

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Wider Impact Consultancy
February 2017



CHANGING LIVES FOR THE BETTER

The Stoke-on-Trent foodbank is clearly a shining example of how local people, local businesses and caring agencies can make such important and significant instant impacts on the lives of those people who have unfortunately fallen on hard times.

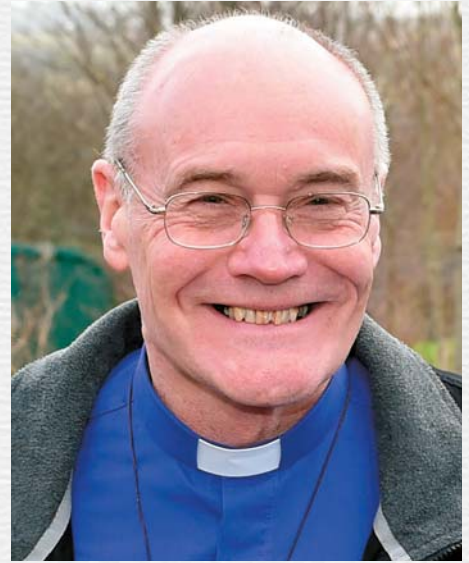
To go without food is a terrible thing, particular when children and other vulnerable people are involved. To go without support, or a feeling of nobody caring, is just as terrible; and it is heartening to know that the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank is playing a significant role in meeting such essential needs.

We should all feel proud of our local foodbanks and express thanks and gratitude to all those who are playing a role in its successes and important achievements highlighted in this report. Such includes the many volunteers who give up their time carrying out a number of roles and responsibilities, for no more reward than a 'thank you' and an awareness that they have made a

difference and potentially changed someone's life for the better.

Thanks should of course also be given to those local people who kindly donate much needed food, local businesses who likewise donate food and share their expertise, the Trussell Trust, the Big Lottery and other contributors for their expertise and funding support; and the host of caring agencies, which work in close partnership with the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank to ensure that support goes beyond the initial distribute of emergency food aid.

This report makes it clear that there is still work to be done for the foreseeable future to meet the needs of our vulnerable local people, and it is with gratitude to learn that with on-going funding and multi-agency support, there remains a commitment from all of those involved in the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank to continue to ensure that who most need our support are not alone, and will see their lives change around with hope and sincere gratitude.



+ Geoffrey Stafford

INTRODUCTION

It is always a pleasure to deliver such a positive report, which hopefully does credit to all those involved in the development and delivery of this excellent Project.

Opportunity is taken to thank Project staff, volunteers, multi-agency partners and all involved in the delivery of this report for their valuable time.

Most significantly, thanks are passed on to those service users/'guests' of the Project who have bravely and unselfishly 'bared their souls' during the research period to ensure that their experiences are heard, and most importantly taken note of by those who have it in their gift to ensure that foodbanks are no longer needed in the future.

In the immediate term it is clear that without the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank it is unfortunately highly probable that a very large number of local people will have nothing substantial to eat for long periods of time; and just as importantly miss out on often life-changing opportunities to



**Edwin Lewis, Director,
Wider Impact Consultancy.**

lift themselves up; enabling them access to direct and often instant support, effective signposting and multi-agency referrals, which are a key and innovative components of the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank Project.

It is therefore comforting and reassuring to know that the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank in partnership with the Trussell Trust has the experience, expertise, systems and compassion to play an essential and often pivotal role in feeding and supporting those who are most in need, when it is most needed.



AUGMENTED REALITY

Download our free app to your smartphone or tablet and bring this document to life.

- Download the **ooh-AR** app from the App Store (Apple) or Google Play (Android).

- Open the app and point your device at the photo above to access the video content.

- Double tap to watch the video full-screen.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The key aim of the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank is to provide three days emergency food to those who are in crisis either due to poverty, sudden loss of income from unemployment, bereavement, domestic violence, illness or changes in benefits, or other crisis within their family unit. It's an independent, registered charity, steered by a committed Board of Trustees, and sustained by generous donations.

The Stoke-on-Trent foodbank also supports vulnerable local people to access to other support services, as it is recognised that help such as money or debt advice, specialist housing support, mental health, drug or alcohol issues and social care, can reduce the need for return visits, and prevent prolonged crisis.

