

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

TWO LONGSTANDING GATESHEAD FOODBANK VOLUNTEERS ARE STEPPING DOWN. HERE ARE THEIR STORIES IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

John Smith, Treasurer: "I joined Gateshead Foodbank in mid-2013 after I was approached by one of the then trustees, Ian Britton, who asked me to take over as treasurer. Having recently retired, I welcomed the opportunity to stay active, meet people and contribute to a meaningful cause.

At first, I felt daunted, expecting to know very few people. However, I was pleasantly surprised to reconnect with familiar faces from my youth and church community. Over time, I became involved in many aspects of the Foodbank, from warehouse duties to supporting food distribution, and built strong friendships along the way.

The experience was deeply rewarding, especially during the Covid period when the need was greatest. Serving others alongside such dedicated volunteers has been a privilege. As I now step back, I look forward to spending more time on photography, carrying many fond memories with me."



Linda Watkin, Team Leader, Birtley: "I joined Gateshead Foodbank in 2017, after working with trustees for many months to establish a Distribution Centre in Birtley. This was so people would no longer have to travel to central Gateshead to collect emergency food. Together with some volunteers, I opened the centre at Birtley Methodist Church in November 2017, where I served as minister.

It has been such a privilege to lead the Birtley team and I received immense support from Gateshead Foodbank, especially in the early days. The strength and friendships of the volunteer team has been so strong, united by a desire to make a difference, with us going out socially and enjoying each other's company.

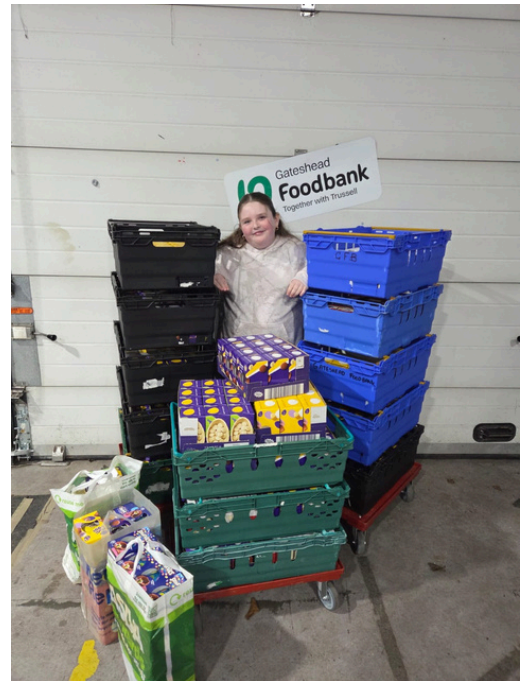


I have now stepped down as I am moving to a new post in the Bede Circuit. I will be moving to Hebburn and working in and around Washington, Low Fell and Felling churches and communities. I'd like to thank everyone for their kindness and am delighted that Lesley Cornwell will continue leading the Birtley distribution centre. Thank you Lesley, you really are a blessing!"

A Heartfelt Thank You for Your Easter Egg Donations

We want to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who generously donated Easter eggs to Gateshead Foodbank.

Your kindness and thoughtfulness made a real difference to local families who are facing difficult times. For many, seasonal treats like Easter eggs can feel out of reach, but thanks to your support, children and families across our community were able to enjoy a small moment of joy and celebration this Easter.



We have been truly overwhelmed by the generosity shown - from individuals like Savannah (shown above) and families to schools, community groups and local businesses. Every single donation, no matter the size, helped us bring a little brightness to those who need it most.

Your continued support reminds us that our community is built on compassion and care for one another. It is because of people like you that we are able to keep going and provide not only essential food supplies but also moments of happiness.

From all of us at Gateshead Foodbank, thank you for helping us share kindness this Easter.



Find us at: <https://gateshead.foodbank.org.uk/>
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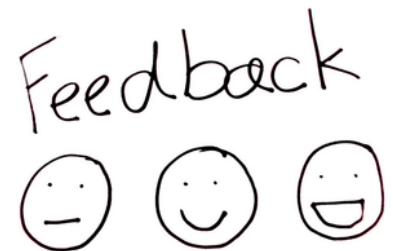
Christmas Survey

At the start of this year, we spoke to 100 Foodbank users to understand their experiences during what was an especially busy run-up to Christmas. We wanted to hear what had worked well and where we could improve.

