

EXETER FOODBANK

Autumn 2015

Exeter Foodbank

PO Box 661, Exeter, Devon, EX2 7QU

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T 07818 226 524

Vouchers can be exchanged at:

Monday 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Tuesday 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Thursday 2.00pm - 4.00pm

A project seeded by The Trussell Trust.

Exeter Foodbank is a Christian charity, motivated by the loving, giving example of Jesus.



Emergency food for local people in crisis

An Inspector Calls:

A Message from the EFB Management Team

Although registered as an independent charity, Exeter Foodbank comes under the 'umbrella' of the The Trussell Trust. In order to ensure that all Trust Foodbanks offer a comparable service, each undergoes a yearly Quality Assurance inspection.

The process is quite rigorous – rather like an Ofsted for Foodbanks. First, a questionnaire is sent to the Foodbank Manager to complete, in advance of a visit by the Regional Development Officer (RDO). The questionnaire covers a range of subjects including working practices of the food store and food distribution centres, volunteer roles, the work and responsibilities of trustees, public relations and communications, fundraising, safeguarding and Foodbank sustainability – to name but a few!

The RDO then visits the Foodbank and inspects the food store and distribution centre. They also look at a lot of the paper work and talk to volunteers (none of whom have been pre-selected!) about their volunteering experience.

This year's inspection found we were clearly committed to complying with Trussell Trust good practice and to keeping supporters and volunteers well informed. We were also commended for:

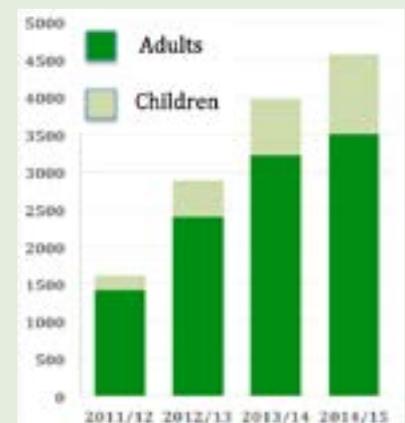
- diligent and timely data entry (*Well done to the volunteers who faithfully do this every week!*)
- taking client needs into account when reviewing changes to operations such as the introduction of a third distribution session

The report concludes that the current establishment of the foodbank is "robust", with every likelihood that it will be durable and resilient.

So...a huge thank you to every one of our wonderful volunteers who work so hard, week by week, to ensure that Exeter Foodbank delivers an excellent service to people in need in the city.

**Exeter Foodbank
Management Team**

Number of people fed by EFB by financial year**



**Figures refer to the number of individual food parcels distributed and therefore include some 'repeat' users.

In 2014/15, EFB fed

- a total of **4,580** people
- **1,072** children
- an average of **88** people per week

HOW FOODBANK WORKS



1 Non-perishable food is donated by the public at supermarket points, churches and schools.



2 Volunteers collect and sort the food at our storage unit just outside Exeter.



3 Doctors, social workers and charities give Foodbank vouchers to people in crisis.



4 Vouchers are exchanged for 3 days' worth of food at the Foodbank centre.



5 Foodbank volunteers take time to listen and signpost clients to further support.

Welfare Watch: *Universal Credit*

Universal Credit is a new benefit to support people who are on a low income or out of work. It is intended to simplify the welfare system by replacing 6 previously existing benefits with a single monthly payment, and to provide a greater incentive for people to work. Universal Credit is being rolled out in stages, and will apply for newly unemployed single people in Exeter from November 2015.

The Positives

The single, streamlined payment system is designed to provide a more stable income for claimants as their circumstances change. For those transitioning from unemployment into work, it will be paid to top-up low earnings without the need to make a new benefit application. For those in low-paid work, the amount paid will be adjusted automatically as hours and earnings fluctuate.

This increased continuity is much needed. In 2014/15, 131 people received food from EFB due to 'delayed wages', to 'plug the gap' between the end of their JSA claim and receiving their first pay packet. Many more explained to us the impossibility of budgeting effectively when working hours vary dramatically week to week and can be cut without warning.

