

Newsletter



We're Needed Now More Than Ever — And Your Support Is Too!

You may remember that in our November 2022 edition, we reported on the latest Trussell Trust survey statistics, covering the period April to September. 320,000 people had been forced to turn to a foodbank in the TT network for the first time, representing a 40% increase, and one in five people were in working households. These reports mirrored our own experience at Gateshead Foodbank, where we also saw a 40% increase last year.

TT expects this winter to have been its busiest ever. In January 2022 we provided seven days' emergency food to 353 people (253 adults and 100 children). In January of this year, we fed 952 people (576 adults and 376 children). That represents an increase of 270% - and the figures for December were even higher (see page 4 below)

In 2022 we bought almost 50% of the food which we distributed, funded by financial donations. The increase in demand means that we are now spending several thousands of pounds a week on food. At the same time donations of both money and food are going down caused, we believe, by the cost of living crisis. Our financial reserves are therefore declining.

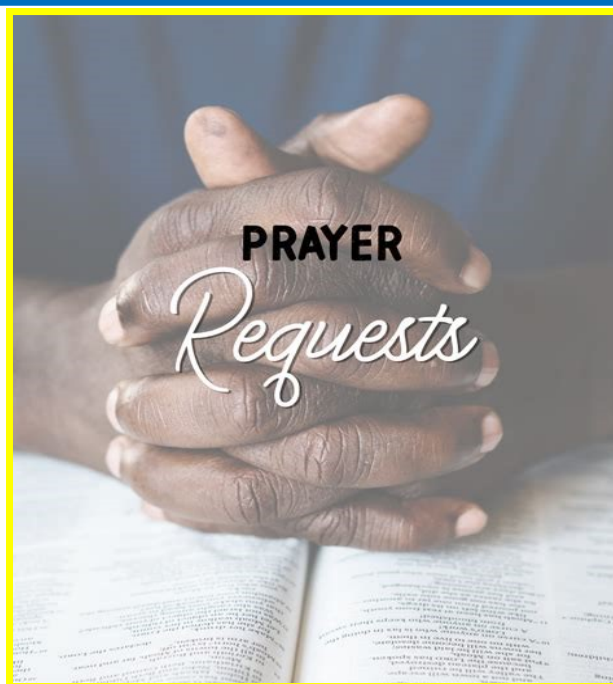
Our experience is mirrored by new research by the Independent Food Aid Network which has found that almost 90% of independent foodbanks surveyed reported increased demand in December 2022 and January 2023 compared with a year earlier. Half of the 85 organisations running 154 food banks that responded to the research said that if demand rose further, they would either have to cut support or turn people away.

With need continuing to outstrip donations, we are now relying on the generosity of our donors more than ever. You can donate easily on our JustGiving page, and also find details of other ways in which to make financial donations on our website, www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk

Prayer Points

Please pray for:

- People in our community of Gateshead who are facing unemployment, ill-health, isolation or money worries at this time, especially for those who are unable to afford basis essentials;
- Gateshead Foodbank that we will receive sufficient financial and food donations to be able to respond to every person who needs our support with sensitivity and kindness; and
- Justice and compassion to prevail in political and economic decision-making, so that everyone is protected from poverty and has the chance to flourish.



Volunteer Focus - Blaydon Team Leader, Joy Chambers

My name is Joy Chambers and I am very privileged to be Team Leader at the Blaydon Distribution Centre for Gateshead Foodbank. We are based at Trinity Methodist Church in Blaydon, which kindly allows us to use their premises each week and to keep supplies of food and toiletries there.

I first began volunteering for Gateshead Foodbank in December 2021. My role includes helping the volunteers to set out tables, information resources and our stock of food and toiletries ready to begin the session.

Before we open, I have a briefing with the volunteer team. We chat together and I then assign everyone's roles. We also pray together, then we are ready to welcome our Foodbank users.

Each person with a voucher comes first to me so that I can process their voucher. I then assign a volunteer to greet them and have a chat, and another volunteer who will ask them what they need and pack their emergency food parcel for them.

I try to make each person feel as comfortable and welcome as possible. As well as providing food, my role also includes listening to people when they want to share their stories in a non-judgemental way, offering advice and signposting them to other services which may be able to help. These include our Financial Inclusion Advisers who are part of our Foodbank.

The Blaydon volunteers are great! I have found friendship with them and even discovered the benefits of an air fryer and a rundown of the best movies to see at the cinema.

At the end of each session, we clear away, and I then see what stock has been used. I then place an order for food and toiletries with the warehouse ready to begin it all again the following week.

I am well supported by our lovely Project Manager, Lesleyann Watson and I never feel overwhelmed or concerned. I really feel that I am making a difference to the lives of others. It is truly rewarding to be able to offer a helping hand and a warm greeting to local people in need.

**Thank you Saltwell Harriers !**

Saltwell Harriers was founded in September 1890 and is Gateshead's longest established running club. Each year the Club hosts



**SALTWELL
HARRIERS**
Since 1890

England's oldest road race which, in 2010, was renamed The Ronnie Walker Saltwell Harriers Road Race in honour of the man who had devoted most of his life to the Club and was its President for more than 30 years.

