

Newsletter



Financial Inclusion Advisers—A New Initiative

We now have two financial inclusion advisers from Citizens Advice Gateshead, Jana and Ngozi, working at each of our distribution centres. They are on hand when the centres are open to meet with any foodbank users who may be having difficulty with managing their finances. They then arrange a follow-up appointment so that they can advise and represent the users in resolving their financial situation.



This has been possible thanks to a generous grant covering the service for three years from our umbrella organisation, the Trussell Trust. It means that Foodbank users have immediate access to money, debt and benefit issues. We expect that this initiative will make a real difference to people in Gateshead who are facing financial hardship.

Food Stats for July

Food donations received: 7,905.88 kg

Food given out: 7,688.75 kg

Number of people fed in our three distribution centres in total: 765

Number of adults fed = 515

Number of children fed = 250

Sadly we're seeing a steady decline in food donations. This may not be surprising given the cost of living squeeze. A corresponding increase in foodbank use means that donations are now even more important than ever.

Asda Collection

We had another successful supermarket collection on Saturday, 13 August at Asda at the Metrocentre. Asda customers donated 1,210kg of much needed food— thanks to them, our volunteers and to Asda for making the collection possible.

Food Donations

Our website lists the food items which we need urgently, together with the locations where you can leave food donations. This month we're particularly short of the following:

- Sugar
- Milk UHT or Powdered
- Tinned Meat or Fish
- Noodles
- Coffee

We are not able to use medicines, baby milk or alcohol so there's no need to include them with your donation. **We are always in need of strong carrier bags**

Prayer Points Please pray for:

- the work of Gateshead Foodbank as we continue to provide food for those in crisis and campaign for a fairer distribution of resources;
- Those in positions of leadership, both nationally and locally, that they will use their influence to further the health and wellbeing of those who rely upon them for help.

Volunteer Focus

I am Linda Watkin, team lead at Birtley Distribution Centre which is based at Birtley Methodist Church. We're open for Foodbank users once a week, on a Wednesday morning.

We have a team of 12 volunteers, including myself. We don't have a rota system as everyone likes to come along each week simply because they enjoy each other's company.

We usually have a steady flow of Foodbank users, which means that we're able to spend time talking with them. When we first opened, we had no one for weeks, and we remind each other of this when we have a quiet week.

We've recently started offering refreshments for the first time since the Covid restrictions.

As well as the Foodbank, Birtley Methodist Church have lunches on a Wednesday. We're therefore able to offer Foodbank users a hot, two course meal (at no cost to themselves). This has been a real asset, and many have taken up the offer. Looking to the future, we want to become one of Gateshead's 'Warm Spaces' as part of the Council's initiative under which any local residents who are cold can come to get warm, stay warm and enjoy a little company and some hot refreshments.

Recently, we have had quite a number of users from different countries whose English has been very limited. We use pictures of food to show what shopping we're able to provide and this has come in really handy! We also use the app, 'Google Translate' (other apps are available) and this has really helped bring the language barrier down a little.

As a team we enjoy meeting and serving others each week. We also try and build the sense of team by celebrating big birthdays through meeting together for lunch. We have also had a meal and theatre trip pre-Covid. Christmas is a time we like to do something together. All of this has fostered a new group of friends who did not necessarily know each other before volunteering for Gateshead Foodbank.



National Citizen Service Fundraiser

In July a group of young people from Gateshead and Sunderland ran a food collection at Lobley Hill Community Centre as part of their project for the National Citizen Service. After advertising and promoting the event themselves, they collected 10 bags of food from the shopping list on Gateshead Foodbank's website.

They also did a sponsored walk from Lobley Hill to the Angel of the North – and back again! It was a baking hot day and the NCS volunteers even did the walk in fancy dress, for which they got loads of car drivers honking their horns as they passed by. This was all worth it as the young people raised a massive £550 from their Go Fund Me page.

Congratulations and thanks to all of those involved!



Help Needed!

We're looking for volunteers to help at our distribution centres in Gateshead and in Blaydon, and also at our warehouse on the Team Valley. Interested? You can find details of these roles on our website, together with an online application. Alternatively email us at the address below.