Our Concerns

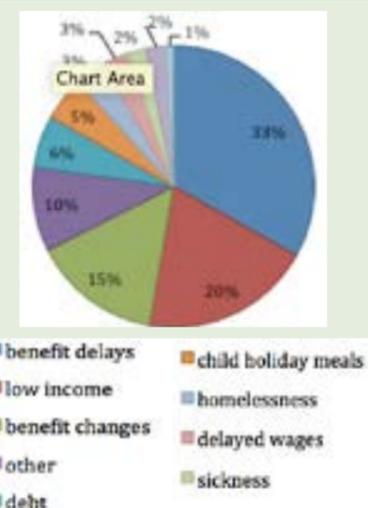
- **Payment delays:** Most people will have to wait 5-6weeks between making a claim and receiving their first payment.
- **Increased 'conditionality' and tough sanctions:** Everyone will have to sign and adhere to a personalised Claimant Commitment in order to receive Universal Credit – or face tough sanctions. Creating a workforce that lives in fear of losing low-paid or unsuitable jobs may lead to abuses and erode employees' rights.
- We have already seen first-hand the adverse impact of benefit sanctions upon vulnerable people – particularly those with mental health issues – who struggle to navigate 'the system'. Our experience shows that sanctions tend to push people away from the workforce through the stress they cause, and often increase personal debt.
- **New online-only application system:** Claims will have to be made and accounts managed online, creating significant issues for those without internet access, or with limited IT skills.
- **New emphasis on personal budgeting:** Claimants will receive their benefit in a single, direct monthly payment. This is likely to prove problematic for vulnerable people with limited budgeting experience.

A survey carried out amongst benefit claimants and advisors in Exeter found that:

- Only **57%** of clients had access to the internet.
- **40%** of clients thought they would need help to complete the online application.
- **90%** of clients thought they would have difficulty managing their money under Universal Credit.
- **9%** of advice workers felt that they knew enough about Universal Credit at present to provide adequate support.

Source: Universal Credit Impact Report – Advice Exeter July 2015

Key causes of referral in 2014/15



EFB FAQ#3: Aren't most people who use foodbanks homeless?

In a word – no. Unlike soup kitchens, our service is not primarily aimed at people who are street homeless. EFB clients come from a wide range of backgrounds and include self-employed professionals, families with young children and students.

Less than 7% of our clients are of No Fixed Abode (NFA)

This is reflected in the food we offer. Our parcels are composed predominantly of non-perishable tinned items; clients ideally need access to basic cooking facilities to make use of it. We ask voucher-holders to take this into account, but of course we are happy to serve rough sleepers if we can. We have tin openers and basic crockery/cutlery available and can often provide fresh bread, jam and fruit. We've also found that some homeless clients are very creative at finding ways of using/cooking tinned food!

We signpost rough-sleepers to various organisations providing free meals: St Petrock's offers weekday breakfasts and lunches, whilst the soup kitchen network ensures people get a ready-cooked meal each night.

See www.stpetrocks.org.uk for details

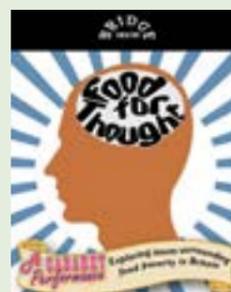


RAG(s) to RICHES

Having chosen EFB as one of its charities of the year for 2014/15, Exeter University's Student Guild RAG (Raise And Give) raised a whopping £14,441.82 through a series of exciting fund raising events. These included a sponsored 'jailbreak' hitchhiking challenge, in which students had 30 hours to travel as far from Exeter as they could without spending any money on travel!

Raising EFB's campus profile also led to other initiatives including:

- **Grand Challenges:** In a week in which first years explore contemporary issues, Joy ran a workshop on food poverty and the work of EFB. In response, the group produced useful documents examining and rebutting foodbank myths and came up with innovative ideas to increase food donations and address rural food poverty
- **Student Drama Performance 'Food for Poverty':** EFB worked closely with a group of drama students, who put on an entertaining and challenging lunchtime performance exploring food poverty in St Stephen's Church
- EFB feature in **Exeter Magazine**



'More Than Food'

"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

— Desmond Tutu

At EFB we're aware that food poverty is a complex issue. There are no simple answers; most people are referred to us due to a combination of challenging individual circumstances and wider factors beyond their control. As a foodbank, we aim to address both personal and contextual causes. In previous editions of the newsletter, we've focussed on our efforts to raise awareness of long-term, underlying issues (such as problems within the welfare system and in employment legislation) – something we've addressed in part through our participation in the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into food poverty. Here, we shift our attention to a new initiative by the Trussell Trust called 'More than Food' which encourages foodbanks to move beyond crisis intervention in order to empower individuals and help them break free from the cycle of poverty itself.

In Exeter, we're fortunate to have a wide range of excellent services on our doorstep. 103 Exeter-based agencies currently hold EFB vouchers, including local housing associations, ECC benefit support services, the CAB, providers of supported accommodation, schools, colleges & children's centres, debt-relief charities, churches, GPs and health visitors. Rather than 'reinventing the wheel', we're looking to develop these existing partnerships by identifying gaps in services and using EFB as a means of improving access to local expertise.

