

Welcome to the newsletter of Norwich foodbank. We hope you will find this to be of interest whether our local Christian charity is new to you or you are a regular supporter.

Covid-19 and Norwich foodbank—One Year On...

On Monday 30th March 2020, Norwich foodbank did the first 'home delivery' of the new covid-secure service model. Rotas were set up to answer the phone (which was routed to willing volunteer's homes or mobiles), to do deliveries every weekday afternoon and Saturday mornings and to work in the warehouse in small teams.

At the time, each month when a new rota went out, Hannah (the Project Manager) would say 'I know you volunteered short term, but here we are again!' and almost a year on, we are still operating in this way.

Referrals are received via the phone or email, the latter using the Trussell Trust secure e-voucher system. The info needed is then put onto a daily spreadsheet and remote route planners, with the driver rota, work out who will deliver what and the warehouse teams make up standard food parcels as well as those with specific dietary needs, requested toiletries and pet food and drivers then arrive mid-afternoon to take their parcels and extras round to the various addresses.

As well as all this taking place at the warehouse, there is of course the usual weighing in, sorting and processing of donations which is being done by smaller teams, but almost 9am—5pm Monday to Friday. When the third lockdown was announced for the end of December, it was with a sense of relief almost that we hadn't returned to distribution centres, so could continue our delivery model with just a few tweaks; nothing like the upheaval of the first lockdown!

This newsletter is being written in early February, but we anticipate lockdown will continue into March, when we will have been experiencing this new way of working and living for a full year. What hasn't changed, is our desire to support those who come our way, and, thanks to our fantastic community, supporters and donors, we have been able to do just that and in many cases more, throughout the past 12 months and indeed the past 10+ years we have been operating.

In 2020, we distributed almost 15,000 food parcels, a 22% increase on 2019. Yet we join with Trussell Trust in wanting to see an end to the need for foodbanks and as you read on, you'll hopefully see what we are doing to try and achieve this.

Norwich foodbank is a local Christian charity that does not affiliate itself with any political party. We are non-judgmental and inclusive, providing assistance to people of all backgrounds, with or without faith, who are found to be in genuine need.

Additional Help Received!

Part of our desire to do our best for those we serve is to ensure we are offering the correct help. We are providing emergency food, but without the support and practical help with the underlying issues (i.e. debt, benefits, employment, etc), we would see a lot more repeat customers!

So it was with great joy that we received a grant from the Trussell Trust through their Asda 'Fight Hunger, Create Change' scheme, to fund a full time Citizens Advice worker who would be solely working with those needing to use or who have previously used the foodbank. A part time worker also was employed through the same scheme to support Hunstanton and Kings Lynn foodbanks and both Stuart (Norwich, pictured right) and Daisy (Hunstanton and Kings Lynn), were employed in October 2020.

We had previously made use of the NCAN referral system (Norfolk Community Advice Network) as this is GDPR compliant and all the info Citizens Advice needs can be recorded in this online system. With Stuart added as specific 'agency' we could refer in to, we trained up one of our office volunteers who was able to help remotely and in January 2021 alone, 45 referrals were made to Stuart for varying issues (as listed in the first paragraph).

We are very hopeful that this new support will bring about lasting change and positive intervention for those we refer and that in due course, fewer people will be coming back to us but will be more able to manage their finances, be on the correct benefits and / or find suitable employment.



Zoom Presentations

Every year, on average a couple of times a month, our Project Manager, Hannah, is invited to speak at groups and events about the work of the foodbank. 2020 had a lot less opportunities as so many groups stopped meeting, but there were a handful—all done via Zoom!

Quite a different experience both presenting and 'attending' but a great opportunity to share what's been happening. Blackfriars Rotary pictured below:



Christmas Switch On

The Norwich City switch-on is usually a big event, but last year, to avoid mass gatherings, it went virtual. Norwich City Council released a video showing Santa and a child taking a walk through the city, and the lights coming on as they pass. At the end of the video they reach City Hall and on the steps are several keyworkers who represent the dedication of so many throughout the pandemic.

Norwich foodbank's Project Manager Hannah Worsley was invited to represent 'community'. "It was a huge honour to be asked," she said, "and while it is me shown in the piece, I really wanted to do it on behalf of my fantastic foodbank team and all those who have done so much for so many."

