



Cirencester
foodbanknews

with Fairford & Tetbury



Looking back
Moving forward

Issue 11 • Winter '21/Spring '22

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NEWS

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. It has once again been a busy year for the Foodbank.

We end the year thankful that those needing our help in the South Cotswolds has reduced from the large numbers we saw in 2020 although, as our new Head of Foodbank, Anton Wynn, explains in the newsletter, we are concerned that the removal of the universal credit uplift alongside rising fuel, energy and food prices will once again put pressure on people's budgets and may tip them into food poverty.

We are working hard to address the underlying reasons our clients need our help, whether that is through working closely with our referral agency partners, the work of our Citizens Advice Foodbank Adviser or through the assistance provided by our wonderful team of signposting volunteers. We are also working towards the reopening of our centres in Cirencester, Tetbury and Fairford in 2022.

Once again we have been humbled by the incredible support which we continue to receive from the local community. We could fill several newsletters with wonderful stories of local businesses, groups and individuals who have supported us in a variety of ways; in this newsletter we have highlighted one of them, the incredible bike riding of Henry and Verity, aged 6 and 4, who cycled over 100 miles raising funds for the Foodbank.

Lastly, I want to thank our staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work for the Foodbank. 2021 has continued to throw many challenges at us and they have responded to all of them with determination, flexibility and good humour!

Best wishes!

Anne Currie
Chair of Cirencester Foodbank

Farewell and Welcomes at Autumn Celebration

We were thrilled to host a gathering of volunteers, trustees and staff in October. For those attending it was an opportunity to make and renew relationships, as many had not seen one another during the previous 18 months whilst enjoying drinks and cakes.

The gathering was also a chance to say a proper 'farewell' to Rachel Brindley, and celebrate her time as Cirencester foodbank's project manager, a position she held for six years before moving on to take up a new career challenge in June 2021. We also took this opportunity to welcome our Head of Foodbank, Anton Wynn who joined us in September.

During her time at Cirencester Foodbank Rachel was instrumental in establishing the processes required to meet growing demand, initially through the distribution centres in Cirencester, Tetbury and Fairford, and latterly, during the pandemic, through a home delivery service.



The new head of the foodbank, Anton Wynn, joins from his previous role as Mission and Outreach Layworker at Cirencester Ashcroft Church and Centre where he was responsible since 2018 for identifying and meeting needs of the community and for developing Ashcroft as a community hub.

Chair of Cirencester Foodbank, Anne Currie, said: *"We are extremely grateful to Rachel for her inspirational management of the foodbank through some challenging times and are sorry to see her go; we wish her every success in her next career steps. We are very fortunate to have secured the services of Anton, a highly-regarded and experienced lay worker in the Cirencester community, and we look forward to working with him to combat food poverty in our community."*



Peter Britton

Cirencester Foodbank
delivery driver



How did you become involved in the work of the Foodbank?

At the start of the pandemic, I was keen to get involved with helping the community in some way, and offered to volunteer with the Foodbank.

However, it soon became clear, that the food collection model at the centres needed to be changed to a delivery service to the client's home address.

This new concept was run in conjunction with British Gas' service engineers who initially delivered the food boxes and was viewed as a success. This led to the delivery driver position becoming available.

I felt my skills would suit this position, as I had held a current private hire taxi driver licence for three years, having retired after 42 years working for Aggregate Industries based at Ashton Keynes.

What is your current role?

My current role is ensuring that everyone on the daily delivery log receives their food parcels in a safe, timely and helpful manner.

The day starts by checking and preparing the van. In order to maintain confidentiality and the dignity of our clients, before we go out on deliveries, we cover the foodbank logos on the van. It is carefully loaded with pre-packed boxes for the clients.

The delivery route is then planned for that day which often takes in the far reaches of the Cotswolds.

What have been the high points?

Having now been undertaking deliveries for the past 18 months I have witnessed the joy and relief from our clients in receiving parcels of food help, in particular during the height of the pandemic

And where possible I enjoy a brief chat to make sure all is well. Christmas time was a particular highlight with the wonderful hampers, as well as handing out Chocolate eggs to the children at Easter.

I would like to also say that all the Foodbank volunteer teams I come in contact with, such as the teams on the telephones, the early morning box packers to the lunchtime and evening shelf stackers. They are all truly dedicated and lovely people.

"I have been overwhelmed by the care and support you have all shown me – from the lovely lady on the phone and your wonderful delivery driver."

What would you say to someone who says that somewhere as affluent as the Cotswolds can't possibly need Foodbanks?