We were encouraged to find that 86% of respondents who had used the Foodbank in December said that **the support they received was what they needed**. This is a real testament to the hard work of our volunteers and the generosity of our supporters during such a demanding time.

At the same time, the feedback has given us helpful insight into how we can do even better. When asked **what they would have liked at Christmas**, 29% said food to prepare a Christmas dinner, while 26% would have liked supermarket vouchers to give them more flexibility. A smaller group (11%) were happy with the existing provision, while 22% expressed a desire for more choice or were unsure.

This feedback will help shape our planning for future Christmas periods, as we look at ways to provide more choice and include seasonal options alongside our core support.



Easter Prayer for Gateshead Foodbank

Lord of hope and new life, following our joyful Easter celebrations, we thank You for the gift of resurrection and the promise it brings.

We lift up all who rely on Gateshead Foodbank – those facing hardship, uncertainty and hunger. May they find not only nourishment, but dignity, comfort and renewed strength.

Bless the volunteers, staff and supporters who give so generously of their time and compassion. Through their kindness, may Your love be made visible in every emergency food parcel shared and every conversation held.

Help us all to be people of resurrection hope – bringing light where there is darkness and care where there is need.

Volunteer Voices

Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Recently, we asked them to share why they chose to volunteer and what the experience means to them. Their responses were thoughtful, honest and inspiring.

Many volunteers spoke about the **importance of helping others** during difficult times. With so many people facing hardship, volunteers value being able to offer practical support, a listening ear and a warm welcome.

Creating a **friendly and non-judgemental environment** was something many volunteers highlighted. A simple smile, kindness and the opportunity to listen can make a huge difference to someone who may be feeling isolated or struggling.

Community and connection also emerged as a strong theme. Volunteers described building genuine friendships and creating a place where people feel accepted and valued. For some, the sense of community is just as meaningful as the support they provide.

Several volunteers also spoke about how **volunteering positively impacts their own wellbeing**. Stepping outside their comfort zone, meeting new people, and hearing others' stories often leaves them feeling uplifted and inspired.

What Our Volunteers Say:

- "As people leave, I want them to feel loved and to have hope in their hearts."
- "I've been part of the foodbank for over 10 years. It has been one of the best things I have done in my life. It is very rewarding, even if it's only a small or temporary way of helping others."
- "Hearing people's back stories really challenges society's stereotypes."
- "Volunteering greatly helps my mental health. It gets me out of my normal comfort zone and I always come out of a session feeling uplifted."

From offering support and kindness to building lasting friendships, our volunteers continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others every day. We are incredibly grateful for their dedication, compassion and commitment to our community.

EMAIL OR CALL US IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS TEAM - CONTACT DETAILS BELOW

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Trussell foodbanks provide over 2.6 million food parcels

New figures released in March by Trussell show that more than 2.6 million emergency food parcels were provided across the UK in 2025 by foodbanks in the Trussell network, highlighting the continued grip of hunger on communities. Foodbank use remains 45% higher than before the pandemic, with the equivalent of one parcel distributed every 12 seconds.

Although parcel numbers fell by 12% compared to 2024 – largely due to easing inflation and fewer job losses – ongoing global pressures could reverse this trend in 2026. Families are still the most affected, receiving 62% of all parcels despite making up just 42% of the population. There has also been a sharp rise in hardship among older people, with support for those aged 65+ increasing by 247% since 2019.

Food banks continue to report severe levels of need, with people skipping meals, living without heating or electricity and even opening parcels to eat before leaving. At the same time, demand is outpacing donations, leaving many foodbanks at breaking point and forced to buy food to keep shelves stocked.

Corporate Volunteering Programme

We're delighted to share that this year's corporate volunteering programme is now underway, with a fantastic response from local businesses.

Our warehouse now hosts monthly corporate volunteering sessions on the first Monday of each month (excluding bank holidays), with space for up to six participants. We also offer volunteering opportunities at our distribution centres, with more flexible scheduling to suit team availability.

We've already welcomed some brilliant teams. Colleagues from Pulsant recently joined us in the warehouse, sharing, "Thank you for letting us take part – everyone really enjoyed the day and appreciated the chance to give something back."

PureGym also volunteered at our central Gateshead distribution centre, telling us: "It was eye-opening to see the impact of your work first-hand – a truly rewarding experience."

We'd love to hear from other organisations interested in getting involved. Please get in touch via our info email address to find out more.

