



# North Northumberland Food Bank

## Newsletter -January 2016

### This month's news:

#### **The end of a busy year!**

The last three months of 2015 were typically busy ones for the North Northumberland food banks.

Between September and December, the **Berwick Food Bank** gave out 55 parcels, to 53 adults, 25 of whom had children. The statistics for wider north Northumberland in partnership with the **Alnwick Food Bank** show that 52 parcels were distributed to 37 adults, 35 of whom had children.

This is always an underestimation though – and it includes some small 24-hour bags given out to people who described themselves as homeless.

On top of this, more than 70 Christmas food bags went out. We owe a huge thank you for the hard work of a small team of dedicated volunteers who give up their time to sort, date and pack the bags. They also had the support of the staff at Berwick Community Trust and a number of different agencies delivered the bags to families in the area.

You may have spotted the piece about our work in the *Berwick Advertiser* just before Christmas. If not, you can read it [here](#).



## **Fund raising**

You may remember that in our last newsletter, we put out a plea for cash as well as donations of food. This is to help us top up some of the bags with fresh food for those in particular need, such as pregnant women or the elderly or very poorly. The community really rallied round and raised more than £2,600. It came from individual donations, open mic nights, scone sales and the generosity of a long list of organisations.

The New Year started with a number of donations from local people to help us re-stock after the Christmas 'rush'.

Some particular hero-grams also go to the pupils of Berwick Academy who visited before Christmas with lots of food and the local Brownies in Berwick who did a Snow Man Drive to raise money and will be visiting us later this month to pack some bags.

Our local supermarkets did their bit too: our grateful thanks go to Asda and Tesco for supporting us through their Community Champions scheme and their in-house collections.

**"This community of north Northumberland never lets us down. Their generosity is overwhelming and very humbling" - Jan Casson, Children's Centre Locality Manager.**

Any further cash donations or suggestions for fundraising should be sent to Jan, who can be contacted on [Jan.Casson@northumberland.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:Jan.Casson@northumberland.gcsx.gov.uk) or 01289 309734.

## **Public figures speak out on food banks**

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, described the numbers of people in the UK going hungry as 'a tragedy'. His comment last month that failures in the welfare system are often to blame for plunging families into financial crisis echoes the experience of our volunteers. You can read his full comments in [this piece](#) from *The Independent*.

The film maker Ken Loach told *The Guardian* in November that the issue of food banks should be given more public attention. You can read more about this [here](#).

## **What's needed now!**

Thanks for donating to a collection. This month we would really appreciate donations of breakfast cereal – and pretty much anything else, apart from soup, as we have plenty of that!

An important note: we're unable to take home-made items such as cakes, jams, marmalades and chutneys. Although these are kindly meant, because of the number of people with allergies, we can only distribute items with a formal food label of contents on it. Why not have a sale of all those gorgeous goodies and send us the proceeds instead? As you know, cash is always welcome to top up parcels with fresh food for the very vulnerable people such as the elderly, or women who are pregnant.

## **Case Studies**

In every newsletter, we highlight some of the true stories of the people who use our food banks. It's important to recognise that, in spite of the stigma that sometimes surrounds the users of food banks, most cases involve working people who find themselves in hardship through an unexpected, unavoidable change of circumstances. We monitor the reasons why people turn to us. These are all instances from the end of 2015.

**Case Study 1** involves a single person in their 40s who is working at a new part-time job. Deductions of emergency pay and a lump sum of tax have left them struggling to reach their next pay day and with no money to buy food. They received a food parcel.

In **Case Study 2**, a single person with a long-term health condition was thrown into crisis when a benefit payment failed to arrive in their bank account on a Friday. Although Job Centre Plus admitted the error, they would not guarantee that the payment would be in the account until after the weekend, leaving the person with no money for food or anything else. They were given a parcel to avoid them being left for a weekend with nothing to eat.

**Case Study 3:** a 60-year-old person with a long-term health problem found themselves with no money when employment and support allowances were withdrawn. They were told they'd have to wait two weeks for the next benefit payment to be made. They were given a parcel because they had no money for food or anything else.

## **Shout out to the volunteers!**

Week in week out, our thanks go to all our volunteers. We are fortunate to have such a committed team, from those who encourage people to donate, to those who collect

the food and bring it to our distribution centre, those who stock check and bag pack and all those who raise money for us. Thank you!

**Contact:**

If you have a query or there's some information that you'd like to see included in this newsletter, then please let the editor know – [Barbara.henderson@live.co.uk](mailto:Barbara.henderson@live.co.uk)