

More people than ever through the foodbank doors last Christmas

Last December was our busiest run up to Christmas ever as we issued 106 food parcels in the month, feeding 178 adults and 188 children. We heard that a number of schools in our area found families with nothing and had to raid school kitchens and staff supplies to help out overnight. School holidays are always a busy time for the Foodbank as children who would have had free school meals have to be fed at home. And of course in the cold and dark more money needs to be found for electric and heating, heaping pressure onto people already in crisis during the winter.



Every year, we also give Christmas hampers to families and individuals who are struggling, and in December we distributed 105 hampers. These hampers, containing extra items such as tins of salmon and ham, Christmas puddings and mince pies, make an enormous difference to the festive season, allowing people to celebrate the season rather than merely exist through it.

A big “thank-you” goes to our teams of volunteers who worked so hard during December to make up food parcels and hampers, sort out stock, and provide assistance to a record number of clients, especially in the week before Christmas.

A volunteer’s story

Rosemary Bishton is a volunteer at our Bishop’s Cleeve centre. Here is her account of life as a Foodbank volunteer.

“It was in 2015 that I volunteered to help at my local Foodbank. I heard of the need in my local area at church.

I work with 20 other volunteers, and work about one shift a month and for approximately three hours. Four of us work at any normal session, more at Christmas and Easter holiday times.



Rosie, left, with other members of the Bishops Cleeve team

We are set up and ready to receive clients by 9.45 and sometimes have people waiting at the door. Occasionally there are no clients but we are always ready and spend the time reading through leaflets so that we know what support is available locally should we be required to signpost clients to support services. Our clients receive enough nutritionally-balanced food for three days. The food is delivered to us on a Tuesday from the store at Guiting Power, which is about 15 miles away, and that is the day that other volunteers restock our shelves.

I realised a while ago that, from my days as a Home Economics teacher, I had recipes where tinned and dried foods could be easily used to make tasty, nutritious meals. This idea has grown and been very successful and we now offer either meat, fish or vegetarian “meal bags” to hand out to clients. These meal bags include a recipe and the tinned and dried foods needed to make it. My husband, who is the “guinea pig”, has been heard to tell friends he had forgotten how good corned beef and spam were!

I belong to the WI and our members have got into the habit of taking food to the local collecting point. When we have a bring-and-buy stall the foodbank usually gets a good haul! We all realise just how fortunate we ourselves are. Our generation have come from the “job for life” group and we have had many advantages during the years since the war. We are aware of today’s needs and we have time and expertise that we are willing to share.”

Donate Food

We rely on donations of both food and money to provide support to people facing crisis within the local community. Without your goodwill, foodbanks would really struggle to operate.

We have been really busy over the Christmas holidays and are now very short of a number of items:

- Tomato ketchup/brown sauce
- Chutneys
- Mayonnaise
- Sponge puddings
- Packets mashed potato
- Packets crumble mix
- Tea bags
- Tinned pasta
- Laundry capsules/liquid
- Men’s toiletries

Please note that we have plenty of pasta, baked beans and porridge at the moment.

All food donations should have a sell-by date of at least 3 months.

We are always short of different items to make up our food parcels, so please check our website for what we need most before donating. You can find an up-to-date list here:

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

You can leave food donations at a number of collection points around the area.



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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.

Tesco collection

Thank you to everyone who contributed food or donated money at our fundraising event at Tesco in Stow-on-the-Wold last December. This helped us to replenish our stocks ahead of the Christmas period. Tesco generously tops up customers' food donations with a financial donation of 20% of the value of the items donated, thus making your donation go even further.

Food collection points

If you are unable to deliver food donations directly to the store in Guiting Power on Tuesday mornings, there are collection points in various locations throughout our area. Please get in touch if you would like to know where your nearest collection point is. Additionally, there are boxes in Tesco in Stow and the Co-op in Bourton and Upper Rissington. These are designed only for items purchased in the store itself. Remember that we are unable to store chilled or frozen foods, so please don't buy these or leave them in any collection box.

If you are donating food from your own home to the store at Guiting Power, or any other collection point, please check the "use-by" date to ensure the item is within date.

Universal credit

Universal credit has been plagued with problems since its inception in 2010. In January, four working single mothers won a High Court challenge over the government's universal credit scheme. They argued a "fundamental problem" with the system meant their monthly payments varied "enormously", leaving them out of pocket and struggling financially.

Research by the Trussell Trust shows the use of foodbanks had increased by 52% in areas where universal credit had been in place for a year or more - compared with 13% in areas where it had not been.

The monthly payment merges six different benefits for working age people into one and has been subject to a gradual roll-out across the UK. The system has faced numerous delays and is now not expected to be fully operational until December 2023.

In February, work and pensions secretary, Amber Rudd, acknowledged the increased use of foodbanks is partly down to problems in rolling out universal credit, saying she was "absolutely clear there were challenges with the initial roll-out" of the benefit and that the difficulty in accessing money was "one of the causes" of the rise.

In response, Trussell Trust chief executive Emma Revie said: "It's promising to see the secretary of state is listening to the evidence of food banks across the UK" and called for action to address why the new welfare system has forced some people to foodbanks".

New charity number

North Cotswold Foodbank has recently changed its charity status and is now a CIO, or charitable incorporated organisation. Whilst there is no change to the objectives of the Foodbank, or the way in which it is run, we do now have a new charity number, which can be found at the bottom of this newsletter and on our website. If you are a regular donor, you should have received a letter from us regarding the change, but you do not need to take any action.

You have received this newsletter because you are on our list of supporters. If you would like to see a copy of the privacy statement for supporters' data, please email info@northcotswold.foodbank.org.uk with "supporters privacy statement" in the subject line. Alternatively, send a text to 07879 375562 followed by your full name and address.

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Store opening

Please note that the Guiting Power store is only open on Tuesdays, from 10-12, for donations of food only.

Donations

Just a reminder that in addition to food, financial donations are always welcome as these support our ongoing work at the Foodbank. Details of how to donate can be found on our website here:

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

Don't forget to complete the Gift Aid form if you are a tax-payer: for every £1 you donate we can reclaim 25p tax to help your donation go even further.

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[@NthCotsFoodBank](https://twitter.com/NthCotsFoodBank)

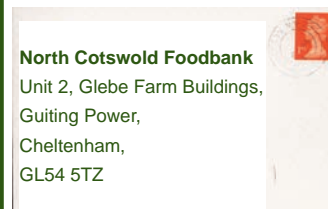
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