

Newsletter



February 2026

Dear Friends,

A very Happy New Year to all, and thank you again for your invaluable support, which makes life better for so many people. January was a wet and rather gloomy month, but we all have hopes of better things to come both for ourselves and for the people who come to our door.

Volunteers

The volunteers have displayed their loyalty and commitment as always in fulfilling their roles and keeping Foodbank running smoothly. Following the short period when our project leader, Hannah, was off sick, we recognised the need for flexibility amongst our workforce and volunteers have been very accommodating in trying out new roles and adapting to whatever jobs are put their way.

Some volunteers inevitably must leave us because of personal circumstances, and we may need to recruit others with a particular skill set to replace them. We are always pleased to hear from anyone interested in helping Foodbank.

Not only to our volunteers help when we are open on Tuesday and Friday mornings, they also do shifts at Tesco and Sainsbury's to help with our collections and transport produce.

Carol Singing

On the 12th December, Food Bank volunteers were invited back to Sainsbury's to sing carols for the customers. This was encouraging as it meant that the feedback from last year must have been quite favourable.

The volunteers turned up for this event in good numbers and led by Helen Clarke, who also compiled the song sheets, the volunteers sang for two hours to customers coming in and out of Sainsburys. It was said that they could be heard from the Frozen Food aisle (but only in a good way)!! Another enjoyable event, helping to raise the Food Bank profile in the town.

Christmas

This Christmas we provided Christmas dinner to 77 families, comprising of a total of 316 people, 129 adults and 185 children living in Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Wem, Whixall, Prees, Higher Heath, Edge and Malpas. All the volunteers played in the Christmas project their part in helping and supporting the project, throughout December and over the 3 days, and it could not have been done without them.

Extra volunteers also offered their time for Market Hall set up, picking and delivering. Donations from the local community were amazing with toys and food coming in throughout December. Support also received from Belton Cheese, Aviagen Turkeys, Sainsburys (special mention to Lou).

Trustee News

We have had our last meeting with Alan in the chair but, bless him, he is still working away in the background until the transfer to our new charity status is complete. We are sad to say goodbye to him but know that with his energy, great heart, many interests he will always be busy.

In the meantime, we welcome Ian Francis as our new chair. Ian says that prior to retiring and becoming a Trustee of Whitchurch Foodbank he worked in adult social care.



“ Ian says, “My experience in the field of social work has shaped my awareness of the issues of social justice and the inequality that we see in the UK today and sadly why Foodbanks such as ours in Whitchurch continue to be so necessary and well used.

Initially I supported adults with learning difficulties in small residential care. Later after completing my social work training, I was involved in moving people out of long stay hospitals and into the community. I then worked as a hospital social worker in Shropshire planning the safe discharge of older people from both RSH and PRH and spent time with the reablement service.

I did my Post Qualifying award at Wolverhampton University where I also trained as a Best Interests Assessor (BIA) and I retain a keen interest in various case law concerning individuals' capacity to make their own decisions.

I have worked across the West Midlands, with my last position being in Stoke. I am married to Barbara and have two adult children Gareth and Rhys and recently became granddad to Poppy.

Away from Foodbank, I volunteer at Whixall Moss NNR and the Baby and Toddler group at Beacon Church. Any spare time I have is spent watching sports including ice hockey, rugby, football and American Football.”

We have also been very fortunate in securing an excellent candidate to take over the role of Foodbank Treasurer when Andrew Fawcett steps down in the summer. Our new Trustee is Melanie Williams who will be known to many of you through her many and varied activities in the community.



“ Melanie says “I joined as a Foodbank volunteer about 15 months ago and enjoy the camaraderie and variety of tasks involved in the operation.

As for my academic history, I studied BTEC Business and Finance at North Staffordshire Polytechnic, and then specialised as a Chartered Management Accountant, finally completing my career at Grocontinental, from where I was fortunate to be able to retire in 2016.

I moved to Whitchurch in the late '90s and became involved in Girlguiding - starting as a Guide leader and after maternity leave returned as a Brownie Leader. I was also involved with St Alkmund's Church as Treasurer for over a decade, only recently relinquishing the role.

I would like to give a big 'thank you' to Andrew Fawcett who has maintained the position of Treasurer from the outset of Whitchurch Foodbank and am looking forward to a smooth transition.”

We would all like to echo those words in thanking Andrew for the enormous contribution he has made to Foodbank for more than a decade. He has been nothing less than brilliant.

Referrers

We have received around 197 referrals since October. We have onboarded quite a few new referrers as well from all areas. If organisations have people that need to refer to the foodbank they can email us at referrals@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk to be set up on our system.

We are always happy to show any referrers around foodbank as well to see how we work. If you are interested in making an appointment to do this send us an email or give us a ring on 01948 663943.

Donations

After some worrying moments at the end of the summer, when our stocks were going down and we were concerned that donors might not wish to change their standing orders to our new account, things have picked up tremendously.

The Harvest season brought in a cornucopia of generosity from all our schools, chapels and churches both near and far and this was followed by an equally generous number of donations in the run up to Christmas.

Pauline Stokes, who, bless her, writes to all our donors, was quite overwhelmed with work, but, as she says, she is not complaining because the support we have received has been simply wonderful, showing how much our communities care about the work of our Foodbank

However, we are still comparatively low on stock especially **long-life milk, tinned spaghetti, tinned meat and custard; pasta; tea and coffee; toothpaste and shampoo** so, if you feel able, please continue to donate and believe that your generosity is truly appreciated

Citizen's Advice Advisor

Our dedicated C.A. advisor is now in place, dividing their time between Wem and Whitchurch. From October to December 2025, we referred 37 clients. According to the report we have received from CA, they dealt with 78 separate issues for these clients. This is a big step forward for our financial inclusion project and means that for those clients, the root cause of the problems which have brought them to our door are being dealt with in a more permanent way than just giving food, valuable though that is.

Meat Vouchers

The foodbank is now able to offer more fresh food, by means of meat vouchers, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables, which is very pleasing.

Since starting this additional service in November, we have given out 113 vouchers which have been very well received.

Our thanks to Alan Purcell Butchers on High Street, Whitchurch who is providing the meat and helping to operate the system.

Charitable Status

The process of changing our status continues and we are receiving support from Trussell Trust to gain Charity Commission approval. Everything is in place it just takes time!

With good wishes to you all. Do get in touch with any questions or comments

The Trustees and Management Team

Whitchurch Foodbank
Bargates Hall
Church Street
Whitchurch
Shropshire
SY13 1LB

Telephone: 01948 663943
info@whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk
whitchurch.foodbank.org.uk

To unsubscribe from this newsletter, send a message to the email address above to let us know to remove you from our mailing list.