



To all our supporters and Referrers –

Thank you – here's the news!

Our apologies that the production of the newsletter has been somewhat delayed but as you will see below there has been a lot happening.

Succession Planning – Recent decisions on the way forward

Most of you will be aware that for the past two years we have been undertaking a review of the operations of Whitchurch Foodbank particularly in relation to the age of its volunteers and future management of the charity.

Alan & Chris Scutt gave notice to the Trustees that they intended to retire from their work at Foodbank with effect from 1 July 2025.

It has not proved possible to identify anyone prepared to undertake their roles on a voluntary basis. The Trustees have therefore had to consider other ways for the work to continue. The continued support of all our volunteers has been amazing as we transition to a new phase of operation. Many having stepped-up and offered to undertake particular roles.

However, even though the roles required to keep the Foodbank mornings operating are now being covered, there is still 'back-office' work that is required to be completed each week. The trustees have therefore decided to employ someone to undertake this work in the role of **Project Leader**.

We are pleased to announce that **Hannah Adamson**, who has been one of our regular volunteers in recent years, has been appointed to the post of **Project Leader**. Hannah will continue to volunteer her time on Foodbank mornings but will be paid for the work undertaken at other times. Hannah will have at least a month of handover with Alan & Chris before she takes up the reigns early in July. Those who have visited or spoken with Foodbank recently will probably be already familiar with Hannah.



The trustees are confident the day-to-day management of Foodbank will be in safe hands as we move into a new chapter. This change will of course necessitate the Foodbank securing / raising additional income each year to cover the cost of this employment. If you currently support Foodbank and are able to increase your support or if you are not a regular supporter but would

like to become one, then we would love to hear from you at trustees@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk Remember a Gift Aided donation increases what we receive by 25%

Management Team

Hannah will be supported by the following Supervisors

Sarah - re Meet & Greet

Emma - re Stock

Barbara - re Fruit & Veg.

All are very supportive of Hannah's appointment and are keen to make the new arrangements work in as seamless a way as possible.

Other Changes

Our Foodbank currently has a Trust Deed as it's charitable governing document but this now needs replacing as amongst its limitations it does not permit us to employ anyone.

We are therefore presently undertaking the process of applying to become a CIO – a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Whilst you will see no difference to the way Foodbank operates, and we will still be known as Whitchurch Foodbank there is a lot of work needed to effect this change. It will mean that we shall be issued with a new Charity number. Once the full implications are known for our Referrers and financial supporters we shall write and advise you.

In view of all the work that is required and associated with this change Alan has agreed to remain as Chairman of the Charity until all the transition work has been completed. During that time Alan will work closely with Ian Francis who has agreed to take on the Chairman's role when Alan stands down. With our current treasurer having advised that he will be standing down at the end of the next financial year (June 2026) we shall therefore be looking for a new treasurer and new Trustees to replace Andrew and Alan. If this is a role you would be willing to consider then please write to the Trustees indicating your interest - trustees@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk

Trussell Trust

You may have noticed in recent press releases that Trussell Trust have revised their branding and are now called just called Trussell. An example of their new logo and typeface are shown here –



Whilst we shall be introducing the new logo in our communications and paperwork this will be done on a phased basis to avoid waste and unnecessary cost. We do not propose making changes to our clothing until such time as it is necessary to buy replacements due to wear and tear.

Demand

Sadly, the demand for a foodbank in Whitchurch which serves the town along with Wem and many surrounding areas still remains. We are often asked if there is real poverty in Britain. Are there really families in Food Poverty in Whitchurch and surrounding areas? Regrettably the answer is Yes.

There are too many individuals and families who lack the resources to ensure they are able to obtain a balanced diet, have acceptable living conditions and are able to participate in activities considered a basic requirement in a civilised society. Trussell continue to campaign that everyone should have a living income that enables them to have decent affordable accommodation which they can afford to heat plus being able to feed themselves/their family. The aim being to bring back people's dignity regardless of background. We are anti-poverty. Hunger in our country is not a food problem it's an income problem. No one should need a foodbank to survive. To this end Trussell are working hard to convince Government of the need to '**Guarantee Our Essentials**' and ensure we have a social security system that protects people from going without those three essentials. Additional information can be found on the **Trussell website** www.trussell.org.uk.