Following on from the combination of a request from one of the members and a news article from UK Athletics about Foodbank Runs, Saltwell Harriers have set up a donation night once a month. The first donation night was on 7 February, and will continue on the first Tuesday of each month. Thank you all!

Want To Get Involved?

Without our amazing volunteers, selflessly donating their time, we simply would not be able to support the thousands of people in crisis who we help each year. We have many volunteers who help and support us but could always do with even more people to get involved.

Volunteering at Gateshead Foodbank is a great opportunity to use your existing skills to make a difference to the running of your Foodbank. It's also great to meet new people who share your passion to eradicate poverty in the community. And we aren't a bad bunch!

Currently we are recruiting for the following volunteer roles:

- Foodbank Centre Helpers at our distribution centres both in Blaydon and in Central Gateshead covering both morning and afternoon sessions. The role involves preparing food parcels for people who visit the foodbank and providing a listening ear and support for people accessing our services;
- Warehouse Assistants on Wednesday mornings at our warehouse on the Team Valley. You'll be part of a team sorting and packing food and additional items in the warehouse; and
- A Volunteer Van Drive on Tuesday evenings to help transport food from collection points to the warehouse for sorting, and finally onto one of the local foodbanks in Central Gateshead, Blaydon and Birtley.

Would you like to explore trying out any of these roles? If so, then email us at info@gatesheadfoodbank.org and we'll send you the Volunteer Role Profile plus details of how to apply. Alternatively you can call us on 07496 840720 to discuss the opportunities which we have available or apply via the Give Help page of our website.



Tales from the Warehouse Revisited by Susan Le Jeune

In the June 2022 newsletter I reflected on the experience of working at the Foodbank warehouse during the pandemic. Writing now in February 2023, the pandemic is fading in our memories, yet the need for Gateshead Foodbank has not lessened and an increasing number of people now require our support. Although I'm still volunteering at our distribution centre at Citizens Advice Gateshead, as I did before the pandemic, I have also continued to volunteer at the warehouse. Working

at the two centres gives me a good understanding of how the Foodbank operates. Also, I'd miss all of my lovely friends if I didn't do my warehouse shift on a Wednesday morning!

At the warehouse we now pack food boxes for delivery to our distribution centres. We also process donations of food from the public and organise the stock which has been purchased. As we work, we still listen to the radio for music and news. The news has changed in focus; a war in Ukraine, changes of prime minister, the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and, perhaps of most relevance, the cost of living crisis which make us remember that the work we do at the Foodbank is becoming more and more important. We all work hard but, at the end of our shift, still find time to celebrate birthdays and Christmas. Here's a photo of our 2022 Christmas celebration.

Clive Carr - Making People Aware

Clive Carr was a volunteer at our warehouse from 2016 until the pandemic, when health issues forced him eventually to retire. However, in November 2021 Clive and his brother-in-law, Steve did a sponsored walk, raising £700 for Gateshead Foodbank. During that fundraiser, Clive discovered that it is often those with the least who give, even when they can't afford it.

2023 is Clive's 70th year and he and Steve (both pictured here) have decided to commemorate it with a walk which they are calling 70 in 7 at 70. What this means is that Clive and Steve will together walk at least 70 miles in 7 consecutive days in May. Wow!

Knowing how the cost of living crisis has hit so many people, Steve and Clive are not asking for anyone to sponsor them for this walk. Instead, they're asking anyone who would like to help, please to put an extra food donation or two in the foodbank bin at their local supermarket.



The Bonny Comet

The Bonny Comet is a neighbourhood restaurant on Durham Road in Low Fell which brings fresh, seasonal dishes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with a fine selection of quality cocktails, real ales and wines. In February they donated over £300 to Gateshead Foodbank on behalf of their fantastic customers. This was made up of charity meal sales, a fantastic donation from his Sunday night music gig fee from Michael Lavery plus a top up by the restaurant themselves. Thank you to everyone involved for this generous donation. We're looking forward to trying the Bonny Comet's modern classics menu!

Food Stats for December 2022 and January 2023

Food donations received: 13,260.92 kg in December and 12,219.01 kg in January.

Food given out: 12,667.91 kg in December and 12,602.74 kg in January. Over 20% of the food which we gave out was purchased from supermarkets.

Total number of people fed in our distribution centres at Birtley, Blaydon and Gateshead: 1,072 people in December and 952 people in January.

Number of adults fed (aged 17 years upwards) = 650 in December and 576 in January

Number of children fed (aged up to 16 years) = 422 in December (including 186 children aged 5 to 11 years) and 376 in January (including 176 children aged 5 to 11 years).

These figures show a high proportion of Gateshead Foodbank users are children aged 16 years and younger, with the highest proportion being aged between 5 and 11 years. We're also feeding a high number of infants of up to 4 years old (104 in December and 110 in January). We're having to partly fund this need from our financial reserves.