

## A note from Ricky Turner, Safeguarding Trustee

Friends, Happy New Year! I hope you have had a wonderful Christmas.

I want to thank you for all the donations, time and energy you generously give to the work of Dunstable Foodbank in serving our local community. Your support is amazing!

In early December, we collected over 3 tons of food and nearly £700 from people shopping at Tesco. Again, the generosity of our community is amazing!

As your Safeguarding Lead, I want to also thank you for all the care and attention you give to safeguarding everyone at Dunstable Foodbank, especially vulnerable adults, young people and children. Your reporting of safeguarding incidents makes such a positive difference – thank you!

At such a challenging time as this, especially for those who are most financially vulnerable, I am so grateful for your generosity.

Your generosity, I believe, reflects the God in whose image we are made, a God who out of abundant love for our world comes among us in Jesus, full of grace and truth, empowering us to become children of God, people of generous love.

So, thank you so much! God bless you in 2023.

*Rev'd Ricky*

## Trustee Stuart Douglas, reflects on the Evening of Thanksgiving

It was such a joy to see so many people attend the Evening of Thanksgiving to recognise and celebrate the wonderful service that so many of our volunteers have given over the decade that Dunstable Foodbank has been active. We were joined by the Mayors of Dunstable and of Houghton Regis, MP Andrew Selous (who was at the original opening of the foodbank in 2012), donors, church friends and our wonderful volunteers.

A number of our volunteers have been involved for the whole 10 years and have been joined along the way by many others, just as wholeheartedly giving of their time and efforts to serve the communities of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the surrounding areas.

So many people fed back that they had a wonderful evening, and in particular, how good it was to see the impact that our Foodbank has had by hearing moving and heartfelt testimonies from people who have been helped by the Foodbank, not just in terms of receiving food but also of friendship and a listening ear over a cup of tea or coffee by so many of those serving weekly in the Distribution Centres.

As a foodbank, we have grown from helping 84 families in our very first month back in October 2012, to providing food for over 6000 people this year.

Hearing people's stories makes all the hard and varied work that goes into running the foodbank so worthwhile.

From all the Trustees we would like to thank the sponsors of the evening – local churches, supermarkets and businesses who helped us with the evening.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who serve so faithfully, to the wonderful public of local communities who have been so generous in their giving of food and finance, and to the organisations who have supported the foodbank, as without your support we would not be able to provide this essential service to people in our area who cannot afford food.



### Watch this space:

We will soon be opening an additional Distribution Centre in Houghton Regis. More details to follow!



# Dunstable Foodbank

❄️ Winter 2022/23 Newsletter ❄️

## Behind the shutters of our Warehouse

Part two of a two-part feature on the hidden hive of activity that forms the hub of our Foodbank operations. To view our Autumn 2022 newsletter and to read part 1, visit the **News** page on our website or see here: <https://dunstable.foodbank.org.uk/2022/10/26/autumn-2022-newsletter/>

Our Warehouse can, and has, stored over 20 tons of food, milk, and other day-to-day necessities that so many of us take for granted. Ominously, as demand from those in need grows in response to a cost-of-living crisis that is pushing more and more people into poverty, the stock over the summer months dwindled to as little as 10.5 tons - enough to satisfy demand, but only just.

Dunstable Foodbank, founded in 2012 by Alan and Sue Sutton, is one of 1,300 foodbank centres supported by The Trussell Trust, itself established in 1997. According to latest figures compiled by the Trust, between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 foodbanks in its UK wide network distributed over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis. That represented an increase of 14 per cent compared to the same period in 2019/20.

Fortunately, despite dramatically increasing pressures on household finances, the people and businesses of Dunstable and surrounding villages continue to support our Foodbank with donations that are primarily picked up by our trusty Transit.

Three days a week the van tours local donation points and returns to the warehouse with those vital supplies. On a large, tabled work area volunteers then sort through bags and crates, ensuring that every bottle, box, package, and tin is dated properly (out-of-date donations cannot be offered on to clients) and placed in appropriate order on the shelves.



Other volunteers will then tour those shelves packing large plastic containers for specified numbers of clients, be they one person, a couple, small families or larger families. These containers are then loaded back onto the van which transports them to the three distribution centres in Dunstable - the New Life Church near Houghton Regis, St Augustine's Church on the Downside estate, and Christ Church in the centre of town.



Over a ton of food leaves the warehouse each week, by way of more than 50 food parcels containing enough to feed well over 140 people.

Typically, warehouse volunteers will have handled, amongst other items, 157 tins of baked beans, 157 tins of soup, 170 tins of vegetables, 84 litres of milk and tins of tomatoes, 47 jars of pasta sauce, 145 tins of fish, 184 tins of meat, 107 tins of rice pudding or custard, and 60 kilograms of pasta and rice. And that's only the essentials!

It is a thoroughly honest endeavour originating from a

warehouse that is, perhaps, deserving of rather more recognition than the nefarious deed that took place at that bridge all those years ago.

Want to see more of what goes on in our Warehouse? See page 4 for a link to our latest video, put together by our community partner Sperring Residential, that shows what happens behind the shutters of our Warehouse!

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### What's in the Warehouse?

