

Newsletter



Welcome to Rebekah - our new Deputy Project Manager

Following the job advert in our last newsletter, we're delighted to welcome our new Deputy Project Manager, Rebekah Scott, who took up her post with Gateshead Foodbank in December. This is a new role and Rebekah has been appointed to assist our Project Manager, Lesleyann Watson. Rebekah's main duties will be the day to day running of our distribution centres, recruiting and supporting volunteers, and liaising with referral partners. Here Rebekah introduces herself:

"Hello, I'm Rebekah Scott, originally from London, living in Gateshead for the last 14 years. I am married with 4 children and have spent the last 10 years doing the school run! Prior to children, I worked in the NHS for 10 years as an Orthoptist (eyes) and then a further 2 years with a Christian charity, Ellel Ministries.

"I am a keen crafter and upcycle and sell items for my 'Redeemed Arts' venture in my spare time. I volunteered for Gateshead Foodbank exactly one year ago, but felt ready to change gears and do something full time. It was therefore perfect timing for me when the Foodbank decided to recruit a new Deputy Project Manager. I am really looking forward to carrying out my new role, working with Lesleyann and getting to know all of the volunteers."



Tesco Triumph at Trinity Square

We held our annual, three day Christmas supermarket collection at Tesco, Trinity Square at the end of November and the beginning of December. Many thanks to all of our volunteers and trustees who, despite the snow and freezing cold, took part together with some representatives of **GB Bank**. Based in Middlesbrough, GB Bank is the UK's newest bank and is dedicated to building and regenerating communities across the UK by supporting SME property developers and investors. We had a great turn out at the collection and, despite the weather and the cost of living crisis, Tesco shoppers were incredibly generous in donating a total of 3,385 kilogrammes of food and toiletries plus £581 in cash.



We Need Your Support

It's not too late to donate to Gateshead Foodbank's Christmas appeal: * You will be charged your donation plus your standard network rate.

- £3, text NGPL01 to 70331
- £5, text NGPL01 to 70970
- £10, text NGPL01 to 70191

* Fundraising, payments and donations will be processed and administered by the National Funding Scheme, operating as DONATE, a charity registered in England and Wales (1149800) and Scotland (SC045106). In addition to any text donation, you will incur your standard network message charge (based on your service provider rates). For Terms & Conditions, see www.easydonate.org.

NO CHILD SHOULD
KNOW WHAT A FOOD
BANK IS, LET ALONE
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ONE AT CHRISTMAS.

the
trussell
trust
City of Rye
trusselltrust.org/christmas-appeal

Spark Health & Fitness

Spark Health & Fitness is a gym on Kells Lane in Gateshead. Their vision is to help people live healthier, happier lives, supporting clients on their personal health, well-being, and fitness journeys. They also offer nutritional advice, as well as advice on diet and lifestyle.

The Spark annual awards evening is held each November at Gateshead Rugby Club. The awards celebrate members' achievements and recognise the challenges that some have overcome to reach their fitness goals. This year Spark chose Gateshead Foodbank as their chosen local charity.

Spark made no profit on the event. Instead, all ticket sales, raffle proceeds and other fundraising activities on the night (an envelope collection and a wheel of fortune) went to Gateshead Foodbank. They raised over £900. They also had a food collection point at their awards evening which they continued at the gym after that.

This is Spark's 10th anniversary. They have therefore released a limited-edition t-shirt to mark the anniversary, all proceeds of which are also going to Gateshead Foodbank. This is expected to raise over £100, making over £1,000 in total. They'll also be holding a Boxing Day Bash, which is a fitness morning where all proceeds raised through entry fees will be donated to Gateshead Foodbank.



WorkCast Working Hard for Gateshead Foodbank

One of our many donor partners are WorkCast, who are a North East based digital event platform (info.workcast.com). Their People & Training Manager is Katie Stephenson and here Katie talks about WorkCast's involvement with Gateshead Foodbank:

"We believe in the power of supporting local charities, and with the escalating cost of living, the demand for foodbanks has skyrocketed. We wanted to make a difference in our own backyard, and Gateshead Foodbank's dedication to addressing crucial needs made it a natural choice for us.

"At our Gateshead office, we conduct regular food donation collections, with our most recent drive focusing on spreading holiday joy through advent calendars. But we don't stop there – our team has also actively participated in volunteer days at the Foodbank's warehouse. We're committed to making these volunteer days a recurring event, ensuring our support is consistent and impactful, with at least a couple of sessions each year.

"Here's to community, compassion, and the joy of making a difference together!"

