

Foodbank Update: After the summer period the Foodbank is moving to the busy season. The Harvest Festival food collections by schools, faith communities and other groups will result in a great amount of work sorting and re-stocking the donations by our warehouse volunteers.

A request for volunteer helpers in articles in the local media produced a tremendous response from the public to the point where we have had to decline offers of support. This means that our three Distribution Centres in Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock, as well as the warehouse, are fully staffed for the foreseeable future. The Foodbank very much appreciates people's generous response in offering their time and service; we will continue to draw on this goodwill as the needs arise.

The Management Committee has been busy for some months seeking suitably experienced replacements for three of our key founding members who have played important roles in serving the Foodbank since its inception in 2012. Our Vice-Chair, Jill Thomson, set us on a firm foundation from the start with her great energy and fundraising skills; Brian and Sue Attwood, our Treasurer and Warehouse Manager respectively, have likewise been solid rocks without whom the Foodbank would not have been able to build its services. We will miss all three of them and wish them every happiness in their much-deserved 'freedoms' to enjoy seeing more of their grandchildren and their passion for gardening.

Over the past year, the Foodbank has benefitted from close cooperation with the Garden City Heritage Foundation. In addition to the Foundation's generous subsidy towards the costs of our warehouse, we have much appreciated their support in publicising the work and needs of the Foodbank. This has raised our profile and helped to develop an increased awareness in the community of the needs of some less-fortunate residents in these difficult times of austerity.

How does a client get food parcel from the Foodbank?

The Foodbank Referral System: The foodbank provides emergency food to local people in a short term financial crisis.

The foodbank works on a voucher referral system to ensure that people in genuine crisis receive the food which has been generously donated by the local community.

The model used has been designed by the Trussell Trust to avoid dependency on a foodbank and to help people find solutions to the underlying cause of their crisis.

Voucher System: Referral Vouchers are held by frontline agencies working in the community e.g. North Herts Homes, Citizens Advice Bureau, Schools, Job Centre, Probation Service

Due to the nature of their work, the professionals working with these agencies are best placed to identify people in a crisis and issue a foodbank voucher to them.

The voucher can then be exchanged at a foodbank centre for a parcel containing three days' supply of nutritionally-balanced tinned and dried food. Hopefully this gives people a vital breathing space whilst the referral agency works with them to try to resolve their crisis.

When a client comes to the Foodbank centre to collect the food parcels the foodbank volunteers also take time to listen to clients and, where relevant, signpost to other agencies for further support.

This model is designed to help those in a short-term crisis rather than providing indefinite long term assistance so there is a three-voucher guideline which allows referral agencies to issue up to three foodbank vouchers per crisis to a person. If the client's crisis has not been resolved within this timeframe, the referral agency usually contacts the foodbank to explain the situation and discuss the issuing of further vouchers to extend support. The foodbank will always work to support the best interest of the clients in conjunction with the referral agents.



Our key Referral Agents:

Clients be referred via various local agencies. Professionals working with clients supporting them to get through a crisis can issue a voucher. Some of the main referral agents are listed below but there are many others. If you know of someone in crisis encourage them to ask any support worker.

North Herts Homes. Citizens Advice Bureau.

Schools & Schools Partnership; Children's Centres.

Job Centre / Benefits agency.

Probation Service.

North Herts Community Mental Health Teams.

Message from a Referral Agent:

North Hertfordshire Homes regularly refer our customers through to use the Letchworth & Hitchin foodbank. It's an essential service that allows us to help those who are in serious need in the short term, giving us time to consider longer term advice and guidance. Circumstances of our customers change all the time and anybody can find themselves in severe financial difficulty, it happens to single people, couples and families. The food and comfort provided by the Foodbank can be literally lifesaving and NHH are extremely grateful that we have this facility covering our properties.

Nicola Price. North Herts Homes Letchworth

Food Donations: The generosity of the public in making food donations is what enables the foodbank to function; we are extremely grateful for the continuing support. In the last 3 months **5,486kg of food was donated**. The summer period is always a period when the level of donations drops and the amount of **food distributed in the last 3 months 6,462kg** exceeded the donations. By any accountant's view this is not good planning.

However, last autumn from Harvest Celebrations in churches and schools and Christmas food drives an amazing 14,840 kg of food was donated. We are hoping for a similar response this year. So; thank you in advance.

Supermarket Donations: There are several supermarkets in the area which have donations boxes, these are:

Letchworth – Morrison's & Sainsbury's Local

Hitchin – Waitrose & Sainsbury's

Donations via the supermarket collection boxes contributes approximately a third of the donations to the Foodbank each quarter:

URGENTLY NEEDED ITEMS: we are always urgently in need of items to make the food parcels nutritionally balanced as possible and to provide extra's such as toiletries. Thank you

- **Long Life Fruit Juice**
- **Long-life Milk and Dried Milk**
- **Dried Potato**
- **Tinned Vegetables**
- **Sauce for Pasta**
- **Sponge Puddings**
- **Noodles**
- **500gm Sugar**
- **Toilet Rolls**

FOODBANK STATISTICS: Summary for May1st– July 31st 2017

No. of referral vouchers fulfilled: 252

Number of People supported: 768 [Adults: 369 Children: 399]

Reason for referral	%
Low income	35
Benefit changes & delays	33
Homelessness	9
Debt	6
School holidays/absence of free school meals	4
Sickness	3
Other	10

Distribution Centre	No. of Vouchers	No. of Clients
Letchworth (Howard Memorial Hall)	123	388
Hitchin (Scout Hut Our Lady Church)	109	331
Baldock (St. Mary's Hall)	15	33
Other	5	16
Total	252	768

Newsletter Feedback

Please email Susan Kostrzewski, Foodbank Newsletter Editor. susan.kostrzewski@hotmail.co.uk