Recent figures show that Foodbanks with the Trussell network issued 3.1 million emergency parcels last year – twice as many as 5 years ago. 1.1 million were for children and 655,000 were for the first time.

Here at **Whitchurch Foodbank** in the financial yr ending 2019 we issued 1105 parcel. The corresponding figure at the end of 2024 was 2101. Thankfully that level has reduced in more recent months and we are now showing only a 50% increase over 2019 ! Which for a foodbank in a small market town is still a considerable increase.

Across the UK the Trussell network consists of over 400 Foodbanks (comprising some 1400 operating locations – a total of over 36000 volunteers). As part of their support for Foodbanks Trussell works closely with other major organisations and businesses in order to provide us with the best support possible.

Since COVID here at **WFB** we changed our food parcels from supplying 3days of food to 7 days, plus we also offer fresh fruit & vegetables, eggs and bread as a vital extra in trying to provide a healthy balanced food parcel.

Donations

Money - Ever since we started WFB we have been truly blessed by the support we have received and always been able to meet our expenditure. There are so many stories we could tell of the generosity of groups, organisations and individuals but GDPR restricts what we can share.

Please accept our Massive Thanks for all your giving, large or small. You are truly amazing.

Food – Undoubtably everyone has noticed the rising cost of food and this has most definitely impacted on the amount that folk are now placing in our collection bins and bringing through our doors.

Three years ago our received donations totalled 31.3 tonnes

Last year it was 24.8 tonnes a 21% reduction

Food donatations through Sainsbury's, Tesco and the Wem Coop are 24% down compared to last year.

During that same year the amount of food we have needed to purchase has increased by 52% -

A monthly expenditure of between £800 – 1000 for the purchase of food,

If you are able to help with Food donations there is no item of which we have excess stock – not even Baked Beans and we have never been able to say that in 12 years!

Major shortages are Coffee; Pasta Sauce; Jam; Tinned Fruit and Boiled Rice

- but currently everything is welcome!

We must also say that we are blessed by the additional items supplied to us that can be offered to our clients – a professional baker supplying cakes to our Meet & Greet area, Cheese - courtesy of Belton Cheese and Chicken Nuggets from a local supplier. Plus of course the bonus supplies received from Sainsburys at various times – recently some amazing cakes. Provision of the food is of course wonderful but the encouragement it gives to all at WFB is priceless. Do please continue to support us.

Volunteers

It is worth reminding ourselves that Whitchurch Foodbank is run by Volunteers, even though we have now had to accept appointing a paid 'Project Leader' for back-office work, everyone on a Foodbank morning gives of their time voluntarily. We could not function without such dedication.

We recently held a training session for potential new volunteers and it always good to know there are others interested in giving of their time for this work. Generally, we try to hold such sessions twice a year dependent on demand and whether we are able to accommodate more.

We have always been blessed with a rich supply of volunteers since we opened 12 years ago. A good % of our current number have been with us from the start. The age of many of our volunteers restricts the number of tasks they can undertake so it is good to have younger folk showing commitment which should hopefully help take us into the future.

If volunteering is something you might like to consider do get in touch (info@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk) and we will let you know when the next opportunity comes up.

We thought it would be interesting to ask our volunteers why they joined and continue at WFB– these are some of the responses

- I was recently retired and wanted to give something back for the blessed life I have had
- It gives me hope to do something for others
- I am happy to do any job that is needed and there is such a variety of tasks to be done.
- I find it is low impact and gives me gentle exercise and I can pace myself
- I get on really well with the other volunteers and enjoy the time we spend together
- There is always someone to ask if you are not sure and you are never working alone
- I so enjoy listening and talking to those clients or visitors that come in and most are very encouraging and grateful
- Hours are flexible and you can do as much as you want each month
- Sadly Foodbanks are still necessary in our society and I am so privileged to be part of an operation that is essential to many. It costs me nothing to be part of it except a little time.

