

## **S2 Food Poverty Network- Newsletter No 8, July 2024**



Welcome to the eighth newsletter. I make updates every couple of months following our Trustees'/ Managers' meeting.

I begin by repeating a plea made in each newsletter:-

- If you are a standing order donor, please send your contact email address to me. Please also indicate whether you would like a personal invitation to see Food Bank at work. My email address is: [jtrhull@outlook.com](mailto:jtrhull@outlook.com)

This plea has already solicited supportive, interesting replies. Several long-standing donors have taken up my invitation to visit Food Bank and Shop and see them in operation. I now send a personal e-copy of this Newsletter to some 25 donors who have made contact.

The Trustees/Managers met in mid-July. I'd like to update you on discussions in our meeting.

### **1. Our rich data**

We keep very good, but simple, data. We use the data to monitor our impact. Here are the key numbers, covering the first six months of this year, which we examined in our meeting.

#### **a. Incoming food and items to Food Bank and Community Shop**

**2024:** 6586 kg donated; 7952 kg sourced from Fareshare; 15570 kg purchased; Total 30109 kg.

**2023:** 9664 kg donated; 8776 kg from Fareshare; 15807 kg purchased; Total: 33947 kg

Donations of food are less so far this year.

#### **b. Numbers of clients being fed**

The numbers below of children and adults "being fed" is calculated by the number of weeks a client comes to Food Bank or Shop and the number of people in each household.

Here are the figures from January to June this year:

	<b>Foodbank</b>	<b>Community Shop</b>	<b>Total Fed</b>
<b>Jan</b>	193	468	661
<b>Feb</b>	229	484	713
<b>March</b>	224	535	759
<b>April</b>	259	699	958
<b>May</b>	255	530	785
<b>June</b>	221	578	799
<b>Totals</b>	1381	3294	4675

For the same period in 2023, the “Total fed” was 4896.

## **2. Reviewing numbers and reasons for referral**

We looked closely at the data for January to June 2024. We noted that self-referrals (155) significantly exceeded referrals (95) by a (professional) third party.

We noted the reasons for referral: 90 in debt, 114 with money issues, 7 affected by domestic violence, 11 homeless, 8 recently unemployed, 7 facing delay in benefits, 7 seeking asylum.

We also asked about health. 99 declared a mental health issue and 86 declared a physical health issue.

## **3. Monitoring our attempts to address causes of food poverty**

We reviewed our developed strategies. A condition of Community Shop membership is that each client explains clearly his/her reasons for food poverty and then agrees, if appropriate, to work with our debt mentors and/or with our benefit worker.

### **a. Debt Advice:**

We are working with 54 clients using the Community Money Advice systems. Seven Debt Relief Orders are now completed. Four further orders are in process of preparation.

A Debt Relief Order (DRO) is a Government approved method to deal with personal debts and helps the debtor make, with some restrictions, a fresh start. It normally lasts 12 months. If approved, the debtor stops making payments towards the debts (and interest) listed in the DRO during that time. After the 12 months, he or she no longer has to pay off the debts. However, for the next 6 years the person’s credit record will show the DRO so taking out future debts is very difficult.

The CMA model is working well. We have volunteers now trained by CMA as debt mentors. Their findings in each case are uploaded to CMA’s website by our specialist in-putter. CMA’s experts oversee and direct our actions.

The 54 live cases show, collectively, a staggering £240,458 of debt. Of that figure we classify £85,844 as “priority debts”. These are debts (gas, electric, rent) which, if left unpaid, carry risk of eviction or disconnection. These must be addressed first.

#### **b. Benefit Worker:**

So far this year, our benefit worker has pursued the cases of 89 clients. He is looking into their eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments, Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance, and Housing Support Fund.

So far (January-June) he has secured £25,489 in additional benefits. In the cases of five clients moving from Food Bank to the Community Shop, our benefit worker has secured an average £450 uplift to their entitlements.

#### **4. Community Shop update**

The Shop is open three days per week. Currently it caters for 71 households. 8 clients have ceased to use the Community Shop for good reasons. 5 have managed to find additional working hours. 1 is now too ill. 1 now has, thanks to benefit worker, accessed Disability Living Allowance and has agreed a realistic debt repayment plan.

#### **5. Update on Staffing**

We have around 25 regular and talented volunteers. They are the backbone of our work. We are now a comparatively large charity. Most charities of our size have a blend of numerous volunteers with a smaller number of part-time paid staff. The part-time paid staff bring specialist expertise (e.g. our benefits worker) and ensure that administrative tasks are promptly completed (e.g. our in-putter of data to CMA’s website).

We now welcome a seventh part-time, paid employee. This is Jill Harris. Jill has extensive experience in catering/provision and working for St Mary’s Community Centre on Bramall Lane. There she has developed accredited skills in debt advisory work and in food hygiene. She will be working on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The other six colleagues are:-

- Lucy Kinsella, who inputs CMA (debt-related) data,
- Steve Johnson, the benefits expert,
- Jade Palmer, the Shop manager,
- Mick Kinsella, the Facilities and Stock Manager,

- Karen Kinsella, the admin assistant,
- Sue (Rosie) Rose, our Coordinator/Leader.

## 6. Extending our reach

As explained in section 1 above, (a) donations of food are lower now than last year and (b) the number of clients we help is fairly stable. Regular readers of these Newsletters will know that our financial position is good. We hold reserves and would be able to cope should there be a renewed cost-of-living crisis.

If you are a new reader of these newsletters you might like to read section 5 of Newsletter 7 which explains our financial strength. We have set deficit budgets for 2023 and 2024. These will reduce our reserves by (a) spending additionally on targeted supports such as winter fuel top-ups, (b) enhancing the range of foods offered in the Food Bank and the Community Shop, and (c) “extending our reach”.

There are numerous, smaller food-related charities operating within, and close to, S2. We seek to help them. We offer support (a) to improve/widen their food offer and (b) to address underlying causes of food poverty.

We have made a good start. We are supporting with advice and funding **Park Community Action**. We have made for, initially, one year an agreement to offer fundings. Every three months we shall review, against agreed success criteria (numbers fed, varieties of food) PCA’s progress.

We are in touch with **S12 and S13 Food Banks**. We know of unmet need in the **Tinsley area**. Jim Steinke, one of our Trustees, is making promising contacts.

JTRH, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024