Food is accessible through voucher referrals, from over 400 partner local agencies and organisations such as schools, social care, health and voluntary sector organisations. Guests who present themselves at one of the 15 food distribution centres across the city receive a warm welcome from volunteer teams, which includes a hot drink, in a comfortable, non-judgemental, cafe style environment.

Significant activities include:

- **Money Matters advice** – funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and delivered in partnership with Salt Box
- **Healthy themed school holiday clubs** – a Coordinator funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and delivered through the commitment of local Churches, in partnership with their local schools. Addressing holiday hunger by providing meals and physical activities to children during holiday periods that are unlikely to receive a nutritious food without the school meals they normally receive
- **Engaging with local schools** – collecting food for the Project, or acting as voucher holders



- **Volunteer placements** – working with multi-agency partners to provide supportive volunteer placements
- **Bus ticket pilot** – replicated as 'good practice' by other foodbanks across the country. Vouchers from local bus companies to help guests and volunteers with the cost of bus travel
- **Job searching, learning and skills and IT access and support** – made available at the Food Distribution Centres in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- **Fuel advice** – developing initiative, with Npower, a Carbon monoxide awareness project – free carbon monoxide alarms from National Grid, distributed at five Food Distribution Centres
- **Energy efficient light bulbs** – large quantities of free light bulbs provided by Npower
- **Eating/cooking on a budget** – sessions to promote healthy eating on low income
- **Fresh basic vegetables** – distributed to guests to complement food parcels. Provided by Freshview

- **Surplus M&S/Tesco supermarket goods (e.g. bread and bakery products)** – distributed to guests to complement food parcels

- **Surplus food distribution to partner charities**

The Ucan logo and brand has been created as an innovative tool for encouraging people to hear the message that Ucan help the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank in three ways, with time, money and food.



The Trussell Trust

The Stoke-on-Trent foodbank is one of the Trussell Trust's network of foodbanks working to tackle food poverty and hunger across the United Kingdom. The Trussell Trust's vision is to end hunger and poverty in the UK.

Combining the experience and figures of over 400 foodbanks nationally, the Trust campaigns effectively at a national level and provides the foodbanks within its network with on-going support and valuable expertise in relevant areas, such as annual audits and quality assurance processes.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE PROJECT

The team at Stoke-on-Trent have excellent working practices including warehouse management, volunteer management, PR and communications and organisation around food donations.

The foodbank processes a considerable amount of food and is doing so with efficiency, organisation and professionalism. The extra services provided at the Food Distribution Centres promote dignity and help to challenge poverty, enabling guests to have increased resilience for the future.

Stoke-on-Trent foodbank is working to a very high standard and is an excellent example of what can happen when a whole community devotes skills, time, gifts and money to a shared goal.

Emma Scholar, Trussell Trust Foodbank Network Regional Development Officer, West Midlands

The foodbank reaches out to those in crisis, with immediate impact. Their need for food is met. It's more than a provision of food. It's also a place to receive compassion and at times advocacy support. It has gone across the city with people working together who otherwise would not.

Amy Wyatt, Swan Bank Methodist Church and Oasis Community Church

We partner the Trussell Trust in Stoke-on-Trent and other areas in the Midlands and South East of England. The organisation provides valuable support to local people in crisis and also offers help and guidance on health, employment and benefit issues.

We have found staff at all levels of the organisation to be passionate, attentive and strive to help local people get back on track after falling on hard times. The foodbank in Stoke-on-Trent is an essential function that provides support to a high number of families and single people who are in desperate need.

My patients go to the foodbank to complete voluntary work each week. Engaging in this gives them a sense of identity and pride and allows them to feel accepted into the local community which is a vital part of their rehabilitation.

Megan Hicks, Senior Occupational Therapist

Ady Culpin, First Bus PR Manager

FACTS AND STATISTICS

Project outcomes

As this table highlights, there can be no doubts that the project will significantly exceed outcomes agreed with the Big Lottery.