'Community is a really important word and has come back into our vocabulary a bit more this year. We have been looking out for others, and I sincerely hope that this care and kindness continues into 2021 and beyond.'

Christmas 2020

2020 was the 8th year we coordinated and distributed gifts and treats to families who otherwise would go without. We set up a 'digital giving tree', referrals were gathered and added and the link to the 'tree' sent out to those who were offering to help at Christmas but were unsure what we needed.

Thanks to donations and gifts, throughout December we were able to provide all households we delivered food parcels to with fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, Christmas treat foods and a local supermarket voucher for £5.



As well private referrals, those from schools, churches and agencies we work with, we also supported our foodbank scheme FISH (Food (and Fun) In School Holidays), through clubs in Thorpe Hamlet, Mile Cross, Earham and Silver Road. These all provided at least one meal for the families they sought to help, as well as activities and treats too.

We were delighted with the response to our digital giving tree – we had 284 children and parents listed to receive a gift and these were all ‘taken’ by donors well within a week of our deadline! We then also received further gifts and we did receive some last minute referrals so these came in very handy! Some feedback is below:

'The foodbank has helped me so much in the past and now that I am back on my feet I want to start something to give back to the people who have helped me so much. I have bought presents for a girl aged one and a girl aged seven. I also have a bag of tinned foods that my housemates and myself wanted to donate.'

'One mother and daughter were delivered their things by our team dressed as elves and Father Christmas. The mum has a serious long term health condition and needs weekly blood transfusions. Her daughter had been desperate to see Santa and this was impossible due to finance and circumstances. When we arrived and delivered the gifts and food the mum cried. She wrote to us later to say that she felt for the first time in a long while that she had family.'

'One teenager loved his remote control car so much that he put it on his pillow as he slept on Christmas night.'



Pathfinder and New Staff

As part of the Russell Trust's five-year strategy, we have joined with other foodbanks across the UK to become a 'Pathfinder', to help develop and execute a strategic plan for reducing the need for our services at a local level

Closing foodbanks in one aspect could be fairly easy, but that doesn't address the issues so many in the UK are facing and so ending the NEED FOR foodbanks, is what we and others in the network are striving for.

In year one, we will be particularly looking at our referral agencies and how they work with those we serve and also looking at the financial capability of those who are referred to us and Stuart, our dedicated Citizens Advice worker will be helping us in this line of work especially.

To help us get the most out of this project and to support the work of the foodbank generally, we have recruited a new part-time member of staff! Iain is our new Project Officer and joined on 1st March.

Iain has began teaching in 1984 and has also worked for the police as an Intelligence Analyst. When his family moved to North Norfolk, he began volunteering at the Cromer and District foodbank.

Iain says, 'I am thrilled to take up the post of Project Officer and help to co-ordinate the task of implementing the Pathfinder project. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to help to shape the way in which people in food crisis are helped in the future.'



Fantastic Volunteers

Alongside 1 full-time and 2 part-time staff, we couldn't do our work without the support of our fantastic volunteers. Covid and ensuing restrictions have sadly meant that many who have been with us for a long time have had to shield, isolate or take on a different role entirely! Fiona, (below right) is a Trustee and now volunteers as a driver once a week and Alex, (below left) was part of the Friday distribution centre but now is on both the phone and route planning teams!



A weekly email goes to all active and previously active volunteers, sharing news and photos of the week, updates and ideas, as well as messages from those we serve (see below).

We are so very grateful for all those involved—the roles to help us literally deliver, but also those praying for us, those who email or text support and those who continue to give food, toiletries or finances. We're able to do so much because of YOU; thank you.



'I have lost both my parents last year, within 15 weeks of each other, I have been ill, my husband was made redundant all of this made worse by Covid and since then I have felt that the world has been against me. What I am trying to say is that the kindness we have been shown today means more than just the food itself it has made me feel better about so much more!'

- Norwich foodbank recipient.



**"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy," Proverbs 31:8-9**

For more information or to send us details of what you are doing for Norwich foodbank please email us at admin@norwich.foodbank.org.uk or contact us at Norwich foodbank, Henderson Business Centre, 51 Ivy Road, Norwich NR5 8BF; Tel 01603 251733; website: www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk; Charity number 1143528
Norwich foodbank Patrons: **Rt Revd Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich; Delia Smith CBE & Susan Hill CBE.**

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