



ROCHDALE FOOD BANK

Affiliated to the Trussell Trust (Charity Number 1172470)

Newsletter Number 7 - May 2020



A brief word from the Editor. Welcome to our seventh Newsletter; this feels very different in that, for obvious reasons, I am having to collate and edit it at home and we will this time be providing it only in electronic form. Still, we hope that this will as usual reach all our trustees, volunteers, agencies and churches, as well members of Rochdale Council and other interested bodies. So, we start with a message from the Chair of our Trustees and follow that with a detailed update from Steve Field.

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF OUR FOODBANK'S TRUSTEES

Dear Volunteers,

The last six weeks or so have presented us with unprecedented and challenging times. In the lead-up to the present crisis, your Trustees had to make some difficult decisions in order to sustain a limited service to our clients. We quickly held an emergency meeting with Mark Widdup at Rochdale Council. Through his swift and supportive response, we were able to continue an emergency service from our South Parade premises.

The Council team is led by Adrian, who has ably stepped up to the plate providing emergency packs of food to those in need whilst maintaining the integrity of the voucher system. I pay tribute to the Council for their support during this crisis and to our Board of Trustees who have played their part in ensuring that we maintained a foodbank presence in the town.

Below you will see a comprehensive report from our Working Trustee Steve Field, who has provided a regular link between the Council team, the supermarkets and the Trustees. I am extremely grateful for his commitment to this. There are also several other volunteers still working from home and I thank them all for their continuing dedication. To all our volunteers, I know how you are missing your teams. However, I assure you that the Foodbank is in good hands, and hope you will be able to return to the fold when circumstances permit. Keep well everyone.



MARTIN COUPE (CHAIR OF THE FOODBANK TRUSTEES)

AN UPDATE FROM STEVE FIELD, WORKING TRUSTEE



STEVE FIELD (WORKING TRUSTEE)

Well, don't we have a very different picture inside the Foodbank compared to the last time we went to print? We would have had around 100 volunteers in our normal 5 day operation and around 12 more at Smallbridge. However, almost to a man and woman at South Parade we are in those categories (or close to someone who is) who have needed to shield ourselves from the virus and now lock down.

Driven by Martin's thinking ahead and realising that this, sadly, was going to be the outcome, we began talking to the Council in the first week of March and set up a plan that,

after a transition period, became fully operational on Monday March 23rd. A team of around 6 staff from Rochdale Council are managing a much-streamlined operation, packing food bags in our warehouse and exchanging food for vouchers as we always have done at South Parade. It has become, as you would expect, a largely practical arrangement, operating from a table at the front door and maintaining the Public Health England rules about social distancing. Nevertheless, it is working well under Adrian the Team Leader's guidance. The core service continues to provide food for our clients and the impact on them is little changed.

I liaise daily with the Council team and have been going in around three times a week to deal with any ongoing issues with Adrian. Via email and through your friends and colleagues who handle these areas, we have been able to manage clients, donations of food and money, the agencies, which have had a similar experience to ourselves, deliveries and collections, new and would-be volunteers (through Sue Cannell), the website (through Dave Drake) and the media (through John Rowe). Along with the other Working Trustees, mostly working from home, we have been securing new supplies of food, donations of money and liaising with other foodbanks in the Borough.

For obvious reasons our clients have been managed through fewer agencies. Nonetheless we have been able with Susan Woosey to set up a network that has directed agencies and clients to secure "open" agencies, who have been able to assess and grant vouchers on their behalf. The integrity of the system has thus been maintained. Those who have enquired about or needed deliveries have been directed to the Council hub. I think we can measure our success by a complete lack of repeat enquiries and/or expressions of dissatisfaction.

Donations have been coming into the restored box at Tesco's Silk Street Store, and in larger quantities to Number One Riverside, which is open for these 24 hours a day. Adrian's team have had the resources of the Council to support the collections from the supermarkets.

Continued overleaf...

