

# Newsletter



## Financial Inclusion Project: First Annual Review

Twelve months ago, Gateshead Foodbank began a project in partnership with Citizens Advice Gateshead to tackle the underlying drivers of poverty by offering tailored, holistic support to Foodbanks users. The project is funded by the Trussell Trust and involves our Distribution Manager, Lesleyann Watson working alongside Social Welfare Advisors from Citizens Advice to provide advice to individuals on maximising their income, budgeting and debt issues. The Advisors also give tailored advice on housing and work as well as using established referral partners to support people into employability schemes. The ultimate aim of the project is to support clients so that they no longer have to rely upon Foodbank support.

We have just completed our first annual review of the project with the Trussell Trust. We are delighted to report that the project has achieved what TT describes as “outstanding” results. A total of 354 people have received advice against a target of 220; this has resulted in financial gains for Foodbank users totalling £267,075 against a target of £165,000, and £131,863.69 of debt being managed against a target of £110,000. Although total debt written off is below target because of the current cost of living, the overall performance has exceeded target by £69,960.45.



In their review report, TT describe the achievements of the Social Welfare Advisors as “excellent”, and the results of the review as “fantastic”. The outcome of the project is that 81 users of Gateshead Foodbank are now estimated to no longer need to use the Foodbank, having received advice and support.

## Statistics – Where do our Food Donations come from?

In the first four months of the current financial year (1st April to 31st July), Gateshead Foodbank provided food parcels to a total of 2,720 people from each of our distribution centres at central Gateshead, Birtley and Blaydon. This number was made up of 1,870 adults and 850 children. Over the same four months of last year, we were able to feed 2,555 people in total, made up of 1,661 adults and 894 children.

Over the four months from April to July 2023, our warehouse received 39.6 tons of food, of which 29.5 tons (or 74.35%) was bought in. Of the remaining 10.1 tons, 64% was donated at supermarket collection points with the remainder coming from a variety of Churches, Community Groups and Businesses.

These figures illustrate how important food donations at supermarkets are to us, and that without our financial donors, we would not be able to make up the shortfall between food which we receive in donations and food parcels given out to Foodbank users.

Our next supermarket collection day will be at Tesco, Trinity Square, 7th October, 10am—4pm. Watch out for emails and social media posts with further details. The more support we receive the better. If you want to volunteer on the day let us know or if you want to donate come along and have a chat with our volunteers.

### Well Done Eva - AGAIN!

Do you remember nine-year-old Eva Milburn from Sunderland, who we featured in our March/April newsletter? Eva had found out that we were having to buy in food to cover the shortfall in food donations and wanted to do something to help. She arranged coffee mornings and bake sales for Gateshead Foodbank, as well as donating 128 meals.

Eva and her father, Mark decided to do even more by having an event to raise both awareness and also food donations and money for Gateshead Foodbank, as well as for Durham and Sunderland Foodbank. Eva decided that she wanted to do a sponsored walk. Originally, she and Mark were planning a 7 mile walk but eventually it turned into a walk of 14 miles. She and Mark walked from Eva's home in Sunderland to the Durham and Sunderland Foodbank Warehouse in Chester-le-Street to deliver some food donations, enough for 92 meals. After that, they walked to the Angel of the North for a picnic with family and friends, where they collected even more donations and finally they walked on to our Team Valley warehouse.

This was a big distance for anyone to walk, even more so for someone as young as Eva. She and Mark made it even more difficult for themselves by pushing a shopping trolley with donations for all of the 14 miles which they covered.

Eva set up a JustGiving page for her walk with a fundraising target of £500. By the time of going to press, she had raised more than three times that amount.

She even featured on the local Tyne Tees news. Interviewed on the telly, Eva commented that "I felt sad because there was not that many people who donate and they had to spend more than £5,000 a week to get the food." If you search Eva Milburn on the JustGiving website you'll find Eva's fundraising page and also the TV news report.

Eva's achievement is truly remarkable. She is an example to everyone, both the young and the not so young.



Here's Eva at the end of the walk, and Eva and Mark being interviewed on the telly



### Prayer Points Please pray for:

- People in Gateshead who are experiencing acute poverty;
- The trustees and volunteers at Gateshead Foodbank, for energy, good health and opportunities to rest and be refreshed;
- The Trussell Trust team, for wisdom and insight as they work to serve and resource their foodbank network.

