

## **Saltash Foodbank**

The foodbank is pleased to be asked to report to the Council's Annual Parishioners meeting. Saltash Foodbank is a Trussell Trust Foodbank established in 2011 by Saltash Churches Together. Three days' worth of food for a balanced diet can be accessed by residents of Saltash and surrounding villages, who are experiencing a financial crisis, by referral from an agency that is supporting them.

Since the start of Covid-19 we have seen the numbers needing our help increase and the recent cost of living has increased the demand even further. We have over 50 volunteers, an increase on other years, due to an increase in the need for our services. We have no paid staff, we are all volunteers. Last year we supported 548 households, comprising of 835 adults and 573 children, so a total of 1,408 individuals were supported with at least 3 days of food. A breakdown of our figures can be found on <https://bit.ly/3kvZH3n>

These were our main sources of referrals in 2022: Job Centre (93), Help Through Hardship (Citizens Advice and Trussell Trust Helpline started during Covid19 - 08082082138) (83) and Christians Against Poverty - CAP (42). The main reason given for many was low income, where a household's income did not cover their outgoings, with the income either as earnings and /or benefits.

Saltash foodbank received over 40.5 tons of food last year from supermarket donation points, supermarket collections, community groups, churches and items from supermarkets themselves, just past their best before date or slightly damaged on the outside. We distributed over 39.5 tons to clients direct, to breakfast and after-school clubs, charities, other food organisations and local foodbanks, when we have a surplus. Thank you to all that donate to the foodbank.

In December we distributed to 138 families a Christmas Hamper with ambient Christmas food items and added surplus food items, with additional gifts to 138 families. This included 202 adults and 205 children. These families were invited to receive a hamper via our many referral agencies. Additionally, we also managed to maintain the regular food support to clients referred to us.

### **Further support**

As our premises are extremely small, we now also use the converted toilet block in the other Belle Vue Road Car park as our overflow store. This has allowed us to store surplus items and helps with our Christmas Hampers over the last few years.

We struggle to meet up with clients for a confidential chat about their circumstances at our current premises at 18 Belle Vue Road so have now developed a team of signposting volunteers from our volunteer pool who call the client after a period of time, since they had received a food parcel from us, to discuss their situation. This allows us to speak with them over the phone at a less stressful time and see if they need further signposting, especially to let them know about activities happening locally in Saltash, such as Saltash Community Fridge and Warm Spaces as well as other organisations that could help them. I know many of the activities at the Community Kitchen and PL12 Community Shop have been welcomed by our clients.

This winter has been especially challenging, as has last year prior to the energy cost rise. We are grateful to have been successful in several grants last year to allow us to help clients who were struggling with their energy costs, in particular, those that are on prepayment meters. In the last year we have signed up with the Fuelbank Foundation to issue voucher codes to clients on pre-payment meters, to their phones. The voucher code can then be redeemed at a shop or post office on to their meter. This relieved our treasurer from having to meet clients in a shop to top up their pre-payment cards. This year there have not been many grants available, other than some support

from the Fuelbank Foundation. The foodbank trustees have therefore agreed to allow some of our funds to be used to help our clients with energy during the cold weather months.

This winter we received a £5,000 grant from the Trussell Trust to help us with volunteering costs, buy in food and purchase items for our clients to stay warm this winter and/or to save them money. Several duvets, blankets, thermals, hats, gloves, thermal socks and slow cookers have been purchased with this fund. We also are able to keep our freephone number going, with grant funding from the Cornwall Community Foundation.

We have also managed to receive support from Databank and have been able to support several clients with free SIMs with data, or a data voucher, depending on their network provider. This has been essential to those needing to access their Universal Credit journal to record job searches, to contact a health professional or a support agency as they are struggling to pay their phone costs.

We hope to soon work with Callington Foodbank to share an extra Citizens Advice staff member to help our clients with their issues, for a few hours a week. This is due to funding from Trussell Trust.

### **Our concerns for the future**

We cannot see an end to the cost-of-living crisis which affects people's health, both physical and mental. People are unable to heat their homes properly and generally only heat one room, so there is an increase in dampness and mould in people's houses. This is on top of a housing crisis. We are aware of an increasing number of people 'sofa surfing' for many years before they will be housed in social housing and people in temporary accommodation waiting for months to be homed, some with young children or with health problems. These are the hidden homeless. We are likely to see more of these as rents have increased recently and income has not kept up with the increase.

With the current cost-of-living increases, many people are cutting back on other items and repeated visits for our food parcels is not ideal. Many people we see wish to be independent and do not wish to rely on charity. We hope there will be a type of social supermarket in Saltash, to allow those on a low-income purchase food at low cost. This is especially needed if government support with energy is being withdrawn soon and people are already struggling to afford the essentials. Ideally, benefits need to be increased to cover the rise in inflation.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the Foodbank volunteers, old and new who are making a huge difference to those we support. I would especially like to thank the many Foodbank trustees for their support and hard work to support those in need. Especially Richard (Chair of Trustees), Jill (Treasurer and Trustee), Charles (Special Projects and Trustee), Corina (Secretary and Trustee), Jackie (Signposting and Trustee), Sara (Agency and Trustee), Revd. Di (Churches Together and Trustee) and Kathryn (Volunteering and Trustee) . I could not do this without you all.

Thank you.

Rika Chanter

Saltash Foodbank Manager (Voluntary) 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Registered Charity Number 1157577