



Dunstable Foodbank

Winter 2024 Newsletter

A note from Dudley Peacham, (Treasurer) Trustee

The Christmas season is upon us and as I write, there are lists of presents to buy, food to order and trees to be decorated. It's a busy time for most of us but, for some in our community, is a time of worry. Worry about how to feed themselves and their family, worry about affording heating bills. As Foodbank Treasurer, I am constantly grateful to everyone that supports us and makes it a reality for us to be able to support those in our community that most need it.

Without those that donate food, money, time and expertise, we would not be able to continue doing this, so thank you.

Financially, times are tough for lots of people, which makes your generosity even more amazing. If you don't currently support us financially, then please consider whether you could. A small standing order each month helps us to plan for what we can and cannot afford to do. All the details are here - <https://dunstable.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>

Being part of a community is all about supporting each other, those giving help today will be those that need help tomorrow. None of us know when the unexpected will happen so let's make sure that we are there as long as people need us.

Warm Welcome to Michele and Gwynneth

We're thrilled to welcome Michele McCalla as Dunstable Foodbank's new Operations Manager and Gwynneth Bianchi, amongst her other roles in the Foodbank, as our newest Trustee!



Michele shared, ***"I'm passionate about creating meaningful change in a role where I can positively impact people's lives every day. What has struck me most is the dedication of our hardworking volunteers and the incredible generosity of so many people in the community. Their kindness and commitment inspire me to creatively reflect on how I can contribute even more."***



Gwynneth added, ***"Initially I got up a ladder and painted the building that was to be used as a warehouse, then helped sort food at the warehouse and drove the foodbank van. Later I joined a distribution centre... I enjoy being part of a huge effort locally. So often I meet people who tell me they have previously put food into a collection trolley but now they find themselves in need of a food parcel. There's a real feeling of us all being in this together."***

We are so excited for the vision, passion and expertise they bring to our mission. Welcome aboard, Michele and Gwynneth! 🌟

Fuelling Change, One Donation at a Time





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Dunstable Foodbank's D-Day - Written by David Smith (Volunteer)

The history books suggest that the D-Day invasion of France, a monumental undertaking by Allied forces which saw its 80th anniversary celebrated in June of this year, was the greatest-ever feat of logistics. More than 100,000 tons of equipment, all carefully logged and stowed, was transferred across the English Channel, with thousands of servicemen and women spurred by the Order of the Day, issued by the late General Dwight D Eisenhower: "You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months."



General Eisenhower's inspirational proclamation might well have applied ahead of a smaller, and certainly less bloody, undertaking that took place in March just before the D-Day remembrance events - **the Great Foodbank Move** from Ledburn, near Leighton Buzzard, to a new warehouse behind the former Argos shop on High Street North in Dunstable. The General would surely have been impressed by an operation that might have fallen foul of so many hitches, hurdles and delays, but instead ticked along like the smoothest clockwork and was accomplished successfully by volunteers numbering no more than a football team.

The move, from a modern facility on a small industrial estate a few hundred yards from the site of the Great Train Robbery, to an older but much larger premises, was necessitated by the expiry of an old lease and the offer of a more advantageous new one for a warehouse that placed the Dunstable Foodbank where it belonged - right in the middle of town and a lot closer to the distribution centres and clients who depend so much upon our services.

Our 'General' was Basil Seymour who, some two months ahead of the scheduled moving day and ably assisted by his wife Sheila, began plotting and undertaking the task of dismantling towering rows of heavy shelving units that, placed in a single line, **would have nearly stretched the length of a football pitch.**

Other members of the warehouse team were recruited to organise the return of our hired Hugo lift, an expensive necessity for safely shifting crates on high shelves but no longer required for the lower shelving of the new warehouse, moving and recalibrating the heavy set of main scales, and preparing everything else for the move. It all had to go: over nine tons of food, filing cabinets, tables, chairs, ladders, dollies, fire extinguishers, dustpans, brushes, kettles, cups, pens, paper, even paperclips.



Volunteer David Archer persuaded prospective son-in-law Dan to add his van to the foodbank fleet (of one van!), and several trips along the Leighton Buzzard by-pass ensued, transferring everything from one place to the other, leaving Derek Ward to work a minor miracle in transforming a once full and bustling warehouse into an echoingly empty, but spotlessly clean facility.



Even while Basil and his team reassembled the shelving in the ex-Argos warehouse, delivery of vital food crates could not be interrupted, and for some time volunteers had to work around decorators, drainage contractors, floor polishers, electricians, heater installers, and pest controllers. Yet, as warehouse manager Angela Dunford observed: **"Despite everything involved with the move, the function of the foodbank**

never stopped. Our volunteers went the extra mile to make sure that our clients still received enough food. Everybody mucked in. It was a real team effort."

