

North Cotswold Foodbank

NEWSLETTER

February 2024

Message from Kevin

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

It is Ash Wednesday as I write this so I have been reflecting on Lent, and on the privilege it is to be able to choose to give up something when you are in the lucky position of having plenty.



Sadly, more and more people are facing impossible choices about which essential items they must do without to make ends meet. And what that means for their families, for their health, for their wellbeing.

The rising costs of essentials, such as bills, fuel, and food, has affected many of us. But certain groups of people are more likely to face hunger than others. Last year we participated in a project on rural poverty in the North Cotswolds which found that the causes of rural hardship can be summarised as 'lacks of', for example government support and investment, employment, transport. You can read more about the "Hidden Hardship" project on the next page.

By understanding what's pushing people to foodbanks, we can establish the building blocks needed to end hunger for good. The Trussell Trust talked to three people who were forced to turn to a foodbank. Single mum Lowri, full-time carer Siobhan and Steve, who is disabled, shared their experiences of needing to use a foodbank. You can watch a video of their stories here <https://www.trusselltrust.org/who-needs-food-banks/>

So, as I thought about what I might choose to give up during Lent, I prayed for a more just and dignified future where all of us are able to make choices from a place of sufficiency, and everyone can afford the essentials.

Kevin Carden
Project Manager

Foodbanks should be planning their own demise

"Foodbanks have become an accepted part of society, and that is wrong." So says Gill Donovan, the outlet lead for Bishop's Cleeve.

"I've been volunteering at the Foodbank for some years and over that time we have certainly got increasingly busy. We first saw a significant increase in October 2021, which was when the Government stopped the additional Universal Credit payment they had made during the pandemic. Then around February 2022, we saw another spike when a lot of people started to see their energy bills increasing and now the cost of living crisis means even more people are coming to the Foodbank. Another reason for the extra demands on us is the additional housing." Bishop's Cleeve and surrounding areas have grown in recent years, and are continuing to grow, with an estimated population now of around 19,000.

"North Cotswold Foodbank has also been able to fund our own Citizens Advice adviser, who comes to our weekly sessions to work with our clients. We subsequently received a grant from the Trussell Trust to expand this service and we now have two part-time case workers/debt advisers coming in to help clients here in Bishop's Cleeve and in Winchcombe. That has been the thing that has made a really big difference."

"Clients are getting advice and help to navigate through difficulties and support filling out paperwork and knowing what benefits they can claim. It takes the service one step further. For me, it feels better that we are offering more than just a food parcel, because the food parcel alone isn't solving the person's problem."

Gill explains that alongside the increase in numbers of people needing the support, the demographic of clients has also changed and become broader over the years.

"We used to see a lot of families. Now we see a



lot of single people, and single parents or couples. Recently, I saw a client who was a single mum with two children. I asked her if she was working and she told me she was a part-time nurse. Inwardly, I was shocked. That is sadly not atypical any more."

"At the other end, we also see a number of people over 60. People who cannot manage on their state pension or who fall in between the gaps, without savings, who might not be old enough to claim a pension but also cannot find work. Their resilience is really tested and there are quite a lot of mental health issues. You see how hard it is for people to help themselves when they're not in a very good place. The 'just get a job' narrative isn't helpful as these people are struggling to cope. Particularly with the need for technology, like mobile phones, life generally is more expensive these days."

The growth of a charity providing support to others is usually something to be celebrated; however, Gill says she is concerned about this. "The ethos of the Trust is that we shouldn't be here. We should be planning our own demise. The Trust does a lot of campaigning and lobbying to Government, but we are getting busier and busier. If we were out of business, we'd be happy. Foodbanks have become an accepted part of society and that is wrong. Politicians speak about this as though it is normal, and it's not normal. It's not right."

From an interview for the Diocese of Gloucester website.

Share a Poem group

A new Share a Poem group launched in Chipping Campden library on 23rd February. Share a Poem is a weekly event that will take place for free at the library for members of the public to come together in an informal way –

poetry will be read out and conversations will be sparked from this about life in general. It is an informal group open to everyone (including those with dementia).

Places can be booked by contacting Chipping Campden Library directly on 01386 840692.



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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.

Hidden Hardship

North Cotswold Foodbank has participated in the "Hidden Hardship" project, carried out by Dr Stephanie Denning, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University. The project aims to understand the experiences, coping strategies and barriers to wellbeing of people in rural poverty in the North Cotswolds.

Research into poverty has primarily focused on urban areas. However, we can't assume that what happens in urban areas also happens in rural areas. Last year, Stephanie spent time at community groups and projects in a rural town and village in the North Cotswolds, to gain understanding of the experience of people living in rural hardship. She interviewed staff, volunteers, and local people. She then worked with three households experiencing rural hardship – they kept diaries of their experiences, and undertook three interviews with her as they went about their daily life.

Rural hardship in the North Cotswolds is often hidden because of the relative affluence experienced by the majority, and the high levels of tourism in the area. The research found that hardship can be defined as struggle and tough times, reflecting daily struggle more than one-off 'emergency' situations. Rural hardship is not the same as urban hardship and each poses different challenges.

The causes of rural hardship can be summarised as 'lacks of', including government support and investment, employment, transport.

In people's coping strategies, huge importance was given to informal support networks with friends and families and support offered by local groups but this could be difficult to access due to limited transport options and a fear of stigma.

Barriers to improved wellbeing were to some degree perceived as outside of people's control, making it difficult for them to envisage hardship improving. These included problems with transport, lack of government support and investment, and stigma linked to inequality.

Read more about the Hidden Hardship project here: <https://hiddenhardship.coventry.ac.uk/>



Thank You

We have been amazed at the kindness and generosity shown by local businesses, schools, community organisations and individuals in the run up to Christmas last year.

In particular, we want to thank Cotswold School in Bourton for delivering a staggering 58 boxes filled with a fabulous 900kg of donations, transported to our store in 2 minibuses!



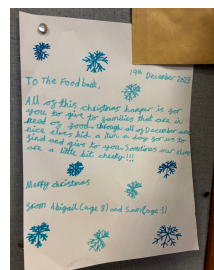
And a big thank you to the night team at the North Cotswolds Hospital in Moreton for their donations.



A huge thank you to all the children at St Catherine's Catholic Primary School in Chipping Campden for their donations as part of their reverse advent calendar.



A massive thank you to our friends at the St Vincent de Paul Society in Stow for their donation of fresh food food hampers.



And, finally, a big round of applause to two of our younger donors for their letter which accompanied the donation of a splendid Christmas food hamper.

Over 60s Group

A new social Over 60s group was launched in Stow Library in February. This is an informal social group for members of the community to come together and take part in activities or listen to talks and will take place on the third Thursday of every month. Places can be booked by contacting Stow Library directly on 01451 830352.

Donate Food

We always welcome non-perishable food and hygiene and cleaning products. The items we need change regularly, so please check the list on our website to see the latest shortages.

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

You can take your donations to the store in Guiting Power, which is open on Tuesdays from 10.00 -12.00.

You can also take donations to our Foodbank centres whilst they are open. For a list of our centres and opening hours, visit our website at <https://northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk/locations>

There are also collection points in the following locations:

Post office and One Stop shop, Chipping Campden

Bishops Cleeve Parish Council Office, GL52 8LR (Monday-Friday 9.00am-12.00pm)

White House Surgery, Moreton, opposite the North Cotswold Hospital

Tesco in Stow and Bishops Cleeve

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

Coventry Building Society, Winchcombe

Please note that supermarket collection points are for in-store purchases only.

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

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