Significant Achievements

The following is a summary of significant achievements recorded by the project from May 2012 to March 2017:

- 437 metric tonnes of food donated
- 25% of the total food donated was given during the Harvest periods from 1st September to 31st October 2012 to 2016 i.e. 113 metric tonnes
- 412 metric tonnes of food was distributed
- 443,871 meals distributed to people in crisis*
- 169,416 meals provided for children*
- An average of 247 meals per day provided to local people in crisis
- Over 400 referral agencies issuing Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank vouchers

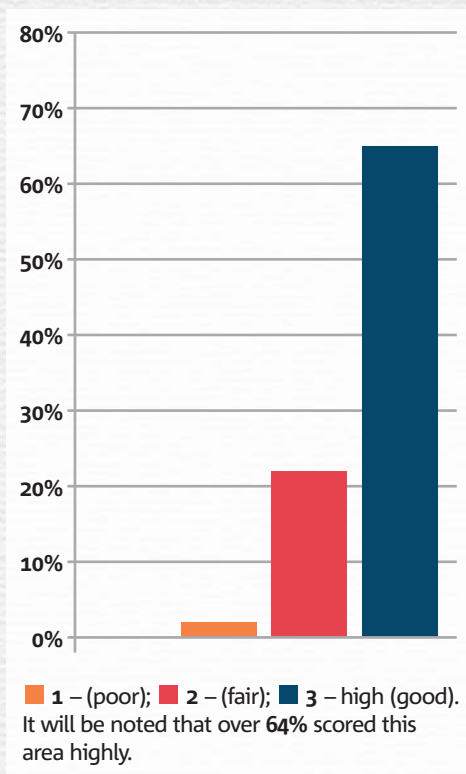
*i.e. 3 meals for 3 days for each person in the household.

Feedback from service users

A total of 6,647 questionnaires completed by service users between August 2014 and February 2017 have been independently analysed by Wider Impact.

Throughout this period 15,260 family members have also been supported by the project.

The following graph provides respondents views about how the project has positively affected their lives.



Outcome	Indicator	By	Targets	Achieved 31 Jan 2017
1	a. The number of recipients who report that their stress or anxiety levels have decreased as a result of the emergency food.	Yr 1	60%	84.9%
	b. The number of recipients who report that their lives have been positively impacted as a result of engagement with the foodbank.	Yr 2	10,000	18,303
	c. The number of recipients who identify that they feel valued and respected with self-esteem sharing their stories.	Yr 3	50	60
2	a. The number of agencies partnering with the foodbank in signposting, supporting recipients.	Yr 1	300	457 (Referral agents supporting foodbank)
	b. The number of people/clients who report that they have been positively supported as a result of signposting to or from partner agencies.	Yr 2	60%	60% (Financial/emotional wellbeing)
	c. The number of clients who report that they have improved financial or emotional wellbeing as a result of the service.	Yr 3	10,000	17,790

Note: The Project is not due to end until the 31 July 2017, which will clearly result in the above data/achievements being surpassed further.

Project Volunteers

There can be no doubt about the importance of volunteers to the project, which is summarised by the Project Manager:

“Those that volunteer for the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank are essential for its existence. These are people who are self-motivated, with a deep-down, personal reason for volunteering, which gives them a real, dependable commitment to their role that shines through as they go about their tasks.”

Volunteer facts include:

- 129 volunteers receiving accredited training, and 644 volunteers receiving other formal training
- Multi-agency volunteers placements available
- The variety of volunteering functions/posts being available meets the

needs/expectations of volunteers’ diverse needs, expectations and abilities

- Raises the skills, self-confidence and potential of volunteers to seek/gain employment
- Vital ‘in-kind’ support provided to the project, enabling such impressive outcomes to be achieved.



CASE STUDY: HARRY

Case study names changed and photographs posed by models.

Harry is 54 years old, divorced, and a native of Stoke-on-Trent. He is currently unemployed.

