

Message from Karl Relton

There is a story way back in the older part of the Bible [2 Kings 6:24] where the price of everyday food had skyrocketed, such that few could cope (this was because a foreign power had laid siege to the people's city).

The difficult situation caused people to ask many questions, including questions of God as well as geo-politics. Into this debate a quirky man with a deep faith in God explained how very soon there would be a price drop, for God was going to cause a significant change in fortunes. Some didn't believe him, but nevertheless the next day the siege mysteriously ended, with the aggressor army leaving behind their supplies! The man with faith had been right after all...

Today it sure feels like we are under siege from multiple global circumstances that are leading to sky-rocketing prices of necessities. It generates many questions, forcing us to look at ourselves, to our politicians, and I guess questioning God too. At Ely Foodbank, we don't have a prediction of an imminent change of fortune, but we do have a belief that things should be organised so that the needy are helped. That goes with our Christian-based hope that God will somehow see us through, no matter how unbelievable it seems.

Recently our warehouse stocks reached their lowest levels since we started 10 years ago, and yet the public responded and we have not run out. Demand has increased but stabilised at least for now – and so we are able to cope. This is the faith that under-pins our organisation in action. It may appear quirky to some, hard to believe for others, and yet this is how we continue to operate.

New Trustees

Ely Foodbank welcomes two new trustees this autumn.

Sara Ochieng has taken over from Gordon Foster as Treasurer. Sara moved to Ely in 2020 having spent more than 25 years living, working and bringing up her family in



Uganda. She is an accountant with experience in a variety of settings and is a practising Christian. Sara works part-time in finance and administration and also volunteers at the Ely Foodbank warehouse.

We are also pleased to welcome Tabitha Griffin to Ely Foodbank. Tabitha has been involved with the Christmas Day lunch in Ely over the last 12 years. Her interest comes from her professional background in the NHS as well as her Christian faith.



We wish Sara and Tabitha all the best in their new roles.

More information about our trustees is available on our website: <https://ely.foodbank.org.uk/about/meet-the-trustees/>

Citizens Advice partnership extended

Ely Foodbank is thrilled to be continuing the partnership with Citizens Advice (CA) from September.

The contract was due to expire on 31st August 2022, but has been both extended and improved to include the provision of a travelling face-to-face CA adviser, who will be available to support clients when they come into the distribution centres.

A rota will be developed to ensure that clients from across the network are given the opportunity to speak to someone face-to-face.

Chair of Trustees, Karl Relton said: "In July we received notification from The Trussell Trust that our grant application for the three-year continuation of funding worth over £150,000 was accepted, which is fantastic news.

"In addition to the recruitment of a new face-to-face CA adviser later this month, we are also delighted to be keeping Sarah Heather, who will continue to support clients remotely over the phone and via email."

2022 stats

- Stock in since 1st April 2022: 30,309kg
- Stock out since 1st April 2022: 31,373kg
- 1,299 children and 1,760 adults given food parcel

Mentoring project expanded

A mentoring project for secondary school pupils who might find themselves in disadvantaged or difficult situations has been so successful that it will now be rolled out to other schools in our area.

In partnership with Form the Future, Ely Foodbank trustees commissioned the pilot in one local school to encourage young people in their life outlook and aspirations, in the hope of instilling better outcomes later in life.

Surveys of the pupils before and after showed definite improvements, with the school observing how all participating students grew in confidence and knowledge regarding future jobs and careers.

As well as being expanded to more schools across our area, the project will become an annual scheme.

Chair of Trustees, Karl Relton explained how the project came about: "Ely Foodbank's charitable purpose is the "prevention or relief of poverty ...". As we know, food parcels certainly help relieve poverty for many individuals or families, but the trustees are continually asking what more could be done to prevent poverty, which ties in with our desire that eventually foodbanks won't be needed in our society at all.

"Encouraged by the success of this pilot, we are now working with Form the Future again to run the project in five or six secondary schools across our area, including March and Ely – discussions with other schools are ongoing.

"With support from Form the Future, schools will identify pupils who might benefit from the scheme each academic year."

Form the Future is currently recruiting volunteer mentors, and will do all the training, checking and supervision that those volunteers need.

If you think you might be interested in becoming a mentor, please do get in touch and we can refer you on to Form the Future.

We're cooking up something new!

To show clients how they can turn their foodbank parcels into delicious healthy family meals within minutes, we've launched our new #FoodForFridays cooking sessions.

We'll be in our Ely kitchen on the last Friday of every month to cook up a tasty and nutritious selection of Parcel2Plate recipes, which can all be made from items you'd find in a standard foodbank parcel.

As well as getting a hot meal cooked by Volunteer and Clerk to the Trustees, Jonathan Peryer, clients can also take home a pack of ingredients in addition to their food parcels to ensure they have everything needed to make the recipes at home.

The idea for #FoodForFridays came from Director Cathy Wright and is the first phase of a project aimed at helping clients to buy and cook food more efficiently.

Cathy said: "While our clients are always very grateful for the food parcels we give them, sometimes they look at the food in the bags and wonder what they are going to serve for dinner.

"The Parcel2Plate recipes will help clients make meals using ingredients they find in the parcels and will helpfully help them come up with meal ideas of their own at home too."

In line with the charity's vision to prevent the need for foodbanks in the first place, the next phase of the project will be to give clients more opportunities to learn how to buy and cook food more efficiently using all kinds of ingredients.

