

North Cotswold Foodbank

NEWSLETTER

June 2020

Message from Kevin

Welcome to our latest newsletter.

As you will no doubt have seen in the news, a record number of people have been using foodbanks during the last few months, as the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact people's incomes and circumstances.

April was our busiest month ever - we saw a massive 145% increase in the number of 3-day emergency food parcels handed out during the month compared with April 2019. And the number of parcels going to children increased by 150% compared to last year. Our figures reflect what is happening around the UK, with large numbers of families in crisis having to resort to emergency food parcels to survive.

Fortunately, we have been able to keep all of our outlets and the store open as usual, although we have had to make a few changes to the way we work in order to adhere to government guidelines regarding social distancing and health and hygiene. This is in no small way due to the amazing response from our volunteers who have worked tirelessly to keep our centres open. At the store, we have been so busy that we now have 3-4 shifts per week instead of just one to cope with all the extra food coming in and parcels going out.

I also want to take this opportunity to say a massive thank-you to everyone who donated food or money during the last few months. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the local community and it is this support which has meant we have been able to meet the rising demand for our help from people who have turned to us as they are unable to afford food.

Finally, it's great that the government has taken note of Marcus Rashford, who highlighted his own experience of child poverty, and changed its mind on the provision of school meal vouchers over the summer holidays. This will make a massive difference to many families and will take the pressure off foodbanks like ours.

Kevin Carden, Project Manager

Thank you to all our supporters...

A massive THANK YOU to everyone who has supported us over the past few months – we've been absolutely amazed at the amount of generosity during these challenging times, as donations of food and money have continued to arrive. This has enabled us to meet the huge increase in demand we have seen as the impact from the coronavirus continues to affect people in our community who are unable to afford to feed their families.

Amongst the many heart-warming stories from around the area is one from a lady whose son lives in America. For his birthday, he asked his mother to donate the money she would have spent on his present to us instead.

We've also had a donation from a gentleman in Bourton to enable us to purchase fresh bread for our clients as he wanted to support both the Foodbank and the Bakery on the Water in Bourton during the current crisis. We've been handing out fresh loaves to clients at all of our centres which has been well received, along with the CackleBean eggs which are still kindly being donated to us by Cackleberry Farm.



We'd also like to thank Tesco for their weekly top-up food donations, which is part of their support package for local communities during the coronavirus outbreak. Thanks also go to the wonderful engineers at British Gas who have been collecting and delivering the Tesco food donations to us following a partnership with the Trussell Trust. And thank you to the



Midcounties Co-op, too, for the money from its Foodbank fund which has enabled us to buy items we are short of from the Co-op store in Bourton.

...and thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

The last few months have been exceptionally busy for North Cotswold Foodbank, but we have been able to keep all of our outlets and the store open as usual in order to support local people with emergency food. And it's our volunteers that have made this possible.

So a big "thank you" to all the volunteers who keep our Foodbank running. The resilience, commitment, and passion they have shown is truly inspiring. Thanks to them, people in our communities are able to access the support they need, which is more important than ever during these unprecedented times.



If you are interested in volunteering with us, see our website for details and an application form.

Donations

If you would like to donate food, the store in Guiting Power is open on Tuesdays from 10 - 12.00. There are also collection points at Tesco in Stow, the Co-ops in Bourton, Moreton, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve, and the post office in Chipping Campden. You can find a list of what we need on the home page of our website at <https://northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk>

Details of how to donate money can be found on our website here:

<https://northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/>



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The Foodbank is very grateful for the generous financial support of: the Notgrove Trust; Co-operative Community Fund; the Baptist Union; the Summerfield Trust; Gloucester Community Foundation; the Moreton Charity; Edith Mann Charity; Bourton on the Water Trust; the Northleach Club; Sudeley Lodge; Yorkshire Building Society; Dormer House School; Muslim Hands; Emporium Gifts; Moreton Conservative Association; The Unite Union; and many parish councils, churches, town councils, individual donors and groups.

June 2020

Stories from a Foodbank

The BBC's Chris Vallance spent some time at a foodbank in Oxford, hearing the stories of those who come seeking help. Here is a summary of his article on BBC News.

"Every Tuesday and Friday between noon and 2pm the food bank sign is wheeled out, outside St Francis church in east Oxford, and people who cannot afford food walk in.

