

EXETER FOODBANK

Emergency food for local people in crisis

A Message from Mark, EFB Manager



Foodbanks have been in the news a lot in 2017 - but there is the public perception of foodbanks - and then there is the reality...

What did I learn in 2017 as the new manager of the project?

Mostly I learned that foodbanks are about real people and that we are all connected in some way. There is no average foodbank volunteer, client or day!

- We have 150 volunteers working in several locations. That sounds simple - but it's a lot of people, training, communication, rotas, skills, and roles. It is a lot of personalities who make up a community.
- We provide emergency food via distribution sessions and food boxes. That sounds simple. But to transport food from all over Exeter to the out-of-town store, sort it, make up boxes, check the sorting lists, assemble items with the correct 'best before' date - and then get the food to sites across the city - takes a lot of people, dedication and organisation.
- We have collected funds at a football stadium. We have run roadshows, given talks at schools, groups and churches. We have been at Exeter Respect Festival. We worked with over 130 professional agencies in the city and provided more than 5,000 food supplies to clients in need. People do not always see the huge amount of work and administration which goes on behind the scenes - or the cost involved in making it happen.

And just as the operation of the foodbank is more complex than you might think, so too are lives of the people involved. Most people know that foodbank clients are given a voucher but this voucher does not fully explain who they are or the reality of their situation. It does not show a human being who is trying so hard to get by, to support themselves or their families. People just like you and me.

On both sides of the foodbank 'serving table' there is respect and appreciation of what it means to be part of a community and to be there for one another. As we step into 2018 we do not know what challenges or opportunities we will face. We are fundraising to secure the long term future of the project as demand for our service seems to be higher than ever before - and is increasing steadily. We wait with some degree of trepidation to see what changes Universal Credit will bring. But the one thing that we do know is that what the general public sees is only a fraction of the whole, complicated, multi-faceted structure that makes us this amazing charity.

Thank you for your fantastic support & have a wonderful Christmas.

Mark

HOW FOODBANK WORKS

- Non-perishable food is donated by the public at supermarket points, churches and schools.
- Volunteers collect and sort the food at our storage unit just outside Exeter.
- Doctors, social workers and charities give Foodbank vouchers to people in crisis.
- Vouchers are exchanged for 3 days' worth of food at the Foodbank centre.
- Foodbank volunteers take time to listen and signpost clients to further support.

Exeter Foodbank

PO Box 661, Exeter, Devon

EX2 5PS

T 07818 226524

W exeterfoodbank.org.uk

E info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk

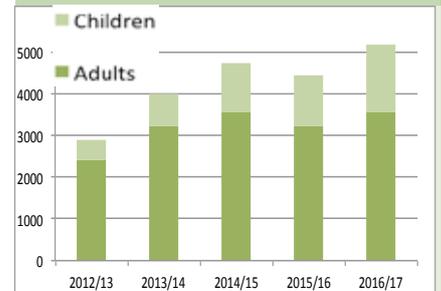


A project seeded by The Trussell Trust.

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

Winter Edition 2017

Number of people served by EFB*

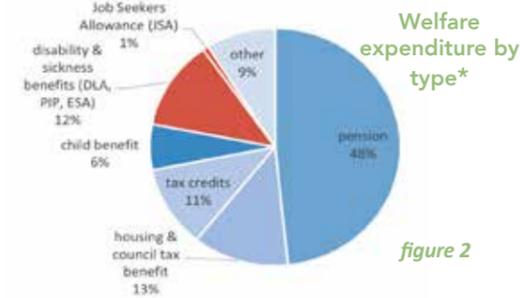
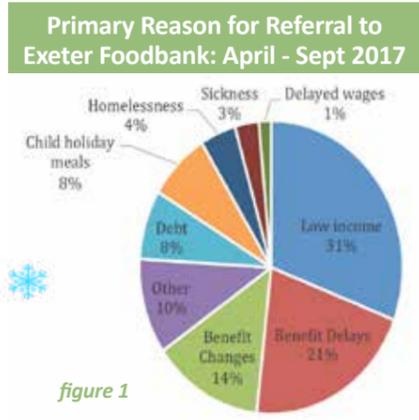


In 2016/17, EFB provided 3 days' worth of emergency food to 5,174 people* of whom nearly 1 in 3 was a child.