We have a bank of some 40 folk that regularly help on Foodbank mornings and despite many being part of an ageing bunch, they carry out the varying tasks cheerfully and with such commitment. Some roles involving stock movement can be physically demanding but thankfully there are those who do not find that a problem and there are plenty of other less demanding roles.

Other Roles – We are very fortunate to have a loyal band of two-person delivery teams who operate on a rota basis so if that is a role which attracts you then do let us know. Also we want to extend a big Thank You to those who collect food from the Supermarkets, provide us with produce from their garden, regularly donate food, consistently support us financially, help us with special events like Christmas and supermarket collection days. Also, a special mention to Vic who responds so quickly to our requests to keep our web site up to date. Then to all the unsung

heroes who wish to remain anonymous. You know who you are please know your contributions do not go unnoticed and are essential to all we do.

Special Mention - THANKYOU so much to **Alan & Ann from Wem**. They have volunteered with us for the 12 years bringing weekly the food donated in Wem Co-op. They have also used their return journey to deliver food parcels back to clients in Wem, nothing was ever too much trouble. We salute you and hope you enjoy a well-earned rest!

Also to **Terrie Hewitt** who has recently said she cannot return to WFB due to ill health and ongoing treatment. Again, Terrie is one of those who has been with us from the beginning and has been such a loyal dedicated supporter and volunteer. Terrie's encouragement of the Ladies of Inner Wheel to support Foodbank has resulted in over 1.5 tonnes being donated to date.

Tribute to Gerard Dolan 1932 – 2025

Where does one begin to write a few words about Gerard Dolan? Gerard sadly died last month after a short illness and his loss has been greatly felt by his family of course but also by all those who knew him. Gerard was born in Blyth and considered himself a proud Northumbrian. Although he spent some time being educated at St Cuthbert's Grammar School in Newcastle, he declared that he certainly wasn't a Geordie! He left school at 17 and began work at a local power station where he stayed until he eventually retired as part of the management team. During that time, he carried out a variety of roles and was proud that on occasions he was left in charge of the plant!



Gerard enjoyed reading, gardening and travel but was well-known in Whitchurch for his role as question master in the Whitchurch Quiz League. He will be remembered for carrying out the role in a firm but humorous manner. But it is in the Foodbank that Gerard revealed his true qualities. Gerard took his work in managing the store very seriously but always with a smile and a merry quip for anyone he worked with. He had the ability to treat everyone he met with kindness, warmth and empathy, qualities which reflected his commitment to working with the team of volunteers and all those in the Foodbank community.

Foodbank Manager, Alan Scutt said of Gerard – He was an absolute star! 100% reliable. Gerard was there from the birth of Whitchurch Foodbank in 2013 (together with his wife Nora) and he took on the role of managing the Issuing Store right up until he was taken ill some 6 months ago. During that time, he will have issued many thousands of food parcels and always with a smile. Nothing was ever too much trouble for him and his strength in moving and shifting stock defied his advancing years. His absence has impacted us all. He will be greatly missed.

Gerard was a man of great faith, and he embodied the Christian values that lie at the heart of our work with those in crisis. He was an invaluable member of the team and will always be remembered by those who knew and worked with him.

Being in the stores will never seem the same again.



What about the clients?

These are the people it is all about and the reason we care. We are continually looking at our process and considering how best to meet the needs we encounter.

The obvious response they give of course is that they are so grateful to be leaving with food to be able to feed themselves / their families but there is more to it than that. Many are glad of somewhere to just come and sit, have a drink and chat and not be judged or interrogated. They are often vulnerable, in a low state of mind and very anxious about the future. More and more we find that most of us can relate to the feeling of being anxious and stressful about the world situation and can offer a listening ear.

A recent client came in and was willing to share their experience with the following feedback:-

This person had recently 'fled' from an abusive relationship and found they had to leave everything they had behind. They were now living in temporary accommodation with literally just the clothes they were wearing. It was the first time they had used a Foodbank, they were very unsure, apprehensive and extremely emotional.

