

Food Pantry 1st PPC Report 17 Jan 2023

Organic, incremental start – keeping small and informal until we see if it has legs!!

Positive uptake – both in food donations and taking food items, pantry instead of foodbank ensuring sense of dignity/community.

Fits in with evangelisation/social justice and supporting/consolidating and expanding our wider community involvement.

1. What?

Provision of small pantry of (Initially) non-perishable food items in line with foodbank list guide with regular donations from the parish community and dispersal to parishioners, their friends/family/neighbours/those they see in need. St. Adrian's school is included in this initiative too. Spare bags to take food home. Church opening times advertised. Regular checks and posts from lead (JT) to ensure food needed most is provided. No referral, no vouchers, self-serve. Jackie Tominey, PPC member, will be responsible for running the food pantry and the coordination and preparation of any volunteers. It is important to keep the externally funded warm hub separate from this small but complementary initiative.

Why?

Cost of living crisis, our mission.

2. How?

Location at the back of the church, church open when Father at home but not Thursdays – advertised. Communication re need through newsletter and social media. Regular tidy/reorganising to monitor food/types of food in excess/needed. Working through parish groups and St Adrian's to extend use. Built up excess to go to the local foodbank at the new Cottonmill Community Centre in Oak Lane which is run by St Albans Community Pantry (SACP) on behalf of the Sopwell Community Trust (SCT). They in turn, will provide us with free recycled bread and cakes for the Warm Hub on Monday's. Invitation for all parish groups to open up food pantry access in the appropriate way to their groups as felt appropriate – would also like to include the local families who attend the parents and toddlers group

3. Progress to date

Been going over 6 weeks now and been received well with steady flow of donations and uptake. 3 volunteers looking for roles with another 3 having expressed interest but not followed through. St. Adrian's have been given 2 large donations of food and are keen to work with us in the New Year. Would like to know church opening times to circulate to whole school and have encouraged staff to collect discreet bags of food for themselves/school families in need. Will formalise working arrangements next week after staff meeting and feedback from the PPC. Good reciprocal relationship with SACP – see point 2. Promotion – Nick has posted photos and info food item requests on St Bart's FB page and has just recently made Jackie a part admin on St. Bread/pastries have been delivered to weekly to our Monday Warm Hub/extended Soup and Lunch plus a back up of spare tins of soup from the Food Pantry has been placed in the Committee room should the Warm Hub receive unexpected guests!

Bart's FB page which means time-sensitive requests/info can be communicated and Food Pantry profile can be raised. Dawn/Father Francis have put reports/requests regularly in the newsletter and Chris Blandford has done likewise on the parish website/newsletter mailout. So far to my knowledge, we have been given £10 cash donation, an offer of £100 from a parishioner and another parishioner wanted to hand over some money spontaneously on Christmas Eve. They all were informed to please pass on to the SVP at the moment (The Warm Hub seems adequately provided for at the moment which is amazing!) Asked for big push over Christmas and New Year and it seems the parish has responded really well with also many food items taken!

I am consulting with 3 different types of diocesan foodbanks to learn what we can from them. Naturally, as I already work with the St. Albans Food Pantry, I take a lot of learning from that and am applying/will apply that to our initiative!

We comply with diocesan guidelines for setting up a food pantry/foodbank – n.b. point re premises under Considerations to be checked by JT with Eamon.

4. Considerations/Issues

Donations/funding – think we should hold fire/redirect with donor permission (Can withdraw donation if not happy) and an explanation for the moment as it is early days and we need to see how the food pantry develops. Overtime I think it would be helpful and I agree with Christine's suggestion of a separate Food Pantry account would be a good idea with Dawn receiving receipts and Eithne overseeing account.

A sign for church opening times has been put up though I think somehow we need to communicate that **parish business** (i.e. Father being off premises – though not expressed like that!!) means that sometimes the church may be closed for a short time and to try again...

Reaching the hard to reach who really need this food is very hard – stigma/pride/access etc. – so I'd like to meet informally with the volunteers/parish groups/St. Adrian's reps via Zoom and face-to-face early in the New Year to hear their challenges/ideas to help their groups and the people they serve. This will inform how we go forward.

Monitoring what food /how much food goes where is very difficult given the informal and discreet nature of our undertaking – I have been going on an almost daily basis to check/re-organise/request less of x/more of a food item over the past few weeks and, to be fair, the system has worked quite well at this level of development of the food pantry. Working closely with the groups mentioned earlier and with more volunteers and a spreadsheet we could keep more formal tabs on the success or otherwise of the pantry – data – and also measure impact/inform how we go forward.

We need to consider the location of the pantry in the church – if the volume/use of the pantry grows, then we'll need a rethink of access and space...

We are under diocesan insurance/risk assessment but I'll need to check with Eamon re extra contents (Food), fire risk, general safety of parishioners and volunteers incl. training, if any, as we expand.

Communications are key and we need to work more closely with Dawn/Chris B/Nick/Father to have the UpToDate messages re need etc. We really need to promote the use of the FB page as that's usually the quickest and easiest way to get time-sensitive info/requests out – only Christine responded to my pre-Christmas request, posted by Nick, for a boost of donations.... I also think it

might be useful for me to set up a series of St Bart's Food Pantry WhatsApp groups where people can post need/donations/requests etc. and dm me with anything sensitive – obviously there would be safe-guarding rules clearly signposted and admin control. Talking to Nick would be good here. There might be several related ones i.e. one for St. Adrian's staff...

Measuring impact is always important and I think we should start shaping this as we go along in the early stages of the food pantry development with a view to having at least a simple tool to use by Easter?? This could also include anecdotal/quote/info from beneficiaries directly or via the groups that support them.

5. Way Forward

1. JT to communicate with volunteers and parish
2. JT convene a meeting of parish groups & St Adrian's
3. JT to implement PPC decisions with PPC and volunteer support
4. JT to update Father and PPC regularly and report to monthly PPC meetings
5. JT to draft a simple impact measurement tool for discussion at March PPC meeting