*Figures refer to the number of individual food parcels provided (including to repeat clients).

Benefits, Taxes & Foodbanks: Myths & Painful Realities

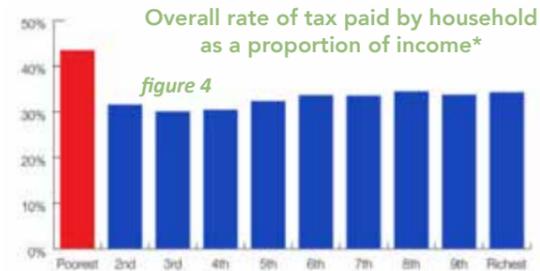
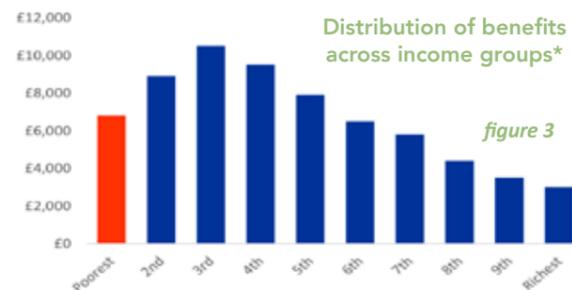
'Benefit changes' and 'benefit delays' were the primary cause of referral for 35% of people served by EFB between April and September 2017 (figure 1). However, although useful indicators of broad themes, there's a danger that such figures reinforce a false distinction between out-of-work benefit recipients and in-work taxpayers (who support them). The stories we hear from individuals at EFB - particularly from the growing number referred due to 'low income' - paint a more complex picture of the reality behind the tick-boxes.



Benefits
Many people equate 'being on benefits' solely with recipients of job-seekers allowance and disability payments. But benefits like these account for only around 13% of total welfare expenditure (figure 2). More than 50% of total welfare expenditure (via pensions and child benefit) provides a basic income for most children and retired people, regardless of their economic status. A further 24% (via tax credits, housing benefit and council tax benefit) is paid to those on low incomes or in low-paid work (figure 2)*.

Taxes

Similarly, we often think of 'taxpayers' as those who pay income tax. However, there are other forms of tax, many of which are set at a standard rate irrespective of income. Whilst income tax is the largest tax that the better-off pay, for others, indirect taxes (such as VAT, council tax and vehicle taxes) are more significant. When these are taken into account, the poorest 10% of UK citizens pay 43.4% of their income in taxes. This is 10% more than the rest of the population, who pay an average tax rate of 32.7% (figure 4)*.



When figures 3 & 4 are juxtaposed, the comparative levels of welfare received - and taxes contributed - by the poorest 10% of the population, is striking. Most of us are 'on benefits' - but those on lower incomes face disproportionate hardship when payments are interrupted. We all pay taxes - but increasing living costs (and rises in indirect taxes) disproportionately affect those on the lowest incomes. When these scenarios coincide, as they frequently do in the current economic climate, the financial impact on people on low incomes can be devastating, as this story from a previous Christmas visitor to Exeter Foodbank shows:

"It is Christmas - December 21st. My partner and I both work and we have 3 young girls aged 10, 7 and 5 years. We live in social housing and our rent is very high - over £700. My partner works for the NHS and I for our local school. We qualify for child tax credit (very small amount) and housing benefit, which has been suspended. Our wages just cover our rent and bills, although some are outstanding. We have no money for food. Without the foodbank my family would have been in a terrible state over Christmas, I feel worthless at the minute and even though I am working can't buy my children food at Christmas - so thank you so much for your help.."
EFB client - 'My Story'

Next Steps

How might these insights help us to reduce UK hunger? On the one hand, they confirm that reform within the benefits system - such as the welcome changes to Universal Credit announced in the government's Autumn Budget - are urgently needed, and can make an immediate difference in the lives of thousands of hungry citizens. However, they also suggest that if we wish to reduce the need for people to come to foodbanks then we must also tackle the poverty that is associated with income inequality.

*Statistics: ONS (2017) 'The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income, 2015/16.' London: Office for National Statistics
Analysis: Duffy, S. 'The Politics of Poverty', The Centre for Welfare Reform, 2017. Reproduced with permission. Full article available at: <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/by-az/the-politics-of-poverty.html>

A Bumper Harvest!

