



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK (Affiliated to the Trussell Trust) Newsletter Number 4 July 2019



From the Editor. Welcome to our fourth three-monthly Newsletter, coming as we prepare to enter the eighth year of the Rochdale Foodbank's existence. Who knew we would be here so long or needed so much? Obviously, each of our 90 plus Volunteers joined for a variety of different reasons.

When I signed up, like many others I'd recently retired and was looking for some voluntary work which would make me feel vaguely useful, be as far removed from my work-life as possible, and allow me to have time off for holidays etc without making me feel too guilty!

In the event, helping at the Foodbank for nearly seven years has given me a lot more than that. I'm struck by some of the comments made to me by the leaders of our Thursday Team (see later), about how much volunteering here has brought together people from very varied backgrounds, enabled us to make many new friends and to enjoy ourselves, while still taking the work very seriously.

In the midst of a process by which just one hundred and fifty thousand people are going to decide who our next Prime Minister is to be, I have, in all the long leadership campaign, barely heard a single reference to the issues which confront us every weekday here at South Parade: not just the awful food poverty which drives still increasing numbers of local people to seek our help, but also issues like education, health and social care (especially mental health care), unemployment, low wages and cuts to benefits, rising personal debt, homelessness, housing costs and shortages and relationship breakdowns, all of which clearly contribute to the need for foodbanks like our own.



While this absence of any sensible debate about the real issues which face us all in Britain drives me into occasional despair and fury, I find Wednesday helping with our foodbank continually strengthens my belief in people's commitment to and care for others. We can feel real pride in the service we provide, even as we may weep at the reasons for the need.

Finally, an abject apology. In my focus on our Wednesday Team in the last newsletter, I should have said that Anne McKown and Jo Hill are joint team leaders and have been for some time. Having been a Wednesday Team member over six years you'd think I'd have got that right at least!

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IN FOCUS – OUR SUPPORTERS



(L-R) ANNE, JOANNE AND IAN (WO)MAN THE COLLECTION POINT AT TESCO

We owe a huge debt of thanks to a number of organisations for their support, firstly **Tesco Supermarket** in Sudden for agreeing to us holding an additional two-day collection in June.

The Tesco collection brought in donations totalling 1,379.91 kilograms of food (or 119 Tesco green boxes), including many items of which we were very short, plus £148.83p in cash donations.

This is in addition to the weekly delivery of food donated at the store, plus frequent generous donations from the staff there. So many thanks to Angie and everyone else who helps us.

Milnrow Coop have for more than two years sent us bread, fruit and vegetables for our grateful clients. **The Laughing Loaf** in Rochdale continue to provide us with generous amounts of bread and cakes.

Aldi have recently joined this long list of supporters by donating food each Wednesday and Thursday morning. **Kleenstrike** regularly donate printer inks for our use.

I'd also like to thank the **Rochdale Observer** and **Rochdale Online** who have been extremely helpful and supportive in publishing news about our Foodbank since I took over publicity a year ago.

Food Swap: Steve Field made contact with volunteers from Stockport Foodbank as a result of which we were able to exchange 500 tins of vegetables (of which we have quite a surplus) for 500 tins of much-needed pasta sauce. Farnworth Foodbank have also given us 100 tins of tomatoes in exchange for 75 tins of our meat. Thanks to both organisations for this mutually beneficial collaboration.

None of these collections and swaps would be easy without the fantastic generosity of **RRG Toyota** in Rochdale who regularly lend us the use of their van to transport our donations. **Lovick's** furniture store have also provided us with a large van and several large men to enable us to shift food across from Tesco's.

Many thanks to all these companies who so generously give us their help.



DAVE HILL (L) AND IAN SANDIFORD WITH THE GENEROUSLY LOANED RRG TOYOTA VAN

NEWS FROM THE STORES

This has in the past been a relatively fallow time of year for donations, coming between the Christmas collections and the Autumn Harvest donations, but a number of significant contributions from individuals and organisations together with Tesco's allowing us to carry out a mid-year collection (see previous page) has enabled us to keep reasonably well stocked.

