

West Oxfordshire Food Bank

It all started in 2012. I had had a particularly difficult family time and wanted to help others, who might be suffering as we had done. So I started in a small way, collecting and distributing food to needy families from my own kitchen. It soon became obvious that there was a big need in the area, so with the generous help and support of the Baptist church in Ducklington, we moved into larger premises. After a while, we moved to Witney, to the Elim church, so that we were more central. From there we moved into a garage, and then in 2013 to Cottsway Housing Association in Station Lane. They have been very generous in extending our stay until spring 2017, after which we will need to move. Ideally we need a unit in central Witney which is easily accessible to our clients.

People in need of our support are referred from a variety of services, organisations and charities; they may be couples, families or single people, who are down on their luck and in need of provisions. The numbers of referrals vary according to the time of the year, the weather, illnesses and school holidays, but our dedicated team of 15 or so unpaid volunteers are always up to the challenge.

Of course we too need support and donations of food. Individuals, churches, charities and shops all contribute by bringing offerings to our premises at Cottsway, or leaving tins and packets in the various boxes around the town.

We want to be able to expand, and to reach more deserving families and individuals. In addition to our food parcels, we would like to be in a position to work with other charities offering advice and social support. Eventually, we would like to be in a position to offer fresh produce too. With all these ideas in mind, we are talking to SOFEA (South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance) based in Didcot, about what might be possible in the future.

If you, your organisation, or your church, can collect tinned and packaged food for us, that would be a great help. But we also need donations of money and offers of help. Above all, at this uncertain time, we need suggestions or offers of accommodation for the future. If you can help in any way, please let me know.

Thank you.

Jo Cypher,

oxwestfoodbank.co.uk

(Ghosted by Howard Brayton)