### InterFlex Group

Jo Moody volunteers on Tuesday evenings at our Team Valley warehouse. During the day, Jo works at a Japan based commercial printing business in Sunderland called InterFlex. InterFlex have recently set up a well-being team. This covers mental health first aid and also looks for opportunities for InterFlex to get involved in charitable work.

Feedback from the shopfloor was that staff wanted to support a local Foodbank. Knowing that Jo is one of our regular volunteers, InterFlex chose Gateshead Foodbank for support. They have therefore set up collection boxes in each of their canteens. In order to get the ball rolling, InterFlex went shopping with Jo to buy some of the items which she knew would be useful. InterFlex staff are now able to make regular food donations at work which Jo can then deliver to our warehouse.

These pictures show Jo going shopping for Gateshead Foodbank, and also some of the items paid for by InterFlex to add to the donation boxes in the canteens.



### Join the Trussell Trust Essentials Guarantee Campaign

We have previously reported on how, in the last financial year, foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network (of which Gateshead Foodbank is part) have seen the highest level of need, distributing almost 3 million emergency food parcels. This is the most parcels the network has provided in a single year.

Our Social Security system should support anyone in need of help. Universal credit is only £85 a week for a single adult leaving a significant shortfall between people's income and their basic needs. This is forcing many to skip meals, switch off essential appliances such as fridges and unable to pay essential bills.

Trussell Trust and the Rowntree Foundation are calling on the UK Government for an Essentials Guarantee to make sure that the basic rate of Universal Credit is at least enough to afford the essentials we all need. They are therefore asking everyone to take action by emailing their MP to ask for support for the Essentials Guarantee.

You can easily get in touch with your MP by searching "TT Essentials Guarantee" and then clicking on the link provided which will put you in touch with them. The more people who join in this campaign, the better.

Dr Nicola Heslehurst is a Senior Lecturer in Maternal Nutrition and Dr Gina Nguyen is a Research Associate, both in the Population Health Sciences Institute at Newcastle University. Dr Heslehurst is also the Chair of the UK Association for the Study of Obesity, a scientific charity that aims to advance our understanding of the causes, prevention, and treatment of obesity. Here Dr Heslehurst and Dr Nguyen write about effects of food insecurity on people's health:



Food insecurity is defined as being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. According to recent Food Foundation statistics, more than 1 in 6 people in the UK currently experience food insecurity, which means they have skipped their meals, have not eaten when hungry, or have not eaten for one full day. Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity. This increases to almost half of households with three or more children in the UK.

The North East of England has the highest level of food insecurity in the UK. The Office for National Statistics has reported that almost 9 out of 10 of adults in the UK have experienced an increase in their cost of living since March 2022, and around 1 in 3 reported as spending less money on food as a result. With the UK cost-of-living crisis continuing, and food and non-alcoholic beverage prices increasing at the fastest rate for over 40 years, it is extremely likely the number of people experiencing food insecurity will get even higher.

Food insecurity is often linked to changes in diet intake and quality, which affects people's health and wellbeing. There is clear evidence to suggest the link between food insecurity and obesity. Part of the reason for this is because people who are experiencing food insecurity do not have the means to buy, or have access to, healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables and home cooked food. Also, they often live in neighbourhoods where access to healthy food is limited, which are dominated by shops selling energy-dense food (such as takeaway chicken, burgers and pasties) and where facilities for physical activity are limited. This so-called obesogenic environment increases the risk of developing obesity. Food insecurity also increases stress, which causes changes to hormones that can impact on obesity. Consequently, in the longer term, this could increase the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Hunger and food insecurity are sometimes talked about together, although they are not quite the same thing. Hunger is a condition - a feeling of discomfort caused by lack of food consumed. Experiencing hunger can be part of a severe level of food insecurity, and the link between hunger and obesity may also be partly explained by hunger causing changes in hormones which result in over consumption of food.

The regional economy in the North-East of England is characterised by predominantly low-paid employment. As a result, more people here are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. People who are food insecure in Gateshead are therefore not only hungry but also more likely to be experiencing the adverse health consequences related to obesity. This makes the work of emergency food aid providers in Gateshead and the wider North East region, such as Gateshead Foodbank, all the more important during this time of the cost-of-living crisis to support those who are experiencing food insecurity.