



History of the North Lakes Foodbank

The North Lakes Foodbank's first Centre opened in Cockermouth in November 2009 with a cohort of volunteers from local churches . We began to address the needs of people in Allerdale and Copeland, many of them living in wards with very high levels of deprivation, who, every day went hungry for reasons ranging from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill when on a low income. Initially we used food collected by local schools, with our first appeal collecting 500kg which at the time we thought was a huge amount of food. This is in comparison to the 90 tonnes which is now handled annually by the Foodbank.

Sadly, Cockermouth flooded 3 weeks after our opening and we lost everything. We thought that this was the end but then started receiving telephone calls from individuals and other Foodbanks across the UK wanting to give us food and other supplies. Within a week we were up and running again with the local Methodist Church generously offering us space to work from. We then moved the warehouse next door into a disused fire station for what was a very long cold winter with only a couple of calor heaters for warmth before being given a portakabin, by one of the contractors at Sellafield, that still stands behind the Methodist Church on Lorton Street.

By 2010 the Foodbank was growing at a rapid rate. A donation from a local charitable trust meant that we could employ a part-time Project Manager to run the project day to day. As the number of Centres grew so did the number of people who could access our help and receive three days' emergency food and support from the growing number of local agencies who were holding our vouchers.

There are now over 212 agencies such as social workers, debt advisors, health visitors and Citizens Advice advisers who work with our clients to help them at their time of need. They will issue a voucher which that person can exchange in one of the Centres for a food parcel which contains enough food for three days. If the agency feel that they need more time, additional parcels can be issued - usually up to three which



gives a total of nine days of nutritionally balanced food - all handed out by the incredible teams of volunteers in our Centres.

Running this was too much for one person and so we employed an Assistant Project Manager in 2013. Along with the Project Manager (now Foodbank Manager), they are supported by a Management Committee, all volunteers, who regularly meet to discuss and direct the project.

Extra Centres meant that we needed a bigger warehouse so in 2012 we came to an arrangement to use one of the units on the Lakeland Business Park, Cockermouth. This was not ideal as we had no security of tenure and moved twice. It was also expensive and not a good use of our resources, so we started looking around and found a disused working mens club in Cockermouth that is owned by Allerdale Borough Council. It was agreed that we could use half as a warehouse and renovate the other half for use as a community space. However, on its own this warehouse space is not quite big enough so we were very kindly offered some additional space by the Derwent Pencil Factory in Lillyhall. This was particularly necessary when we realised the need amongst the children in the area. So many families live in poverty, often with young children. In 2016 we employed a Schools Worker to take the message of the Christian and community values of the Foodbank to children and young people in local schools – teaching them how to be good neighbours in the future. In 2021 we employed a part-time Warehouse Manager to compliment the staff team and help manage all the volunteers working to sort and pack food. Before the pandemic there were 180 Foodbank volunteers. There has been a lot of change over recent months with volunteers retiring and at the moment there are 140 volunteers and plans are in place to actively recruit more.

Background information:

The North Lakes Foodbank is part of The Trussell Trust who support a nationwide network of foodbanks including ours and together we provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.



In the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty – including 4.5 million children. The Trussell Trust support Foodbank centres in the UK to provide a minimum of three days' nutritionally-balanced emergency food to people who have been referred in crisis, as well as support to help people resolve the crises they face. Between April 2019 and March 2020, foodbanks in our network provided a record 1.9 million food supplies to people in crisis, an 18% increase on the previous year and during the coronavirus pandemic foodbanks have seen need rise even further.

Most of our funding comes from individual donations of food or money but we have some help from charities whose donations help pay for members of staff's salaries. In addition to this firms like Tesco's support Foodbanks through their special collections in their stores twice a year. They match fund these collections.

We collect food from customers at supermarkets, churches, schools and through local groups. The trend for donating food changed during lockdown in the pandemic and we now also receive financial donations. This in itself has meant that we have to purchase far more food than in the past and this has impacted on the way people have had to work.

We give out shopping lists/share on social media for people to buy items of food. The non-perishable food is handed in to collections points throughout Allerdale and Copeland. Food is given out from our Foodbank Centres where clients are offered a hot drink, a biscuit and a friendly chat. Here clients will be signposted to agencies to help further with their requirements. Voucher holders can pick up the food for clients if they are not in a position to collect for themselves.

We manage 6 foodbank centres across the North Lakes area including; Cockermouth; Workington; Maryport; Egremont; Whitehaven and Wigton.

In addition to this there are also food collection points in 11 towns and villages in the area.



The North Lakes Foodbank is part of the work of Cockermouth Christian Centre and the Christian faith underpins all the work that we do. Christian literature is put in the food packs and holiday activities with a Christian message is put in in the Holiday Lunch Packs. A Schools Worker is employed to work with and in schools providing resources, running assemblies/collective worship or working with teaches in delivering lessons.

The North Lakes Foodbank have a Management Team who each have a portfolio for each area of business e.g., Finance; HR; Safeguarding; Health and Safety; Business matters like contracts and insurance. The group meet quarterly and meet with staff on matters connected with their Portfolio individually in the interim periods. The Director has line management responsibility for the Operations Manager on behalf of the Management Group and meets with them regularly.

The Foodbank employs 4 members of staff including the Operations Manager; a Schools Worker; Assistant Project Manager; and a Warehouse Team Leader. All these posts are part time. In addition to this we have approximately 140 Volunteers who work in different aspects of the Foodbank including; overseeing and working in the Foodbank centres; sorting food and packing boxes; driving the van for collection and delivery of food; finance; maintenance; administration.

This is an area which we want to develop as there is much more volunteers can do and there are people with a wealth of experience wanting to help. Many Foodbanks elsewhere in the Country run their operation solely on the use of Volunteers which is how this Foodbank started.



We also have support from businesses including delivery of food for the Holiday Lunch pack scheme, delivery of food from distribution points.

This is another area of business that can be developed.

If you think that you are interested in working for the Foodbank then please complete an application form which you find on our website or if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Sybil Worsley on 01946 861580 or 07775750774 or email sybilworsley@btinternet.com