

Foodbank Update:

The Foodbank has continued to be busy. By working with both statutory and voluntary organisations and the generosity of the local community, we continue to maintain the work of the Foodbank.

In December and first 2 months of the year during lockdown, referrals to our distribution centres continued to be higher than previous years by approximately 25%. Referrals have dropped in the last month and are back to levels seen pre the Covid pandemic. We hope this is because those who struggle financially in our community are starting to find life a little easier with children back at school and workplaces opening again.

Because of our successful bids for grants from the National Lottery and North Herts District Council we have been able to add supermarket vouchers of £10 or £20 depending on size of the family to our usual food parcels of non-perishable goods to enable our clients to buy fresh food.

As well as referrals direct to the distribution centres we are now providing food directly to Settle and Kings Community Church who make up parcels to distribute to their clients who they know are struggling with rent arrears etc. We also provide food to the charity Survivors of Domestic Abuse (SADA) based in Stevenage to give directly to clients. The partnership with SADA has helped many who find themselves in difficult circumstances and has led to a new initiative. A pilot scheme with SADA and the police across Hertfordshire is providing essentials packs, emergency parcels of basic food items and toiletries; to be kept at police stations to give to victims of domestic abuse.

(See back page)

Donations: Our warehouse continues to be well stocked. The public have continued to fill our collection boxes at the supermarket collection points and many schools, churches and faith groups and local organisations have undertaken collections. In addition, we receive many generous individual monetary donations which enables us to purchase any additional items required for the food parcels.

School Holiday lunch packs for

Nurseries: The Foodbank have supported many families whose children receive free school meals and who suffer greatly during the holiday periods when these meals are not available. During the pandemic, the issue of free school meals was highlighted and finally the government has stepped up and now provides vouchers for families of school age children to help with lunches in the holidays.

However, the Foodbank became aware that children in nurseries attached to schools are not covered by the governments scheme.

Therefore, for the Easter holidays we contacted all the schools with nursery aged children and asked them to nominate any families who may be struggling and would benefit from food parcels for the holiday period. 180 food parcels were delivered to nursery schools across Letchworth and Hitchin for the two-week Easter holiday to distribute to families.



Food parcels being delivered to Strathmore Infant and Nursery School, Hitchin

We received some amazing feedback; it is really pleasing to us to know can help those in need.

- *Wow, there's so much stuff. Thank you so much.*
- *I want to cry, I can't tell you how much that means to me.*
- *I am so grateful, thank you.*
- *This is going to make such a difference, please pass on my thanks.*

We have continued the initiative this May half term and will do again for the summer holiday.