AN UPDATE FROM STEVE FIELD, WORKING TRUSTEE

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We are short of no food items, having very good stocks of most "list" foods for our clients thanks to the generosity of the people, schools, churches, mosques and companies of Rochdale, during October, November and December last year. Where we have had new shortages, we have been able to direct donations to those items, principally long-life milk and tinned meat and fish. We have major support from a range of companies, as is reported later in this Newsletter. We have also bought in where we could, although that hasn't been easy. Offers of support continue to come in from Rochdale and out into Greater Manchester.

Adrian is collecting all the relevant data day by day, and we are able to keep up to date in passing that information to the Trussell Trust, the Council and other interested parties (through Dave Drake and Susan Collinson). As we anticipate this situation will be with us for some while, we are looking at setting up online training for the agencies to work with e-vouchers, a straightforward and more secure system in this remote environment.

I would want you all to be confident that your Foodbank is working well, with grateful thanks to all those who are collaborating with us at this time. We are more than optimistic that it can be sustained well into the future and deal with whatever next might be thrown at it! With my very best wishes. Keep well.

NEWS FROM THE STORES

At the start of the lockdown Martin Coupe calculated that we had approximately 11,590 kilograms of food in store, valued at around £20,000. Steve Field now reports that the amount of food at our disposal has actually increased – thanks largely to the magnificent support we have received from a number of local stores – reported later in this newsletter.

In January we received 4,043 kilos in donations, compared to 4,221 in the same month last year, and gave out to clients a massive 7,934 kilos, up from 5,455 in January 2019. 465 vouchers were received, an increase of 20, with 587 adults and 334 children being fed.

In February we received donations totalling 4,925 kilos and bought in a further 281 kilos with the help of financial donations. This was much higher than the 2019 figure of 3,040 kilos. We gave out 6,149 kilos of food through 420 vouchers, involving 525 adults and 251 children. All of these figures were substantially higher than last year, making these last two months before the lockdown began by far the busiest, we have ever experienced at the Foodbank.

From here of course accurate and complete figures are harder to establish, but in March 426 vouchers were received, with 538 adults and 275 children being supported. During April the picture has remained much the same, with less vouchers being presented than was becoming the norm, and most of these coming from singles. It is likely that many families with children are benefitting from Council initiatives like the local hubs for primary school children and via direct deliveries to families.

ADRIAN AND HIS TEAM



ADRIAN AND MEMBERS OF HIS TEAM HARD AT WORK AT THE FOODBANK

Adrian, pictured here with a couple of his team at the Foodbank, is the man currently keeping the show on the road for us.

His substantive job with Rochdale Council is Local Welfare Provisions Officer, monitoring universal credit and the Discretionary Crisis Fund and also collating foodbank figures for the Borough, which made him an ideal choice when our Trustees discussed what was needed with Mark Widdup.

He is leading a team of five council staff working at the Foodbank, he and one other being almost full-time, though he told me he needs to leave some time to keep up with his normal work!

Adrian said "The operation has been going well; we have plenty of donations coming in from many different sources so we're able to provide ample food to the clients. We are also helping other foodbanks and food providers in the area with any shortages they may have so that they can also continue to provide their vital services."

Adrian said he gets great satisfaction from seeing his team working well together; they have proved to be extremely versatile and adaptable, ensuring everything is working as smoothly as possible. The hardest part is receiving and making deliveries and ensuring the right stock is in the right place at the right time, so he really appreciates the help of Diane, an Enforcement Officer with Environmental Management, who has helped take the strain.

Adrian is clearly very fit, since he says he likes competing in Sprint Triathlons! However, with those currently on hold, he's enjoying running, cycling and having adventures with his family. Our Foodbank and its clients are certainly very lucky to have you and your excellent team to get us through this crisis, Adrian!

THANKS TO OUR MANY GENEROUS DONORS

Local supermarkets have certainly rallied to support our Foodbank in its hour (or months!) of need.

The Tesco Store in Sudden has of course long been a major supporter through the fantastic work of Angie, their Community Champion, and many other staff.

They are currently providing food organised through a partnership with the Fareshare charity, with donations being delivered to our Wheatsheaf store by British Gas. The collection boxes at the store have been resumed and are collected weekly by Ian Sandiford and Steve Field.

Each Monday for the past four weeks Morrison's Store on Kingsway has donated £1,000 worth of food as part of their national "Feed the Nation" campaign.

