

Cirencester foodbank news

with Fairford & Tetbury

Volunteers
Needed!
Please contact info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk

Issue 7 • May 2018



CEO visits Cirencester Foodbank *(see back page)*

I have been the Chair of Cirencester Foodbank since its inception back in 2012 and it seems likely that this will be my final letter to you all, as life moves on and I move away. So it seems like an ideal time to look back at what we have achieved with a view to looking forward as to what next... Since we opened we have now diversified considerably in that we are now a three-pronged Foodbank whereby we distribute food in Fairford and Tetbury as well as in Cirencester. We hope that this, alongside the emergency food boxes that are scattered across the district, mean that we are better able to reach those in need in some of the more outlying communities. It also means that we are in need of purchasing a van and I am hopeful that by the time the summer holidays arrive, our van will be seen in and around the local community. We have also diversified in that we have become much better at working in partnership with other organisations. The Trussell Trust, of which we are a part, is very keen that Foodbanks should offer "more than food". We have resisted re-inventing the wheel in how we provide this but we now offer access to trained advisors from CAB and P3 in the majority of our sessions. This means that clients who have finally found the courage to access our help can also access advice to help them out of their current crisis without having to step over the threshold of another organisation. This strategy is clearly working as the majority of our clients are not repeat clients,

which suggests that people are accessing the support they need to try and sort out their underlying situation, be that benefit problems, sickness, domestic violence, redundancy or short term demands on their resources such as a broken boiler. The reasons that people access the Foodbank are very varied and it is worth reflecting on how easy it would be for all of us to suddenly find ourselves in a position of need.

As we look forward our main challenges are ensuring that we continue to reach those in need, with a particular focus on wanting to reach out to the more elderly in our communities. Older folk are often particularly isolated and so not in touch with many of our referral agencies and this, coupled with the perceived stigma of needing to use a Foodbank, are often obstacles for them in accessing the help that they need. We are also keen to achieve some sustainable funding to enable us to continue to provide our services and so there are details later on in this newsletter as to how you could support us financially on a regular basis or get involved in one of our fundraising initiatives.

Dr Mandy Fry
Chairman, Cirencester Foodbank.

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How did you get involved?

Jan Having led a very busy active life, juggling with raising a family, a full-time job, always involved in Community and Church activities, suddenly retirement loomed. My husband, Kevin, and I moved from a rural community to a smaller house in Tetbury, looking forward to a quiet, peaceful life without any ties or commitment. But life isn't like that – you cannot just suddenly stop the world and get off! We soon became integrated into our new community and were drawn into the many activities that were going on around us. When we learnt that a Foodbank was opening in Tetbury and seeking volunteer helpers, we were ripe for the picking!

Kevin When the Foodbank first started in Tetbury, there was a great need for drivers. As another volunteer project that I had been involved in, had just ceased operating, I now had some spare time. I spoke about the project to another volunteer, and found it suited me just fine, so I put my name down.

What is your role?

Jan The Foodbank distribution opens in St Mary's Community Centre, every Tuesday morning. I work there on a rota basis alongside other volunteers like me, giving out the food to the clients who, for whatever reason, need help at this time and are referred to us by the various local agencies, eg doctor's surgery, schools, social workers, CAB etc.

Kevin My role is to gather up the food, that has been donated by the people of Tetbury, from the local Churches and Tesco Supermarket; collect the empty food containers from St Mary's Community Centre and deliver it all to our warehouse in the basement of the Baptist Church in Cirencester, where it is weighed, date stamped and sorted into the varying sized family groups, ensuring a well-balanced diet for all. I return the filled containers to the store cupboard at St Mary's Centre, along with cereal, sometimes coffee and toiletries.

What motivated you to get involved?

Jan I was at Church one Sunday morning at the beginning of Lent. The sermon was about not focussing on giving up things for Lent, but rather what

things can you add-on to make it more meaningful. This stuck in my mind and when I heard that a Foodbank was opening in Tetbury – it seemed to be a sign...!

Kevin It was really a no-brainer for me. I had a car, was able to lift and carry heavy boxes and now had some spare time.

What have been the high points and joys?

Jan It is very satisfying and rewarding when you see the smiles and gratitude of needy families, especially the children, going off with their supplies of food. But, also I am just amazed at the generosity of members of the public, who donate food in the churches and when they shop at their local supermarkets.

Kevin There is the obvious satisfaction of being needed and doing something useful for the local Community, but I also enjoy driving through beautiful countryside and spending time in such a lovely town as Cirencester.

What challenges do you see for the future?

