

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



GATESHEAD FOODBANK VACANCY - ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT ENDING THE NEED FOR FOODBANKS?

We're sorry to report that our Deputy Project Manager, Rebekah Scott is leaving us to focus on her crafting business. We're therefore now recruiting for Rebekah's replacement. The role is based at our main distribution centre in Gateshead, however it will involve support across all centres.

The purposes are to assist the Project Manager in the smooth running of the Foodbank (including communicating with our volunteers, warehouse, distribution centres and partners); to recruit, train and support volunteers, alongside the Project Manager; and to respond to enquiries and liaise with referral agencies and other partners. If you're passionate about seeing an end to the need for foodbanks and feel that you may be suited to this role, then you can find further information and apply by visiting our website: www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk. Go to 'Give Help' page, 'Get Involved' section and click on the link for Deputy Manger role. If you require further information then please contact Lesleyann Watson at projectmanager@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk or on 07496 840720. The closing date for applications is Monday 24th March. We should like to wish Rebekah every success in the future and to thank her for her hard work throughout her time with Gateshead Foodbank.

Malcolm Young

With sad hearts we would like to announce the passing of Malcolm Young, who had a short battle with a brain tumour. Malcolm was a dedicated volunteer at our Central and Blaydon Distribution Centres. Malcolm joined the Foodbank in May 2023 and took to the roll of 'speedy emergency food parcel packer' straight away. Malcolm often talked to us about the value of being a volunteer and the joy he received from the social aspect and the good conversation he had. Malcolm will be greatly missed, and our thoughts and prayers are with Malcolm's family and friends.



EASTER SMILES

We aim to put a smile on people's faces when they collect their food parcel by giving out an Easter egg to everyone we see. In the week running up to Easter Sunday we envisage giving out around 200 emergency food parcels in 10 hours. We're happy to take donations of Easter eggs or you can see different ways to make financial donations on our website.

Your kind donations and generosity are greatly appreciated. This will help us to give out enough chocolate Easter eggs to everyone who attends. For donation drop off information please call 07496 840720 or e-mail info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk (Physical egg donations need to be received by **4th April**).

Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers

Amelia is one of three young volunteers at our warehouse. They began volunteering in September 2023. Here, Amelia writes about their experience:

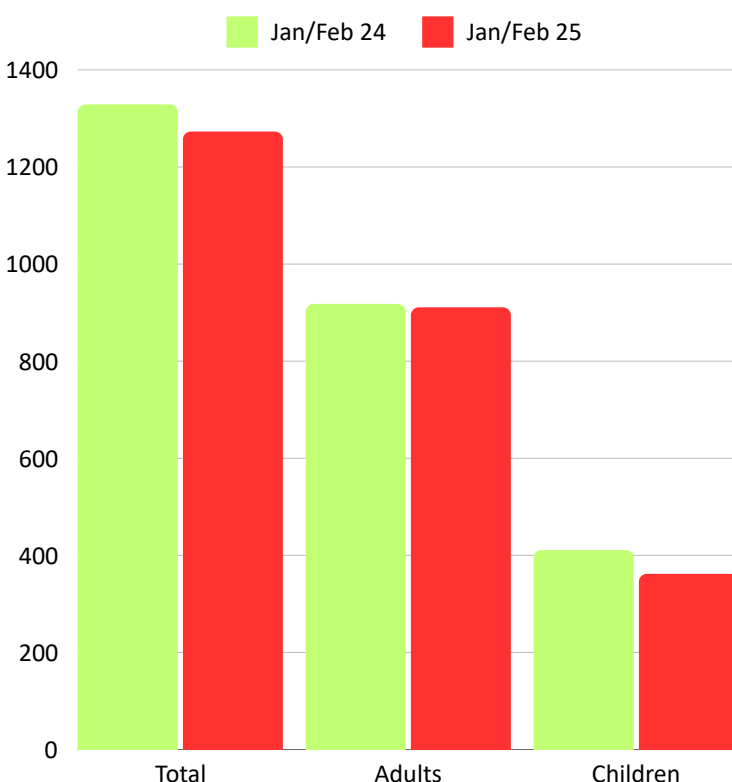
When we first started volunteering at the Foodbank, it was only for our Duke of Edinburgh. But, after gaining insight into the scale of Gateshead’s poverty, and realising the crucial impact the Foodbank has on the local community, we decided to continue volunteering.



Here’s our three Sunday volunteers, Erin, Amelia, Henry

We go to the Team Valley Warehouse every Sunday, making up the orders for the distribution centres on a Monday morning. We are so happy to be making a difference, especially as people are facing the increased cost of living.

