



Romsey Foodbank – Update March – April 2020

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers during this time. As we find ourselves in week 10 of lockdown, we are busier than usual and having to make some adjustments to ensure we can continue to meet demand. We are settling into a new way of working and one that I think will be here to stay for quite a long time to come.

We are working with a much smaller volunteer team and are meeting and greeting clients and donors outside the front of the building. Both changes help us to manage social distancing.



We remain open at our usual times both in Romsey and North Baddesley. With several of the donation collection points being currently closed, we have asked people to donate food directly to us at the Foodbank and it has been a real privilege for us to meet some of our donors as so often people just put food in a collection point, but we have really enjoyed being able to meet people and thank them personally.

We have been incredibly well supported with donations which has meant we are now well stocked and our concerns about being able to meet demand can be eased.



We are very grateful for the space we have at the Freedom Centre as we have taken over a large portion of it as we work out how to serve the community in a different way. We have been able to buy some new storage that we are using in the 'lounge' to help at this time and we are very grateful for the financial donations we have been receiving allowing us to get ourselves set up in a new way.



Clients – we have seen an increase as you can imagine of the number of people we are supporting. There was a 66% increase in April from April 2019, nationally there has been an 89% increase. In March and April we redeemed 160 vouchers which supported 421 people. We are meeting lots of new people, people who are self-employed and really not managing at the moment, people who have been made redundant etc. I think the financial difficulties people are going to have as time goes on, will mean we continue to support some of these people for a while yet. Interestingly, although we have seen a lot of families we haven't seen as many as we thought we might as they have been supported by schools and the Connect4 Summer school programme.

We have been working closely with Test Valley Housing and supporting about 11 people who were rough sleepers and have been temporarily housed in a B&B, in the B&B they only had access to a kettle so we have been providing them with some bespoke food packages! Thankfully for them, most of them have been transferred into more suitable accommodation now. As well as food we have been able to support some of them with some household items such as kettles and toasters as they have none of their own. It's been a really positive partnership between us and the housing department.

We are providing some of the families we meet with a 'care packages' as well as food as an extra gift. These include some games, colouring books, and a few fun treats to help them with the children through this lockdown period.

To finish with I want to share two messages that we've received from clients recently, it helps to keep us focused and motivated. It brings a very real and human element to 4000kg of food and rooms over spilling with donations. What I love most is how both of them want to give back – I know they will when they can.

"The food bank at Romsey has helped me so much over the last few months, when I was first referred I was so embarrassed to go, but I was in a situation following a break up that I had no choice to. I needn't of worried, the ladies that volunteer there were so welcoming and friendly. I have been a few times now and would tell anyone if they need help, to go. I can't wait to be in a position to donate for other families who are in need. People who donate really don't know how much their kindness is appreciated."

"I've just received my foodbank parcel and I am overjoyed! Thank you so so so much. I'm in tears and feeling very blessed. We are normally okay every month, but our money has been messed up this month. If could let me know how I can repay you in the future that would be amazing as I would love to make a donation when we can afford it. And to top it all off it even included my son's favourite biscuits -his smile was amazing – thank you!"

Thank you again for your support and please continue to pray for those needing to access our service and that we will continue to meet the demand.

Best wishes

Jo