The Warehouse is still currently **very well stocked with: baked beans & dry pasta.**

#### Items most-needed at this time:

- Tinned vegetables
- Tinned meat
- Instant mashed potato
- Tinned fruit
- Sponge puddings
- Rice pudding
- Teabags (packs of 40 / 80)

## Thoughts of a Foodbank Client

Everyone's heard of foodbanks but do they really know how important they are? Having struggled, like so many other people, during Covid, I was then made redundant. No money, alone and no food. It was a daunting experience going to the foodbank for the first time but very quickly I was put at ease and realised that the volunteers were friendly, there to help and non-judgmental even when I was upset. Going somewhere like this was an eye-opening experience.

Yes, there is a difference in being given food rather than choosing your own. But I learned how to cook and make a meal with things I wouldn't normally use. It also helped me to waste nothing and be more creative with foods. I was so overjoyed when putting away my foodbank to find, not only basic, practical food, but some wonderful treats - a bag of Haribos, a packet of Jaffa Cakes and a bar of chocolate for us. It really was a lovely lift when feeling so low.

I'm so grateful for the foodbank, for the lovely volunteers, for those who donate, for the overall kindness and most of all for the food to put in my cupboard instead of having nothing. **Thank you.**

*'Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.'*  
**2 Corinth 9: 10-11**

## More than food...

Everywhere you look and so much of what we hear at the moment is about the cost-of-living crisis. With winter upon us, the challenges for our community continue to grow and as a foodbank, we are exploring creative ways to help people in addition to food parcels. Distribution Centres now have blankets that can be given to those struggling to keep warm, as well as flasks of hot water to take with them. Houghton Regis Town Council have provided 'warm packs' for clients, too, and supermarket vouchers through the government's Household Support Fund are once again available, enabling clients to purchase food for themselves, including fresh food and other essentials. We are always looking for ideas for how best to support the community so please let us know if you have any thoughts!

## Bigger team, bigger impact. Financial Inclusion Project with Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice logo is a blue speech bubble containing the words "citizens advice" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

citizens  
advice

We have been blessed to be working with colleagues from Citizens Advice (CA), thanks to the Financial Inclusion Project through Trussell Trust.

Sarah and Saima are Foodbank Advisers based at the CA offices supporting clients through phone or face to face appointments; Abi comes into the Distribution Centres and supports clients as they collect their food, providing an immediate point of contact and booking appointments for follow up support. In the last year, the Foodbank Advisers met with 492 new clients to offer and provide on-going Financial Advice (including Welfare Benefits Advice and/or Debt Advice) in order to improve their financial situation and maximise their income.

We want to help beyond 'just food' and through this project, we can help people connect with relevant & professional, financial support that we hope will mean they may no longer require foodbank support.

*Client K arrived at our Foodbank, beaming with joy that he had just come from an appointment with the Foodbank Adviser. With her help, his energy debts had been halved and he was now on a plan to pay back the remaining amount. Whilst he still required support from the Foodbank, had he not been referred to the Adviser he would not have known about the support that was available for him.*



# Dunstable Foodbank

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## What happens when you donate? Take a look...

We'd like to say a big thanks to the team at Sperring Residential for their new partnership with our Foodbank - raising awareness and funds for us, and offering their expertise and services to help us get the word out in the local community about what we do. Jess from their marketing team has worked with us over the last few months to create 2 videos that communicate exactly what happens to the food we receive when people donate to our Foodbank. The first was made especially to send to local schools as a resource for their Harvest Festivals. The second gives an insight into what happens to donations from the general public - along with an insight into the journey of a donation from



Supermarket to Warehouse to Distribution Centre to client. Type the YouTube web link into your browser or visit our Facebook / Instagram page to watch the videos:

**SPERRING**  
RESIDENTIAL

▶ **General Donations video:** <https://youtu.be/leyKIJTimOg>

▶ **Harvest Schools video:** <https://youtu.be/UzYrxqvXc2c>

## Bringing in the Harvest

This year, local schools and community groups have donated an amazing 1,700kg of food through their Harvest Festivals! This weight is the equivalent of us providing over 2,500 meals for clients! Thank you to everyone involved in organising harvest events, and to the extra hours our volunteers have put in to collect and organise these extra donations!



## Dunstable Foodbank Key Contacts

General enquiries

[info@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Clive Cook, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

[clivecook@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:clivecook@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Jemma Watkeys, Operations Manager

[jemmawatkeys@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:jemmawatkeys@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Sue Cordell, Operations Assistant

[suecordell@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:suecordell@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Dudley Peacham, Treasurer

[dudleypeacham@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:dudleypeacham@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Ricky Turner / Stephen Brevitt, Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Lead

[safeguarding@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Stuart Douglas, H&S Lead

[stuardouglas@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:stuardouglas@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

Elton Ginsberg, Warehouse Manager

[warehouse@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:warehouse@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk)

**DUNSTABLE FOODBANK**

**HELPING LOCAL  
PEOPLE IN CRISIS**

## Other ways to get involved

- **Fundraising Champion** The Board of Trustees would like to bring on a new Trustee with experience of fundraising and grant applications. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Clive Cook or Jemma Watkeys (details on left).
- **Amazon Smile** Now you can nominate Dunstable Foodbank to receive donations from Amazon every time you order through them! To sign up, please visit <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1198625-0>
- **Like and follow on our NEW social media pages** to receive updates! Share the page with friends, family and neighbours to spread the word about who we are and what we do:



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