

EXETER FOODBANK

Emergency food for local people in crisis

Exeter Foodbank

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A project seeded by The Trussell Trust.

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

'Chain Gang': A Message from Mark, EFB Manager



I went to my first meeting as a volunteer Cubs Leader recently. I want to encourage my son to go to Cubs, so when the leaders were looking for new volunteers, I felt I had a responsibility to help. I'm free on that evening and have done quite a lot of youth work.

So now I volunteer: I meet people, have fun, kick a ball around and play various noisy games! But I was sad to hear that Cubs, Scouts and Beavers struggle to find volunteers: 'People just don't volunteer nowadays', they said.

And then I looked at what Exeter Foodbank is doing.

I've been managing EFB since January; there is so much to learn; I've spent a lot of time in the office reading policies, guidebooks, risk assessments. However, when I get out to the store, sorting or distribution centres, I find a team of volunteers who have created a wonderful, friendly community. They are working together and making a massive difference. Last year they helped to provide emergency food for 5,000+ local people – including 1,500+ children.

In February we moved to our new store at The Orange Elephant. Over two days we moved 15 tonnes of food! That sounds like really hard work (and it was!), but it was also fun to do – as friends, we shared coffee, had a pasty (or two), and a laugh. Celebrating such work at our Annual Volunteers Meal in March was a wonderful experience.

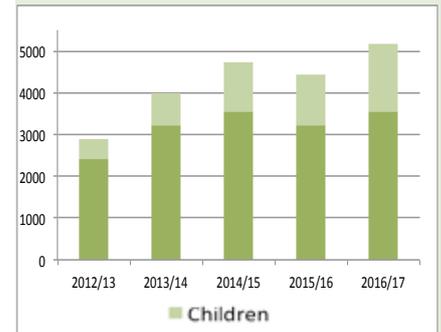
In March, I interviewed 22 new volunteers and we have another 12 to interview. As I've met the new volunteers we've looked at the abilities they bring to us as a charity. Their range of skills is quite staggering. The challenge now is how best to utilise those skills & gifts to develop our work. Many Trussell Trust foodbanks are embarking on **More than Food** projects: community hubs, school holiday lunch clubs, cookery courses, debt advice.

So we are exploring what else we could do and how we could develop the project to help people in need. And each of us in this foodbank family has a role to play. One of my favourite authors, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, once wrote; '*everything depends on whether each individual is an indispensable link in the chain.*' I believe that describes how our foodbank works.

Mark

Spring / Summer 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).

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.

Poverty Watch: *Benefit Sanctions*

At Exeter Foodbank we know that one major reason why people are unable to provide food for themselves and their families is because they have been “sanctioned”. But what are sanctions exactly?

Most people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance and Universal Credit, and certain people claiming Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support, are subject to conditions that can lead to sanctions. For example, people receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) must show that they are actively seeking work. Sanctions can be fixed in length up to three years, and can also continue indefinitely until a claimant meets conditions.

Benefit Sanctions: Key Statistics

- 24% of JSA claimants received at least one sanction between 2010 and 2015 (1)
- A single JSA claimant aged 25+ loses **£300 a month** if sanctioned for 4 weeks (2)
- 24% of sanctions referred by JSA providers in 2015 were overturned on appeal (1)

Do sanctions work?

A recent study by the National Audit Office (NAO) concludes that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) isn’t doing enough to find out how sanctions affect people on benefits (1). International studies suggest that people receiving sanctions are more likely to get work but the effect can be short-lived and can increase the number of people moving off benefits into inactivity. The DWP has not analysed its own data in the light of this research.

According to the NAO, use of sanctions varies substantially between jobcentres and between providers. It infers that local decision-making has a substantial influence on whether or not people get sanctioned (1). Evidence from ex-employees certainly suggests that pressure on staff to achieve targets is intense. “Advisers were encouraged to see every interview as an opportunity to begin the process of sanctions that might suspend or cancel claims, thereby reducing the number of claimants”(3).

Sanctions & foodbank use

Research by the University of Oxford found a “strong, dynamic relationship” between sanctioning and foodbank usage (4). Analysis of Trussell Trust foodbank data from 259 local authorities between 2012 and 2015 found that as the rate of sanctioning increased, the rate of foodbank use also increased. As sanctioning decreased, foodbank use decreased.

At EFB, we frequently see people for whom benefit sanctions have made the critical difference between them ‘just about managing’ and destitution. The reasons why individuals we see are sanctioned vary. However, for many (particularly those suffering from mental health conditions) the additional pressures caused by sanctions can compound the challenges they face.