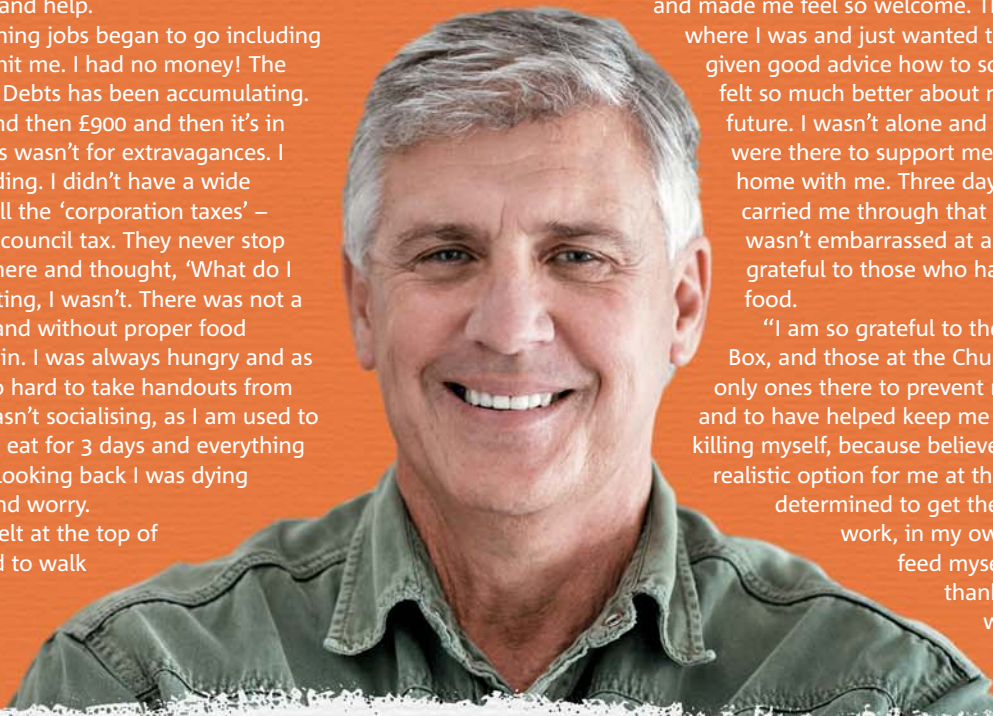
He says: "My life was what I would call 'normal', until around eight years ago when the recession hit. I was a construction labourer and had a good life until then. I could pay my bills, go out and socialise and was a proud man. I was in work and depended on no one for support and help.

"Without much warning jobs began to go including mine. Then one day it hit me. I had no money! The penny suddenly drops. Debts has been accumulating. £300 turns into £600 and then £900 and then it's in the thousands. And this wasn't for extravagances. I wasn't going out spending. I didn't have a wide screen TV. It's what I call the 'corporation taxes' – rent, heating, lighting, council tax. They never stop coming and I just sat there and thought, 'What do I do?'. And talking of eating, I wasn't. There was not a lot of money for food and without proper food depression quickly got in. I was always hungry and as a proud man it was too hard to take handouts from family and friends. I wasn't socialising, as I am used to paying my way. I didn't eat for 3 days and everything began to close down. Looking back I was dying through lack of food and worry.

"I remember how I felt at the top of the road knowing I had to walk into a foodbank. I was shaking with fear. I am a proud man and

now I was looking for charity. But I knew I had to eat and pride had to take a back seat for a while. I was in a daze with my voucher in my hand and I just stumbled in, not knowing what to expect. I would have kept my eyes closed if I could have. But it was amazing. Everyone was so friendly and everything was so relaxed and there were good people around me. They weren't judging me and made me feel so welcome. They understood where I was and just wanted to help me. I was given good advice how to sort myself out and I felt so much better about myself and my future. I wasn't alone and people and help were there to support me. I took some food home with me. Three days' supply, which carried me through that rough patch. I wasn't embarrassed at all and was so grateful to those who had donated the food.

"I am so grateful to the foodbank, Salt Box, and those at the Church. They were the only ones there to prevent me from starving and to have helped keep me sane and from killing myself, because believe me it was a realistic option for me at the time. I am determined to get the old me back. In work, in my own home and able to feed myself. All I can say is thank you to all those who have been there to help me."



CASE STUDY: JOAN

Joan is 50 years of age, single and a native of Stoke-on-Trent. She lives in a council-owned house with her two children and two grandchildren. She is the sole bread winner and is currently seeking work.

She says: "Life has never been easy for me. I never buy new clothes, as it has always been my priority to look after my children and those in my care. I can't chew food properly as I have lost most of my teeth over the years. Dentist bills and the like are just too much for me.

"I have had jobs as I am a proud person who hates relying on charity and benefits. At one time I was working three jobs, but it has been really difficult to hold a job down since my grandchildren came to live with me. How have I got by? I don't really know.

"Things got really difficult the week before Christmas when I received a letter out of the blue informing me my benefits had been capped. This meant I was losing around £200 a month, and for reasons beyond me had to pay money out by direct debit to the benefit system – £45.70 per week to be exact.

"We also had a water leak a while ago and I lost all of the food in our freezer as the electric failed as well. Social Services did help to get me a tax credit, but because they spelt one of my kids names wrong I had to go without that for around two months.

