

Welcome to the newsletter of Norwich foodbank. We hope you will find this to be of interest whether our local Christian charity is new to you or you are a regular supporter.

## Covid-19 and Norwich foodbank - 18 months and counting...

On Monday 30th March 2020, as we organised and made our first home delivery, little did we know how long it would be before we could realistically consider opening our food distribution centres once more. Along with the rest of the nation we have watched the R number rise and fall, been astounded by the way in which the NHS have managed to roll out the vaccination programme so quickly and, above all, prayed that all would be well. As this newsletter is being written in early July, it seems as if those prayers are being answered and that we may soon be seeing some kind of return to normality.



Following much planning and discussion, our distribution centre at New Hope Christian Centre tentatively re-opened its doors on Wednesday 23rd June. Food parcels were given to three families and the café provided hot drinks and snacks to all who visited. Thank you to all those volunteers who positively 'queued up' to get back to work in the hub.

The next centre to open will be at Witard Road Baptist Church later in July. We then plan to open others from September as we monitor carefully how things progress, including the use of electronic vouchers! Deliveries will continue for the time being, although it is our intention to phase them out in the long term with a return to establishing face to face contact with those we serve so that we can help them to access advice and practical help from other agencies.

When more centres do open, the hub currently run by St Stephen's Church will move to St Peter Mancroft and be based in Chantry Hall. Our sincere thanks to St Stephen's who originally agreed to take over the hub while St Peter Mancroft was undergoing building work. They now have their hands very full and St Peter Mancroft have the resources to run it once more—thank you to the team who are able and willing to make this change!

Finally we must thank our wonderful delivery drivers who continue to deliver food parcels around our area, those on the phone system taking referrals, in the warehouse sorting donations and packing boxes. Without their help we would simply not be able to function and we are incredibly grateful to ALL our volunteers for their time, effort and commitment.

**Norwich foodbank is a local Christian charity that does not affiliate itself with any political party. We are non-judgmental and inclusive, providing assistance to people of all backgrounds, with or without faith, who are found to be in genuine need.**

## The Pathfinder Project

You may remember that, in the last newsletter, we introduced our new Project Officer, Iain Turner, who joined us in March to lead on the Pathfinder Project. Having been in post for nearly four months we asked Iain to explain a little more about the project and what is happening at the moment. Here is what he said:

'You may have noticed in the press recently that there seems to have been an increase in mentions of foodbanks and food poverty. That is partly due to the recent release of the second part of the Trussell Trust's 'State of Hunger' report. Carried out by researchers at Herriot Watt University, it is helping us to understand the scale of hunger and destitution in the UK. The research is being carried out over three years with interim reports published each year. Some of the findings in this year's interim report make for very disturbing reading. For example:

\*90% of people referred to food banks in our network in early 2020 were destitute meaning that they were *unable to afford to eat or to stay warm and dry.*

\*62% of working age people referred to food banks in our network were disabled (*three times the rate in the general working population*).

\*47% of those referred to food banks in our network because of problems with debt *owed that money to the Government*

The Pathfinder Project has been established by the Trussell Trust to take a step beyond the normal foodbank role of feeding those in crisis and work actively towards ending the need for foodbanks completely. Put in simplest terms we are setting out to change communities, change minds and then change policy. More than 50% of referrals made to us at the Norwich Foodbank come from statutory agencies and local authorities, clearly showing that things are not working as they should be. There is also a good deal of misunderstanding with regard to the reasons that people find themselves in crisis.

By engaging with referral agencies we are building strategies to streamline local processes to make assistance and funds, available to those in crisis when and where they need it. We are also beginning to engage with local community organisations to speak to their members to explain our work and the ways in which they can get involved. By dispelling the myths about people who use foodbanks, we can begin to help people understand the true nature of destitution and its effect on families and children.

There is no doubt that it will be a long uphill struggle, but it seems incomprehensible that the seventh richest country in the world should need food banks in the 21st century and that government agencies should be relying on them.

If you would like me to come and talk to a group you belong to about ways in which you can get involved, please drop me a line at: [iain@norwich.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:iain@norwich.foodbank.org.uk) I will be more than happy to meet your colleagues and engage with them.'