Ideas currently being explored include:

- Producing a **recipe leaflet**, with information on how to make use of food in a foodbank parcel, safe food storage and portion sizes – for those with limited experience of cooking for themselves
- Running a **basic cookery course** and **budgeting courses**
- Having **CAB advisors** and representatives from a local **YMCA job club** present at distribution sessions to provide benefit and employment advice (and make follow-up appointments)
- Working closely with agencies at the new **Exeter Health and Wellbeing Hub**, which is due to open in Wat Tyler House in early 2016, to facilitate two-way referrals to services (<https://www.exetercvs.org.uk/wellbeing/hub>).

If you have any comments, creative ideas or suggestions about areas where additional support is needed, please get in touch (info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk).

To find out more about 'More than Food' programmes taking place in Trussell Trust foodbanks nationally, visit <http://www.trusselltrust.org/more-than-food>

"My money was stopped by Atos because I failed their medical. At the medical, they didn't even test me for the conditions I have – they just ticked boxes on a form and would not take into account any medical reports. I have not had any money for 4 weeks because they stopped it there and then. I have now gone to the courts – my appeal is being heard by the judge this week.

This cannot be right and is putting a lot of strain on people. I would feel better off in jail – at least I will get three meals a day and bills won't be mounting up. I think your doctor should say whether you are fit for work, not someone who doesn't know you."

EFB client, June 2015

Meet the team

Having completed our introduction to the management team in the last issue of the newsletter, we now turn our attention to other people without whom Exeter Foodbank couldn't function.

Betty Williams is EFB's Distribution Rota Compiler, a role which involves gathering available dates each month from the distribution volunteers – there are currently 59 volunteers - and organising them into 3 teams per week, comprising 2 leaders, 2-4 helpers and a 'sign poster' per team.



"I sometimes heard about scroungers taking handouts, so I decided to volunteer and see for myself."

Betty says she first became aware of EFB about six years ago when treasurer of her local church: "Over time the plight of those in poverty, for a variety of reasons, not least the economic climate and welfare restrictions, showed the need for Food Banks, and I wanted to help in a personal way.

The Bible teaches us to help the poor and feed the hungry but what galvanised me into action was the criticism I sometimes heard about

'scroungers' taking handouts, so I decided to volunteer to serve at the distribution centre and see for myself."

Betty really enjoys her role because the volunteers are so willing to serve and if it's true that 'the Lord loves a cheerful giver' she says they are very much loved!

Betty sometimes gets to serve at the Mint as well. "It's a pleasure and a privilege," she says, "and I don't see any 'scroungers' - just people in need."

Thank you to:

- Staff and customers at Tesco Exe Vale who supported our **July Neighbourhood Food Collection**, collecting a whopping 1709kg of food - the equivalent of roughly 4070 meals
- **Janet MacDonald & Quorum**, who put on a wonderful concert of classical music in Topsham in March, raising £429.96; and who perform again on Thursday 22nd October in St Stephen's Church from 12.30
- Young people from **Exeter City National Citizen Service**, who collected an impressive 190kg of food and £76.87 at Morrison's
- **Ashford LLP** for 151.3kg of food collected at a staff fundraising day
- **RD&E UNISON**, Kier Living Ltd, Hospiscare, Artavia Personal Financial Services, the Environment Agency, Exeter City Football Club, the Royal College of Nursing – and many others - for all their support.

Foodbank Shopping List

Milk - UHT, semi-skimmed

Coffee - instant

Custard - tins

Meat meals - tins

Vegetables - tins

Potatoes - instant / tins

Fruit - tins

Rice pudding - tins

Why not stick the shopping list on your fridge, and choose one item from it to add to your own list next time you go shopping?



Donate

Foodbanks receive no government funding and are dependent on your support in order to keep going. We appreciate whatever you can give, big or small.

You can give gifts by:

Texting **EXFB12 £5** to **70070** to give a one-off gift of £5.

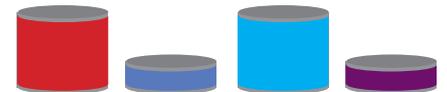
Sending cheques (made payable to Exeter Foodbank) to **PO Box 661, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6JP**.

To find out about giving a regular gift or leaving a legacy gift visit:

exeter.foodbank.org.uk/donate

Please help us make your gift go further by downloading, filling out and including a Gift Aid Form if applicable. Thank you!

Get involved



You can donate in-date non-perishable food from our shopping list at one of our Foodbank boxes, which are located at:

Sainsbury's - Pinhoe

Sainsbury's - Guildhall

Sainsbury's - Alphington

Tesco - Exe Vale

Co-operative - Cowick Street

Co-operative - Sidwell Street

Co-operative - Queen Street

Waitrose - Heavitree Road