Sometimes they wait by the door, at other times they walk back and forth while they summon up the courage to enter. Sometimes it's the job centre or social services that gives them the necessary blue referral form. Sometimes they are referred by a doctor who can tell they are not eating.

I have been visiting the food bank since mid-January, on and off, listening to people's stories.

I've spoken to a nurse, a student librarian, former academic researchers, someone who gets ambulances ready to answer calls, a nursery teacher, a former primary school teacher, a funeral director, carers, a charity worker, someone on a zero-hours contract, a former chef, a painter and decorator, the recently destitute, the recently separated, the mentally ill, the physically ill and the homeless.

The saying that we are all two pay cheques away from disaster rattles around my head.

It's impossible to guess who will walk through the door next. A man enters wearing a dark suit. "I'm a funeral director, I'm the gentleman who wears the hat and tails, I'm the gentleman who walks in front of the hearse" he says.

Steve, as we'll call him, is the sole wage earner in his family. His wife is unwell and he has four children, two of whom live at home. He used to be in the armed services.

For some time, the difference between his monthly wages and the rent hasn't been enough to cover the remaining bills, even with a little bit of help from the benefits system, he tells me. His wife sometimes skips breakfast to help feed the children, he says.

He had always assumed that food banks were "literally for homeless people".

We talk for a while, but as we part he says there's one more thing - the family is likely to be evicted.

The landlord has given them notice because of rent arrears, and with nowhere else to go he has no choice but to wait for the bailiffs. The City Council is helping them find a home but it will be difficult to get somewhere they can afford."

Our nation is at a crossroads

By Garry Lemon, director of policy and external affairs, the Trussell Trust

The government has responded to coronavirus with unprecedented measures to support workers, businesses and self-employed people. But the stark reality many of us now face is laid bare in the most recent unemployment figures, with hundreds of thousands of people falling off payrolls since March.

With the jobs retention scheme and the self-employed income support scheme set to wind down over the coming months, there is real concern that this is just the start of a tidal wave which will sweep people into poverty and financial hardship.

Food banks across the UK have just reported their busiest month ever. Our volunteers are telling us many people are coming for the first time. The number of families with children needing emergency food has doubled, compared to this time last year.

This simply isn't right. But there are things the government can do to protect people from needing a food bank as the economic downturn unfolds. That's why we're working with a coalition of anti-poverty charities to call for a Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme to ensure we all have enough money coming in to weather the storm.

There are already signs the government is open to making the changes that are needed. Last week the Prime Minister announced a new £63 million fund to help people struggling to afford food and other essentials due to coronavirus. It is heartening that the government has listened to and acted on the calls of charities and campaigners.

We urgently need funding to support the roll out of the rest of the emergency response proposed by our coalition to ensure everyone has enough money in their pockets for essentials during this crisis. For too many people, benefit payments do not adequately cover the cost of living, with research showing households referred to food banks being left with just £50 per week after housing costs.

That's why we must:

- Increase benefits that go to families to help with the costs of raising children
- Extend the suspension of benefit deductions to include advance payments – the loans offered to cover the five-week wait for a first Universal Credit payment
- Lift the benefit cap to ensure this support scheme benefits everyone

Our nation faces a crucial fork in the road. We must choose the right path. The path that builds on the foundations our government has laid and buoys up the many people already struggling to keep their heads above water, as well as people pushed into poverty for the first time.

Radio stars

Earlier in the year, Rhian Morgan and Kevin Carden appeared on the 'In The Cooler' radio show from North Cotswolds Community Radio in Chipping Camden, presented by Peter Lewis. They explained how the foodbank worked, with the vast majority of clients being low income working families. Kevin said that numbers of foodbank users are increasing: we had already fed more people than during the whole of last year, with another month of the financial year still to go. Half of the people fed are children.

Rhian gave examples of people she had met such as mothers who had not eaten all day in the evening. They concluded by encouraging everyone to think about people who are less fortunate than themselves and expressed gratitude to everyone locally who has generously contributed food and money or their time in volunteering.

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via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NorthCotswoldFoodbank>

via Instagram: www.instagram.com/Northcotswoldfoodbank

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*Contact details*

Store:

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Email: info@northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk
Website: northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk

The store is open on Tuesdays from 10.00 – 12.00 for donations. For opening times of our centres at Bourton, Moreton, Chipping Campden, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve, check our website.



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