"I didn't eat for a long while, and my eldest daughter could not go to college for a week, as we couldn't afford tampons for her. Have you seen the price of tampons? All I am trying to do is keep my kids together. I have visited a foodbank a few times in my life, and whilst it is a blessing, and the people there are so nice and helpful, I still feel so ashamed walking in. But it means we can eat when things get desperate and that is the main thing.

"A key thing for me since the last time I used a foodbank has been the additional support and advice provided. I get food, but I am also being offered hope. I have received excellent advice and support, with lots of positive referrals to agencies who can support us. Whilst it is still not easy, I am feeling a lot less stressed or anxious. With their help I have attended courses, and I am proud to say I now have two GCSEs – Maths and English! I have always known I am a clever person, but I haven't really had a chance to show it.

"I have decided that I am going to make something of my life and plan to train to be a counsellor. I am looking to obtain a bursary and enrol in the Open University to achieve a degree. Thanks to those at the foodbank 'holding my hand', I am getting ever more confident and know I can achieve this goal. I don't want to rely on others and I want to see my kids and grandkids do well and make something of their lives."



CASE STUDY: FRANCESCA

Francesca is 51 years old, single and a native of Stoke-on-Trent. She lives alone and is currently off work sick.

She says: "I was once married living in our own home with children. I suppose that was when I had the 'normal life' so many people have. I was fit and well and certainly had no need of a foodbank. But we divorced and I got the house and custody of the children. Whilst I was not 'rich', all was OK and I managed whilst the children were at school. But things changed when the last child went to university. I had no income support and I was on my own. I never saw it coming, but I had to down-size and let my house go. I moved into my flat and was alone. It was down to me to survive.

"At different points I have had two and even three jobs to keep my head above water. I have been physically worn out, but I have no choice. It just wasn't enough and more cut back had to be made. I was and am determined to keep a roof over my head, so the bills that keep me there have to be paid. This left very little for food and I would not eat for days. At the worst I did not eat for a week. My health began to deteriorate, I had to go off work sick, and I became depressed. I am a proud woman, but I have to depend on friends, family members and the Church for help to keep me alive.

"I was in limbo and had nothing to eat, and had to go to the foodbank. The food I received was so important to me. For example, it may seem strange to

some people, but I remember being able to make myself a cup of tea when I got home, rather than just drinking hot water. It tasted and felt amazing. Such a simple, but important pleasure that we all take for granted. But tea bags cost money, and my focus is keeping my home.

"The foodbank and the wider support has been so important to me. They have helped me make the appropriate claims. It is so complex and time consuming and I don't have access to a computer, which you need to make claims. There is no one else out there who has the time and resources to help me like they do, and it is as if someone is holding my hand. Whilst I won't be able to work for a while, I know I won't starve now.

"I am a proud woman who just wants to pay my way and keep my home. But I have to be honest. I have considered suicide and have been treated for depression. Hunger is a terrible thing, and things happen to your mind after a week without food, and no hope of things getting better.

I am determined to make my own way again. I want to get back to work and come off benefits. I just want to be 'normal' again. I will never forget all those who have helped me through this rough patch.

Believe me, anyone can be where I have been, and I am so grateful to all those who are helping me now!"



CASE STUDY: ANTON

Anton is 38 years old, single and from Bulgaria.

He says: "I am an electrician by trade and have been moving around following work. The UK has good transport links and I was never too far away from my daughter who lives down south with her mother who I am parted from. This is the reason I came to the UK. To be near my daughter.

"Eventually I found myself in Stoke. I joined an agency who promised me work in a distribution centre. I had to pay them £280 and more for the accommodation they provided for me. They found me a house, which I shared with three other men. But despite attending training the work never happened. But I still had to pay the rent and I had no money.

"The landlord spoke to me one morning at Christmas time and told me that unless he got his rent that day my belongings would be out in the street when I got back. I was really annoyed, so I went to the police as felt I was being treated as a slave. But the landlord had let my room out, and I had nowhere to sleep and I had no money.

"The police did however make some phone calls, and after a while they took me to the Night Shelter. The people there were amazing and made sure I had a bed for a few nights and arranged for me to have food from the foodbank.