With all the cutbacks and pressures of modern living, many more people will be wanting and needing our services. Therefore it is important to keep the momentum going by constantly raising awareness in the public eye, especially when there are so many charities nowadays seeking help for their cause. From a practical point of view, our cupboard in the Community Centre can only just store enough food for our families, so with expansion we must look ahead to the problem of even greater storage facilities.

Does an affluent town like Tetbury really need a Foodbank?

We hear many voices around us echoing this question. It is true that there isn't the same need in Tetbury as there is in a city such as Gloucester. Nevertheless, there is still a need here, especially in school holidays when the free school meals stop. How are large families expected to cope?

Food donation points

We now have the following permanent collection points across the area:

-  Cirencester
- Waitrose Cirencester
-  Tetbury

Each week one of our team collects all the items from these points and brings them to our warehouse for sorting and sending out to our Foodbank sessions.

Our warehouse is in the basement of the Cirencester Baptist Church and is open for donations as follows:

- **Monday 6pm-7pm**
- **Wednesday 10am-12.30pm**
- **Thursday 6pm-7pm**

Ways to donate financially

The Foodbank is always very grateful for both food and monetary donations. There are a number of ways to donate financially:



1. Write a cheque to **Cirencester Foodbank**
2. Set a **standing order** up
3. Donate via BTMyDonate mydonate.bt.com/charities/cirencesterfoodbank

If you are considering donating, please also consider gift aiding your donation as this allows us to reclaim the tax on your behalf.

Privacy notice

As many of you will be aware, new data protection regulations will be in force from 25 May 2018. We wish to draw your attention to the following statements.

If you do not wish to receive newsletters from Cirencester Foodbank, please email info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk with the word **"unsubscribe"** in the subject line, and your full name in the body of the email.

Cirencester Foodbank takes data security very seriously. You have received this newsletter because you are on our list of supporters. If you would like to see a copy of the privacy statement for supporters' data, please email info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk with **"supporters privacy statement"** in the subject line.

Session opening times

We have now opened a session in Fairford. Our weekly Foodbank sessions are as follows:

Day	Time	Venue
Monday	1pm-3.30pm	Ashcroft Centre, Cirencester
Tuesday	9.30am-11.00am	St. Mary's Community Centre, Tetbury
Wednesday	1pm-2.30pm	Fairford Community Centre, Fairford
Thursday	9.30am-12pm	Ashcroft Centre, Cirencester

We are joined by our partners Citizens Advice and P3 advisers in each of our locations, this enables us to provide our clients with additional, immediate support and information.

Foodbank myths...

People just become dependent on the Foodbank...

All the people who come to the Foodbank are referred in by one of our partnership agencies, of which there are currently 90. The referral agency gives them a voucher to exchange for three days worth of nutritionally balanced food for their size of family. There are guidelines that suggest that each individual should only be issued a maximum of three vouchers within a six month period and the vast majority of our clients only access our help one or two times. For those who may need longer term support, perhaps whilst awaiting universal credit, then we make sure that they are engaged with one of our partners, such as the CAB, to help them out of their current situation. The exception to this would be in the school holidays when we work in close liaison with the local schools to ensure that no local families go hungry, given that they are missing out on free school meals and often breakfast clubs as well.

Anyone can just turn up and say they're in need...

The vast majority of our clients are referred into us by the voucher system. Occasionally people will turn up to a session without a voucher. It is then up to the team leader of that session to make a judgement call as to whether they are genuinely in need. If that is the case then we will issue a voucher from the Foodbank but inform the client that this is for one time only and that they will need to get future vouchers from one of our referral agencies.

Christmas cards

We know it's a little early to be thinking of December already, however, we will be selling Christmas cards to raise much needed funds for the Foodbank. We'll be approaching local retailers to stock for us and also selling at Christmas fayres. Please do get in touch if you'd be able to stock cards for us, or if you'd be interested in helping on a Christmas fayre stall with us.



Don't people just shop around for vouchers and abuse the system...

We enter all our data onto an online database provided by the Trussell Trust, which means that it is easy to see who is accessing vouchers where. Since we started in 2012 there have been only three individuals who voucher-shopped between agencies. This was easy to stop by telling those involved that we would only accept vouchers issued by a particular agency, and getting everyone concerned to sign up to this approach.

Aren't all Foodbank clients just scroungers who waste money on alcohol, cigarettes and drugs...

It is not our place to judge the people accessing the Foodbank. That is why we operate a referral system. However our experience would suggest that the majority of our clients are just about surviving but they have no resources to cope with an unexpected expense. Many of them are working, but may be in less than full time hours or on zero hour contracts. If any of you have seen the film I, Daniel Blake, it really emphasises how easy it is for any of us to fall into need unexpectedly.