Prayers for Christmas

Most people who are referred to foodbanks are living on very low incomes (on average, £50 a week after housing costs). **Pray that everyone who needs to use Gateshead Foodbank over the Christmas period will feel welcomed and valued, and that some of their burdens can be lifted by the support they receive.**

Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year for Gateshead Foodbank. **Pray for energy and enthusiasm for our volunteers, whether they are working behind the scenes to make sure food is properly stored and organised, or whether they are making sure that people who come to the foodbank are warmly welcomed and appropriately supported. Give thanks that so many people are generous with their time in this way.**

Give thanks also for people's generosity in donating the food that makes up the emergency supplies Gateshead Foodbank gives out. Pray that donations will be sufficient to meet the needs of people experiencing hunger and destitution in Gateshead this Christmas and throughout the year.

We don't believe it's right that foodbanks should exist in the UK today. Trussell Trust is actively campaigning to change government policies in ways that will reduce need. This includes ending the five week wait for Universal Credit. **Pray that compassion and justice will increasingly be reflected in the way our economy and our benefit system work, particularly for those experiencing destitution.**

The Christmas story reminds us that joy and peace can come in unexpected ways in unexpected places. Yet for some, Christmas can be a lonely or fractious time. **Pray that everyone involved in the Trussell Trust foodbank network, whether they are receiving support, volunteering, donating, or working in a paid role, experience moments of joy, kindness, celebration, and community over the festive period.**



Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association

Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association has made a generous donation of Tesco vouchers to Gateshead Foodbank. Esha Ahmad Nasir is a university student studying pharmacy, who is also serving as a humanitarian worker with the Association. Esha got in contact with us about the donation. Here she describes their work and why the Association made their donation:

"The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, also known as Lajna Ima'illah, is the women's auxiliary organisation of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Ahmadiyya Muslim Community spans over 200 countries and has branches in over 140 cities in UK.

"As Ahmadi Muslims, we believe that one of our foremost duties is to serve mankind and alleviate their suffering. Our community's slogan is "Love for all, hatred for none" and we are guided by Islamic teachings to love and respect each other and help the disadvantaged and those in need.

"As part of our mission to serve humanity, which is integral to Islam, our local members residing in Gateshead raised the money for shopping vouchers which we then donated to Gateshead Foodbank. They wanted to help a local foodbank, knowing that foodbanks are a lifeline for many low-income families, providing support to those who can't afford to buy essential items. The humanitarian work conducted by our members is not only because it is a basic moral obligation to help others, but also because serving humanity is an essential part of our faith as Muslims. Our organisation looks to help food banks, charities, and other humanitarian organisations across the country with donations."

PC Nick Minto Of Northumbria Police has set up two collection points. Here PC Nick describes what he's been doing:

"I moved to Northumbria Police from Durham Constabulary in September 2023. In my previous role I'd had a hands on role with foodbanks and local charities and helped with gift donations and emergency food parcels with local businesses. After moving to Gateshead, I became aware that the Foodbank was under immense pressure due to demand. I know as a front-line officer how passionate we are about helping the public and knew that others would like to get involved. I have therefore set up two collection points in Gateshead Police Station, and also advertised the Gateshead Foodbank and the excellent work it does. So far, we have had an excellent return and hope to fill a police van with donations for Christmas to stock the foodbank for the New Year."



Well Done Harrison and Max!

For each of the last three years, Harrison McCrea (age 11) and his brother, Max (age 9) have organised food collections for Gateshead Foodbank. This year they arranged collections through their contacts at the JJ O'Donnell Elite Football Academy in Low Fell, Blaydon Rugby Club and Whickham Fellside Football Club. The boys put together some details of the Foodbank's work which they gave out to their friends, together with a bag of Haribos to encourage them to help with the collection. This year they collected a record 136 KG of food.

This year the boys also saved up their pocket money during the year and together saved £70 which they spent on buying more food donations from their local Tesco.



This year was also different in that the boys and their father, Bruce were able to visit our warehouse and had an opportunity to help sort out the food donations received and also to learn about the work of the Foodbank. This picture shows the boys and their Dad together with JJ O'Donnell at the warehouse.

Thank you to Harrison and Max and to all their friends for their amazing generosity.

A Message from our Distribution Manager, Lesleyann Watson

I can't believe that another year has flown by so quickly, but sadly the need for emergency food provision is growing. Gateshead Foodbank could not deliver the service we offer without our wonderful volunteers. I would like to thank everyone for all of the time and support you give us. We greatly appreciate this. You bring so much value to the Foodbank and to those who access our services for emergency food provision. I would also like to thank our many donors. There isn't room to mention everyone in this newsletter, but your generosity is no less appreciated. Not forgetting James Wilders, who pulls our newsletter together .

We have had a really successful winter collection at Tesco, Trinity Square, as well as new and ongoing food and monetary donations from an array of donors, especially over the last two weeks. This includes sums received into our donate page on our website and text donations to our Christmas hamper appeal which have raised almost £5,000 to date. One of the highlights of the year was Callum Wilson's visit to our main distribution centre in central Gateshead, which was featured on the BBC's Football Focus and on Sky Sports, as well as in the Daily Mirror newspaper.

On behalf of everyone at Gateshead Foodbank I'd like to wish all of our wonderful volunteers and donors a wonderful Christmas!