"I can't tell you how low I was when the landlord kicked me out. I was on the pavement at Christmas in a foreign country with no money, nowhere to live and nothing to eat. It was the lowest I have ever felt in my life, and all I wanted to do was to be near to my daughter and buy her a present for Christmas. I did consider killing myself as I was so low. The only thing I have is the kindness of those at the Night Shelter and at the foodbank. They helped me when I needed help the most. No-one else is out there who could have done this for me.

"Loneliness is still a terrible thing in my life, but I now volunteer at the local foodbank, helping others who are where I was. I enjoy it as it gets me out of my room, and I get to socialise with other people.

"I am also adding to my CV and learning new skills. I can get to visit my daughter in London on the bus.

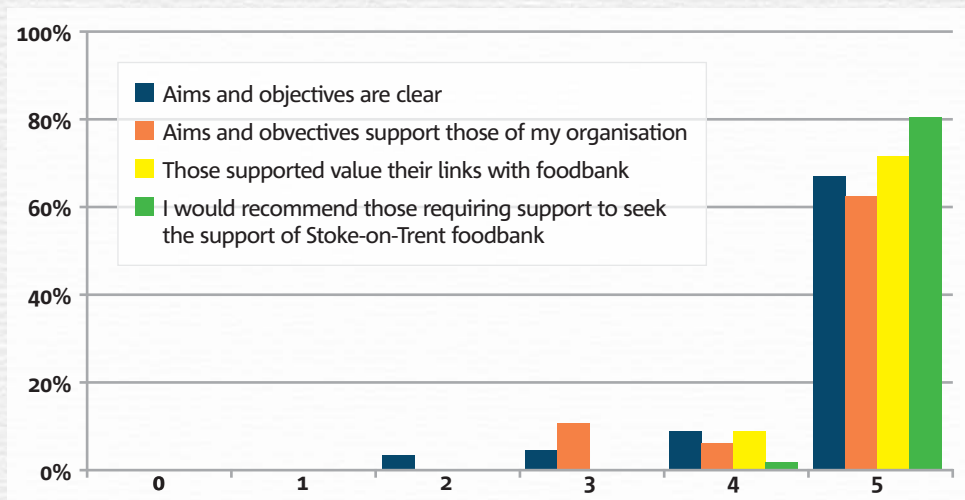
"I like being in Stoke as it is a friendly and safe place to live. I am determined to find work and those at the foodbank help me to complete application forms. They also keep my spirits up. I don't want to live on benefits for ever. I am a proud man and want to make my daughter proud of me."



VIEWS OF PARTNER AGENCIES

This graph, right, highlights the high regard partner agency members have for the project. In relation to the achievement of **project outcomes**, partner agency members report that:

- The project is delivering key outcomes – delivery of the support service users require (i.e. improved well-being, service users feeling valued and have improved self-esteem), and have increased access to support agencies; and as a result have improved their financial well-being
- There is a wider multi-agency understanding of issues linked to poverty, resulting in improved and positive partnership working.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

It is clear from both quantitative and qualitative research findings that there can be **no doubts** that the project is a success in terms of it achieving the outcomes agreed with the Big Lottery.

In no particular order the following **good practice** is noted:

- The collaborations between local churches, which in addition to delivering Christian values, enables an accessible and highly efficient, audited distribution network within the city's most deprived communities, which for example includes **412 tonnes** of donated food distributed and feeding nearly **50,000** local people – **38% (18,824)** of whom being children
- The roles and functions of the hard working staff and committed volunteers
- The leadership and strategic direction provided by the Board/Trustees
- The role, functions and effectiveness of the Central Team, which includes project management, auditing, information/ data management, internal communications, marketing, the development of innovative projects and initiatives, partnership/multi-agency working, training support and unlimited motivation, empathy and caring to project staff and service users
- The partnership/affiliation with the Trussell Trust, which includes two-way exchanges of data, information, training/support materials, good practice and lessons learnt
- Led and steered by the Central Team, the extent of innovative multi-directional partnership/multi-agency working
- The careful placing of volunteers into roles that suit their individual skills, experiences, abilities, aspirations and comfort zones
- Practical, externally funded 'added value' projects and initiatives such as the city Council funded **Salt Box Money Matters** project and the **School Holiday Clubs**



- The practical and much needed front-line support provided to service users/guests within the Food Distribution Centres, which in addition to the provision of emergency food includes non-judgmental (often bespoke) support, advice, 'hand holding', multi-agency referrals, signposting and empathy, caring and motivation

3. Building on the expertise and experiences of staff and volunteers, the future project should enhance the support 'offer' available to service users, with an emphasis on developing and delivering a 'hand holding' service, designed to further enable much needed multi-agency signposting and referrals beyond initial visits to a foodbank.