“In November I was sanctioned because I missed an appointment at the Job Centre. I was depressed and anxious, and sometimes when I’m like that I can’t leave the flat. I began to sell the Big Issue in December but I can’t go on – I’m finding it so hard to get out.

I was then late for my next appointment at the Job Centre, and I have now been sanctioned again, this time for 3 months. I can’t heat my flat. The electric has almost run out so I can’t heat water and I am having a light on as little as possible. My heating was gas but I have run out of gas. I know the cause of my depression and anxiety but I can’t get any free counselling or help.”

EFB client, January 2017

Recommendations

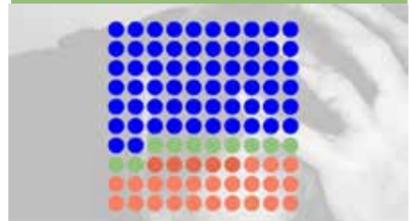
Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) into how sanctions affect people, including first-hand evidence from people who have experienced the system, leads it to support the NAO’s call for the system to be reviewed (5).

The JRF and the Trussell Trust would like to see a stepped approach to sanctions with early warnings, clear communication, and improved access to hardship payments (5) (4). Final sanctions should not result in destitution, both organisations say.

“There is much to be hopeful about - we’re very pleased to see sanctioning rates have decreased [...] However, we still see people being referred to our foodbanks who have been sanctioned unfairly. A true ‘yellow card’ system, which gives people a non-financial warning first, would mean less people thrown into crisis and ultimately, less people needing foodbanks.”

Adrian Curtis, Foodbank Network Director for The Trussell Trust, October 2016 (4)

People with mental health problems make up the largest group of ESA claimants sanctioned (6)



Mental health Musculoskeletal
Injury / external Other



EFB was thrilled to be one of the first 3 Exeter-based charities to receive support from the **Co-op Local Community Fund** in the six month period to March 2017. A huge thank you to Co-op members who supported us and helped raise £2,825.06!

Good Eggs



Clients at Exeter Foodbank enjoyed special chocolate treats recently, thanks to the thoughtfulness of local supporters.

A huge thank you to staff at Virgin Money, Guinness Care, Thorntons, Hotel Chocolat and many other kind donors for helping to put a smile on people’s faces this Easter.

Beacon Heath: One Year On



May 2017 marks the first anniversary of our distribution sessions at the Beacon Community Centre in Beacon Heath, which were introduced to improve access for people who struggle to get to our city-centre sessions.

Food distribution takes place alongside the Beacon Community Centre’s weekly coffee morning; foodbank clients have greatly enjoyed the warm hospitality of centre staff and volunteers - and their homemade cake!

During our first year we provided food parcels for 647 people; following a slow start, numbers are now averaging at about 15 per week. We’re very pleased to have gained support from Cllr Emma Morse and funding to help extend the project for 2 more years, enabling us to meet further unmet local need.

In May, we held a roadshow in the Beacon Centre to raise awareness of what we do and meet potential future voucher distributors. If you’re an organisation, service or church which helps support vulnerable people in Beacon Heath and are interested in holding our foodbank vouchers, please do get in touch (info@exeterfoodbank.org.uk / 07818 226524).

From A to B...and back again

You probably know a fair amount about EFB (Exeter Foodbank) by now...but have you heard about EFA (Exeter Food Action)?



Exeter Food Action is the local branch of the Devon and Cornwall Food Association – a charitable company established in 2010. Its mission? To prevent good food from going to waste, whilst supporting organisations that tackle food poverty.

Around 30% of food that is produced is wasted. EFA helps address this by receiving surplus food directly from growers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers (including Aldi, M&S, Waitrose & Pret-A-Manger). Their team of around 60 volunteers make daily collections from some shops and outlets in Exeter, as well as responding to ad hoc requests.

Exeter Food Action’s premises off Blackboy Road are kitted out with a range of fridges and freezers. This means that, unlike the foodbank, they can accept donations of nearly any form of food, including fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and fish, dairy, chilled and frozen produce. They then re-distribute this food to other local charities who can use it – including EFB.

Twice a week, volunteers collect trays of fresh fruit, veg and frozen bread from EFA and deliver them directly to foodbank sessions for immediate distribution alongside the foodbank’s parcels of nutritionally-balanced long-life food. Foodbank clients love choosing these additional items – it’s not unusual to find a punnet of blueberries, eggs or croissants tucked away amongst the standard carrots and loaves.

This partnership works a treat; it means that the foodbank can provide fresh food to clients without storage issues, and also ensure that the more unusual food donations we’re offered are well used. (A wholesaler’s case of ketchup may not be of much use to a single foodbank client with nothing else in the cupboard – but, when passed on via EFA, it could be exactly what the local soup kitchen needs.)