A huge thank you to everyone who has supported us this autumn. A whopping **8 tonnes** of food was donated in October following bumper harvest collections. The store, which was looking quite empty, is now much fuller, and we're able to provide food to an increasing number of people. In November, we regularly provided food for around **115 people per week**.

Thanks to (among many others): **Aquamarine Media** who raised funds and food through a Harvest Bake-Off; **Exeter City FC** who allowed us to collect at the game against Luton; and **Quorum** for their lovely fundraising concert.

FB Manager Mark Richardson has enjoyed getting out and about, giving harvest talks to - and collecting non-perishable food donations from - numerous schools, nurseries, churches and other groups, including Exeter Library and Exeter Labour Party.

If your school, church, group or business have a creative idea to support us, or would like a talk on our work, we'd love to hear from you.

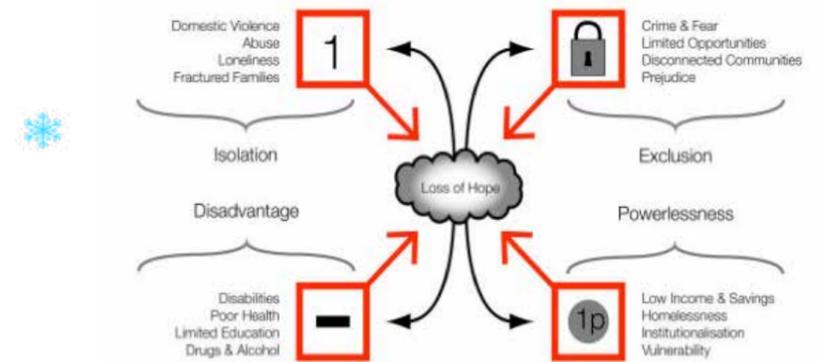


Christmas 2017

Last year we provided 3 days' worth of emergency food to **777 people** in the December run-up to Christmas, and expect to be busy again this year. We'll also be asking schools to be aware of families who may struggle during the holidays season due to loss of free school meals.

The foodbank will be closed **25th Dec - 1st Jan**, but clients will be able to collect 2 vouchers worth of food in the preceding week to tide them over. We'll also be running an additional foodbank session at Beacon Heath that week. We hope to have festive treats available to help make Christmas special, and agencies will be offered Emergency Food Boxes to keep on their own sites in case they are needed when we're closed.

Real Poverty - Real Generosity this Advent



"Poverty is the lack of all the resources necessary to participate as an equal in the life of the community."

Duffy, S. 'The Politics of Poverty', The Centre for Welfare Reform, 2017. Reproduced with permission <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/by-az/the-politics-of-poverty.html>

A lack of money - and of food - is an important aspect of poverty, albeit one that is self-evident, and (theoretically?) easy to address. However, poverty's true costs are pervasive and long-lasting. Its effects are both less calculable and more damaging than a simple shortage of funds: they can include social exclusion, disadvantage, disempowerment, loneliness and loss of hope.

Local charities such as foodbanks can play a key role in tackling poverty's wider effects. From the tins collected in a school harvest assembly to the funds raised in an office bake sale and the hours contributed by volunteers 'behind the scenes' - every element in the foodbank's operation is a powerful example of a community coming together to support fellow Exeter citizens who are struggling. In doing so, we send an important message to the people who come through the foodbank's doors: *you matter, you are welcome, and you are not alone.*

This December, we're inviting supporters to explore these ideas further with our **Exeter Foodbank Reverse Advent Calendar**. Each door contains a food-related generosity challenge, designed to help you raise awareness of food poverty, support the foodbank and reach out to others. The calendar can be downloaded from our website at <https://goo.gl/N2hp3J>. If you'd like us to post you a copy, please contact our office on 07818 226524 / info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk. We'd also love to see your Advent stories & photos. Join our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/adventstories>, tweet (@ExeterFB #efbadvent) or email us to join in.



Comments in EFB Guest Book:

"I have been so impressed with the help of the foodbank. I have no family or friends left and my ex-partner has every right not to be in contact. It's not just the food - I enjoy the company, the smiles and the talking - it helps me forget my loneliness."

Thank you for the help at a difficult time of my life and keeping a spark of hope alive. A man can live about 40 days without food, 3 days without water, 5 mins without air but only one second without hope.

