

S2 Food Poverty Network- Newsletter No 13, May 2025



Welcome to the thirteenth 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 regular 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

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 30 donors who have made contact.

The Trustees/Managers met in late April. This Newsletter will (Section 3) explain in more detail the workings of the transfer of clients from Food Bank to Food Shop.

1. Our rich data

We keep very good, but simple, data. We use the data to monitor our impact.

1a. Incoming food and items to Food Bank and Shop (kilograms)

Food donations are fewer than in the past. We are making contacts with churches, scout groups etc to establish new ways and locations to collect food. We have a new volunteer colleague whose skills we shall use in making specific appeals on Facebook.

We continue good use of Fareshare, the charity which distributes unsold but close-to-date food from supermarkets and shops, and we source some supplies from S6 Food Bank which makes bulk purchases for Sheffield Food banks to share.

Here are the figures, for January to March, for food coming in.

	Purchases	Fareshare	Donations	Total In
Jan	2069.80	1153.90	947.60	4171.30
Feb	2398.80	1274.00	1143.90	4816.70
March	2250.35	1183.45	870.90	4304.70
Totals	6718.95	3611.35	2962.40	13292.70

1b. Numbers of clients being fed

The numbers below of children and adults “being fed” are calculated by the number of weeks a client comes to Food Bank or Shop and the number of people in their household. Thus a client with a family of 3 coming for 4 weeks counts as 12 “people fed”.

So far in 2025 we have “fed”:-

	Foodbank	Community shop	Total Fed
Jan	207	580	787
Feb	164	589	753
March	120	554	674
Totals	491	1723	2214

Comparing these 2025 figures with the same period in 2024, we note the clear shift from Food Bank to Food Shop. Food Bank, so far this year, fed 155 fewer than 2024, whilst the Shop fed 236 more. The number of adults and children fed was 81 more than in 2024.

2. Reviewing numbers and reasons for referral

We had 139 new referrals between January and March. 69 were from professionals and 70 were self-referrals. The pattern in the reasons for referral was similar to the recent past:-

27 cited money issues, 19 cited debts, 16 were unemployed, 9 had benefit issues, 4 were homeless, 1 had a disability issue and 2 were avoiding domestic violence.

59 declared a mental health issue and 25 a physical health issue.

3. Movement from Food Bank to Food Shop

This Newsletter will tell you a little more about the transition of clients from Food Bank to Food Shop. Clients usually spend 4 weeks in Food Bank before, in most cases, transfer to Food Shop. Transition depends on openness and clarity about underlying reasons for each client’s food poverty.

In these three months, 11 clients moved across to Food Shop, 25 clients did not make the transfer. Of these, 6 were deemed to have sufficient money in the bank. The remainder did not provide convincing evidence.

Whilst clients access Food Shop, their cases are reviewed by suitably trained volunteers. (Below, in section 4, will be data on assistance given with debt management and with access to correct benefits.) 29 reviews were held in

these three months. 27 clients continued to access the Shop. 2, whom we had supported to gain access to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) duly left the Shop.

A further 9 clients left the Shop. 2 moved out of the S2 area, 2 gained employment, 5 did not attend the required reviews.

4. 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.

- **Debt Advice:**

Our debt mentors are supported by experts from CMA. We looked at data showing impact since we began to work with CMA (Community Money Advice).

Our team has now completed 22 DROs. These are Debt Relief Orders which, after due process and by agreement, write off most debts and allow a fresh start. The 22 DROs wrote off debts of £189,500.

The Trustees were greatly impressed. Our volunteers have impacted far more quickly than we might have expected. They are changing lives!!

- **Benefit Access**

Regular readers of these Newsletters will understand our developing practice. We used a Service Level Agreement to secure the time and expertise of a fine Benefit expert from Manor and Castle Development Trust. From his practice we learned.

The SLA has now finished. To continue this work we have three strands. (a) One volunteer specialises in support to gain PIP payments. He has attended, with S2 clients, two tribunals and has won both! (b) We have deployed one volunteer to pursue Household Support Grant funds. So far she has accessed £1765 for clients. (c) Two volunteers are specialising in other benefits. They have undertaken suitable training courses.

5. Some points on finances

- **Clearer monitoring data**

The Trustees have established a new Finance and Resources sub-group. It will meet in the gaps between the main Trustee Meetings. It will monitor patterns and help plan ahead. It has already, working with our Bookkeeper,

developed a clear colour-coded new format for interim financial reports to trustees. Departures from planned expenditures will clearly show.

- **Good news on Peppercorn rent**

Sheffield City Council is our landlord at the Shop premises. We have made the case for a special rent. They have listened and, for now, we are not being charged rent. This is very good news.

- **Update on pursuit of grants**

Regular readers of these Newsletters will be aware. S2 Food Poverty Network emerged from Covid in a healthy financial state. Since then we have developed (debt advice, benefits access) strategies which, we hope, address the underlying causes of wider food poverty within S2. The Food Shop provision is the key context for the development of these new practices.

To meet the costs of running the Shop and the longer-term sustained provision of food, we decided it was time to renew efforts to secure additional funding from a number of Charities. We identified several charities with local roots which specialize in helping Sheffield people.

The process of multiple grant application has, for me, been a truly enlightening experience. We made application to **Sheffield Town Trust**. The Town Trust was founded in 1297. We further applied to the **Graves Trust** and to **Freshgate Trust**. J G Graves, in his lifetime gave much of his fortune to the people of Sheffield to establish parks and woodlands. He set up the Trust which, to this day, supports Sheffield charities. Freshgate Trust was founded in 1941 by Harry Brearley, the pioneer of Sheffield stainless steel. He wanted to share his fortune with the working people of Sheffield. These three trusts have accepted our applications. Each Trust knows that we have help from the others: there is good collaboration. Quite rightly, they will monitor our subsequent use of their funds in supporting the Shop.

Contact with these charities gave me a real sense of the sound traditions of mutual help which distinguish strong communities. We also applied to **Sheffield Church Burgesses Trust**, founded in 1554. Their awarding committee will meet and decide later this month.

We should give clear and public thanks to these charities. The S2 website already names and thanks them.

My trustee colleague, John Le Corney is pursuing further grants from, for instance, National Lottery, Awards for All.

JTRH, 4th May 2025