And one that surely would have earned a salute from General Eisenhower!





Thoughts of a young volunteer

During my week of work experience, I gained insight into how foodbank is operated. I have witnessed and helped with the packing of food parcels and dating products before organising them in the warehouse, as well as helping pack bags for clients at multiple distribution centres. **It has been an eye-opening experience** working in the distribution centres seeing clients coming in as there is a wide variety of people who attend in want of help. Foodbank does show very clearly that even those whose struggles may not be as visible as others still have problems and need help, proving that it can be impossible to know what some people are struggling with when they are behind closed doors. I have enjoyed my time with foodbank and feel it has been a privilege to meet those who volunteer to help people in need. Every volunteer I have met has been so kind, welcoming and do an amazing job at creating a positive environment for both volunteers and clients. **I believe more young people should get involved with foodbank**, they can by volunteering at a local distribution centre or in their local foodbank warehouse during half-terms and school holidays; if they do not do full school weeks and have days off from college or sixth form. Even if young people cannot volunteer, they could help by donating food or essential items like toiletries.

Damon



More than spam...

In a heart-warming twist on 80th birthday wishes, a Dunstable gentleman, named John asked friends and family to gift him cans of Spam. Not with the purpose of stockpiling for the winter but to donate all the canned meat to Dunstable Foodbank. As seen beaming outside the Foodbank's storage unit, clutching a pack of the iconic tinned treat, he is all set to spread joy (and protein) to those in need. This thoughtful gesture turns a simple birthday celebration into a community-driven act of kindness, proving that the best gifts are the ones we share.

"If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

1 Corinthians 13:3

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



citizens
advice

We are blessed to continue working with colleagues from Citizens Advice (CA), thanks to the Financial Inclusion Project through Trussell.

The Foodbank Advisers come into all the Distribution Centres and support clients as they collect their food, providing an immediate point of contact and booking face to face or phone appointments for follow up support.

In the last quarter, the Foodbank Advisers met with 167 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. Will you consider supporting this project by donating? - <https://gofund.me/daaf4e8b>

"During the gateway assessment with the adviser, a client expressed interest in social groups due to feeling lonely. The Client was able to speak to a CA Social Prescriber, who provided her with information about local social groups and invited the client to a Dunstable CA Coffee Morning to attend and socialise." - Case study, Dunstable Foodbank Citizens Advise Team.



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Partnership with the Dunstable Town Mayor



Our town's Mayor, Louise O'Riordan, has been an incredible champion for the local community in many ways, one of them being through her partnership with Dunstable Foodbank as one of her chosen Charities of the Year. Her steadfast support has been instrumental in helping the foodbank meet the growing needs of vulnerable families in, Dunstable and beyond.

Mayor O'Riordan's advocacy has enabled us to raise vital funds and significantly increase the foodbank's profile.

Her innovative networking initiatives, such as the mayoral coffee mornings, have brought together residents, businesses, and community leaders, fostering connections and raising awareness of food insecurity and hardship in the region.

Her vision to see neighbouring towns like Houghton Regis and Luton better connected is inspiring, paving the way for broader collaboration and shared resources.

We are deeply grateful for the partnership with the Mayor and Dunstable Town Council, whose support has empowered us to make a meaningful impact. We look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship to ensure no one in our community goes without essential support.

Together, we are stronger. Thank you, Madam Mayor O'Riordan!



Dunstable Foodbank Key Contacts

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With Gratitude...

To our incredible supporters— schools, nurseries, Scouts, churches, corporate partners, private donors, volunteers, supermarkets, and community groups— thank you for your generosity through 2024. Your kindness has brought hope and sustenance to so many in need.

Whether it's through donations, fundraising, or simply spreading the word, your contributions make an enormous difference.

Together, we're not just fighting hunger; we're building a stronger, more caring community.

From everyone at Dunstable Foodbank, thank you for standing with us. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! ❤️🎄

Other ways to get involved

- **Volunteer at the Foodbank Warehouse** as a collections Driver on a Monday or Tuesday, must be able to comfortably lift up to 16kg. Please enquire using the general enquires email or email our Operations Manager (details on left).
- **Like and follow on our 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:

facebook.com/dunstablefoodbank

instagram.com/dunstablefoodbank

DUNSTABLE FOODBANK
HELPING LOCAL
PEOPLE IN CRISIS