## ACTS 435

Every now and again you come across an idea that is so simple, and yet devastatingly effective. ACTS 435 is such an idea. The name comes from a line in the Bible -

'They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as they had need.'

There is a network of churches and charities that act as advocates and put requests onto the ACTS 435 website. This website can then be accessed by those who wish to make a donation. The potential donor can then look at all requests or narrow down the field to a more local area or specific issue of need—i.e. children or clothing.

In this way those who wish to make a charitable donation can do so to a specific person and situation.

The Norwich Foodbank has made several requests through ACTS 435 including a young mum who needed a new mattress for her young child as the springs were coming through the old one and a family with children moving to high school who needed help buying shoes and branded uniform.

To date 30,163 people have benefitted from the scheme and nearly £3.2m donated with 99% of requests being paid for in full. Norwich foodbank has been making referrals since July 2019; 18 referrals = £1,310 received

It is such a simple website to use and yet it gives people who wish to make a donation total control over exactly where their money goes. If you would like to look at their website, you will find it at:

<https://acts435.org.uk/>

## Young Visitors

One of the things we have missed during the last eighteen months has been welcoming pupils from local schools to visit the warehouse.

It was a great pleasure, therefore, to welcome 15 children from the Blackbird class at Erpingham Primary School in late June when they came to find out how the foodbank operates. They had been working hard prior to their visit and came with donations from their schoolmates which they helped to sort into the right crates. They also had a go at packing boxes and soon discovered that it is not nearly as easy as it looks!



Before they came to see us, the children had learned a lot about foodbanks and came armed with a number of questions that had arisen during their lessons. It was lovely to hear from their teachers that they were going to take everything they had learned and present it to the rest of the school in a special "Foodbank Assembly".

We also received some beautifully written thank you letters—see above!

It was lovely to see them and their visit will, hopefully, be the first of many more as we finally emerge from all the COVID precautions and try to return to a more normal routine.

## FISH

The summer holidays can be tough for families who rely on free school meals to get by. The Norwich Foodbank provides holiday FISH clubs (Food (and Fun) In School Holidays) with the supplies to offer children a hot meal each session consisting of a hot main course, dessert and a drink.

Our FISH clubs are also supported by a large number of organisations who offer their services to help to entertain and educate the children so that they enjoy their day.

We have had huge support in the past from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Library Service, Chartwells, the cathedral Education Team, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service.

The FISH clubs maintain strong links to their local schools who help to identify those who would benefit and put them in touch.

Thank you to fantastic teams in Wymondham, Queens hill, Thorpe, Mousehold, Mile Cross and Catton who have plans afoot for the summer—hoping to meet face in face in some instances!



## Donors

The majority of our donations come through collection points in supermarkets and churches where people contribute tins and packets directly which we then gather into food parcels.

Whenever possible each food parcel we send out has an accompanying 'goody bag' in which we add items of fresh food, surplus stock or treats (such as chocolate or cakes) according to what is available.

We are very grateful to local artisan bakery Bread Source who provide us with bread two or three days a week and, every now and again there are cakes too.

Thanks to the generosity of Aviva, we have a daily delivery of the Eastern Daily Press and are able to include those with our food parcels.

Our thanks also to Bramerton Christadelphians who began with a donations box at the back of their Ecclesia, but felt that they would like to try to supplement the food parcels we provide with fresh produce. As a result we receive regular deliveries of fruit and vegetables, delivered by Aldis and Sons.

Thank you to all who donate to us, whether it be food, time or money. Every single donation makes a real difference to somebody's life.



**"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Proverbs 31:8-9**

For more information or to send us details of what you are doing for Norwich foodbank please email us at [admin@norwich.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:admin@norwich.foodbank.org.uk) or contact us at Norwich foodbank, Henderson Business Centre, 51 Ivy Road, Norwich NR5 8BF; Tel 01603 251733; website: [www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk](http://www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk); Charity number 1143528

Norwich foodbank Patrons: **Rt Revd Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich; Delia Smith CBE & Susan Hill CBE.**