The Cotswolds is undoubtedly a fantastic place to live and attracts many affluent & wealthy people to live and to holiday. But like all societies we have the full spectrum of people with lots of different needs.

Foodbanks are a fact of life, at the moment, and need as much support as possible from everyone as any of us could see our circumstances change suddenly often through no fault of our own, and it's comforting to know help can be sought & provided with no stigma.

Did you know?

Along with non-perishable food, our food parcels are also supplemented, wherever possible, by fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs provided by local organisations. In addition to food, we can also supply toiletries, nappies, sanitary items and pet food as part of our support provision.

Henry & Verity convert pedal power into food donations

Kind-hearted Henry (6) and Verity (4) Walker really were moving forward as they cycled over 100 miles in aid of Cirencester Foodbank. In doing so they raised £350 through sponsorship to buy items for Cirencester Foodbank.

The children were inspired to take on the challenge after Henry read about the issues some children face in a series of informational postcards created by Unicef. He wanted to help after reading that 'other children don't even have food and the basic things we have' and his sister was keen to get involved.

They were cheered along by little sister Imogen and mum Heather, who formed the support team, as they took on the momentous challenge. After collecting the sponsorship, Henry and Verity set off for the local supermarket, where they purchased over 150kgs of food and toiletries, which included urgently needed items for the Foodbank. The children added in some sweet treats recognising that they would lift the spirits of those receiving the emergency food parcels, which will be delivered to those in need in the area.

Head of Foodbank, Anton Wynn, said, "*We are always amazed and overwhelmed by the generosity of our supporters, but we were especially impressed with Henry and Verity's kindness and determination to help those in need. With the removal of the universal credit uplift and rising energy and food prices, we expect to see need grow this winter, so we were incredibly pleased Henry and Verity rode in to help us fill the gap. They are real-life super-heroes and their support helps us ensure no one in our local community has to face food poverty.*"



A hybrid way of working – The future of Cirencester Foodbank

Before the pandemic struck, if you heard the word 'hybrid', what would have come to mind? For most people perhaps they would think of cars that ran on both conventional fuel and electric. Others may have thought of a particularly interesting animal or plant species born of, or created through, hybridisation. However, it was not a word that was particularly in general use. The pandemic changed all that and now it is a common term, especially in the workplace, for the blending of two distinct styles of working practice.

In the early stages of the pandemic the Foodbank closed its distribution centres in Cirencester, Fairford and Tetbury and moved to a home delivery model to ensure the safety of clients, staff and volunteers. This was in line with our strategic objective to expand our geographic and client reach.

Delivering directly to clients, many of whom may be isolated, lacking transport or facing illness or medical

conditions that prevent travel, has proved to be a huge success in ensuring we can support those most in need and is something we intend to continue providing.

We also recruited a team of trained volunteers to provide phone signposting support to clients to help them resolve the crisis they faced.

However, we recognise that whilst deliveries and telephone engagement provided help to clients, there was still a need for meeting and providing support in person.

As we move into 2022, we are therefore considering our own hybrid model with the launch of Foodbank support cafes. These community hubs may provide a hot drink and food, along with support and signposting from our teams and external support agencies who attend. Through addressing issues such as digital inclusion, debt management, work skills and more, it could be possible to support people to resolve the underlying issues that cause food poverty, before they cause people to need emergency food support.

“ Client feedback

A selection of the many comments we've received over the last few months. We are really grateful for all of those clients who take time to complete a feedback card (we provide a stamped addressed envelope for them to return the feedback).

“I moved to the Cotswolds to be nearer my sister with my youngest daughter. I have a rare kidney disorder and am in and out of hospital. My daughter has struggled both mentally and physically most of her little life. I can't work and feel depressed as I love helping people and don't like asking for help. But here I am needing the Foodbank and cannot thank everyone who has helped my daughter and I in our hour of need. I wasn't treated as a nuisance or no hoper. I felt truly confident with all who helped me. One day I hope to repay the kindness I was shown. Thank you, Cirencester Foodbank.”

“Following a bad head injury I have been unable to work as it is difficult to work without falling. With the universal credit system in disarray I often am left without money to buy food. Cirencester Foodbank is a lifesaver to me and many others and I wish that they will always be supported to help many like myself.”

“Unfortunately my family and I have fell into a difficult time recently. Without the help from you guys we would really struggle. We appreciate it very much all the help we have been given.”

“I've recently moved into my own house and I'm not ashamed to use the Foodbank at all they are here to help and I'm so grateful and will continue to use them. Amazing telephone manner when spoken to on the phone. Very lovely ladies. Thank you for your efforts.”