The most important thing was to assure her she was in a safe, friendly space and very few questions would be asked. She could say as little or as much as she wanted to. It was all treated as confidential.

In her feedback she said she felt the warmth from everyone and thought the foodbank was very welcoming and caring.

It was appropriate in this case to offer signposting and agencies she may like to contact. We were also able to take her to the Clothes Hub at St. John's where she got clothes to help her through the crisis.

This is not an unusual thing for us to do and we often have 'resident' agencies present at a morning session, who can offer the 'expert' advice into the situation. There are a number of agencies we know we can refer folk to should that help be needed. Many of the statutory organisations are struggling with the pressures of staff cuts and financial pressures so we do believe that by working closely with each other it helps all of us. Especially our clients.

We have seen the lady mentioned on one further occasion and are pleased to say she is progressing well

Christmas Initiative

Again we were pleased to be able to support the families referred to us by the schools as in need of assistance over the Christmas season.

We helped 65 families a total of 287 persons (108 Adults and 179 Children)

Our thanks again to all those who assisted us with this project, with particular thanks to Aviagen who once again provided us with turkey crowns. We were able to supply all the children under 12 with new toys as part of the family parcel. The feedback was good with all being very grateful. **Christmas 2025?** – well hopefully we can do it yet again.



Referrals

We are so grateful for the continuing support of all our referral agencies – for the work they carry out with their clients but also for the cooperative way they work with us. There has to be ‘rules’ of course for us to make sure the donated food is used to the most effect and also that our systems and procedures are recognised by all and adhered to. This ensures we are consistent and fair to all.

Some helpful key pointers -

- **ALL clients requesting food MUST** have an electronic voucher referral from one of our registered agencies
- **ALL requests must be made by 4:30 the day before.** Any requests after this time will need to be deferred to the next opening and the client advised by the **Referrer** please.
- **If a delivery is required** there must be a genuine need and if in doubt please speak to us regarding this.
- **Unless there is a genuine safeguarding issue – we need a contact number for all requests** – we often need to get hold of the client. All data is stored securely in accordance with GDPR requirements.
- **If a delivery is asked for it is helpful to know of any special dietary requests** or delivery problems – please add these to the notes on the voucher form.
- **We do not do offer ‘repeat prescriptions’** subsequent referrals for the same client must be requested each time.
- **Ensure the clients are informed dogs are not permitted** at Foodbank. Leaving them outside tied to the railings is not acceptable as it could result in injury to the dog or other persons attending the foodbank.
- **We also remind Referrers that the food is meant for those in crisis and should not be seen as a long-term solution.** We recognise a crisis may last a while e.g. waiting for Universal Credit to be paid or a long-term illness. A better solution to the need may be more appropriate rather than the individual relying upon the Foodbank.
- **If there is a genuine emergency and on this occasion you are not able to fulfil all the above rules please ring the FB or send an e-mail to request a solution.** Please do not send clients to the FB without a voucher – it is embarrassing for them and awkward for us to make it fair for everyone.

PLEASE NOTE: A new email address for all communications related to referrals has been established. Forthwith, please ensure all emails related to the referral of a client are sent to

referrals@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk

The info@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk email address should only be used for other communication that does not relate to clients or referrals made through the DCS system.

Citizen's Advice

Following the resignation of the previous CA Advisor we had working solely for Foodbank clients, we are hopeful that since a new appointment has been made we shall soon be able to offer this service again.

Clothing Hub – operating from St. John’s Methodist

We have great links with St John’s and all those that work to keep this initiative operational. We know it is well used and thank all of you who donate clothing for this. Do check details of opening hours etc but be assured of a warm welcome whether you are donating clothes or coming to have a look at the items. You will be encouraged to have a cup of tea and chat with the **MORE** social group that takes place Monday from 12 noon and Thursdays from 1pm

Finally – our sincere thanks to Alan & Chris for their 12 years of loyal service, enjoy your retirement.

The Trustees and Management Team

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