

North Cotswold Foodbank

NEWSLETTER

February 2021

Message from Kevin

As I write this, we are coming to the end of week 3 of yet another Lockdown. But it is business as usual for us, as foodbanks are deemed to be essential services that can remain open, although we have sadly had to say a temporary farewell to some of our volunteers who are shielding once again.



The Trustees and I would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all the volunteers for the outstanding assistance they have offered since March last year. The centres and the warehouse have been much busier than ever before but despite lockdowns and shielding we were still able to maintain an excellent service for all our clients.

It is also most humbling to note how kind and generous the public have been and we received a non-stop supply of both stock and money donations throughout the year.

December was a really busy month for the Foodbank, particularly at the warehouse, with donations from the Tesco collection as well as lots of donations from individuals and local businesses ahead of the Christmas period. During December we provided 100 food parcels for clients, feeding 396 people. We also provided 194 Christmas Hampers and various other extras, such as meat vouchers, Argos gift vouchers, and Christmas chocolates and biscuits which were donated by Cadburys.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we received a grant from Asda, via the Trussell Trust, to fund a dedicated Citizens Advice Bureau advisor. I'm delighted to announce that Maggie Reilly joined us in December and is looking forward to helping clients visiting our Chipping Campden and Bourton outlets. It's great to have her on board and I am sure she will prove to be a real asset in supporting our clients.

Kevin Camden, Project Manager

Making Christmas a bit more special

Thanks to the additional funds we received last year we were able to provide a few little extras to our clients at Christmas.

In addition to the usual hampers, containing festive items such as salmon, Christmas pudding and cake, mince pies and boxes of chocolates, we also provided meat and fruit and vegetable vouchers. And Andy Hill, the local Butcher in Bishops Cleeve, kindly donated sausages from his shop each week during December.

We also decided to provide something extra to help people buy gifts they might otherwise have been unable to afford in the form of pre-loaded Argos gift cards. We received many positive comments of surprise and delight from the recipients and it was a joy to see the smiles and happiness as people received this unexpected extra.



Many thanks to one of our donors who brought several made-up hampers and additional "helpers" Fraiser and Rosie to the warehouse at the beginning of December!

Thank you so much to Carol at The Hearing & Mobility Store in Bourton who devised a reverse advent calendar requesting people to donate an item to our foodbank - and so beautifully wrapped, too!



And thanks also to Trevor Harris, a local craftsman in Moreton, who built a storage cabinet for our Moreton centre.

Almost half of people at foodbanks have money taken by government from benefit payments

Last December, the Trussell Trust published a new report "Lift the Burden" revealing that one in two households at foodbanks (47%), already struggling to make ends meet, face the stress of having money deducted from their benefits payments by the government.

According to the report, 73% of households on Universal Credit at foodbanks over the summer were repaying an advance payment to the government. Advance payments are largely taken out by people to cover the five-week wait for a first payment. This is because everyone who applies for Universal Credit must wait at least five weeks for their money to start coming through: the government offers people a one-off payment to cover this wait, but that payment must be paid back.

Paying back an advance payment, or repaying an overpayment after a system error, makes it harder for people to afford the essentials and can affect people's mental health. More than half of households (53%) at food banks where someone was living with mental health problems reported they owed money to the government through a loan. This compares to 30% of households which did not report anyone with mental health problems.

The Trussell Trust is urging the government to stop taking money from people's pockets through the winter months until a more responsible and just system is put in place. This should help bring government debt collection closer to that practised in the private sector which has improved its practice significantly, assessing people's ability to pay before recovering debts.

Emma Revie, chief executive at the Trussell Trust said: "With the pandemic continuing to hit people's incomes, the government must pause taking money from benefit payments over the winter months until a more responsible and just system that offers security and support is in place. This would help people on the lowest incomes to keep every penny of their benefits to help afford the absolute essentials, instead of needing to turn to a food bank for help."



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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.

News update

The national Tesco winter collection took place between 19th and 21st November at both the Stow and Bishops Cleeve stores. The collection yielded 700kg of food, which was an excellent result given that unfortunately our persuasive volunteers could not be involved due to the lockdown imposed shortly beforehand. However, Tesco gave us great support through their colleagues in store, in-store advertising and through their social media channels online, as they had done for the summer collection.



The MidCounties Co-op ran a campaign last December encouraging customers to donate money to their foodbank fund through in-store transactions and via their website. As a local Foodbank partner, the great news is that we will receive a donation from the Coop shortly from the funds raised during this campaign.

Welfare Support Scheme

Gloucestershire County Council has extended the existing Welfare Support Scheme for a time-limited period to provide support to people and families in hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The fund provides practical support to eligible adults and families for food, gas/electricity top ups and household items such as furniture including white goods/appliances, carpets and essential household equipment. The Children's Fund can also provide clothes.

To view the eligibility criteria visit the Gloucestershire Welfare Support Scheme's website at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/gloucestershire-welfare-support-scheme/



Many thanks to staff at Pulham Coaches for their annual collection for the Foodbank.

Sign of the times



Donations to North Cotswold Foodbank are not just limited to food: this is the lovely new mobile sign on display outside our centre at the Encounter Church in Winchcombe!

Many thanks to Mark at Saxon Print and Design for producing and donating the sign. Mark commented "We're not a large business but try to help out with local charities/groups where we can, especially with the current issues going on all around us and the Foodbank is one of the organisations we see doing great work."

Donations

If you would like to donate food, the store in Guiting Power is open on Tuesdays from 10.00 -12.00.

There are also collection points in the following locations:

Post office and One Stop shop, Chipping Campden

Tesco in Stow and Bishops Cleeve

Co-op in Bourton, Moreton, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve

Please note that supermarket collection points are for in-store purchases only. You can find a list of what we're short of on the home page of our website at northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk

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

northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/

Contact details

Store:
North Cotswold Foodbank
Unit 2, Glebe Farm Buildings
Guiting Power
Cheltenham GL54 5TZ
Tel: 07879 375562

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

The store is open on Tuesdays from 10.00 – 12.00 for donations.

Covid-driven recession likely to push 2 million UK families into poverty

Destitution levels in Great Britain are expected to double in the wake of the pandemic with an estimated 2 million families, including a million children, likely to struggle to afford to feed themselves, stay warm, or keep clean as the recession deepens, according to a study carried out for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and reported last December in The Guardian: www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/09/covid-driven-recession-likely-to-push-2m-uk-families-into-poverty

These new figures are shocking. The report described "increasing, intensifying" levels of extreme poverty experienced by some of the country's poorest households in recent years, and highlight a social security system increasingly failing to protect society's most vulnerable.

Cuts in social security rates over the past decade, together with design flaws in universal credit and disability benefits, as well as the harsh impact of welfare reforms such as benefit caps, were driving sharp rises in extreme poverty even before Covid struck, the study says.

The study defines destitution as inability to afford two or more of shelter, food, heating, lighting, weather-appropriate clothing, or basic toiletries over the past month, or a weekly income after housing costs of or below £70 for a single adult or £145 for a couple with two children.

Over half of destitute individuals most commonly lacked food, followed by suitable clothing (49%) and basic toiletries (43%). A third of destitute households reported no income at all. While single people were most likely to be destitute, families – especially lone mothers – were increasingly at risk, the study said.

The research was carried out by the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research at Heriot-Watt University. Around 1 million households experienced destitution in 2019, up 35% since 2017, equivalent to 2.4 million people. These rates were likely to have doubled in recent months, it said.

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