“I only use the food bank when I really have to as I was trying to support two adults on my Universal Credit claim as my adult son finds it hard to claim money. Just at times did not meet the bills so cheaper food had to go further. Now I have been told I cannot work due to illness I should get more.”

“I left an abusive marriage so I am now a single mum and finding it hard as I had my work hours cut and I just couldn't afford shopping. The Foodbank is marvellous been such a big help. Thank you.”

“I have been homeless and struggling financially ever since first lockdown when my business collapsed. This is the first time I have had to ask for help. I can't thank you enough for the food, especially accommodating for vegetarians. You are truly lovely people and have re-installed my faith in the human-race.”

“Many, many thanks. A lifesaver!!! I don't know what I would have done without your help. Such kindness and generosity. Thank you!”

Thank You

In the short time since I started as manager of Cirencester Foodbank, I have been overwhelmed by the commitment to Cirencester Foodbank from our communities and our wonderful volunteers. 'Thank you' does not even start to capture how grateful we are to all those who support our work!

The local community continues to be amazing in the way that they have kept the Foodbank in their hearts and minds, and this has been evident over the harvest period and continuing into Christmas. Many schools, churches and community organisations gave us their harvest food again this year, and it was the largest harvest collection period Cirencester Foodbank has ever seen. It provided a huge boost to us, especially in topping up essential items for which we were low on stock.

This support will be of significant help over this winter period which has the potential to be especially difficult for households. The removal of the universal credit uplift, rising fuel, energy and food prices and the continued impact of COVID means Foodbank referrals may continue to remain high.

It has been incredible to look at what Cirencester Foodbank has achieved over the past year, in the face of the pandemic and high levels of need. I think all who are involved with Cirencester Foodbank should be pleased when they look back on what has been accomplished!

However, we continue to be saddened that Foodbank's even need to exist in the UK and it is our aim, moving forward, to work to bring about change that reduces and, finally, removes the need for Foodbanks in our communities. The next year will bring new challenges and changes to our operation as we look towards these aims.

These are not changes we can achieve alone, and we rely on your support to make such a vision a reality. So once more, **THANK YOU** for all you do!

Anton Wynn
Head of Foodbank



Ways to help

The Foodbank is always very encouraged and grateful for the goodwill shown and help provided so many people in our community. If you would like to support our work, you can do so in the following ways:

Raise Awareness

Help us to raise awareness of the issues that cause food poverty and support us with your voice as we work to make it a thing of the past. Follow us on social media to stay informed about the latest news and issues affecting the people we work with, like and share our messages and help us spread the word.



Volunteer

We cannot survive as a charity without the amazing support of our volunteers. To find out about our current volunteer vacancies visit:
<https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/volunteer/>

How to get help

To access Foodbank support, you need a voucher. They are available (virtually) from many different agencies including **Citizens Advice** on **0808 800 0511**, other local charities, schools and health professionals.

Donate financially

There are several ways to donate financially:

1. Make a one-off gift by writing a cheque to **Cirencester Foodbank**, and sending it to the address below, or via bank transfer
2. Make a regular donation with a **standing order** using our standing order form at www.cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money

If you are considering donating, please also consider gift aiding your donation as this allows us to reclaim the tax on your behalf. You can download a gift aid form from our website at www.cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money

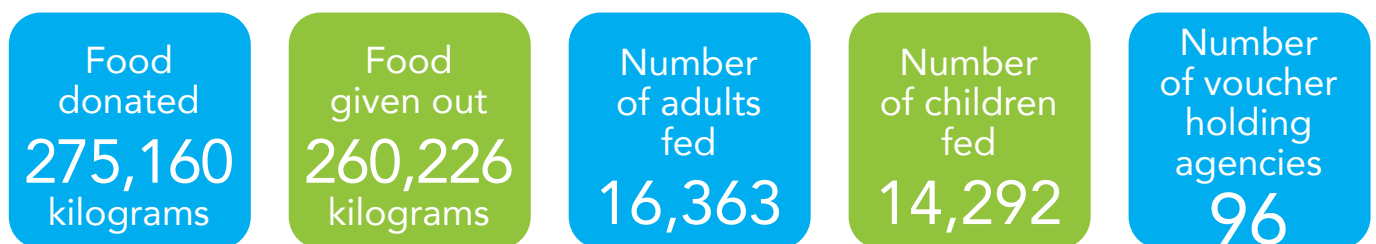
Electronic Donations

A/C Name: **Cirencester Foodbank**
A/C number: **43957160**
Sort Code: **30-80-95**

Donate Food

You can find a full list of donation points and can view our shopping list of essential items at:
<https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>

Cirencester Foodbank in numbers since 2012



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



or write to us at

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