Thank you Exeter Food Action for all your tremendous work – we may be separate charities, but we think we make a great team!

Exeter Food Action (EFA)	Exeter Foodbank (EFB)
Receives surplus food directly from producers, manufacturers, wholesalers etc	Receives food donations from members of the public
Collects most forms of food (incl. chilled, frozen & short-dated items)	Collects mainly non-perishable / long-life food
Accepts ad hoc donations of misc. items	Requests specific items from a prescribed, nutritionally-balanced list
Re-distributes food to local charities / support organisations	Provides individuals directly with 3 days’ worth of non-perishable food (via a referral scheme)
Fairly quick turn-around of smaller quantities of food to ensure fresh supply	Longer-term turn-around of larger quantities of food to ensure consistent supply
Works with local partners to tackle food poverty locally – a great team!	

(1) National Audit Office: ‘Benefit Sanctions’ (30 November 2016). Available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/press-release/benefit-sanctions/>
 (2) The Guardian: ‘Why Sanction Benefits?’ (30 November 2016). Available at: <https://goo.gl/3Efmk7>
 (3) The Guardian: ‘It Was My Job’ (30 November 2016). Available at: <https://goo.gl/9U0pmp>
 (4) The Trussell Trust & The University of Oxford: ‘The Impact of Benefit Sanctioning on Food Insecurity’ (October 2016). Available at: <https://goo.gl/QqiRgH>
 (5) Joseph Rowntree Foundation: ‘Evidence Shows Benefit Sanctions Are Not Fit For Purpose.’ (30 November 2016). Available at: <https://goo.gl/hF7UEb>
 (6) The Methodist Church In Britain: ‘Rethink Benefit Sanctions Infographics.’ (Q1, 2014) Available at: <https://goo.gl/UqWiiY>

All Things New: Some 'Hellos...'

They say that good things come in threes. So far in 2017, we've been delighted to welcome **Mark Richardson** as our new manager, **Gary Flint** as a new trustee and **The Orange Elephant** (source of the award winning ice-cream) as the new home for our store.

New Manager: Meet Mark



"Wow! I have to say how very impressed I am by the passion and energy of Exeter Foodbank's 100+ volunteers. And I can already see that Joy is going to be a hard act to follow.

Before moving to Exeter I was in Ordained Ministry for 12 years at Windsor Baptist Church. During my time there, we started Windsor Homeless Project, Windsor Foodshare, The Windsor Street Angels and the church is now open every day as The Tree House Cafe.

What we discovered was that the more we became involved in the life of the local community and in serving people, the more vibrant the work of the church became.

Claire and I and our two children are thoroughly enjoying exploring Devon (Dartmoor and the coastline in particular). I have a love of acoustic music, forests, countryside, photography, seaside, walking, theology, films, football - and good coffee! I look forward to sharing a cup with some of you soon."

New Trustee: Meet Gary



"I'm delighted to become a Trustee of EFB. I'm a member of Belmont Chapel where I've heard much about the Foodbank's work. I've also done some sorting at the store.

Foodbanks have such an important role to play in helping vulnerable people in our society and I'm looking forward to supporting the great work that's already going on.

I live in Clyst Heath with my wife, Saz, and two daughters. I work in HR for Lloyds Banking Group, and enjoy running, going to the theatre and watching Liverpool FC."

New Store

In February the foodbank store moved from its childhood home at Rebecca Springs to the Orange Elephant Farm at Kennford.

A huge thank you to John & Margaret Robertson for hosting us for so many years, and to Rob and Helen Taverner for generously offering us new premises in our hour of need and for making us so welcome.

...and Some Special 'Farewells'



Having organised our distribution centre rotas for the past five years, Betty Williams stood down in May.

It's Betty we all have to thank for managing to juggle the demands of 60+ volunteers every month in order that our two centres are appropriately staffed, all the while coping with temperamental IT systems and, of course, for doing so

in such a patient and good-natured way.

Betty says she has "greatly enjoyed and appreciated the interaction with everyone involved in the foodbank" and hopes to be able to help occasionally at distribution sessions.

Having been trained by Betty, Jane Vinall has kindly agreed to take over as Rota Coordinator. Thank you Jane.

We're also saying farewell to two of our longest-serving distribution volunteers - Margaret Breeding & Bob Weston. Thank you for all your tremendous support and for helping EFB to become what it is today.

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.exeterfoodbank.org.uk/

By **texting EXFB12 £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

Noodles / Pasta snacks

Loo rolls

Sponge puddings

Rice - 500g

Pasta sauces

Tinned fish

Milk - Long-Life, 1 Litre

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.**