This is our first understanding of volunteering and has been a good opportunity to gain experience whilst supporting our local community. We enjoy going every week to help with the order and any other way we can. During our time off school after our exams, we also volunteered one Monday when there weren’t enough people to help as the Foodbank is an important cause close to our hearts. As we continue with school and our studies, we are going to continue to help and support this crucial charity and try to volunteer when we can.



First Two Months’ Statistics

In the first two months of this year, we gave out emergency food parcels to a total of 1,273 people (911 adults and 362 children). This compares well with the same two months the year before during which we provided food to 1,329 people, made up of 918 adults and 411 children.

You’ll remember from our last newsletter that in 2024 we saw a reduction of almost 1,000 people using the Foodbank compared with 2023. This improvement was down to the great work of our Financial Inclusion Team and the signposting to complimentary services provided by our volunteers. It’s great that in 2025 the number of Foodbank users is still gradually falling.

WESTMINSTER LOBBY DAY ON 18TH JUNE 2025

Back in February 2023, our umbrella organisation, Trussell launched the Guarantee Our Essentials campaign, which calls on the UK government to make sure that the basic rate of Universal Credit at least covers life's essentials, and that support can never be pulled below that level.



Everyone's circumstances can change. Losing your job, needing to care for a sick family member, breaking up with your partner – these are things that can happen to any of us. That's why Universal Credit should offer support to anyone who needs it, but right now it's not providing enough income to cover the cost of life's essentials, such as food and bills, with around five in six of low-income households receiving Universal Credit going without.

You will remember we all signed the petition, which was handed in to Westminster. Last year, we all took part in 'Laying it on the Table' events, which asked our service users to write their stories of hardship and hope onto our tablecloths. Some of those stories were then collated into a mock up of a newspaper, "The Hardship Times" which was handed out at Westminster, was sent to all our MP's and featured in our last newsletter.

The next step in the campaign is to lobby parliament on the 18th of June. Hundreds of us, including three from Gateshead, will descend on Westminster, with an open letter to each MP signed by many community organisations asking for them to Guarantee our Essentials. We aim to show our MP's that there is widespread support for changes to be made to our Social Security System. Our voices are stronger together and with hundreds of people across the UK all calling for change at once we'll be impossible to ignore. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch.

Diane Kindred, Local Organiser 07938 649505

NEW FUNDRAISING GROUP

In February we held the first meeting of our new fundraising group. The group is made up of four volunteers drawn from our warehouse and distribution centres. The Foodbank's finances are in reasonable shape, so the purpose of the fundraising initiative is not only to raise money. We also aim to raise awareness of the Foodbank and the issue of food poverty in Gateshead, and to get the community involved with the Foodbank. In addition, we don't know what unforeseen events may happen in the future which could jeopardise its financial position.



So, if you're a business in Gateshead or a private individual and you'd like to hear more about Gateshead Foodbank and what our plans are for the fundraising initiative then please get in touch with us at info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk

Find us at: www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk e: info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk t: 07496 840 720



GATESHEAD COUNCILLORS VISIT GATESHEAD FOODBANK.

One of the tasks in my role as Local Organiser is to liaise with other organisations and the local authority, to build and maintain relationships. Gateshead Foodbank has always had a good relationship with Gateshead Council, and we want that good relationship to continue.

I have invited all of the Cabinet Members of Gateshead Council to visit our main distribution centre which is housed in the Citizens Advice building in central Gateshead. First, I wanted them to see firsthand how we operate, to talk to our volunteers and to get to know the process for how we provide emergency food parcels to people in poverty in the borough. Secondly, I wanted Cabinet Members to talk to our Financial Inclusion Adviser, to understand how we work to move people away from needing to attend the Foodbank, and to get to know me and my role, which again is part of the process of reducing the need for foodbanks.

One outcome of the visit by Cllr Martin Gannon, Leader of the Council, was that we were able to establish that Gateshead Council applies auto-enrolment for Free School Meals locally. This is something which is really close to my heart and which Gateshead Council has been doing for ten years – although they haven't made any announcement about it. We are campaigning to get the Government to apply auto-enrolment centrally, which would save local authorities' time and money. We will keep pushing for this, anyone who is interested in campaigning about this please do get in touch with me!



Diane Kindred

Diane Kindred, Local Organiser 07938 649505

PRAYER POINT



During February we asked Gateshead Foodbank users what they found the most helpful about their visit to the Foodbank. The two main responses which we received were that it was our volunteers' welcome which made people's visit, and that our volunteers did not judge anyone.

We pray for the continuing work of our volunteers both in our distribution centres and in our warehouse, for volunteers continuing to be a welcoming face to anyone who visits, and that Foodbank users will engage with our financial inclusion service so that we can work together to end the need for them to use the Foodbank.