

## Christmas Newsletter 2020



What a challenging year at the Food Bank! During the first lockdown, most of our usual packers, donation collectors and drivers were in the vulnerable category and had to self-isolate. At the same time our numbers went up considerably and we had to act quickly to recruit fifty new volunteers to support us. Most of our current volunteers are from that group, although some have left and some joined or rejoined since. Currently we have 14 regular packers plus 2 session leaders, 10 regular drivers and 14 people who collect donations and/or move stock. We also have others behind the scenes including Ron, our treasurer, Peter who manages our website, Tom and Jo who do a range of useful jobs for me, and Fiona and Ian who organise the rotas. Our Trustees also help out with a range of jobs including the admin for referrals.

During the height of the Covid crisis we had a 110% increase in clients needing support. We are now back to near normal for this time of year, but expecting to see more clients during the winter as many struggle to pay heating bills as well as affording food. We have provided Christmas hampers for 69 households this year. A small number of these are homeless/ in emergency accommodation, others are seeking employment or are vulnerable for health and social reasons.

In July we moved to new accommodation where it is much easier for us to manage our own space efficiently, despite it being smaller. We are lucky to be able to use the previous premises to continue taking in donations and storing extra food. Also in July our previous Co-ordinator, Andie Milne left, so there was a period of adapting to be done. Andie had worked extremely hard for over two years to grow the Food Bank and expand our services. Unfortunately Covid has made a temporary stop to some initiatives, but with the hope of the vaccine next year we will be looking at how we can support clients with visits from energy advisers, etc. in future.

This autumn we have had many generous donations of food, money and Christmas items from the lovely people of the Sid Valley and we are in a good position to continue supporting needy clients.

Ian Barlow from the Town Council visited last Friday and asked me to convey to the volunteers his grateful thanks on behalf of council members for the work they do.

There was also a message from our Chair, Renee Forth:

*Thank you's never seem quite enough when we express them to the people who give their time so generously to help those less fortunate than themselves. However the Trustees are always conscious that without our volunteers the whole food bank could not operate so, as always and particularly just now approaching the extra busy time of Christmas (not forgetting the past and current lockdown periods) we send you all our truly grateful thanks for everything you do. You are fantastic.*

I would like to add my grateful thanks to all volunteers. Some of you don't ever meet a client or hear the relief and thanks from worried people needing support, but be assured that whatever your role, you play an important part in making their lives better.

And now it remains for me to wish you a happy and safe Christmas and a much more enjoyable 2021!

Chris Chapman  
Food Bank Coordinator