Their Store Manager James said "The current Covid-19 situation has provided us with an ideal opportunity to help not only those who are vulnerable and struggling but also everyone who feels they need help".

ASDA Store continue to make donations and B and M Bargains on Yorkshire Street have now donated two collections of food valued at £750 each, thanks to the great support of their Manager Dave.



MORRISON'S DEPUTY DUTY MANAGER JAKE AND COMMUNITY CHAMPION EMMA LOADING UP A DONATION INTO A COUNCIL VAN



SOME OF THE MANY EASTER EGGS DONATED BY ALDI

Aldi Store on Entwistle Road generously donated a large quantity of Easter Eggs for the children of our clients. We have also received much-appreciated donations from the Freemasons and from the Vegetarian Society.

Milk remains a major shortage for us but Ian Sandiford has been able to buy in significant amounts of this from Bookers.

NEWS FROM THE TEAMS

I thought it would be interesting and fun in this time of self-isolation to hear about what our friends and colleagues in different teams have been up to during lockdown.

Cynthia Giles (Monday Team) ...

Cynthia says her colleagues seem to be coping well with the very different situation in which they find themselves. They keep in touch daily with a WhatsApp link, sharing daily routines, little funny videos etc. There are regular telephone conversations with members, especially the few who do not have other facilities. The regular foodbank updates, for which they are very grateful, cheer them up enormously and they look forward to all being back together serving the people of Rochdale.

Sandra Wright (Tuesday Team) ...

Sandra told me that all her team were self-isolating, with two being medically shielded, but were all feeling very positive. One was unfortunately trapped in Spain where of course the lockdown has been much more stringent, and was still trying to get a flight home. Team members were keeping busy gardening, doing all the household jobs they'd been putting off, walking dogs and generally enjoying the April sunshine. They were all definitely looking forward to returning to the Foodbank!

Jo Hill (Wednesday Team) ...

Jo reported that she and Ann McKown were phoning the team members weekly; they were all missing each other and wanting their old Wednesdays back! Meanwhile, gardens are weed-free, lofts and cupboards sorted, books devoured, walks in the sunshine enjoyed, elderly relatives cared for, and skills in sewing (including for a Tanzanian orphanage), woodwork, drawing, cooking, quizzing and of course zooming exercised.

Sheila Tolley (Thursday Team) ...

Sheila said that, in order to maintain contact throughout the lockdown, the members of her team have formed a WhatsApp group on which they can share information on vital issues like the availability of flour, their cooking achievements and how many scarves and pairs of jeans they have! Most importantly it enables them to share concern, encouragement and prayers for those who need them. She said all team members can't wait to get together again for their weekly sessions.

Wendy Fell (Friday Team) ...

Wendy reported that thankfully all her team members and their families were well. They have been gardening, tidying garages, spring cleaning the house, washing everything in sight, and doing a lot of queuing! However, they all agreed going for walks in the good weather had been a bonus. One cloud on the horizon was the inability to go to the hairdresser – some members of the team had taken matters literally into their own hands with rather varying results! Everyone was missing working at the Foodbank.

R.I.P. - LINDA PHILLIPS



LINDA PHILLIPS WHO SADLY PASSED AWAY ON APRIL 14TH 2020

Very sadly Linda Phillips, a much-loved founding member of our Thursday team, died on April 14th having been ill since late last summer and then contracted Covid-19.

She worked mostly at the front of the Foodbank where she loved talking with clients, supporting and helping them. She was also increasingly involved in campaigning for victims of abuse in Rochdale.

After her illness was diagnosed Linda always maintained a really positive attitude and the Thursday team were really pleased she could join them for their Christmas celebration. Our thoughts are with her four children and four grandchildren and with the many other children she fostered during her life.

AND FINALLY,

Many thanks to all those who have helped me put this Newsletter together, and as always, a special thanks to David Drake for the presentation. When we finally emerge from this lockdown, I think the Trussell Trust's ambition to abolish food poverty and the need for foodbanks will be even more critical. Look forward to seeing you all then.

Best wishes from the Editor, John Rowe