



Dunstable Foodbank

Winter 2023 Newsletter

A Christmas message from our Chairman

As we approach that time of year yet again when we are supposed to be happy and joyful, it's very sad to see the state of our nation and the world for that matter, where there is so much pain and suffering within our communities. Many will not be looking forward to this Christmas for obvious reasons.

It is therefore such a blessing to see the wonderful dedication from all our volunteers and supporters without whom the Foodbank would not function. It is certainly heartening to see and experience the generosity of the people of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and the surrounding areas during these extremely difficult times for many.

Therefore, from all of the Trustees and those involved in the day to day running of Foodbank, may I say a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to all those who have generously donated their food, finance and time over this and previous years. We appreciate every gift/donation, no matter how large or how small.

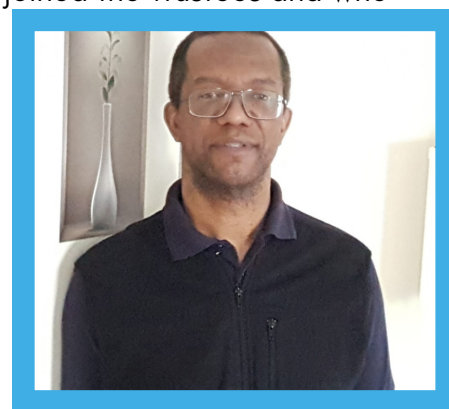
I would also like to say 'Welcome!' to Michael Simms who has recently joined the Trustees and who brings a wealth of experience, which will benefit the Foodbank.

Also, a welcome to Esther Omotayo, who has stepped down as a Trustee to take up a paid position as Operations Assistant.

Lastly, a farewell and a huge thank you to Sue Cordell, who has recently finished in her role of Assistant Operations Manager for all that she has contributed to the work of the Foodbank.

May I wish you all, whether you are a volunteer, supporter, or client of Dunstable Foodbank, a blessed time over the Christmas period as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Saviour.

- Stuart Douglas, Chairman



Welcoming on the Trustee Board:

Michael Simms

Celebrating our Foodbank team!

Dunstable Foodbank is incredibly blessed to have so many kind, generous and enthusiastic volunteers, giving of their time, energy and resources. That was shown by the recent nomination that our Foodbank received for the 2023 King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS, formerly Queen's Award for Voluntary Service), the highest accolade given to volunteer groups across the UK. Whilst we did not receive the award on this occasion, the KAVS local and national assessors were impressed by the Foodbank's 'substantial achievements' in supporting the local community. Not only that, but the nomination itself is a testament to the dedication and selfless commitment of all of our volunteers, who keep our Foodbank running and providing (ever-developing!) food provision and signposting support for those facing hardship and crisis in our community.

*"It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."
- Mother Teresa*

In particular, we would like to shine the spotlight on two volunteers - Ron Burgess (St Augustine's volunteer & Warehouse Driver's mate) and Dave Room (St Augustine's volunteer) - who this year both mark their 10th anniversary of volunteering with Dunstable Foodbank! What an amazing achievement! We thank them for their dedication and commitment over the last 10 years.

Many may also be aware that after 9 years volunteering in our Warehouse, Iain Stubbs has stepped down from his Team Leader role; we thank Iain for his contributions to the work of the Foodbank, both in the Warehouse & beyond over those many years.

Over the summer, we said 'farewell' to another of the Tuesday volunteers - John Griffiths - who made collections and deliveries in the trusty Foodbank van for the last 8 years; John has moved to Bourne, where he is already looking to get involved with the local foodbank!

DUNSTABLE FOODBANK
HELPING LOCAL PEOPLE IN CRISIS

To all of our volunteers - whether you have volunteered with us for a few days, months or several years, we say **THANK YOU!**

Harvest time has come and gone again! We have been overwhelmed by the positive response from more schools, community groups and churches than ever before, rising to our request for food support and collecting food donations for Dunstable Foodbank through their Harvest festivals! Thank you to the 17 schools, 6 churches and 5 groups of Cubs, Beavers and Scouts, who contributed over 3 tonnes of donations (the equivalent weight to us providing approximately 5000 meals for people referred to us in crisis or hardship). A couple of our volunteers also got involved in a Harvest Assembly, sharing with their pupils about the work of the Foodbank in the local area and explaining what happens to the donations received – thank you Nigel & David!

We're so grateful for schools and other community groups who work with children and young people, for their support in teaching the next generation not only about the sad reality of foodbanks, but about how they can help (through donating or volunteering with us one day) and how we, as a Foodbank, are trying to help those who visit our centres by connecting them with local support agencies.

See page 4 for lots more photos of some of the Harvest donations received this year!



Spotlight on our volunteers – Sheila Seymour, Warehouse



A little about the foodbank - What is your foodbank role and what inspired you to join Dunstable Foodbank?

When I retired, I wanted to give back to the community. After I joined, my husband Basil joined, too, so we're now volunteering here together. My role is: Jack of all trades! At the warehouse I enter the weights for incoming donations, and for outgoing items, into the foodbank computer, to keep our stock control up to date. I also sort our 'extras' section for the various team leaders, and pick boxes for outgoing orders.

What are the best things about volunteering with the Foodbank?

Meeting other people, also volunteers, who come from so many different backgrounds. It makes for a good team atmosphere within the warehouse.

Tell us a little about yourself - What was your previous occupation?

I worked in office administration. That experience has helped with inputting data, such as stock slips, on the warehouse computer.

Do you have time for hobbies or other interests?

