other goods totalling 16,890 kilogrammes. 1,423 adults have been provided with food during that time and 603 children, making a total of 2,026 clients we have helped. The March total of vouchers honoured was 369, an increase of 66 over the same month last year – so you can see how busy we have been! Nevertheless, thanks to the amazing generosity of the people of Rochdale our stores are still well filled, though



Members of the Friday Team demonstrate the new carrier bags

we are very short of rice pudding, pasta sauce, jam, fruit juice, tinned tomatoes, sugar and custard.

Since the departure of Stuart Watson as stores manager we have established a kind of men's collective to oversee the organisation of our stores. One member from each daily team is involved, and Martin Coupe, Bill Hardiker, Chris Wood, Ian Sandiford and I have been working together to get the 400 or so boxes of food over at the Wheatsheaf sorted and dated, much of it transferred to Fleece Street, and then to try to keep on top of further donations and ensure that the storage upstairs at Fleece Street is well organised and clear.

I am very grateful to those volunteers who worked extra shifts to sort the Wheatsheaf boxes and to our van driver Dave Hill; we also had welcome help from students from Kingsway School and Hopwood College. Sadly, we found that some of the food donated to us had passed its "Best-By" date by the time we sorted it and had therefore to be either rejected or put in the "Help Yourself" boxes at Fleece Street. Next year, to limit the degree to which this happens, we intend to organise sorting of Harvest donations as they happen in the Autumn, so that we are able to deal in January with all the pre-Christmas donations.

We have recently had some extremely generous donations. The Manchester Fareshare Depot wanted to donate some wrongly labelled but actually perfectly usable milk to the Trussell Trust network and at the time of writing we are awaiting delivery of no less than 320 litres of long-life milk! This is an item we constantly need so we are tremendously grateful to Fareshare.

Cutgate and Rooley Moor Co-ops wanted to make a practical demonstration of support to our foodbank and they have generously donated a large number of compostable plastic carrier bags. Since the welcome Government legislation to reduce the use of plastic bags our foodbank has been in need of supplies (we can use 1400 bags every month!) and so this donation will be most welcome and save us a considerable amount of money. We have also received donations of bags from Lovick's furniture store and from Iceland The Food Factory. Many thanks to all of them!

IN FOCUS 1.....OUR VOLUNTEERS



Linda gets ready for another morning's packing

Linda Armstrong joined the Rochdale Foodbank soon after its opening over six years ago; she met Margaret Wight at a stall in the town centre and has been a valuable member of the Friday team ever since though, like many of us, she didn't expect to be still working at the foodbank six years later. Linda works mainly in the middle section, doing the picking and packing, and says she really loves it and the volunteers she works with. She added that her Friday colleagues make a great team – she thinks you have to be a particular kind of person to do volunteering and that at

the foodbank they are all like-minded people. Linda is clearly willing to give up a great deal of her time to help others – as well as her foodbank stint, she has also volunteered for the WRVS at Rochdale Infirmary and helped with the Meals on Wheels service. Once again, it's great to be able to pay tribute to one of our brilliant team of volunteers – thanks Linda!

IN FOCUS 2.....OUR TRUSTEES

The Rochdale Foodbank Board of Trustees, of which Iain and Margaret Wight were Chair and Secretary respectively, are responsible for the oversight of all our work and is answerable to the Charity Commission and the Trussell Trust, both of which regularly inspect the foodbank. In the wake of Iain and Margaret's departure, "working" members of the Steering Group (ie those who are also volunteers) have, for the medium term at least, taken on a much more hands-on role.



Trustees prepare for a long agenda

Martin Coupe now chairs the Trustees (Steve Field chairs meetings of the Steering Group) and most importantly every week there is a designated Trustee who is the first reference point for major decisions and issues. The current "working" Trustees are Martin Coupe, Mo Evenson (Treasurer), Wendy Fell, Steve Field and Ian Sandiford. The other Trustees are the Reverend Mark Coleman, the Vicar of St Chad's Parish Church, the nearest church to the foodbank, the Reverend Richard Bradley, the Vicar of Bamford Chapel, Jenny Thompson from Bettaprint, the company which makes our tabards, and a new Trustee, Kathryn Ansley, formerly Lay Preacher at St Cuthbert's R.C. High School.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Ian Sandiford continues to be the link person with our churches, Wendy Fell liaises with schools and Susan Woosey is the main link with our associated agencies. Sue Cannell has taken over the important responsibility of coordinating the work of volunteers from Margaret Wight, Dave Drake continues to manage our excellent website and John Rowe is Publicity Coordinator and Newsletter Editor. Kate Burns and Susan Collison are responsible for vouchers and Bill Hardiker has been doing a tremendous job sorting out building issues. Responsibility for the stores is shared as described above.

So far these changes in our organisation seem to be working well. We are all unpaid volunteers, and great credit goes to everyone involved for the time they give up and in particular to all those who have taken on these new and additional responsibilities.

IN FOCUS 3.....OUR WEDNESDAY TEAM



Wednesday team members propping up the (tea) bar as usual.....

While our other daily teams have remarkably only ever had one leader, the Wednesday Team is unusual in having had four! Initially David Knight was leader for several years, then Mo Evenson and Jo Hill stepped in at various times as acting leaders, before Anne McKown took over around two years ago. There have also been quite a number of changes in personnel over the last six and a half years as some members have unfortunately had to step down, and two very sadly have died, while plenty of new additions to

the team have more than proved their worth. Anne says her current team of 19 volunteers are all excellent, very welcoming, considerate and caring in their dealings with clients, always putting them first. They are prepared to use their initiative, generally muck in with whatever is required and work really well together as a team. Anne, who originally became involved with the foodbank through delivering donations from her Church, St Vincent's in Norden, says she feels privileged and humbled to be the leader of a team which makes such a positive contribution to our work.

AND FINALLY

A printed version of this Newsletter will once again be available for all our Trustees and Volunteers, while electronic copies will be sent to affiliated Churches, Agencies and other supporters. I hope you've enjoyed reading it and will send me any feedback. The next edition will be in July. My thanks once again go to Dave Drake for making the Newsletter far more attractive than I could ever dream of! Best wishes from your Editor, John Rowe.