We still have considerable supplies of baked beans, tinned meat, vegetables and soup, dried pasta and tea, but at the time of writing we are very short of tinned tomatoes and fish while we regularly run low on items like jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, custard, rice pudding and milk. Thanks to the considerable efforts of Chris Wood and other volunteers the large Tesco collection was quickly sorted, dated and stored, with long-dated items of what we refer to as "The Big Four" (baked beans, dried pasta and tinned vegetables and soup) being stored over at the Wheatsheaf, the rest brought quickly to South Parade.

In April and May we received donations totalling 8693 kilograms and gave out food weighing 10363. The total number of adults and children helped over the same two month period was 1280, with 755 vouchers being honoured, an increase of 83 over the same period last year. I am indebted to Ian Sandiford for these figures. As well as donations of food we continue to receive generous gifts of money, which helps enormously given our overheads at South Parade and the need to buy in food items of which we are running short.

IN FOCUS – THE THURSDAY TEAM



MEMBERS OF THE THURSDAY TEAM READY FOR ACTION

Our Thursday Volunteers have been led since the opening of the Foodbank by Margaret Ogden and Sheila Tolley; Sheila initially led, but after the very sad and untimely death of her husband John, who was also a valuable and highly respected member of the Thursday Team, Margaret took over as Leader with Sheila acting as her Deputy.

Margaret initially joined when she heard about the new organisation from Iain and Margaret Wight at an Elders Training Day at Bamford Chapel; Sheila's husband saw an article about the opening in the Rochdale Observer. Margaret and Sheila had never met before they began leading the team, but six

and a half years later their partnership is obviously still very strong!

The team is relatively quite a small one, around 14 members currently, with a few joining and leaving along the way and new members always settling in quickly. Margaret said they have come from a variety of different backgrounds and volunteering has enabled them to make really good new friends. Sheila added that they laugh a great deal and have a lot of fun! Members tend to gravitate to particular roles, some enjoying interacting with the clients while others prefer working behind the scenes. They all care a great deal about their work at the Foodbank and have many valuable discussions at their team meetings. Margaret and Sheila emphasised that they consult a lot with the team, that all decisions are joint ones and that they all collaborate where decisions have to be made about how they deal with particular clients.

IN FOCUS – OUR VOLUNTEERS

Greta Newton has been an absolute stalwart of our Foodbank since its very first day. She and husband Alan joined having attended the open day at St Mary's Church.

Greta for a long while volunteered three mornings every week but now concentrates on Wednesdays and Fridays. She says she enjoys working and talking with all the other volunteers, meeting new people and making lots of friends.

Greta it seems has always been a glutton for hard work; when she was employed as a Teaching Assistant at Healey Primary School she took on lots of extra tasks (including painting the library!), and now in addition to her foodbank days she is volunteering for four hours every Saturday afternoon at the Cancer Research shop on Yorkshire Street! All this despite Greta suffering very badly on occasions from her asthma.

At South Parade Greta often spends time packing up the food parcels in the middle section, but also helps out with cleaning and with signposting clients to other supporting agencies. When she works at the front, meeting, greeting and helping clients, Greta said "I find you often having to keep your own feelings in check when you hear the really sad stories the clients tell you, finding the nice, kind words that will help them as much as possible."

She added it is very rare for a client to pose any problems or be aggressive, and that they always end their visit by saying thank you to, as one client called our volunteers, their "little guardian angels". Greta is truly a star of our fantastic team of volunteers.



GRETA PREPARES FOR WHATEVER THE MORNING MAY BRING

AND FINALLY,

This Newsletter will, as usual, go to all volunteers, to our agencies, to supporting churches and to all members of Rochdale Council. Our newsletters are also available for anyone to view on our website – just follow the 'Rochdale Foodbank Newsletters' link on the front page.

Many thanks as always to David Drake for his help with this newsletter, the website and for his patience with my technological illiteracy!

We'll be back in October. Have a good summer! **John Rowe (Editor)**