

S2 Food Poverty Network- Newsletter No 10, November 2024



Welcome to the tenth 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 mid-November. 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 eight months of this year, which we examined in our meeting.

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

2024: 11295 donated: 13780 sourced from Fareshare: 40218 purchased: Total 65293.

These figures show a continued, slow decline in donations in kind for which we compensate by increased purchasing.

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".

From January to end of October this year we have "fed":-

	Foodbank	Community Shop	Total Fed
Jan	193	468	661
Feb	229	484	713
March	224	535	759
April	259	699	958
May	255	530	785
June	221	578	799
July	264	702	966
August	154	612	765
September	126	633	759
October	212	741	953
Totals	2137	5982	8119

2. Reviewing numbers and reasons for referral

We looked closely at the data for January to October 2024. We noted that self-referrals (226) significantly exceeded referrals (173) by a (professional) third party.

We noted the reasons for referral: 143 in debt, 114 with money issues, 10 affected by domestic violence, 15 homeless, 15 recently unemployed, 17 facing delay in benefits, 7 seeking asylum, 2 victims of human trafficking.

We asked about health. 140 declared a mental health issue and 92 declared a physical health issue.

We note ethnicity. 234 identify as White British and 19 as Black British. Additionally, we have individuals from Slovakia, Bermuda, Iraq, Ghana, Mauritania, Honduras, Turkey, Namibia, Syria, China, and Somalia. We have 2 clients from each of Afghanistan, Jamaica, and Albania. We have 3 from each of Portugal and Kurdistan. We have 6 from each of Russia and Pakistan.

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.

- **Debt Advice:**

We are currently working with 51 clients using the Community Money Advice systems. 15 Debt Relief Orders are now completed.

The 51 live cases show, collectively, a staggering £377,018 of debt. Of that figure we classify £126,564 as “priority debts”. These are debts (gas, electric,

rent) which, if left unpaid, carry risk of eviction or disconnection. These must be addressed first.

So far this year, including the cases where DROs have been given, 28 cases have been closed. A case closes when a realistic plan to manage remaining debts is agreed.

- **Benefit Worker:**

So far this year, he has pursued the cases of 89 clients. He is looking into their eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments, Personal Independence Payments, Limited capability for Work allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Council Tax Support and Housing Support Fund.

By end of October he had secured £42,188 in additional benefits.

4. Food Bank and Community Shop updates

Remember, please, that our metric is people/children, or households, “fed” with a week’s provision.

This year, up to October, the Food Bank has fed 1103 households comprising 1276 adults and 861 children. Usually, and prior to transfer to Community Food Shop, clients attend Food Bank for 4 weeks.

The Shop is open two days per week. Currently it caters for 71 households. So far this year, the shop has helped (weekly) households 2378 times, adults 3331 times, children 2650 times.

5. Overview of finances

We are currently in the process of setting the 2025 budget. Our budgeting year aligns with the calendar year. Donations of food are lower now than last year and the number of clients we help is fairly stable. We have good financial reserves so for 2024 we had set a deficit budget.

In 2024 we spent additionally on equipping and refurbishing the new Community Shop, on expert staffing to secure benefit entitlements, and on supporting other food-related initiatives across our S2 area (“extending our reach”). In retrospect, we believe that we have delivered well on our strategic objectives of better addressing the underlying causes of food poverty in our area.

We are now considering setting another deficit budget and have agreed an additional (December) meeting to finalize decisions. The dilemma stands: we should use our reserves strategically to relieve pressing food poverty but should retain sufficient reserves to meet future, possibly growing, need.

My next Newsletter will explain our financial decisions and planning for 2025.

We shall, for certain, now renew our pursuit of grants from commercial and charitable sources. We already have success to report in this regard:-

- We have a long-standing relationship with the **Coop**.

Through its Local Community Fund the Coop does great work supporting a wide variety of local charities across the country. Its sponsorship year runs from October each year. For this coming year we are again one of the Coop's Sheffield partner charities. We have been a partner in several recent years. Rightly the Coop changes its selections annually so it can help start-ups and a varied range of local charities.

If you are a Coop member, please go on the Coop's website (<https://membership.coop.co.uk/dashboard>). Go to "choose a local cause". Select, say, 10 mile radius. You will soon be impressed by how many worthy charities there are in Sheffield gaining Coop support. You could pick S2 Food Bank as your selected charity. The more people choose us, the greater share we shall receive of monies pledged via the Coop.

- We will shortly receive support from **Sainsbury**.

Their Greystones Local Store has, for many years, passed their close-to-sell-by breads and other products to us each week. We are their "front of store" partners. The store has named S2 Food Bank to receive a Sainsbury Community Grant before Christmas.

JTRH, 24th November 2024