

S2 Food Poverty Network- Newsletter No 17, November 2025



Welcome to the seventeenth 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 mid-November.

I am now trying in each Newsletter to highlight new themes and issues. This Newsletter will (a) update readers on our two new appointments and explain the induction plans, (b) report on the visit of three local councillors in response to the Strategic Review, (c) update you on the ongoing work better to understand the fluctuation in demand, (d) report on budget setting for 2026.

See Section 5 for more detail.

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 have diminished of late recovering somewhat in October. (They tend to pick up towards Christmas.) We have received or purchased 18 tonne less this year across all headings than at the same point in 2024.

Here are the figures (kilogrammes), for January to October, 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
April	2681.20	1521.20	1717.00	5919.40
May	2999.60	1233.40	642.20	4875.80

June	2555.20	1077.10	705.98	4338.28
July	2858.20	1295.33	743.40	4897.07
August	2362.20	1130.20	525.64	4018.04
Sept	2892.60	1042.57	692.50	4627.67
Oct	2643.30	1335.56	1061.50	5040.36
Totals	25711.39	12246.71	9051.22	47009.32

1b. Numbers of people 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 children coming for one week counts as 4 “people fed”.

So far this year we have fed:-

	Foodbank	Community shop	Total Fed
Jan	207	580	787
Feb	164	589	753
March	120	554	674
April	130	620	750
May	177	472	649
June	164	474	638
July	184	612	796
August	136	453	589
Sept	151	471	622
Oct	261	532	793
Totals	1694	5357	7051

So far this year, Food Bank and Shop have fed 7051 people. In 2024 the figure by this point in the year was 8119. Demand is decreasing. We are puzzled. (See 5c below for our response.)

2. Reviewing numbers of referrals

	Professional	Self-referrals	Total
Jan	22	21	43
Feb	21	38	59
March	26	11	37
April	13	19	32
May	11	28	39
June	18	29	47
July	9	19	28
August	11	25	36
Sept	16	23	39
Oct	10	31	41
Totals	157	244	401

Looking at referrals there is a clear continuity, in terms of main reasons cited for fuel poverty, from the 2024 pattern. Debt is still the main driver of food poverty. Failure to access the full range benefits is also significant.

3. Patterns of Food Bank and Food Shop

Currently Food Shop helps 78 households. Clients coming into Food Bank each week in October averaged 22 (households).

4. Monitoring our attempts to address causes of food poverty

- **Debt Advice:**

Our debt mentors are supported by experts from CMA. Our excellent volunteers, **Ruth Abbey and Julie Roberts**, lead on this. We looked at data showing impact so far this year working with CMA (Community Money Advice).

Our team has now completed 15 DROs this year. These are Debt Relief Orders which, after due process and by agreement, write off most debts and allow a fresh start. To date the DROs agreed, since we partnered with CMA, have written off wrote off debts of £320,000.

8 more DROs are in process.

- **Benefit Access**

Our impressive specialist in **Personal Independence Payments**, Duncan Lennox, is currently working on 22 cases. 6 cases have been to tribunal of which 4 have been won.

Another effective volunteer, **Nikki Kearsley** specializes in **Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity**. She has 19 active cases, 3 at tribunal stage.

A third and fourth fine volunteers, **Corynne Bailey and Ruth Abbey**, succeeding the Benefits expert from Manor and Castle Development Fund, specialize in **Household Support Fund**. Those eligible must apply twice per year. Here are the results so far this year:-

Jan - Income for clients is £365
Feb – income for clients is £860
March–income for clients is £540
April – income to clients is £170
May income to clients is £120
June income for clients £324
July income for clients £124
August income for clients £175
September income for clients £320
October income for clients £170

5. Reporting on four issues

a. Changes in our Staffing

We have three currently employed staff. These are:-

- Coordinator (Sue Rose) who takes overall responsibility for Food Bank, Food Shop and additional offers/projects.
- (Facilitator) Mick Kinsella who deals with making orders, receiving orders and donations, plus managing all equipment whilst ensuring safety.
- Administrator (Karen Kinsella) who ensures welcome, and appropriate direction, to volunteers and clients. She deals with practical administrative functions in support of Mick and Rosie.

The three form a wonderful team. Without them, we would not have seen the many ground-breaking innovations of the last few years.

Karen and Rosie are retiring in the New Year. (Rosie will continue as a volunteer.) They gave us helpful early warning.

We have now made the two new appointments. We welcome **Zoe Steane** who will take Rosie's role and **Grace Lee** who will be our new Administrator. Both began work in November. This gives us almost two months of overlap.

Typically, Rosie has made careful plans. She will, use the overlap period to induct our new colleagues. Not only will they understudy herself and Karen, they will also see the Christmas routines planned and delivered. That is family food parcels, children's presents, liaison with Father Christmas.

b. Visit by local councillors

The three councillors for Park and Arbourthorne (**Mia Drazaic, Ben Miskell, Nabeela Mowlana**) came for a good visit on a Wednesday to see both Food Bank and Food Shop in operation. They had requested such a visit after reading my Strategic Review of our operations.

They asked questions, helped in our work and were very positive. They agreed to seek out other possible fundings the Council might provide. They also agreed to encourage friends, colleagues and Party members to donate to our work. It was a pleasure seeing them.

I should also thank Councillor **Laura Moynahan** (Manor and Castle). She was instrumental in persuading the City Council to waive our rental costs for the Shop premises.

c. Fluctuations in demand

One of our Trustees, **Margaret Booth**, is working on this matter. We have been puzzled by fluctuating, and diminishing, demand, especially for Food Bank help. Here the good data assembled by Karen Kinsella come to our rescue.

Karen and Margaret are analysing patterns of referral, location and take-up. The first part of her research has been to mine the data. Margaret is looking at other providers within, and close to, the S2 area. What do they offer? Where are they based? Is there complementary practice or overlap?

She hopes also to interview selected current and past clients.

At the trustees' November meeting Margaret gave initial report. She will report more fully in January.

d. Budget setting, 2026

Our financial year is the calendar year. Our Treasurer is **Geraldine Roberts**. She has, at each previous meeting, given simple-to-understand but comprehensive data on our 2025 budget.

We have agreed a deficit budget for next year. Geraldine stressed the need for caution where income expectations are concerned. We do not want, however, to "sit on" reserves which might alleviate food poverty. Our success in pursuit of grants gives us "room". Funding for food and premises for the Community Food Shop increases the financial demand.

We agreed to increase the budgets for food in the Food Bank by £1000 and in the Food Shop by £6000.

6. Coop support to S2 Food Poverty Network

My wife, Carol, and I visited the Woodhouse Coop Store, to be presented with a big cheque! On the left is Alex Archer, Coop Member Activator for Rotherham and Sheffield. In several recent years the Coop has been a generous supporter of S2 Food Poverty Network. This year Coop funded extra costs of running the Community Food Shop.

If you have not before, check online. The Coop does great work in all local areas. The range of worthy charities in Sheffield is excellent.

JTRH, 25th November 2025