I fill up my time very nicely, thank you! I go swimming once a week to help me keep fit. I also enjoy walking, and I go bellringing with Basil at churches in Caddington and Luton. Basil has a 1,500cc Honda Gullwing motorbike, and we go out for rides on that. We enjoy ballroom and sequence dancing, and we volunteer at the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, where I act as a station host.

Is there anywhere that you would recommend visiting?

North Wales! The scenery there is beautiful, and the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways are amazing. It is well worth making the journey to take a ride on the trains.

What is the most adventurous thing that you have done?

Ha! We once went on a tour to India. As part of the trip, we were supposed to take a train ride for three nights. But on the first night, we were advised to padlock our suitcases to our beds. After that, we decided to spend the next two nights in hotels! But we still enjoyed the holiday, and I would definitely go back to India – just not necessarily on a train! India was a great experience, but it was sad to see so much poverty there. It doesn't really touch you until you see it in person.

Finally, what is your message for anybody thinking of volunteering with Dunstable Foodbank?

Don't put off making an application to join us! If you want to volunteer somewhere, you will find everybody here is very welcoming and helpful. And you will get so much out of it. The reality is that there are people out there less fortunate than ourselves, and helping them is very rewarding.

A Day in the Life of a Can of Beans

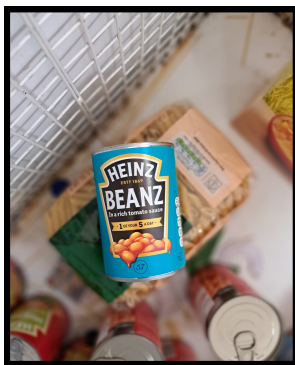
Hello there. Let me introduce myself. My name is Kan O'Beenz, and I would like to tell you about my journey from the supermarket shelf to a parcel made up especially for clients of Dunstable Foodbank.

I share space on the shop shelves with some friends and family, all desperate to become foodbank donations, of whom I am sure you will have heard. These include my mates, Kan O'Soop and Kan O'Peez, my cousin Boxa Kornflakes, and my ecclesiastical uncle, Pastor Sauce. We wait patiently, hoping to be placed into a shopping trolley or a basket by a customer acting out of kindness and concern for others.

For us cans, it is helpful when a customer chooses a superior one (such as myself!), with a ring pull top. It is a sad fact that, due to circumstances often beyond their control, some foodbank clients cannot lay their hands on the barest of essentials such as a tin opener.



On the supermarket shelf



In the supermarket donation bin

So off I go, our customer friend paying for me at the checkout, then placing me (gently, I hope, as dents don't become me!) in the donation bin which can usually be found close to the shop's exit door. There I await collection by one of the foodbank van teams who make regular visits to shops and other donation points such as churches or schools.

One of the collection team members will place me into a crate, which is then loaded into the foodbank van. Along with all sorts of other donations, I am transported back to the foodbank warehouse where we are unloaded and weighed in - weighing in and weighing out every donated item is important in order to keep track of stock in the warehouse - and then I await my turn to be dated.

A warehouse volunteer will look for a printed 'best before' or 'use by' date on my can, and then clearly write the month and year with a permanent marker. It is essential that food passed on to clients in their bags or boxes is not out of date. So, another volunteer will stack me in the appropriate place on the warehouse shelves.



On the Warehouse shelf, waiting to be picked.

I am a can of beans, and my 'best before' date is 9/26 (September 2026), so the volunteer will find the section on the shelves for beans, and then place me in the crates holding fellow cans of beans for the year 2026. That will be my new home until another volunteer searches the shelves picking the order for clients submitted by one of the four foodbank distribution centres (DC) in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. If all the cans of beans marked for previous years and months have been picked, it will be my turn to be placed into a parcel, along with other vital food and personal items, that is loaded back onto the van and transported to the DC. There, another volunteer (I am amazed just how many volunteers give their time to help me on my way!) will put me in a bag or a box ready to be given to a grateful client. And I will know that my journey has had the best of endings.



In the Warehouse, waiting to be dated

DOWNLOAD OUR APP FOR FREE

LINK TO YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK AND DONATE WHAT IS NEEDED

WWW.BANKTHEFOOD.ORG

BanktheFood is a registered charity Charity Commission for England and Wales 1194167

What's in the Warehouse

Dec 2023 most-needed items:

- Long life fruit juice
- Tinned meat meals
- Sponge puddings
- Long life milk
- Tinned fruit
- Teabags (packs of 40/80)

Please ensure that Christmas donations are alcohol-free.

A few snaps of this years' Harvest Festival Collections!



Between July & Sept 2023,
201 people
accessed financial advice
& support through the
Dunstable Foodbank &
Citizens Advice
**Financial Inclusion
Project.**

Other ways to get involved

We have the following volunteer opportunities:

- If you are an existing Foodbank volunteer, and you would be interested in taking part in giving short talks about the Foodbank at school assemblies, or local community groups, please let someone from the Operations Team know!
- Date for your diary: Morrisons Collection Event, 29th Feb - 2nd Mar 2024. More details to follow!



If you or someone you know is interested in any of the above, email us for more details:

info@dunstable.foodbank.org.uk

Like & follow our social media pages for updates!



facebook.com/dunstablefoodbank

instagram.com/dunstablefoodbank



If you know of someone who is in need of emergency food assistance, please encourage them to contact one of the many local support agencies we work with who can refer them to our Foodbank. Many of these agencies can also offer specialist advice and support for the challenging circumstances they may be facing. Find details for our main referral partners on our website:

dunstable.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/referrals/

Dunstable Foodbank Key Contacts

General enquiries

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