

## VOLUNTEERING AT GATESHEAD FOODBANK

Gateshead Foodbank opened in November 2012 to provide emergency food and support to local people in crisis. It has since fed 3,548 people (2,563 adults and 985 children). People from every council ward in Gateshead have turned in desperation to the foodbank, the 200<sup>th</sup> to be launched by The Trussell Trust in the UK.



*Donated food at supermarket*

How would you feel if you were struggling to put food on the table? If as a parent you were skipping meals to feed your children? If you were forced to choose between paying the rent and eating? One crisis or another - benefit changes or delays, loss of employment, low income, debt, homelessness, domestic violence - is driving families and individuals to seek the foodbank's support.



*Transporting food*

Foodbanks play a vital role helping to prevent family breakdown, housing loss, crime and mental health problems. Frontline care professionals such as doctors and social workers give foodbank vouchers

to people in crisis. Foodbank vouchers are exchanged for 3 days of food at the foodbank.



*Foodbank packing*

130 volunteers offer their time in a range of ways to enable Gateshead Foodbank to carry out its work. In the warehouse they help to sort food by type and date. Others transport food to distribution centres in central Gateshead and Blaydon as well as collecting food from drop-off points in Gateshead Civic Centre, shops, workplaces and churches.

Volunteers based at the distribution centres meet and greet clients and, while food is packed for them, provide a listening ear and a cuppa and signpost them to further support.

Supermarket collections are organised where volunteers invite shoppers to select an item from the foodbank's shopping list and donate it as they leave the supermarket. The smooth running of the foodbank is ensured by volunteers specialising in administration and fundraising.



*Giving out list at supermarket*

Gateshead Foodbank was recently visited by the Anglican Bishop of Jarrow, the Right Reverend Mark Bryant, and the Catholic Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, the Right Reverend Seamus Cunningham, keen to learn about the foodbank's response to local need.



*Bishops talk to volunteers*

Over 50 churches of various denominations in Gateshead are donating food to the foodbank. Our three parishes are not involved in that particular way because of our ongoing commitment to collect food for another group of people in great need - asylum seekers supported by Hexham and Newcastle Diocese's Justice and Peace Destitute Asylum Seeker Project. But parishioners can offer help in another way.



*Food sorting at warehouse*

Michael McHugh, of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, gives time as a volunteer at one of Gateshead Foodbank's distribution centres and at supermarket collections. If you are interested in volunteering at the foodbank why not ring 0191 487 0898, email: [info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@gateshead.foodbank.org.uk) or check the website: [www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.gateshead.foodbank.org.uk)