

**November & December 2024 Edition**

# BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## 2024 STATISTICS

During 2024 we provided emergency food parcels to a total 8,104 people (5,590 adults and 2,514 children) across our three distribution centres in central Gateshead, Blaydon and Birtley. This represents a reduction of nearly 1,000 people compared with the number of people who attended the Foodbank during 2023.

In order to access an emergency food supply, Foodbank users are assessed and referred on to us by one of our 63 referral partners using a voucher system. 4,126 vouchers were fulfilled over the three distribution centres during 2024. Our top referral agents are Gateshead Citizens Advice and Gateshead Council's Housing and Advice Support service. 61% of people to whom a voucher was issued visited the Foodbank only once.



The reduction in the number of people coming to the Foodbank is great news. It follows Trussell's objectives which include working together to ensure no one in the UK needs a foodbank to survive, while providing food and practical support to people left without enough money to live on.

The decrease is because of a combination of elements. They include the great work of the Financial Inclusion Team (working for Gateshead Citizens Advice and funded by the Foodbank) who achieved over £500,000 in financial gains and debt management for Foodbank users. They also include signposting to complimentary services provided by our volunteers, to help people to move on from the Foodbank.

Our last session of 2024 was on Monday 23rd December. That day we processed 36 vouchers and gave out emergency food parcels to a total of 76 people from our central Gateshead distribution centre alone. Also during December, we gave out 354 Christmas hampers to Foodbank users, in addition to our standard emergency food parcels, across our three centres.

The Gateshead Foodbank Project Manager, Lesleyann Watson commented on these figures as follows: "I want to say a massive thank to everyone involved, from our donors, volunteers, partners and staff. This would not be achievable without you all in continuing our aim to end the need for foodbanks. Thank you everyone!"

## MATTY HOPPER



We're sad to announce the death of one of our stalwart trustees and volunteers, Matty Hopper who sadly passed away peacefully at home over Christmas. Matty was a massive part of Gateshead Foodbank, including being the Warehouse Manager from when we started back in 2012 until 2019. He was famous for having his shorts on in all weathers and was always there for people, sharing his Christian values. He was a faithful Husband of 60 years to Liz Hopper, as well as being a Grandad and Great Grandad and also Father of our current Chair, Jackie Beeley.

## NEW YOUTUBE VIDEO

In December we released a four minute video on YouTube describing the work of Gateshead Foodbank and our objectives. It was filmed at our main distribution centre in central Gateshead and at our warehouse on the Team Valley. It describes how we operate and how we support people so that they don't have to use the Foodbank in the future.

We're really pleased with the video. It's called "What We Do" and you can see it by searching YouTube Gateshead Foodbank or by following this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYfuTdbTOQI> As you will be able to tell from the video, it was professionally produced for us. This is thanks to Alex Wright of Alex Wright Film + Photography. Alex's business is promotional photography and videography, focusing on the human side of business. One of his clients is another one of our supporters, Westray Recruitment and they put Alex in touch with us.

It took Alex a total of four days to produce the video and he gave his time free of charge. He commented that it was "nice to be able to give up my time for a cause where you're effecting real change. Four days of my time was nothing in the grand scheme of things."

Alex's website is [www.alexwright.studio](http://www.alexwright.studio) and you can email Alex at [alexcaptures@outlook.com](mailto:alexcaptures@outlook.com) if you want to learn more about his work.



## NEW NEWSLETTER LOOK

In our last edition of the newsletter, we wrote about the change of name of our umbrella organisation, the Trussell Trust to simply Trussell, and also about Trussell's rebranding. On top of this, you will have seen that the formatting and layout of this newsletter have also been overhauled.

This improvement in the newsletter's appearance is entirely down to some fantastic help we've received from Keera Tate, Social Media Strategist at Blue Moon Marketing on behalf of their client NERC UK Ltd. It's great our supporters donate not only food and money but people like Keera and also Alex Wright donate their time as well. We hope you like the new look newsletter. As always, do please get in touch with any comments you may have on the newsletter and any suggestions for articles which you would like us to include in future editions by emailing us at [info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk).



## A PRAYER FOR OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Lord God, guide our staff and volunteers in our warehouse and distribution centres by your Holy Spirit as they go about their work; guide their feet so they may go where they are meant to be; guide their eyes that they may see your love in the face of friend and stranger; guide their words so they may speak with integrity; guide their hearts towards Your loving gaze that they may live free from fear; and guide their vision so they may not doubt Your call even if it leads to trouble.



# THE HARDSHIP TIMES

On 20th November a number of Trussell foodbanks, anti-poverty charities and people with lived experience of hardship, alongside Ambassadors Mark Hoyle from LadBaby and Levi Roots, gathered at Parliament Square to unveil a bold new newspaper, *The Hardship Times*.

This one-off publication is filled with stories of hope and hardship which have been gathered from across the UK by foodbanks (including Gateshead Foodbank), charities, faith groups and businesses. You can download *The Hardship Times* simply by searching Trussell Hardship Times, or we can send you a paper copy if you contact us on [info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk) or 07496 840720.