My Foodbank Supper

Fancy a different dinner party? Why not invite your friends round and be creative by making a delicious dinner using ingredients you'd find in a Foodbank parcel? Rather than bring wine or flowers (or pay for the cost of a night out), all we ask is that your guests make a monetary donation to the Foodbank.

To get involved, drop us an email at info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk and let us know when you are hosting your party. We'll give you the list of items you can use, invitations to send to your friends, some bunting and balloons to decorate your table.

We'd love to see your menu creativity so please share your photos with us on social media using the hashtag [#myfoodbanksupper](https://twitter.com/myfoodbanksupper)



Update from Cirencester

Sessions in Cirencester continue from the Ashcroft Centre on Mondays and Thursdays. We are joined by CAB and P3 each week. We are Sewell Mullings Logie and one of Nationwide's charities of the year for 2018 and we appreciate their kind support to us.

Collection points are available in the local churches, at Tesco Extra and Waitrose in Cirencester.



Update from Fairford

Our Fairford session opened in late 2017 on a Wednesday at the Fairford Community Centre. As with our other sessions, P3 is alongside us every fourth Wednesday in the month.

Donation points are available at the Community Centre and in the local churches in Fairford. For clients in need of Foodbank support, vouchers are available from the GP surgery, the local schools and District Council. We are looking to add to our referral agency base in Fairford, if you are an agency or know of any that would be interested in referring into us, please get in touch!



Update from Tetbury

The Foodbank in Tetbury remains very busy. We are incredibly grateful for the recent "Who killed the vicar?" Murder Mystery fundraiser in the church, which raised almost £750. What a super idea!

The monthly Tetbury Lions support to the Foodbank is highly appreciated and enables us to support our clients as much as possible.

Donation points are available at Tesco in Tetbury and the local churches.

We are joined by P3 in Tetbury on the second and fourth Tuesdays in the month.



Trustee update

Although Cirencester Foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust we are an independent charity with our own governing documents in the form of a charitable incorporated organisation. So we need a trustee board to have oversight of the governance issues and strategic vision of the Foodbank. Several of our current trustees have been involved with the Foodbank from its' beginning back in 2012. So we felt it was time to re-invigorate our current trustee board. Consequently we have recently held a very successful recruitment round whereby we have managed to find some new trustees. Most of our trustees come from a church background and all of them are signed up to the Christian ethos that started off the Foodbank. We hope to be able to introduce some of them to you in forthcoming newsletters but also plan to have their details on our website for you to access if you would like to know more about them.

Volunteers needed

Like many charities, Cirencester Foodbank couldn't function without our amazing team of volunteers. There are lots of different roles available, ranging from supermarket collections to a regular weekly commitment. We are particularly looking for support in our Fairford session & on Monday & Thursday evenings in our warehouse.

If you'd like to get involved and want to know more please contact us at: info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk

Stories from the frontline...

A family we'd been supporting for a little while, had a change in circumstances. By working across different agencies, we were able to signpost the main referrer to additional help, which allowed the family to reach significant help within 24 hours. A few days later we received the following message:

"Your assistance was invaluable and directed us to absolutely the right person. The family is very grateful and is already looking forward to a much brighter future. Within a few weeks they will no longer need Foodbank support."

Other feedback received:

"Thank you so much for your recent help. We wouldn't have been able to cope without you. You provide an invaluable service when it's most needed."

"Thank you for being so flexible. It's made a massive difference to our client."

"Thank you to your team for the kindness shown this week. It really helped this person."

CEO visits Cirencester Foodbank

In February, we were delighted to welcome Emma Revie, newly appointed Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust, to our warehouse. She was keen to hear our experiences of working in a relatively rural area, how we engage with our referral agencies, reflect the vision of the Trussell Trust and hear of our community engagement work. We're looking forward to seeing how she takes the organisation forward and engaging with her to help our clients more.

Cirencester Foodbank – Social media

You can now follow Cirencester Foodbank on twitter or visit us on Facebook. Do sign up for updates so you can see how you can get involved!



 @CirenFoodbank

 Ciren Foodbank

Cirencester Foodbank in numbers



For further details of the work of the Cirencester Foodbank and how you can be involved please:

email: info@cirencester.foodbank.org.uk

or check out our

website: www.cirencester.foodbank.org.uk

find us at

 @CirenFoodbank  Ciren Foodbank

or write to us at

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Charity registration number: 1159810