'Pointing the Way':

Meet EFB's Signposting Team

Debt, low income, poor health (both physical and mental), benefit issues, bereavement: there are many reasons why people come to the foodbank and their needs are often complex. In addition to providing food, we have a team of trained signposters on hand at distribution sessions to chat to clients over a cup of tea and point them towards further help. Signposters have access to a wide of information leaflets and can refer people to agencies with whom we work such as CAP, Exeter CAB and St. Petrock's.



Marje Bryant, an experienced signposter with a background in counselling, says

"I try to be empathetic and accepting of where people are and of their stories. I then begin to think if there are services that they might helpfully link into and I gently offer the appropriate information."

Marje finds that some of the most distressing stories are from those who have serious health problems and have come out of hospital to find they have no benefits or have lost their accommodation.

"Perhaps the most important thing is to

really listen to what the clients say and to be non-judgemental," she says.

We'll be developing our resources and training our teams further in the months ahead, particularly in anticipation of the roll-out of Universal Credit full service in summer 2018. We have new volunteers with experience of volunteering with CAB and other related organisations, and hope to draw on their expertise. They will join our existing team of Marje, Penelope Moor, Laura McIvor and Magi Young.



BOLOGNESE FOR BREAKFAST, TAGLIATELLE FOR TEA



FAQ #6: Why does your Food Priority List say "no baked beans or pasta please"?



What is the first item that springs to mind when you think about giving to a foodbank? It's probably something hearty & nutritious – like pasta or baked beans. These items are an important part of the food parcels we give out, and make great, filling meals for hungry people. The problem is, they may be the first items you think of - but they are often the first items everyone else thinks of too!

Our food parcels are designed to be nutritionally balanced. They're intended to provide recipients with everything they need for breakfast, lunch and tea (plus a few snacks/treats) for at least 3 days. Whilst certain items on the list are popular with donors, other staples such as tea bags, jam and UHT milk are frequently overlooked. This can lead to very unbalanced stocks: we often have 80+ crates of baked beans and 50+ crates of pasta crammed into our store. We are very grateful for

these donations, and every one will be well used in the weeks and months ahead. However, if we don't take steps to limit further donations, our stores may burst and we will be less able to offer clients a balanced diet.

Food Priority Lists, updated every 4-6 weeks, help us to manage stocks. By only donating items from this list you help ensure that local people receive a balanced food supply, and reduce the chance of donations going out of date. Current Priority Lists can be found at supermarket collection points, on our website (at <https://exeter.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>) and are circulated via social media – please do take a look before you shop. We're also working with supermarkets to explore ways of highlighting lists in-store at the beginning, not the end, of your shopping trip – watch this space for details.

Donate

£

£

Exeter Foodbank receives no statutory funding & relies on the generosity of local people to keep going. You can help by:

- Becoming a **Friend of Exeter Foodbank** & helping to meet our regular costs with regular donations. Visit www.exeter.foodbank.org.uk to download a standing order form, or set up a regular payment online. Alternatively, call **07818 226524** to request a form via post.

- By making one-off gifts:

By **debit/credit card** at www.exeter.foodbank.org.uk/

By **texting EXFB13 £5** to **70070** to give a one-off gift of £5.

By sending **cheques** (made payable to Exeter Foodbank) to **PO Box 661, Exeter, Devon, EX2 5PS**.

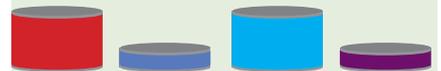
By **online bank transfer**:

Sort code: 08-92-99

Account no: 65314566

Any gifts, big or small, are hugely appreciated. Thank you very much!

Donate Food



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

Sainsbury's (Pinhoe / Guildhall / Alington)

Tesco (Exe Vale)

The Co-operative (Cowick St / Heavitree)

Waitrose (Heavitree Rd)

Shopping List

Long-life fruit juice

Milk - UHT, 1L, semi-skimmed

Potatoes - Tins / Instant Mash

Tinned vegetables

Biscuits

Noodles / Pasta Snacks

Sugar - granulated

Please note that the shopping list doesn't list the full range of items we give - just the items we're currently short of. To keep up-to-date with our changing stock needs, please see our website or priority lists in-store.