## 2023/24 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM was held at Methodist Church on 8 January. Here's some of the main points from our Chair, Jackie Beeley's report.

Our mission continues to be to provide emergency food parcels to local individuals/families in crisis and to offer care and ongoing support to help them to maximise their income. As we do not want to build dependency with foodbank users, our volunteers always offer signposting so foodbank users can access individualised support from a variety of relevant organisations. Our steering group, trustees and volunteers give their time for free and often their work is unseen. Thank you to those of you who faithfully collect and deliver food to the warehouse and to our referral partners who assess the needs of individuals. Also, thanks to those who organise the many local events over the year together with Harvest and Christmas. Future plans include regularly reviewing our strategic plan and mission statement. It is important that we examine the drivers of local food insecurity and poverty. We have been successful in receiving funding from Trussell to explore this more fully.

All of the reports to the AGM are available in the news section of our website or we can email them to you if you contact us on [info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk) One of the questions raised at the AGM was to ask who's who at Gateshead Foodbank. We have virtually 100 volunteers working in our warehouse, three distribution centres and at supermarket collections. In addition, we have three full time paid members of staff, namely Leslyann Watson (Project Manager), Rebekah Scott (Deputy Manager) and Diane Kindred (Local Organiser). We also commission a Financial Inclusion Advisor from Citizens Advice Gateshead, whose role is shared between Jana Pokutova and Nagozi Chukwu. Finally, our trustees are Jackie Beeley (Chair), John Smith (Treasurer), Steve Caithness (Secretary), Rob Brotherston (Warehouse Manager), Carol Thompson, Don Sinclair and Will Mac.

## TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Gateshead Foodbank wouldn't exist without our volunteers. They're an energetic bunch and are often involved in other volunteering activities as well. They include Iain Burdis, who not only gives his time to the Foodbank but also to Low Fell Library, which is run and managed entirely by volunteers. At Christmas he appeared at the Library disguised as Father Christmas. Iain was a huge success with their younger customers and entertained them with lots of Santa tales as well as giving each child a gift. He was assisted by his elf, Kath, who is the partner of one of volunteers, John.

Find us at: [www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk) e: [info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk) t: 07496 840 720



# VOLUNTEER FOCUS – WILL MAC

I'm not really sure how to begin this, but "Hello!" feels appropriate. I'm Will Mac and I've been volunteering at Gateshead Foodbank since 2018. Professionally I work in the tech industry as a Product Manager, politely asking people much smarter than me to turn caffeine into software. At the time I started volunteering for Gateshead Foodbank I was working at a local bank, having recently moved to Carr Hill, and I felt like there was more I could do to help people. I've always felt actions are more important than words, and that we need to build resilience within communities so that we can mutually support ourselves, especially when those outside take a more austere view.



For the vast majority of my time volunteering, I have been sorting donations at the warehouse on the Tuesday evening shift and having competitions for who can find the most out of date donated item. My record is a jar of beans with a use by of 2007, but my favourite was over 10kg of white rice that was so old it had turned brown!

Over my time volunteering my role in the warehouse has expanded, and since 2021 Rachael Bradley and I have been co-team leaders of the Tuesday shift, usually with Rachael holding the fort whilst I'm out in the van collecting food donations and delivering food to the distribution centres. Covid brought with it a need to reassess how we operate, spearheaded by the Warehouse Manager, Rob Brotherston, and by Vic Turner who at the time was Volunteer team Leader which led to a lot of positive changes in the warehouse. These changes have enabled us to feed more people as the need for the Foodbank has increased, and have led to us having stock waiting in the warehouse for much shorter periods of time.

In mid-2022 I was asked to join the Steering Committee to represent the warehouse Tuesday shift. The main topic of the first meeting I attended was coincidentally covering the strategy for the Foodbank. As this is a core part of my professional life, I felt that I could contribute much more, and so as all management people do, I put together a PowerPoint.

The Trustees and I agreed an approach for the strategy which would set clear targets but not be prescriptive in solutions. Over the next couple of meetings, the Steering Committee agreed a Vision Statement, our Objectives for the next 12 months, and measurable metrics for success (Key Results). This paper sets out the way forward for Gateshead Foodbank which is both specific and flexible.

Early in 2024 I decided to take a break from my day job and spend more time at the Foodbank's Distribution Centre in Gateshead. I'll be forever grateful to my partner Emma for her ongoing support in this decision. Since then, I've been volunteering at the Distribution Centre about 3 times a week, packing food parcels, and speaking to Foodbank users and volunteers. I've also taken on responsibilities for IT, extending the lifespan of older hardware, updating our ways of working (such as emails, shared storage, backups, etc), creating pretty graphs, and occasionally building desks whilst trying not to get in the way of Leslyann (Project Manager), Rebekah (Deputy Manager), and/or Diane (Local Organiser). They have been awesome in accepting me into their space with camaraderie and goodwill, whilst continuing to do a fantastic job. Most recently, in December I was invited to join the Board of Trustees, with specific responsibilities for IT and Data.

Finally, a massive thank you to everyone on the Warehouse Tuesday Team. You've been a constant source of kindness, support, and friendship over the years. I couldn't do this without you.