

Ely Foodbank Newsletter February 2022

Message from Karl Relton

A Christian once wrote: 'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'. This year will be our tenth year of Ely Foodbank operations, and we have relied on this basic faith principle year on year. We have always set ourselves to help people in crisis need and have put our trust in God on many occasions to see us through, even when we couldn't physically see the resources needed because they were not yet available. Each time those resources have arrived, whether it was food donations, money, or the right person becoming available at just the right time.

Our world this year seems just as uncertain as ever. Whether you want to look on the big geo-political stage, or the harsh struggle of neighbours you may know down your street, there is uncertainty that gives cause for worry and anxiety.

Yet we remain confident. We hope for our ability to go on helping, and we also expressly hope for the day when our operations will not be necessary because all are catered for in a renewed society. Of course, the latter we certainly do not see right now, sadly with evidence that things will likely get worse before they improve! Yet that does not diminish our faith, because for us it is ultimately not in governments or programmes.

The writer who wrote the quote above went on to list a whole dynasty of people who were able to hold out in faith (you can find it in the Bible: Hebrews chapter 13). This long inspirational list looks back at past heroes but concludes with the writer *looking forward to something even better*. We share in the writer's conviction that God has plans for better... and has had them all along!

2021 stats

- 73 tonnes food given out
- 2,329 vouchers fulfilled
- Equivalent of 25,000 meals given out.
- Over 40% of the people helped were children

Ely Foodbank, run in partnership by local churches, and seeded by the Trussell Trust. Registered Charity no 1150746.
T: 01353 468626 E: info@elyfoodbank.org.uk W: www.elyfoodbank.org.uk

New Starters

Sophie Bell, our new Foodbank Manager.



Sophie has worked and volunteered for a number of charities, public sector organisations and emergency services in frontline and strategic roles, and hopes to put her communications and project management skills to good use.

Sophie said: "Although I've only been in the role a short time, I've been made to feel very welcome by all of the wonderful volunteers, clients, agencies and staff. I'm thrilled to be playing a small part in shaping the future of something great."

Caroline Barnes, Warehouse Manager

Caroline said: "I've been in this role since July last year. There's lots of different aspects to the job but essentially, along with a team of volunteers, I am responsible for all the donations that come into the foodbank. Sorting, storing and then packing them up as food parcels to go out to clients. I started as a volunteer a couple of years ago driving the van and generally helping wherever was needed. Originally from a scientific background, I was often disheartened with nothing to show for months of work. However here at the foodbank I now feel I have a purpose, that what I'm part of can actually help make a difference and have a positive impact on a person's life. It has helped me see that there is another side to things and to not always take things on face value. You get to know some of the clients and their stories and through this I know that what I'm doing goes towards helping make things better for people."

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Pat Del Grazia, Triage Manager



I'm really looking forward to joining the team at Ely Food Bank to be part of the service that uses Christian principles of welcome and friendship to help hundreds of people in the area. I know from my work at Citizens Advice that food insecurity is very real and a debilitating cause of stress, debt and relationship breakdown in families. Following two years of intermittent lockdowns and uncertain work conditions, we are now facing a period of increased cost of living which will certainly bring more families to our service. I hope to learn from the rest of the team and volunteers the full operations of Food Bank and will be pleased to discuss ideas for developing the roles to extend the service, using some experience from my background in Debt and Benefits' advice.

Christmas lunch

Ten clients enjoyed a Christmas lunch from Tesco.com through the Community Champion Partnership. It made a real difference to those struggling with the cost of Christmas. They even included Christmas trees to complete the Christmas cheer. Thank you, Tesco!

December snapshot

Capture just two weeks in December and you will get a snapshot of the work being done at the Foodbank as well as a glimpse into the nation's mood.

In just two weeks in Dec 2020 10.3 tonnes of food was received from those wishing to make what could be described as a dark time into something brighter for those who are in need. The same two weeks in 2021 saw 4.2 tonnes of food received. In each of these time periods approximately 800 people were fed by Ely Foodbank.

We often hear we are hitting a perfect storm as food and energy prices rise. People will be having some serious thoughts as to whether they can support charities in the way they have done in the past. Foodbank is extremely grateful for the amazing support and generosity from so many people, and we understand that donations may decrease but to give a little is the best gift of all to our work. Every little can really does help!

Hamper Hoorah!

With so many lovely contributions to our Hampers, we were able to give out 300 to our clients as well as support some other projects in the area. 20/20 Productions/Food Project in March asked for help as they prepared to give out 800 hampers. We were pleased to help and in turn helped us to reduce our pasta mountain into a mound!

Duke of Edinburgh Award

When the Duke of Edinburgh died last year, it immediately brought an interest to achieve the Award he had done so much to champion young people. Students helped pack the hampers and had one or two broken chocolate Santas to keep them going on a cold evening in the warehouse. A group of four students continue to do an hour each week packing the food parcels ready for centres to distribute.

A client story

"I wanted to bring my friend to you today to prove to him, it was you that helped me". The client went on to say that she didn't need Foodbank any longer because of the support and advice she had been given from our partnered Citizens Advice team, as well as the care shown by our volunteers.

A good news story highlighting our work - this is what we aim to do; to show interest, get to the issues that brought people to foodbank and move people on to better days.