4. Opportunity should be taken to celebrate the successes of the current project with an emphasis on:
 - a. Congratulating and thanking staff, volunteers and partner agency members for a 'job well done' in relation to the successful delivery of current project outcomes;
 - b. Sharing good practice with similar projects and initiatives across the United Kingdom.

Recommendations

Based on research findings the following recommendations are tendered:

1. With the agreement of the Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank Board/Trustees, steps should be taken to continue the project for a minimum period of 5 years.
2. Such should continue to be delivered in close partnership with multi-agency partners, with a continuation of innovative and effective projects and initiatives such as *Money Matters* and the *School Holiday Clubs*.

COMMENTS



I read this report with an immense sense of gratitude to the volunteers, donors, and supporters of Stoke-on-Trent foodbank, whose commitment and passion has made the contents of this report possible.



Looking back over the five years of Stoke-on-Trent foodbank's life, the desire to give food to those in crisis who are hungry has driven an amazing joint achievement.

We remain proud to be part of the Trussell Trust network of more than 400 foodbanks, which over the last year have thrust the experience of people helped by foodbanks into the attention of governing administrations across the UK, to compel decision makers to recognise the realities of poverty.

As UK foodbank use continues to rise, the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank will continue to provide accessible emergency food to individuals in crisis. We will also work to reduce the need for return visits, aiming to reduce food poverty and hardship by continuing to offer additional support at the Food Distribution Centres and facilitating engagement of our Guests with the many support services across the city.

This excellent evaluation report has reinforced our determination to enhance the impact our loyal and committed volunteers, partners and staff make on the lives of those they serve through the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank.

For me, and many others, the impact of engagement with the Stoke-on-Trent foodbank has been rewarding. I will forever remember, the words of one of our Guests who now volunteers with us, which speaks of what we are about: "Foodbank is definitely more than a tin of food, I am appreciated and valued."

Susan Simcoe, Chair of Trustees



It is a privilege for me to be a part of Stoke-on-Trent foodbank.



It is an opportunity that has changed me for the better. I have witnessed, and known of, many others growing and branching out too, from their own involvement with this captivating organisation.

I am constantly inspired by, and in admiration of the spirit of volunteering which holds this amazing organisation together. From the enduring commitment of the volunteers who were part of the birth, and maintain dedication in their roles, to those in it for a season, having an experience which serves to launch them forward into a new chapter of their lives.

Learning of the many disabling, tragic, desperate situations and circumstances that adults and children in Stoke-on-Trent are facing each day, has driven my team to ensure our volunteers are supported as effectively as possible in their endeavours.

It is the genuine difference that is made when someone at their wits end is met with warmth and non-judgemental understanding by someone who then takes the time to listen, and show care, empathy and practical support, which is the 'gold dust' of what foodbank is about.

We are so thankful for the provision of time, money and food, given by the generosity of local people and local business, and the magnificent support from the staff team, trustees, Trussell Trust, multi-agency partners, funders, sponsors and supporters, all of whom enables our work to continue.

Anna Willcocks, Project Manager

CONTACTS

Stoke-on-Trent foodbank

Hanley Community Fire Station
Lower Bethesda Street
Hanley
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 3RP

Tel: 01782 899018

Email: info@stokeontrent.foodbank.org.uk

stokeontrent.foodbank.org.uk

[facebook.com/stokeontrentfoodbank](https://www.facebook.com/stokeontrentfoodbank)

twitter.com/stokefoodbank

[youtube.com/channel/UCXH2SGdcKgx_mKmXqBk4Mgw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXH2SGdcKgx_mKmXqBk4Mgw)

This foodbank is run in partnership with local churches, facilitated by Stoke-on-Trent foodbank. Registered charity number 1150820. Registered in England and Wales.



Stoke-on-Trent foodbank Trustees



www.trusselltrust.org

Report produced by:
Wider Impact Consultancy Limited
Newport House
Newport Road
Stafford
ST16 1DA

0845 165 0491



edwin@widerimpact.com
www.widerimpact.com

Wider Impact Consultancy
 @EdwinJLewis
 Edwin Lewis

Registered in England and Wales No. 5834433